

**An exploration of how advertising
fashion retail products (both offline &
online) can affect self-esteem and body
confidence in women who have
experienced breast cancer.**

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Abstract

In recent decades, fashion advertising has become the forefront of many research papers discussing its practice and effects on women. Women who appear in such advertisements are often portrayed as “perfect” which has led to the decreased positive self-image and a lack of self-esteem in women viewing these advertisements.

This study aims to explore the effects of fashion advertising towards female breast cancer survivors' self-esteem and body confidence. Specific attention has been given to the participants' attitudes in relation to self-esteem, particularly regarding self-image and body image. This is in hopes that this type of market research will pave the way for future fashion brands to enter the market specialising in post cancer related products. Or alternatively, allow current fashion brands to market to an already underrepresented target market, including marketing with a new, sensitive approach. Primary research was conducted using the research method of semi-structured interviews. Participants were chosen in respect of being survivors of breast cancer, and their age. Overall, it was found that all participants had had their self-esteem affected by breast cancer and fashion advertising contributed to their lack of self-esteem, especially in younger participants. It was concluded that current fashion advertising tactics which advertise breast cancer so as to represent the survivors was inaccurate and lacked authenticity.

Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Background to research.....	8
Chapter Two: Literature Review.....	9
2.1 Women & Advertising.....	9
2.2 Breast cancer survivors/patient's self-esteem.....	12
2.3 Advertising breast cancer.....	13
2.4 Breast cancers survivors' reactions to breast cancer advertising.....	13
2.5 Sensitive subjects.....	16
Chapter Three: Research Question.....	17
3.1 Research Aim.....	17
3.2 Research Objectives.....	17
3.3 Research Objectives.....	18
Chapter Four: Methodology.....	18
4.1 Research Aim.....	18
4.2 Research Design.....	19
4.2.1 Philosophy: Interpretivism.....	19
4.2.2 Approach: Inductive.....	20
4.2.3 Choice: Qualitative Research.....	21
4.2.4 Strategy: Interviews.....	22
4.2.5 Procedures.....	24
4.2.6 Research Sample.....	25

4.3 Ethical considerations.....	26
4.4 Limitations.....	27
Chapter Five: Data Analysis & Findings.....	27
5.1 Introduction.....	27
5.2 Research Objective One.....	28
5.2.1 Misrepresentation of women.....	29
5.2.2 Age.....	29
5.2.3 Social Media.....	30
5.2.4 Cause Related marketing.....	32
5.2.5 Representation.....	33
5.2.6 Authenticity.....	34
5.2.7 Unpopular.....	35
5.3 Research Objective Two.....	35
5.3.1 Empathy.....	36
5.3.2 Diversity.....	37
5.4 Research Objective Three.....	37
5.4.1 Physical Changes.....	38
5.4.2 Mastectomy.....	39
5.4.3 Resources.....	39
5.4.4 Partners.....	40
5.4.5 Societal Pressure.....	41
5.5 Summary of Key Findings.....	42
Chapter Six: Discussion.....	43

6.1 Research Objective One.....	43
6.2 Research Objective Two.....	44
6.3 Research Objective Three.....	44
Chapter Seven: Conclusion & Recommendations.....	45
7.1 Conclusion.....	45
7.2 Recommendations.....	46
Chapter Eight: References.....	48
Chapter Nine: Appendices.....	57
9.1 Biographies of interviewees.....	57
9.2 Interview Schedule.....	58
9.3 Interview Consent Form.....	58
9.4 Interview Handout.....	60

Chapter One: Background

There has been a significant increase in breast cancer diagnosis' over the past 10 years in Ireland. Of course, with that there has been an increase of positive reinforcement of medical advances alongside it. This results in a large pool of women undergoing tough medical treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation, not to mention in some cases, surgery and then proceeding to beat the disease. Here in Ireland there are 3100 new cases of breast cancer diagnosed each year and it is the second most common cancer affecting women. Most women diagnosed with breast cancer are aged between 50-64 (41%), but younger women are also affected, with 23% of diagnosis occurring in women under 50. (Irish Cancer Society, 2019). There is little evidence to date in demonstrating the dynamic relationship and attitudes between women who have undergone breast cancer treatments, chemotherapy and/or mastectomy, and the fashion industry. The following review of several literature topics is a fundamental starting point for fashion brands to acknowledge a new target market in women who have undergone such treatments, in the hopes that they will view them as a separate market to advertise and cater to. As it stands, the connection between women and the fashion industry has had a bi-polar narrative. It has been noted by previous authors such Recihert (2003) that the sexualisation of women found in advertising has highlighted that this style of advertising can affect how young females compare themselves to such advertisements. The literature investigating the self-esteem of women who have had breast cancer is reviewed. This is to support the suggestion that women who have had breast cancer do in fact have additional concerns in comparison to before they were diagnosed. Additionally, the interpretive suggestion of considering these women as "sensitive subjects" is reviewed and analysed.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Women & Advertising

It is widely known that the relationship between advertisers and women has caused controversy throughout the existence of advertising, much of which has been criticised for focusing on highlighting women's' insecurities while taking advantage of their tendencies to be more liable to emotional advertising (Gulas & McKeage, 2000). This level of gender stereotyping and its nature in advertising has been well documented by academics such as Gill (2007), who analysed that there has been a recent shift in the advertising industry's representation of women. Now women are being presented not as passive objects for the male gaze but as powerful, independent and sexually agentic. Gill (2008) later proceeds to explain that this shift could be interpreted as having been framed by advertisers, as a response to feminist critiques of previous representations of a more traditional and sexually objectifying responses. Women have been subject to scrutiny when it comes to their depictions in cultural assets such as TV programmes and magazines. Wykes & Gunter, (2005) argue that messaging such as those in magazine features that focus on work and careers can shape women's' perceptions of female entrepreneurship in the same way as their beauty coverage influences women's' attempts to alter their appearance. They also mention that their coverage of beauty, appearance and lifestyle issues impact women's real lives are well established in media studies. This has brought much attention and negativity to the practice of fashion advertising and has resulted in many women becoming self-conscious and suffering from a loss of body positivity & self-esteem, therefore feeling a sense of inadequacy (Martin, 1997). Literature explains that more modern consumers are actively seeking out the incorporation of "real" women in brand advertising. Loken & Peck (2005) suggest that when advertising presents and supports the use of larger sized female

models, adolescent girls' self-ratings of their attractiveness and self-esteem are improved. Interestingly, authors such as Billig et al., (1988) have argued previously that people can refuse to accept the societal norm and attempt to peruse alternative options. In the case of modern marketers, more attainable female portrayals have been used in favour of unobtainable body types. This type of practice has been used widely across contemporary advertisers such as Dove. Since its release in 2004, the Real Beauty campaign has given educational initiatives for beauty equality, combined to form something more than a simple appeal from a packaged goods giant. It was one of the earliest to adopt corporate responsibility into its business model (Zed, 2019) and these Real Beauty ads were focused on improving the self-esteem of women everywhere. Subsequently, there is a divide as to whether female target markets are in support of these types of practices. Bishop (2000) argues that utilising women in advertising as “beautiful” or “sexy” are simply tactics for marketers to influence target consumers to purchase and project this self-image onto themselves. He argues that these types of images are not false or misleading but are in fact subject to the consumer's perception of themselves. It is worth noting conflicting arguments presented such as Kilbourne (1999) who suggest that women can feel victimised and depressed about the unattainment of unrealistic standards regarding weight and body shape of models used in such advertising. Furthermore, academics have discussed the idea that women consciously seek out advertising with heavy use of such practices (such as unrealistic models) as a result of a constant drive for self-improvement (as per Festinger's, 1954 “Social Comparison Model”). However, providing imbalance to this argument is that there is now a skewed outlook on what exactly is “normal” in female physical identity (Henderson King et al, 2001). Finally, it has been argued that advertising in modern circumstances should veer away from traditional, descriptive and function orientated messages. According to Levitt, (1970) modern advertising should focus on the reality of shifts in consumer culture and societal change by asserting that

people don't buy things but buy solutions to problems, the marketing imagination makes an inspired leap from the obvious to the meaningful. It is without question that the digital world is now shaping the modern consumer. Belleghem (2016) argues that if marketers are going to compete against one another, they need to understand exactly how their customers think, react and how to react with them through the digital world, including how and where they advertise. Consumers are looking for personalisation and to be treated as individuals, rather than being cooped up with others, each of them having individual needs. Totman (2013) explains that social media has become so prominent in marketing strategies and how modern consumers now rate themselves and others based on their online profiles. Interestingly, online social 'norms' are compared to the value of 'likes' and comments on social media, thus providing conversation as to what is acceptable or deemed as typical in the eyes of the consumer. There is now a consensus among researchers that this process is subject to changing constantly due to the physical and psychological needs of consumers. Women are known to constantly compare themselves to others and discontent with their bodies is normative for women (Rodin et al., 1985) and now there seems to be a lack of empathy, especially towards women who have undergone surgery or cancer treatments when it comes to the representation and feelings toward the fashion industry and its advertising (Gubar, 2019). Not only that but body image issues appear to affect younger women more often in more negative ways than older women (Pruis & Janowsky, 2010). Dittmar and Howard (2004) suggest that for women in Western cultures, appearance is central to their self-definition and is socialised early into learning that their bodies should be used to attract others. Fashion and beauty magazines have been identified as a prime source and disseminator of the (impossibly) thin ideal for women (Malkin, Wornian, & Chrisler, 1999). Women learn to see themselves as objects to be looked at and evaluated by appearance (Frederickson and Roberts, 1997). Some argue that this pressure is constantly reinforced by a strong cultural ideal of female beauty, and that ideal has

become synonymous with thinness (Wiseman et al., 1992). A study conducted by Borland & Akram (2007) suggests that advertisers would profit from redirecting thin models and using a range of models.

2.2 Breast cancer survivors/patient's self-esteem

The definition of self-esteem is a set of impressions that an individual has of him or herself. (Kermis, 2006). This involves self-assessment, lifestyle and ideas about oneself that can be positive or negative. This means that people who have low self-esteem have trouble earning the approval of themselves and others. In the context of women having undergone cancer related treatments such as mastectomy and chemotherapy, the idea of self-esteem has become more visible. Not surprisingly, women who have undergone breast surgery have been known to feel less physically attractive, due to the removal of a highly eroticised organ capable of provoking desire, alongside thoughts of loss of femininity and poor self-esteem (Arroyo & Lopez, 2011). Additionally, self-esteem has been found to be higher in women who have had a mastectomy who then proceed with breast reconstruction surgery compared to those who have not (Fernández et al., 2012). It is known that medical procedures involved with chemotherapy or hormones will often lead to weight gain (Carmichael 2006) and that the physical impact of different breast cancer treatments can lead to a different body image, appearance concerns for women and diminished femininity (Kraus, 1999). According to Fobair et al., (2006) addressing concerns such as body image and sexual activity is essential to improve the quality of life for young women with breast cancer. Similarly, a study conducted by Prates et al., (2017) showed a 74.8% prevalence of body image dissatisfaction in women who underwent breast cancer treatment. Interestingly, Price (1990) widened the concept of body image to now include body presentation i.e. how we dress and groom ourselves which opens discussion as to how this is important for

women attempting to resume daily lives after breast cancer treatment. (Beard, 2011). We know that clothing can change the way we look and feel, as we attempt to create the ideal body visual for our wider circles i.e. the public, (Kaiser, 1985). We also know that clothing that is attractive and appropriate can be used to transform body appearance (Paek, 2001). While women have little control over the outcome of their breast cancer, they can in fact turn efforts towards things which they do have control over, for example their appearance (Carver et al,1998). Additionally, a study completed by Jackson (2004) found that one of the most critical issues after breast surgery for women was clothing. Women reported that they wanted to look “reasonable” and use clothing to camouflage their surgeries. Women who are post mastectomy have concerns about their aesthetics and of the lack of clothing available to them post-surgery.

2.3 Advertising breast cancer

There is little evidence discussing the topic of advertising products (such as fashion) to women with breast cancer. Mainly, there are case studies and examples of these instances. The available literature predominantly represents how breast cancer (or other types of cancer) is visually depicted in the media. Therefore, a combination of literature is necessary in order to provide adequate reasoning and discussion. This is in the hope that future research can develop and become visible, ultimately opening the floor to new opportunities in fashion for women with breast cancer. Notably, there are of course some well-known associations linking cancer and advertising together and that is the colour pink. Indisputably, this well-known use of pink is highly effective in making the cause “viable”. For some women, the colour pink functions as a sign of community, sisterhood and comfort as they battle cancer (Elliot, 2007). Other associations include the use of visuals in providing images or awareness about the disease

and its prevention. Visual images, such as photographs enhance communication and education about cancer (Michielutte et al, 1992). Also, there is room to consider how little research there is available on how women with breast cancer are presented in advertising. We know of studies such as conducted by McWhirter (2012), showing that images of women who were affected by breast cancer resulted in feelings of being unrepresentative of age, ethnicity, and body weight risk factors for breast cancer, yet these types of studies do not answer the fundamental research question. It was found that most images analysed depicted positive, emotional tone, minimal disease impact on the body and attractive, well-groomed, healthy looking women as well as common use of emphasis on gender identity (e.g., motherhood, beauty), as were feminine colors (e.g., pink). These strategies used by mass media communications are becoming outdated and the harsh realities of cancer (such as self-esteem, body issues) is being ignored by the fashion industry. There is little discussion about representation in fashion brands (if any at all) in this context, which in turns reiterates the importance of knowing and understanding the thinking of women who do have cancer and how they feel they are represented in the fashion industry. Bower & Landreth (2001) said that how influential an attractive model is, is depending on the nature of what is being advertised and the extent of her attractiveness. So, it is worth noting that, using women who have not had surgery or gone through the extents of cancer treatment and are attractive do not necessarily equate to a successful influencing message in relation to breast cancer. In reality, breast cancer survivors don't see this as an accurate representation of their experiences.

2.4 Breast cancers survivors' reactions to breast cancer advertising

It is worth noting the research and reactions from breast cancer survivors regarding advertising breast cancer. Fashion brands have been known

to utilise breast cancer awareness into their marketing campaigns, such as Ralph Lauren, who contributed \$100,000 to launch the Nina Hyde Centre for breast cancer research at the Vincent T.Lombardi Cancer Centre at Georgetown Medical Centre. This was done as a tribute to his close friend “Hyde” who was the fashion editor of the Washington Post (Guest & Vanchieri, 1990). This type of generosity is common amongst fashion brands but has certainly backfired on occasions, such as Breast Cancer Now’s partnership with M&S, River Island and Simply Be, whereby they released a range of t-shirts and promoted on social media with slogans “good things come in two’s” and “two is stronger than one”. The initiative was to raise awareness about breast cancer and the importance of early detection. The marketing campaign caused controversy on social media when patients and charities branded it insensitive. (Mullin, 2019). In response to the campaign, a social media influencer named Laura Bailey (@mumwithcancer) who has stage 4 secondary breast cancer, shared a powerful, nude image of herself saying “my breasts tried to kill me and are not #bosombuddies”. Instances such as this involving fashion brands have played a role in the contribution to what is known as “pink washing”. There’s an endless array of products sold in the name of breast cancer awareness, appealing to shoppers’ sense of advocacy and activism by offering an easy way to support a cause. Pink products - which proliferate especially during October, designated since 1985 as Breast Cancer Awareness Month — supposedly give a percentage of profit to cancer research or awareness. The idea is that the money contributed by buying these branded items helps bring the disease one step closer to eradication. Most of the funding for breast cancer research comes from the federal government, not from cause marketing campaigns. (Sulik, 2019). Activists have pointed out that the money trail of allocated funds to cancer research is nearly impossible to track, and survivors have spoken out about how they feel their disease is being exploited in the name of profit. (thinkbeforeyoupink.org). This begs the question of why do fashion companies seem to believe in cause related marketing, rather than create

pieces with cancer survivors in mind? Gubar (2019) recently proclaimed that many patients know that designers and manufacturers haven't found it profitable to outfit them in widely advertised or available garments. Because of scars, surgeries and prostheses etc, cancer patients rarely want to flaunt their changing bodies and the apparel industry keeps its distance.

2.5 Sensitive subjects

Perhaps one of the reasons why this discussion has not yet arisen is due to the societal and ethical concerns around this group of women. Their recent tribulations in diagnoses and interpreting it may be a sensitive issue, labelling this topic as almost taboo. So, in theory, the reason for the avoidance of research by the fashion industry and brands may be more of an issue around the idea of these women being "sensitive subjects". Lee & Renzetti (1990) believe that the sensitive characteristics being researched inheres less in the topic itself but more in the relationship between that topic and the social context within the research conducted. Their definition of a sensitive topic is "*one which potentially poses for those involved a substantial threat, the emergence of which renders problematic for the researcher and/or researched and/or the researched the collection, holding, and/or dissemination of research data*" (pg. 512, 1990). On a positive note, research on such sensitive topics has contributed to methodological development. Macheitte & Roy (1994) compare "sensitive subjects" to those in the gay population, native Americans and working women. They conclude that with the emergence of cultural social issues comes thereafter a change in customer apathy. So, in retrospect, this research will ultimately add a more detailed definition examining what is classified as a "sensitive subject", as well as deferring the stigma associated with the disease and finally addressing the concern as to why

women who experienced breast cancer are not represented or considered in advertising within the fashion industry.

Chapter Three: Research Question

3.1 Research Aim

The aim of this research was to explore the attitudes of breast cancer survivors towards their representation in advertising in the fashion industry for both products and brands. Overall, this was in hope that this type of market research will pave the way for future fashion brands to enter the market specialising in post cancer related products or alternatively, allow current fashion brands to market to an underrepresented target market, including marketing with a new, sensitive approach.

3.2 Research Objectives

- 1: To discover the overall attitudes and impressions from breast cancer survivors about current fashion advertising and its representation of women who have survived cancer.
- 2: To investigate whether breast cancer survivors are indeed “sensitive subjects” regarding market research.
- 3: To explore in depth the effects of cancer in relation to self-esteem and body confidence amongst cancer survivors.

3.3 Research Questions

In relation to the research questions, using the sub heading themes as discussed in the literature, the following questions have been chosen for the intended sample to contribute and attempt to answer:

- 1: Does advertising fashion retail products (both online and offline) affect self-esteem and body confidence in women who have experienced breast cancer?
- 2: What are the most ethical/reasonable (according to the subjects) considerations in advertising to women who have gone through breast cancer, including chemotherapy and/or breast surgery?
- 3: Do female breast cancer survivors consider themselves sensitive subjects in relation to marketing practices?

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.1 Research Aim

The overall aim of this study was to investigate the attitudes of breast cancer survivors in relation to fashion advertising. The aim was also to explore how breast cancer survivors felt about their representation as a target market for fashion advertising, considering their body transformations and surgeries. Specifically, the aim of the study was to attempt to establish the foundations for fair representation of female breast cancer survivors in fashion advertising. This type of research is very specific, is limited and difficult to source, especially when attempting to retrieve previous results and studies from the perspective of women who have gone through breast cancer and their reactions to modern fashion advertising. This research could ultimately start the conversation between women having survived breast cancer and fashion brand advertising, most prominently, towards their efforts in marketing

to these women directly. It will also urge other fashion brands to look at their current strategies and question whether they are speaking to this target market sensitively and accurately with their messaging and advertising outputs. Finally, it will provide a growing chance, an opportunity and valid market research for brands directly founded for the benefit of breast cancer survivors so as their products can compete and succeed against other fashion competitors.

4.2 Research Design

The decided research design will be under “exploratory research” as defined by Hair et al (2010) as having at least one of two objectives: 1) generating insights that will help define the problem and 2) deepening the understanding of consumer motivations, attitudes and behaviour that are not easy to access using other research methods. This research will be considered exploratory because it gives the subjects a voice, yet the role of the researcher will still be acknowledged (Gall et al., 1996). A benefit to this would be due to its main advantages of high validity in data, tending to be trustworthy and honest results. (Dudovisky, 2018). Because this research will be examining a yet to be defined “sensitive subject” amongst the target sample, this approach has been deemed most appropriate and accessible.

4.2.1 Philosophy: Interpretivism

The interpretivist paradigm is originally rooted in the fact that methods used to understanding knowledge related to human and social sciences cannot have the same usage in physical sciences. This is because humans interpret their world based on such interpretation while the world does not (Hammersley, 2013, p. 26). As a result, interpretivists adapt a relativist ontology in which a single phenomenon might have multiple

meanings rather than truth simply being determined by measurement. Interpretivist researchers attempt to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon in its unique context instead of giving a consensus for everyone (i.e. the whole population) (Creswell, 2007). Hammersley (2013) agrees that since multiple interpretations are developed among humans, the researcher should try to understand the diverse ways of seeing and experiencing the world through different context and cultures, whilst trying to avoid bias. From this perspective, it highlights some of the advantages of this paradigm, including how there is now a diversifying view to investigate phenomena. (Pham, 2018). Interpretivists can not only describe objects, humans or events but can also understand them on a deeper level. Additionally, this type of research can be completed in a natural setting with grounded theory such as ethnography. Secondly, it facilitates a method of interactive interview which allows researchers to investigate and prompt things that we cannot observe. Researchers can therefore probe thoughts, values and prejudices. (Wellington & Szczerbinski, 2007). Thus, this data provides better insights for further action later. In this context, this study is case sensitive and can be difficult to speak about openly in an interview situation. According to Willis (1995) interpretivists are anti-foundationalists, who believe there is no single correct route or method to knowledge. The idea, is to provide the right setting, give the right context, based from previous research, such as the literature and generate insightful data. Therefore, the fact that the retrieved data will revolve around emotions, feelings and thoughts on societal norms and modern tactics pushed by the fashion industry is reason to choose an interpretivist motive throughout this research.

4.2.2 Approach: Inductive

The use of an inductive approach is common in several types of qualitative data analyses, especially grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin,

1998). The primary purpose of the inductive approach is to allow research findings to emerge from the frequent, dominant, or significant themes inherent in raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies. (Thomas, 2006) Interestingly, Scriven's (1991, p. 56) description of "goal-free" evaluation is consistent with an inductive approach which is the researcher's wish to describe the actual effects, not just assumed effects. This identification of any significant unplanned/unanticipated effects arising is an important evaluation task. Also, known as the "bottoms up" approach, taking the observation that there is a lack of representation and discussion about women with breast cancer and the fashion industry advertising, an inductive approach is viable. The strength of inductive reasoning lies in establishing probability. Ultimately, the logic of confirmation is inductive because we do not get conclusive proof from empirical research. A main reason being that there is little research done in this field due to its very niche characteristics and early development in modern society. The research project will be designed to capture and represent the voices, emotions and actions of those being studied (Denzin, 2001).

4.2.3 Qualitative Research

Guba & Lincoln, (1989) suggest that qualitative research generally contends that reality is socially constructed, and that social behaviour follows social norms. In this case, they argue that it is important to get close to the objects of study throughout observation so that they can experience it themselves. It can also be said that the researcher themselves is the instrument of data collection. The primary method of research during this project was qualitative research. "*Qualitative research is an umbrella term for a wide variety of approaches to and methods for the study of natural social life*" (Saldana, Leavy and Beretvas, 2011, p.4). Additionally, it was undertaken as an action research study, which seeks to generate knowledge that will allow

judgements to be made about the impact of an intervention (Froggart and Hockley, 2011). This is a suitable research method as the researcher originally sought to gain knowledge about breast cancer survivors in order to implement an effective approach to target marketing for fashion advertising and discusses the effectiveness of the intervention by measuring the responses throughout the process. Qualitative research was used because it has become a reputable mode of investigation in social behaviours (Creswell, 2009). As defined by Bryman (2008), qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasises words rather than quantification in the collection and analysis of data. Quantitative research often uses what might be called a “narrow-angle lens” because the focus is on only one or a few causal factors at the same time. The reason this analysis was chosen was due to the nature of data. In qualitative research, different groups are said to construct their different realities or perspectives, and these social constructions, reciprocally, influence how they “see” or understand their worlds, what they see as normal and abnormal, and how they should act. (Antwi and Kasim, 2015). Qualitative researchers study behaviour naturalistically and holistically. They try to understand multiple dimensions and layers of reality, such as the types of people in a group, how they think, how they interact, what kinds of agreements or norms are present.

4.2.4 Research Strategy: Interviews

Qualitative research methodology is suitable when the researcher or the investigator either investigates a new field of study or intends to ascertain and theorize prominent issues (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). There are many qualitative methods which are developed to have an in depth and extensive understanding of the issues by means of their textual interpretation and the most common types are interviewing and observation. (Creswell, 2007). Interviews come in many variations, unstructured resemble conversations and are thought to be more of a

controlled conversation, which is directed towards the interests of the interviewer. Semi-structured interviews allow in depth interviews to occur where respondents must answer open-ended questions (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and are based on an interview guide. This guide serves the purpose of exploring respondents more comprehensively and to help keep focus. The questions of the interview comprise of the core question and many other associated questions, based on the literature review/previous research. The data is captured more effectively through recordings because it makes it easier for the researcher to keep focus on the key points. For the purpose of this research, the interviews will be conducted in order to gain information on the differing experiences of transition and will be semi-structured. This is opposed to answering a questionnaire. Interviews are a more personal approach. This gives the interviewee more opportunity to speak more openly. A major benefit to semi structured interviews is that they allow the interviewer freedom to guide the conversation in order to gain the most information. Ideally, the interviews would be set-up face to face, in a location preferred by the participant. However, due to the current COVID19 pandemic, the interviews will take place over the phone at a time which suits the interviewee. Traditionally one on one interviews gain better results as the interviewee feels more comfortable sharing their own personal opinions. The main task is to understand the meaning of what they say (Alasuutari, 1998).

However, there are some difficulties and challenges that arise when conducting interviews. In order to carry out an interview, the person looking to conduct the interview must first gain ethical approval. This process can take some time to complete. Once ethical approval has been given, the person carrying out the research must then provide a series of resources such as consent and assent forms for all subjects involved. No interview can be carried out until these resources have been created by the researcher and completed by the subjects and other relevant parties. The questions that will be asked during the interview will be centred around specific themes of women and advertising, breast cancer

survivors/patient's self-esteem, advertising breast cancer, breast cancers survivors' reactions to breast cancer advertising and sensitive subjects. These five themes will provide a base structure for the interview and will give the subjects room to expand and give opportunity to the interviewees to provide opinion.

The most appropriate method of analysis, given the nature of data collection and sample size, is thematic analysis as per Braun & Clarke, (2006). Holloway and Todres (2003, pg. 347) identify “thematizing meanings” as one of a few shared generic skills across qualitative research methods. One of the benefits of thematic analysis is its flexibility. Given this advantage, it is important to note, that is an absence of clear and concise guidelines around thematic analysis.

4.2.5 Procedures

In order to carry out this research project, there are many steps that must be taken. The researcher must choose a setting and decide who the target subjects will be and what methodologies will be applied. For the sake of this project, there will be no physical location due to the Covid19 pandemic and current government guidelines to ensure public safety, but a scheduled phone call will occur in its place.

The intended procedures of sample obtainment will be through clear communication via phone, email or personal meeting and requesting permission of study. Thereafter, a simple written contract of agreement will be signed detailing all intentions of the study and agreement to share results with the individuals thereafter. The interviews will take place in whenever suits the individual over the phone due to the current recommended social distance guidelines provided by the Irish Government as a result of the COVID19. The intended sample size will be 5 interviewees consisting of 1-hour long interviews. The next stage is data analysis. Here, the researcher analyses the data gathered using a template chosen by the researcher to help draw conclusions and findings

that will benefit the researchers chosen topic. In the case of this study the chosen template is the five literature themes previously outlined. In order to successfully carry out the analysis the researcher must first transfer the interviews into transcripts. Once the transcripts have been created the researcher must relate each question and response back to one of the five themes. By doing this, the researcher is ensuring the data collected is meeting the aims of the research project. Once the data analysis is complete the researcher can draw their final conclusions and findings.

4.2.6 Research Sample

The participants chosen to take part in this case will be made up of 5 women, all of which have experienced breast cancer, have been in remission for over 6 months and are not currently awaiting further treatment/scheduled surgeries. These women will be based in the Leinster area and are aged 18-65 years of age. The reasons for choosing these target subjects are.

- 1: A locality close to the researcher to refrain from cultural or locative fashion trends outside of the researcher's knowledge.
- 2: A broad age range to allow fashion requirements and life experience to compare data against
- 3: Commonality of breast cancer to include and maintain course throughout the results.
- 4: Finally, no further recovery or surgeries to impair or make the subject feel uncomfortable about their experiences.

The process of the interview must be carried out in a sensitive, respectful, and confidential manner. Subjects will be allowed as much time before the interview as they may need to go through the questions.

Subjects will also be allowed to take as much time as they need to consider each question before answering. The aim here is to make the subject feel as comfortable as possible. The researcher will take their time when asking the questions in order to ensure each subject fully understands the question they are being asked. If the researcher feels there is more information to be gained, they will ask further questions in order to gain the most thorough data possible. It is important to try and gain as much data as possible without going too far or breaking ethical protocol and as a result making the subject uncomfortable. These recordings will be secured on an audio file which will be stored on a password protected computer. This will ensure complete confidentiality and allow for multiple listening's from the researcher.

4.3 Ethical considerations

In order to carry out this research, a few ethical considerations must be made. Firstly, the researcher should seek out the permission of the principal to carry out this research proposal within their school. Next the researcher must create all necessary ethical documents such as the consent and interview handout (see appendices 9) and issue them. Finally, once the documents have been returned to the researcher and the interviews are conducted, the researcher must store the recorded interviews on a secure and password protected computer in order to ensure confidentiality.

There are numerous considerations in relation to the sample audience and method in accumulation of data for this research. This includes taking into consideration social grouping/classes according to Goyder, (1987) whereby different social groups attribute different meanings to requests for participation in research. When conversing with subjects, common areas of social life and delving into the private sphere need not be threatening (Day, 1985). Finally, acknowledging that sensitivity

affects almost every stage of the research process must occur (Seigel & Bauman, 1986).

4.4 Limitations

One main limitation for the chosen method of qualitative research is due to the small group number. It will be that after analysing the data, the chosen group size is too small to generalise the results and findings that are made.

Chapter Five: Data Analysis and Findings

5.1 Introduction

Having established the methodological approach for the purposes of this study, the following section presents the findings and analysis extracted from the interviews. The aim of this study was to explore the attitudes of breast cancer survivors towards their representation in advertising in the fashion industry for both products and brands. There was also ambition to identify factors associated with market research to create opportunities for fashion brands so that they could consider adjusting their advertising methods accordingly or allow more freedom to post cancer related products into the market. The five themes were used as a frame of reference in order to draw findings and conclusions from the analysed data. In this section, each theme will be discussed, and findings made from the analysed data in relation to the five themes. In order to do this, using the technique of thematic analysis, the data was carefully reviewed to reveal key themes which occurred amongst the participants. In order to gain an understanding of which themes had the most significance, a list of general themes which held a strong link with the data collected were collected as per Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

<u>Section</u>	<u>Most popular themes</u>
Women & Advertising	Misrepresentation of women, age, social media,
Breast cancer survivors/patient's self-esteem	Physical Changes (Body weight, hairloss), mastectomy, resources, partners, can be insensitive to women with breast cancer, societal pressure
Advertising breast cancer	Cause related marketing, Misrepresentation, lack of representation
Breast cancers survivors' reactions to breast cancer advertising	Authenticity, Accurate representation, Unpopular,
Sensitive subjects	Not sensitive, empathy, diversity

Table 2 - Key Themes for Data Analysis

The research reported in this paper, although not nationally representative, does provide interesting, valuable and useful insights into women, body image, advertising and how these women interpreted the relevance of the advertising through their own self-image. Additionally, the research provides an attempt to compare two different adult female age groups and explore how the influence of increasing age affects their changing perceptions and interpretations of advertising.

5. 2 Research Objective One: To discover the overall attitudes and impressions from breast cancer survivors about current fashion advertising and its representation of women who have survived cancer.

Key Themes:

- Misrepresentation of women,
- Age,
- Social media,
- Cause Related marketing,
- Authenticity,
- Involvement and inclusion,
- Unpopular

5.2.1 Misrepresentation of women

The idea of the misrepresentation of women was discussed and mentioned throughout all the semi structured interviews. Based on the data recovered from the interviews, the research found that breast cancer survivors predominantly felt that there were misrepresentations present in fashion advertising. Most notably, there was an exchange of comments regarding the female's anatomy proportions and their weight being “unrealistic”. The participants all concluded that women did not look “real” and were not representative of the average person.

Interviewee A *“I have always felt like any woman who I see in a retail or clothing brand TV ad or in a magazine that they are not like normal women, but I have gotten so used to it at this stage”*

5.2.2 Age

Interestingly, Interviewees A & D, who are both in their late 50's mentioned that they felt any fashion advertising does not affect them

personally and do not feel the need to attempt to look a certain way. Both participants said this was due to their age and simply accepting their skin. They also noted that they both have worked in retail for a large majority of their working life and felt lucky to be knowledgeable of different styles, trends, and materials in clothing, prior to their diagnosis’.

Interviewee D *“I have learned that there are more important things in life than trying to look a certain way. If I am comfortable and happy, that's what matters. But that took me years to perfect!”*

In comparison, Interviewee’s B & E both discussed in part that they felt their age played a big part in how they felt they were supposed to look.

Interviewee B *“I love dressing up and looking and feeling nice, but I would agree if someone said to me, oh young people feel the need to keep up with trends and how fashion brands are calling the shots. I feel very compelled to keep up with them (fashion brands and their trends), which I mostly see online or on TV with gorgeous models.”*

5.2.3 Social media

Interviewee B mentioned that before her diagnosis, she loved fashion, regularly went shopping and was experimental with clothes. Interestingly, she did not feel “pressure” but did admire how models looked in advertising she was susceptible to, most notably online. However, she felt her diet, exercise regime, and personal style had her comfortable to not have her self-esteem affected majorly but admitted it had affected her in the past. Interviewee E noted that she would regularly

visit social media apps such as Instagram and felt that every model or advertisement shown was of someone who she knew she “would never look like”. Yet, she still liked the clothing and how the advertising was shown on the model. She admitted that there are times she will purchase clothes as a result of advertising and when they arrive be disappointed with how they look. This makes her feel self-conscious and will often deter her from wearing the outfit, especially if it’s trendy because “it doesn't look how it supposed to”. When enquired, she explained that if the outfit is “trending” online or fashionable with her friend group and she didn't feel comfortable, she has felt frustrated in the past that she feels she can't wear the outfit.

The data also noted that there has been a recent upheaval of social media accounts for certain fast-fashion retailers who are now showing a series of images alongside the intended advertisement to support positive body image. The images detail models in the brand's clothing, posing. The follow-up images would show the models in different positions, showing their bodies in a different setting, their stomachs would be pushed out, their arms lowered thickening them, and backsides showing cellulite. The younger participants (B, C & E) felt these were spreading a positive message to the brand followers/consumers.

Interviewees B & E spoke about breast cancer-fashion brands on social media who have targeted them on social media through advertising but felt that they were in their infancy and didn't use very attractive advertising when showing their products.

Interviewee B *“I have been targeted on Instagram by brands that are to do with fashion and cancer. Things like headscarves and hats mostly. I didn't particularly like anything when I saw it and I know why I am getting the ads in, but I personally don't like anything I see. The ads are always showing mannequin heads or women with a full face of make-up smiling at the camera, which just looks ridiculous!”*

Interviewee E *“I have seen brands like Hairclub and lots of online shops which I found through Google, but they don't look as nice as the high street brands”*

5.2.4 Cause Related marketing

The participants were asked to detail their opinions and thoughts of breast cancer and how it is depicted and advertising on media available to them. The data detailed that most of the advertising discussed was cause-related marketing such as brand collaborations with cancer research organisations in order to raise funds for charities. The major discussion points were that there were no actual details shared about breast cancer, only statistics. Interviewee A spoke very openly of her feelings towards brands working with breast cancer initiatives, saying that all they do is “look for money”. She felt that every motive she had come across involved an exchange of money where she didn’t feel as a breast cancer survivor that she would have benefitted in any way. Of course, she mentioned, that any donations to research was positive but as a survivor, the disease affects her as a person and her life. She felt her life was not affected by these exchanges and if anything, she would be annoyed when she saw clothing or products that claimed to be helping breast cancer organisations. Interviewee C proceeded to explain the way brands compose themselves and use these initiatives to “look good”, has no effect on her. She explained that once her treatment was over and there was/is nothing that that fashion brand can physically do for her. She explained that this was a result of her previous engagements and exposure to fashion brands utilising celebrity collaborations and her opinion was she felt little to no funding/help actually goes to any patients. Most notably, she said the reasons she felt this was because when she was sick, it ‘was devastating’. In short, when her physicality

had changed, fashion brands and their advertising were not there to support her then.

Interviewee E said similar that she had noticed that everything with breast cancer was pink and feminine but concluded that that made sense as it was a predominantly a female disease. However, she noted that it was slightly sexist to assume that “just because it’s pink” is a very outdated way of marketing. Concluding that she felt that fashion brands shouldn’t be relying on colours/gender affiliated tactics in order to promote something.

Interviewee E *“I didn’t know what pinkwashing was/is but it makes sense now, I have seen loads of collabs with fashion brands and charities, especially for breast cancer in Ireland, but I never thought of it that way...”*

5.2.5 Representation

When asked “in your opinion, how do you feel that breast cancer is advertised? Interviewee B said, that even though there is a lot more information available now, she said she still didn’t understand how breast cancer is advertised in the media as it does not actually reflect the journey and the effects.

Interviewee B *“the only way I can see the actual effects of breast cancer is by talking to other people/groups or online, I follow a few accounts which detail their journeys and it made me feel better. But anything on paper or TV, doesn't give a fair representation.”*

When asked about how they would like to see women who have undergone breast cancer represented in fashion advertising, the data

retrieved showed many similarities. The consensus was that they would like to see less “perfection” and more realistic representations. Interviewee C said they she wouldn’t like to see specific contexts in fashion advertising for breast cancer, for example, modelling pajamas, because that could make people think that’s all they could wear, because they were sick. Interviewee E, said she was unsure how to answer the question because she would like to think that women who have had breast cancer, or any cancer, shouldn't be singled out and “represented” because she didn’t want her diagnosis to define her. Interviewee D said similar, that she didn’t want to be walking around in clothing that was “made for women with mastectomies” yet didn’t want to be seen trying too hard to fit in and that there was no in between that she could relate to with fashion brands. Concluding, that the current practices of showcasing women in current advertising practices for breast cancer, fashion related or not, needs to become less about the aesthetics and perfection but more real and representative.

5.2.6 Authenticity

Interviewee A said that prior to her diagnosis, she couldn’t recall any advertising that depicted someone's journey or detailed the symptoms on an actual person. When asked to explain further and detail examples, Interviewee A detailed that the women she had seen in advertising brochures or TV ads were always smiling. Interviewee C said that fashion brands would often use celebrities (who have access to money and other privileges), even if they were a survivor, she did not feel this was authentic to her and never felt compelled to support.

Interviewee C *“I have seen lots of celebs work with breast cancer charities before and when I was well, it was all well and good. But once I was sick, I have never felt compassion or like a connection to such because it really dresses it all up”*

Interestingly and in comparison, interviewee B spoke differently in that she felt ‘compelled’ to support and be an advocate for breast cancer due to her young age and to spread awareness of the disease. She herself signed up for the VHI Women’s Mini marathon to raise funds for breast cancer research. She spoke about how important it is for survivors to get involved and encourage others to do same and has in the past purchased items, predominantly accessories to support breast cancer initiatives, prior and after her diagnosis. She spoke about seeing these events and collaborations advertised for similar charities made her feel that there was in fact a genuine concern from fashion brands and a connection to the cause.

Interview B *“Doing the marathon made this whole situation seem real for me. I think things like this give charities, the advertising and everything else seem more genuine, and human!”*

5.2.7 Unpopular

Interviewee D could not recall any fashion brands who have impacted her by working with breast cancer organisations. When asked, Interviewee D said that she felt that fashion brands avoided catering to women but that there was simply “not a market to focus on”. Interviewee’s D & C both felt that fashion brands didn’t consider cancer survivors in their advertising. Interviewee C said that they felt if they did, they would open a can of worms, that everyone is sensitive these days and it’s best to avoid it. When asked how that made her feel, she responded that it didn’t affect her personally because she fought the fight herself and didn’t need pity from anyone, she noted that this was a very personal stance.

5.3 Research Objective Two: To investigate whether breast cancer survivors are indeed “sensitive subjects” regarding market research.

Key Themes:

- Empathy,
- Diversity

The last question of the interview for all participants was “would you consider yourself, as a result of your experiences and your effects of breast cancer that you are a sensitive subject, in relation to market research for fashion advertising”. Interviewee A answered that she didn’t agree because the subject should not be sensitive and that it is simply a fact and unfortunately for some a result of living.

Interviewee A *“it’s very unfortunate when someone gets sick, but that doesn’t mean that your life stops, in some cases of course.”*

The final consensus concluded that none of the participants did not feel like ‘sensitive subjects’ but there were indeed factors to consider when evaluating or researching into the topic. These discussed included empathy and diversity.

5.3.1Empathy

Interviewee B mentioned that she felt in some cases it could be more sensitive than others and that insecurities are heightened during and after cancer treatment. Empathy was mentioned throughout the discussion as part of how advertising should consider certain aspects but there is no need to avoid it. Interviewee E expressed that brands should be including cancer survivors in market research.

Interviewee E *“I never actually saw it that way at all. I have never felt like a target to be avoided, wouldn’t have even thought about in fashion, but I would like to think that they at least talk to other survivors if they are going to do some sort of advertising on TV or do something with the clothes.”*

5.3.2 Diversity

Interviewee C said that she didn’t feel she was a sensitive subject but not due to advertising or the fashion industry but to herself and how she had the strength and thanks to her medical team who helped her and made her become a stronger person. She felt that if the fashion industry were to speak directly to cancer survivors, they might not like what they hear as it isn’t exactly what the normal consumer would consider “pretty”. Interviewee D said similar, having already outlined that fashion retail does not cater to cancer survivors because “there is no market there”. Finally, interviewee E said she didn’t see herself as a target to avoid for advertising as there is a lot more diversity now, not only for women but for other demographics and nothing should be shielded away from.

Interviewee E *“It shouldn’t be something to shy away from or not talk about. I know some people feel sorry for me cause I am young to get cancer but it’s pretty common now, doesn’t make it easier but it’s not like it’s not happening and we can’t be open about it!”*

5.4 Research Objective Three: To explore in depth the effects of breast cancer in relation to self-esteem and body confidence amongst cancer survivors in order to benefit further and/or potential market research for products/brands.

Key Themes:

- Physical Changes (Body weight & Hairloss)
- Mastectomy,
- Resources,
- Partners,
- Can be insensitive to women with breast cancer,
- Societal pressure

5.4.1 Physical Changes (Body weight & Hairloss)

Like the previous data the interviewees provided a substantial amount of thoughts when asked to speak about their self-esteem and how it changed after their cancer diagnosis and thereafter their treatment. Interviewee C told that she considered herself “attractive and slim” prior to her cancer diagnosis. After she lost her hair, she felt very different. Interviewee A spoke similar saying she had recently lost a substantial amount of weight but then had gained over a stone in weight due to steroid treatment and “couldn’t enjoy it” (her weight loss). Subsequently, once her treatment was over, she explained it took a considerable amount of time to feel herself again. All the interviewees spoke about taking a similar journey once their treatment had finished. Interviewee C also spoke about her weight gain and how it was difficult to process, mentally.

Interviewee C *“Weight will always be a woman's problem but when I finished chemo and had been on steroids, the weight piled on. Of course, didn't care at the time, but it it's when you are better does it start to have an effect”*

Interviewee D *“I wasn’t skinny before or after my diagnosis but my god, with no hair and a fat face, it is very hard to feel pretty”.*

5.4.2 Mastectomy

Interviewees A & D, both received mastectomies and spoke about the difficulty to find clothing that they felt was “suitable”. When asked to define suitable, both participants mentioned that any low-cut tops, wrap over dresses or any clothing that showed cleavage was predominantly on offer and they avoided due to their prothesis. Not surprisingly, the prothesis is now an additional item to be considered from a long-term perspective and is not compatible with many items of clothing. Both participants spoke about how the clothes were styled online were not helpful to them during this period and felt the options were very limited. Interestingly, interviewee D felt the reason this was so was because “there wasn't a market for it”.

Interviewee D *“All the clothing brands now advertise what's trendy and what's nice at the moment. Summertime, it's wraps dresses on women with big boobs, wintertime it skintight polar necks hugging “all the right places”. No one wants to see a woman with one boob in a tight sweater!”*

5.4.3 Resources

Interviewees A, C & D spoke about the fact there are little resources and education available about post treatments bodies and how to cater to them in order to help maintain a positive self-esteem during and after their breast cancer journey. Ultimately, having little to no resources on how to look after your mental health or to probably approach a positive body image during this process, is something that the participants felt is

vital for women who are undergoing this kind of treatment. Subsequently, if fashion advertising were to acknowledge this, there may be some slight adjustments in empathy in how they proceed to advertise their products towards this target market.

Interviewee C *“When you get your diagnosis and your POA, you are given a couple of leaflets or brochures and sent on your way. You are given a nurse and some other bits but actually very little with how to process all this information or how to psyche yourself up or recover mentally from all of this once it’s all over and done”.*

Interviewee E did not feel that there was enough applicable information or messaging in this realm due to her young age and the risk of breast cancer being lower in women of 18 years of age. She mentioned all information available to her and from what she was exposed to were of older women. She explained she had to heavily seek out information and advise online, when she felt it might have been nice to have been given all of this on day one. Especially, in relation to her self-esteem and how her body was going to change.

Interviewee E *“I relied quite a lot online, different blogs, and groups and profiles. I never posted or anything, but I used to see them, and I would take people tips or read their accounts and thought that was great”.*

All participants mentioned that there could be additional resources in learning how to cope with body changes, without having to search online or find out on your own. When asked if they felt this might be an opportunity for fashion brands to work alongside or collaborate with and thus use it as an advertising opportunity, how would that look/.feel, Interview B responded.

Interviewee B “ *Now that you say it, I can definitely see that working. Once I got into the swing of the groups and forums, it was really natural for me to get involved. If I saw a brand, like a normal brand I liked getting involved, some people might think that’s a bit more credible...*”

5.4.4 Partners

A common theme between these participants A, C & D, were that they spoke about having partners, not having to feel pressure to “look good” all the time, yet they felt lost when it came to feeling themselves and towards a more positive self-esteem. We can compare this to previous literature such as Martin (1997) who explains how women can become self-conscious and suffer from a loss of body positivity & self-esteem feel a sense of inadequacy when comparing themselves to models. From an advertising perspective, it seems that women that have a lifetime partner become less obsessed with perfection and are generally more welcoming to age. Essentially, their priorities change as a target market.

Interviewee A “*I have been married for over thirty years; I still like to look nice but at the end of the day it's for me*”.

5.4.5 Societal pressure

In relation to market research and breast cancer survivors as a target market for fashion advertisers, there was a strong theme of feeling pressure from peers and friend groups, specifically, pressure about how they look. Interviewee E, the youngest of the participants, noted a sense of pressure to get back to “normal”. Similarly, Interviewee B spoke that she decided to use “cold capping” as part of her chemotherapy treatment,

as she felt that her hair was part of her “look”, like how her outfits made her feel. According to breast cancer.org, these caps and scalp cooling systems may help some women keep some or quite a bit of their hair during chemotherapy. Cold caps and scalp cooling systems work by narrowing the blood vessels beneath the skin of the scalp, reducing the amount of chemotherapy medicine that reaches the hair follicles. Her reasoning to do this was because she felt that wearing wigs would be obvious. She did not want to be seen wearing a wig in her friend group or at work. When investigated further, she said this was because she felt she would be compared to her friends, many of whom who like to take pictures and post on social media and se could compare herself to models on Instagram slightly more.

5.5 Summary of Key Findings

From the above research findings, it was very clear that the participants in this study felt that fashion advertising, overall, is unrepresentative of the average woman. Even more so, it is apparent that there is a lack of accuracy in representation of women who have survived breast cancer under not only fashion advertising but of advertising breast cancer itself, including cause related marketing circumstances. It was revealed that there are many elements that these women have been affected by considerably more so as a result of their treatments. Such evidence could suggest that previous research completed regarding fashion advertising and women (in this case unaffected by breast cancer), is not relevant to women who have been affected by breast cancer. The additional elements in this case have shown that they do in fact play an important role in the self-esteem and well-being of women who have experienced the effects of breast cancer. The role of social media was discussed in grave detail, in particular, regarding fast-fashion brands. Although it was noted that in very recent times, there has been some slight improvement

in promoting body confidence in women, the participants all mentioned that practices such as using women that were unrepresentative of most women were in fact effecting self-esteem. In relation to the representation of breast cancer and advertising, the participants concluded that most if not all examples of advertising published in relation to breast cancer was unrepresentative to the disease.

Chapter 6 – Discussion

6.1 Research Objective One: To discover the overall attitudes and impressions from breast cancer survivors about current fashion advertising and its representation of women who have survived cancer.

The women in this research felt that most, if not all fashion advertising, is unrepresentative of women and does not portray an accurate depiction of women in general, including women who have survived cancer. In these results, the women aging 50+ felt more comfortable in their skin but it was evident in the other participants that there are additional values such as social media and societal pressures that affect and play a part in how the individual feels about themselves and how they look. It was noted that cancer fashion brands online are in their infancy and are not up to par with other fashion retailers with their advertising, making them less appealing. Cause related marketing in relation to fashion brands were seen to not be beneficial and just a way for fashion retailers to make money. This was due to the fact that in practice, the retailers used women “who have had cancer” in a unnatural depiction, such as heavy make-up, thin bodies, long hair which the participants felt was an unfair representation of women who have survived cancer. Overall, it was concluded that representation of women who have had cancer needs to occur. It was noted that specific contexts of advertising, such as for

particular garments could be seen as insensitive. Also, that there was no requirement for women with cancer to be singled out or decisively obvious but there was no need to make it impossible for women with breast cancer to feel involved/represented. Finally, a contrasting opinion declared was there was simply not a market for fashion brands to cater to because it wasn't seen to be attractive, whether it be in profits or in practice. Such an initiative was compared to as opening a can of worms due to the exemplified nature and sensitivity now present in consumers in modern commerce.

6.2 Research Objective Two: To investigate whether breast cancer survivors are indeed “sensitive subjects” regarding market research.

The participants in this study concluded that they did not feel themselves as sensitive subjects when it came to market research. It was discussed that breast cancer is becoming more and more common now and many more women are beating the disease albeit with the aftercare/effects that come with it. It seems that there are elements to consider when discussing or researching the issue and a degree of empathy is required and a need to be sensitive in some cases. Mostly, inclusion is important and not to feel singled out in the process. Finally, there seems to be a block or prevention of speaking about it because its details are not exactly on par with what normal advertising practice might look like and could erupt into a negative sphere. However, it was concluded that it is important to discuss and not to avoid.

6.3 Research Objective Three: To explore in depth, the effects of breast cancer in relation to self-esteem and body confidence amongst cancer survivors in order to benefit further and/or potential market research for products/brands.

There was evidently no shortage in evidence and data in relation to the effects and self-esteem issues in breast cancer survivors. Firstly, the physical changes such as weight gain and hair loss were evaluated as difficult hurdles to process once treatment was done. Additionally, mastectomies were an added concern once treatment was complete with having an additional prosthesis (or in some cases additional reconstructive surgeries). It was very apparent that these affected each of our participants similarly. However, there were mixed reviews about the availability of resources but concluded that there is an important need for having available mental after care for mental well-being and effected body/self-esteem. The idea of fashion brands becoming involved with creating these resources was mentioned and taken positively and could be seen as a different route for brands to advertise in a CRM perspective. Having a partner seem to alleviate some of the stress but societal pressures to the younger participants is very relevant. It should be noted that these additional stresses are very present in the daily lives of breast cancer survivors. It seemed that if fashion brands considered these emotions in their advertising, there may be some different outcomes to this research.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion & Recommendations

7.1 Conclusion

The principal aim of this study was to gather insight and to explore the attitudes of breast cancer survivors towards their representation in advertising in the fashion industry for both products and brands. With the help of three research objectives which focused on the self-esteem of cancer survivors, fashion advertising towards with women with cancer and explicitly asking if cancer survivors felt they were an

avoidable and taboo subject labelled as sensitive, it is felt that the main research question has been answered. In regard to the study, there was also an underlying aim to understand whether women who are older could influence a different perspective or point of view in relation to the chosen topic.

Although there have been endless research studies exploring the relationship between women and fashion advertising, none have discussed the effect of self-esteem of women in relation to fashion advertising from an Irish perspective. Previous research conducted on the effects of fashion advertising and women has typically been correlated with self-esteem and body image on healthy women. The findings and discussion derived from the primary research uncovered that all participants had had their self-esteem affected by breast cancer in more than one-way while also mentioning that efforts made by fashion brands made very little impact to them personally. Overall, participants' backgrounds had a varying amount of influence in response. Many responses within the findings were similar, regardless of the background but themes such as authenticity of advertising and accurate representation uncovered some contrasting views between the participants. In conclusion, after completing this project, it would be welcomed that fashion brands reconsider the reoccurring and normalised portrayal of women in fashion advertising as a tool for selling. Irish women have become more aware in recent years and this research has unearthed this.

7.2 Recommendations

The study undertaken has allowed for the emergence of several key issues which affirm the need for further immersion into the chosen topic. Firstly, future research should explore in a more in-depth level of knowledge in women's perception of themselves in comparison to women in fashion advertisements, especially if these women have been

affected by an illness such as breast cancer. A more extensive study will allow for a deeper understanding of the complex relationship women have with their self-esteems, body image and how fashion advertising makes them feel about themselves. By doing this, it can allow for greater revelations surrounding the different aspects that effect women but not just for fashion advertising but for new product research and design. It is recommended that researchers who look to undertake further research should look at other methods of data collection and at a larger scale. Albeit the data collected was helpful, more data for comparison and possibly from other Irish locations might have given a different perspective and discussion. Additionally, focus groups would be recommended for future research so as more discussion and openness to the conversation could be had alongside other survivors as it would have allowed for further probing.

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Chapter Nine: Appendices

9.1 Biographies of interviewees

Interview A: Interviewee A is a 54-year-old female who was diagnosed with breast cancer in November 2014. Her treatment consisted of a mastectomy to remove her right breast, 6 months of intense chemotherapy and radiation treatment for a consecutive 31 days. She has been married to her husband for over 30 years, has two grown up children and currently works in retail, specifically in the fashion industry for a well know Irish brand, in a local shopping centre in Co. Wicklow. Interviewee A has been in remission for over 4 years now and has decided not to receive breast reconstruction surgery.

Interview B: Interviewee B is a 26-year-old female who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2019. Her treatment consisted of chemotherapy and cold cap treatment. She will be married to her long-term partner in August 2020 and has one 5-year-old daughter and has since returned to her workplace on a part time basis as a business manager for a landscaping company. Interviewee B did not require surgery but did proceed to receive cold cap treatment with efforts to maintain her hair molecules during chemotherapy. Interviewee B has been in remission for just under a year having completed her treatment 9 months ago.

Interview C: Interviewee C is a 33-year-old female who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2014. Her treatment consisted of chemotherapy and radiation. She is a mother of two and works for FMCG Brand Partner in Dublin. Interviewee C has been in remission since 2016.

Interview D: Interviewee d is a 58-year-old female and was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2011. Her treatment consisted of a mastectomy and radiation for 2 months. She is a married, mother of 4 and is a retail/fashion boutique owner in Co.Wicklow. Interviewee D has been in remission for 8 years.

Interview E: Interviewee E is a 21 year – old female who was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2019. Her treatment consisted of chemotherapy and is hoping to return to her third level studies in September.

9.2 Interview Schedule

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Date Contacted</u>	<u>Agree/Disagree</u>	<u>If Agreed - what date</u>
1	Interviewee A	21st July	Agree	23rd July
2	Interviewee B	22nd July	Agree	25th July
3	Interviewee C	19th July	Agree	26th July
4	Interviewee D	21st July	Agree	26th July
5	Interviewee E	22nd July	Agree	23rd July

9.3 Interview consent form

TITLE:

An exploration of how advertising fashion retail products (both offline & online) can affect self-esteem and body confidence in women who have experienced breast cancer.

Consent to take part in research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.

- I understand that participation involves...a one-hour phone discussing and detailing my experiences with cancer and my feelings about my representation in the fashion industry which will involves discussing my self-esteem during this time.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in this dissertation.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in the researcher's home address of Hillview, Kilmacoo, Avoca. Co. Wicklow and will be secured in a locked office and computer protected by a password, only the researcher knows.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained until the dissertation is graded, it will promptly be destroyed thereafter.

- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.

- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information. Names, degrees, affiliations and contact details of researchers (and academic supervisors when relevant).

Signature of research participant:

Signature of participant Date:

Signature of researcher:

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

Tara Sterling-Byrne

Signature of researcher Date:

9.4 Interview Handout

Hello participant,

First, a huge thank you for your time in participating this 1 hour, semi structured phone interview. As part of receiving my MSc in Marketing from NCI, this dissertation will be submitted, graded and be accountable towards my final grade. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at any time.

Below is a set of question that I will ask. I must request that you read these questions. There is no need to prepare anything before hand or handwrite your answers prior to our conversation, this is simply an opportunity for you to become familiar and comfortable with the material and types of questions I am looking to engage with. During the interview, I will discuss specific examples and ask your direct

feelings about them. If at any stage you feel uncomfortable or would like to not answer, this is no problem. I do not want to make anyone uncomfortable. A reminder that I will be recording our conversation, this is for the sole reason that I can listen back when analysing the results.

Finally, should you wish to receive a copy of the final dissertation, I am more than happy to email you a copy. Please leave your email with me and will contact you upon its completion after its submission.

Research Objectives

- 1: To discover the overall attitudes and impressions of current fashion advertising in respect to cancer survivors
- 2: To confirm or deny whether cancer survivors are indeed “sensitive subjects” regarding market research.
- 3: To explore in depth the effects of cancer in relation to self-esteem and body confidence amongst cancer survivors.

Overall Research Questions

In relation to the research questions, using the sub heading themes as discussed in the literature, the following questions have been chosen for the intended sample to contribute and attempt to answer:

- 1. Does advertising fashion retail products (both online and offline) affect self-esteem and body confidence in women who have experienced cancer?
- 2. What are the most ethical/reasonable (according to subjects) considerations in advertising to women who have gone through cancer, including chemotherapy and/or breast surgery?
- 3. Do female cancer survivors consider themselves sensitive subjects in relation to marketing practices?

Section 1 - Women & Advertising:

- **Question 1:** How do you feel about women’s representation in fashion advertising. This can include magazines, social media and mass media such as television?
 - Can you identify advertisements that trigger positive or negative emotions?
 - Do you feel it affects how you perceive yourself or would like to perceive yourself (I.e. push to feel/look a certain way?)

- Do you agree/disagree that fashion advertising can make an impression on your self-esteem. If so, in what way?
- **Question 2:** In your opinion, how do you feel about yourself when you see standard practices in fashion advertising.
 - Has this changed since you have had cancer?
 - Do you think that fashion advertisements consider changes in the female anatomy as a result of surgery or chemo in these instances? Please speak about both instances (before and after cancer)

Section 2 - Breast cancer survivors/patient's self-esteem:

- **Question 3:** Have you had experience of low self-esteem after cancer? Please explain.
 - Has it affected your body image, if so, how?
 - How did you go about fixing that? Or did you try to fix it? E.g. clothing
 - Do you feel/did you feel that there/were ways to make yourself feel better about your self-image through current fashion trends and fashion brands?

Section 3 - Advertising breast cancer:

- **Question 4:** In your opinion, how do you feel that breast cancer is advertised?
 - Would you like to see any changes?
 - Do you agree/disagree that fashion brands advertise breast cancer the same or not?

Section 4 - Breast cancers survivors' reactions to breast cancer advertising:

- **Question 5:** How do you feel when fashion brands work/collaborate with breast cancer initiatives?
 - Do you think they work well with each other? Please explain.
 - Do you think they show a fair representation of women and women who have had breast cancer?
 - How do you feel about “pink washing”?
 - Do you agree or disagree that fashion brands avoid catering to customers, having experienced body changes/confidence issues as a result of cancer?

- Do you think that women who have had breast cancer are fairly represented in fashion advertising?
- In your opinion, how would you like to see women who have undergone breast cancer represented in fashion advertising.

Section 5 - Sensitive subjects:

- **Question 6:** Would you consider yourself, as a result of your experiences and considering the effects of cancer that you are a “*sensitive subject*” in relation to market research.