An examination of the influence of sexual appeal usage in fashion advertising on young adult females

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Abstract

Title: An examination of the influence of sexual appeal usage in fashion advertising on young adult females

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Purpose: As some recent literature suggested there may be a change in women's views on the use of sexual appeals in advertising, this study aimed to gain an insight into how young Irish women from Dublin viewed these types of advertisements. The study was also conducted because the majority of previous studies on the use of sexual appeals in advertising were executed in the United States and the author wanted to conduct the study in an Irish context.

Methodology: The author used an Interpretivist philosophy when conducting this study and collected qualitative data. This was achieved through the method of interviewing. Sample advertisements were used as visual aids in order to examine the participant's reactions to different levels and types of sexual appeals. The data was then analysed using open coding, axial coding and selective coding.

Findings and Recommendations: Based on the gathered during the interviews, it was found moderate to high sexual appeals helped gain standout, which corroborates with findings by Reichert (2002) and Dahl et al. (2003). Overall, sexual appeals had a negative impact on purchasing intention and brand image if the advertisements were highly sexual, which upholds findings by Ford et al. (1991) and Reichert (2002) respectively. A number of factors that affected how sexual an advert was viewed were also identified, such as visible cleavage and suggestive poses.

The author recommends that if other researchers are studying similar topics that the use of visual aids and the snowball sample framework would be particularly effective. It is also suggested that marketers use a moderate level of sexual appeal, as low levels do not gain standout, as also discussed by Berger (2007), while high levels have a negative effect, which was found by Ford et al. (1991).

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1. Introduction

The aim of this research is to examine the influence companies use of sexual appeals in their advertising has on young adult females in Dublin. For the purposes of this study, young adult females will be defined as women between the age of eighteen and twenty-five. The reason Dublin has been chosen as the area it will be based is the author wants to place the situation in an Irish context. This is not only due to accessibility of the sample but also because Ireland is traditionally seen as a conservative and religious country and the author would like to see if this still influences attitudes towards sexual imagery in advertising. The author has chosen to focus on the fashion industry because sexual appeals are often used in the advertisement of clothing (Panda 2005).

The majority of previous research on the subject of sexual appeals in advertising found that women react negatively to overly explicit sexual appeals (Reichert, 2002; Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes, 2006; Hyllegard, Ogle and Yan, 2009). However, some recent studies (Dahl and Sengupta, 2008; Dahlberg and Zimmerman, 2008), have hinted at the idea of a change in women's attitudes, and this research aims to discover whether this is truly the case.

Ireland, as a society, has traditionally been viewed as conservative and this filters through to marketing, as advertising must attach novelty to the product being launched and otherwise support the status quo (Moran, 1984). If it is an established brand, emphasis must be placed on ancestry (how it is delivered or made) and gender roles regarding stereotypes, such as a woman being a housewife (Moran, 1984). This conservative culture's roots are in the Catholic Church's historical influence in Ireland (Inglis, 2005). However, in the last two decades, the Catholic Church has had a declining influence on the people of Ireland. A "value survey" conducted in Ireland showed that in 1990, 48% of the respondents viewed religion as being very important to their lives (Halman, Inglehart, Díez-Medrano, Luijkx, Moreno and Basáñez, 2008). The same survey was conducted again in 2000, where only 33% of the people surveyed felt religion was very important, a drop of 15%. Irish culture is going through an unsettled period, caught as it is between Catholic morality on which modern Ireland was founded in the nineteenth century and sexual/moral revolution that has been taking place throughout Western society (Inglis, 2005).

This sexual revolution can be seen in a number of changes in society and women's attitude towards sexual culture in the period between 1995 and 2005. Pop icons such as icons such as Britney Spears featured in music videos becoming increasingly unclothed (Levy, 2005) while Christina Aguilera borrowed from the codes of pornography in her self-presentation with a song and album featuring the titles 'Dirrty' and 'Stripped' (Gill, 2008). The music channel MTV has been accused of showcasing music videos that contain sexist and sexual messages (Gan, Mitrook and Zillmann, 1997). There were a several objections made by the National Coalition on Television Violence, Women against Pornography, and church groups who rallied against sex and violence in music videos (Swan, 1985). Parents were also in an uproar, criticising music and videos for

their glorification of drugs and sex and for their degradation of women (Alexander, 1990; McCormack, 1985).

The rap/hip-hop genre has been most severely criticised for both its sexually explicit lyrics and its imagery (Gans et al. 1997). This type of music is often described as being used to express misogyny (Adams and Fuller, 2006; Kubrin and Weitzer, 2009). However, music genres are often said to reflect the environment and society in which the artists come from (Adams and Fuller, 2006; Gans et al. 1997). There also seems to be an acceptance of this attitude, with female rappers echoing their male counterparts in themes of sexploitation and degradation (Lewis, 1993). These projections of female self-degradation can be seen in rap music videos with images of pelvic thrusting, gyrations, breast and crotch clasping, and "frottage" of the female rappers with bare-chested men (Gans et al. 1997). This has also spread into other forms of music, with R'n'B star Rihanna described as producing sexy songs that contain sexual innuendo and raunchy music videos (Corliss, Luscombe, Poniewozik and Tyrangiel, 2007).

In movies, the remake of the film Charlie's Angels was basically a "jiggle show" and became a box office hit while this "raunch culture" also appeared on TV with the Victoria's Secret Fashion Show shown on ABC described as a "cavalcade of legs and breasts" and the hit show at the time, Desperate Housewives, revolved around the lives of promiscuous women (Levy, 2005). The use of sexual appeals in advertising has also become increasingly prominent and more explicit (Carpenter and Reichert, 2004), with studies showing it featured in 12% of TV advertisements and 40% of magazines.

In the printed media, the launch of "Lad's mags" such as FHM and Maxim which feature scantily clad celebrities and models are being sold in newsagents (Levy, 2005). Furthermore, pornography has also moved from what used to be a "back alley" purchase to something that was sold in shops in the main streets in towns, with its stars such as Jenna Jameson books becoming bestselling authors (Levy, 2005).

In America, the pornography industry is worth over $10billion dollar industry, with major companies such as General Motors even getting involved (Egan, 2000). There is $4billion a year spent on renting/buying movies and 1 in 4 regular internet users (21 million Americans) view online porn (itself a $1billion industry) sites at least once a month online (Egan, 2000). Overall, the value of the pornography market has grown exponentially, as it was only worth between $5-10million 30 years prior (Egan, 2000). In 2012, the global porn industry was reportedly worth $95billion and $15billion in the US (McNair, 2012). Pornography has also become a vital part of the hotel industry (Egan, 2000). Pay-per-view porn movies generate more money for hotels than the mini bar. Over 40% of all hotel rooms in the United States have access to this service, and figures show that at least half of the guests buy these movies which create $190million in sales a year (Egan, 2000).

Another sign of the prevalence of sex is this year's publishing phenomenon, Fifty Shades of Grey by the British author EL James. The book would suggest that sex still most definitely sells even though its front cover downplays the content. The erotic novel

has become the fastest-selling book in the UK with nearly 3 million print copies sold and 20 million worldwide (Handley, 2012).

This sexual revolution also impacted on the clothing worn by women with the Playboy logo, the symbol of a "gentleman's magazine" emblazoned on t-shirts (Levy, 2005). Another example of sexualised t-shirt slogans includes French Connection's "Fit Chick Unbelievable Knockers", "FCUK Me" and "FCUK Football" (Gill, 2003). There are also generic t-shirts also featured words such as "pornstar" (McRobbie, 2009) and "babe", the latter even featuring on the London School of Economics t-shirts (Gill, 2003). Even the style of clothing worn by women was changing, with teens, young women and even middle aged women dressing in low cut jeans and small, cleavage showing t-shirts (Levy, 2005).

Levy (2005) and McRobbie (2009) also draws attention to the behaviour of some women during this time, such as the trend of women going to see female strippers "for fun" and the rise in pole dancing classes as a way to keep fit. Coy and Garner (2010) also discuss the suggestion that young women increasingly view glamour modelling and lap/pole dancing as attractive career options. Jyrkinen (2005) notes that these values are increasingly standardised through the globalization of Western culture, creating a context of normalization that she refers to as 'McSexualization'. Glamour modelling is an integral part of McSexualization, found in such everyday sources as British national newspapers ('Page 3 girls'), and appears to be fundamentally grounded in the idea that women using their bodies for profit is empowering (Coy and Garner, 2010; McRobbie, 2009). This obsession with image has also led to the number of plastic surgery operations has also increased dramatically, with breast augmentations increasing 700% between 1992 and 2004 in the US (Levy, 2005) and cosmetic surgery also increasing exponentially in the UK (Coy and Garner, 2010).

Possibly the greatest example of how sex has become ingrained in modern society and culture is Paris Hilton (Levy, 2005). The heiress managed to turn a sex tape scandal into her own jewellery line, a bestselling book about her life, a string of nightclubs in major cities, a pop album and a mass of other endorsement deals. She was voted in the Top 10 Most Fascinating People of 2004, instead of being reviled; this individual was celebrated as a role model and mascot of that time (Levy, 2005). If the sexual revolution has intensified in recent years, it may have impacted young female's attitudes towards sexual appeals in advertising.

The reason the author has chosen this particular area to research is the result of a previous study of the topic. The area of sexual advertising featured in a previous exam and continuous assessment which the author found interesting and believed was worthy of further research. The author intends to examine what influence sexual appeals in advertising have on gaining female consumers attention, their purchasing intention and their resultant view of the company's brand. How varying degrees of sexual imagery effect young adult females will also be researched. The author intends to have an Interpretivist philosophy and use qualitative research methods to collect the data for this

study. This will be done through unstructured interviews, which may become semi-structured if necessary to gather the relevant information. The sample will be chosen using the snowball sampling framework.

The next chapter, the literature review, will contain a discussion of the main articles on the area of sexual imagery in advertising. The conclusion of this review will lead on to the next section where the research question and objectives will be outlined. The subsequent chapter will discuss the methodology that will be used to obtain the desired information. Following that there will be the analysis chapter and then the concluding chapter, were recommendations and limitations will be discussed. Finally there will be a reference list containing all cited materials.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Advertising and Reality

Advertising can be defined as a form of communication that is used to persuade or encourage the viewer to purchase the product or service being offered (Hilmi and Ngo, 2011; Levitt, 1993). People consume billions worth of advertising and only a small portion of that they would actually want (Gustafson, 2001). It is all used to try and get people to do something they might not ordinarily do, or try to get them to do it differently (Levitt, 1970). Advertising gets on peoples nerves and it intrudes on their lives but they understand and put up with it as it is the price they pay for choice and free access (Gustafson, 2001; Levitt, 1993). Advertising informs, entertains and excites and helps to break up TV shows and pages of plain text. People know that adverts aren't depictions of the real thing, and they don't want to know how it is made, just what it promises emotionally or suggests symbolically (Levitt, 1993). People are motivated by things that are beyond reasonable, wishful possibilities that transcend reality. Advertising is representational, not the real thing. Seeing a celebrity in an advertisement will do more to a woman than a doctor telling her about dieting (Levitt, 1993).

Rather than deny that distortion and exaggeration exist in advertising, Levitt (1970) argues that embellishment and distortion are among advertising's legitimate and socially desirable purposes. He compares it to poetry, as it tries to persuade and seduce. Like fashion designers, playwrights and poets, advertisers deal in symbolic communication (Levitt, 1970). However, Gustafson (2001) believes that Levitt focuses too much on advertising giving us dreams, and that he neglects the literal information advertising should give the viewer about products. Gustafson (2001) feels advertising should give facts about real products and that the importance of truth in advertising is overlooked by Levitt.

2.2 Overview of Sexual Appeals in Advertising

Sex has been used since the very beginning of advertising as an appeal to try increase consumer interest (Dahl and Sengupta, 2008). Even as far back as 1910 a romantic advertising campaign increased sales of Woodbury's Facial Soap and successfully saved them from going out of business. Sexual appeals are often used to gain standout amongst other advertisements or to make the adverts message more appealing to the audience (Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes, 2006). Alexander and Judd (1978) say that the goal of using sexual appeals is to get the customers attention, gain product/brand recognition, recall and eventually increase sales. There is normally an agreement that a nude or partially nude female has the ability to gain attention (Reichert 2002; Dahl, Frankenberger and Manchandra, 2003; Torlak, 2011) but doubts do exist about whether it can achieve the other objectives (Alexander and Judd, 1978).

The sexual imagery featured in advertisements is becoming increasingly explicit and is appearing in media with a broader target audience than in the past (Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes, 2006). Sex is everywhere, on prime time television programs, movies, and music videos. It is rare to view an hour of television and not see a suggestively dressed or undressed female, whether in a program or a commercial (Dahlberg and Zimmerman, 2008). Sexual imagery appears in magazine articles and advertisements. A recent issue of Cosmopolitan might contain hundreds of half-naked women, stories of sexual mishaps, and even instructions for the ancient art of Kama Sutra (Dahlberg and Zimmerman, 2008).

Products are often "sexualized" by sexual appeals and it is obvious that advertisers consciously use such tactics to make their products more attractive to consumers (Gould, 1994). One key finding is that sexual appeals are most effective when sexuality is related to the product. Advertising is sometimes criticised as it is said to causes people to buy products they do not need and leads them to a preoccupation with materialism. Yet, there are also unintended consequences of limiting sexually related ads, such as restrictions on the advertising of condoms and birth control measures on television which could be responsible for the growth of AIDS and unwanted pregnancies (Gould, 1994). Furthermore, Ogilvy (2012) feels that it is a matter of opinion about whether advertising makes people buy unneeded products, as different people have different needs, so he thinks it is wrong to make a defaming claim about advertising.

Sexualised advertisements can result in some unintentional effects that are thought to be harmful to women and children. For example, a child witnessing sexual ads is thought to be unwholesome and often can be a result of poor media targeting by advertisers (Gould, 1994).

There have been numerous societal changes since the early studies on the use of sexual appeals in advertising (Dudley, 1999). Advertisements for Calvin Klein jeans featuring Brooke Shields (see Appendix 7.1), which provoked storms of criticism in 1980, are mild when compared to more recent advertisements; e.g. Guess Jeans (see Appendix 7.2). Ads featuring women ogling a shirtless construction worker in a Diet Coke commercial and speculating on men's physical attributes in a Hyundai automobile ad have also become the norm (Dudley, 1999). In light of these societal changes, Dudley (1999) feels there may be a change in how consumers view nudity in advertising.

Sexual appeals can appear in many forms such as; nudity/partial nudity, physical attractiveness, interaction, innuendo, suggestive behaviour, setting, context and camera effects (Reichert, 2002). The area of sexual appeals in advertising is what has been dubbed a "soft issue," based in complex subjective and socially/culturally constructed roots and values (Gould, 1994). There are many different types of sexual appeals used in ads and consist of different elements. They are usually visual elements, such as attractive models, and can feature varying levels of nudity and suggestiveness. However, these appeals can also include suggestive verbal elements, as well as

suggestive music and even smells in "scent strip" (e.g. placing fragrance samples in printed ads, Fetscherin and Toncar, 2012) advertising (Gould, 1994).

The uses of sexual appeals in advertising can be placed into the following categories; sexual behaviour, body display, contextual factors and sexual referents (Reichert, 2002). Sexual behaviour refers to the provocative movements and vocals of people in the advertisement. Body display refers to the state of undress the model appears in the advert, whether it is revealing clothing or fully nude. Contextual factors are elements that enhance the action in the advertisement such as the setting, location and music. Sexual referents are the use of double entendre and innuendos along with suggestive imagery to gain the interest of consumers (Reichert, 2002).

It is important to consider these factors because they may decide whether people find a sexual appeal to be ethical or unethical. For example, though adverts that simply use attractive, sexy models are objectionable to some people, the general consensus seems to be that these ads are acceptable (Gould, 1994). However, many people would probably oppose nudity in general advertising. Hence, in relating sexual appeals to ethical concerns, we must consider not only sexual appeals in general but also the specific forms of those appeals. In the case of advertising, the media and various pressure groups often set and enforce the moral standards of society (Gould, 1994).

In advertisements, there are often four representations of women that are used (Torlak, 2011). The first type is based on advertising messages, in which the woman is jealous, for example, of the softness of the towels being used by her friend. The next representation is that of a woman who seduces a man by wearing revealing clothes or acting provocatively (Torlak, 2011). The third type is that of a housewife who looks after her "poor" husband after a hard day at work by bringing him coffee. The final representation is that of a motherly figure, who interacts with their son or daughter in a positive or negative manner (Torlak, 2011).

Some viewers often view sexual appeals as being shocking, and as documented in research conducted by Dahl, Frankenberger and Manchandra (2003), shocking advertising increases attention, is more likely to be remembered and can positively influence behaviour when executed correctly. Today's consumers are bombarded with nearly 3,000 advertising images a day and sexual imagery is seen as a way for companies to cut through the clutter and gain the attention of its audience (Dahl et al. 2003).

However, these shocking advertisements can run the risk of failing to meet advertising standards, as recently seen with American Apparel (Shields, 2012). The company incurred the wrath of the Advertising Standards Authority for an advertisement on their website that featured "overtly sexual" images of models that appeared to be under 16 which were deemed to be unsuitable to be seen by children (Shields, 2012). In a separate incident, three ads for hosiery on the retailer's website were deemed "unnecessarily sexual and inappropriate" for a site that could be viewed by children (Shields, 2012).

Even in a country viewed as sexually liberal, the French self-regulatory system developed a system involving various stakeholder organizations to analyse social trends related to the acceptability of sexually oriented advertisements, develop new voluntary guidelines, solicit complaints, and handle them through an independent jury (Boddewyn and Loubradou, 2011).. Feminist groups enraged by the treatment of women in advertising also have been influential in France, though they have not yet received the same official recognition as consumer and environmental organizations because of their fragmented and sometimes aggressive nature (Boddewyn and Loubradou, 2011).

In contrast to the view that shockingly sexual advertisements get "cut through", Berger (2007) believes that the fact so many companies are using sexual appeals in their advertising, it has created what he calls "sexual clutter", resulting in sexual appeals losing their standout value. This has resulted in marketers developing increasingly explicit advertisements in order to be distinct from the other sexualised adverts. Berger (2007) also states that because sexual imagery has been used to advertise every type of product, including generic ones like milk, people are becoming de-sensitised to sexual imagery, resulting in it losing its shock factor which in turn is creating a situation where advertisers are forced to stage ever more explicit adverts to break through the clutter (Jhally, 1997). This view is also supported by Alexander and Judd (1978), who state that the fact sexual appeals are ubiquitous, they are no longer rare.

As attitudes towards sexuality and advertising regulations vary substantially across cultures, it can be difficult to have a standardised advert if you choose to use such appeals (Nelson and Paek, 2008). Nelson and Paek (2008) conducted a study to see how the use of sexual appeals differed across the globe, engaging in research in Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, South Korea, Thailand and the United States. Results show that female (but not male) nudity differed substantially across countries, and females were portrayed in greater states of undress than males (Nelson and Paek, 2008). Commercials in the US and China showed the lowest level of nudity, whereas German and Thai ads showed the highest level. Cultural values (masculinity/femininity) and advertising regulation (pre-clearance policy) explained only minimally the degree of model nudity in ads across the countries (Nelson and Paek, 2008).

The role morality and personality variables have in the emotional response to sexual appeals in advertisements was researched by Ford, LaTour and Reichert (2011). The study was conducted with the hope of that understanding these variables would help managers make more informed decisions when deciding whether their target market would respond positively to advertisements featuring sexual appeals. The study used fragrance advertisements in their experiments. The research found that these variables had as much, if not more of an influence in a person's response to advertising than the degree of nudity involved (Ford et al. 2011). These findings show that marketers must ensure that their sexually charged adverts do not alienate their target market. This problem can be avoided through market research and creating profiles of consumers to see if their personalities are positively responsive towards sexual appeals in advertising (Ford et al. 2011).

Another aspect to be examined is the characteristic of erotophilia-erotophobia (Gould, 1994). People who are erotophilic display positive attitudes toward sexual matters while erotophobic people have negative feelings toward sexual matters. This characteristic can be seen in a host of sexual attitudes and behaviours ranging from the use of contraception (erotophilic people are more likely to use them) to having favourable attitudes toward pornography (erotophilic people are more likely to have favourable attitudes). Other areas that could also make a difference in a person's ethical stance on sexual appeals in advertising are the persons love style (e.g. being more sexual versus seeking more companionship from your partner), sexual experience, and stage of sexual development, as well as one's general religiosity, political and ethical stances (Gould, 1994). The attitudes and values people with these characteristics have could also affect how they view sexual appeals in advertising, and could be a customer trait that companies should consider when choosing to utilise sexual appeals in their advertisements.

2.3 Postfeminism and Women

It is also important to look at the ideology of Postfeminism when discussing women's attitudes towards sexual appeals in advertising. Gill (2007) argued that Postfeminism is best understood neither as an epistemological perspective nor as an historical shift, and not simply as a backlash. Rather, Postfeminism should be conceived of as a sensibility. This new viewpoint emphasises the contradictory nature of postfeminist discussions and the complexity of both feminist and anti-feminist themes within them (Gill, 2007).

It also points to a number of other relatively stable factors that make up a postfeminist discussion. These include the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; the emphasis upon self-surveillance, monitoring and discipline; a focus upon individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; a resurgence in ideas of natural sexual difference; a marked sexualisation of culture; and an emphasis upon consumerism and the commodification of difference (Gill, 2007).

Subjectification is women knowingly choosing to be treated as sexual objects, rather than it being something done to them (Gill, 2008). They are pleasing themselves and in doing so just happen to win the admiration of men (Gill, 2009). Self-surveillance is the monitoring of ones looks, weight and general physical appearance (Calogero and Jost, 2011; Maurer and Sobal, 1999). This has resulted in dieting becoming prevalent, with the commercial weight loss industry worth $55billion in America as over 65 million people are reportedly on a diet (Brownell, 1993) while in Australia over $500million a year is spent in the commercial weight loss industry (Lester, 1994).

The makeover paradigm describes the "makeover takeover" (Hollows, 2000) that has occurred on television and in magazines. It started with food, homes and gardens, but has now extended to clothing, cleanliness, work, dating, sex, cosmetic surgery and

raising children (Gill, 2007). These themes coexist with and are structured by stark and continuing inequalities and exclusions that relate to 'race' and ethnicity, class, age, sexuality and disability -- as well as gender (Gill, 2007).

Gill (2007) suggests there is a growing trend in contemporary advertising to promote products targeted at women using the notion of empowerment, or what Michelle Lazar (Lazar, 2006) has called 'power femininity'. This has become almost ever-present in prosperous developed countries understood as being in a 'postfeminist' era, in which women are invited to purchase everything from bras to coffee as signs of their power and independence from men (Gill, 2007).

Although, in recent times, advertising has begun to move away from depicting women as objects of men's desires, and there is a new focus in some adverts upon women's sexual agency (being active, behaving independently and sexually powerful; Gill, 2008), especially in adverts where the products are targeted at young women (Gill, 2007). A clear trend can be seen and in the UK, it is possible to pinpoint the time of this shift quite precisely to 1994. Gill (2007) cites the impact of marketer Trevor Beattie's campaigns for Wonderbra, which featured sexy models who directly addressed the viewer in a knowing and humorous way. More broadly, the shift was the outcome of the mix of societal movements such as 'girl power', new "laddism" and the libidinous 'return' to sex, after more than a decade of HIV/AIDS (Gill, 2007).

Advertising has always evolved during its history as a result of changes in the economy, technology, fashion and social relations (Gill, 2007). But the changes it has gone through in the last twenty years have been especially significant, as developments in information and communication technologies (ICT), the emergence of a new generation raised on computer games and music television, and the growing confidence of increasingly 'media-savvy' consumers forced a radical rethink of previous advertising strategies (Gill, 2007).

Marketers, Goldman (1992) states, had to respond to what he called 'sign fatigue', viewer scepticism, and also to the impact of feminism on lifestyles and attitudes. The fact women were gaining increasing financial independence meant a number of new products were being targeted at them which resulted in a rethink of earlier representations: featuring a woman draped over a car may not be the best strategy if the aim is to sell that car to women (Gill, 2008). Furthermore, by the late 1980s and early 1990s, marketers started to recognise the significance of many women's anger at being objectified and bombarded with unattainable, idealized images of femininity (Gill, 2008). Marketers began to change their ways of representing women.

Possibly the most significant shift in advertising has been the construction of a new female representation: a young, attractive; heterosexual women who knowingly and deliberately plays with her sexual power and is always 'up for it', that is, sex (Gill, 2008). This figure has been referred to as the 'midriff', which was named after the trend of exposing this part of the body that was synonymous with the time.

Gill (2008) even suggests there has been a shift in how femininity is defined, describing it as a bodily property rather than a social/psychological structural one. Instead of caring and nurturing, it is now having a 'sexy body' that is put forward as a woman's source of identity (Gill, 2008). This can be seen in numerous ads (such as those seen in Appendix 7.3), were women choose and enjoy showing off their sexuality (McRobbie, 2009). Advertisements that feature women in bikinis on a car are now used in an ironic fashion, poking fun at old times (McRobbie, 2009).

However, Gill (2003) also states that many years ago, feminists were fighting not to be viewed in an objectified manner and yet today young women are actually paying good money for expensive t shirts to present themselves in this way. Gill (2003) argues that a shift has occurred in recent years: the knowing and deliberate re-sexualisation and re-commodification of women's bodies. She says we are witnessing, a shift from sexual objectification to sexual subjectification in constructions of femininity in the media and popular culture.

Nowhere is this clearer than in advertising which has responded to feminist critiques by constructing a new figure to sell to young women: the sexually autonomous heterosexual young woman who plays with her sexual power and is for ever 'up for it' (Gill, 2003). The exhortations to young women to 'be yourself' and 'please yourself' are emblematic of this shift in which women are presented as knowing and active sexual subjects (Gill, 2003). But sexual subjectification, Gill argues, has turned out to be objectification in new and even more pernicious guise (Gill, 2003).

In Halliwell, Malson, Rudolfsdottir and Tischner's (2011) study, although participants sometimes responded positively to midriff images their discussions of these images were overwhelmingly critical and tended most often to construct a feeling of difference and distance between themselves and the images. This difference was described as a difference between 'perfect' bodies and the bodies of themselves and other 'normal' women (Halliwell et al. 2011). That is, respondents almost invariably interpreted the midriff figure as an image of a beautiful and sexy but 'slutty' woman who dresses only to please men (rather than herself), who 'hasn't got anything apart from her body really' and whose independence and success is, therefore, illusory (Halliwell et al. 2011). This study shows that some women still view models in advertisements as being objects and not real women.

However, there is generally a degree of consensus about the 'sexualisation of culture' as an empirical phenomenon both in media/popular writing and in more scholarly texts (Gill, 2009). Authors from different perspectives seem to agree that something has changed, that the late 20th-century and early 21st century media in the West are characterised by an unprecedented degree of 'sexual revelation and exhibitionism in which public nakedness, voyeurism and sexualized looking (objectifying or viewing someone in a sexual manner) are permitted, indeed encouraged, as never before' (McNair, 2002).

Douglas (2002) discussed the link between Postfeminism and advertising. Douglas states that Postfeminism should mean complete gender equality, but feels that this has not happened and that women are made to think it has. She thinks that the term describes a time where women have made great progress because of feminism but it has left millions feeling "unhappy and unfeminine" (Douglas, 2002). She believes that corporate media has engineered this way of thinking because it relies so much on advertising (Douglas, 2002). If women suddenly decided they did not need products such as L'Oreal, Diet Coke, lipstick and Victoria Secret lingerie to make themselves feel fulfilled and feminine, it would result in a serious fall in advertising revenue. So the media continue to manufacture Postfeminism as an easy way to understand women's current place in society (Douglas, 2002).

2.4 Religion and Irish Society

Irish society has often been looked on as being a conservative one (Moran, 1984). This has even had an impact on marketing, as advertisements have to add novelty to the product and follow the status quo. If it is an established brand, emphasis must be placed on ancestry (how it is delivered or made) and gender roles stick to stereotypes, such as a woman being a housewife (Moran, 1984). This conservative culture's roots are in the Catholic Church's historical influence in Ireland (Inglis, 2005).

However, in recent years, the Catholic Church has had a declining influence on the people of Ireland. In the years between 1990 and 2000 there was a drop of 15% in how much Irish people valued religion in their lives (Halman, Inglehart, Díez-Medrano, Luijkx, Moreno and Basáñez, 2008). There was also an 18% drop in how much Irish people felt it was important to encourage children to value religion over the same time period (Halman et al. 2008). These statistics, along with weekly mass attendance figures decreasing from 81% in 1990 to 48% in 2006 (catholicculture.org, 2006), show the declining importance of religion in some Irish people's lives.

Over the last fifty years we have moved from a catholic culture in which sexual pleasure and desires were repressed, to a culture of consumption and self-indulgence in which fulfilment of pleasures and desires is emphasised (Inglis, 2005). This shift reflects not so much sexual liberation, but a transition from one sexual regime to another.

The traditional stereotypical image of a good Irish woman was one who had the virtues of loyalty, forbearance and an unlimited capacity to endure suffering (Inglis, 2005). Women were seen as the weaker sex and not proactive in seeking sexual pleasure (Inglis, 2005). They were romantic rather than sexual – passive, submissive receivers of powerful male sexual urges. But there were challenges and resistances to this stereotypical image of how women should act. This transformation was also represented in a number of films and books during the eighties and nineties (Inglis, 2005). The women in them were seen as sexually proactive and in control. They were attempts to reconstruct a stereotypical image of the young Irish woman, one that lives closer to the

edge, resisting and challenging the images and representations of the ideal woman (Inglis, 2005).

This development can be seen as part of increased sexual openness in Western society generally, where there is greater public acceptance of the notion that indulgence in private sexual pleasures is part of the overall right to the pursuit of life, liberty and happiness (Inglis, 2005). Irish culture is going through an unsettled period, caught as it is between Catholic morality on which modern Ireland was founded in the nineteenth century and sexual/moral revolution that has been taking place throughout Western society (Inglis, 2005). This sexual revolution, coupled with the new stereotypical Irish woman, could have an effect on how women view sexual appeals in advertising.

2.5 Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion and Sexual Appeals

In the past, sexual appeals have been used to draw attention to unrelated products, such as an attractive model standing beside a car or as an integrated part of the brand, as with Jovan Musk fragrance for men (Reichert, 2002). The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion (see Fig. 1) shows how sexual appeals are beneficial when used to promote unrelated products (Cacioppo, Petty and Schumann, 1983). The marketing communications literature generally defines persuasion as the ability for a message to produce measurable cognitive, affective, or behavioural changes in their targeted audiences (Gnepa, 2012). Cacioppo et al. (1983) created the Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion in an attempt to help explain how consumers may be persuaded or not when exposed to an advertisement. They theorised the existence of two routes to persuasion: a central route, and a peripheral one.
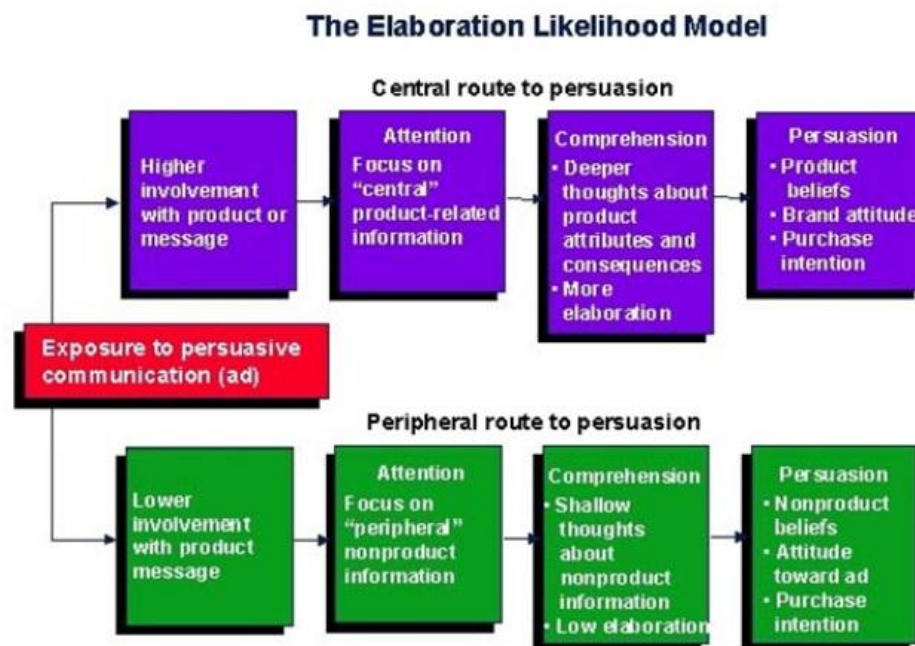

Fig. 1 Gnepa, T. (2012). Product involvement, elaboration likelihood and the structure of commercial speech: a tale of two print advertisements. *International Journal of Business Research*. **12**, pp.42-51.

With the Central Route, the recipient is highly motivated to learn about the product and has the ability to carefully consider all the relevant information in the advertisement (Gnepa, 2012). The high motivation exhibited here may have to do with both the relevance of the advert to the viewer (e.g. personal involvement, need for cognition, etc.) and the consequential nature of the purchase outcome. The recipient's response to the message (e.g. attitudinal change, behavioural tendency) is a product of this careful analysis of information contained in the advertisement (Gnepa, 2012). Brand choice among competing alternatives and final purchase decisions must be perceived as the logical conclusions of the brand advocacy that preceded them.

On the other hand, with the Peripheral route the recipient in this situation lacks sufficient motivation (e.g. no involvement or need for cognition) or the ability to examine the information made by the advertisement due to noise or exposure without comprehension (Gnepa, 2012). This is often due to either the trivial nature of the product, time constraints or other distractions. Not surprisingly, under these conditions, the recipient's response to the message will be essentially based on peripheral cues and mental heuristics, rather than the content of the message in the advert (Gnepa, 2012). It is in this situation where irrelevant material, such as sexual imagery and appeals, is used to gain the viewer's interest and illicit a response (Cacioppo et al. 1983).

However, regarding younger people, a study by Lampert, Lehman-Wilzig and Te'eni-Harari (2007) found that that in contradistinction to adults (Cacioppo et al. 1983), children and early adolescents do not use the two routes for processing information (Lampert et al. 2007). This study's findings provide evidence that the involvement variable, which is critical among adults in explaining the use of two information processing routes, does not have the same effect on young people as no significant differences were found in advertising effectiveness between high and low involvement, which could also have been down to motivation/ability to process information (Lampert et al. 2007).

The results of Mulder, Siero, Stapel and Trampe's (2010) research confirms the importance of the role of product relevance and elaboration likelihood in predicting the persuasive power of attractive models in advertising. Participants who had viewed an advertisement featuring an attractive model and had spent cognitive effort on the advertisement held more positive attitudes toward the advertised product when the model's attractiveness was relevant for the product than when her attractiveness was less relevant for the product (Mulder et al. 2010). In contrast, when participants did not elaborate on the advertisement with the attractive model, the relevance of the product for the model's attractiveness did not influence their attitudes.

2.6 Support for the use of Sexual Appeals

As has been said previously, sexual appeals are often used to get the customers attention, gain product/brand recognition, recall and eventually increase sales (Dahl and

Sengupta, 2008; Gould, 1994; Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes, 2006). Very few people question the idea that a nude or partially nude female has the ability to gain attention (Reichert 2002; Dahl, Frankenberger and Manchandra, 2003; Torlak, 2011), but doubts do exist about whether it can achieve the other objectives (Alexander and Judd, 1978). This section will detail some of the academics and supporting research that support the use of sexual appeals.

Sexual content is one of the most efficient ways of attracting the attention of a target audience as sex is one of the most important motivational factors, classified among the physiological factors which, according to Maslow, are first in the hierarchical order (Torlak, 2011). Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes (2006) believe that adverts using sexual appeals increase brand awareness, possibly due to the fact they often feature in print media, resulting in multiple viewings. It has also been found that young people view sexual appeals positively, especially in comparison to the older generation (Loroz, 2006; Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes, 2006). When targeted at a younger audience, sexual appeals also have the potential to be viewed as "cool" and relevant to these consumer's needs (Dahl et al. 2003). Other research did show that sexualised advertisements were more likely to be discussed amongst this audience (Panda, 2005).

Research by Alexander and Judd (1978) found that an audience will view a "moderate" level of sexual intensity positively in fashion advertisements. Men have generally been found to be more receptive to sexual appeals, though this observation may be attributable to the fact that such appeals have largely been targeted to them (Gould, 1994).

Lassar and Mittal (2000) highlight that advertising normally reflects society's views and values, and pose the question that maybe it is just the minority who do not like sexualised advertisements and complain about them. In their research, they found that while adverts featuring sexual appeals were found to be more "ethically unjust", they shared the same brand attitude and purchase intention of ads which were found to be ethically just. This shows that just because an advertisement is viewed as ethically unjust, it doesn't mean people don't like the ad. They also found that there was no significant difference in opinion between the different genders. Sexual liberalism, defined as positive attitude towards and liking of sex or sexual material (De Visser, Grulich, Richters, Rissel and Smith, 2003), was found to be a key factor in a person's judgement on ethical justness and it partially affected the attitude towards adverts (Lassar and Mittal, 2000).

Belch, Belch, Holgerson and Koppman (1982) found that the use of both nudity and suggestiveness in advertisements elicit strong physiological and cognitive reactions. The sex of the receiver will have an effect on the reactions to the use of sex in advertising, with women reacting much more to suggestive ads than do men (Belch et al. 1982). They also found that both opposite sex and same sex nude ads elicit strong physiological reactions, with appealing and offensive cognitive reactions respectively (Belch et al. 1982).

Dudley (1999) investigated the attitudes of young consumers who were marketing students, toward the use of nudity in advertising suntan lotion. Four test ads were developed featuring the product only, a model wearing a one-piece swimsuit, a topless model, and a nude model. Although some opinions were negative, nudity was viewed as been better for getting attention, more interesting, created an appealing ad, and led to a more distinctive brand. It was even found that the nude model was generally more favourably rated than the topless model. This shows that companies willing to risk the negative effects of nudity in their advertising, should consider "going all the way" with nude models rather than merely "adding a little spice" with topless models (Dudley, 1999). A study by Ahmed and Veloutsou (2005) also found that young people in the UK from one subculture viewed sexual appeals in a positive manner. The study featured two groups of young women from different sub-cultures, one Anglo-Saxon and the other Asian-Islamic, and the Anglo-Saxon group viewed the sexual appeals much more positively than the other group (Ahmed and Veloutsou, 2005). This shows that sexual appeals could work when carefully targeted.

Research by Reichert (2002) attempted to find out whether sexual appeals in advertising had a positive or negative effect on brand recall and the viewer's ability to process the advert's message. The findings revealed that sexual imagery in advertising was noticed, remembered and found more engaging for both the men and women who participated in the study (Reichert, 2002). Despite some negative findings about the use of sexual appeals, there were higher purchase intentions seen with the advertisements featuring sexual imagery when it was relevant to the product and the imagery wasn't too explicit. This is due to the emotional response overruling rational thinking (Carpenter-Childers, Reichert and Reid, 2012; Reichert, 2002; Reichert and McRee-Walker, 2005).

Hyllegard, Ogle and Yan's (2009) study that compared American Apparels ethical and sexual advertisements found the use of ethical marketing to be more effective; although their experiments did have some interesting results. The findings indicated that women had a more positive response to the American Apparel advertisements, which featured high and moderate levels of sexual appeal, than the men in the study.

The beauty match-up hypothesis (Kamins, 1990) suggests that physical attractiveness is relevant when advertising attractiveness-related products, but should have no effect on products not related to attractiveness because only for attractiveness-related products does the presenter's beauty function as an associative link and product argument. However, several studies report positive effects of a presenter's attractiveness on persuasion for products not associated with attractiveness and suggest that the assumption that beautiful communicators only work for attractiveness-related products, does not hold (Praxmarer, 2011).

There have also been some studies that investigated how to gets the best results from using sexual appeals and the target audience characteristics that need to be considered. A number of demographic and gender differences were also found during the research conducted by Reichert (2002). For example, women are more likely to view an

advertisement featuring someone of the same sex more favourably than men would. Furthermore, women will react more positively to an advertisement featuring romantic interaction between the models while men are more inclined to like the models physical features (Reichert, 2002). Another study also found that women react positively to the notion of relationships and commitment, especially when the sexual appeal was used in an advertisement which featured gift giving between couples (Dahl, Sengupta and Vohs, 2009). However, the men who participated in this study reacted less positively when gift giving was featured. Reichert (2002) also found that young, educated people were likely to view sexual appeals in advertising more favourably than mature adults and that upbringing shapes opinions on these types of adverts.

Kim, La Tour and Reichert (2007), conducted a study using fashion adverts and found that with both sexes, for the best chance of a positive response, a member of the opposite sex needed to feature in the advertisement. The next most effective use of sexual appeals was when the advertisement featured members of both sexes. The effectiveness of sexually charged advertising was at its lowest when the advertisement features a model of the same sex. This research also found that a viewer's personality will have an influence on their emotional response to sexual appeals in advertising. A person's sexual experience and learned disposition to respond to sexual imagery also had an impact on how they viewed the advertisement (Kim et al. 2007).

2.7 Sexual Appeals Do Not Work

Although there is support for the use of sexual appeals in advertising, there are some who doubt its ability to achieve marketing objectives. While Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes (2006) found that sexual appeals can lead to increased brand awareness, they also state that it can also be found to be brand harming. Their research found that women find sex and nudity in advertising to be taboo, especially in comparison to how men view the matter (Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes, 2006). This opinion was especially strong with older respondents, especially those who were female (Loroz, 2006; Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes, 2006).

Adverts that feature lower levels of sexual appeal may not gain the consumers attention, while those that feature higher levels of sexual appeal may distract the view from processing the brands message (Alexander and Judd, 1978). This is normally due to it being a distraction as seen in research by Steadman (1969). Findings suggested that readership and recall of messages accompanying sexual illustrations may be low, due to this distraction hypothesis (Steadman, 1969). A practical example can be seen by a firm that obtained a low rate of return from its coupon featuring a scantily clad woman and a much higher rate of return when this sexual content was taken out (Steadman, 1969).

This was similar to research by Reichert (2002) who found that although advertisements featuring sexual appeals were noticed, as a result of the distraction hypothesis mentioned above, it proved counterproductive as the advertisements message was not

processed and the brand name was less likely to be remembered over the long term. However it was noted that this effect can be reduced if the sexual information in the advertisement is integrated into the brand message (Reichert, 2002).

In Alexander and Judd's (1978) research, were the participants were male, they found that nonsexual (forests and mountain scenes) adverts had better brand recall that those adverts featuring a nude female. However, they did find that the level of brand recall did not significantly decline as the degree of nudity increased. They also found that a person's attitudes towards sexual imagery did not affect their ability to recall adverts with sexual appeals (Alexander and Judd, 1978).

Although research by Reichert found that advertisements with sexual appeals had a higher purchase intention, this response decreased in likelihood with women if the imagery in the advertisement became too explicit (Reichert, 2002). The overall traditional view then is that sexual advertising is more effective when targeted towards men, as women behave more conservatively due to societal factors in their upbringing. This corroborated with the Hyllegard et al. (2009) research on American Apparel advertisements previously discussed, as the results also showed that when the women were shown another advertisement which included graphic imagery and text implying sexual intercourse (representing a high level of sexually appeal), they responded extremely negatively.

Belch, Belch and Severn (1990) found that while the use of an explicit sexual advertising appeal did not interfere with message recipients' ability to recall brand name, it did have a negative effect on copy-point recall.

Panda (2005) attempted to discover what effect sexual appeals in advertising had on the behaviour of teenagers. In this research it was found that using sexual appeals did not lead to increased purchase intentions. The teenagers who participated in the study also said that these types of advertisements did not improve the chances of them purchasing the product offered.

Lassar and Mittal (2000) discuss when it is appropriate to use sexual appeals in advertising and who marketers should be targeting when using these appeals. Lassar and Mittal (2000) say that marketers believe sex sells but authors do not think they know how much to use or who to direct it towards. Lassar and Mittal (2000) point out that in the early nineties, marketers misjudged the public's tolerance to (and possibly liking of) sex in advertising, citing the anger caused by the Calvin Klein advert (see Appendix 7.4) in 1995 featuring teen models (Lassar and Mittal, 2000).

Even to this day there can still be negative reactions to sexual appeals in advertisements, especially if they are used in what is viewed as the wrong context (Handley, 2012). As mentioned previously, American Apparel also had advertisements removed in two separate incidents (Shields, 2012) for what was described as 'gratuitous nudity' (Handley, 2012). Recent incidents show that it still may not be acceptable to use sexual

appeals in some people's eyes, especially in certain contexts, such as when they can be viewed by children (Handley, 2012).

2.8 Women's Changing View?

The difference in gender responses to sexual appeals in advertising was further researched by Dahl and Sengupta (2008). Dahl and Sengupta (2008) found that on average, men react more positively to sexual appeals in advertising, which is a result of their open minded views on sex in general. The authors also discovered that the majority of women had a negative view on sexual appeals in adverts, which is a result of them having a more conservative upbringing because of pressures from their parents and institutions (Dahl and Sengupta, 2008; Inglis, 2005).

However, this study did find that there were differences in opinion amongst the women who took part in the research. The women who described themselves as being more sexually liberal actually reacted positively to sexual appeals in advertising and had a similar view to the men in the study, as long as it was relevant to the product (Dahl and Sengupta, 2008). This response seems to be increasing amongst women and it is thought to be due to the surge in Postfeminism and sexual liberalism, which has broken down the conservative beliefs they previously held.

Another recent study measured the attitudes of young women to sexually objectified advertising (Dahlberg and Zimmerman, 2008). They distributed a survey that combined elements of two previous studies (Ford, LaTour, and Lundstrom, 1991; Mittal and Lassar, 2000) to 94 female undergraduates. The results showed significant changes in attitudes of young, educated women (Dahlberg and Zimmerman, 2008) compared to the study done in 1991. The results of the 1991 study showed that women were still critical of the way in which they were portrayed in advertising, feeling that the advertisements treated them mainly as sex objects. According to that sample of women, an offensive advertising campaign would have a negative effect on company image and purchase intention (Ford, LaTour, and Lundstrom, 1991).

The respondents to the Dahlberg and Zimmerman (2008) study agreed the displayed advertisement was highly sexualized, yet they did not think it was offensive, extremely irritating, or unethical. Overall, they thought the advertisement was interesting and liked it because it was done tastefully, even though it contained high levels of sexual objectification of women (Dahlberg and Zimmerman, 2008). The fact that the respondents found the advertisement culturally acceptable proves this point even further. It does not matter whether the advertisement is ethical or morally right because they accept sex as part of their culture. As far as purchase intention, there were highly significant changes between this study and Ford, LaTour, and Lundstrom (1991). Even if today's young women are offended or do not like advertisements for a product, they will still purchase them and will continue using the ones they already have (Dahlberg and Zimmerman, 2008). Their attitude toward the brand is much more important than

their attitude toward the advertisement. This drastic change in purchase intention reflects the indifference created by the society in which they live (Dahlberg and Zimmerman, 2008).

Since the mid 90's women began to use their sexuality as a way to empower themselves and the "ladette" culture was born, were women believed they could have the same liberal attitudes about sex that men have (Gill, 2003). This is backed up by research which found that women reacted extremely positively towards advertisements for clothing companies Levis and Calvin Klein, both of which were described as being overtly sexual (Reichert, 2002). Finally, the trend of postmodern consumers' infatuation with self-image and identity also shows women's positive attitude towards sexual appeals in advertisements. When they purchase clothing which was advertised in such a manner, they are of the belief that it reflects them as being sexy.

Finally, regarding the complaints against American Apparel (Shields, 2012) and New Look (Handley, 2012) use of sexual appeals mentioned previously, only one person complained in each case (Handley, 2012). This concurs with statistics from the Advertising Standards Authority in the United Kingdom, as seen in the table in Appendix 7.5 (a table detailing some of the adverts that received complaints can also be seen in Appendix 7.6). The figures show that each of the advertisements only received, on average, two or three complaints each (asa.org.uk, 2013). This would suggest that what Lassar and Mittal (2000) discussed could be true, that advertising normally reflects society's views and values, and maybe it is just the minority who do not like sexualised advertisements and complain about them.

2.9 Research Question

Following on from this review of the sexual appeals in advertising literature, the overall research question that this study intends to answer is "what influence does the use of sexual appeals in fashion advertising have on young, adult females in Dublin?"

The "influence" the author is looking to investigate includes how the use of sexual appeals affects the target samples attitude towards a company's brand and their decisions on what products to purchase. The forms of sexual appeals that will be included in the scope of the study will be those described by Reichert (2002): nudity/partial nudity, physical attractiveness, innuendo, suggestive behaviour, setting, context and camera effects. The study will focus on fashion advertisements that are targeting women and only feature women in them.

For the purposes of this study the target sample, young adult females, will be defined as women between the age of 18 and 25. The reason the author wants to put the study in an Irish context is because Ireland is traditionally seen as a conservative (Moran, 1984) and religious country (Inglis, 2005) and the author would like to see if this still influences attitudes towards sexual imagery in advertising. The author did not only choose to focus

on Dublin due to accessibility of the sample but also because Dublin has such diverse social classes, ethnicities and religious groupings. It is like a microcosm of modern Irish society. The author has chosen to focus on the fashion industry because sexual appeals are often used in the advertisement of clothing (Panda 2005).

The reason the author has chosen this question is because the current literature seems to suggest a change in some women's attitude towards sexual appeals in advertising (Dahl and Sengupta, 2008; Dahlberg and Zimmerman, 2008) and sex in general (Levy, 2005). The author would like to conduct a study with the aim of finding out whether these feelings have increased among women, especially in an Irish context. This overall research question will also be broken down into three sub objectives.

The *first sub objective* is: To examine the impact the use of sexual appeals in advertising has on gaining the attention of young adult females in Dublin. The reason the author has chosen this objective is because while many authors such as Reichert (2002) and Dahl et al. (2003) have found sexual appeals to be useful in gaining consumer attention, Berger (2007) found that due to the prevalence of sexual appeals in advertising a "sexual clutter" has been created, resulting in sexual appeals losing their stand out. The author aims to find which view the participants in this study corroborate with.

The *second sub objective* is: To examine what influence the use of sexual appeals in advertising has on the purchasing intentions of young, adult females in Dublin. The main goal of advertising is to persuade the viewer to purchase the product (Levitt, 1993). Therefore, the ultimate test of the influence the use of sexual appeals has is whether it increases the chances of the viewer buying the product being advertised.

The *third sub objective* is: To discover what impact the use of sexual appeals in advertising has on young, adult female's views on the company's brand. The author would also like to discover how the use of sexual appeals effects women's perception of the brand. The author is interested to see whether using this form of advertising creates a more acceptable image for the brand (Dahl et al. 2003) in consumer's eyes or is it brand harming activity (Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes, 2006).

The *fourth and final sub objective* in this study is: To explore the response and effect of different levels of sexualised appeals in advertising on young, adult females in Dublin. As the explicitness of sexual appeals in advertisements varies, the author would like to find out how the participants feel about them. The aim will be to discover whether taking it too far will alienate the target audience, as in Reichert (2002) or is it better to create explicit adverts rather than only mildly sexual ones (Dudley, 1999).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Philosophy

As this study is aims to examine young, adult female's feelings and attitudes towards the use of sexual appeals, it is imperative that the author takes an Interpretivist approach to the research for the reasons discussed in this section. This research philosophy is about finding the personal reasons or motives that shape a person's internal feelings and guide their decisions to act in particular ways (Neuman, 2006). It revolves around detailed reading and examination of data from conversations, pictures and written words in order to discover the embedded meaning. Each participant involved in this type of research contributes their own subjective meaning to the data (Neuman, 2006). As each individual's view of sexual appeals can be different, the allowance of this subjectivity favours the Interpretivist approach. The researcher tries to absorb the information and gain a deep understanding of it. The quote "True meaning is rarely at the surface" (Neuman, 2006) emphasises the need to use this approach over a Positivist one. The following section will describe the Positivist approach and where it is useful, followed by the chosen Interpretivist approach, its methods of data collection and the rationale for choosing the most appropriate method.

The two most common research philosophies are Positivist and Interpretivist (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2012). The research method that is normally used in Positivist research is quantitative. The approach taken is usually deductive. It is involves examining relationships and variables that are measured quantitatively. The data gathered is analysed using statistical techniques and probability sampling is used. It is normally used for descriptive and explanatory research. Quantitative research is normally executed using questionnaires (Lewis et al. 2012).

Questionnaires are useful as surveys are cost effective and digital surveys can also help the environment by cutting down on paper (Cameron and Price, 2009). They also allow you to gather large amounts of data in a shorter space of time than with qualitative data. This is because they either require less open ended answers or the researcher doesn't need to be present at as each questionnaire is filled out (Cameron and Price, 2009). Software packages can help you analyse the data you have gathered in a much easier way than with qualitative data. However, good questionnaires can be difficult to design, as you must ensure the respondent is able to understand each of the questions and has to have the time to answer the questions. Response rates can also be low and it can be difficult to analyse open ended questions (Cameron and Price, 2009).

Positivist research seeks rigorous, exact measures and objective research (Neuman, 2006). This approach tests hypotheses by carefully analysing numbers. However, it focuses too much on abstract statistics that are not relevant to the actual lives of real people and assumes humans think rationally (Neuman, 2006). For these reasons, along with those mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, the author has chosen to use an Interpretivist approach.

The Interpretivist researcher usually collects data using qualitative methods. It usually involves an inductive approach. It is used to study meanings and gain a deep understanding. This method normally uses non probability sampling. The researcher must not only have physical access to the participants, they also have to build a rapport with them and demonstrate sensitivity so they will be confident they can trust the researcher with their information. It is normally used in exploratory research, which gains insights, probes responses and places data into context. The qualitative approach usually involves structured interviews, semi structured interviews, unstructured interviews, telephone interviews, focus groups or observational studies (Lewis et al. 2012). These Interpretivist research methods for collecting qualitative data will be discussed in the next section.

3.2 Qualitative Research Methods

Interviews are often used if there is an exploratory element to the research you are conducting (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010; Lewis et al. 2012). When executed correctly, interviews can provide you with rich and illuminating data (Cameron and Price, 2009). They also offer the researcher a degree of flexibility and adaptability as they can reword the question if the participant does not understand it or use probing questions (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). Interviews can be a more natural process compared to some other forms of research, feeling like a conversation in a different context (Cameron and Price, 2009). The participant can also feel valued as by selecting them you have shown you think they may have something interesting to say, which, along with the conversational feel, may make them feel more comfortable disclosing information (Cameron and Price, 2009).

They also allow you to explore the meaning in what people are saying rather than just provide answers. Another benefit of interviews is that they can help you get some interesting quotes from the participants which can help support the findings during the analysis (Cameron and Price, 2009; Lewis et al. 2012). Interviews also allow you to pick up on nonverbal cues which can provide as much information as the words spoken by the participant (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). The data they produce is also seen to be credible and transparent as recordings and transcripts are kept (Cameron and Price, 2009).

However, they can be very time consuming when all the aspects are considered, which include: drafting questions, contacting people, travelling, conducting the interviews and transcribing them (Cameron and Price, 2009). The sample size is often smaller (Cameron and Price, 2009) and they usually come from as smaller geographical range (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). The interviewer also needs to have good communication skills in order to make the interviewee feel comfortable enough to provide the information (Cameron and Price, 2009). If they do not have the required skills, it could result in bias as they may ask misleading questions (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). Interviews are good for accessing feelings, although the researcher needs to gain a high

level of trust with the participant (Cameron and Price, 2009). They can also be difficult to compare (Cameron and Price, 2009) and the respondents can feel uneasy about whether they will remain anonymous (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010).

Visual aids are also sometimes used during interviews (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). They are shown to the respondent who answers the questions posed regarding the image. This helps capture what they like and dislike, which is especially useful for packaging and advertising (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). They are also useful if it is difficult for the respondent to express a reply without them.

It is important to keep the interviews as concise as possible while gaining the required information, as both the interviewee's and the researcher's time is precious (Cameron and Price, 2009). Before conducting the interview, the interviewer must decide what information they are looking for, such as personal information, perceptions, beliefs, feelings, values and evaluations (Cameron and Price, 2009). The researcher must also ensure to use consistent voice inflections, wording of questions and interpretation in order to reduce interviewer bias (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). When the interviews provide no new information, the researcher stops conducting interviews and begins analysing the data obtained. This data is then used to answer the objectives set out at the beginning (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010).

Interviews can be structured in different ways; unstructured, semi-structured and structured (Cameron and Price, 2009). With structured interviews, the information needed is known from the outset (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). The interviewer has a predetermined list of questions that are standardised, which they themselves administer (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010; Cameron and Price, 2009; Lewis et al. 2012). Structured interviews are useful for finding specific information related to the research objectives (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010; Cameron and Price, 2009). The interviewer reads out the question and records the response (Lewis et al. 2012). They stick to the schedule and ignore anything else that may be said (Cameron and Price, 2009). The benefit is that they can be compared with other interviews relatively easily but the disadvantage is they lack flexibility and adaptability (Cameron and Price, 2009). For this reason they are sometimes referred to as quantitative research interviews (Lewis et al. 2012).

Semi-structured interviews lie somewhere between structured and unstructured interviews. The degree of openness and flexibility can vary considerably, depending on where on the scale they lie (Cameron and Price, 2009). The interviewer has a list of questions and themes to cover, however these may vary from interview to interview. They may leave out some questions, add new ones or change the order depending on the flow (Lewis et al. 2012). In order to be successful, they need to have clear objectives. They are easier to analyse than unstructured but harder to analyse than structured (Cameron and Price, 2009).

Unstructured interviews are more informal and can be referred to as in depth interviews (Lewis et al. 2012). They use open-ended questions to explore in-depth/general areas in their totality (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010; Lewis et al. 2012). There is no predetermined

list of questions, just an idea of the aspects the interviewer wants to cover (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010; Lewis et al. 2012). The interviewer responds, prompts and probes where appropriate and needs great skill and awareness to keep the discussion within the frame of relevance of the study (Cameron and Price, 2009). They can also be used to set the stage for further, more structured interviews (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010).

Telephone interviews are often used for highly structured interviews. They tend to have a higher response rate than electronic/paper questionnaires (Cameron and Price, 2009). Telephone interviews allow you to access a wide geographic range and a high number of people in a relatively short time span (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010; Cameron and Price, 2009; Lewis et al. 2012). The downsides to telephone interviews are that it is harder to build trust with a person if you can't see them (Cameron and Price, 2009) which may make it difficult to ask sensitive questions (Lewis et al. 2012) as the participant may feel uncomfortable divulging sensitive information over the phone (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). This, along with the fact it is impossible to pick up on nonverbal cues (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010; Cameron and Price, 2009; Lewis et al. 2012) mean that reliability of the data can be reduced (Lewis et al. 2012). They can also be difficult to record (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010; Cameron and Price, 2009; Lewis et al. 2012) and face problems such as the possibility of a bad line (Cameron and Price, 2009) or the respondent hanging up at any point (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010).

Focus groups are a well-developed technique for extracting information from groups rather than individuals (Lewis et al. 2012). They involve a group holding a discussion, normally two hours in duration which is focused on a particular topic, prompted and facilitated by the researcher (Cameron and Price, 2009). They can usually generate a great depth of data (Cameron and Price, 2009). They typically have between four and eight people, sometimes even twelve and the more complex the topic, the less people the better (Lewis et al. 2012). The participants are normally chosen using nonprobability sampling, usually for specific reasons. There is no real pressure on them to come to a consensus and they are given the opportunity to express their views (Lewis et al. 2012).

Focus groups allow differences of opinion to surface, which produces great data for the researcher (Cameron and Price, 2009). The moderator ensures they discussion stays within the boundaries of the research topic and generate interest/encourage discussion (Lewis et al. 2012). If the focus group is run correctly, it can reduce the influence of the researcher, as they just present the issue and let the discussion develop (Cameron and Price, 2009). The researcher normally conducts at least two focus groups and tries to identify trends and patterns between them (Lewis et al. 2012). Conducting focus groups can be very time consuming, difficult to record and require good facilitation skills (Cameron and Price, 2009). There can also be issues with individuals dominating the discussion which can lead to false agreements and other individuals not participating fully. Focus groups are also difficult to record and transcribing them can be difficult as it may be hard to identify voices (Cameron and Price, 2009). When sensitive issues or

personal opinion are to be discussed, one to one interviews may be may be more appropriate (Cameron and Price, 2009).

Observational research involves gathering data without asking questions (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010) where the researcher works with the participant they are observing or simply just observes, can sometimes be used where appropriate (Cameron and Price, 2009). The researcher notes and records the activities, behaviour, movement, expressions, statements and body language that occur (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). As with interviews, they can be structured and unstructured. The advantages to this method are that the data is reliable and usually free from bias, it is easy to note environmental influences and it may not be able to get information from them otherwise (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). However, they can be very time consuming and require a lot of concentration (Cameron and Price, 2009), if fatigue sets in the results may be affected (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). As no questions are asked, the thought process of the people involved cannot be obtained and in order to gain quality data, the observer must be trained and have the required skills (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010).

3.3 Method Selection

This study requires the researcher to get inside the minds of the participants and understand their feelings about and attitudes towards the use of sexual appeals in advertising. Although the observational method would be useful to see the nonverbal reactions to advertisements (Cameron and Price, 2009), there are other methods that can also gather this data while also collecting the meaning and thought process behind these expressions (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). Furthermore, applying this method to this type of study would be difficult to execute, as it would be difficult to show advertisements to participants without the researcher impacting on their behaviour, resulting in bias.

This leaves two other possible approaches that need to be considered; interviews (and their various formats) and focus groups. A positive that both these methods share is the ability to use visual aids in the process, which can be used to get the participants reaction to advertisements (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). However, focus groups can be very difficult to facilitate, as some participants can dominate the discussion while others may not feel comfortable talking in front of the group (Cameron and Price, 2009). This requires great skill that a first time researcher may not have. It may be difficult to keep all of the participants interested, as focus groups lack direct interactivity between each participant and the moderator. Furthermore, there can be problems in recording focus groups, distinguishing between voices and transcribing. It may also prove difficult to find enough people for the sample size (typically two groups of at least 8 people) given the time constraints of this study. If a sensitive issue needs to be discussed, such as the topic of this study, a one on one interview may be more appropriate (Cameron and Price, 2009).

Interviews can also seem more natural when compared focus groups, resembling a conversation in a different context (Cameron and Price, 2009). The participants can also feel special as they were the select people chosen and it shows you value their opinion, which along with the more natural feel, can make it easier for them to disclose information (Cameron and Price, 2009). As interviews are interactive in nature, there is no fear of the participant losing interest during the discussion (Cameron and Price, 2009). Finding a suitable number of participants in the given timeframe will also be easier with interviews than focus groups, and as mentioned, sensitive topics such as the use of sexual appeals in advertising are more suited to this method (Cameron and Price, 2009). For these reasons, the method of interviewing will be used. These interviews will be unstructured, as the use of open-ended questions will help examine the area of sexual appeals in advertising in great detail (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010; Lewis et al. 2012). These interviews will be conducted face to face, as with telephone interviews it is harder to create a rapport with the participant if you can't see them (Cameron and Price, 2009) which can make asking questions regarding sensitive issues difficult (Lewis et al. 2012) as the participant may not feel comfortable divulging sensitive information over the telephone (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). As mentioned previously, face to face interviews can also allow for the use of visual aids (such as advertisements, which will be discussed later in this chapter), something which is impossible with telephone interviews.

3.4 Sample

The sampling design that has been chosen for this study is nonprobability sampling. As a result, the findings of the study cannot be confidently generalised or representative of the entire population (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010). However, this type of sampling is required not only due to the time available, but also due to the exploratory nature of the study. The sampling framework that has been chosen for this research is snowball sampling.

Snowball sampling gets its name from an analogy to the way in which a snowball picks up more and more snow as it rolls down a hill (Cameron and Price, 2009). The researcher asks each interviewee to suggest other people they know to participate in the study (Lewis et al. 2012). This also allows the researcher to identify relevant people previously unknown to them. As each new participant is recommended, it can increase their willingness to talk to talk to the interviewer, which is good when discussing issues where trust is important, such as the use of sexual appeals in advertising (Cameron and Price, 2009). This sampling framework is often used in social research. This method is highly unrepresentative (Cameron and Price, 2009; Lewis et al. 2012) but it can allow you to find participants that fall within a certain criteria or have certain characteristics (Lewis et al. 2012). There can be an issue with bias, as the participants may recruit people similar to them, resulting in a homogenous sample (Lewis et al. 2012). However this can be reduced by asking the participants to suggest people outside their immediate

contacts (Lewis et al. 2012). Cameron and Price (2009) state that people should not reject snowball sampling, just acknowledge its limitations and try to reduce them.

The target sample for this study must meet the following criteria. The study is focusing on gathering the views on young adult females, aged between eighteen and twenty-five, who are from Dublin and are religious or of a religious background. The participants must have had a Catholic upbringing. The participants will also be of Caucasian ethnicity and from a working or middle class background. This sample is similar to those used in other studies on this topic, with most studies normally focusing on people between the age of 19-24 (Dudley, 1999) or 18-27 (Dahl et al. 2003) who are attending college. Information regarding the participant's education level and employment status will also be gathered, but this will just be used to help build a profile of them and is not part of the sample criteria. The author intends to interview between eight and ten people from this target sample. The final number of participants will depend on when a point is reached where the data acquired from the interviews begins to repeat itself.

The participants in this study will remain anonymous. They will be described in the study using only certain demographic information (gender, age, religious background) and their names will be changed to "Interviewee [letter]". They will be told what the study is about prior to commencing the interview and what the information gathered will be used for. The interviews will be voice recorded so they can be transcribed afterwards and the participants will be made aware of this before the interview begins. The reason for this is it will allow interviewer to focus on questioning, listening and nonverbal cues (Lewis et al. 2012). It also allows for more accurate recording of data later and as the researcher can re-listen to previous interviews, they can identify areas to improve for future interviews. Furthermore, it will provide the opportunity to use direct quotes to help support any points being made (Lewis et al. 2012). The researcher will understand that this will place the data in a specific context as the interviewee may respond differently with the tape recorder present, and may also have to deal with any technical issues that may arise (Lewis et al. 2012). However, if the participant refuses to allow the interview to be recorded, the interview will go on unrecorded and notes will be taken instead. The participant will be allowed see the transcript afterwards if they so wish, and will have the right to make any amendments or refuse permission for it to be used.

3.5 Field Research

The author initially contacted five people who matched the criteria of the sample in an attempt to find the first participants, who would then hopefully recruit further participants. These five possible participants were contacted with the author sending an image containing an invitation, along with a message (both of which can be seen in Appendix 7.7) explaining the study and what was required of them if they were interested in participating. Of the five people who were contacted, three replied and were interested in being part of the study. The three initial participants recruited a

further five participants in total (a visual representation of this can be seen in Appendix 7.8). At this time, the author felt that a general pattern had appeared in the interviews and no new data regarding the research question or objectives was being found. This resulted in a total sample size of eight participants.

All of the participants were from the Dublin area and came from a Catholic background, as set out in the sample framework. There was a slightly heavier weighting towards the older end of the age range between eighteen and twenty-five. Although these factors weren't part of the criteria, the majority of the sample had attended college and were currently employed. A demographic profile of each of the participants can be seen in Appendix 7.9.

In each of the interviews, a theme sheet was used (see Appendix 7.10). This contained a general outline of the topics to be discussed such as general advertising, offensive advertising, and the use of sexual appeals in advertising as well as other probing questions to be used if necessary. This was used to keep the interview relevant and ensure that the data collected could be used to answer the research question.

In the interviews, advertisements were used as visual aids. These advertisements contained varying degrees of sexual appeals (categorised as low, medium or high) and were also judged independently to ensure that none of them would offend any of the interviewees. The print advertisements came from several fashion brands and contained a number of different sexual appeals, such as partial nudity, suggestive settings and provocative poses. A number of them were published in the United States, where more explicit adverts are permitted. All of these images can be seen in Appendix 7.11 to 7.27.

The interviews took place over two weeks at the beginning of August. The interviews took place at the interviewee's houses, which resulted in a more relaxed and comfortable environment for the participants unknown to the author. The interviews took on average 24 minutes to complete. There are is a breakdown of each individual interview in Appendix 7.28. After each interview was completed the authored transcribed them so the data could be analysed later. The transcripts of the first and last interviews can be seen in the Appendix 7.29. A visual representation of the frequently used words can also be seen in Appendix 7.30.

3.6 Analysis Method

The methods that will be used to analyse the data in this study will be open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Neuman, 2006).

When analysing qualitative data, the researcher tries to develop explanations that are close to concrete data. It is about trying to create a realistic picture and understand social life, rather than to test a causal hypothesis (Neuman, 2006). These explanations are normally extremely detailed but considered in a certain context. The goal is to organise the raw data into a set of interlocked concepts. The analysis uses all the data

used during the field research, such as interview transcripts, field notes and observations (Cameron and Price, 2009)

Qualitative researchers often use general ideas, themes or concepts as tools for making explanations (Neuman, 2006). The first activity of the analysis involves identifying categories, to which a researcher will subsequently attach meaningful parts of the raw data, which is known as open coding. This allows a researcher to rearrange the original data into analytical categories, themes or concepts. Each category is given a suitable name, normally referred to as a code (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2012). This part of qualitative data analysis that is guided by the research questions (Lewis, Saunders and Thornhill, 2012; Neuman, 2006) and the key themes from the literature review (Cameron and Price, 2009). It frees the researcher from becoming overawed in the details of the raw data and encourages a higher level of thinking (Neuman, 2006). Identifying and coding themes allows a researcher to draw meaning from the wider implications in which people use words (Cameron and Price, 2009).

The second method that will be used to analyse the data is axial coding (Neuman, 2006). After the raw data has been organised into a set of initial codes or concepts, the researcher focuses on these initial themes more than the actual data. At this stage the goal is to move toward organising ideas or themes and identify the axis of key concepts in analysis (Neuman, 2006). During this point the researcher looks for causes, conditions, interactions or concepts that cluster together.

The third step undertaken is selective coding (Neuman, 2006). This step involves scanning all the data, themes and concepts that have been identified (Neuman, 2006). This stage is the essence of data analysis, it is the point where the researcher answers their research question and objectives by determining what identified themes stand for, by thinking about explanations for observed patterns and relationships, or by making contrasts and comparisons (Bougie and Sekaran, 2010).

4. Analysis and Findings

4.1 Analysis Introduction

This chapter will detail the findings obtained from the data gathered during the interviews, as mentioned in the Methodology chapter.

The first step at reducing the large amount of data obtained involved attaching codes to important sections of information, which is known as open coding. This process involved reviewing the transcripts from the interviews and identifying key themes, which were significant among the participants. This initial list of codes was reviewed and adapted into a list that can be seen in Appendix 7.31.

The data that these codes were attached to were then organised into themes, which is known as axial coding. This step helped the author to categorise the data to aid answering the objectives and research question. Some of the codes could fit into more than one theme and could be used to answer more than one objective. A table that displays the codes and their relevant themes can be seen in Appendix 7.32.

The themes and codes were again reviewed and altered, with the resulting data then used to create explanations to answer the research questions, through the process known as selective coding.

4.2 General Advertising

The interviewees were given the opportunity to discuss their views on advertising in general. There was an even split among the participants about whether advertising has an influence on their decision to purchase a product. Half of the interviewee's felt that their friend's opinions had more of an influence over their buying behaviour. However, there was a general consensus that advertising was good for creating awareness of a product. The participants were more likely to pay attention to an advertisement if it was for a product they had an interest in. Two of the product categories that were mention were fashion and smartphones. The interviewees paid most attention to online adverts, followed by television and then billboards.

> **Interviewee G** "I'd notice billboard ads the most because they're so 'in your face'"

> **Interviewee D** "TV ads as well and online advertisements if they appeal to me"

None of the participants admitted to paying attention to print advertisements. The use of humour was the most popular advertising tool to gain attention result in viewers liking the advert, followed by celebrity endorsements and the music used. However, celebrity endorsements can have both positive and negative results for the brand.

4.3 Offensive Advertising

When given the opportunity to discuss whether or not they found any advertisements to be offensive (or going too far to be shown in to a mass audience), the majority of the interviewees said they didn't. While this was the general consensus amongst the participants, a small number of possibly offensive issues were identified. Some of these were advertisement for charities such as Concern and anti-drink driving. These adverts that either featured starving children or road accidents were viewed as being too difficult to watch, although it was understood that they were necessary to get a message across.

> **Interviewee C** "Ehm yeah, the charity ads like
> Concern, I understand they need to raise awareness
> and make an impact, but it is hard to watch the poor
> babies!"

> **Interviewee F** "I'd say the car crash ads for drink driving
> go a bit too far, especially ones with kids in them, I don't
> like them"

Other types of adverts that some participants found offensive were those that use unhealthily skinny models, young people in vulnerable situations and the lack of gay/lesbian couples in advertisements.

4.4 General use of Sexual Appeals in Advertising

The majority of the interviewee's did not find the use of sexual appeals in advertising to be offensive. One of the participants believed that this was due to being in a younger age group, and that her opinion may change as she gets older. Over half of the participants believed that sexual appeals are used a lot in advertising; with one participant arguing that sex in general it is also prevalent in TV shows such as Geordie Shore and music videos. Several participants also highlighted that sexual appeals should not be used in adverts that can be seen by children. Although it is not a topic of this study, a number of the participants stated that attractive male models were useful advertising tools for gaining attention and resulted in positive views towards an advertisement.

4.4.1 Objective 1 Findings

To examine the impact the use of sexual appeals in advertising has on gaining the attention of young adult females in Dublin.

Prior to seeing the advertisements used in this study, the data gathered from participants views showed that just over half of the interviewees believed that sexual appeals were good for gaining the viewers' attention.

Interviewee F "It would get your attention more than
an ad without a sexual appeal though"

A couple of the participants even went as far as saying that they were more likely to remember an advert that used a sexual appeal than one which featured a non-sexual appeal. A number of the participants were of the opinion that because sexual images were so prevalent in society, that a low-to-moderate level of sexual appeal would go unnoticed and not gain standout.

Interviewee E "sexual appeals are so over used now I
barely even notice it"

However, after the participants viewed the advertisements used in this study, they believed that the ones they would classify as moderate-to-highly sexual would indeed gain their attention and stand out from other advertisements. This shows that advertisements that use a sexual appeal and abide by the Irish Advertising Standards Authority's regulations are unlikely to gain standout or be viewed as being overly sexual. However, if these standards are changed to allow more explicit advertisements, then sexual appeals would be seen as a good method of gaining viewer's attention, although what impact it has on the viewer will be seen later in this chapter.

4.5 Purchase Intention

4.5.1 Objective 2 Findings

To examine what influence the use of sexual appeals in advertising has on the purchasing intentions of young, adult females in Dublin.

The vast majority of the interviewees were of the opinion that they would not purchase a product because it was advertised using a sexual appeal. The overall feeling was that they, as viewers of an advertisement, were more interested in whether the clothes were nice or not.

Interviewee F "I'd probably buy but because I like the
clothes not the ad" (Regarding the advert in Appendix 7.17)

They felt that unnecessary nudity and suggestive poses took away from the product being advertised, and that they would prefer more focus on the item of clothing being advertised. The participants believed that if a sexual appeal was to be used, a more subtle (low to moderate) sexual appeal would suffice. The interviewee's said that they would be more likely to purchase a product when it was advertised in a colourful scene (Appendix 7.16), as a black and white advert made it difficult to see the clothes (Appendix 7.12).

Highly sexual advertisements were often viewed as cheap, which affected purchase intention negatively when the product advertised was indeed quite expensive (Appendix

7.15). With some of these highly sexual adverts, the participants were unsure what was being advertised, due to more of the models body being shown that the clothes.

> **Interviewee E** "I don't even know what it's meant to be advertising, is it the sheets or the jeans!... They are really not showing off the clothes, it's a stupid ad. "

They would much prefer for the model to be styled well, and one participant recommended that the brands that use partially nude models would benefit more from having models wear more clothes. Not only would this be more appealing as it gives the viewer ideas of what clothes work well together, but it could also lead to increases sales for these brands.

> **Interviewee F** "The ones that were highly sexual, as I said, they were advertising the bottoms and the girl had no top on, like why would you do that when you could try and sell another product along with the trousers and show what goes with them, because when a customer goes into the shop they are probably going to be looking for a top to go with it like, but they are taking away from that by just showing nudity."

Some of the participants were also more likely to think of purchasing a product if the model in the advertisement had a similar body shape to them, and physical attractiveness of the model also resulted in a higher purchase intention. This also worked conversely too, if the model in the advertisement was deemed too skinny, it would have a negative impact on their purchase decision. Advertisements for clothes which focused on one body part also received negative purchase intention, as the participants felt that the ad was selling sex rather than trying to get them to buy a product (Appendix 7.14).

> **Interviewee H** "I would prefer to buy from a brand such as River Island who don't emphasise just one body part"

However, the interviewee's also stated that a low level of sexual appeal or non-sexual advert would likely go unnoticed, also reducing their likelihood of purchasing the product. The general consensus was that, if a sexual appeal was to be used, a more subtle appeal or suggested nudity would be more likely influence their decision to purchase the clothes being advertised. However, whether they liked the clothing being advertised was a more important factor then whether it was advertised in a sexual manner.

4.6 Brand Image

4.6.1 Objective 3 Findings

To discover what impact the use of sexual appeals in advertising has on young, adult female's views on the company's brand.

When the participants were asked could they think of any advertisements that used a sexual appeal, nearly half of them could not think of one off the top of their heads. The other participants were only able to name a brand that used sexual appeals. This seems to suggest that advertisements containing sexual appeals are not memorable for the participants, which suggest that they may not be good for brand recall. Another issue may be that the sexual appeal in the advertisement is not tied to the brand. Some of the brands that used sexual appeals in their adverts that could be recalled were American Apparel, Victoria Secret, Luis Vuitton, Gucci and Dior. Although not part of this study, brands the participants felt used a sexual appeal for men's clothing were Tommy Hilfiger and Abercrombie and Fitch.

From the data collected in the interviews it was found that when advertisements contain unnecessary nudity or overly suggestive poses, the brands image was viewed as "sleazy" and "cheap" by the vast majority of the participants.

> **Interviewee E** "They [American Apparel ads] seem more like they are for sex trafficking than a clothes store" (Regarding the advert in Appendix 7.19)

When the advertisements focused on one of the models body parts, the interviewee's believed this was objectifying and degrading women, which had a negative impact on how they viewed the brand (Appendix 7.21). The use of models deemed "too skinny" that normally attracts negative comments from viewers was also exacerbated by the fact that models in adverts using sexual appeals wear revealing clothing. The brands that used more "curvy" models were viewed more positively.

A number of participants had a negative view of brands that used models that looked under the age of eighteen, as they felt this was exploitative.

> **Interviewee C** "I would like this ad a lot more if the girls were a bit older, they seem very young... Using young models in sexual advertising would make me think negatively about a brand" (Regarding the advert in Appendix 7.16)

They also viewed brands negatively when they used sexual appeals in their adverts for clothes that were aimed at a younger target audience, as this gives them a bad impression of how they should dress. All of the participants were more likely to view a brand positively for having adverts with nice clothes, models that were styled well and a scene that seemed fun (Appendix 7.18). Some of the participants believed that a

moderate level of sexual appeal could make a brand look "cool" and "edgy", especially when targeted at younger audiences. These brands were also more likely to stand out from other fashion brands that do not use a sexual appeal. The overall view from the participants was that nice clothes and adverts that showed off the brands style would create a more positive brand image than the use of sexual appeals.

4.7 Different Levels of Sexual Appeals

4.7.1 Objective 4 Findings

To explore the response and effect of different levels of sexualised appeals in advertising on young, adult females in Dublin.

The majority of the participants in this study were of the belief that a lower, more subtle use of sexual appeal would be more effective overall. The use of female models in highly sexualised adverts does not appeal to them and they do not understand why this tactic is used for products that are targeted at a female audience. They believe that these advertisements are only going to be liked and looked on positively by men.

> **Interviewee G** "I can only assume that they're meant to be advertising to girls…so why have a picture like that which is probably going to arouse guys before girls?"

The interviewees did like the advertisement (Appendix 7.22) that suggested the model was nude but did not show off any part of her body. This was because no nudity was shown and the product being advertised (shoes) were what your attention was drawn to.

A number of different factors in the advertisements used in this study were identified to increase the chance of the participant viewing the advert to be highly sexual rather than contain a low sexual appeal. The first was the models cleavage, which pushed an advertisement from a low sexual appeal to a moderate-to-high sexual appeal (Appendix 7.12). Another factor was how the model was positioned, with suggestive poses resulting in advertisement being viewed as highly sexual. Advertisements that focused on one part of the models body were also viewed as being overly sexual (Appendix 7.27). Other factors included a ladder in one of the models tights (which the participants believe suggested "naughty" behaviour) and suggestive facial expressions (open mouth and look of pleasure).

> **Interviewee G** "I mean their expressions may be a bit suggestive" (Regarding the advert in Appendix 7.16)

The participants believed that full nudity would be going too far, and that some of the suggestive poses in the adverts in this study were "degrading", "sleazy" and "cheap". However, as mentioned previously, the majority of the participants said that they would not pay attention to adverts that contained a low level of sexual appeal. This would

suggest that if a brand intends to use a sexual appeal in their advertisements. They should use a moderate level of sexual appeal.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

This section will compare the findings of this study with that of the previous research discussed in the literature review. The participants in this study had mixed views on sexual appeals ability to gain attention. Some of them believed that an advertisement using this type of appeal would stand out from other advertisements, which echo findings by Reichert (2002), Dahl et al. (2003) Torlak (2011), and Dahl and Sengupta (2008). However, the other participants were of the opinion that because sexual appeals were so prevalent, they did not gain their attention anymore, which concurs with Berger (2007) and Jhally (1997). The participants believed that the moderate and highly sexual adverts shown in this study (which were of a higher level than those normally viewed in Ireland) would gain their attention. As Berger (2007) and Jhally (1997) suggested, marketers are producing more explicit ads in order to break through the "sexual clutter", which would seem to work based on the views on the participants in this study.

The participants in this study did not feel that an advertisement using a sexual appeal would encourage them to purchase the product being advertised, which agrees with findings by Ford et al. (1991). They were more interested in the clothes that were being advertised and how the model was styled. The participants believed that these advertisements were more likely to be liked by men and they did not understand why they would be used to get women to purchase the product. These findings disagree with those by Reichert (2002), Dahlberg and Zimmerman (2008) and Dahl and Sengupta (2008), who found that purchase intention was high with adverts that used a sexual appeal and that the participants would still purchase the product even if the advert offended them.

Regarding brand image, the participants viewed companies who used unnecessary nudity and suggestive poses as "sleazy", "cheap", opinions which mirror those found in research by Ford et al. (1991), Manceau and Tissier-Desbordes (2006), Reichert (2002) and Alexander and Judd (1978). The participants also viewed brands that use models that look young or put pressure on women to look skinny in a negative way. These findings general oppose those found by Dahl and Sengupta (2008). However, one of the participant's view that sexual appeals make a brand seem "edgy" and "cool" did concur with the findings in Dahl et al (2003).

As was found by Reichert (2002) and Ford et al. (1991), the participants in this study did not like advertisements that used highly sexual appeals. They view them as "unnecessary" and "selling sex rather than clothes". However, many of the participants pointed out that a moderately sexual appeal would gain their attention more than a low or non-sexual appeal, which reflects what was discussed by Berger (2007) and Jhally (1997).

Based on the insights gained from the sample in this study, the decision for a brand to use sexual appeals can be very risky. If the advert has a lowly sexual appeal, it may not have standout. If it has a highly sexual appeal, it may alienate its target audience. The following quotes would suggest how the participants feel sexual appeals in advertising should be implemented:

> **Interviewee A** "I think sexual appeals can be done in two ways, a classy elegant way and a cheap racy way"

> **Interviewee C** "Although it seems like a lot of the ads shown were more extreme and would make you look at the ad, I think that more subtle sexual appeal in advertising would be far more effective in terms of my decision to buy or view on the brand"

It would seem a moderate level of sexual of sexual appeal would be ideal, but even then it would be difficult to qualify what that is due to differing opinions amongst viewers. It would seem that before using sexual appeals in advertising, the company must consider the brand image they are trying to convey and the characteristics of their target audience.

5.2 Limitations

One of the main limitations of this study was time, as it also impacted and caused a number of other limitations. The first nine months was done concurrently with other modules and their subsequent exams. The time that could solely be devoted to this study was just over three months.

The secondary research conducted to form the literature review also had its limitations. This was due to the restricted access to some journals, books and databases. Considering the topic of the study (sexual appeals) and the other areas touched on (feminism and religion), there wasn't the ample resources available to the author that he would have liked as the college does not focus any of their syllabuses on them. This study was also limited by the word count and the scope of the research. This resulted in a lot of interesting material being removed (or placed in the appendix) due to it being too long or not being directly relevant to the study.

There was also a difficulty in getting people to participate in the interviews. This is due to both the time pressures the author and the possible interviewees were under and the sensitive nature of the topic at hand. Another way in which time impacted the study was some possible sub-objectives had to be left out. The author had considered interviewing employee's at marketing agencies to get their perspective on the use of sexual appeals in advertising (as was suggested by Gould,) but this would have proven difficult to organise in a short timeframe.

A further limitation to this study is the fact it cannot be representative to the entire population. This is due to the fact qualitative research methods and nonprobability sampling was used. This means the findings that were extracted from the data can only be used to describe the attitudes of the sample. Another one of the main limitations is that this is the first time the author has conducted his own research. This could have resulted in some bias in the data that was collected during the interviews. A final limitation is that this research is only a snapshot to the target samples current thinking, and is not one that has been done over time. This means there is no way to tell if there was a point when attitudes changed or how they were before, other than compare the findings to previous research.

5.3 Recommendations

For researchers: The use of advertisements as visual aids in the interviews was useful not only because some participants could not think of ads themselves, but also because it allowed the researcher to see how different participants viewed the same advert. The author would recommend using this tool to anyone who was undertaking similar research. The author would also recommend the snowball sampling framework to anyone doing research on a sensitive topic. As the participants were friends or recruited by friends, it helped to build trust and make them comfortable discussing sensitive issues.

If another researcher wanted to replicate this study, there are a couple of other approaches the author would suggest. The first would be to use focus groups as the research method. As mentioned previously in the methodology chapter, there are several benefits from using this method and it would gain a different insight into the topic than the one this study produced. The other approach, although it may be unfeasible due to ethical issues surrounding participant permission, is social media monitoring. As brands post pictures of their products and advertisements on social media, followers often give their views on these images. This information could be analysed to give yet another perspective on the topic.

Throughout the process of this study, a number of other broad research areas were identified, these included: the use of celebrities and sexual appeal in advertising, the use of attractive male models with attractiveness-unrelated products, the influence of male/female interaction in advertisements using sexual appeals and brand/advert recall of advertisements that use a sexual appeal over time.

For marketers: Based on the insights gathered from the sample in this study, the author would recommend that marketers who intend to use a sexual appeal in their advertisements should use a moderately sexual appeal. This is due to some of the participants suggesting that a low sexual appeal does not stand out and the majority of the participants viewing a high sexual appeal as "cheap" and "sleazy". It would also be recommended that marketers use online and TV advertising over print, as these were the

media that the participants said they paid most attention to. Other suggestions would be to focus on the style and clothes of the brand and avoid using models that could be viewed as being too young. Finally, marketers should conduct thorough research in their target audience to ensure that they will respond positively to sexual appeals.

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7. Appendices

7.1 Brooke Shields Calvin Klein Jeans advert
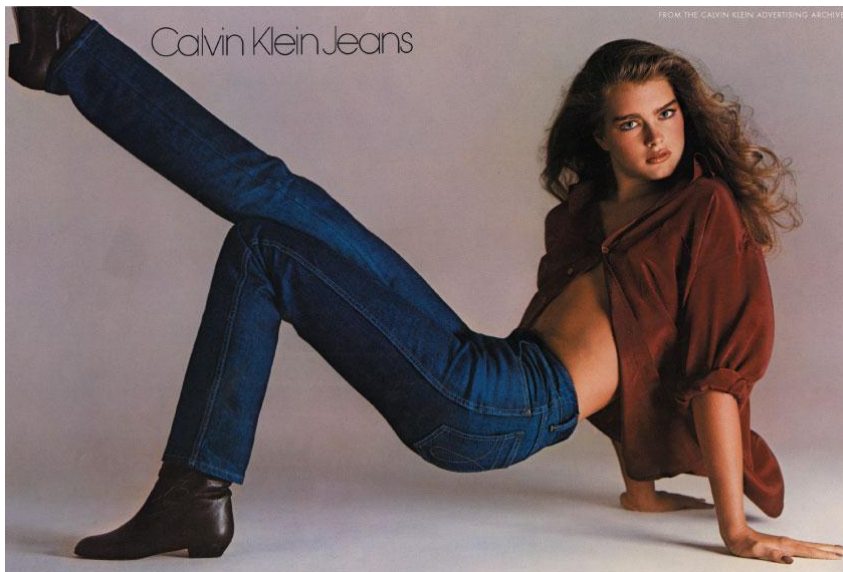
7.2 Guess Jeans advert
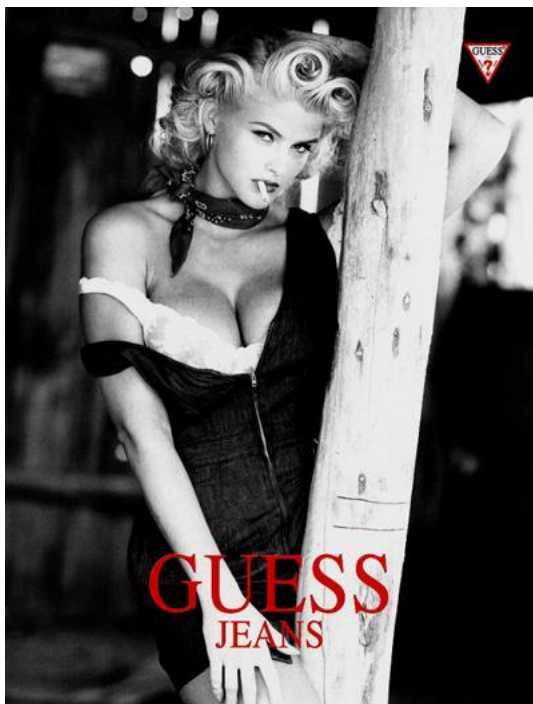
7.3 Wonderbra advert

This advertisement for Wonderbra shows a young woman wearing only a black, cleavage-enhancing bra. Located between the breasts are the words: 'I can't cook. Who cares?'- emphasizing the view that her curvy body is far more important than any other feminine attributes she may or may not have (Gill, 2008).
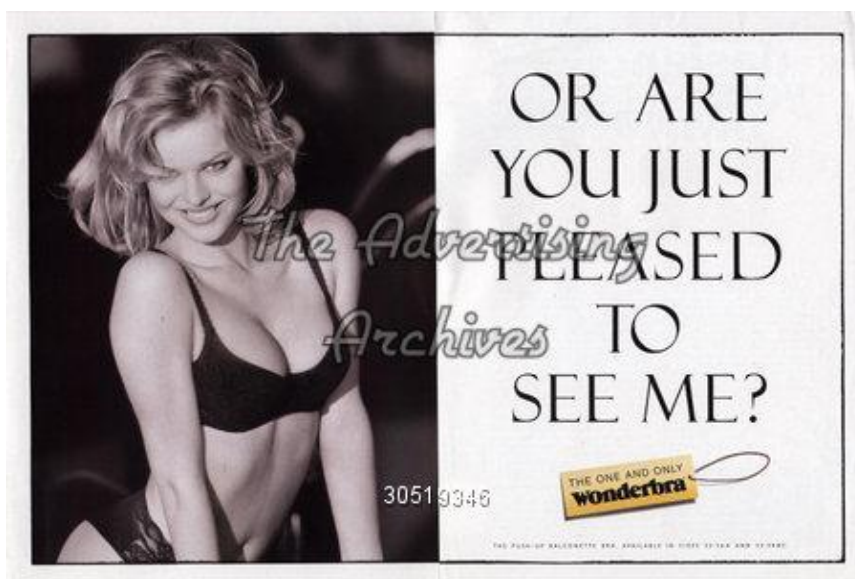
Another Wonderbra advertisement featuring model Eva Herzigova's face and cleavage, and contained the quote from Mae West: 'Or are you just pleased to see me?' The beginning of this quotation – 'is that a gun in your pocket?' which implies that the male viewer had an erection – was left out, for the viewers to fill in. This was no passive, objectified sex object, but a woman who was knowingly playing with her sexual power (Gill, 2008).

7.4 Calvin Klein advert that caused outrage
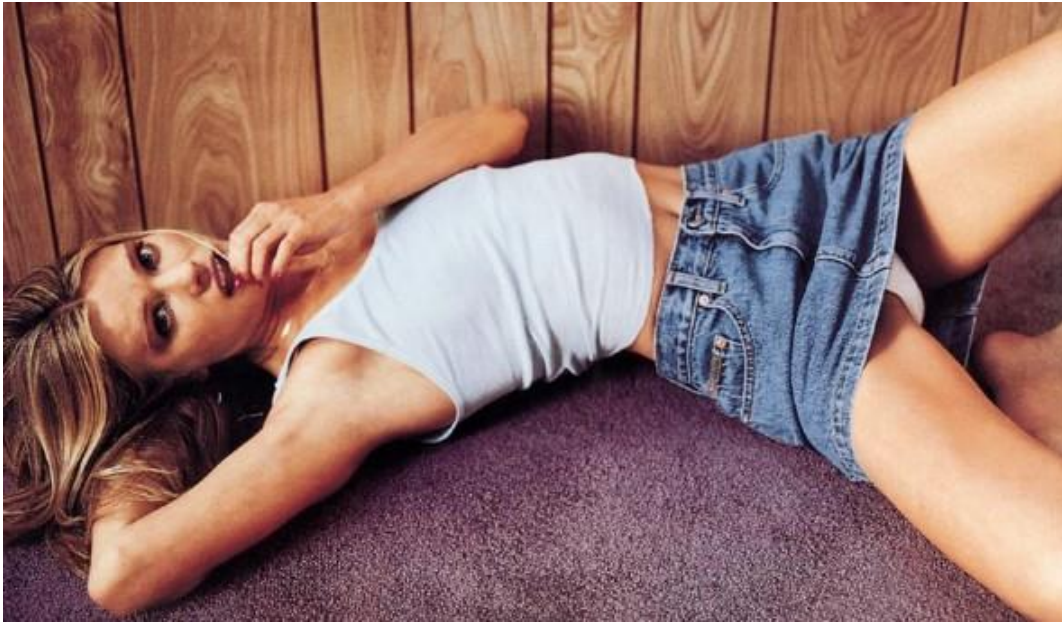
7.5 Advertising Standards Authority UK statistics on complaints

Year	No. of complaints	No. of ads complained about	No. of ads banned
2013*	89	42	1
2012	139	72	7
2011	347	120	8
2010	114	39	1

<u>Complaints of harm / offence about ads related to sex (upheld means we ruled in favour of the complainant i.e. the ad was banned)</u>

*First six months of 2013

**Please note the ASA extended their online remit in 2011 which increased complaint numbers

(asa.org.uk, 2013)

7.6 Advertising Standards Authority UK complaint examples

Brand	Media	Year	Reason for complaint	Complaints	Result
Agent Provocateur	On own website	2012	Sexual imagery could be seen by children as no age restriction	1	Upheld
ASSOS of Switzerland	On own website	2012	Sexual imagery was viewed as offensive and demeaning to women	1	Not upheld
Calvin Klein	Transport	2012	Offensive to Jewish people as it featured a woman in underwear, could be viewed by children in public	1	Not Upheld, Not Upheld
American Apparel	Magazine	2010	Sexual imagery featuring young-looking girl in provocative pose	1	Not Upheld
Diesel	Magazine, Poster	2010	Sexual imagery was said to be offensive, could be seen by children, condoned anti-social behaviour	33	Upheld, Upheld, Upheld
American Apparel	Magazine	2009	Sexual imagery could be seen by children, ad sexualised a young looking girl	1	Not upheld, Upheld

Upheld = Advert was banned

(asa.org.uk, 2013)

Hello _____, I'm doing interviews for my Master's dissertation and was wondering if you would be interested in taking part? I'm just beginning this part of my research so I'm just asking a few people that are in the target demographics I'm looking for. The interviews are about young, adult women (18-25 year olds) from Dublin view's on advertising and the use of sexual appeals, particularly focusing on fashion advertising. They are done face to face in a location that suits you, at a time that suits you between the 26th of July and the 15th of August. The total time (introduction, interview and closing discussion) should take about an hour. If you are the slightest bit interested and would be able to participate or would like more information, please let me know! Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope to hear back from you!

7.8 Snowball Sample diagram
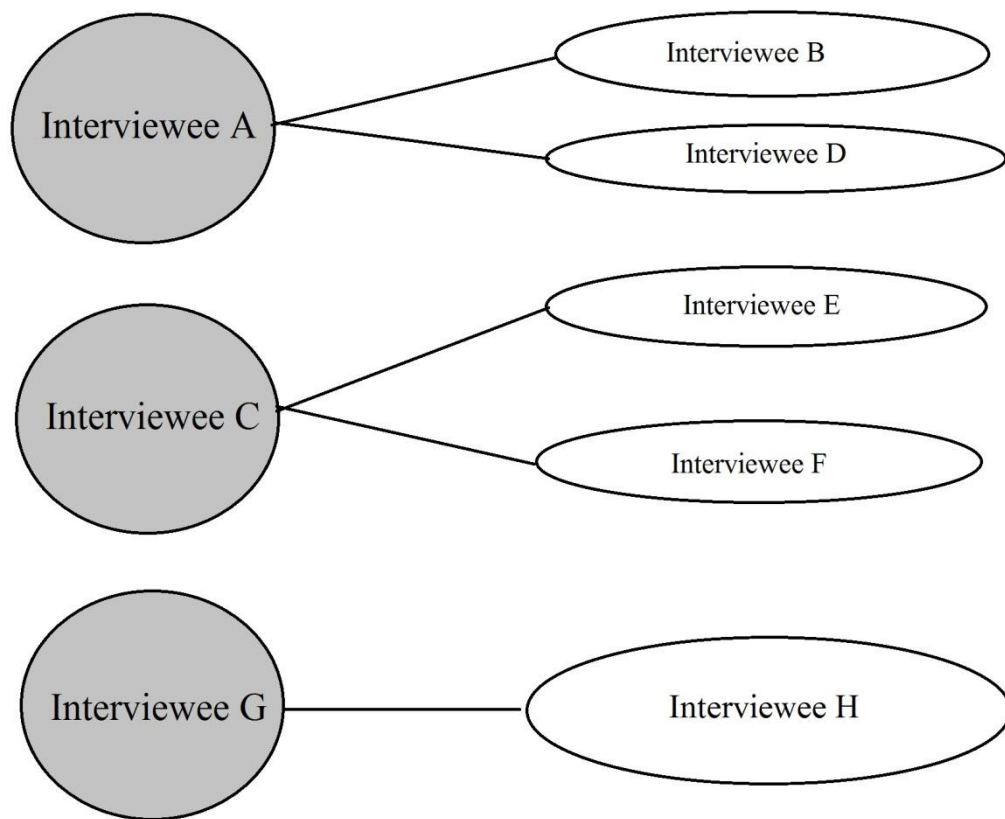
7.9 Interviewee Profiles

Interviewee A	
Gender:	Female
Age:	22
County of Residence:	Dublin
Religious Background:	Comes from Catholic Family
Occupation:	Civil Servant
Education level:	College

Interviewee B	
Gender:	Female
Age:	20
County of Residence:	Dublin
Religious Background:	Comes from Catholic Family
Occupation:	Sales Assistant
Education level:	College

Interviewee C	
Gender:	Female
Age:	22
County of Residence:	Dublin
Religious Background:	Comes from Catholic Family
Occupation:	Client Services Advisor
Education level:	College

Interviewee D	
Gender:	Female
Age:	19
County of Residence:	Dublin
Religious Background:	Comes from Catholic Family
Occupation:	Sales Advisor
Education level:	Leaving Certificate

Interviewee E	
Gender:	Female
Age:	24
County of Residence:	Dublin
Religious Background:	Comes from Catholic Family
Occupation:	Promotions
Education level:	College

Interviewee F	
Gender:	Female
Age:	24
County of Residence:	Dublin
Religious Background:	Comes from Catholic Family
Occupation:	Student
Education level:	College

Interviewee G	
Gender:	Female
Age:	25
County of Residence:	Dublin
Religious Background:	Comes from Catholic Family
Occupation:	Student
Education level:	College

Interviewee H	
Gender:	Female
Age:	21
County of Residence:	Dublin
Religious Background:	Comes from Catholic Family
Occupation:	Barmaid
Education level:	College

7.10 Theme Sheet used in interviews

Introduction

- State purpose of the interview
- Assure complete confidentiality
- Explain the interview process, length of time, check happy with it being recorded

Advertising

- Do you watch/pay attention to them?
- Does advertising impact on your purchasing decision/brand view?
- If so, what impact and where does it rank in comparison to other factors?
- Specifically to fashion?
- State purpose of the interview
- Assure complete confidentiality
- Explain the interview process, length of time, check happy with it being recorded

Advertising can be viewed as offensive?

- What offends you?
- Examples?

Sexual appeals can sometimes be viewed as offensive?

- How do you view the use of nudity and sexual appeals in advertising?
- How do you feel about the different degrees and variations?
- Affect purchase intention?
- Affect brand image?

Can you think of examples of ads you view as sexual?

- What ones do you like?
- What ones do you dislike?

Do you mind if I show you some examples?

- Can you evaluate these advertisements for me?

Closing points

- Any other opinions/questions?

Interview termination

- Thank them for their participation, reassure confidentiality
- Debrief on how findings will be used, say they can have a copy of the transcript if they want
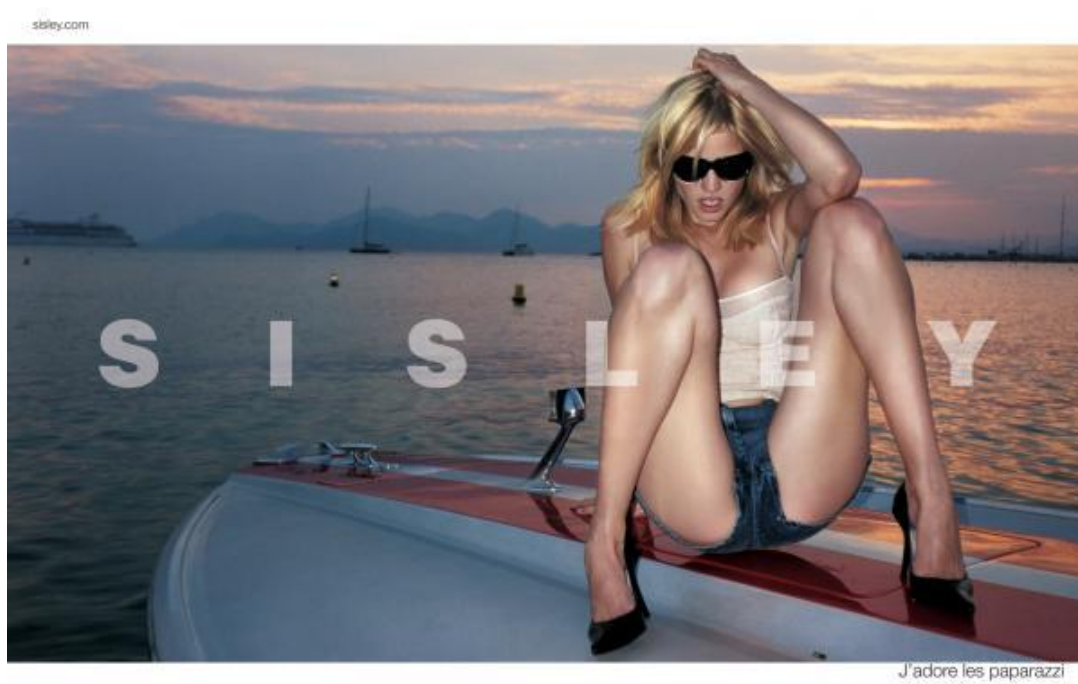- If they say something after tape is turned off, ask if it can be used

7.11 H&M Advertisement [Image 1]

7.12 Topshop Advertisement [Image 2]

7.13 Sisley Advertisement [Image 3]

7.14 American Apparel Advertisement [Image 4]

7.15 American Apparel Advertisement [Image 5]

7.16 Bershka Advertisement [Image 6]

7.17 American Apparel Advertisement [Image 7]

7.18 River Island Advertisement [Image 8]

7.19 American Apparel Advertisement [Image 9]

7.20 Bershka Advertisement [Image 10]

7.21 American Apparel Advertisement [Image 11]

7.22 River Island Advertisement [Image 12]

7.23 Sisley Advertisement [Image 13]

7.24 New Look Advertisement [Image 14]

7.25 Bershka Advertisement [Image 15]

7.26 American Apparel Advertisement [Image 16]
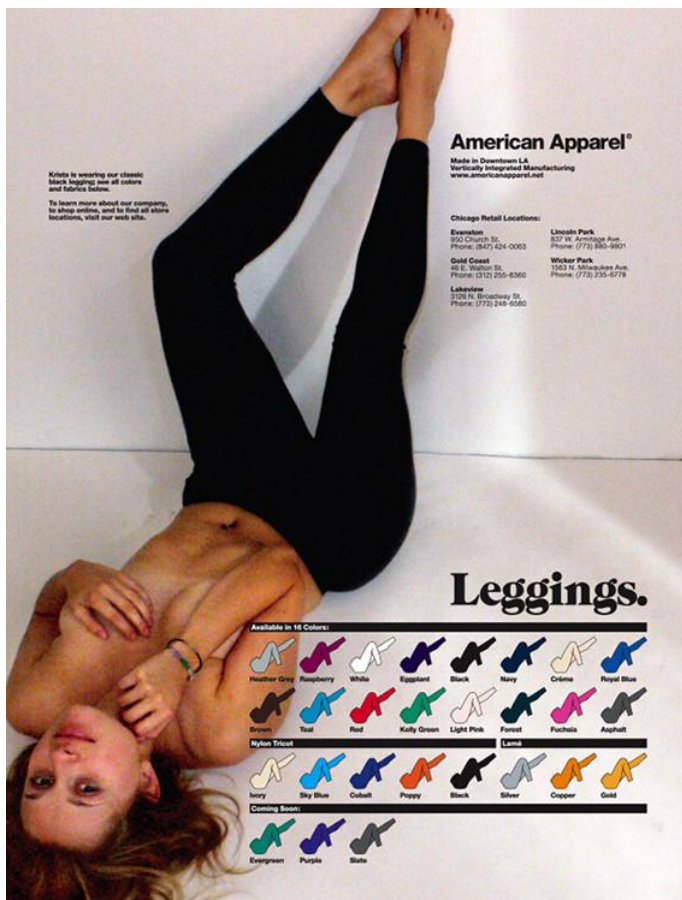
7.27 Sisley Advertisement [Image 17]
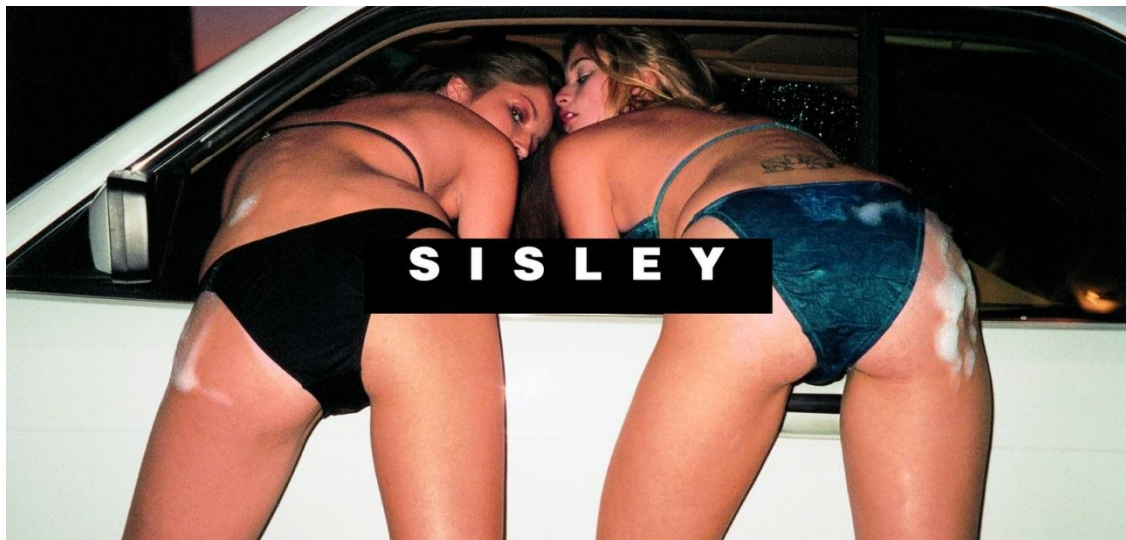
7.28 Interview location and time information table

Interview	Date	Time	Duration
Interview A	31/7/13	8.05p.m.	24 minutes
Interview B	1/8/13	1.25p.m.	21 minutes
Interview C	2/8/13	8.35p.m.	22 minutes
Interview D	5/8/13	3.15p.m.	20 minutes
Interview E	6/8/13	2.30p.m.	25 minutes
Interview F	6/8/13	5.15p.m.	22 minutes
Interview G	9/8/13	4.10p.m.	29 minutes
Interview H	13/8/13	1.30p.m.	28 minutes

7.29 Interview transcripts (first interview and last interview)

Interview 1

Interviewer: Ian Notaro (the author)

Interviewee: A

Interview Setting: Interviewee's sitting room

Date: 31/7/13

Time: 8.05p.m.

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: First of all, thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of this study is to discover young women's views on advertising and the use of sexual appeals, particularly in fashion advertising. Anything you say in the interview will be confidential and you will remain anonymous in the written study, just being referred to as something like interviewee A. If you wish to view the transcribed version you can and are allowed to make any changes you want. The interview will take a maximum of 45 minutes depending on how long your answers are. There is no right or wrong answer; I'm just looking for your views and your opinions on the different areas. If you need me to clarify anything just interrupt me and I will rephrase it. We'll start the interview now if that's okay with you?

Interviewee: Yeah that's fine.

Interviewer: What is your general view on advertising?

Interviewee: For the most part, I do pay attention to ads to be honest but I do blank out a lot too… I tend to watch the ads on YouTube videos and online far more then I would a newspaper or TV... The things that tend to catch me with those ads are that they are accompanied by a soundtrack, which usually is the first thing that draws me to watch an ad, followed by the quality and or humour it's made with. My friend's opinions tend to mean a lot more to me than advertising.

Interviewer: That's great, now some people can view advertising as being offensive, what would your opinion be?

Interviewee: I don't generally find ads offensive… ads with half naked people in them can be annoying but as I said the ads that I pay most attention to are online ads and they tend to be a bit more racy then those shown on TV... I suppose I do find it annoying but I tend to block those out at this stage… I suppose ads containing nudity should have a water shed time similar to that on the TV, because from what I have seen there is none.

Interviewer: Some people can view sexual appeals as being offensive, how would you view the use of sexual appeals in advertising?

Interviewee: There is a lot of ads that are based on sex appeal, to be honest it would never influence me to buy something but it is eye catching and I guess somewhere in my mind it tends to be stored more than an ad without a sex appeal... I don't find them offensive however they can go too far like the ones that American Apparel use, this might sound over the top but I think they almost look like low budget still shoots from porno's , they look a bit racy... I think sexual appeals can be done in two ways, a classy elegant way and a cheap racy way.

Interviewer: Could you think of any advertisements that use sexual appeals in fashion ads?

Interviewee: I can't think of any ads in particular but American Apparel and Victoria Secret would be brands I'd say use them.

Interviewer: I have some examples here if it's okay with you to go through them? Just describe how much of a sexual appeal you think they are, why you think this and whether you like the ad?

Interviewee: Yeah that's grand.

Interviewer: Image 1

Interviewee: This would be lowly sexual… I do like the ad, it's classy not cheap and it would influence me to buy… it almost gives the brand an essence of expensive.

Interviewer: Image 2

Interviewee: This one would also be lowly sexual… it looks expensive, the graphics are attractive, the model is not over the top and it shows off the product well… I would buy the product off this brand.

Interviewer: Image 3

Interviewee: I'd say this is a medium one; the legs are a bit much… I wouldn't be influenced to buy, in fact I wouldn't be interesting in looking in the store at all… it definitely cheapens the brand

Interviewer: Image 4

Interviewee: I'd say this is a medium sexual appeal… it's not the worst I've seen from them (American Apparel)… I think it does show off the product well and I would probably buy from them.

Interviewer: Image 5

Interviewee: Yeah this is highly sexual, this is a bit much like really it looks cheap and like that picture was never meant to be seen... I wouldn't buy it, especially knowing that those jeans cost about 100 euro.

Interviewer: Image 6

Interviewee: This one would be lowly sexual… it looks like it was cheaply produced, things like that come across to me as cheapening the brand… I wouldn't buy based on this.

Interviewer: Image 7

Interviewee: [Laughs] this is like I said about the cheap porno still shots… it's so random and not appealing at all… It is obviously highly sexual.

Interviewer: Image 8

Interviewee: This one would be lowly sexual… it is eye catching but unlike the pervious one it's because of the clothes and the style… its appealing and would influence me to buy and view the brand well.

Interviewer: Image 9

Interviewee: Yeah I'm not a fan of this either, it's weird, I feel like these girls are seriously just rolling out of bed and it's not hot or attractive it's just cheap and dirty looking… it does the clothes no justice.

Interviewer: Image 10

Interviewee: This one would be lowly sexual… it's not very eye catching and wouldn't influence me to buy.

Interviewer: Image 11

Interviewee: I actually think while this is borderline high, it's kind of funny like the text under the caption is funny and it is eye catching but it wouldn't get me to buy from them.

Interviewer: Image 12

Interviewee: Yeah this one would be low… I like this one, its expensive looking and interesting… it keeps you guessing while also showing off the product really well.

Interviewer: Image 13

Interviewee: This is the same as their [Sisley] previous ad; it's just unnecessary... while I do think the graphics are good and eye catching it wouldn't encourage me to buy.

Interviewer: Image 14

Interviewee: This is a poor one; it's low in my opinion but extremely cheap which does not appeal to me at all.

Interviewer: Image 15

Interviewee: This one would also be lowly sexual, there's not much to it… It wouldn't encourage me to buy it, it's boring and not eye catching at all.

Interviewer: Image 16

Interviewee: Yeah this one is highly sexual… it's not a great one again like I said borderline porno stills… it has to be said there is something dirty about it and I don't mean in a sexual way.

Interviewer: Image 17

Interviewee: [Laughs] it's a medium level sexual appeal but cheap as fuck… I wouldn't buy here at all… it's similar to American Apparel, it just looks cheap.

Interviewer: Overall, what would be your view on the ads and the brands that use them?

Interviewee: American Apparel is an expensive brand but the ads are cheap and vile! The women look like they are in bits… the brand might be expensive to buy but the clothes and the ads are cheap… River island are expensive and there ads portray this I think… H & M ads tend to be glossy and well-presented which is appealing as the brand is quite cheap so this enlightens its appeal.

Interviewer: Okay that's great, are there any other points or comments you would like to make?

Interviewee: No I think that's all.

Interviewer: Okay well thank you for taking part in the interview. Again, I would just like to reassure you that all the information will be kept confidential; your name will not be used in the actual dissertation. You can have a copy of the transcribed interview if you want, just in case you want to make sure I didn't misquote you. After this interview I will provide you with information in case you were affected in any way by the material discussed.

Interviewee: That's great, no worries.

Interviewee 8

Interviewer: Ian Notaro (the author)

Interviewee: H

Interview Setting: Interviewee's sitting room

Date: 13/8/13

Time: 1.30p.m.

(Start of Interview)

Interviewer: First of all, thank you for participating in this interview. The purpose of this study is to discover young women's views on advertising and the use of sexual appeals, particularly in fashion advertising. Anything you say in the interview will be confidential and you will remain anonymous in the written study, just being referred to as something like interviewee A. If you wish to view the transcribed version you can and are allowed to make any changes you want. The interview will take a maximum of 45 minutes depending on how long your answers are. There is no right or wrong answer; I'm just looking for your views and your opinions on the different areas. If you need me to clarify anything just interrupt me and I will rephrase it. We'll start the interview now if that's okay with you?

Interviewee: Yeah that's fine.

Interviewer: What is your general view on advertising?

Interviewee: Since I started studying business, to be honest I pay more attention to ads… I would pay more attention to TV ads and online rather than print and billboards… I like humorous ads, actually at the moment I love the Ikea ad I think it's amazing and extremely clever… In terms of ads having an influence on me compared to my friends, I would care more about what my friends wear or what they advise me to buy.

Interviewer: That's great, now some people can view advertising as being offensive, what would your opinion be?

Interviewee: Ehm, there aren't any ads I find offensive to be honest, there has been nothing that I went oh that's quiet rude or I am not happy about that.

Interviewer: Some people can view sexual appeals as being offensive, how would you view the use of sexual appeals in advertising?

Interviewee: Sexual appeals don't really bother me to be honest I wouldn't pay much attention to them, as I mentioned humorous ads catch my attention more… I can see though how they influence people, there has been a lot more of it in recent years… It

wouldn't influence me to buy a product at all, but I do think the lynx ads for men are excellent and I can see how they would influence men.

Interviewer: Could you think of any advertisements that use sexual appeals in fashion ads?

Interviewee: Ehm, to be honest I can't think of any. Sorry.

Interviewer: I have some examples here if it's okay with you to go through them? Just describe how much of a sexual appeal you think they are, why you think this and whether you like the ad?

Interviewee: Yeah that's grand.

Interviewer: Image 1

Interviewee: I'd say this is lowly sexual, I think the model is dressed appropriately and there is nothing to revelling in the image… I like the ad because it would encourage me to buy the coat; I think it looks classy and elegant. It makes me think H & M are quite a sophisticated brand with relatively low prices.

Interviewer: Image 2

Interviewee: I think this image has medium sexual appeal. It is more revelling than the first image... This isn't something I would buy or wear, it doesn't appeal to me in any at all... I wouldn't be too mad on this ad it's just ok even though I really like Topshop as a brand... The ad is kinda boring even though they are trying to use a sexual appeal.

Interviewer: Image 3

Interviewee: This ad has a medium sexual appeal… I feel the clothes in which she is wearing aren't sexual but I feel the way in which the model is positioned is... I never bought clothes from this brand to be honest and this ad hasn't really had an impact on me… It seems like a good brand, I just never really paid attention to it before.

Interviewer: Image 4

Interviewee: Ehm, I think this has medium sexual appeal… It's focusing on one part of a women's body only… It's giving the impression if you wear these disco pants you will have a bum like hers... I like American apparel and would purchase their clothes... I view this brand as fun and kinda outgoing.

Interviewer: Image 5

Interviewee: Ok I'd view this ad as highly sexual most definitely… I don't particularly like it as I think it's giving women this perception of how they should look. Flat tummy's, and even in the heading there is use of the word "slim". These types of ads I feel put some pressure on women about how their bodies should look.

Interviewer: Image 6

Interviewee: [Smiled] I love Bershka clothes... I would view this ad as lowly sexual, they are in bikinis and shorts and there is nothing too crazy about that. I like the ad, it's not too fussy and there's a nice use of colouring… This ad would encourage me to buy this product and my view of the brand hasn't changed for using this appeal.

Interviewer: Image 7

Interviewee: [Laughs] well ehm, the appeal here is highly sexual I feel… So the clothes the model is wearing aren't sexual but the way they have the model positioned in the ad is extremely sexual... Their (American Apparel) first ad you showed me didn't bother me at all and I said how I liked their brand, but this one is a bit too much and I don't like it at all… So after been shown these ads I feel that sexual ads must bother me, before I was in this interview situation I never paid attention to sexual ads, but now I feel I do.

Interviewer: Image 8

Interviewee: I feel this ad is lowly sexual... I like it, I think it's a fun and quirky ad by River Island and it works well... It's different and the clothes the model is wearing are cool... I would buy the product and I still love the River Island brand.

Interviewer: Image 9

Interviewee: Ehm, this ad is definitely highly sexual... Even though she's wearing like a polo neck it is still so revealing... I don't like it; I feel the ad is a bit much for winter clothes if that's what they're getting at with the woolly jumper… I like the jumper but I would wear it with leggings or jeans but the ad has actually annoyed me a bit, it's a bit over the top.

Interviewer: Image 10

Interviewee: Another good one from Bershka, I think it's lowly sexual again… The girl clothes are cute and nothing too crazy about this ad... I would buy these clothes; the ad matches the brand well. The ad is fun loving with models wearing nice clothes.

Interviewer: Image 11

Interviewee: Oh! Ok I think it's highly sexual, the other ad that they (American Apparel) had on the disco pants I felt focused on one body part only and this is the same except the last ad the model was fully clothed... I don't really like it I feel it lacks colour. It wouldn't be eye catching to me anyway… It says the "morning after"; I found this a bit strange.

Interviewer: Image 12

Interviewee: Eh, this one is lowly sexual… yeah so she's in the bath, but it's not really sexual... I like the ad it's colourful, love the shoes, I would buy them and I think yet again more creativity from River Island.

Interviewer: Image 13

Interviewee: This ad is ehm [pause] a medium sexual appeal I'd say... Its more the way the model is in the photo than the clothes, I think they are going for adventure as well as an sexual appeal, the bull horns I feel is there way of being adventurous especially with the model in red... I don't really like the ad I find it strange as I said before I never bought their clothes.

Interviewer: Image 14

Interviewee: I would say this ad is a medium sexual appeal... Her top half is fine but she's in fairly tight skimpy shorts [laughs]… The ad is ok, it is eye catching but unrealistic, who cleans the streets dressed like that but I'm guessing that's what advertising is all about... I like New Look clothes and I still do, the ad wouldn't change my opinion.

Interviewer: Image 15

Interviewee: The ad has a low sexual appeal… I like it, the ad is pretty and girlie and it's cute… You can just see the bikini top, there is nothing too extravagant about that, but it works… I would buy the top and the glasses, I think it's cool.

Interviewer: Image 16

Interviewee: [Laughs]. It's like the woolly jumper again, the leggings cover up the whole bottom half and I have never seen leggings as highly sexual, however this ad is highly sexual… Even after seeing this ad I still could never view leggings as sexual, I love them but I see them as comfort… The ad is ok, I think I like it because I love the item of clothing in it, I actually would buy this product.

Interviewer: Image 17

Interviewee: This ad has a medium sexual appeal... Ok so they are wearing bikinis, everyone does but it's not like the Bershka ad, the models in that one are wearing bikinis but they are standing up straight and it looks like they are having fun and the ad is cute and pretty whereas this ad they are bent over and the that's the first thing you can see... This wouldn't appeal to me and I don't really like it to be honest.

Interviewer: Overall, what would be your view on the ads and the brands that use them?

Interviewee: Highly sexual ads don't appeal to me, I think they sometimes give both men and women a perception of how there body should be, and I think that's wrong everyone should feel comfortable in their own skin. From the ads above I really like River Island and Bershka as they did it perfectly, their ads are fun loving and nice,

there's nothing too crazy about them... I would prefer to buy from a brand such as River Island who don't emphasise just one body part they prefer to be quirky and that appeals to me more. I would buy lowly or medium sexual appeals.

Interviewer: Okay that's great, are there any other points or comments you would like to make?

Interviewee: Before we started I thought ads with sexual appeal, I never paid any attention to them but after been shown them I do actually feel something towards them. That's the only point really.

Interviewer: Okay well thank you for taking part in the interview. Again, I would just like to reassure you that all the information will be kept confidential; your name will not be used in the actual dissertation. You can have a copy of the transcribed interview if you want, just in case you want to make sure I didn't misquote you. After this interview I will provide you with information in case you were affected in any way by the material discussed.

Interviewee: No problem, best of luck.

7.30 Interview Word Cloud

Attention: Interviewee F *"It would get your attention more than an ad without a sexual appeal though"*

Attractiveness: Interviewee C *"I don't think the model is that nice anyway... Perhaps that makes a difference; as if she was more attractive I might be more partial towards it"*

Body: Interviewee C *"The girl looks curvy and I could relate to that"*

Brand names: Interviewee A *"American Apparel… Victoria Secret"* and Interviewee E *"Louis Vuitton"*

Cheap: Interviewee E *"it gives a cheap impression of the brand"*

Cleavage: Interviewee B *"because of the cleavage on show"*

Clothes: Interviewee D *"because the clothes are nice"*

Colour: Interviewee H *"and there's a nice use of colouring"*

Dislike: Interviewee B *"I don't like this ad and it wouldn't make me want to buy the product"*

Encourage: Interviewee G *"so it doesn't really encourage me to go and buy something from there"*

Influence: Interviewee A *"it's classy not cheap and it would influence me to buy"*

Like: Interviewee E *"I like the ad though because of the scene, it looks professional"*

Media: Interviewee G *"I'd notice billboard ads the most because they're so 'in your face'"* and Interviewee D *"TV ads as well and online advertisements if they appeal to me"*

Model: Interviewee F *"the models aren't too anorexic either"*

Negative: Interviewee C *"It would make me think negatively about the brand"*

Nudity: Interviewee A *"I suppose ads containing nudity should have a water shed time"*

Offensive: Interviewee G *"that kind of caption could be really offensive to people"*

Pose: Interviewee B *"but the pose is a bit suggestive"*

Purchase: Interviewee H *"This ad would encourage me to buy this product"*

Sex: Interviewee B *"they just seem interested I selling sex"*

Sexual: Interviewee A *"it has to be said there is something dirty about it and I don't mean in a sexual way"*

Subtle: Interviewee C *"I think that more subtle sex in advertising would be far more effective"*

Suggestive: Interviewee G *"I mean their expressions may be a bit suggestive"*

Unnecessary: Interviewee B *"the way she has to be naked to sell the product which is unnecessary"*

Women: Interviewee H *"These types of ads I feel put some pressure on women about how their bodies should look"*

Young: Interviewee C *"The model seems far too young to be posing like that"*

7.32 Themes and Respective Codes

Themes	Codes
General advertising	Media, Influence, Purchase, Attention
Offensive advertising	Offensive, like, dislike, media
General use of sexual appeals	Influence, purchase, attention, media, negative, offensive, like, dislike, encourage
Purchase intention	Purchase, clothes, unnecessary nudity, suggestive, pose, subtle, colour, cheap, negative, model, body, sex, sexual, attractiveness, like, dislike, subtle, encourage, influence
Brand image	Brand names, sexual, attention, unnecessary nudity, suggestive, pose, cheap, body, negative, young, clothes, like, dislike, women, influence
Different levels of sexual appeals	Sexual, model, nudity, cleavage, suggestive, pose, unnecessary, like, dislike, subtle, encourage, influence