

Body size similarity between model and shopper: mitigating the risk in online clothes purchasing

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Abstract

The body positivity movement has been growing over recent years, and increasingly many retailers have started to acknowledge this and have models with different body types present their products and services. While the impact of more “average” rather than skinny models on brand perceptions has been studied in the past (mostly in advertising research), their role in assisting specific product evaluations and purchase decisions has not been investigated. We study how presenting clothes on differently sized models influences consumers who are shopping for clothes online. Across four experiments we find that consumers who perceive the model’s body to be more like themselves perceive a lower level of risk regarding the fit and appearance of the item. This, in turn, results in higher intentions to purchase the item. We discuss the implications and offer recommendations to online retailers.

Keywords: *online retailing; visual merchandising; models*

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