“FINALLY SOME DIVERSITY”: An exploration into the publics’ perceptions of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign in relation to how it challenges the lack of diversity in the mainstream Westernized beauty industry

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the Requirements of Cardiff Metropolitan University for the Degree of Bachelor of Science
Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own independent investigation under supervision of my tutor. The various sources to which I am indebted are clearly indicated. This dissertation has not been accepted in substance for any other degree, and is not being submitted concurrently for any other degree.
Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would thank my supervisor, who I cannot thank enough for offering enormous amounts of guidance, support and patience throughout this project. I was blessed to have had you as my final year supervisor.

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Abstract

Previous research has identified females in western society experience strong social pressures to reach a cultural ideal of thinness and perfection in appearance (Jefferson & Stake, 2009) portrayed by Western beauty ideals in varies media sources. Not only are these pressures experienced in Western society, Western beauty ideals are also effecting non-Western societies. Research by Carneiro et al., (2013) stated interviewee’s living within a Mexican culture, expressed they had cosmetics surgeries to comply with Western European beauty ideals. Diverging substantially away from the mainstream Western beauty ideals, Rihanna’s (2017) ‘Fenty Beauty’ cosmetic products and campaign has included a wide range of skin tones for individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds promoting diversity and inclusivity in the beauty industry. The current study will adopt a qualitative approach, using a thematic analysis with guidance from Braun & Clarke (2006). The current research analysed the first four hundred comments from the public which were extracted from ‘posts’ publicly displayed on the ‘Fenty Beauty’ social media pages (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter) from the 1st of September 2018 to the 7th of September 2017. The current research aims to explore the public’s perceptions of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign in relation to how it challenges the lack of diversity in the mainstream Westernized beauty industry. Limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed.
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1. Introduction

The international fashion and beauty industry is widely criticized for the promotion of unrealistic and unhealthy body standards; exploitation of models and the reproduction of racial and ethnic stereotypes (Kuipers, Chow & Van Der Laan, 2014). Models around the world are predominantly white, often blue-eyed and blonde (Frith, Ping & Cheng, 2005), portraying Western middle-class ideals of slim, pale beauty (Mears, 2011, p. 6). These Western beauty ideals are dominant and are promoted through the current beauty industry which is advertised and displayed in various forms in the media. Such standards of unrealistic Western beauty ideals influenced by the media have contributed to some women developing anorexia, depression and poor self-esteem (Ashikari, 2005). As media communication develops, these negative Western beauty expectations in the media have been transferred and expanded to social media which could have a global impact (Perloff, 2014). Generally, research has demonstrated that the promotion of social media in the beauty industry is affecting women globally, resulting in the increased amount of woman having cosmetic surgery to comply with Western beauty ideals and expectations society has for women (Sepulveda & Calado, 2012).

The beauty industry is not a historically recent phenomenon, throughout history women and men have applied lotions, creams and preparations to change their bodies in order to “conform to aesthetic standards of their day and their social position” (Black, 2004, p.20). Beauty ideals are broadly defined as a cultural representative which endorses ‘looks’ that incorporate various features of the human face and body which are said to define the standards for physical attractiveness within a culture (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007). Calogero, Boroughs and Thompson (2007) suggested a review of the history of beauty ideals would provide the clearest demonstration of the importance of beauty and appearance in the lives of women.

Historically, surviving texts, artefacts, and images from ancient Egypt illustrate the immense amount of time and effort women invested towards the perfection of their bodies (Watterson, 1991). Considerable evidence suggest that this crusade for thinness, beauty and
youth among ancient Egyptian women continues 5,000 years later with women in modern society.

Early research by Chapkis (1986, p. 68) acknowledges and claims that “female beauty is becoming a standardized quality throughout the world, a standard so strikingly Western, white and wealthy it is tempting to suggest there must be a conscious conspiracy afoot”. Consistent with a sociocultural approach, the common component among various perspectives is the idea that beauty ideals contain information about more than just external appearances (Calogero, Boroughs & Thompson, 2007). Female beauty ideals can also be said to provide information about fertility (Buss, 1989) and reflect the distribution of economic and political power in society (Hesse-Biber, 1996) e.g. skin lighters purchased by Victorian women were designed to give the pale, alabaster appearance to signify a lack of physical labour and exposure to the elements (Black, 2004, p.23).

Even though according to Black’s (2004) research the beauty cosmetic industry did not become fully recognisable, commercialised and a mass industry until the 1920s and 1930s, however, during the 19th century we see a shift toward restricting women’s weight. This period seems to represent the early stages of the mass standardising of female beauty in Western culture and the promotion of unrealistic, unnatural beauty and body ideals, e.g. the use of corsets, restrictive garments etc., (Calogero, Boroughs & Thompson, 2007). According to Zones (2000, p. 87) at any given time and place there are fairly uniform and widely understood models of how particular groups of individuals “should” look. Empirical research has further demonstrated the associations between idealised images of female beauty and negative effects on women’s physical, psychological and social well-being (Thompson, et al., 1999).

In today’s society, beauty therapy is a part of a vast multinational industry, the industry includes cosmetics and skin care products, the cosmetic surgery industry, hair care etc., (Black, 2004, p.5). It is not a secret that the beauty industry has often been criticized for being painfully white in representation and casting. Specifically, the ideal woman as reflected by North American media has a very thin body with long legs, light eyes, healthy teeth, clear skin and no wrinkles (Halliwell & Dittmar 2003; Mears, 2011, p.6).
Bartkys’ (2003) research highlights external appearances are extremely important in Western cultures, enhancing physical beauty through the use of different products is seen as a domain of women (Sowad, 2017). Drawing on a sociocultural theoretical model, considerable research has demonstrated the powerful influence of societal factors on these disturbances in girls’ and women’s lives (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, Quinn & Zoino, 2006). According to a recent survey of 3,300 girls and women across 10 countries, 90 percent of all women aged 15 to 64 worldwide wanted to change at least one aspect of their physical appearance (Etcoff, Orbach, Scott & D’Agostino, 2004). Etcoff et al., (2004) research also revealed only 2% of 3,000 women in ten different countries described themselves as beautiful. These findings suggest that there is a global phenomenon concerning women’s anxiety about their appearance, found in many countries from Saudi Arabia to the United States. (Calogero, Boroughs, Thompson, 2007).

Media is one of the strongest ways values and ideals of appearance are communicated to society (Haboush, Warren & Benuto, 2012). Society is influenced by what the media portrays as 'beautiful', many of the models used in the media are idolized and promote unrealistic beauty standards which society compares themselves too. Western European society’s expectations can be seen in the media and in beauty icons such as Barbie dolls; where beauty involves having blue eyes, slim figures and white porcelain skin (Dittmar et al., 2000). A vast amount of research has provided evidence of the negative effects of media influences on body image for example, interviews with adolescent girls revealed that although they recognize that the beauty ideals portrayed in magazines are difficult if not impossible to achieve, they still feel a strong pressure to conform to those ideals and experience negative feelings when they fail to do so (Duke, 2000; Milkie, 1999).

In recent years modern society has highlighted the pressure on young women to conform to such Western standards of beauty by alternative forms of media. Blair, Kelly, Serder and Mazzeo (2012) suggests the internet is the most commonly used form of media e.g. social media, which can be defined as web-based and mobile-based Internet applications that allow the creation, access and exchange of user-generated content that is ubiquitously accessible (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). While social media has been recognized as sites of identity, exploration and expression, Perloff (2014) theorized that many body dissatisfaction effects associated with Westernized beauty ideals, which were found in traditional media
are also likely to be linked to social media e.g. research has shown individuals compare themselves to celebrities or models displayed in the media (Tiggemann & Brown, 2016).

Tiggemann and Slater (2013) further suggested social networking sites such as Facebook and Instagram are used more often than any other website. These social networking sites can be described as web-based platforms on which members can create personal profiles, articulate friendship connections and socially interact with the friend connections by uploading, liking and commenting on content; known as ‘Posts’ such as photos, messages, and videos shared located on newsfeeds (Ellison, Vitak, Gray & Lampe, 2014). This is also supported by statistics from Statista (2017) which illustrated in September 2017 Facebook, Instagram and Twitter were the most popular platforms of social media used worldwide. Marwick (2013, p.2) research explains 50% of American’s use Facebook, 76% of Americans teenagers use social media and 93% of those use Facebook, suggesting social media and computer-mediated communication is central to many individuals’ social lives and suggesting the potential for social media to have a strong influence on the promotion of beauty ideals.

Research by Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis and Kruck (2012) proposed women have reported viewing other individual’s Facebook profile in order to make comparisons to those individuals, their findings concluded that those women who spend more time on Facebook, led to greater face, hair and skin discrepancies. Tiggemann’s (2013) research suggests the reason for the negative relationship of social media and body image is mediated by appearance comparisons in general. Engeln-Maddox (2006) research also suggests that women which do not possess the idealized Western characteristics are considered less desirable, internalization of such standards leads to appearance dissatisfaction and negative consequences. Such standards of unrealistic Western beauty ideals influenced by the media have been a contributing factor to some women in the global world developing anorexia, depression, and poor self-esteem (Ashikari, 2005). Evidence to support these studies can be derived from Festinger’s (1954) Social Comparison theory. The theory proposes that people have an innate drive to evaluate their progress with the absence of objective standards; individuals compare themselves to other individuals to evaluate where they stand. In relation to the above research, Festinger (1954) recognised there were two types of social comparisons, upwards comparisons
which occur when individuals compare themselves to another individual better off than themselves (models, celebrities) which can produce negative consequences e.g. feeling of adequacy, develop anorexia, depression etc. While downwards comparisons can produce positive effects when individuals compare themselves with individuals worse off than themselves. Social media can be said to widen these comparisons, not only to models and celebrities but a vast amount of other individuals globally who use social media and may conform and promote Westernized beauty ideals.

Social media is accessible universally, previous research has suggested the pressure to conform to Western standards of beauty is a global phenomenon. Not only are comparisons to high Western standards of beauty effecting the Western society but also non-western societies. Research conducted by Carneiro, Zeytinoglu, Hort and Wilkins’ (2013) has demonstrated that Western European beauty standards have impacted on other cultures in the world e.g. across Asian and black cultures women are increasingly considered beautiful when they meet Eurocentric ideals in terms of body shape, skin colour and hair texture (Sepulveda & Calado, 2012). Many Asian women undergo surgery in order to copy the facial characteristics e.g. chin, big eyes, or high bridged noses of popular Western actresses (Sepulveda & Calado, 2012) e.g. Asian societies have seen increasing requests in the procedure ‘blepharoplasty,’ where the procedure establishes a crease in the upper eyelid (Carneiro, Zeytinoglu, Hort & Wilkins, 2013).

Research by Carneiro et al., (2013) also illustrated interviewee’s living within a Mexican culture disclosed that they underwent cosmetics surgeries to comply with Western European beauty ideals as the interviewee’s never felt pretty or loveable and desired to be pretty like their friends e.g. white, blonde hair and wore expensive clothes. Even among cultures and countries distant from Western cultures, research by Lewis, Robkin, Gaska and Njoki (2011) identified African women from Tanzania aspired to become “beautiful” like Western Europeans and chose to bleach their skin with creams despite the increasing risk of infertility and skin cancer. This demonstrates the strong influence of Western standards of beauty on global audiences to the point where individuals are willing to endanger their lives to comply with expectations promoted by the beauty industry. Similar research findings by McLoughlin (2013) outlined individuals from different cultures desire paler skin to make a closer comparison to the mainstream Western beauty standards. The
participants of McLoughlin’s (2013) research explained the cultural preoccupation with skin colour was manifested by the media and magazines prioritizing pale skin in beauty and fashion (McLoughlin, 2013). Bissell & Chung’s (2009) research also highlighted societal pressures have changed, e.g. South Koreans’ perceptions of ideal attractiveness in the beauty and body image are based on the adoption of ‘Westernized’ ideals.

As the effects of standardised Western beauty ideals are global, campaigns by brands such as Vogue and Dove have tried to combat issues of the lack of diversity by promoting darker skin toned women in the beauty and fashion industry. Kuipers, Chow and Van Der Laan’s (2014) research identified Vogue as a company who launched initiatives that addressed global moral issues and actively spoke to transnational public. In 2008, Vogue Italia published ‘The Black Issue’ which exclusively featured models of African descent. Vogue was said to have championed racial diversity as it attempts to broaden the Vogue aesthetics by including dark-skinned models (Kuipers, Chow & Van Der Laan, 2014). Like ‘Vogue Black’ the Oriental Beauty frame promotes a broadening of representation of beauty beyond white or Western-dominated standards (Kuipers, Chow & Van Der Laan, 2014).

Dove Cosmetics also tried to tackle the lack of diversity by launching an international campaign in 2003 portraying ‘real women’ of diverse body sizes and ethnic backgrounds (Johnston & Taylor, 2008). Dove considers itself as an esteem-building brand based on enhancing women’s natural beauty (Dye, 2009). However, critiques of the Dove campaign claim it upholds the beauty myths and expectations it aims to reverse e.g. Dove’s magazine ‘Shine’ held a contest to find the most unique hairstyle, while these contests seek to honour an individual women’s uniqueness it also separates women by encouraging them to solely focus on personal external traits rather than encouraging acceptance and collectively against beauty ideals (Dye, 2009). Although diversity has been attempted by other campaigns from brands, the Western beauty ideal still remains dominant and due to the extensive promotion of Westernized models of light skin tones and shades, Westernized ideals remain the desirable expectation for women and girls. The beauty industry predominately only cater for light skin tones and would traditionally only offer 2-3 dark/deep shades (Superticioso, 2017) essentially excluding individuals of very light and very dark skin tones from the definition of beauty.
Newly launched ‘Fenty Beauty,’ a cosmetic brand established by Rihanna a Barbadian singer, song writer and actress intends to fill a palpable void in the beauty industry. ‘Fenty Beauty’ has been described as the new generation of beauty (Ahsan, 2017) and has created a bold shift in cosmetic cultures, focusing on a wide range of hard-to-match skin tones, creating formulas that suit all skin types and covering universal shades (Fenty Beauty, 2017).

‘Fenty Beauty’ released 90 products e.g. 40 foundations shades, 6 cream skin sticks, 1 universal lip gloss ‘Gloss Bomb’ and highlighters in various shades i.e. ‘Trophy Wife’ (Muller, 2017) in 17 countries and 1,600 stores (Ahsan, 2017). However, the most talked about product is the ‘Pro Filt’r Soft Matte Longwear Foundation’ offering 40 different shades, thirteen of them were shades for the darkest of skin tones which has been previously neglected by various other brands.

Diversity and inclusion has also been promoted and demonstrated in the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign by the use of multicultural models. Therefore, positioning itself as an inclusive beauty line for all skin tones e.g. the inclusion of the deep skinned South Sudanese model Duckie Thot and hijab-wearing fashion model Halima Aden (Superticioso, 2017) rather than solely using mainstream Western beauty models. Beauty role models and media experiences serve as sources of inspiration, pride and comfort and contribute to individuals’ development of their sense of self and that these experiences remain salient into young adulthood and possibly beyond (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011). McLoughlin (2013) suggests Rihanna has played a vital re-educational role by featuring models to present a wider range of skin types resulting in developing a positive sense of racial diversity.

Due to the brand’s diversity of tones and shades of the products and also the diversity of models used, ‘Fenty Beauty’ has been seen to be pushing boundaries within the beauty industry, expanding beauty ideals and promoting “beauty for all” (Fenty Beauty, 2017) so that “women everywhere would be included.” The campaign has said to have promoted a sense of women’s empowerment, allowing all cultures to be able to feel beautiful by providing importance and beauty to be associated with diverse ethnic backgrounds which diverge substantially away from the focused and direct promotion of mainstream Westernized beauty standards. These alternative standards may even provide a buffer against mainstream societal pressures, as more young girls are exposed to media content
that promotes the benefits of thinness and attractiveness and lacks exposure of diverse body types and appearances (Bissell & Chung, 2009).

As discussed previous research has shown that the public globally are experiencing pressures to conform or become more westernised. Despite racial diversity previously being tackled in the fashion and beauty industry by cosmetic brands, it is still in its infancy. Kuipers, Chow and Van Der Laan’s (2014) analysis demonstrated that racial diversity has never been explicitly addressed and there is a plea for a broader understanding of human beauty to include diverse body sizes and racial types, signifying broader and more inclusive tastes. Muller (2017) research also suggests the beauty industry has historically failed to represent people of colour in advertisements and products, demonstrating diverse representation is a huge problem in the beauty industry. ‘Fenty Beauty’ by Rihanna could be seen to overcome previous limited diversity campaigns. Rihanna’s ‘Fenty Beauty’ created makeup to inspire, stating “makeup is there for you to have fun with, It should never feel like pressure” and also created products with a wide range of shades, diverging away from the pressure to conform to Western beauty standards experienced in diverse cultures outlined in previous research.

As outlined in the introduction, to explore if ‘Fenty Beauty’ has challenged the lack of diversity in the mainstream Westernized beauty industry the researcher will be using Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as forms of social media which are the most frequently used for the data collection. This is due to social media data being the largest, richest and most dynamic evidence base of human behaviour, providing opportunities to understand individuals, groups and society (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015). It can also provide indications of public opinions regarding specific policies, or reactions to specific media events (Department for Work & Pensions, 2014) e.g. ‘Fenty Beauty’ promoting diversity and inclusion into the beauty industry.

Previous research with reference to beauty, replicates exclusive Western patriarchal deliberation by excluding women of colour, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender and women with disabilities in their participant samples, (Thompson, Heinberg, Altsbe & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999). The current research could be considered to overcome limitations of previous research regarding reduced demographic samples as due to the global use of social media, encapsulating a sample of various ages, sex, ethnicity and religion. Various other research
have adopted a similar method of data collection using social media. Caplan, Purser and Kindle (2017, p.436) used the social media website ‘Reddit’ and explained social media discussions are rich, plentiful and a free source of data of the public’s opinions and personal accounts of lived experiences, especially concerning sensitive or stigmatizing topics.

Also due to the lack of research published in this area because to the recent release of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign, the researcher is interested to see if diversity and the inclusion of a wide range of skin tones and colours offered by ‘Fenty Beauty’ is a buffer from the pressures created by the beauty industry also if whether the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign has challenged the lack of diversity in the beauty industry and how the public have reacted to the campaign.

Therefore the current research aims to explore the public’s perceptions of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign in relation to how it challenges the lack of diversity in the mainstream Westernized beauty industry.
2. **Method**

2.1 **Design**

The current research utilised a qualitative design where the researcher analysed comments from the public responding to the social media “posts” uploaded by the ‘Fenty Beauty’ on their official Facebook, Instagram and Twitter webpages. This research was undertaken using existing data within a limited and specific period. The “posts” on the social media platforms promoted the campaign, products e.g. foundation, highlighter, lip gloss etc., and the models advertising the brand.

2.2 **Sampling**

In accordance with the aims of the research, the data sample was collected from the first 400 comments from the social media posts on the ‘Fenty Beauty’ official Facebook, Instagram and Twitter webpages between the 1st of September 2017 and the 7th September 2017. The researcher envisaged the data as being suitable as a similar sampling criteria was used by Sullivan et al., (2012) i.e. 1000 comments were collected from a social media platform.

2.3 **Data Collection**

The current research analysed text i.e. publicly displayed comments extracted from ‘Fenty Beauty’s posts on their official Facebook, Instagram or Twitter webpages in response to the promotion of the campaign.

Statista (2017) statistics reported Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are the most prominent forms of social media in 2017. Additionally, in accordance to the ‘Fenty Beauty’ official website Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are the only forms of social media which allow the public to publicly comment and provide their views, responses and reactions to uploaded posts by ‘Fenty Beauty’. Therefore the researcher foresaw substantial and extensive data
could be obtained and analysed which may result in meaningful findings, by selecting these three social media platforms.

The public’s comments responding to the social media posts uploaded by ‘Fenty Beauty’ on their Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages will be analysed within the 1st of September 2017 and the 7th of September 2017. These specific dates were chosen due to the release of the product promotion from the 1st of September 2017. A specific one week duration for collecting the public’s responses from the Facebook, Instagram and Twitter following the ‘Fenty Beauty’ promotion date was selected due to the researcher’s desire to capture the immediate public responses which allows for spontaneous reactions towards the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign. These spontaneous responses are more likely to be a truthful representation of the public’s views (Brent, 2014, p.300).

The researcher collected the public’s comments by identifying the number of “posts” on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter webpages within the specific dates, then selecting and highlighting all the public’s comments on the posts, then copying and pasting the comments directly from the social media webpages into a word processing document for storage and analysis. Personal information e.g. usernames, phone numbers, addresses were deleted and excluded from the data to preserve anonymity and provide confidentiality due to pertinent ethical issues identified by the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2013).

2.4 Method of Analysis

In relation to analysing the data, a thematic analysis was conducted due to the flexible approach it offers, its ability to identify and interpret key features within and across the data (Braun & Clarke, 2017), whilst delivering rich descriptions and detailed accounts of the research’s topic (Braun & Clarke, 2006), with the emphasis on producing rigorous and high-quality analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2017). Braun and Clarke’s (2006) paper provided guidance for an accurate analysis in six steps. The first stage consisted of familiarising oneself with the data by repeatedly reading each transcript which is characterized as a “key phase of data analysis within interpretative qualitative methodology” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.87). Stage two involved generating initial codes in a systematic procedure and attempting to identify key concepts and assigning them ‘codes’ which are described as the “smallest unit of
analysis that capture interesting features of the data” (Braun & Clarke, 2017, p.297). The third stage involves the researcher grouping codes into potential sub themes and looking for overarching themes, a theme is described as a “pattern found in the information that describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998, p.7). In this stage some of the irrelevant codes were excluded (e.g. ‘high prices’, ‘money spent’ etc.). The fourth stage involved the themes being reviewed, refined, using these themes a thematic map was produced. Following onto the fifth stage, which entails the researcher to define, label and generate clear definitions for each theme by “identifying the essence of what each theme is about” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.92). Lastly the sixth stage included the final analysis, a written description of each theme and the production of a report.

2.5 Ethical Consideration

In relation to the British Psychological Society (BPS) (2013) guidelines surrounding internet mediated research, the researcher’s methods may encounter “non-obvious complexities” that must be addressed, if potential data collected from online sources should be considered in the public or private domain. However as the data was collected from public social media pages, it can be foreseen that commenters are aware of the information they post to be freely available to the public due to the openness of the social media websites where no passwords were required. Nonetheless, to comply with the BPS guidelines all personal information e.g. usernames, phone numbers, addresses that compromise anonymity will be excluded from the data. As a result of these exclusions ethical approval was granted by Cardiff Metropolitan University Ethics Committee on the 30th of October 2017.
3. Results

The current chapter presents a table of the sample seen in Table 1, a thematic map which is derived from the data during a thematic analysis. The overarching theme, themes and sub themes can be seen in Figure 1.

Table 1. Table of sample

The table below displays the data which has been extracted from 41 social media posts from the social media sources Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, within the specified dates below, resulting in 1,069 comments from the public devising the data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social media platforms</th>
<th>Dates of ‘posts’ extracted.</th>
<th>The number of ‘posts’ ‘Fenty Beauty’ uploaded on the Social Media Platform within the specified time period.</th>
<th>The number of comments included in the analysis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>1st September 2017 - 7th September 2017</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram</td>
<td>1st September 2017</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td>1st September 2017 - 7th September 2017</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1: A thematic map of an overarching theme, themes and sub-themes

Each of the themes displayed in figure 1 will be discussed through an interpretative commentary below.

3.1 The positive impact of ‘Fenty Beauty’s’ campaign leading to more diversity in the beauty industry:

Across the data, the public’s comments have supported and praised the promotion of diversity by the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign. This has been achieved by changing perceptions of beauty ideals by the inclusion of beauty models from different ethnic origins allowing beauty to be universally relatable. There are numerous comments from the public to support and compliment the wide variety of shades and tones of the cosmetic products established by the ‘Fenty Beauty’ brand which promotes ‘beauty’ beyond the Western mainstream ideal which previously dominates the beauty industry. This has led to satisfying
a multicultural customer base within the beauty industry, demonstrated by a great deal of emotional responses from the sample.

**Theme 1: Westernize standards dominate current beauty industry:**

This theme identifies the sample’s recognition of the current beauty industry being dominated by Western beauty ideals. The sample included people from many cultures and countries which have tended to be overshadowed by the Western beauty standards and explains there is a need for cosmetic products which match and compliment a wider range of skin tones. The ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign demonstrated the limitations of the Western standards of the beauty industry and highlights the lack of inclusivity and diversity:

‘...as we always tend to get overlooked in western media and basically everthing tbh’ (Instagram, 7, 279).

‘Even within asia, the standard of beauty has always(still is) leaned towards having double eyelids(or a crease)’ (Instagram, 7, 276).

‘Thank you for representing when who are not “model perfect”.. hope she changes the game’ (Facebook, 2, 87).

‘it’s about time there's a make up brand for dark skin’ (Facebook, 6, 282).

**Theme 2: ‘Fenty Beauty’ products promote diversity by connecting with a global audience:**

This theme identifies there is substantial evidence that the ‘Fenty Beauty’ products do promote diversity as numerous comments from the public demonstrate that the campaign overcomes barriers of Western beauty ideals as well as reaching a global audience which the public can relate to due to its inclusivity and diversity.

‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign overcomes barriers of Western beauty ideals:

This sub themes acknowledges a recognition from the public’s comments that ‘Fenty Beauty’ promotes a powerful message that beauty can be associated beyond the
boundaries of Western beauty norms influencing the changing of norms, attitudes and beliefs towards beauty by promoting diversity within the beauty industry by representing a global audience within the same breadth normally reserved for paler skin tones:

‘❤️👑This advertising is a powerful message❤️👑and a true definition of all types of beauty, diversity and ethnicities’ (Instagram, 5, 211-212).

‘... All these REAL women finally representing US ALL!!!!’ (Facebook, 1, 1).

‘I love the variety of Beauty in this collection. You also touched different cultures celebrating women beauty globally’ (Instagram, 6, 227).

‘Love this ad! Good on her. This is a proper representation of the different cultures that make up our society’ (Facebook, 1, 35).

‘Awesome it so modern and diversify! Thank you to show us who we are today’ (Instagram, 6, 224).

‘...she put melanin first too lmao I lied I spotted a few but STILL! BROWN PEOPLE STILL CAME THROUGH HARD YASSS RIRI DID THAT - included every race and f****** colour take notes b****’ (Instagram, 6, 237-239).

Additionally, the brand has overcome limitations of other brands with the inclusion of a wide range of foundations from very light to very dark.

‘Hard to find makeup for darker women and you changed that’ (Facebook, 5, 248).

‘Can i just say i seen someone else who is albino like myself post an amazing review which made me wanna try i just wanna say thank you for making a product i can actually use and feel confident wearing i love this foundation’ (Facebook, 5, 259-261).

‘ha ha ha. Out of 40 shades, my perfect match should be there.’ (Facebook, 3, 133).

Furthermore the sample also reconfigured a mainstream Western beauty icon ‘Barbie’:

‘Black Barbie’ (Twitter, 2, 49).

‘Fade & chocolate Barbie had me like yaaasssss!!!’ (Facebook, 1, 21).
Inclusivity and relatability of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ brand for a global audience:

This sub theme illustrates ‘Fenty Beauty’ have included various cultures, religions, skin tones and countries into their campaign by providing products for a range of skin tones and using models from various ethnic backgrounds. This inclusion allows ‘beauty’ to be relatable to individuals globally and diverges away from Western beauty ideals:

‘This is for ALL skin tones!! Thank you for not leaving anyone out!’ (Instagram, 5, 189).

‘Got Asian, black, African, Muslim, latino/Hispanic, ..yass’ (Instagram, 7, 282).

‘YAS THEY GOT A HIJABI IN THERE’ (Instagram, 7, 283).

The sample explains the inclusion of culture and religion within the beauty industry has previously been neglected by other brands. The inclusion by the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign provided the sample with a sense of acknowledgement and acceptance within the beauty industry:

‘She's done more for hijabis in one minute than the entire fashion industry in the past decade’ (Instagram, 6, 229).

‘Thank you for using a muslim model. Its like i never see anyone representing me in this beauty world and u did it :’)’ (Instagram, 6, 252).

‘Seeing a Muslim girl in a makeup advertisement feels like “all that prejudice will end”’ (Instagram, 7, 272).

The inclusion resulted in the sample praising the ‘Fenty Beauty’ brand for demonstrating and allowing beauty to be relatable to ordinary individuals who do not measure up to the Western beauty modelling industry’s standards. Thus, promoting ‘beauty’ to be associated universally:
‘you should’ve been in this ad!’ (Instagram, 8, 331).

‘I could see you being in this ad’ (Facebook, 3, 113).

‘These girls are our color! Lol’ (Facebook, 5, 219).

‘THANK U SO MUCH FOR REPPIN THE EAST ASIANS W MONOLIDS RIHANNA!!’
(Instagram, 7, 275).

Theme 3: The positive influence of ‘Fenty Beauty’s’ campaign which embraces diversity:

There is significant evidence from the large number of supportive comments that the ‘Fenty Beauty’s campaign has had a positive influence on diversity by using a range of models and products which promotes a message of diversity to other brands.

‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign is a positive example to other brands:

This sub theme identifies ‘Fenty Beauty’ as being an inspiration and an example to other brands to follow suit within the beauty industry. This is due to the brand introducing diversity and expanding the variety of representation of beauty:

‘Yesssss love it love it. That’s how it’s done. Diversity’ (Instagram, 4, 123).

‘I don’t think you understand what you have done. Thank you. You are an inspiration.’
(Instagram, 5, 176).

‘Yes!! You did that! Showing diversity in the beauty industry!’ (Instagram, 6, 244).

‘Show the beauty and fashion industry how it’s supposed to be done!’ (Instagram, 6, 249).
‘I know right! I felt like she was just taking L'Oréal to school, showing them how it's meant to be done’ (Twitter, 3, 94).

‘Dear makeup brands who only cater to 4 shades of beige, please watch & learn how Fenty Beauty do diversity right!’ (Twitter, 1, 6).

‘When they say diversity, but this is what it should look like’ (Instagram, 10, 400).

Furthermore the sample has described ‘Fenty Beauty’ to be the most diverse brand in the beauty industry which has filled a long awaited void in the industry:

‘This is the most diverse than like the rest of the makeup industry’ (Instagram, 7, 286).

‘...meaning she tapped into a market craving for inclusion’ (Facebook, 5, 247).

‘Finally shades for everyone’ (Facebook, 4, 195).

The sample has even made reference to other brands becoming unnecessary and outdated:

‘Kim and Kylie can pack up and go home’ (Twitter, 2, 47).

‘Rihanna out here ending kylie cosmetic’ (Facebook, 1, 12).

‘somebody said she out killing Kylie cosmetics’ (Facebook, 2, 67).

The influence of Rihanna and the beauty models in campaign are positive role models for diversity:

This sub theme identifies that throughout the dataset Rihanna has been described as a mom, queen etc., and is referred to as a role model and an influential figure for diversity. Providing a sense that Rihanna is an inspiration and champion’s diversity and inclusivity within the beauty industry, diverging away from mainstream beauty ideal:
‘Rih you are my motivation, you are the proof that there is beauty in being different and you always show us women to love ourselves like we are, to love our differences... That’s why i love u 😍’ (Instagram, 5, 179-181).

‘MOM’ (Twitter, 10, 287).

‘Diversity queen’ (Twitter, 9, 265).

‘Queen of makeup is coming’ (Twitter, 5, 167).

‘Mom realize my dream’ (Twitter, 5, 147).

‘God's coming she just taking her time...’ (Facebook, 7, 308).

‘LOOK AT ALL THE DIVERSITY - RIHANNA YOU QUEEN. *spends life savings on the launch at sephora*’ (Facebook, 1, 43).

Furthermore, the sample displayed support and enthusiasm for the inclusion of the diverse array of well-known models used in the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign and advertisements:

‘YES PALOMA ESSLER! Gorgeous models all!! Loving this’ (Twitter, 1, 30).

‘DUUUUUUUCCCCKKKKKKIIIIIIIIIIIIIIEEEEEEEEEE’ (Twitter, 2, 61).

‘SLICK WOODS IM SOLD ALREADY’ (Twitter, 2, 72).

**Theme 4: The support and emotional response for ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign:**

This theme demonstrates a positive emotional support of the release of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ products. The sample displays a number of supportive emotional comments which is demonstrated through the use of ‘heart’ or ‘fire’ emoticons. The comments also valued the inclusivity and diversity of ‘Fenty Beauty’ products:

‘OMG I CAN’T my heart just stopped 😥’ (Instagram, 7, 295).

‘I will definitely be supporting our girl’ (Instagram, 5, 201).
‘Would love to be apart of this campaign’ (Instagram, 9, 399).

‘Im just so shook that you didnt forget about us east Asians’ (Instagram, 7, 278).

‘I’m soooo excited about Fenty Beauty!!!! I’m totally anticipating the release’ (Twitter, 9, 250).

‘I legit almost cried at the end😩😊’ (Facebook, 4, 170).

‘🔥🔥🔥’ (Facebook, 5, 229).

‘😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊’ (Facebook, 7, 331-332).

There was a sense of proudness from the sample across the data of what ‘Fenty Beauty’ has achieved from establishing a diverse makeup brand:

‘Congratulations I am so proud of you’ (Twitter, 4, 139).

‘Barbados is proud ri keep shining bbg’ (Facebook, 7, 359).

‘U go girlfriend representing Beautiful Barbados luv ya’ (Facebook, 3, 154).

The sample also illustrated that the ‘Fenty Beauty’ products impacted on the sample’s well-being by increasing levels of confidence:

‘I finally found a foundation that i can wear and doesn’t make me look like I have makeup on, I slap that contour stick trophy wife highlighter, and the natural lip gloss on and i look delicious’ (Facebook, 5, 255-258).

‘...product i can actually use and feel confident wearing i love this foundation’ (Facebook, 5, 261).
Theme 5: Limitations of Campaign:

This theme expresses the sample’s concern of the limited availability and destinations of the products. A small number of the sample gave their opinions of how to expand the campaign’s diversity through the inclusion of males, diverse body shapes, darker continental skin tones and broadening of the shipping availability options for products.

Limitations of retail availability and shipping destinations:

This sub theme acknowledges the global interest in the ‘Fenty Beauty’ products however, there are limited retail stores supplying the products and limited shipping destinations to countries which predominately possess darker skin tones:

‘Y’all know full well Barbados ain’t got no damn Sephora’ (Twitter, 6, 196).

‘India is nt listed in shipping’ (Twitter, 9, 269).

‘Please let it happen soon. 17 countries still no India not fair’ (Facebook, 6, 279).

‘When is this coming to India?!? 😭 😭 😭 There are millions of gorgeous dusky women out here, stuck with making do with a pathetically small pool of makeup products suited for their skin!’ (Instagram, 2, 75-77).

Lack of males and body shapes of models in campaign:

The final sub theme illustrates the sample’s desire for more diverse models to be included in campaign. While the majority of the sample praise ‘Fenty Beauty’s inclusion, a minority still recognise the omission of male role models and diverse body shapes in the campaign:

‘...would like to have darker Asians depicted and boys who wear makeup, too.’ (Instagram, 6, 257).

‘But show only skin models, need be diverse in body shapes too’ (Facebook, 1, 7).

‘NO plus size allowed huh.’ (Facebook, 2, 63).

‘Where’s the guy’ (Facebook, 4, 202).
‘Sadly they don’t include boys.’ (Instagram, 7, 287).
4. Discussion

The aim of the research was to explore the public’s perceptions of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign in relation to how it challenges the lack of diversity in the mainstream Westernized beauty industry. In conjunction with the aim it was the researcher’s intention to focus on the public’s perceptions of the Fenty Beauty’s campaign using social media therefore, the researcher adopted a qualitative method of data collection. The researcher thematically analysed the content of statements made by the public online from social media sources such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, within a specific time duration. This was seen to be an appropriate sample due to social media reaching a global audience and overcoming previous research’s limited demographic samples. The researcher also predicted a wide range of responses from the public displayed on social media in which to analyse and that these would be taken from a world-wide geographical range which included individuals from different countries and cultures. In addition to this, the social media data was said to provide a rich evidence base of human behaviour (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015). The researcher also considered that the recent release of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ products meant that there was likely to be a limited or lack of published research in this area.

From the thematic analysis the researcher identified an overarching theme which was ‘The positive impact of the ‘Fenty Beauty’s campaign leading to more diversity in the beauty industry’. Five themes and six sub themes were also identified during the analysis.

The researcher identified a lack of research regarding the public’s perceptions of diversity in the beauty industry and therefore the previous research would not being directly relatable to the current research findings, however there are several aspects of the current research findings which are consistent with previous research. The current research identified the theme ‘Western standards dominate current beauty industry’ where the campaign highlighted the lack of diversity and inclusivity in the beauty industry. Similarly, early research by Chapkis (1986) found there was a standardized quality of beauty throughout the world which was Western, white and wealthy ideals. Similar recent findings by Halliwell and
Dittmar (2003) also enforces that there is still an expectation of the ideal women to have a very thin body with long legs, light eyes, clear skin and no wrinkles.

Another theme ‘The Positive influence of ‘Fenty Beauty’s campaign which embraces diversity’ and its sub themes has been consistent with previous research. With reference to one of the sub themes identified in the current research ‘The influence of Rihanna and beauty models in the campaign are positive role models for diversity,’ there is supporting research by Gomillion & Giuliano (2011) which acknowledges role models can serve as inspiration and comfort for the public. This could also explain in part why the diverse array of models which have promoted inclusivity and diversity have had a substantial amount of positive responses from the sample.

The researcher identified another theme which suggests the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign has had a positive impact on the sample and challenged the lack of diversity in the beauty industry i.e. ‘Fenty Beauty products promote diversity by connecting with a global audience.’ The theme was supported by the sub-theme ‘Fenty Beauty campaign overcomes barriers of Western beauty ideals’ which coincides with findings of other research. Previous research identified there was a need for diversity in the beauty industry (Laan, 2014). Research by Ashan (2017) claimed that the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign was the ‘new generation of beauty’ and it expanded beauty ideals by creating “beauty for all” (Fenty Beauty, 2017). The current research has supported the claims made by the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign and suggests that the ‘Fenty Beauty’ product range promotes diversity by including a wide range of skin tones which allows many cultures to be able to relate to the campaign and products.

In addition, another sub-theme which was identified was that the ‘Inclusivity and relatability of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ brand for a global audience’ due to the campaign including a diverse array of models from different ethnic backgrounds which encouraged the sample to feel accepted in the beauty industry, suggesting many cultures are effected by the Westernized beauty ideals. However, the findings of the current study contrasted with the claims of previous research i.e. African American (AA) girls and women tend to reject European American (EA) beauty standards projected in the media. Evans and McConnell (2010) found that when AA women viewed yearbook photos, they rated the attractiveness of EA women relatively low compared to AA women. Also Beasley (2000) reported that body images of AA
women were not affected by exposure to thin EA models. In addition to this Evans & McConnell (2010) indicated Asian women responded differently than Black women and were more likely to endorse mainstream Westernized beauty standards.

The research also highlighted a sub-theme called ‘Limitations of the campaign’ this discovered the ‘lack of retail availability and shipping destinations.’ Although this is taken from comments from the sample there is a general lack of research in this area to support this sub-theme. However, one possible explanation for the lack retail availability and shipping destinations is the increase in online purchases, 53% of women shopping online for beauty products due to convenience and inspiration (Ben-Shabat and Gada, 2016). Also Ben-Shabat and Gada (2016) research identified online shopping for beauty products is set to increase more than 8% between 2009 and 2019. Another limitation and sub-theme identified was ‘The lack of males in the campaign’. Even though similar research to Black’s (2014) acknowledges that males have historically used lotions in which to conform to their day and social positions; males and the pressures of the beauty industry is a contemporary area of research and is limited compared to research regarding females and the pressures of beauty. However, recent research by Sowad (2017) has already discovered males are also involved in the practise of the desire to become beautiful, and the number of beauty conscious males who use different surgical procedures and cosmetic products for personal beautification is increasing as in “2013 there had been an 273% increase in the number of cosmetic procedures on men since 1997” (Sowad, 2017, p. 3). Furthermore, Sowad’s (2017) research found similar findings and claimed further research should be completed regarding masculinity and male beautification.

The current research’s findings have important implications for acknowledging the negative effects of the current mainstream Westernized beauty industry and illustrates how the use of models from diverse ethnic backgrounds in addition to a wide range of products catering for a majority of skin tones in a beauty campaign can promote the acceptance of diversity beyond Westernized beauty, which has had a positive effect on a global audience.

There have been limitations identified during this research. When collecting the data, Facebook’s privacy issues are more complex than Twitter’s or Instagram’s, meaning that a lot of comments are harder to obtain. Facebook choses to only display the ‘Top Comments’, ‘Most Recent’ and ‘Top Comments (Unfiltered)’ so some comments may have been filtered
out, which could result in a bias (Batrinca & Treleaven, 2015). However Dhaoui, Webster, Peng Tan (2017) suggests the top comments are crucial as they reflect not only the most meaningful comments but also the most viewed comments.

While some research has shown that there is often similarity in perceptions of people posting on the internet (Weisbuch, Ivcevic, & Ambady, 2009), other research suggests that individuals do not necessarily show idealized accounts of themselves, but rather a version closer to their true personality (Caplan, Purser & Kindle, 2017).

The researcher acknowledges another limitation associated with this method of data collection in that although social media is open to a global market the researcher does not know what age, sex, gender, religion, language, ethnicity of the public who have commented on the social media posts and therefore this research cannot be specific on statistical information findings. However, “Qualitative research is used to gain insights into people’s feelings and thoughts, which may provide the basis for a future stand-alone qualitative study or may help researchers to map out survey instruments for use in a quantitative study” (Sutton & Austin, 2015, p. 227).

Further research could focus and expand on themes found in the current research and could further examine this topic using a semi-structured interview method for “detailed examination of the participant’s lifeworld and attempt to explore personal experiences and concerns with an individual’s personal perceptions” (Smith & Osborn, 2007, p. 53).

Participants from a wide geographical range could be used as the sample for the semi-structured interview to overcome the current research’s limitations of unknowing the samples origins. Longitudinal research could also be conducted regarding this topic and discover if whether the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign still continues to promote diversity and if the current research’s findings can be supported.

Ashikari (2005) research suggests such unrealistic Western standards add to some individual’s low confidence and self-esteem. As ‘Fenty Beauty’ promotes diversity and inclusion within their campaign it may lower the negative effects of the pressures to conform and improve and increase individual’s confidence and self-esteem. Further research could also discover whether if other brands trying to tackle diversity and inclusion in the beauty industry (e.g. ‘Maybeline’ a cosmetic brand are starting to introduce a wider
colour range of foundations) could have a positive impact on individuals and the beauty industry.

Another area of which future research could explore and expand on is the current research’s theme of the omission of males in the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign. Future research could also focus on males within the beauty industry and how Westernized beauty ideals effect males and how campaigns diverging from the pressures to conform may also effect males.

**Reflexive Analysis**

The nature of qualitative research e.g. a thematic analyses is largely subject to the researchers’ own interpretations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Reflexivity involves continuously examining how the subjectivity and preconceptions of the researcher may affect the understanding and interpretation of the phenomena in the research process (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2017, p21).

I chose this topic as I am very pale myself and I have a limited variety of cosmetic products available which suites my skin tone. Therefore, I resort to constantly wearing fake tan to achieve a desired look to conform to ‘Westernized beauty’ ideals which has been promoted by diverse media sources. This enables me to feel comfortable and accepted by peers and society in my everyday life. Due to recently acknowledging these pressures to conform from the beauty industry and becoming aware of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign promoting diversity within the beauty industry, I was interested in discovering and exploring other individual’s perspectives on the campaign and how this may have impacted on them.

Throughout the analysis process I acknowledged how much I was trying to understand the use of certain language or phrases the sample was using. I understood my interpretation was subject to my experiences of slang or urban language which transfers on to the data collection. I began to understand based on my own experiences which I have encountered, that my subjectivity may affect the codes and themes I have given to the data e.g. when the sample refers to Rihanna as “mom” or “queen”. I acknowledge I have a positive perception of the term ‘mom’ due to my own positive experiences of my mother i.e. “mom” and the “queen” whereas, if I, or another individual had a negative relationship with their mother their coding or interpretation of the data may differ.
To finally conclude, the aim of the current research is to explore the public’s perceptions of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign in relation to how it challenged the lack of diversity in the Westernized mainstream beauty industry. The results from the current research identified the positive impact of the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign which has led to more diversity in the beauty industry therefore challenging the lack of diversity in mainstream Westernized beauty industry. The findings also suggest the positive impact that the ‘Fenty Beauty’ campaign has had on the public’s perceptions especially by the release of products catering for a wide variety of skin tones and colours and the inclusion of models from diverse ethnic backgrounds which has created a bold shift in cosmetic cultures (Fenty Beauty, 2017). The campaign could be said to be moving away from the norm of conforming to the Westernized beauty ideals and effecting the way the sample see themselves e.g. inclusion and acceptance in the beauty industry and how they negatively acknowledge the impacts of Westernized beauty industry. The current findings are similar findings to those of previous research with regards to highlighting that Westernize beauty ideals and standards have dominated the beauty industry and that there has been a lack of inclusion and diversity in the beauty industry. Future research is required to create further awareness of how ‘Fenty Beauty’ and other similar brands could have a positive impact on individuals. The beauty industry by using different methods to the current research e.g. semi-structured interviews or longitudinal methods, also conducting further research tackling the limitations of the omission of males in research regarding the beauty industry.
References


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Signed: ___________________

Date: 18/04/2018