

**Analyzing Victoria's Secret's Lack of Change in Regards to Beauty Standard**

Sofia Marquez, Elizabeth Alling, Morgan Asher, Brittany Espinosa-Arevalo, Hannah Jacobsen,

Bridget Nelson, and Shayla Rodriguez

Knauss School of Business, University of San Diego

MKTG 410:02: Marketing Research

Professor Yongseok Kim

December 18, 2023

## **Analyzing Victoria's Secret's Lack of Change in Regards to Beauty Standard**

### **Introduction**

In our current society, it's evident that consumers' tastes and beauty ideals constantly undergo significant transformations, placing a notable emphasis on body positivity and inclusivity. Our research discovers the true cultural difference between younger and older generations towards their standards of beauty, with a particular focus on the renowned company, Victoria Secret.

The brand itself has been present for both younger and older generations, but “in April 2019, it was announced that Victoria's Secret would be closing 53 stores across North America throughout the year. For those not following the company's controversies, leadership shake-ups, and fiscal reports for the past few years, the news likely came as a shock “ (The List, 2021). As a company, Victoria Secret was created from the perspective of the male gaze, created by men, founded men. Roy Raymond, founder of Victoria's Secret came up with the brilliant idea of creating a lingerie brand in which husbands, boyfriends and lovers of any type felt comfortable shopping for their partner but not only that, he also wanted to design lingerie that isn't “ugly and boring” (Grabinski, 2022). With its doors slowly starting to close, it's evident that Victoria Secret is struggling to maintain its standing with other younger competition such as Skims and Aerie. By focusing on the companies original history, we can get an insight into how Victoria's Secret initial vision and goals no longer aligns with the current values of Generation Z, whereas to not allow any underwear brand to sexualize women to the disgusting extent in which women are expected to look, feel and act a certain way because the items made for them are not made for them, but rather for a man. Victoria Secret won't be able to remain open for future generations

unless they adapt to the new generations values because without the younger generations support there is no future for the company.

As new generations slowly intertwine with the world, the level of social awareness has changed, aiming for more healthy aspects, dismantling the “traditional” aspects society has previously implemented. “Traditional” meaning it has always been evident that Victoria's Secret markets to a certain type of person: the “pretty” girl in the room. Tall, thin, white, with an hourglass figure - the one with the long legs and perfectly blown-out blonde hair. Generation Z has implemented a social awareness and acceptance that previous generations have never experienced. Instead of following previous generations views of beauty as social acceptance and external validation, Generation Z views beauty as a means to self-expression and self-care. One would say that the younger generations find beauty from the “inside-out” instead of the outdated “outside-in” beauty standard. As the first generation to have social media embedded into the fabric of their lives, Generation Z has become a beacon of social responsibility. We have never been more connected in each other's lives, Generation Z has never known the world without connection. Our research is to prove the difference between Generation Z and other generations' standards of beauty.

### **Research Hypotheses**

#### ***Findings from the Literature Review***

Just like in any study there are different questions and things that we are trying to answer, however it is important to note that there are different reasons on why we think or have a certain hypothesis about things, this is mainly because of secondary research. Based on our research we can tell that as time goes by the level of accountability that companies are being held because of generations are beginning to care more about the social responsibility that society has. Younger

generations are becoming more aware of the economic, social, culture and political power they can have on a company.

The level of social power that us consumers have can quickly define a company's mission, vision, and their culture perspectives on social issues. The way they view certain social issues can shift companies' marketing strategies. For the purpose of this study we wanted to view the beauty standards that Victoria has on the issue of body positivity. With that being said, we examined different sources and their perspectives on it. In this research endeavor, we are broadening our perspectives to encompass diverse approaches, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of various individuals, both directly and indirectly involved. The selection of the company under scrutiny, Victoria's Secret, stemmed from our awareness of prevalent negative actions and marketing practices related to body positivity.

To cultivate a nuanced approach, we deemed it crucial to delve into the intricacies of the chosen company. This involved an in-depth examination of its mission, values, and goals, allowing us to discern whether they align with the promotional narratives. Our findings, such as the closure of 53 Victoria's Secret stores in North America in 2019, served as a poignant highlight, fortifying our three distinct hypotheses. Further scrutiny involved an analysis of female shopping trends, revealing distinctions in purchasing behavior between genders. Notably, women exhibited a growing concern for the origins and production processes of their purchases, thereby making empowerment of women's bodies integral. This trend contributed to increased sales for brands incorporating body positivity in both marketing strategies and tangible actions, encompassing aspects like sizing, modeling, product diversity, and affordability.

Drawing parallels with comparable brands like Aerie, Skims, and American Eagle, which share ostensibly similar mission statements and visions, revealed disparities in their actual

practices. This exploration into the historical context illuminated potential impacts on consumer decisions. Our approach emphasizes demographic diversity, with a thorough investigation across different generations, considering external and internal factors influencing consumer behavior. This holistic approach aims to unravel the intricacies of how consumers perceive brand positivity in their day-to-day purchases. In the process, we have meticulously gathered secondary data from reputable sources such as academic papers, published statistics, industry reports, and news articles. This wealth of information, spanning from a business perspective to consumer insights, has provided varied angles to our research questions. Complementing this, our primary data will be derived from interviews, surveys, and focus groups, contributing to the refinement of our hypotheses.

As we finished collecting our research we found five different hypotheses. The first one is that “younger generations are less interested in buying Victoria’s Secret products compared to the older ones”, meaning that the people who are likely to buy Victoria Secret products are older individuals because this is a company that has been a monopoly for so long making it harder for older generations to figure out different companies to buy their lingerie from. The second hypothesis we came up with was “Younger generations have a different standard of beauty”, when a large majority of people think about beauty standards they think of a glowy skin, no tattoos, skinny yet somehow still curvy. This is a stereotype that society has placed into women because of companies like Victoria Secret, visualizing this image on people. However, as people dismantle this stereotype it is key for companies to shift it as well, to embrace the healthy feminist paradox. The third hypothesis is “there is an inconsistency between the beauty standards of Victoria’s Secret and younger generations and not with old generations’ , this hypothesis was developed because it is hard for older generations to believe something else especially when they

grow up seeing it constantly. The stereotype that the image of the perfect body is unhealthy and sometimes unrealistic is what is forcing companies to shift their marketing body campaigns leading to our fourth hypothesis “Younger generations have more social power and they are the voice of the next generation”. Last but not least, our fifth hypothesis was “younger generations are willing to be more critical to Victoria’s Secret beauty standards by using their social power”, for example, even this study is an example of how we are beginning to be more critical and ensuring that companies are accountable for their toxic standards they have held to society, specifically women.

All of our hypotheses were developed based on the research we found but most importantly personal experience. After receiving our data we found that they were all correct, even adding different components to it. Our main findings were yes there are certainly different standards of beauty. Gen Z is not an individual customer. Social power and influence. There is a willingness to advocate using social media. It was interesting to see how different generations and how their backgrounds contributed to the issue. It is safe to say that not all the generations were categorized in the same way, some did think the same if not similar to other generations we did not think would correlate. Sometimes there were differences that did not make sense but that was the beauty of this study, which was discovering the different aspects of the ways people think or believe.

### ***Findings from the In-Depth Interviews***

Victoria’s Secret. Our demographic consisted of women of all ages, from 15 to 81 years old. It was crucial to interview women of such a large age group because we wanted to research the difference in opinions with different age groups. To start off, we asked interviewees to tell us

what brands they shop at when looking for new bras. Our responses were very spread out, with some saying Victoria's Secret, and others being Target, Lululemon, Kohl's, Notori and many others. We also found that almost every respondent said they looked for comfort when shopping for bras. It was very important to ask our interviewees what they thought of when they heard the word Victoria's Secret. We found that most respondents, no matter their age, said things like "sexy, models, lingerie, pink, and sex appeal." One of our interviewees, a 23 year old Gen Z, said this: "The company is not a well rounded company, very problematic from the sizing to some of the actions they have taken, it seems like they know that they carry such a high name that they do not bother to fix their issues anymore." Answers such as this, along with others describing VS as impractical and not comfortable, led us to believe that younger generations are less interested in buying Victoria's Secret. Another finding that we found very interesting was when asking interviewees if they feel comfortable in their VS bra. Brit (21) said "No, there's too much wiring. Also when they size you there, they always upsize me. That's why I stopped shopping there." Our group shared similar opinions on these topics. Many of us have also experienced sizing errors and saw VS as a problematic company. On the other hand, several women between the ages of 48 and 55 said that they do feel comfortable with their VS products. This was a big finding for us, as we realized that there definitely is a difference between generations. We then asked the question: Do you feel that all body types are included in Victoria's Secret products? We found very different answers between age groups, which led us to believe that there is an inconsistency between the beauty standards of older and younger generations. One of our interviewees who is 21 said it was discriminatory towards women, sizing makes her feel like she's not wanted there, which is probably why she hasn't shopped there in a long time. On the other hand, one of our 48 year old interviewees said, "Yes, I think they have options for everybody. Sometimes, they don't have my bra size in store but then they order it and have it shipped." Another 52

year old woman said, “I do believe they cater to most body types.” These questions were very important because we were able to form several hypotheses with these types of answers. First, we found the inconsistency between younger and older generations standard of beauty. We realized that older generations found VS to be inclusive and cater to all body types. It is very possible that the reason for this is because older generations found beauty in skinniness, tallness, and a thin body. Those were the beauty standards of that generation, and they aligned with VS’s values and products. On the other hand, Gen Z and younger people do find VS’s beauty standards to be problematic. As seen above, VS is known for being discriminatory against those who aren’t skinny or models. Younger generations value acceptance of all body types, and don’t feel that VS represents the real society. We know live in a world where younger generations believe in body positivity and support companies who cater to all people. Because younger generations were willing to tell us this information, we came to the hypothesis that they have more social power and are the voice of the next generation. GenZ has a lot of power in deciding what companies to support. We also came to the hypothesis that younger generations are willing to be more critical towards Victoria’s Secret. Older generations are known to not speak up on these issues, and as the world has evolved, people can be a lot more open and opinionated now. Younger generations are no longer supporting companies that go against their values. For these reasons, it would be very important for VS to adopt their values and products to be more inclusive. Doing these in-depth interviews allowed us to come up with the hypotheses mentioned above and learn more about what women’s opinions are on Victoria’s Secret.

## **Data**

### ***Data Collection Process***



In order to form theories or conclusions regarding our hypothesis, we needed to gather data. We knew we needed information from women with ages within our current generation and within more older generations. We began conducting verbal interviews with our family members, friends, and peers. As a group we conduct around 15 interviews, with the youngest interviewee being 18 and the oldest being 81. We felt we would get the most accurate representation of information from interviewing women in both generations, based on what we were trying to test within our hypotheses. The questions we asked these women consisted of brand preference, style preference, and their overall opinions on the brand of Victoria's Secret. These answers not only provided us with an insight into their own tastes, but also provided us with an initial sense of their feelings regarding the brand, their image, and the way women are portrayed.

After we conducted these interviews, we were left with a gap in the information we needed. We needed to uncover the "why". To remedy the gap in our data, we sent out a 5-7 minute online survey to the same demographic we interviewed. With our efforts to spread the survey around, we gained about 97 responses.

As a group, we decided to do an online survey based on several factors. We found that they are the most convenient and cost-effective way of reaching a wide audience, which allowed us to collect data from respondents located in different geographic locations without the need for physical presence. We also discovered that the accessibility of online surveys makes it easy for participants to respond at their own pace and convenience, increasing response rates and reducing the likelihood of non-responses.

On this survey we based our questions off of the variables in each of our hypotheses. In total we had around 80 variables within our survey. Furthermore, our variables helped us uncover connections and correlations between our hypotheses. After labeling our variables, we input

them into R Studio, which allows us to “clean” our data, making it easier for us to comprehend. We were then able to test our hypotheses using frequency tables, calculating means and standard deviations, as well as, plotting several graphs. The discussion and dissection of these key variables will be talked about next.

### ***Key Variables***

The key variables are the variables from our survey that play a crucial role in helping us determine if our hypotheses are accepted or rejected. These key variables also help us understand our results in relation to our research question. The first key variable we found was reasons to shop at Victoria’s secret. We asked the respondents what their main reasons for shopping at Victoria Secret are. The set responses consisted of quality, price, style, fit, comfort, variety, availability, service, promotion, reputation, social responsibility and the option of others. This was a key variable because it gave us insight into what generations of people are shopping at Victoria Secret. Our code for this variable is reasons\_shopvs. This variable goes hand in hand with another key variable which is the reason to not shop at Victoria’s Secret. This consisted of the same exact response choices with the question changed for why the respondent would not shop at Victoria’s Secret. Our code for this variable was reasons\_notvs. With these two variables we were able to gauge the respondents willingness to shop at Victoria's Secret. Below are the mena and standard deviation of both variables. 1 representing strongly disagree and 7 representing strongly agree.

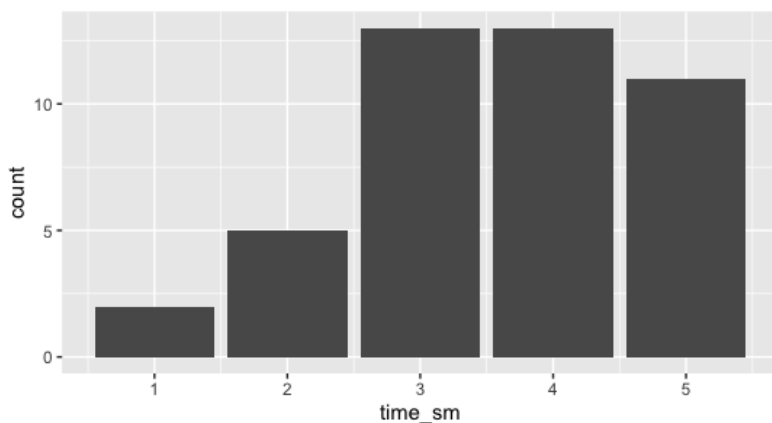
Variable	mean	Standard devaiiton
Reasons_shopvs_1 Price	4.43	1.83

Reasons_shopvs_2 Quality	3.29	1.79
Reasons_shopvs_3 Style	4.47	2.06
Reasons_shopvs_4 Fit	4.09	2
Reasons_shopvs_5 comfort	4.34	1.94
Reasons_shopvs_6 Variety	4.5	2.06
Reasons_shopvs_7 Availability	4.11	1.82
Reasons_shopvs_8 Service	4.32	1.76

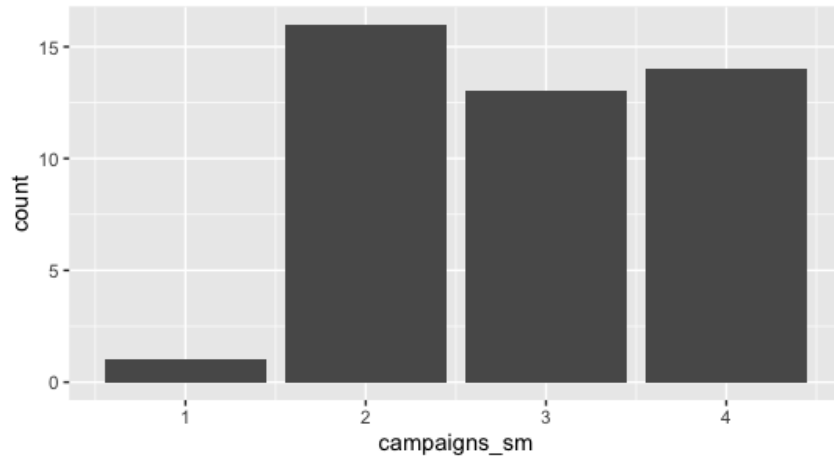
Variable	mean	Standard deviaiton
Reasons_notvs_1 Price	3.41	1.63
Reasons_notvs_2 Quality	4.77	1.72
Reasons_notvs_3 Style	3.72	1.79
Reasons_notvs_4 Fit	4.20	1.73
Reasons_notvs_5 comfort	3.63	1.78
Reasons_notvs_6 Variety	3.59	1.88
Reasons_notvs_7 Availability	4	1.69
Reasons_notvs_8 Service	3.75	1.58
Reasons_not_9 Promotion	3.68	1.69
Reasons_not_10	4.07	1.73

Reputation		
------------	--	--

Another key variable in our findings is time spent on social media. For this variable, the question we asked respondents was how much time on average they spent on social media. The given responses were less than 15 minutes, 15 minutes to 30 minutes, 30 minutes to 1 hour, 1 to 2 hours, 2 to 3 hours and more than 3 hours. This variable was key for us because it allowed us to analyze how much time the respondents were spending online. Our code used for this variable is `time_sm`. Below is a histogram of the responses given.



We also found that the social media campaigns that the respondents engage in was a key variable. For this variable we asked the respondents how likely they are to engage in a social media campaign that challenges traditional beauty standards. The response choices were, yes actively, yes they support, no and unfamiliar with the movements. This variable is associated with our understanding of social responsibility with our respondents. The mean for this variable was standard deviation. The code we used for this variable was `campaigns_sm`. Below is a histogram of the responses. 1 coded as the response: yes, actively support.



Another key variable we used in our findings is the promotion of body positivity by Victoria's Secret and competitive brands. For this variable we asked the respondents to rank different brands by how well the respondent knew of the brands social movements. The respondents used a sliding scale with codes 0 meaning they didn't know at all and 5 they knew it extremely well. The code we used was promo\_bpos. This variable helped us understand the differences in beauty standards from our respondents. Below is a table with mean and standard deviation of this variable.

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Promo_bpos_1 Victoria's Secret	1.61	1.38
Promo_bpos_2 Target	3.11	1.37
Promo_bpos_3 Skims	3.47	1.37
Promo_bpos_4 Aerie	3.45	1.6

Lastly, we used age. Clearly proved to be one of the most significant variables as it was necessary to compare our other significant variables with age. The mean of age was 28.29 and

standard deviation of 14.83. For our testing we split age into two groups, respondents under age 27 and over age 27. We used these age groups so that they were split into younger generations and older generations. All of these variables are important because with additional testing, that will be discussed below, we were able to come to conclusions on each of our hypotheses.

## **Results**

In order to determine the validity of the hypotheses, we needed to analyze the relationship between variables. Data analysis allows for insight extraction, informed decision making, pattern and trend detection, hypothesis testing, and more. The objectives that guided our analysis were the 5 hypotheses mentioned previously. Some of the key questions that we determined to be the most important for hypothesis testing were: shopping at Victoria's Secret and why, defining the beauty standards of participants and the company, and how participants use social media. All analysis was conducted using R Studio and methods included mean, standard deviation, frequency tables, bar charts, t-tests, and regression. These methods were chosen as they are thought to give the best results of the variables themselves and to compare variables.

### *Descriptive statistics*

To begin, it proved beneficial to provide a summary of the basic characteristics of our respondents. On average, our respondents are single, white, Christian, 27 year-old heterosexual females. Given the subject of the survey and project, the survey was only distributed to females. It is important to note that since age and generation is such a big factor in our hypotheses, we decided to create a variable "gen\_z" for those aged below 27, for easier identification and comparison between our variables and generations. However, we believe that this could affect results negatively due to the fact that 80% of the respondents fall under Gen Z and 20% are

non-Gen Z, potentially skewing results that focus on generational differences on certain variables.

### *Hypothesis Test 1*

Our first hypothesis was younger generations are less interested in buying Victoria's Secret products compared to the older ones. The key variables for this hypothesis we measured were buyvs, reasons\_vs, and reasons\_notvs.

Table 1

Test Results for Hypothesis 1

Test	Variable name	Variable Meaning	p-value
t-test	Buyvs_1, gen_z	Purchase	0.6625
t-test	Buyvs_2, gen_gen_z	Interest	0.92
t-test	Reasons_notvs2, gen_z	Price	0.0918
t-test	Reasons_notvs10, gen_z	Social Responsibility	0.09518

As seen in Table 1, we found that there is no significant difference between generations and whether or not they buy or are interested/willing to purchase from Victoria's Secret, which would mean we cannot reject the null hypothesis. However, we did find it interesting that there was a marginally significant generational difference between two reasons to not shop at Victoria's Secret: price and social responsibility. So while Gen Z is still interested in buying Victoria's Secret products, if they were to not shop there it would be because of social responsibility, and price, but that is assumed to always be a factor).

### *Hypothesis Test 2*

Our second hypothesis was that younger generations have a different standard of beauty.

We found, as seen in Table x, that 57% of respondents said there are "very different" standards of beauty between younger and older generations.

Table 2

Do Younger Generations Have Different Standards of Beauty Compared to Older Generations?

	var	cat	n	n_total	percent
	<chr>	<chr>	<int>	<int>	<dbl>
1	dat\$gen_b_stnd	1	32	56	57.1
2	dat\$gen_b_stnd	2	22	56	39.3
3	dat\$gen_b_stnd	3	2	56	3.57

Table 2 shows 1-very different, 2-somewhat different, and 3-not different. This simple table allows us to see that Gen Z is perceived to have a very different standard of beauty, however this answer was consistent among all respondents, and there was no significant difference between generations, as seen in Table 3.

Table 3

Test Results for Hypothesis 2

Test	Variable name	Variable Meaning	p-value
t-test	Gen_b_stnd, gen_z	Generational Differences on Beauty Standards	0.1437
t-test	Diversity_b_stnd_1, gen_z	Body Types	0.07086
t-test	Diversity_b_stnd_2, gen_z	Skin Colors	0.001193
t-test	Diversity_b_stnd_2, gen_z	Gender Expressions	0.0004906

Furthermore, we found that Gen Z places significantly more importance on seeing different body types, skin colors, and gender expressions in media and fashion compared to non Gen Z. With



these values we can reject the null and say that Gen Z does have a different standard of beauty, one where it is important to celebrate diversity of body types, races, and genders.

### *Hypothesis Test 3*

Our third hypothesis was there is an inconsistency between the beauty standards of Victoria's Secret and younger generations and not with older generations.

Table 4

### Test Results for Hypothesis 3

Test	Variable Name	Variable Meaning	p-value/mean
t-test	Vsopinion_1, gen_z	Victoria's Secret promotes unrealistic beauty standards and lacks diversity in their marketing.	0.5928
t-test	Vsopinion_2, gen_z	Victoria's Secret is out of touch with the changing beauty and body positivity trends.	0.297
t-test	Vsopinion_1, m=4	m= 4 → Neither agree nor disagree	6.528e-07
t-test	Vsopinion_2, m=4	m= 4 → Neither agree nor disagree	0.007519
t-test	Bstnd_stance, m=3	Victoria's Secret products align with my stance on body positivity. m=3→ Neither agree nor disagree	0.003483
mean	promo_bpos_1	Victoria's Secret	1.64
mean	promo_bpos_2	Target	3.05
mean	promo_bpos_3	Skims	3.34

mean	promo_bpos_4	Aerie	3.36
------	--------------	-------	------

While the t-test of the two opinions and age did not prove significant, when comparing the opinions and the neutral answer ( $m = 4$ ) they were significant. This relationship shows that all respondents believe that Victoria's Secret's beauty standards are not current. Additionally, while we did not find generational significance on the level of agreement on the statement "Victoria's Secret products align with my stance on body positivity.", the results of all respondents demonstrated that there is a significant difference between the answer to the statement and the neutral option, with the respondents leaning towards disagreeing. Lastly, when looking at the question asking how well different brands promote body positivity, the results show that Victoria's Secret has a mean of around 1.6 meaning "not well at all" to "slightly well" whereas all the other brands have means around 3 meaning "moderately well" to "very well". Given these results, we can say that there is an inconsistency between Victoria's Secret's beauty standards and that of our respondents, not just Gen Z. It is also important to note that brands like Aerie are perceived to promote body positivity very well.

#### *Hypothesis Test 4*

Our fourth hypothesis is younger generations have more social power and they are the voice of the next generation. The key variables to test this hypothesis are time\_sm, platforms\_sm, and advocate\_sm.

Table 5

#### Test Results for Hypothesis 4

Test	Variable Name	Variable Meaning	p-value	R squared
t-test	Time_sm, gen_z	average time spent on social media each day	0.06004	N/A

t-test	Platforms_sm_6, gen_z	Use TikTok	0.06109	N/A
t-test	Advocate_sm, gen_z	Use your social media to advocate for change and raise awareness about important societal issues?	0.09727	N/A
regression	Advocate_sm, platforms_sm_6	Social media to advocate for change; TikTok	0.06409	0.04469

We found that there is a marginally significant difference between the amount of time Gen Z spends on social media compared to non-Gen Z, between the usage of TikTok between the two, and the importance to use social media to advocate for social issues. All three of these results show how much more Gen Z is using social media and how much more importance they put on it. We also found that using TikTok is a key factor in one's willingness to advocate for societal issues on social media. We believe that Gen Z's social media usage is very important as it shows that they are not just an individual customer but are extremely interconnected with and influential for their peers. These results allow us to reject the null hypothesis.

#### *Hypothesis Test 5*

Our final hypothesis is that younger generations are more willing to be critical to Victoria's Secret beauty standard by using their social power.

Table 6

#### Test Results for Hypothesis 5

Test	Variable Name	Variable Meaning	p-value	R squared
t-test	Gen_engage_sm, gen_z	Comment/post about social issues on social media	0.08694	N/A
t-test	Repost_dont_agree, gen_z	Repost/share campaigns that you don't agree with	0.6901	N/A
t-test	Campaigns_sm, gen_z	Participated in or supported	0.01733	N/A

		campaigns that challenge traditional beauty standards		
regression	Repost_dont_agree, vsopinion_3	repost/share campaigns that you don't agree with; Victoria's Secret is out of touch with changing body positivity trends	0.01555	0.1563

The results in Table 6 depict how Gen Z is not an individual consumer but a vast interconnected group who are willing to advocate for social change and, more importantly, what they find disagreeable. With these results we can say that Gen Z is willing and able to use their social power to participate in body positivity trends, which supports our hypothesis.

To sum up all of these findings, we can say that i) all generations shop at (and are willing to learn about) Victoria's Secret, and ii) there are differences between Gen Z and non Gen Z in their reasons why they would or should not shop at Victoria's Secret: 1 being price and 2 being social responsibility. Victoria's Secret should care about Gen Z potentially not shopping there because of social responsibility because i) in general, all ages believe that Victoria's Secret is out of touch with changing beauty standards, ii) Gen Z believes they have a very different standard of beauty (which goes against that of VS), compared to older generations, and more importantly iii) Gen Z is not an individual customer but has social power and influence and are willing to participate in body positivity movements in addition to reposting content they dislike.

## Conclusion

To conclude, our examinations evaluate the dynamics of the diversity of consumer preferences and beauty ideals within our society. More specifically, our research aimed to find contrast between generations and their predetermined standards of beauty when it comes to women intimates with a focus on the world known brand, Victoria's Secret. As mentioned at the beginning of our research, Victoria's Secret, a brand conceived from a male-oriented perspective faces modern dilemmas due to an antiquated mindset. It is no surprise that the principles of this brand now clash with the evolving values of Generation Z as the foundation is based on something that would not be approved by today's society, a brand for women by men.

When doing our research we came across brands like Skims and Aerie that have recently gained more popularity not only because of their eye-catching and comfortable intimates but also because of their purpose which prioritizes inclusivity and body positivity in a realistic way. As opposed to Victoria's Secret they take women's needs into account rather than objectifying them and making them into a fantasy. This severely affects the ideals of Gen Z in which they tend to focus more on self-expression, diversity and self-care.

With all these details in mind, we took it upon ourselves to test out a few of our hypotheses and see if our opinions matched reality. At first, we were sure that our generation, Gen Z would rarely purchase from Victoria's Secret but after further investigation, we found out that some still do but majority willingly choose not to due to their lack of social responsibility and price which is the minor reason. The fact that they have trouble being inclusive of people of all backgrounds while other brands are going above and beyond to make everyone feel included is what is setting Victoria's Secret behind and making them lose trust and loyalty from those who followed them. However, there are many more reasons for which certain generations do not shop or would not

shop from Victoria's Secret. In the future it would be ideal to get a larger sample of the different audiences to see better any other underlying reasons that reflect this.

After getting a better sense for the industry and how Gen Z takes part in this we realize that there is now a redefined concept of beauty which emphasizes inner qualities over external validation which directly and interestingly reflects on intimate wear choices. This leads us to the conclusion that Victoria's Secret, despite their lack of inclusivity as well as focus on women's needs is still at a perfect point to take into account newer audiences and what they ask from their favorite brands. Generation Z has taken a great stance in redefining concepts that were thought to be pretty much set in stone such as: beauty is ideal and what a woman must strive for always. As generations continue to emerge and integrate themselves into society, brands like Victoria's Secret have to keep every generation in mind to continue being a loved staple in every woman's heart.

## References

- Ariunbold, S.-E. (2023, July). *Being authentic on social media with generation Z*. Digital Commons@Lindenwood University. <https://digitalcommons.lindenwood.edu/theses/543/>
- Cruz, N. R., & das, B. (2022, September 23). *We are real: The aerie mission*. #AerieREAL Life. <https://www.ae.com/aerie-real-life/2022/08/08/we-are-real-the-aerie-mission/>
- Deloitte. “Deloitte Brandvoice: For Millennials and Gen Zs, Social Issues Are Top of Mind-Here’s How Organizations Can Drive Meaningful Change.” *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 22 July 2021, [www.forbes.com/sites/deloitte/2021/07/22/for-millennials-And-gen-zs-social-issues-are-top-of-mind-heres-how-organizations-can-drive-meaningful-change/?sh=2f669707450c](http://www.forbes.com/sites/deloitte/2021/07/22/for-millennials-And-gen-zs-social-issues-are-top-of-mind-heres-how-organizations-can-drive-meaningful-change/?sh=2f669707450c)
- “Gen Z and Body Positivity: What Should Brands Know?” *Fanbytes*, 3 Feb. 2023, <https://fanbytes.co.uk/gen-z-and-body-positivity/>
- Grabinski, Alyssa. "The Rise and Fall of Victoria's Secret: A Timeline." *L'Officiel USA*, 14 July 2022, <https://www.lofficielusa.com/pop-culture/rise-and-fall-victorias-secret-timeline>.
- Ngo, N. T. (2019, October 1). *What historical ideals of women’s shapes teach us about women’s self-perception and body decisions today*. Journal of Ethics | American Medical Association. <https://journalofethics.ama-assn.org/article/what-historical-ideals-womens-shapes-teach-us-about-womens-self-perception-and-body-decisions-today/2019-10>
- O’Brien, Jennifer. “The Truth about Victoria’s Secret’s Bra Sizes.” *The List*, The List, 30 Apr. 2021, [www.thelist.com/359537/the-truth-about-victorias-secrets-bra-sizes/](http://www.thelist.com/359537/the-truth-about-victorias-secrets-bra-sizes/).

Skims. *About SKIMS*. (2023). <https://skims.com/pages/about>

Victoria's Secret. (2023). *Our company*. Victoria's Secret & Co.  
<https://www.victoriasecretandco.com/our-company/overview>



## Appendix A: Survey

# Marketing Research | Body Positivity

### Start of Block: intro

intro We are a team of USD students. We are conducting marketing research that studies consumer perception surrounding Victoria's Secret. It will take about 8 minutes to complete the survey. Thank you for your participation.

### End of Block: intro

### Start of Block: h1: younger generation are less interested in buying Victoria's secret products

buys Do you purchase your undergarments from Victoria's Secret?

	Very likely (1)	Likely (2)	Neutral (3)	Unlikely (4)	Very Unlikely (5)
I purchase my undergarments from Victoria Secret (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in purchasing my undergarment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

from Victoria's  
Secret (2)

I am willing to  
purchase my  
undergarment

from Victoria  
Secret (3)

I want to learn  
more about  
Victoria

Secret's  
undergarment  
for my future  
purchase (4)

bra\_choice If the price was not a problem, select which brands you would buy your  
bra/underwear from?

Skims (1)

Aerie (2)

Victoria Secret (3)







Comfort (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Variety (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Availability (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Service (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Promotion (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reputation (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social Responsibility (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: h1:: younger generation are less interested in buying Victoria's secret products

## Start of Block: h2: Younger generations have a different standard of beauty

socialcause What are some of the social causes you care about?

- Body Positivity (1)
- LGBTQ Rights (2)
- Racial Justice (3)
- Environmental Sustainability (4)
- Animal Welfare (5)
- Mental Health Awareness (6)
- Women's Rights (7)
- Other (8)





Victoria's  
Secret  
has  
high-quality  
lingerie  
and offers  
a wide  
range of  
products.

(2)

Victoria's  
Secret is  
out of  
touch with  
the  
changing  
beauty  
and body  
positivity  
trends. (3)



Victoria's Secret has made efforts to be more inclusive and diverse in recent years. (4)

Victoria's Secret is a brand I support and have a positive opinion of. (5)

beauty\_stnd Scale of max 100 how does each sub category connect with your level of beauty standard?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Clear Skin ()	
Symmetrical ()	
Slender/Skinny ()	
No stretch marks ()	
Youthful ()	
Hourglass Figure ()	
Tall ()	
Toned ()	
Glowing Skin ()	

gen\_b\_std In your opinion, do younger generations have different standards of beauty compared to older generations?

Yes, very different (1)

Yes, somewhat different (2)

No, not different (3)

I'm not sure (4)

diversity\_b\_stnd How important is it for you to see diversity in beauty standards, including representations of different body types, skin colors, and gender expressions in the media and fashion industry?

	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)
different body types (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
skin colors (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
gender expressions (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: h2: Younger generations have a different standard of beauty

Start of Block: h3: there is an inconsistency between the beauty standards of Victoria's Secret and younger generations and not with older generations

social\_awareness How much does a company's social media presence influence your willingness to buy?

None at all (1)

A little (2)

A moderate amount (3)

A lot (4)

A great deal (5)

caterMF To what extent do you agree/disagree with the statement:

*Victoria's Secret caters products to align with men's standards of beauty more than women's?*

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

bstnd\_stance **Body positivity** refers to the embrace and celebration of one's unique and diverse physical attributes.

It promotes self-acceptance, self-love, and confidence, while rejecting societal pressures and stereotypes related to appearance.

Given the definition of "body positivity" above, to what extent do you agree/disagree with the

statement:

Victoria's Secret products align with my stance on body positivity.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Somewhat disagree (2)
- Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- Somewhat agree (4)
- Strongly agree (5)

promo\_bpos On a scale of 0 to 5 how well do you think the following brands promotes body positivity?

Not well Slightly Moderately Very well Extremel  
at all well well y well

0 1 2 3 4 5

Victoria Secret ()	
Target ()	
Skims ()	
Aerie ()	

End of Block: h3: there is an inconsistency between the beauty standards of Victoria's Secret and younger generations and not with older generations

Start of Block: h4: younger generations have more social power and they are the voice of the next generation

platforms\_sm What social media platforms do you use

	Yes, I use it. (1)	No, I do not use it. (2)
Instagram (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



LinkedIn (3)

Pinterest (4)

Snapchat (5)

TikTok (6)

YouTube (7)

Reddit (8)

WhatsApp (9)

time\_sm How much time on average do you spend on social media each day?

15 minutes to 30 minutes (1)

30 minutes to 1 hour (2)

1 to 2 hours (3)

2 to 3 hours (4)

More than 3 hours (5)

engage\_sm How much do you engage with brand posts?

Never (1)

Sometimes (2)

About half the time (3)

Most of the time (4)

Always (5)

content\_pref Do you prefer seeing content from companies/brands or your friends/family or influencers?

Please rank the following options from 1 to 3, with 1 being your top preference and 3 being your lowest preference:

\_\_\_\_\_ Friends/Family (1)

\_\_\_\_\_ Companies/Brands (2)

\_\_\_\_\_ Influencer (3)

socialmove\_sm Please provide your level of agreement to the following statement.

Strongly disagree (1)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
--------------------------	--------------------------	--------------------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

---

I have participated in or supported social movements or campaigns focused on issues like climate change. (1)

I have participated in or supported social movements or campaigns focused on issues like racial equality. (2)

I have participated in or supported social movements or campaigns focused on issues like gender equality. (3)

I have participated in or supported social movements or campaigns focused on issues like other social justice causes. (4)

advocate\_sm How important is it for you to use your social media presence and platforms to advocate for change and raise awareness about important societal issues?

- Not at all important (1)
- Slightly important (2)
- Moderately important (3)
- Very important (4)
- Extremely important (5)

End of Block: h4: younger generations have more social power and they are the voice of the next generation

Start of Block: h5: younger generations are more willing to be critical to victoria's secret beauty standard by using their social power

gen\_engage\_sm How likely are you to comment or post about social issues on social media?

- Extremely unlikely (1)
- Somewhat unlikely (2)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (3)
- Somewhat likely (4)
- Extremely likely (5)

repost\_dont\_agree How likely are you repost/share campaigns that you don't agree with?

- Extremely unlikely (1)
- Somewhat unlikely (2)
- Neither likely nor unlikely (3)

Somewhat likely (4)

Extremely likely (5)

repost\_like How likely are you to repost/share campaigns that you agree with?

Extremely unlikely (1)

Somewhat unlikely (2)

Neither likely nor unlikely (3)

Somewhat likely (4)

Extremely likely (5)



share\_sm\_bpos On a scale from 1 to 5, how often do you engage in discussions or share content on social media platforms regarding beauty standards and body positivity?

- Never (1)
- Sometimes (2)
- About half the time (3)
- Most of the time (4)
- Always (5)

engage\_vs\_sm Have you ever used social media platforms (e.g., Instagram, Twitter, TikTok) to criticize or comment on Victoria's Secret's portrayal of beauty standards or body image?

- Yes, multiple times (1)
- Yes, occasionally (2)

No, but I support others who do (3)

No, and I don't support such actions (4)

campaigns\_sm Have you ever participated in or supported campaigns that challenge traditional beauty standards, such as the #BodyPositivity or #AerieReal movements?

Yes, I actively participate (1)

Yes, I support these movements (2)

No, I don't participate or support (3)

I am not familiar with these movements (4)

unfollow\_sm How often do you unfollow or stop supporting brands or individuals on social media that promote unrealistic beauty standards?

Never (1)

Sometimes (2)

About half the time (3)

Most of the time (4)

Always (5)

public\_critism Do you think that public criticism and social media activism can lead to changes in how brands post and operate.

Definitely not (1)

Probably not (2)

Might or might not (3)

Probably yes (4)

Definitely yes (5)

End of Block: h5: younger generations are more willing to be critical to victoria's secret beauty standard by using their social power

Start of Block: demo

age What is your age

---

gender What gender do you identify as?

Male (1)

Female (2)

Non-binary / third gender (3)

Prefer not to say (4)

location Which city are you from?

---

income What is your approximate household income?

Under \$25k (1)

\$25k - \$49k (2)

\$50k - \$74k (3)

\$75k - \$99k (4)

\$100k - \$124k (5)

\$125k - \$149k (6)

\$150k or more (7)

Prefer not to say (8)

marital What is your martial status?

Single (1)

Married (2)

Divorced (3)

Widowed (4)

Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_

race What is your ethnicity and race?

White (1)

Black or African American (2)

American Indian or Alaska Native (3)

Asian (4)

Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (5)

Hispanic or Latino (6)

Other (7)

religion What is your religious affiliation, if any?

Christian (1)

Catholic (9)

Muslim (2)

Jewish (3)

Buddhist (4)

Hindu (5)

Atheist (6)

Agnostic (7)

Other (8) \_\_\_\_\_



sex\_orientation How do you identify your sexual orientation?

Heterosexual (1)

Homosexual (2)

Bisexual (3)

Pansexual (4)

Asexual (5)

Prefer not to say (6)

Other (7) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: demo

