Women’s Magazines & Body Images
An empirical case study of the Danish fashion magazine Costume

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Abstract

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This thesis is about the Danish fashion magazine Costume and women’s reception of it. The thesis is especially concerned with the body images in Costume and the way in which they influence women’s subjectivity and sense of self.

The thesis is situated within feminist and cultural studies and uses an interdisciplinary approach. Through a combination of textual analysis and individual research interviews the thesis gives an insight into the life-world of six women and their reception of Costume. The thesis uses both avid and reluctant readers, which gives the thesis the opportunity to investigate the women’s life-world and reception of a media product such as Costume, from differing perspectives.

By using a post-structuralist approach and drawing on theorists such as Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, the thesis provides a rigorous critique of Costume. The case study has proved that Costume carries a certain ideology, which deals with the construction of a female bodily ideal, an ideal, which is white, young, thin, heterosexual, beautiful and able-bodied. This ideology influences women and asks them to take on self-responsibility for the way they look. Costume thereby produces contemporary disciplines of ‘body projects’ and thus reproduces normative feminine practices within our culture. These are practices which train the female body in docility and obedience to cultural demands, which insist that all women should be slim and ‘perfect’, while at the same time being experienced in terms of ‘power’ and ‘control’.

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Introduction

“One is not born, but rather becomes a woman” (de Beauvoir, 1961, p. 9).

In The Body and Social Theory, Shilling (1993) argues that the body has become a “blank screen” open to construction and reconstruction in concert with the meanings of surrounding cultural “texts and discourses” (p. 5). Certainly, there is much evidence to propose that the mass media constitute a significant example of such texts and discourses; the media have been shown to play a significant role in shaping cultural impressions about the body, which in turn, provide a clear context for the development of personal attitudes toward the physical self (Bordo, 1993; Featherstone, 1991; Shilling, 1993).

In addition to presenting highly stylized and idealized imagery of the body, contemporary popular media are replete with messages that emphasize the desirability of a well-maintained body i.e. thin and toned, and that promote consumer products designed to assist in the achievement of such a body. In this cultural context, the body has assumed a sort of malleability in that it has been constructed as an object open to ready transformation through body projects of dress, diet, exercise, and surgery (Bordo, 1993; Featherstone, 1991; Foucault, 1977; Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1991). Furthermore, by implicating the disciplined body as symbolic of one’s healthfulness, morality, and spiritual salvation, the media have effectively constructed the external appearance of the body as conjoined with one’s personal character, as well as individual success at taking responsibility for disciplining the body (Featherstone, 1991).

This thesis is based on the Danish fashion magazine Costume, which is a part of Benjamin Publications and Denmark’s leading fashion magazine. From January 2007 to June 2007 the audited circulation copies were 39.919 with a readership of 140.000. The readership is split between 16.6% men and 83.4% women. Demographics show that the women reading Costume are aged between 15 and 35+ with equal percentage on all age groups (Costume media information).

Alongside other social institutions, Costume contributes to wider cultural processes which define the position of women in society. In this exchange with the wider social structure, Costume helps to shape both a woman’s view of herself, and society’s view of her. Costume promotes a certain kind of femininity which contains a set of practices and beliefs. The magazine is pervasive in the extent to which it acts as an agent of socialisation, and the remarkable degree to which it deals in and promulgates values and attitudes.
Most social commentators agree that the media reflect current social norms. Some have gone one stage further and suggested that media portrayal of slender body shapes can actually affect the way that women feel about their body shape and size (Bordo 1993, Featherstone 1991). Studying the content of the media enables one to speculate about the role of the media in moulding and mirroring societal values around body image.

Motivation
As a fellow consumer of women’s magazines I am particularly interested in the messages women’s magazines present and the questions such messages raise. Are they producing certain notions of femininity? Should the constant encouragement of women to improve their appearance and body be seen as a negative issue? More importantly, do women internalise the notions of the ideal body and discipline themselves or is reading women’s magazines simply used to ‘kill’ time? This thesis will investigate whether critics who see women as victims are overemphasising the power of the text and underestimating the ability of women to be selective and critical. Or should it be feared that even women who think they read the magazines very casually are still absorbing hazardous messages about what society (as demonstrated through the magazines) thinks is important (sex and beauty as opposed to serious political issues)?

The aim of this thesis is to mount a rigorous and systematic critique of Costume as a system of messages, a signifying system and a bearer of a certain ideology; an ideology which deals with the construction of a female bodily ideal. It will be argued that Costume and other women’s magazines collectively comprise a social institution which serves to foster and maintain a cult of femininity. In promoting a cult of femininity these magazines are not merely reflecting the female role in society; they are also supplying one source of definitions of, and socialisation into, that role.

Thesis statement
This thesis will carry out an analysis of the Danish fashion magazine Costume with a view to cover:

- What kind of body images Costume promotes and in what way women absorb these images. Does it influence their subjectivity and sense of self?

Through a textual analysis and qualitative research interviews, it will be illustrated how ‘codes of femininity’ are incorporated into Costume to shape the consent of the readers to a set of particular values. These codes are essential elements of scripts provided for women to use in the exercise
of their everyday life. However, the thesis will also show how some women’s interpretive frame enables them to critique and distance themselves from selected aspects of a consumption object with which they regularly engage.
Theoretical Framework: Exploring the Point of Entry

The concept of cultural studies emerged in the beginning of the 1970’s in England. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham University became an education and research institution for critical culture and society researchers. CCCS was already founded in 1964 as an interdisciplinary project by cultural-critic Richard Hoggart, who was one of the first researchers in England to start analysing popular culture. The Chicago School inspired many of the 1970’s researchers, however, Marxist, structuralist and feminist trends also influenced this inspiration (Hollows, 2000).

As a result, feminism and cultural studies can be said to have common concerns. Both “focus on the analysis of forms of power and oppression, and on the politics of production of knowledge within the academy, as well as elsewhere in society” (Franklin et al. cited in Hollows 2000, p. 25). In addition, both are interested in the connections between theory and experience. Thus, they have both played a huge part in the development of reception research, as many researchers from both strands have been interested in the way in which people have integrated media use in their everyday lives with a focus on the social and cultural context.

The cultural studies critic Stuart Hall argues that, besides having common concerns, feminism also transformed cultural studies. The idea that the ‘personal is political’ opened up the range of areas studied in cultural studies and “forced critics not only to reflect on how they conceptualised power relations but also on how these power relations were bound up with issues of gender and sexuality” (Hollows 2000, p. 25). Furthermore, feminism put questions about identity back on the agenda of cultural studies (Hall 1992).

This thesis is situated in the field of both feminism and cultural studies and thus requires an interdisciplinary approach, as I believe that one discipline is deficient in grasping the study of culture as a whole. The following is a theoretical chapter, which focuses on the female body. The body and body image is the central theme of this thesis and it is therefore important to highlight key theories related to the body. The chapter also serves as a foundation for the chapter on methodology.

The Body

Historical trends: portrayal of the female body

There is general agreement that the social pressure to conform to the slender ideal is greater in the West on women than on men (Bordo 1993). The idealisation of slenderness in women is
often viewed as the product of a historical evolution that has occurred over the past century. Within Western industrialised cultures, there have been many changes over the years in the body shape and size that is considered attractive and healthy, especially for women. It is possible to trace a cultural change in the ‘ideal body’ from the voluptuous figures favoured from the Middle Ages to the turn of this century, to the thin body types favoured by the fashion magazines of today (Grogan 1999).

Plumpness was considered fashionable and erotic until relatively recently. From the Middle Ages the ‘reproductive figure’ was idealised by artists. The female body was frequently represented with full, rounded hips and breasts. This trend is represented in the fleshy bodies painted in the C15, which represented the aesthetic ideal at the time. In the 1800s the idealised form was still voluptuous. The ample and curvaceous woman’s body was idealised as the antithesis to the taut male body (Grogan 1999).

According to the feminist philosopher Susan Bordo (2003) the idealisation of slimness in women is a very recent phenomenon, dating from the 1920s. It is often argued that the thin ideal is the outcome of successful marketing by the fashion industry, which has become the standard of cultural beauty in the industrialised affluent societies of the twentieth century. Clothes fashions were represented by hand-drawn illustrations until the 1920s, when they started to be photographed and widely distributed in mass-market fashion magazines. These magazines presented a fantasy image of how women should look. The fashions themselves demanded a moulding of the female body, because each ‘look’ suited a particular body shape (Grogan 1999).

At this stage in time, middle and upper-class women began binding their breasts with foundation garments to flatten their silhouettes. They used starvation diets and vigorous exercise to try to get their bodies to the pre-adolescent, breastless, hipless ideal (Silverstein et al., 1986). In the 1930s and 1940s ideals moved towards a shapelier figure, epitomised by actresses Jean Harlow and Mae West in the 1930s and Jane Russell in the 1940s. Breasts became fashionable again, along with the clothes that emphasised them.

The trend for slimness became particularly acute in the 1960s, when the fashion model Twiggy became the role model for a generation of young women. She had a flat-chested, boyish figure, and weighed 96 lb. Slimness came to exemplify unconventionality, freedom, youthfulness and a ticket to the ‘Jet Set’ life, and was adopted as the ideal by women of all social classes (Grogan, 1999).

Studies of the portrayal of the female body in the media have reliably found that models became thinner and thinner between the 1960s and 1980s. This trend for thinness as a standard of beauty has become even more marked in the 1990s than it was in the 1980s. In the 1980s, models were slim and looked physically fit, with lithe, toned bodies. On the contrary, the 1990s have seen a departure from this trend with the emergence of ‘waif’ models who have very thin
body types, perhaps the most famous of these being Kate Moss, who has a similar body shape and weight to Twiggy from the 1960s (Bordo, 1993).

The late 1990s and the beginning of the 21st Century have seen the rise of ‘heroin chic’, where fashion houses have taken very thin models and made them up to look like stereotypical heroin users, with black eye make-up, blue lips and matted hair. This is yet another fashion trend that glamorises extreme thinness, and may give cause for concern because of the potential negative effects on young women’s body image (Grogan 1999).

**The objectified body**

Professor Susie Orbach (1993) argues that women are taught from an early age to view their bodies as commodities. She shows how women’s bodies are used to humanise and sell products in Western consumer culture, and how the fact that women’s bodies themselves are objectified creates body image problems for women:

> The receptivity that women show to the idea that their bodies are like gardens – arenas for constant improvement and resculpting – is rooted in the recognition of their bodies as commodities.” (Orbach 1993 cited in Grogan 1999 p. 52).

Professor Wendy Chapkis (1986) of women and gender studies, argues that women are oppressed by a ‘global culture machine’ (made up of the advertising industry, communications media, and the cosmetic industry), which promotes a narrow, Westernised ideal of beauty to women all over the world. She looks at the rituals women go through to try to attain the ideal such as bulimia or anorexia, and uses these to demonstrate how oppressive these beauty regimes are for women. She argues that women are entrapped in the beauty system, but that there are possibilities for change if women are willing to accept themselves and their bodies as they really are. This would involve a close examination of ‘beauty secrets’ (the rituals that most women undertake to try to conform to the cultural ideal) and a rejection of these in favour of a celebration of the ‘natural’ body.

Bordo (2003) is pessimistic about women’s ability to resist the pressures from this beauty system. She argues that women cannot help but collude with the system because they are submerged in the culture where slimness in women is associated with a specific (positive) set of cultural meanings from birth. She states that feminists should be sceptical about the possibility of developing free, feminine identities that are independent of the mainstream beauty culture, and shows how women’s attempts to escape the system may be reabsorbed into negative discourses of femininity.
Professor Susan Grogan (1999) argues that one of the problems with this analysis is that women end up as ‘victims’ of a system of oppression. In contrast, sociologist Dorothy Smith (1990) sees women in an active role in interpreting cultural messages. She argues that women ‘do femininity’ in an active way and she defines ‘femininity’ as a skilled activity. One of the sources of learning the skill of ‘being feminine’ is to read appropriate materials (especially women’s magazines) where information is actively presented on how to be more attractive. The material itself requires prior knowledge in the area to place it into context. Smith (1990) shows how women’s magazine articles assume agency in the reader, and how they work by presenting the woman with a specific ideal (in the representation of a ‘perfect’ model body), by advising her on what source of action she should take in order to attain this ideal (diet, exercise, use cellulite creams and make-up).

Furthermore, she argues that the creation of dissatisfaction in women leads to active attempts to rectify the perceived deficiency. Women objectify their bodies and are constantly planning and enacting measures to bring them closer to the ideal.

**Foucault and the social construction of a bodily ideal**

Relevant to the debate about women and their body is the French philosopher Michel Foucault’s theory of biopower and docile bodies. For Foucault, biopower arose as a result of the increased prominence of social and human sciences, taking the human body and behavior as their object of knowledge. This knowledge gave rise to institutions and administrative techniques for measuring, regulating and controlling people and their behavior. According to Foucault (1977), the shift from traditional to modern societies has been characterized by a great change in the exercise of power, by what he describes as “a reversal of the political axis of individualization” (p.44).

Modern society has, according to Foucault (1977), seen the emergence of highly invasive systems of power: these exercise a far more restrictive social and psychological control. Therefore, as a result, modern power “circulates through progressively finer channels, gaining access to individuals themselves, to their bodies, their gestures and all their daily actions” (Foucault 1980, p. 151). These ‘finer channels’ are an expression of the growth of organized knowledge and take the form of timetables, taxonomies, examinations and registers, which facilitate the control of large numbers of bodies within a regimented space (Turner 1991). This way of exercising power required new forms of surveillance and control and a disciplining of individual subjects and bodies. Overall this is what Foucault terms ‘biopower’.
The Panopticon (Bentham’s plan for a circular prison from the centre of which the warder has all-round visibility of the cells) captures, for Foucault, the essence of the disciplinary society and biopower. The prisoners would assume that they could be observed at any moment and would adjust their behavior accordingly. The disciplinary forces thereby work “to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power” (Foucault 1977, p. 201). In other words each becomes his own jailer and the system has thus created a ‘docile body’.

This sort of ‘disciplinary surveillance’ is not, however, restricted to prisons. For Foucault (1977), the structure and effects of the Panopticon resonate throughout material institutions in society: “Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons?” (p. 228).

As has been explained, the central role of biopower is controlling the bodies of individuals, thus creating ‘docile bodies’ that turn their ‘gaze’ upon themselves and regulate and discipline themselves on a material level, according to the cultural expectations and requirements. How they ‘should’ behave, or perform, is not subject to individual interpretation but is determined by mass standards. “A normalizing gaze is internalized, prescribing what is and is not acceptable to do or to be” (Frost 2005, p. 72).

Foucault (1977) argues that everybody is the product of biopower, because everybody is worked on and ‘written on’ by institutions such as the family, schools, universities, bureaucracies, medical and health agencies, prisons, religions or the army, either directly (by being part of the institution) or indirectly (through the circulation of discourses throughout the culture). However, Foucault stressed, later in his life, that during the process, the rules by which some people are constructed as normal, and others excluded, ensure that opposition and resistance are built-in effects of biopower. “Where there is power, he came to see, there is also resistance” (Bordo 1996, p. 254).

**Doing femininity – Judith Butler and the performing gender**

The American professor Judith Butler represents a post-structuralist approach to gender and sexuality by arguing that the subject is socially constructed and discursively constituted. Butler is, amongst others, inspired by Foucault’s notion of biopower and how a certain discourse
eliminates or integrates elements, which do not fit society’s norms. Due to her ground-breaking book, *Gender Trouble*, which was first published in 1990, Butler has been claimed to be the founder of queer theory.

Butler criticises the traditional perception of gender by stressing that neither women nor men should be categorised on the basis of their sex. In this way, a binary opposition between man and woman is created, which forces the individual subject to remain within this particular category. Rather, Butler is interested in the social gender, since an individual’s gender should be defined by its performance. Butler argues that gender is something you perform or act out as part of your identity, which is created and recreated throughout your everyday life:

> There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender…identity is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results (Butler, 1990, p. 233).

Butler (1999) highlights that gender as a performance should not be understood as a single action but as repetitive, ritualizing actions, which are naturalized because of the body. Butler (1999, p.12) shares Simone de Beauvoir’s view that “one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one” (de Beauvoir, 1961, p. 9). The surrounding culture teaches you from infancy how to perform and behave according to your sex.

Butler uses the term ‘heterosexual matrix’ to describe the problems she sees with the sex-gender-desire link. The heterosexual matrix indicates that our sex (male/female) produces our gender (masculine/feminine) which causes our desire towards the opposite sex. Butler argues that the heterosexual matrix acts restrictingly on the gender’s unfolding because it regulates individual subjects and marginalises those who do not conform to the norms of the relationship between man and woman. Thus, homosexuality and homosexual identification are excluded as abnormal and obscure (Stormhøj, 1999).

Butler differentiates herself from feminism by being critical towards the tendency of viewing women as an equal crowd, whose identity is first and foremost defined by their sex. Despite the intention, feminism participates in defining women as a certain ‘specie’ – a common ‘we’ - and thereby limits women’s cultural opportunities. Feminists promotes the female gender as a homogeneous group and have thus implicitly accepted the thought of a connection between sex and gender. Furthermore, Butler is saying that the term ‘women’ is often, within feminism, referring to a white, heterosexual, able-bodied, Western woman. This is a representation which does not account for the countless differences amongst women when it comes to race, age, sexuality and so forth. She says:
Butler concludes that our gender is not a core aspect of our identity but rather a performance, how we behave at different times. Our gender is an achievement rather than a biological factor. Butler suggests that we should think of gender as free-floating and fluid rather than fixed:

> When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one (Butler 1990, p. 6).

**Post-structuralism**

Post-structuralism covers well this thesis’ overall theoretical perspective and has been used as guidance for the development of an appropriate and valid methodology. Post-structuralism encompasses the intellectual developments of continental philosophers and critical theorists who wrote with themes of twentieth-century French philosophy. The prefix "post" refers to the fact that many contributors, such as Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, and Julia Kristeva rejected structuralism and became quite critical of it. Broadly speaking, post-structuralism can be understood as a body of distinct reactions to structuralism (Sarup 1993).

Post-structural practices generally operate on some basic assumptions. Firstly, the author’s intended meaning is secondary to the meaning that the reader perceives. Post-structuralism rejects the idea of a literary text having a single purpose, a single meaning or one singular existence. Instead, every individual reader creates a new and individual purpose, meaning, and existence for a given text. To step outside of literary theory, this position is generalizable to any situation where a subject perceives a sign. Meaning (or the signified) is constructed by an individual from a signifier (Sarup 1993).

Secondly, a post-structuralist critic must be able to utilize a variety of perspectives to create a multifaceted interpretation of a text, even if these interpretations conflict with one another. It is particularly important to analyze how the meanings of a text shift in relation to certain variables, usually involving the identity of the reader (Sarup 1993).
In the post-structuralist approach to textual analysis, the reader replaces the author as the primary subject of inquiry. This displacement is often referred to as the "destabilizing" or "decentering" of the author, though it has its greatest effect on the text itself. Without a central fixation on the author, post-structuralists examine other sources for meaning (e.g., readers, cultural norms, other literature, etc.). These alternative sources are never authoritative, and promise no consistency (Sarup 1993).

Many scholars who began by stating that texts could be interpreted based solely on the cultural and social circumstances of the author came to believe that the reader's culture and society share an equal part in the interpretation of a piece. If the reader sees it in one way, how do we know that that is the way the author intended? We don't. Therefore, critical reading seeks to find the contradictions that an author inevitably includes in any given work. Those inconsistencies are used to show that the interpretation and criticism of any literature is in the hands of the individual reader and will necessarily include that reader's own cultural biases and assumptions. While many structuralists first thought that they could tease out an author's intention by close scrutiny, they soon found so many disconnections, that it was obvious that their own experiences lent a view that was unique to them (Sarup 1993).

As will be evident in the following chapter on methodology, this theoretical chapter on the body has been highly influential in the choice of methodology for the present thesis. Post-structuralism will naturally dictate the methodological approach and theories put forward by post-structuralists such as Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault and Judith Butler will be used in the analysis.

**Summing up my theoretical standpoint**

Following the examination of the body it is pertinent to add the following questions, as guidance for the upcoming investigation into body image in *Costume* and the interviewees’ perception of it:

- What kind of ‘images’ concerning the body does the interviewee establish in *Costume*?
- Does *Costume* create a need, which can only be reached through consumption and bodily work? If so, how?
- If an ideal body image exists, how does the interviewee internalise that image and discipline herself accordingly?
- Does the reader feel a sense of agency while reading *Costume* and in what way?
- Is the interviewee consciously resisting certain ideals portrayed by *Costume*? If so, how is the resistance met in society?
- According to the interviewee, how is Butler’s understanding of gender as a performance evident in *Costume*?
As previously stated post-structuralism serves as the overall theoretical perspective and is used as a framework for the design of the methodology. From the post-structuralist point of view, the above mentioned questions cannot be answered in one single way but will involve a multitude of answers which should be seen according to the context of the individual interviewees.

The key aspects of such post-structural interpretations are:

- Every individual reader creates a new and individual purpose, meaning, and existence for a given text.
- A post-structuralist critic must be able to utilize a variety of perspectives to create a multifaceted interpretation of a text, even if these interpretations conflict with one another.
- The interpretation and criticism of literature is in the hands of the individual reader and will necessarily include that reader's own cultural biases and assumptions.
Methodology

The preceding theoretical chapter has served as a foundation for the choice of an appropriate methodology. Being familiarised with previous research on the body and body images, I am able to reach conclusions and make rational decisions about the gathering and analysis of empirical data in the case study of the Danish fashion magazine, *Costume*. The thesis is situated within the field of feminist and cultural studies and the choice of methodology highlights that fact. What follows is an explanation of the designed methodology.

Social constructivism

This thesis is situated within the field of cultural studies. Since social constructivism can be said to have been influential in the field of cultural studies it seems natural to use social constructivism as a methodological frame for my research. A major focus of social constructivism is to uncover the ways in which individuals and groups participate in the creation of their perceived social reality. It involves looking at the ways social phenomena are created, institutionalized, and made into tradition by humans. Socially constructed reality is seen as an ongoing, dynamic process; reality is reproduced by people acting on their interpretations and their knowledge of it (Wenneberg 2002).

Language has a central position in social constructivism, because language is regarded as crucial to the way in which we experience the world surrounding us. In this lies the idea that people are born into a world with already existing norms and values (Wenneberg 2002). The norms and values of society are learned through our upbringing and since they are incorporated into our language, it ends up playing an important part. As a social constructivist, my understanding of the world is therefore not founded on an objective reality rather it is socially constructed through relations with other people. Furthermore, social constructivists do not believe that there is such a thing as one single truth and therefore don’t seek to reveal the ‘true’ nature of people; Rather they seek to reveal the various, differing truths, which they believe, exist. The social constructivist focus on language, works well with both the reception analysis and the qualitative approach in this thesis. I believe that it is through the linguistic formulations in the qualitative interviews discussed later, that the respondents’ reception of *Costume* will be available to me as a researcher.

I view social constructivism as a good theoretical and methodological frame for my research, since reception analysis is closely linked with the social constructivist understanding. Social constructivism, as opposed to positivism's demand for objectivity, gives me the opportunity to regard the knowledge I produce qualitatively. What is important is the assumption that you always interpret the world according to its context. In addition, social
constructivism contains an important element seen from a feminist perspective, namely the idea of transformation. Since social phenomena are historically and culturally shaped, it must mean that they are also historically changeable. If social values and norms are created by people’s actions, then it seems obvious that people can also change them.

It is my intention to use a hermeneutic interpretation of the interviews, which is a useful tool in social constructivist research, depending as it does on my interpretation of the gathered empirical data. From a hermeneutic perspective the interpretation of meaning is the central theme. When interpreting the interviews, the actual interpretation of meaning is characterised by a hermeneutic circle. So, the understanding of the text is a continuing process in which the meaning of the individual parts is determined by the all-encompassing meaning of the text, as it is also pre-empted (Kvale 1997 p. 57). Effectively this means that by focusing on the meaning of individual parts, the original all-encompassing meaning can be changed. The hermeneutic interpretation of a text is thereby potentially an endless process. However, in practice it will end when you have reached a valid meaning, which is reasonable and without any contradictions. (Kvale 1997, p. 57). The interpretation of meaning is the central theme within hermeneutics, thereby enabling me to reach a valid and common understanding of the interviews.

Textual analysis

The purpose of carrying out a textual analysis of Costume is to establish interesting issues and problems related to body image and a bodily ideal. The findings are used in constructing a useful interview guide for the qualitative research interviews. The textual analysis has semiotic influences as I see semiotics as a form of hermeneutics - that is the classical name for the study of the interpretation of literature. In addition, since it is the meaning of Costume I want to study, especially the visual images, semiotics provides the best approach.

Semiotics originates mainly in the work of two people, linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, and philosopher Charles Peirce. Semiotics is the study of signs in society, and while the study of linguistic signs is one branch of it, it encompasses every use of a system where something (the sign) carries a meaning for someone. In this thesis I wish to use the semiotic ideas of semiotician Roland Barthes who has rejected the purely structuralist semiotics of Saussure and Peirce and takes us closer to the semiotic analysis of contemporary media from a post-structuralist perspective (Bignell 2002).

Theorists such as Roland Barthes initially used semiotics for the ‘revelatory’ political purpose of ‘demystifying’ society. However, the semiotic ‘decoding’ and denaturalization of textual and social codes tends to suggest that there is a literal truth or pre-given objective reality underlying the coded version, which can be revealed by the skilled analyst’s banishing of ‘distortions’ (Bignell 2002).
When we consider media texts, it will become clear that linguistic, visual, and other kinds of signs are used not simply to denote something, but also to trigger a range of connotations attached to the sign. Barthes (1977) calls this social phenomenon, the bringing-together of signs and their connotations to shape a particular message, the making of ‘myth’. Myth here refers to ways of thinking about people, products, places, or ideas, which are structured to send particular messages to the reader or viewer of the text.

**Audience reception research**

It is a basic principle of reception research that meaning is not simply transferred from the media to their audiences. Moreover media/audience meaning processes are strongly embedded in the social contexts of everyday life in which people use the media. Reception research explores the encounter of active audiences with media meanings. Audiences ‘do’ things with media messages, but what they do is not just to rationally expose themselves to media material likely to gratify this or that individual psychological ‘need’. The activity of audiences is also a discursive activity that implicates audience members in the construction of social, political, and cultural identities, and the collective production of social reality (Drotner 2003, pp. 124-125).

**Qualitative research interview**

The preferred methodological approach of reception research is the qualitative interview. The thesis will use Professor Steinar Kvale’s book *Interview* as the main reference for successfully carrying out the interviews. Overall, Kvale (1997) argues that qualitative research produces knowledge about specific experiences and meanings and the goal is to produce in-depth knowledge relating to a specific phenomena. In addition, qualitative analysis sees the production of meaning as a process, which is a viewpoint it shares with social constructivism. With the use of qualitative interviews it becomes possible to access the recipients’ experiences with *Costume* empirically, since the readers formulate the experiences linguistically. This is because the qualitative research interview tries to understand the world from the interviewees’ point of view and is a place for the production of knowledge (Kvale 1997, pp. 17-19). This is relevant in comparison with social constructivists’ understanding of language as a focus of the creation of an individual’s reality. The qualitative form of interview seems very useful for this thesis which “seek(s) to gather descriptions of the life world of the interviewee as a means to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena” (Kvale, 1997 p.19, my translation).

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1 Original version: “…har til formål at indhente beskrivelser af den interviewedes livsverden med henblik på at fortolke betydningen af de beskrevne fænomener.”
What is characteristic of the qualitative method is that it is based on few people with a unique knowledge, who can be helpful in covering a given thesis (Kvale 1997). In designing the qualitative interviews I have found inspiration in Kvale’s (1997) ‘guide’ to the design, analysis and verification of the qualitative research interview. The seven steps are thematization, design, interview, transcription, analysis, verification and reporting (p. 95). The seven steps he describes are used as a guideline for successfully carrying out the interviews in this thesis. I see these stages as a tool to clarify the questions, so that they can be incorporated into the qualitative interview. However, it is not my intention to slavishly follow the stages. They are used as a guideline for developing the interviews.

Throughout the interviews and the following interpretation I focus solely on the interviewees’ own descriptions, since I am not interested in the ‘absolute truth’ but rather in the ways in which the interviewees experience reality. The social constructivist approach means that I (as a researcher) produce data material rather than gathering it. This can be seen to have a direct relation with Kvale’s (1997) metaphor about a researcher as a ‘traveler’ rather than a ‘mine-worker’ (p. 17). This is so, because when there does not exist one true and objective reality, it is impossible to collect samples of it. Reality and truth is created through the social context and language. The data material is produced through interaction and conversation between me and the interviewees.

A semi-structured interview, which is guided by a list of topic areas that require discussion in the interview, allows an informal way for the women to talk about their experiences of body image. The advantage of doing this (rather than asking the women to complete a questionnaire that asks specific questions) is that the women are given the freedom to express how they feel, rather than just answering pre-planned questions. This allows them to set their own agenda and address issues that are important to them, a technique which gives more flexibility than questionnaire work (Kvale, 1997, p. 78).

**Classification of interviewees**

The semi-structured interviews will involve two types of interviewees; avid readers and reluctant readers, all aged between 22-28. I have chosen these two types of women to gather various perspectives on the matter of body image and to see what part Costume plays in the shaping and reception of bodily ideals.

I know all the interviewees privately. I find this a huge advantage, as I believe this will make the interview more relaxed and run more smoothly, since the interviewees will be more comfortable in the presence of a friend, rather than a stranger. Furthermore, the interviewees will more openly share private feelings and concerns as we already have established a trusting relationship. I predict that this will improve the results of the interviews, as more in-depth
empirical data is created. Yet it is possible the contrary may occur; my personal relations with the interviewees might affect the outcome negatively as my interaction with the interviewees might not be free from bias but rather influenced by personal attitudes and prejudices (Kvale 1997, p. 73). By being aware of this potential negative influence before carrying out the interviews I will be able to avoid it and thus reach valid and useful results.

The interviewees are as follows (using pseudonyms):

**Avid readers:**
- Anna: Anna is 22 years old and subscribes to *Costume*.
- Amanda: Amanda is 23 years old and reads *Costume* and other women's magazines on a regular basis.
- Alice: Alice is 28 years old and buys *Costume* regularly.

**Reluctant readers:**
- Rebecca: Rebecca is 24 years old and would never buy women’s magazines like *Costume*.
- Rose: Rose is 22 years old and rarely reads *Costume* or other women’s magazines. She buys a magazine about twice a year for long train rides but does not find them particularly interesting.
- Rachel: Rachel is 23 years old and does not buy *Costume* or any other women’s magazines. She does however have a lot of female friends who buy *Costume* and therefore is familiar with the magazine.

**The qualification of the interviewer**

In every interview situation it is important to be aware that the interviewer is the actual research tool and that you learn to become an interviewer by interviewing (Kvale 1997, p. 151). According to Kvale (1997) a good interviewer is a person who masters both the interview subject but also the human interaction which takes place. As an interviewer I have to constantly make quick decisions about what the next question should be and how to pose it. In addition I need to be aware of what aspects of the respondents’ answers I should follow up and which I should not follow up. These aspects are specifically related to the results of my textual analysis and the hypotheses I have made throughout. It is also important to make decisions about what answers to interpret (Kvale 1997, p. 151).

In relation to Kvale’s (1997) seven stages for research interviews, he recommends that you outline criteria of qualifications for the interviewer. By this he means that the interviewer ought to be well-informed, structured, clear, friendly, sensitive, open, critical, controlling,
interpreting and able to remember (p. 152). As I wish to make the interview situation as pleasant for the interviewees as possible, it is of course my intention to rely on the above-mentioned criteria of qualification.

**Interview guide**

In order to produce useful knowledge on the basis of the interviews I find it essential to create a question guide\(^2\), in which I design the questions I want answered by the respondents. The question guide will be developed on the basis of the hypotheses I have reached through the textual analysis. With a view to the questions, which relate to the chosen editorial features, I will also, in the question guide, consider the individual feature’s specific form and content. Furthermore the question guide will also contain questions about women’s relationship with consumerism. The question guide is therefore extremely relevant in relation to an investigation of my hypotheses.

**The trinity of reliability, validity, and generalization**

“In modern social science the concepts of validity, reliability and generalization have obtained the status of a scientific holy trinity…to be worshipped with respect by all true believers in science” (Kvale 1997, p. 225, my translation\(^3\)). The essence of research is the collection of facts or bits of information in order to prove or debunk theories and hypotheses. The collected information would be useless if it were not accurate, relevant and did not pertain to the topic i.e. if it was not valid. The concepts of reliability, validity and generalization can, however, be understood in different ways, which is why I wish to question the traditional positivist understanding and instead use a social constructivist approach.

Kvale (1997) argues that a strong focus on validity in research may foster an emphasis upon testing and verification of knowledge, rather than upon exploration and creative generation of new knowledge. The issues of control and legitimation come to dominate over and hamper creativity and production of new insights (p. 246). Therefore I wish to limit a strong emphasis on validation, as that might be an expression of uncertainty about the value and worth of my own results. Rather, I will ensure that the quality of the craftsmanship results in knowledge claims that

\(^2\) The interview guide is enclosed as appendix 3

\(^3\) Original version: “Begreberne generaliserbarhed, reliabilitet og validitet har opnået status som videnskabelig, hellig treenighed i moderne samfundsvidenskab…og de tilbedes med respekt af alle sande tilhængere af videnskaben”.

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are so powerful and convincing in their own right that they as it were carry “the validation with them, like a strong piece of art” (Kvale 1997, p. 246, my translation⁴).

The reason why it does not make sense to use positivist objectivity within interpretive sciences is because the field of research stems from human interaction and is therefore in a state of constant change. Subsequently it is only possible to produce snapshots of the concrete reality. This is also evident in this thesis, as I cannot claim to have found the definitive truth about women’s reception of *Costume*. This, however, does not make the results less valid, although the data will never result in an all-encompassing truth as understood by positivists. Rather the data should be viewed as a snapshot of a process of reception, which my investigation can be said to resemble. In addition, I wish to question whether it is relevant to strive for generalization, since human relations are constantly changing. Instead, I believe it is important to be able to use and apply my results to relevant contexts, rather than reaching the general and universal. Therefore, as a social constructivist, I seek to produce trustworthy and useful knowledge, thereby showing how social phenomena are influencing the way in which we experience truth.

By making my research procedures transparent and the empirical data evident, the conclusion of this study becomes intrinsically convincing as “true, beautiful and good” (Kvale 1997, p. 246, my translation⁵). Appeals to external certification, or official validity stamps of approval, then become secondary. In this sense valid research is research, which makes questions of validity superfluous.

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⁴ Original version: “…bærer deres egen gyldighed og værdi i sig ligesom et godt kunstværk”.
⁵ Original version: “…sande, skønne og gode”.
Case: Costume and its content

This textual analysis focuses on 3 issues6 of the monthly, Danish, fashion magazine *Costume*. It will use the techniques of semiotic analysis and will deal with the signs and codes at work in the magazines, to consider whether they encode a coherent mythic bodily ideal to their readers. To answer this, I will examine the editorial content of the magazines. I have examined 47 editorial articles with a total of 212 photographs in order to establish whether a general pattern exists, when it comes to a bodily ideal. From this sample I will outline and analyse some of the main issues, which it is important to be aware of when it comes to designing the interview guide. The analysis will help in the process of constructing an interview guide for the upcoming qualitative research interview.

The purpose of Costume

What is the purpose of *Costume*? The answer to this depends on the viewpoint from which the question is posed. *Costume* editors believe that they engage and inspire their readers by giving them the most comprehensive fashion material. They also claim to be down to earth, so that the inspiration provided by the magazine becomes immediately useful and dreams can be changed to reality. Furthermore *Costume* editors believe that they entertain their readers in a sexy and informative way by combining glamour, style, beauty and culture. Finally they argue that the universe of *Costume* is a female universe (Costume media information). On the reader’s part, primarily *Costume* is to entertain us. *Costume* is also informative, telling us about the latest products on offer. It can be instructional, e.g. the ‘how to’ genre, which will be looked into later on. On the text producers’ part, *Costume* is a vehicle for promoting various commodities through advertisements, because this is where the real revenue lies. Income from the actual sales of *Costume* is quite negligible.

The front cover

On the front covers of *Costume* we find linguistic signs, which can be said to encode mythic meanings of femininity and the body in their address to the female reader. This is a narrow femininity which is consistent with Butler’s heterosexual matrix. The cover of the June 2007 issue of *Costume*7, for example, announces a feature inside with the linguistic syntagm “Ready for the beach...you can become beautiful and ready in just 4 weeks plus sexy beach hair,

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6 The issues are (1) no. 59, March 2007 (2) no. 62, June 2007 (3) no. 66, October 2007
7 See appendix 2
beautiful legs and feet” (my translation\(^8\)). This address to ‘you’ is supposed to invite the reader to recognise herself as the individual being spoken to, and also to recognise herself as a member of a group, ‘women like you’. *Costume* editors claim to address individuals with unique desires and needs, promising that the contents of *Costume* will fulfil the needs of the individual and her group (Costume media information). However, as further analysis will show, the covers of *Costume* cannot claim to address everybody, since the femininity they portray is very narrow and only reachable for certain kinds of women.

The front covers also address the reader not by using the sign ‘you’ but by listing a series of metonymic items which are components of a signified ‘women’s world’. Again, this ‘women’s world’ is not including ‘all’ women but addresses white, Western, young and heterosexual women. Similar to Butler’s critique of feminism, I can critique *Costume* for treating women as a homogenous group.

The cover of the March 2007 issue\(^9\) lists: ‘The perfect spring wardrobe step-by-step, shopping bargains which update your style, pink lips and 9 other make-up must-haves’ (my translation\(^10\)). These diverse signs appear to signify quite distinct signifieds, but what unites them is the absent signifier ‘woman’, whose feminine identity, interests and aspirations are connoted by them. I think it is obvious that there is a certain femininity composed from these signs (and composed out of many more signs too), which the magazine and reader are expected to fit into and make complete. The problem is though, that a ‘woman’s world’ cannot be signified in one singular way. Rather, *Costume* is once again guilty of portraying an extremely narrow and stereotypical femininity.

The cover of *Costume* is also selling the reader a future image of herself as happier, more desirable. The object being ‘advertised’ stands in for the self which she desires to become. The linguistic syntagms on the cover position the reader as a subject who will be interested, excited, amused, or assisted by the articles in the magazine, which are being advertised on the cover. The magazine cover is offering something and at the same time coding the reader as a particular kind of subject, a gendered subject. In one way or another, all the linguistic signs on the cover signify that *Costume* will make ‘you’ happier or better in your gender identity. To use Judith Butler’s notion of ‘performativity’ you can say that *Costume* will, ultimately, help ‘us’ to perform the specific femininity they value and call for.

\(^8\) Original version: “Strandklar – Bliv sommersmuk fra top til tå på 4 uger + sexy strandhår, smukke ben og fodder”

\(^9\) See appendix 2

\(^10\) Original version: “Skønhed – Pink læber + 9 andre makeup-musthaves”
By creating this specific femininity, *Costume* limits the amount of women who are able to identify with the women on the front covers. These images are iconic signs, which represents the better self, which a lot of women desire to become, but are not able to. Since the model signified in the photograph is made to appear as she does by the various cosmetic products, hair stylists, and clothes which are detailed on the inside page of the magazine, the connotation is, however, that the reader can become like the model by using these products. All front cover models look directly into the camera, which can be compared with looking into the mirror. In addition the eyes of the models signified on the *Costume* covers all look out at the viewer, just as a reflection in a mirror looks back at us. So, both the linguistic and visual signs position the reader as a ‘lacking’ subject, and simultaneously connote that her desire to overcome ‘lack’ can be satisfied.

The title ‘Costume’ is a short and snappy name, and carries in itself a string of connotations. ‘Costume’ is an English word but resembles the Danish word ‘Kostume’ which carries the same meaning. The denotative meaning is simply that: a costume. The connotative meaning can be that the magazine can provide you with advice for improving your looks and appearance and symbolically putting on a ‘better’ costume. The various signifiers on the cover all signify the change and transformation you can go through.

The relationship with the reader

In the editor’s comment the editor approaches the reader personally and invites her to enter their female community and universe. The editor is thus on ‘our’ side and seeks to establish a ‘female friend’ discourse through the editorial. In the June 2007 issue¹¹ the editor, Rikke Agnete Dam, writes:

> I have realised something: I am not Gisele (Brazilian top model with meter-long legs and olive-coloured skin) and I probably never will be. Therefore, nobody will wonder why I show up on the beach with a pretty normal body. But that will not refrain me from giving my body a helping hand (p. 14, my translation¹²).

The editor has then established a ‘we feel the same’ relationship with the reader and continues by giving the reader the secrets to looking ‘better than normal’ and giving your body ‘a helping hand’. However, by referring to Foucault’s theory of biopower, the editor and *Costume* can be compared to an institution which regulates and controls their readers, while somehow managing

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¹¹ See appendix 2

¹² Original version: “Der er en ting, der er gået op for mig: Jeg er ikke Gisele (brasiliansk topmodel med meterlange ben og olivenfarvet hud). Og jeg bliver det sandsynligvis heller aldrig. Derfor er der ingen, der vil undre sig over, at jeg dukker op i solen med en ret almindelig krop. Men det skal ikke afholde mig fra at hjælpe den lidt på vej.”
to make it look as if they do not. The use of pronouns throughout *Costume* is also a way in which text producers create a relationship with the reader. By using the pronoun 'you', which covers anyone who reads the text, the text producer appears to address the reader directly.

The October 2007 issue states in a health article that ‘It will soon turn cold and grey, but you don’t have to leave Denmark to feel better. Go to a spa hotel in this country. Here are the five best’ (my translation¹³). The subject position of the reader is someone who has said ‘I can’t possibly feel good when the weather is cold and dark’. The modal auxiliary ‘can’ is emphatic in reassuring a doubtful imaginary addressee. Another way in which text producers imply that they know the reader is by the use of presupposition: You don’t have to feel bad when it is cold and grey. This presupposes that you (the implied reader) do feel bad when it is cold and grey. Presuppositions are taken-for-granted assumptions. The text producer refers to something as though it already exists, with which the reader is invited to identify. In the act of doing so, the reader is constructing herself as a member of a community of women for whom winter is a source of misery.

Finally, *Costume* can be said to establish a relationship of dependence. Obviously *Costume* is depending on the reader to buy the magazine and continue to buy it in order to survive financially. It succeeds in doing that by making the reader dependent on *Costume*. Roland Barthes (2006) argues that fashion has its own specific language, a ‘garment system’. The fashion industry requires that new clothes are constantly being bought, regardless of ‘need’. This is guaranteed partly by seasonal innovations and style and depending on the consumers wanting to be constantly up-to-date. As the editor writes in the editorial of the March 2007 issue: “What you like today will in six months time be replaced with something you like just as much” (p. 26, my translation¹⁴). Similar to Foucault’s theory of mass standards determining how individuals should perform or behave, *Costume* prescribes what is acceptable to wear on a monthly basis and how the readers succeed in performing their narrow femininity. The editor goes on to promising that this issue of *Costume* will help ‘you’ through this season’s tendencies and styles. As Barthes (2006) argues, fashion is, then, predicated upon change and modernity and the job of *Costume* is to continually create a new language to circumscribe what is new in the field, thus making sure that the reader will come back for more every month. *Costume* has thus created ‘docile bodies’ who regulate themselves on a material level.

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¹³ Original version: “Det er snart koldt og gråt, men du behøver ikke tage væk fra Danmark for at få det bedre. Tag på spa hotel herhjemme. Her er de 5 bedste”

¹⁴ Original version: “Det, som du i dag er vild med, vil om et halvt år være erstattet af nye ting, du er lige så vild med.”
The women in Costume and body shape

Generally *Costume* portrays three types of body shapes. The first type are celebrities who are used as style icons\textsuperscript{15}, sources of inspiration and as examples of beauty and health. These are women with very different body shapes. However what they all have in common is that they have been picked by *Costume* because of their beauty and are often featured in relation to a beauty product. The second type is the catwalk model\textsuperscript{16}, which is used in the magazines to show the latest trends. These women are ‘size zero’ women, who are typical of the high fashion industry. The images of these women function solely as a means of showing the clothes from the catwalks. Lastly we see models chosen by *Costume* for their own fashion features\textsuperscript{17}. These women are all slim but not extremely skinny. They are healthy looking and can’t be said to present a typical bodily ideal, when it comes to body shape. However, it is obvious that the pictures are airbrushed and that other technological means have been used to make the image look aesthetically beautiful.

However, an important point to make is the fact that out of the 212 photographs of women in *Costume*, only 6 women have a different ethnic origin than white. In each of the three magazines used for this study, one Asian-looking catwalk model was used. Furthermore, each of the magazines featured one non-Western celebrity as a style-icon; Zimbabwean actress Thandie Newton, Mexican-American actress Jessica Alba and African American singer Beyonce Knowles. This means that less than three percent of the women in *Costume* are white and presumably Western. Add to this, the fact that most of the women, especially the models, are very young. Finally, all 212 photographs feature able-bodied women. *Costume* thereby excludes a huge amount of potential readers and can be said to discriminate by not considering a more multifaceted choice of models and icons.

Despite all being white, young and ablebodied, *Costume* seems to acknowledge different body shapes and sizes. An article in the June 2007 issue\textsuperscript{18} gives advice on buying clothes to suit your figure. They use famous actresses, such as Cameron Diaz, to signify the boyish body, Scarlett Johansson signifies the curvaceous body, Sienna Miller the petite and Beyonce Knowles the wide-hipped. The connotation is that all these body shapes are acceptable and that *Costume* can help you to look your very best regardless of your shape.

\textsuperscript{15} See appendix 2
\textsuperscript{16} See appendix 2
\textsuperscript{17} See appendix 2
\textsuperscript{18} See appendix 2
The fictional body

*Costume* is a combination of written text and images. However, the images take up a much larger part of the magazine than the written text. Therefore it is significant to notice the kinds of images, which are portrayed. *Costume’s* fashion features are a series of about 8-10 images of a chosen model wearing the latest fashion. In a single issue there will normally be three subsequent fashion features. They have in common the fact that, from my point of view, they are orchestrated images. Close attention has been paid to the aesthetics and the staging of the models. This is evident in the often-exaggerated postures. These features clarify the fact that the image is just an image and not reality. In other words I view it as aesthetic design and not a truthful rendering of reality. In this way I will argue that the images can be characterised as fiction, because the images can’t be seen to be a ‘snapshot’ or an extract from real life. On the contrary, the images seem to signify a universe, separated from reality, because it is posed and staged. Therefore, by being staged, the images can be said to thematise their own displacement from reality.

A clear-cut example of the above contention is the fashion feature in the October 2007 issue. The feature is called ‘Upcoming Danish Designers’ (my translation19) and is an 8 page spread portraying the new Danish designer’s autumn looks. Two images in particular stand out and are good examples of the displacement from reality and fiction, which is characteristic of the fashion features. The first image (p. 113) is a black/white photograph20. The model in the image is holding a frame in front of her upper body and face and has a very awkward posture. I believe that all three features work to confirm that the image is staged and ‘unreal’. The second image (p. 114)21 is also interesting. A model is situated in an armchair and all she is wearing is a pair of high heels and panties. Her facial expression radiates concern and a sense of uncomfortableness. Her one breast is exposed whereas the other is covered by the model’s arm. Her legs are placed at the side and even though they are not crossed over they seem to connote a sense of innocence. Behind her, on the wall, hangs a blue dress by the designer Lizette Snorgaard, which is meant to be the main focus of the image. The displacement from reality of this image is the obvious staging of the image. The dress is hung on a nail in the wall and the model is sitting, half naked next to it.

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19 Original version: “Upcoming Danske Designere”
20 See appendix 2
21 See appendix 2
The ‘How to…’ guides

_Costume_ has 4 features under the section “Beauty and Health” (Costume 2007, my translation) in every issue. The first feature is called “Beauty” and the tagline for every issue is “Beauty News: The beauty editor has tested beauty products and recommends the very best – and reveals how you can become even more gorgeous” (Costume 2007, p. 127 in March issue, my translation). In these one-page features the latest beauty products are shown and described. The features promise to give us a summer-glow, a moisturised and well-cared-for skin, natural-looking peachy cheeks, a delightfully smelling body, strong and healthy hair and a wrinkle-free face, to name but a few. The features are a mixture of written text and visual images. The largest image is in the top right-hand corner and shows an upper body shot of a female celebrity, who represents the essence of outcomes of the described beauty products.

The second feature is called “Gorgeous” (my translation) and strengthens the ‘female friend’ discourse, which can be said to exist between the reader and the magazine throughout. In this feature we get insider advice from the hair-stylist, make-up artist or the beautician, who give us their best advice of the month. The feature also includes a test of a beauty product and functions as help for readers in choosing the best product. The features are dominated by a large image in the top left-hand corner of a female fashion model.

The third feature is called “Gorgeous as x” (my translation) where ‘x’ is replaced with a famous person’s name. The three issues chosen for this dissertation feature model and actress, Elisabeth Jagger, director of the Danish Fashion Institute, Eva Kruse, and _Costume’s_ front cover model, Lily Cole. The chosen person gives us her daily beauty routines, favourite beauty products and health advice. The three women are very different in appearance but what they have in common is that they have been labelled ‘Gorgeous’ by _Costume_. The headline “Gorgeous as Elisabeth” for instance, signifies that by reading this feature and buying the mentioned products, the reader can become as ‘gorgeous as Elisabeth’.

The final feature, which deals with health, is a double page spread, which gives a detailed guide on a given topic. The June issue for instance has a guide for “getting ready for the beach in just 4 weeks” (my translation). The feature is dominated by an image of top model Giselle

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22 Original version: “Skønhed og sundhed”
23 Original version: “Skønne nyheder: Skønhedsredaktøren har testet skønhedsprodukter og anbefaler de allerbedste – og giver dig tips til, hvordan du bliver endnu smukkere”
24 Original version: “Skøn”
25 Original version: “Skøn som…”
26 See appendix 2
27 Original version: “Bliv strandklar på kun 4 uger”
Bündchen\textsuperscript{28} and is accompanied with the caption “Even though you are not the top model Gisele, you can take it easy - you have a month to care for yourself and get ready for the beach” (Costume, June 2007, p. 134, my translation\textsuperscript{29}). This concept has been coined ‘anchorage’ by the Roland Barthes (1964) who argued that linguistic elements, such as a caption, can serve to ‘anchor’ (or constrain) the preferred readings of an image: “to fix the floating chain of signifieds” (ibid., 39). The anchorage convinces the reader that by reading the feature and following the recommendations we can easily become as ready for the beach as Gisele. The health feature in the March issue promises us that we can be beautiful with just one beauty treatment. Costume has tested how you can get radiant skin, white teeth, healthy hair and a bikini wax. The connotation is therefore that healthy and beautiful women have all of the above and Costume assumes that readers are interested in obtaining this look.

\textbf{Costume in context}

\textit{Costume} is a combination of texts, which refer to and work in relation to each other. Furthermore, the various texts draw on other texts, which exist outside \textit{Costume}. The individual texts in \textit{Costume}, written texts, images and adverts, are closely related in a thematic and aesthetic unity. Intertextuality is the overriding principle for the way in which the texts in \textit{Costume} are structured and related to each other. Intertextuality is also the way in which \textit{Costume} communicates with the readers. The reader will be able to activate the meaning of the text from her knowledge of the intertextual circumstances in the text and in her social context. It is very obvious that \textit{Costume} expects the reader to be knowledgeable about female celebrities and well-known models for instance. Even though I am not interested in the advertisements in \textit{Costume} it is important to note that intertextual references exist in the relationship between the editorial content and the advertisements. Thus they refer to and are weaved into each other. Throughout the magazines an advertisement will be placed so that it, with regards to content, reflects the editorial article. Overall this means that no single text in \textit{Costume} exist as a closed system. Rather they exist as part of the whole, which is \textit{Costume}.

\textbf{Final observations}

When investigating a whole text like \textit{Costume}, it is very important to be aware of how the process of reading \textit{Costume} affects the meanings of the signs which are used. I will argue that \textit{Costume} constructs a single mythic meaning for a bodily ideal and promotes an ideological position for its
readers. This in an ideal which treats ‘women’ synonomous with white, young, heterosexual, able-bodied women. However, within that narrow framework the signs in Costume are still mixed, sometimes contradictory, and involve the reader in choices about how to decode the signs. These choices are not infinite, and the concept of conscious choice needs to be evaluated in relation to subject-positions taken up by readers, which are unconsciously structured.

The above analysis has also shown, that there is no preferred body shape in Costume. To put it briefly, the central concerns of Costume are the care, protection, improvement and embellishment of the body with the use of clothing, cosmetics and beauty products. Costume makes their ‘narrowised’ readership believe that, with enough effort, discipline, and financial sacrifice, those ideal bodies or features of the body can actually be attained. Within any given issue, prototypical women’s bodies are shown in abundance throughout a combination of several genres – from editorials to advertisements, pictures, advertorials and letters to the editor. As signifying systems they each have a powerful existence outside the world of Costume.

With this in mind it is important to investigate the modality judgements the readers make when reading Costume. Modality refers to the reality status accorded to or claimed by a sign, text or genre. More formally, Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress (1988) declare, “modality refers to the status, authority and reliability of a message, to its ontological status, or to its value as truth or fact” (p. 124). So, in making sense of Costume, the readers make modality judgements about Costume, drawing on their knowledge of the world and of the medium. They assign it to fact or fiction, actuality or acting, and they assess the possibility or plausibility of the events depicted or the claims made in it. Modality judgements involve comparisons of textual representations with models drawn from the everyday world and with models based on the genre; they are therefore obviously dependent on relevant experience of both the world and the medium.

Although Costume has some very clear views about what constitutes appropriate femininity, it is by no means stable or unitary, so it might be more appropriate to refer to it in the plural: femininities. Femininities are articulated in and through commercial and mass media discourses, especially in the magazine industry and in the fashion industries of clothing and cosmetics (McLoughlin 2000). But most of all, I would suggest that they are articulated on women’s bodies, by women themselves. By turning femininity into a verb, to ‘feminise’, the active process and Butler’s notion of a performance, is highlighted, whereby women readily engage in the various practices, which are needed to make them appear ‘appropriately’ feminine.
Case: Women and their consumption of Costume

Hypotheses

In this chapter I will shortly resume the hypotheses and questions, which have been developed throughout this thesis, and subsequently divide them under relevant sections of study. It is these assumptions and questions which function as the background for the semi-structured interviews. I am aware, however, that not all hypotheses and questions can necessarily be tested empirically.

The hypotheses based on the textual analysis are:

1. There is no obviously idealised body shape in Costume.
2. Costume treats the term ‘women’ synonemous with white, heterosexual, young and able-bodied.
3. Costume encourages their readers to work on their body and improve it.
4. Costume establishes a narrow female universe, which only a limited amount of women can identify with.
5. The fashion features are staged and do not resemble reality.
6. Costume readers are interested in transforming their body and use Costume as a tool.

As the interviews will be semi-structured, I have established these main themes, which will be discussed and explored throughout all interviews. Enclosed as appendix 3 are the specific questions, which have been used in order to shed light on following questions:

Reading pattern

- Are the avid readers reading Costume as active and conscious readers or as passive and defenceless readers?
- What is the interviewee’s reading pattern and motivation for reading or lack of motivation?
- What are the interviewee’s expectations of Costume? Are they met?

Relationship between Costume and the reader

- From the interviewee’s point of view, what are the supposed functions and responsibilities of Costume?
- Does the reader feel a sense of agency while reading Costume? If so, in what way?
- What modality judgements does the interviewee make about the magazine?
Body Image
- What kind of ‘images’ concerning the body does the interviewee establish in *Costume*?
- In what way are the interviewee affected or influenced by the body images in *Costume*?
- How does *Costume* make the interviewee self-conscious about her body and encourage her to work on it in order to achieve an ideal?

Choice and independence
- In what way does *Costume* create a need, which can only be reached through consumption and bodily work?
- If an ideal body image exists, how does the interviewee internalise that image and discipline herself accordingly?
- Is the interviewee consciously resisting certain ideals portrayed by *Costume* and how is the resistance met in society?
- According to the interviewee, how is Butler’s understanding of gender as a performance evident in *Costume*?

The Findings
The following is a presentation of the findings from the semi-structured interviews. Please note that all citations made from the interviews are my translations. The original Danish transcripts can be found as appendix 4.

Reading pattern
The avid readers of *Costume* have a very positive attitude to *Costume*. All three readers read it for the entertainment and feel that it is some sort of treat. Anna, who is a subscriber, looks forward to receiving it every month. What all three have in common is an interest in fashion and the latest trends, which is also the main motivational factor for reading and buying the magazine. They expect the magazine to provide them with ‘inside’ knowledge from the fashion industry and enjoy the related articles and interviews. They read the magazine when they relax and it is often enjoyed on long train rides or during weekends when daily routines can be ignored for a few hours.

The readers rarely finish reading the magazine at once. They have a ‘pick-and-mix’ attitude and are very selective in their choice of articles. Amanda, who buys *Costume* on a regular basis skims the table of contents and quickly gets an idea of the articles of interest to her. “I am not the type who reads the entire magazine; the articles which are not of my interest is left
unread” she says. Anna explains that she never reads the beauty pages because she has no interest in doing so. She focuses mainly on the fashion.

The readers’ expectations of the magazine vary to a certain degree. Amanda explains that she unconsciously hopes that she is fashionable. She expects *Costume* to give her inside tips about the latest trends so that she can feel constantly up to date. Anna’s motivation is to be inspired and she says that *Costume* lives up to those expectations every time. Having read *Costume* and women’s magazines for several years, Alice does not have any particular expectations because, as she says: “I am never disappointed and know by now what they contain.”

The three reluctant readers are all critical of *Costume* and women’s magazines in general. Rebecca says that she would never buy *Costume* but “if I visit someone and they have it lying around I would be reluctant to have a look. Just for fun. But the ‘we-women’ attitude is horrible and I don’t want to recognise myself in the images they portray.” Rachel agrees and says, “reading these magazines makes me really sad. It is a horrible image they give of women and I wonder whether they really believe in everything they write”. Rose is more open and says, “I don’t want to admit it but I do read them maybe twice a year on a train ride. But to me they are of no use really as I don’t find fashion and beauty interesting”.

The three reluctant readers all know women who read *Costume*. When asked what they believe their motivation is, they have some critical comments. Rachel believes “that the women who buy these magazines need confirmation that they are like everybody else.” Rebecca thinks that her female friends read it because they can identify with the articles and enjoy reading about how to be a woman. She says, however, that it is problematic because “in the mainstream media this is the only source of information about how to be a woman”. Rose sees *Costume* as a service to women who are interested in fashion and beauty, because “the magazine tells you what’s new and where to buy it”.

**Relationship between Costume and the reader**

The avid readers agree that the function of *Costume* is to inspire and entertain. As a fashion magazine its primary function is to write about fashion and the latest trends. But Anna argues that *Costume* also writes about successful and strong women, who function as inspiration role models. Alice feels that another function of *Costume* is to communicate other women’s problems and solutions so that the readers can learn from them. Rebecca sees *Costume’s* function as nothing but business. “It is there solely to earn money and as a result, extremely superficial.” Anna is very positive about the supposed relationship between *Costume* and the reader. She says:

The editorial for instance indicates that we should not stress ourselves. We should not be influenced by the bodily ideals in the magazine. This is the general tone throughout.
Sure, they have thin models on the front page but *Costume* does not signal that I have to look that way. At least I don't perceive it that way.

Alice agrees with this so-called ‘female friend’ discourse. “You can say that the magazine is your other friend. It is there to give me advice about things that interests me.” Despite not being an avid reader, Rose has got the impression that *Costume* is at eye level with the reader. “You very rarely get a finger-wagging from *Costume*. It is more recommendations,” she says. More critical are Rebecca and Rachel who both see *Costume* as authoritarian and decisive. Rebecca starts:

*Costume* has a veiled agenda. They tell women how to act in an indirect kind of way. They make it look as if the bodily ideal is not dictated because they know that women want to make their own choices. However, it is impossible not to be influenced, as you can never disengage yourself from your context.

Rebecca’s comment can be compared to Foucault’s theory of biopower. Ultimately, what she is saying is that *Costume* works as a disciplinary force on the readers. However, the readers do not experience it in terms of power and control but rather they feel a sense of agency.

Rachel comments on the editorial as well and argues that *Costume* succeeds in creating a female universe, which the reader becomes part of. Rachel explains how *Costume* describes ‘the situation we all know’ and pretends to understand and be on our side, “while at the same time using it as a stick to beat women with about how perfect they should look. It is irrational and useless. They create a wrong image of the world somehow. Least, in my world.” Both the avid and reluctant readers are divided when it comes to the supposed responsibility of *Costume*. When asked whether *Costume* has a responsibility, Rebecca answers:

Yes, most certainly. Everybody who says something in public has a responsibility.

Specifically you can say that *Costume* has a responsibility for its portrayal of the female body as thin. *Costume* shows no sign of a social commitment. Its only interest is money.

Anna agrees and argues that *Costume* should be more thoughtful and considerate of women who have low self-esteem and are easily influenced by the bodily ideals in the magazine. Both Alice and Rose disagree and do not think that *Costume* has a responsibility; “it’s just a magazine” as Alice says and Rose adds “you can just avoid buying it if you don’t like what’s in it”. Rachel finds it problematic and thinks that women have a responsibility towards themselves for not protesting more loudly. She is also appalled that *Costume* apparently does not feel responsible for
setting up the bodily ideal. “The women at Costume must have a very unhealthy relationship with their body,” she concludes.

Rachel is fairly sarcastic in her judgement of readers’ sense of agency when she says: “many women delude themselves that they are not easily influenced. When they stand in a beauty shop and randomly buy a product without further reason, it’s bloody obvious that it’s because they have just read about it”. Rose does not believe that the regular readers become manipulated by reading the magazine and is convinced that they are capable of making conscious choices. Rebecca agrees, although she says that the choice becomes limited. She uses the example of the latest trend of ‘wearing gloves’. Costume recommends three gloves and your choice then lies in the three gloves portrayed.

It should be interesting to hear the readers’ own opinion about agency and conscious choices. Anna feels that she makes very conscious choices while reading. “I would never replace my current mascara just because a beauty test recommends otherwise”. Alice does not feel that she is easily persuaded either. But admits that she occasionally is tempted to buy the product Costume recommends. Amanda feels that her own personal taste is often controlling in her choices, she says, “if they recommend a pink lipstick and I don’t like it, then I would never buy it. I don’t follow fashion slavishly but I think that fashion is such a strong force so that to a certain extent we are all unconsciously influenced”.

Anna, Amanda and Alice feel that they at some level can identify with the women in Costume. When it comes to appearance they do not experience identification with the women in the magazine but as Amanda explains “the model on the front cover is a woman and so am I. Perhaps we have the same age and the same worries and dreams. That’s how I identify with them”. An important note to make is the fact that all three avid readers are white, young, heterosexual and able-bodied. This might explain their ability to identify with the models in Costume.

**Body image**

Both the avid and the reluctant readers are very critical of the body image in Costume. They all share the view that the models are extremely thin and ‘perfect’. “Nobody stands out. You could take one person’s head and place it on another person’s body because they all have the same body. It is really hard to find someone who does not look like everybody else,” says Rose. Rebecca agrees and argues that you rarely see black women because “Costume focuses on the majority and does not account for the fact that women are different”. Again, this is similar to Butler’s critique of feminism. Costume can also be claimed to be quilty of the heterosexual matrix. Rebecca states:
Costume does not acknowledge that a lot of women are not heterosexual. Heteronormativity is extremely strong in the magazine and homosexuality non-existent. There is no room in Costume for being different.

Rebecca’s comments are a sure sign of her frustration with Costume’s portrayal of the female gender and Costume’s expectations to her as a woman. This is a role which is obviously against Rebecca’s own performance of the female gender.

During the interviews I drew the interviewees’ attention towards some of the fashion features in the magazines. They all more or less agree that Costume’s fashion features and the unrealistic world fascinate them and Costume thus encourages daydreaming. They are all aware that the world of Costume portrayed through images is unrealistic and does not resemble their own reality. While identifying with the dream-like universe in Costume, the avid readers are very conscious about their own reality to which this bears no resemblance at all. Amanda says for instance “these features are very interesting, but I am of course aware that they are staged and arranged and that it is a photo shoot. But I think it is great that they are on location and create a fabricated universe. It puts it into perspective and creates a good atmosphere.” Rachel is more critical in her view of the fashion features. She believes they create a false hope and argues that they are unrealistic both fashion wise and body wise. She uses the following example:

In this feature for instance the model is wearing a short skirt, leg warmers and bare legs in the middle of a snow landscape. Very few women can be dressed like that. This results in women never being able to reach the portrayed perfection, as we would be forced to wear tights for instance. These magazines are a constant letdown.

The question now is whether readers feel reluctant to reach the portrayed perfection and whether they are influenced by the body image they all agree is evident in Costume. The three reluctant readers’ answers are all ‘yes’: women are indeed negatively affected. “How can you avoid being negatively affected? Even the ‘serious’ interviews with successful women are accompanied by a series of photographs where they look like a model. Costume makes everybody a beauty ideal,” says Rachel. Anna can’t see a huge problem with a supposed influence “it depends who you are and how you are influenced. You can be influenced by anything, even your friends. You just need to take it with a pinch of salt”. Alice, who is a couple of years older than the other interviewees, rejects any influence by the beauty ideal: “No, I am not affected by the body ideal in Costume. I am over that. An 18 year old might be, I think I was when I was that age.” Alice explains that her relaxed relationship with her body has to do with the fact that she is
very aware of the retouching and manipulation of images in Costume. Referring to a front cover model she says, “this is probably not her everyday look” and laughs.

The avid readers all admit that they care about their looks and are interested in many of the things Costume writes about. Their interviews all allowed for a talk about women who resist the beauty ideal and what Anna termed ‘unacceptable body behaviour’. Amanda explains her view by saying that “in the year 2008 you don’t grow hair under your arms. At least, not in my world. Also, if you have bushy eyebrows I can’t help but thinking, ‘gosh do something about it’”. Both Alice and Anna agree with Amanda on the hair issue and Anna adds:

I also find it unacceptable if people are not well cared for and healthy. If I see someone on the streets that weigh too much, have greasy hair and a slovenly appearance I find it unacceptable. Mostly towards themselves, of course. I should not sit in judgement on them but that is what I think when I see them.

Alice concludes by saying that obese women who wear very tight clothes offend her in some way. “It is a pity that they can’t see for themselves that it looks horrible,” she says. Amanda says that she does not frown on women who do not conform to the beauty ideals but that she is glad she does not look that way herself. The readers are here taking part in the discourse which excludes certain kinds of people as abnormal. A discourse which, Costume takes part in creating.

**Choice and independence**

Through the interviews I was interested in finding out whether consumption and Costume had any connection at all and whether readers felt encouraged to consume after reading Costume. The avid readers all agree that there is a clear correlation. They all fancy buying something after having read Costume and feel encouraged to do so. “What I love about Costume is that you can dream about buying all these things,” says Amanda. Anna and Alice agree that they dream about wearing the clothes in Costume and generally dream about having the lifestyle portrayed. They are, however, aware that it is financially unreal. Amanda complains that “I can’t afford to buy the things in Costume, I use it more as inspiration.” In this relation, Rachel thinks that Costume constructs yet another wrong signal when it comes to looking good. “What is wrong with wearing clothes from H&M? They make you believe that you can’t be hot in H&M clothes but only in a skirt costing 10.000 Danish Kroner. Now that’s ridiculous,” she says.

Rebecca argues that consumption is the core value in Costume and that Costume is a symbol of the way society works. “Ultimately, we are all reduced to consumers,” she says. Rachel is critical as well and reflects on the mental consequences:
The problem is that *Costume* is published monthly and every time we are encouraged to buy something new. That is bloody negative because the pleasure becomes short-lived. You buy something and are happy for 2 weeks, and then you have to buy something else. Women need to realise that we don’t need to consume constantly. And those who do, I wonder if they are happier than the rest of us. It is an evil and endless circle in which you never reach the goal.

This endless circle can be compared with Foucault’s idea of docile bodies. In this context, the readers can be said to have become their own jailers in a system of disciplinary surveillance created by *Costume*.

However critical, Rachel is still fond of fashion and clothes and is conscious about her appearance. “It is very important to me that I choose how to look myself. I am very aware that I don’t want magazines and the media in general to make me think negatively about my body. I hate doubting myself and rarely do. Rather I try to actively dissuade people from the beauty ideal,” she says.

Towards the end of the interviews I introduced the interviewees to Judith Butler’s theory of performativity and they all agree with Butler’s view. In general the six women think that there are some unwritten rules about how a boy should behave and how a girl should behave. “I am aware that men and women are different but it is insane that we feel able to judge what a child will enjoy before it is even born,” says Rachel and gives the example of boys playing football and girls playing with dolls.

When it comes to looks and bodily appearance the women also agree that *Costume* encourages some sort of performance. “*Costume* tells us what women in the year 2008 should look like. We are told how to wear makeup, clothes and where to shop,” says Amanda. Anna calls *Costume*’s role “a help” and does not think there is anything wrong about it. Rachel says “*Costume* strongly encourages a performance of the female gender and when they occasionally don’t it is extremely half-hearted. For instance, if they interview a woman who works in the military they always ask what they do to feel feminine after work”. Amanda reflects on her own role in this situation and comments: “If you chose to buy *Costume*, then I guess you have also chosen to allow *Costume* to tell you what’s right and wrong”.

The future and change

The avid readers are all satisfied with *Costume* as a magazine. As Alice says “*Costume* contains what I expect from that kind of magazine”. They all agree, though, that the magazine would benefit from more serious articles and less adverts and fashion. “It would be great with a few more personal articles concerning women’s everyday life and not so much our appearance” says
Amanda. Rebecca notes that *Costume* only writes about the physical woman and not so much about what other things a woman encompasses. She says:

*Costume* does not write about politics or anything newsworthy. It is all about how we appear to other people and not about subject knowledge or professional skills, or just something, which could interest women apart from what everybody else sees. Somehow they reduce women to something less than they really are.

*Costume* does indeed reduce ‘women’ to something less than they really are or rather their understanding of women is extremely narrow and discriminating towards race, age and sexuality. Rachel shares the same view and is also keen on changes, not only in the magazine but also in society in general. She says:

I don’t think we will ever escape the concept of ‘women’s magazines’. However, I wish we could reach a stage where women don’t feel the need to buy them. Because it is not until you buy the magazine that you realise you are doing something wrong. That is what is so unhealthy about women’s magazine. They are definitely more damaging than beneficial.

Rebecca comments on the damaging effects as well and makes an interesting comparison when she says:

Some people argue that wearing a Muslim headscarf is an oppression of women. But is not it just as big an oppression to wear a dress, makeup or high heels? It is all about cultural notions about how to behave and look in society. It is a restrain of our personal freedom to be told how to look.

The interviews all opened up for a general talk about bodily ideals in society and the demands made towards women with regard to their looks. The interviewees had very strong, interesting views on this matter. The interviewees all agreed that a bodily ideal does exist in *Costume*. What they also agree on is a bodily ideal in society; “the public domain is plastered with adverts of half-naked women’s bodies who all look the same,” says Rebecca. The interviewees mention the following adjectives to describe the bodily ideal: young, thin, slender, tanned, blonde, feminine, wearing make-up, natural looking, tall and ‘perfect’. Interesting is the fact that none of the interviewees mentioned the adjective ‘white’ which might be explained by the fact that they are all white themselves.
I asked the women whether they felt the existence of a discourse demanding them to be ‘perfect’ and to live up to the bodily ideals. The women agreed that society ‘demands’ some sort of perfection. Therefore, *Costume* can be said to be part of a larger system of material institutions in society which exercise power and control. Only Alice did not feel that the demands affected her: “I think it must be my age, the fact that I don’t get influenced. I am happy with my body just the way it is. But perhaps I was not earlier.” Rachel says that when exposed to these ideals on one of her bad days she feels that she should live up to the demands. However, she is very aware that not all women can look that way. Anna and Rose share the view that women, to a certain extent, are their own worst enemy. “I think that women create these demands themselves, nobody says that we have to look that way” says Anna. Similarly Rose concludes “it’s ambiguous because the bodily ideal is everywhere and somehow made as the right thing to do. But nobody tells me off for not living up to the ideal. It is my own expectations, which are my worse enemy.” This is a clear-cut description of the internalizing gaze theorised by Foucault.

The bodily ideal has changed during the last decades but do the interviewees see the possibility of change when it comes to the current ideal? Rose definitely thinks it can change but not that it necessarily will. She points to the fact that it already has changed from what it was 50 years ago. She even suggests that, “at some point we will see a backlash. People will get sick and tired of hearing about health, exercise and slender bodies”. Alice believes that it is up to the fashion industry to change the ideal. She says, “It’s the fashion industry which creates the ideal so if they did something actively to stop it, they might succeed. However, I don’t think they have any interest in doing so. Even though they discuss it occasionally, I just can’t see it coming”. Rachel finds it extremely important that the ideal does change as she sees a tendency to lifestyle illnesses. She says:

> People focus more on the result than how to actually get there. They get stressed about having to look perfect, live perfectly; have the perfect job, the perfect house and so on. People get physically ill from this stress. Therefore I think it is important that the media signals an acceptance of the non-perfect and that nobody can ever be perfect.”

Furthermore, Rachel acknowledges that the ideal changes in the sense of fashion. Yet, despite the positive development within equal rights, women are still expected to conform to some sort of ideal. Rebecca insists on a political and economic interest in keeping the ideal:

> There are hidden forces that want a continuation of the woman as an ideal, the fact that women should fulfil a certain role. I am not saying that there is some sort of higher power making evil plans; rather I see it as a natural part of the capitalistic system.
Overall the interviewees are critical of the bodily ideals both society and Costume portray. Costume leaves no room for an interest in things other than the stereotypical idea of what the female gender should comprise. Women are different and have different interests, bodies, desires, ages and so forth. Therefore they should be treated that way.
Discussion of findings

The following will provide a discussion of the results of the reception analysis and draw conclusions when it comes to body image in *Costume* and women’s reception of it. Firstly, I will resume the previously stated hypotheses, which can now be either confirmed or disconfirmed.

1. There is no obviously idealised body shape in *Costume*
   On the basis of the reception analysis this hypothesis can be refuted as all interviewees are under the impression that an ideal body shape certainly does exist; an ideal which demands that women be thin, slender and toned.

2. *Costume* treats the term ‘women’ as white, heterosexual, young and able-bodied.
   By looking at both the textual analysis and the reception analysis it is evident that this hypothesis can be strongly confirmed. *Costume* is guilty of generalising when it comes to ‘women’ and not considering different races, age groups and sexualities.

3. *Costume* encourages their readers to work on their body and improve it.
   I can conclude that *Costume* does encourage women to work on their body and improve it, however, the attitudes towards its effect differ. The reluctant readers are very critical of that fact and all argue that it has an extremely negative effect on women; as a result it is a constant letdown since most women are not able to reach the ideal. The avid readers do not share this negative view on the effects and argue that they are not influenced by the ideal negatively and are generally happy with their body the way it is.

4. *Costume* establishes a narrow female universe that only a limited amount of women can identify with.
   We have already confirmed that the female universe in *Costume* is extremely narrow and excludes a lot of women who are not white, heterosexual, young and able-bodied. Even though the avid readers felt that they could identify with this ‘universe’ this might be seen as a result of the fact that they actually fit *Costume’s* narrow femininity.

5. The fashion features are staged and do not resemble reality.
   The interviewees agree that *Costume’s* fashion features represent an unrealistic world, which does not resemble reality. The avid readers are, however, fascinated by the world and feel that it encourages daydreaming. One of the reluctant readers is critical, as she believes the features are problematic when *Costume* uses unattainable bodies which create false hope.
6. Costume readers are interested in transforming their body and use Costume as a tool.
This hypothesis cannot be either confirmed or rejected, based on the gathered empirical data. The avid readers are all interested in fashion and their outer appearance but do not feel that they are in need of living up to the ideal. The reason why the hypothesis cannot be refuted is the unconscious influence that may take place while reading.

As the analysis pointed out, the six interviewees have differing viewpoints. These viewpoints were especially evident in the difference in attitude between the avid and reluctant readers. However, the most important conclusion that can be drawn from the reception analysis is the fact that women cannot be judged across the board and should not be treated as a fixed entity with common interests and values. The avid readers all have a general interest in beauty and fashion and buy Costume as a result. While seeking to be objective in my interpretation of the interviewees’ statements, I would not be right to judge whether such an interest is valuable or ‘good’. However, based on the statements from both the avid and reluctant readers I can reach the valid conclusion that they do recognise body ideals in Costume (and society in general) and that these ideals affect them.

The avid readers argued that they were not significantly influenced by the body ideals in Costume. However, I wish to question those statements, as I cannot eliminate the fact that the results of the reception analysis could be evidence of their attempt to portray themselves as independent and conscious readers. Rather the overall analysis has given a general assumption that the interviewees are indeed negatively affected by the bodily ideals.

Society’s imposition of discipline upon bodies, and thereby also Foucault’s notion of biopower has, in this case study, been proved successful, as women are regulating themselves. Women feel the need to construct female bodies, which are slim and acceptable to the invisible observer’s gaze. Female subjects, then, are constituted according to powerful meanings which impose what it is to be a woman and which are then meticulously internalized and constantly applied. I might even dare to say that a cultural fixation on female thinness is not an obsession about female beauty but more an obsession about female obedience.

Amanda, one of the avid readers, makes a sound comment in the discussion about Costume dictating right from wrong: “If you choose to buy Costume, then I guess you have also chosen to allow Costume to tell you what’s right and wrong”. Despite not being able to prove this empirically, I believe this shows that avid readers are perhaps not that critical of the ideal and have a personal interest in improving their body and outer appearance. Or, perhaps, they are able to make their own decisions and simply use Costume as a tool.

It can also be concluded that Costume offers a confusing and contradictory set of ideas. Many of the messages are positive although the emphasis on looking beautiful, too, is inescapable. The
avid readers agreed that they do not take all of the magazines’ messages seriously anyway – favouring a pick and mix attitude to the various ideas in the magazines – which might suggest that those who fear for the reader-victims of these publications are overemphasising the power of the texts and underestimating the ability of readers to be partially selective and critical.

The avid and reluctant readers all hope for a change in the bodily ideals and the general attitude towards women as consumer objects in society. However, they all agreed that such a change is unlikely to happen without a serious effort from the beauty and media industry itself. I share this view and I am rather pessimistic about women’s ability to really resist the pressures from the beauty system. Women cannot help but collude with the system because they are submerged in a culture where perfection in women is associated with a specific (positive) set of cultural meanings. Bordo (1990) even warned against attempting to escape the system, as women who do might be reabsorbed into negative discourses of femininity. This was evident in the reception analysis, as the avid readers all shared distaste towards women who don’t at least try to conform to the ideal.

In terms of the theories discussed in earlier chapters, then, I can confirm that Costume suggests ways of thinking about the self, proposes certain kinds of lifestyles and signals an unattainable bodily ideal, all of which is then actively processed by the readers as they establish their sense of identity. Femininity is exposed as artifice and performance in the magazines, which celebrate women’s opportunities to play with different types of imagery, in line with Judith Butler’s proposition that gender is always a performance. However, although women’s magazines encourage a degree of playfulness in terms of clothing and make-up, they would never encourage women to step outside their carefully imagined boundaries of the ‘sexy’, the ‘perfect’ and the ‘fashionable’. Butler’s idea of ‘gender trouble’ is very unlikely to happen.
Conclusion

The overall aim of this thesis has been to investigate the body images in women’s magazines and their effect on women. I used the Danish fashion magazine *Costume* as a case study and proved that *Costume* carries a certain ideology, which deals with the construction of a female bodily ideal. This ideology influences readers and asks them to take on self-responsibility for the way they look. Arguably, this is problematic, as *Costume* produces contemporary disciplines of ‘body projects’ and thus reproduces normative feminine practices within our culture. These are practices which train the female body in docility and obedience to cultural demands, which insist that all women should be slim and ‘perfect’, while at the same time being experienced in terms of ‘power’ and ‘control’.

Consistent with prior work suggesting that the popular culture may present both dominant and countervailing messages about the body, findings from the present textual analysis revealed that the rhetorical visions included within the editorial content of *Costume* addressed a wide range of sometimes-conflicting meanings about the ideal body. In particular, some content addressed the assembly of an ideal body and the self-care practices or bodywork routines that could be undertaken to achieve it. This type of content perpetuated the ideology of the body as readily malleable and promoted the virtue of the slim body as symbolic of a “well-managed (i.e., controlled and disciplined) self in which all is kept in order” (Bordo, 1993, p. 201). In other instances, however, content urged readers to resist cultural discourses perpetuating narrow norms of attractiveness and the notion of the body as infinitely malleable. Here, bodies that were problematized in other articles as unacceptable and in need of ‘work’ were framed as acceptable and even valuable. The repeat audience for *Costume* is thereby exposed to a ‘mixed bag’ of rhetorical visions about the body. This inconsistency in *Costume*’s content reflects the surrounding cultural ambivalence or ambiguity about the body.

Although the present thesis provides valuable insight about the ways in which the editorial content of *Costume* constructs meanings about the female body, findings from this thesis provides only a glimpse into the ‘media diet’ that informs women’s understandings about their bodies. For instance, it was beyond the scope of the present work to examine the advertising content included within *Costume*. Therefore, in future work, it will be important to analyze this additional aspect of *Costume*’s body-related content. Findings from such analyses would provide a richer and more comprehensive understanding of the ways in which *Costume* might produce meanings about the female body. In addition, although *Costume* is the most widely circulated fashion magazine within Denmark, it is only one of many media publications competing for women’s readership. Thus, to fully understand the range of media messages directed at women, it will be important to extend the present analysis so as to include varied media publications and
formats (e.g., varied print and electronic magazines as well as other media formats such as television programming).

Clearly, another interesting step in building on the present thesis would be to explore how women who fall out of the category of white, young, Western, able-bodied and heterosexual would interpret the messages in *Costume*. Prior work has suggested that women from diverse sociocultural backgrounds filter magazines content through various cultural lenses and, therefore, think about it in different ways. Thus, of particular interest in future work will be to examine if and how readers representing diverse sociocultural experiences interpret conflicting messages within *Costume* (and other media) and, in particular, what sort of meanings they assign to dominant and countervailing messages about the body. Also, due to attitudes about and behaviors toward the body are shaped by diverse sociocultural factors, it will be important to explore how personal experiences and interpersonal interactions with significant others (e.g., family members, friends, romantic partners, teachers) may serve as a filter for body-related meanings presented within *Costume* and other media targeting female consumers.
References

Books


**Journal articles**


**Magazines:**

Costume no. 59, March 2007, Published by Benjamin publications

Costume no. 62, June 2007, Published by Benjamin publications

Costume no. 66, October 2007, Published by Benjamin publications

**Websites**

Costume media information [http://www.benjamin.dk/static/medieinfo/EN/costume_en_08.pdf](http://www.benjamin.dk/static/medieinfo/EN/costume_en_08.pdf)

[Accessed May 2nd 2008]
Appendix
1. Rationale of the practical exam work

Documentation of process and reflection
My finished project ‘Nobody is Perfect’ should be understood in the light of the tremendous amount of research and development, which has taken place throughout this semester. The following will account for the process and sources of inspiration, which have influenced and helped in shaping the final project.

Analysis and understanding of work
My intended message is fairly simple. I want to create awareness of the manipulation and retouching of images in women’s magazines and make clear the process in which women are made to identify with a beauty and bodily ideal that bears no resemblance with reality. I communicate those messages with a series of ‘similar’ images, which have been exposed to manipulation in the photograph programme Photoshop. The images develop from a natural image to a clearly manipulated image. The images are designed as a stereotypical copy of a front cover on a woman’s magazine and thus illustrate the false image they portray. I feel I have created an interesting piece, which for the naked eye does not have a clear message but is still a visually exciting piece. However, I wish for the viewer to investigate the piece at close range and realise the obvious differences in the various images and thereby understand the intended message.

Reflection of the process
The project has developed throughout this semester and is a result of weeks of research and considerations. I did not determine the specifications of the final project until at a very late stage. This has meant that I have been open to various ideas and also been able to let the ‘process’ lead the way rather than letting the idea determine the process. Even though it might have cost me extra time it means that I have a resulting idea, which reflects aspects of my thesis statement in the best possible way since all possibilities have been investigated.

At the very start of the process I visited the photo exhibition ‘This Way 07’ which exhibits some of the most interesting contemporary photographs from the Danish art scene. The exhibition inspired me and developed my understanding of photography as a medium and a means of communicating emotions and individual expressions and themes. Photographer Peter Holst Henckel had created an image out of two photographs. Most of the images carried a political message and I was inspired by the various ways he chose to interpret concepts. It made me start thinking about how to visually interpret the problems with contemporary bodily ideals.
The second image, by the photographers Svend-Allan Sørensen and Steen Møller Rasmussen, which made an impression, was a piece built in a series of photographs with different colours. What was evident was the fact that the individual photographs only made sense in the context of the rest of the photographs. It was the correlation between all photographs, which created the full impact. The same thing can be said about my finished project. The individual photographs, which constitute the finished piece, only makes sense when experienced in relation to the other photographs.

The final piece, from the exhibition ‘This way 07’, which has influenced my own work was a series of photographs with an obvious manipulation. The photographer, Jakob Hunosoe, did not hide the obvious construction of the image, which opened up a whole new and honest image of the endless possibilities offered by photography. Manipulation and retouching is a natural part of all photographs in women’s magazines and it inspired me to show the manipulation in my own photographs. This is due to womens’ magazines interest in hiding the manipulation of the models, which is resulting in an unattainable beauty ideal, which most women find hard to live up to.

Following the exhibition I started looking for a reason for today’s idealised female body. Through my research it became clear that the beauty industry and the media play a huge part in shaping the ideal. At the museum of journalism I looked at old womens’ magazines, which clearly showed the way in which women’s magazines under the pretext of advising women, actually dictate what it means to be a woman and what a woman should be like. This is also evident today where they use a ‘we-women’ discourse in which they establish a universe with which women seek identification.

From the very start I have been interested in creating a finished piece, which is some sort of protest against this beauty ideal. I have been very inspired by the Danish actress Anne-Grethe Bjarup Riis and her naked self-portrait ‘Ordinary hooker with career spoiler’. It is meant as a protest against the condescending expressions used against women in rap music. More generally she seeks to start a dialogue about equal rights and creates focus around the one-sided and stereotypical image of women’s bodies and sexuality. For instance all women’s magazines use a stereotypical white, young, able-bodied woman on their cover and never an old, black or other ethnic-looking woman. I wish more women would take part in this dialogue as I think it would most certainly work to our own benefit.

Half way through the process I started thinking about what constitutes art and who determines the beauty of art. Both photographer Joachim Ladefoged with his art project ‘Mirror’ and photographer Andres Serrano’s work ‘A History of Sex’ made me think about the composition of photographs as aesthetically beautiful but in which the actual object might seem repulsive and offensive.

As a natural part of the process I have researched feminism and feminist art, especially the American collage artist Barbara Kruger and her montages which seek to reveal the deception of signs. She wants to create awareness of consumerism and the commodification of the sign in order to reject conformity and interfere with the cultural stigmas and stereotypes we are bombarded with
on a daily basis. This is very much in line with my intentions for this project. I want to reveal that the social ideals we hold about beauty, self-identity and the female body are mere 'simulacra'. Her image ‘You are not yourself’ of a woman looking into a broken mirror is suggestive of the distance between the simulacrum and reality: you are not yourself because what society tells you to be is impossible.

**Theoretical aspect and use of references**

My project should be seen in the light of various theoretical references. I have been highly influenced by Michel Foucault and his ideas about power. Foucault (1978) determined: “Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere” (p. 334). In Foucault’s theory, power is not quantifiable and/or a containable concept, it “is not an institution…it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society” (p. 334). Power basically flows continually, and we are constantly in the process, or at least at risk of becoming involved in the process of going from powerful to powerless and vice versa. Furthermore power is constantly in flux because as Foucault (1978) writes, “where there is power there is resistance” (p. 336). Power is embedded in the signs and icons of culture, media and advertisement and my project should be seen as resistance. Even though power is diffuse and anonymous, it is not impossible to realize who is not in power. My aim of this project is not to alienate the viewers. Rather I wish to allow them to realize their alienation. My aim is therefore not only to interpret the world but also seek to change it.

Writer Susan Sontag has been a good source and an inspiration when it comes to understanding the obsession with beauty in our society. She explains, in her book *On Photography*, that people want the idealised image “a photograph of themselves looking their best” (Sontag, 1977 p. 86). People feel anxious when the camera does not return an image of them as more attractive than they really are. But as Sontag (1977) says “few are lucky enough to be ‘photogenic’ – that is, to look better in photographs than in real life” (p. 86). This might explain the extremely perfect images of models in women’s magazines. They are there because we enjoy looking at them. Sontag (1977) concludes, “So successful has been the camera’s role in beautifying the world that photographs, rather than the world, have become standard of the beautiful” (p.85). Arguably, she is saying that even though a photograph is supposed to be a snapshot of a real-life moment, it should not always be seen as a true rendering of reality.

**Technical and aesthetic choices**

In the creation of the finished project I have been forced to make technical as well as aesthetical choices. The composition of the final poster is highly influenced by Andy Warhol’s Pop Art. The choice of keeping the images in colour is so that the various manipulations are more obvious and so that the poster is more visually interesting.
Costume, which is the main focus in my dissertation, has obviously been a major source of inspiration in the finalising of the project. I have been very interested in the aesthetic choices they make in their fashion features. The front page and the obvious retouching have been inspirational and also something I wish to criticise and question with my project. They portray an extremely stereotypical woman whose outer appearance is perfection. The models poses and appearance are something I was very aware of in my images and something, which I have sought to imitate. For instance they always have their hair down and they look directly at the reader (camera). Often the image is an upper body shot. However, for technical reasons I have chosen not to use a full upper-body shot, as I believe, for this particular project, it works better to have a close-up of the face.

**Communicative independence**

I have sought to create a photograph, which answers my thesis statement in a visually interesting and psychologically challenging way. I believe it stands independently while at the same time functioning as a perfect ‘companion’ to my thesis. Throughout the process of creating this image and writing my thesis I have developed my knowledge of photography as an art form and become aware of the technical possibilities with photo manipulation and retouching. Most importantly I have been reconfirmed in my view that the idealised image of a woman’s body needs changed.

The project is aimed at women aged 20-30 which is also within the target audience of Costume. I hope that my project can help those women to be aware of the obvious and narrow beauty and body ideals Costume and other women’s magazines portray. My project should encourage a rejection of the ideals, support difference and make as many women as possible feel good about them selves because ‘nobody is perfect’ – not even the models in the magazines.
2. Images

Costume, front cover, June 2007

Costume, front cover, March 2007

Costume, editor’s comment, p. 14, June 2007

Costume, p. 60, June 2007 (Celebrity icons)
Costume, p. 36, March 2007 (Catwalk models)

Costume, p. 127, October 2007 (fashion feature)
Costume, pp. 66-67, June 2007 (Clothes to suit your body shape)

Costume, p. 113, October 2007

Costume, p. 114, October 2007
3. Interviewguide

Generelt kvinde ideal:
Synes du der eksisterer et kvinde ideal i dag mht. kvindens krop?
Hvis ja, beskriv.
Det at være femininin – hvad betyder det for dig?
Er du noget du selv forsøger at efterleve?
Eller føler du at der bliver stillet krav til dig som kvinde vedr. dit udseende?
Hvad tænker du om det?
Tror du det kan ændres?

Reading pattern:
Hvad er din generelle holdning til modeblade/dameblade?
Kender du Costume? Har du læst det? Hvad er din opfattelse af det?
Har du nogen veninder der læser det?
Hvordan læser du det?
Hvad motiverer dig til at købe det/læse det?
Har du nogle forventninger til bladet inden du læser det?

Relationship between reader and Costume:
Hvad tror du faste læsere forventer af Costume?
Hvad er Costume’s funktion?
Hvad er forholdet mellem Costume og læseren? Lærer/elev? Veninder?
Agency? Tror du faste læsere føler at de tager bevidste valg gennem læsningen? Tror du de vælger til og fra? Eller påvirkes de let?
Har Costume et ansvar overfor kvinder?
Identifikation. Kan kvinder identificere sig med kvinderne I bladet?

Body Image:
Når du bladrer igennem bladet føler du så at kvindekroppen bliver fremstillet på en bestemt måde?
Hvis ja, hvilken? Hvis nej, hvorfor ikke?
Er det noget der er specielt for disse blade eller ser du det andre steder?
Tror du ‘kvinder’ bliver påvirket af billede af kvindekroppen i Costume? Positivt? Negativt?
Hvad tror du kvinders reaktion er?
Choice and independence:
Ser du en sammenhæng mellem de ting Costume skriver om, og så forbrugsgoder?
Tror du nogen kvinder bevidst modsætter sig kvinde idealet? Gør du? Kender du nogen der gør?

Butler and performativity:
(Forklar teorien kort)
Hvad tænker du om den teori?
Synes du Costume tager del i den teori?
Opfordrer de til en performance? Kan du give eksempler?
Anna:

Generelt:


Førhen skulle man bare være helt vildt tynd, det skal man stadigvæk men jeg synes det er blevet bedre. Det er blevet mere acceptabelt at have kvindelige former.

Man skal være slank, man skal have styr på sine ting. Det er ligeså meget hvordan man er og ikke bare hvordan man ser ud. Jeg tror der er mange kvinder der stiller høje krav til sig selv mht at være perfekt. Alt skal bare være i orden, det skal være i orden derhjemme, hvordan man indretter sig det er vel også en del af idealet.

Jeg tror ofte det er kvinder selv der stiller krav. Der er jo ingen der siger det skal være sådan.

Feminin har noget at gøre med ens holdning og ens udstråling. Det er ikke så meget tojet fordi man kan jo godt være feminine uden at rende rundt i en blomstret flæsekjole. Jeg tror det er meget med hvordan man har det med sig selv og hvordan man føler og hvad man så udstråler.

Jeg tror det er svært at ændre kvindeidealet. Så skal det komme stille og roligt hen ad vejen. Det er selvfølgelig en selv men det er jo i høj grad påvirket af omverden og samfundet.

Reading pattern:

Jeg læser dem for underholdningens skyld. Så synes jeg også at der er nogle gode artikler engang imellem. Jeg bliver inspireret af moden og tojet.

Motivation:


Forventninger:

Det lever op til mine forventninger hver gang. Jeg glæder mig inden det kommer.
Funktion:

Relationship:
Jeg synes ikke de har en løftet pegefinger. Lederen signalerer at man ikke skal lade sig stresse. Man skal ikke lade sig påvirke af de idealer der er. Sådan synes jeg også lidt at bladet er hele vejen igennem. Selvfølgelig har de slanke piger på forsiden men jeg synes ikke at de sætter et billede op om at sådan skal jeg også se ud. Sådan opfatter jeg det ihvertfald ikke.

Jeg føler godt at jeg på nogen punkter kan identificere mig med kvinderne i bladet.

Skøn siderne:

Jeg synes helt klart at Costume har et ansvar overfor læserne. Der er jo mange som bliver mere påvirkede end andre når de læser sådan et blad. Jeg bliver også påvirket men nok ikke i så høj grad som så mange andre ville blive. Tror jeg ikke.

Jeg synes helt klart de har et ansvar for hvilke artikler de bringer og hvilke billeder de sætter i.

Body image:
Fashion features: jeg synes de er okay. Selvom hun er meget slank så er hun stadig meget naturlig.
(nøgen kvinde) hun er stadig meget naturlig. Altså foreksempel har hun jo ikke kæmpe bryster som måske også kunne stresse nogen.

Jeg synes de er meget naturlige fordi man ved jo at det er opstillet.

De signalerer jo i sidste ende det samme som alle andre. Altså de bruger jo ikke ældre modeller, de bruger jo unge piger med glat hud. Hoje og slanke.
Retouch:
Det tænker jeg ikke så meget over.


Choice and independence:

Når jeg har læst Costume, får jeg helt klart lyst til at købe noget. Tøj.

Der er vel nogen der modsætter sig idealet i protest men den har vel kun en effekt over for en selv.


Butler:

Det tror jeg er rigtigt nok fordi der er bare nogle uskrevne regler om hvordan en pige bør opføre sig og hvordan en dreng bør opføre sig. Foreksempel så er der nogle ting som for drenges er tilladt at gøre men ikke for piger. Foreksempel er det være hvis en pige bovser end en dreng.

Costume hjælper helt klart. Men det synes jeg ikke er forkert.

Ændring:
Costume ville blive bedre hvis der kom nogle flere artikler. Lidt mindre mode og så lidt mere seriose artikler.
Amanda:

Generelt:

Kronprinsesse Mary er et forbillede. Jeg tror at den der kvinde der kan formå at begå sig på arbejdsmarkedet og have en flot krop efter de er blevet mødre. På den måde tror jeg at der eksisterer et kvindeideal. At man ikke falder hen men stadigvæk holder sig god tog vedlige, plejer sig selv. For mig er et kvindeideal at man stadigvæk tænker på sin krop og holder den vedlige.

Det kunne sagtens være en slags ‘Mary’ man så op til.

Jeg synes ikke at kvindens krop i den grad skal være formet med store bryst og brede hofter. Det er nok mere en standard krop eller en slank krop.

Jeg synes der bliver stillet krav til at man forholder sig slank. Foreksempel så arbejder jeg i fitnessbranchen og så ville jeg da ikke have det godt med at arbejde 5 kilo for meget. Så på den måde tænker jeg over min vægt.

I dag synes jeg der bliver stillet höje krav til kvinder om at man forholder sig til sin krop og tager stilling til at man lever sundt. Så på den måde tror jeg at kvinder får rygrad og bliver skeptiske over for sig selv. Vi lever jo i et samfund hvor man skal få born til at spise sundt og hele vejen igennem sørge for at vi ikke lever i amerikanske tilstande.

Der er rigtig mange kvinder der stiller krav til sig selv. Man sammenligner sig ofte med de kvinder der er.

Bare i en tøjbutik er det jo ekstremt slanke mannequiner og giner. Så det toj de udstiller er vel det toj vi gerne skulle kunne være i alle sammen. Det er jo ikke en str. 40 giner der står rundt omkring men en str. 36/38 der står rundt omkring. Og ellers er der jo specialforretninger til store kvinder.

Feminin:

Det er at man går op i makeup og sminke. Af manden vil man gerne blive behandlet som en feminin kvinde. Måske at man er lidt fin på den. I mit tidligere job hvor jeg bar uniform var jeg ikke feminin. For det var arbejdsbukser og en stor hvid t-shirt. Der folte jeg mig slet ikke feminin. Men nu hvor jeg har et job hvor jeg kan have mit eget toj på så føler eg mig helt klart meget mere feminin. Jeg tror at jo mere feminin du er jo mere attraktiv føler du dig.
For mig er det vigtigt at være feminin, så tror jeg man har det godt med sig selv. Det går jeg meget op i. Jeg har jo mærket hvad tøj kan gøre for en og for hvordan man føler sig.

Reading pattern:

For mig er dameblade sådan noget hyggelæsning. Jeg køber det af lyst og ikke så meget fordi jeg bare skal have et bestemt blad ind af døren hver måned. For mig er det meget forsiderne og teaser-teksterne der påvirker mig i mit valg. Så er det for at få inspiration til tøj og makeup og kvindeting. Vi kan jo altid godt lide at læse om andre der har de samme problemer. Sucesshistorier osv. Af den grund køber jeg bladene. Det er en hyggelig ting og det interesserer mig hvad der står i bladene.

Det henvender sig til min målgruppe. De skriver om mange af de ting som berører mig lige nu.


Ubevidst så går man og håber på at man lever efter moden. Så man forventer at de fortæller mig hvad den nye mode er. Jeg håber efter at have læst sådan et blad at så er man lige lidt med på beatet igen. Det skal det gerne give mig.

Er det noget du så efterlever?

Det svinger. Jeg tror også det er meget om jeg kan lide det. Fordi hvis jeg ikke kan lide at det skal være pink læbestift lige nu så ville jeg heller ikke gå ud at gøre det. Så meget påvirker det ikke mig at jeg vil følge moden slavisk.

Hvis man får nogle gode fif kunne jeg godt finde på at afprøve det for at se om det ville klæde een.

Og nogle gange er det jo også sjovt at kaste sig ud i noget nyt kan man sige.

Funktion:

Både at underholde og inspirere men også mht. Reklamer hvis der fx er Copenhagen Fashion Week at man så bliver inspireret til at besøge den. Formidle ud hvad der sker og måske deres funktion er at oplyse hvad der sker i kbh. Primært er funktionen at fortælle om moden og tendenser.

Jeg tror sagtens jeg kan blive påvirket ubevist til at købe noget. Men altså hvis man er i en butik og ekspedienten så har den lyserøde læbestift på og anbefaler den så kan man sige hvorfor så ikke hoppe
med på vognen. Så ja ubevidst kan det sagtens have inflydelse. Men jeg føler jeg laver meget bevidste valg om hvad jeg vil og ikke vil. Men jeg tror også at selvom nogle ikke vil lade sig pådutte noget så gør de det alligevel. Jeg tror moden den er så stærkt at vi alligevel bliver hevet med ind i det.

Ansvar:
Ja, de skal undersøge markedet for deres målgruppe og finde ud af hvad deres læsere vil have. Ellers mister de jo læsere. Så det er vigtigt at de går ind og føler hvad vil vores målgruppe have.


Identifikation:

Body image:

Feature:

Påvirket:
Ikke acceptabelt:

Det er unormalt og falder ud af mængden. Det er anderledes og det er ikke godt.

Forbrug:
Dyre priser. Det der er fedt ved de her blade er at man kan drømme sig til nogle ting. Ønske man havde råd til at købe den dyre taske.

For mig er det urealistisk at købe de ting Costume reklamerer for at tøj, sko og tasker. Det er i den dyre ende og mere som inspiration. Man ville selvfølgelig ønske at man havde råd til at købe alle de rigtige ting.

Modståttelse:

Butler:

At købe et godt blad er også nogle gange en god trøst eller en forkælelse. Man er god ved sig selv.

Alice:

Generelt:

Nogle gange bliver jeg stødt over det for da synes jeg simpelthen de er for tynde og andre gange synes jeg det er okay.

Dove: det synes jeg er meget friskt. Det er jo ikke sådan at de er ulækre at se på. Det er bare lidt mere end hvad man efterhånden synes normalt er. Men det er jo fordi man er vant til at se de der super tynde kvinder.

Det er nok figuren jeg selv fokuserer mest på. Men selvfølgelig har det også noget at gøre med ens ansigt.

Feminin:
Det er at man gør lidt ud af sig selv. Håret og måske lidt make-up, nogle kan så også slet ikke have noget på. Smykker og toj, at man går op idet. Altså det toj der så lige er på mode, det er jo forskelligt.

Krav:
Det er nok ikke alle kvinder der kan komme ud over det, der er nok nogle kvinder der bliver ved med at hænge.

Ændring:
Ja, det skal modebranchen jo nok være med til at gøre. Det er jo dem der sætter kvindeidealet op. hvis de gjorde noget mere aktivt kunne det nok godt lade sig gøre. Men jeg tror det bliver svært. Jeg tror ikke umiddelbart de ønsker at gøre det. Selvom de snakker om at nu skal modellerne have en bestemt vægt så synes jeg bare ikke vi ser en ændring.

Holdning:

Forsiden:
Ofte er det sommerens mode, temaer om det nye toj eller frisurer går jeg meget op i og også makeup. Det er de tre ting der hovedsageligt fænger mig. Det kan også være en bestemt artikel om en person, et interview med en kendis.

Motivation:
Underholding og at jeg gerne vil følge med. Og nysgerrighed om at læse om en kendt.


Forventninger:
Jeg tror ikke jeg har så mange forventninger lige til dameblade. Selvfølgelig skaber overskrifterne nogle forventninger. Men ellers ikke.

Funktion:
Artiklerne skal kommunikere ud andres problemer så læserne kan lære af dem.

Forhold:
Veninde forhold. De giver råd om nogle ting.

Skøn sider:
Ja, det har jeg taget mig selv i flere gange hvor man tænker ej det var da et spændende produkt. Man får jo kendskab til de fleste nye produkter. Selvfølgelig kan man også gå ned i en butik og høre om det men her kan man ligesom sidde i fred og ro. Og så kan man godt blive fristet.

Agency:
Jeg føler ikke jeg bliver overtalt. Fordi jeg synes faktisk at jeg er meget kræsen med de her ting. Nogle gange kan jeg selvfølgelig godt blive påvirket lidt.
Når du har set produktet en gang så er det nemmere at komme til at købe det. Elelrs ville man måske bare gå lige forbi det.

Ansvar:

Identifikation:
På et eller andet plan ja. Det gælder nok meget med tojet og ikke udseendet.
Body Image:
Ja, de er meget tynde og virker meget høje. Meget meget slanke kvinder. Catwalk kvinderne er ekstremt tynde.
Det er generelt. Costume skiller sig ikke ud.

Det ser man ikke så tit. Det vigtigste er at se tojet og så læser jeg teksten om priserne osv.
De har mange dyre mærker med. Det er dyrt. Nogle ting har man selvfølgelig råd til.

Jeg kan huske at man kiggede meget på billederne. Jeg ville gerne have længere ben. Nu har det nok også noget at gøre med hvordan de bliver fotograferet. Det tænkte man nok bare ikke lige over dengang.
Man kan jo gøre ben længere ved høje hæle og kamera vinkel. Det er jeg meget bevidst om i dag og det er nok også derfor at jeg har et mere afslappet forhold til min krop i dag. Altså hun ser nok ikke helt sådan ud til hverdag.
Jeg lægger meget mærke til på forside at det er blevet retoucheret. Det er jo tydeligt og det er jeg meget bevidst om.

Forbrug:
Ja der er en klar sammenhæng. Det er ihvertfald nemmere at blive påvirket.

Modsettelser:
Jeg kender nogen der er ligeglade med idealt. Det synes jeg er helt okay og det kan jeg godt acceptere. Man skal gå i det toj man føler sig godt tilpas i.

Uacceptabelt:
Jeg kan ikke så godt lide piger der har for meget makeup på. Sortmalet. Jeg synes det er synd. Jeg kan også godt blive stødt over piger der er kraftige og går i alt for stramt toj. At de ikke selv kan se at det kan man ikke.
Kropsbehåring er heller ikke så lækkert. Men det er nok fordi jeg selv går op I det. Jeg gør det for min egen skyld.

Butler:

Ændring:

Rebecca:

Generelt:
Ja, det synes jeg i den grad der gør. Hvis man bare kigger i det offentlige rum så er det jo plastret til med reklamer af kvindekroppen som er halvnøgne og tit ser ud på den samme måde.

Jeg har faktisk lige været med til at lave en aktion for et par uger siden, hvor vi tog en masse af sådan nogle reklamer ned og hang sådan nogle ‘ingen reklamer tak’ op. For netop at sætte fokus på at hver gang man er i det offentlige rum så bliver man betrådet som en forbruger. Og at det man skal gå og kigge på hele tiden det er reklamer. Og rigtig mange af de reklamer handler jo om et kvindeideal som er meget stereotypt og som flertallet af kvinder slet ikke kan leve op til og slet ikke har lyst til at leve op til. Som er en hvid, smuk, tynd kvinde med store bryster og solbrun. Selvfølgelig kan man visuelt synes det er smukt men det har ikke noget at gøre med hvordan folk reelt ser ud.


Jeg forholder mig meget kritisk til det og jeg siger jo også til mig selv at det ikke påvirker mig men det gør det jo alligevel for det er jo omkring en hele tiden. Man vil jo også gerne selv være tynd og smuk og alle de der ting. Jeg tror det er meget svært at se sig fri fra det der ideal.

Nu ved jeg ikke om det er meget bedre i mandeblade men hvis man kigger på samfundet generelt så forbinder man jo mænd med nogle helt andre ting end man forbinder kvinder med. Kvinder bliver forbundet med børn og det at være mor. Det kan der også være i bladene, den her moderlighed der bliver fremstillet er jo også enorm stereotyp.

Der er slet ikke plads til at man som kvinde kan interessere sig for andre ting end sådan lige den stereotype ide omkring hvad ens køn er. Og det er jeg grundlæggende meget kritisk overfor. Der er ikke een kvinde. Halvfjerdsernes feministiske kamp kan man jo også kritisere den for at præsentere kvinden som en der var imod alt det her men stadigvæk som en samlet gruppe.

Kvindelighed er rigtig mange ting og vi er alle forskellige. Jeg tror der er mange der ikke rigtig kan genkende sig selv i de her blade. Men selvfølgelig så påvirker de een helt vildt meget. Det betyder jo at der er mange der prøver at tilstræbe det her ideal man får præsenteret.

Mine mindre søstre på 14 og 12 de læser jo sådan nogle blade og det er jo en måde at finde ud af på hvordan er kvinder, hvordan skal jeg være som kvinde og man prøver at skabe sin identitet ud fra hvad man ser i samfundet og de rollemodeller der bliver opstillet. Og det er da med til at præge kvinder helt vildt mht hvad de kommer til at interessere sig for og hvordan de kommer til at se ud. Det er da vildt ærgeligt fordi man udnytter slet ikke det store potentiale. Det er da også sådan lidt frihedsberøvende og krænkende. Indskrænkende at man ikke bare kan få lov til at være som man er fordi der er en eller anden diskurs for hvordan man skal være som kvinde.

Min søster synes jeg er helt vildt klam og hun kan slet slet ikke forstå at jeg ikke interesserer mig for toj. Det er jeg jo ked af på hendes vegne. Jeg håber da på et eller andet tidspunkt at det går op for hende at man også kan have nogle andre værdier og gå op i nogle andre ting end det bladene opfordrer til.
Ændring:

Man anerkender slet ikke at der er en stor del af kvinder der ikke er heteroseksuelle.


Reklamer er en stor del af bladet og der er jo næsten ingen forskel på en artikel og en reklame. Det handler bare om hvordan man kan se ud og hvad det koster.

Costume:
Jeg ville aldrig købe det og det er ikke noget jeg sådan læser men hvis jeg besøgte nogen og det lå der kunne jeg da sagtens finde på at sidde og bladre I det. Sådan for sjov.
I sommers havde min søster et par stykker jeg læste i og så lagde jeg virkelig meget mærke til den der tone de kørte, den redaktionelle tone. ‘Hej os kvinder-agtig, tihi’. Det er ikke til at holde ud. Jeg har bare ikke lyst til at genkende mig selv i det der billede. Det er ligesom om de snakker rundt om en og så ender man i sådan en spiral.

Jeg har altid kritiske briller på når jeg læser de her blader.

Det er da fint nok at der er sådan nogle blader til kvinder der gerne vil være sådan her. Problemet er jo at der ikke er andet. I mainstream mediet er det kun det her du kan læse. Det er den eneste kilde for unge kvinder til at finde ud af hvordan de skal være kvinde.
Udover det er jeg generelt kritisk overfor at vi som mennesker konstant bliver betragtet som forbruger. At vi skal købe noget hele tiden.

**Motivation:**
Jeg tror da det er rart for kvinder at læse noget de føler de kan identificere sig med. Læse nogle historier om at være kvinde. At man kan genre sig selv i noget af det.

**Forventninger:**

**Funktion:**
Først og fremmest er det jo en forretning. Det er jo til for at tjene penge. Jeg har svært ved at se hvad der ville drive en som journalist til at lave det fordi det er jo ikke sådan noget journalistisk godt håndværk. Der er jo ingen gode dybdeborende artikler. Det er bare super overfladisk.

**Relationship:**

**Agency:**
Ja jeg tror kvinder føler de laver bevidste valg fordi foreksempel med de tre handsker, så kan man vælge en af dem. Jeg kan godt forstå at folk går med på den fordi det er jo virkelig hård påvirkning. De her kvindeblade er jo bare et eksempel på det, det er jo overalt i samfundet. Man bliver reduceret til at være mor eller lækker eller noget andet. Hvis man er ulækker er man ikke rigtig kvinde, hvis man er politikker så er man heller ikke rigtig kvinde.
Ansvar:
Ja, i høj grad. Det synes jeg da alle der går ud og siger noget i det offentlige rum må da tænke over hvad det er de siger og reflektere over. Helt konkret så har de jo et ansvar overfor at fremhæve et kvindeideal der er så tynd. Som faktisk slet ikke er sundt. Det emne tager de jo også op en gang imellem. Men så er der bare en modsætning i at hele deres blad er fyldt med tynde kvinder. Der ligger ikke noget samfundsmæssigt engagement bag de her blade.

Identifikation:
Ja, man vil jo gerne. Det der med at se det perfekte og nogle der er helt vildt lækre. Man tænker vel at man selv gerne vil være sådan. Man identificerer sig nok med livsstilen.

Body image:
Alle er hvide. Der er aldrig nogle mørke kvinder. Man kigger kun på majoriteten man tænker ikke over at kvinder er forskellige.

Man bliver reduceret til en der gerne vil se lækker ud. Min søster på 14 går op i de her ting fordi det er det hun er blevet vist. De rollemodeller hun ser er jo kvinder som er lækre. Man spejler sig jo i det man ser og efterligner det.

Man kan jo hæbe at folk på et eller andet tidspunkt holder op det påvirker jo alle kvinder uanset. Alle vil gerne se godt ud også selvom man er kritisk overfor det så er det jo noget alle bliver påvirket af. Man bliver jo også påvirket af ens omgivelser.

Jeg synes det er dumt hvis folk gør sig lækker fordi det bliver forventet af en. Man skal gøre det fordi man har lyst selv. Og huske på hvorfor man gør det.

Hvis man sammenligner tørklæde debatten. Så siger man jo at det er kvindeundertrykkende men det er vel ligeså kvindeundertrykkende at gå i kjole, med makeup eller høje hæle. Det drejer sig jo bare om nogle forestillinger om hvordan man skal være i samfundet og som er i forskellige kulturer.

Det er frihedsindskrænkende at man skal være på en bestemt måde. Det må man da kunne samle sig om.

Forbrug:
Det er jo det der er hele fundamentet i det her blad. Det her blad er jo bare et symbol på hvordan hele samfundet er. Hvordan vi bliver reduceret til forbrugere.

Modskættelse af ideal:

Judith Butler:

100%. Hvis du bliver behandlet som en pige så forventer de at du er pige-agtig og ikke for vild. Man forventer at drenge får huller på knæene. Og ja man spiller sig jo ind i de roller. Costume er jo også bare en påvirkning.

I danmark er det jo nærmest tabu at tale om kön. Det er på et mere humoristisk plan. Og det kommer det aldrig ud af. Man kan ikke rigtig snakke om det.

Rose:

Generelt kvinde ideal:

Ja, der eksisterer et kvindeideal på en dårlig og overdrevne måde.

Idealet er at man skal være rigtig pæn, rigtig høj og rigtig tynd og så er man ligesom perfekt. Der er ikke rigtig plads til forskellighed. Det er meget det ydre og materialistiske.

Det at være feminine er en del af idealet.

Modeller er ikke kvindelige i krops forstand for de har jo ikke nogen former. Men de har altid pænt toj og er meget sminket.

Idealet feminin det er at gøre noget ud af sig selv.

Feminin for mig betyder bare at være kvindelig og det kan være mange ting. Det er selvfølgelig at gå op i hvordan man ser ud. Men jeg synes også det kan være det at være rigtig god ved sig selv. Tage en ansigtsmaske på og lave et fodbad. Altså at være god ved sig selv uden nødvendigvis at vise andre hvordan man ser ud.

Jeg kan ikke undgå at blive påvirket af kvindeidealet fordi det er simpelthen overalt. Ligeså snart man tænder for fjernsynet eller går udenfor. Det er jo over det hele. Jeg ville nok ikke være ærlig hvis jeg sagde at det ikke påvirkede mig. Fordi jeg vil da også gerne se ud som de der modeller der hænger need i HM men det er ikke ensbetydende med at jeg synes det er et rigtigt ideal.
Jeg synes godt at man kan skelne. For hvis man ikke er enig i idealen så er der jo ingen grund til at leve op til det. Det er sådan lidt dobbelt fordi det bliver påduttet een i og med at det er overalt, det er ligesom det der bliver gjort til det rigtige. Men altså der er jo ikke nogen der skælder mig ud hvis jeg ikke gør det. Det er jo ens egne forventninger til en selv som er det værste.

Kan kvindeidealet ændres?
Ja det kan det – altså det er det jo blevet. Hvis man tænker bare halvtreds år tilbage så havde modellerne jo meget mere krop, flere former og de skulle være gode til at passe born og lave mad, ellers var de ikke rigtige kvinder.
Tiden ændrer det. Det er en udvikling der også kommer til at ændre sig fremover.
Det her med at man skal være….at have kontrol over sit liv og sig selv. Også det med at man skal se godt ud, dyrke motion og spise sundt. Man kunne da godt forestille sig at der på et tidspunkt kom en modreaktion. Altså det ser man jo også i tiden. Jeg tror da på et eller andet tidspunkt så gider folk ikke høre mere om helse og motion og hvordan man skal se ud.

Reading pattern:

Jeg vil helst ikke indrømme det men jeg læser dem engang imellem. Altså når man virkelig ikke skal tænke fx. Når jeg kører tog så kan jeg godt finde på at læse et Woman blad. Men min generelle holdning til det er at der er ikke noget indhold i for mig fordi jeg ikke går særlig meget op i mode og det er ligesom det eneste det handler om. Så det er rent tidsfordriv hvis jeg ikke lige kan overskue at læse avisen.

Jeg har masser af veninder der læser de her blade. Jeg kender ikke nogen som siger det vil jeg bare ikke læse. Jeg kan godt forstå at folk godt gider læse det hvis de gerne vil følge med.

Motivation:
At man kan følge med i moden. Tips til dig selv og test dig selv. Det er meget easy læsning. Nogen gange er det jo nok meget rart at læse noget der tager en halv time og bagefter så glemmer man det men det var meget rart mens det varede.

Forsiden:
Det er ikke forsiden der påvirker mig når jeg skal vælge fordi de ligner allesammen hinanden. Det der gør at jeg vælger det ene frem for det andet det er de der appetizers der står. Hvis der står meget om mode så vælger jeg det ikke fordi jeg ikke rigtig kan bruge det til noget.

Jeg har ingen forventninger til bladet andet end at jeg forventer at det er ligesom det plejer at være. Jeg ved godt hvad jeg får. Hvis man har læst det ene så har man også læst det andet. Der er meget få variationer. Mine forventninger er meget lave og jeg bliver stort set aldrig skuffet.

Faste læseere:
Jeg tror da de køber det fordi de føler at de kan bruge det til noget. For folk der går rigtig meget op i mode så er det jo en service.

Funktion:
En service for læserne. Inspiration til hvad skal jeg købe og hvor skal jeg købe det.

Jeg synes tit de er meget på højde med læserne. Det er sjældent de står med loftet pegefinger. De kommer snarere med anbefalinger. Jeg tror også at de bestræber sig på at være i øjenhøjde med læserne.

Ansvar:
Nej jeg synes overhovedet ikke de har et ansvar fordi så kan man da bare lade være med at købe det.

Body Image:
Ja, der er helt sikkert et kropsligt, fysisk ideal. Fordi der er jo ikke nogen der skiller sig ud. Man kan jo tage et hoved af den ene og sætte på den anden. De har jo alle sammen den same krop. Det er virkelig svært at finde nogen som ikke ser ligesådan ud som alle de andre.

Jeg tror ikke man kan undgå at blive påvirket fordi der jo ikke er en eneste der afviger.

Choice and independence:
Det opfordrer til at bruge en masse penge men ikke at man bliver nødt til det. Jeg tror at folk der køber det her det er folk som gerne vil. Men det har jeg lidt svært ved at vurdere. Det kan godt være at nogen ikke føler de er gode nok hvis ikke de har det de anbefaler.
Jeg tror kvinder er meget bevidste når de så køber de produkter der anbefales. Altså at enten siger det ‘det var da en god ide, det gør jeg’ eller ‘ej det er da noget pija, det gider jeg ikke’. Jeg tror også at folk vælger ud. Fordi man kan jo ikke gøre det hele.

Jeg tror ikke at man kan blive manipuleret af at læse sådan et blad.

Butler:
Det er jeg enig i, altså når man bliver født har man jo allerede fået en dukke hvis man er en pige.

Ja, det er Costume, sammen med alt det andet. De er selvfølgelig med til at påvirke men man har jo stadigvæk et valg.

Ændring:

Rachel:

Generelt kvindeideal:

Der er en eller anden ide om hvordan den perfekte kvindekrop ser ud, og at den er opnåelig for alle og at man selv er skyld i det hvis man ikke gør det.

Tynd, høj, brun, sminket, farvet hår (blond), skinnende hår – feminint på den bløde smukke skinnende måde.
Feminin hører med til ideallet. Høfter, bryster, neglelak – typisk feminin.

Skal du leve op til det?
På mine dårlige dage når man ser sådan nogle ting så tænker man ej sådan gad jeg også godt se ud.
Heldigvis er jeg bevidst om at ikke alle mennesker kan se ud på den måde.
Når man ser en reklame for en læbestift og modellens læber er perfekte så tænker man med det same at så er resten af kroppen også perfekt. Så glemmer man at tænke på at vi har alle vores små fejl.

Ændres kravene? Vigtigt at de ændres. Tendens til livstilssygdomme. Folk tænker mere på resultatet end vejen dertil. Stress – du skal både se perfekt ud, have det perfekte liv, det perfekte hjem og job.
Den her stress med at alt skal være perfekt gør jo at folk bliver fysisk syge. Derfor tror jeg at det er virkelig vigtigt at man får frem i medierne at ingen er perfekte og det perfekte kan ikke opnåes. Mere noget med at man er god nok som man er. Hvis man skal træne så skal det være fordi man kan lide at træne og fordi ens krop har brug for det. Man skal ikke gøre det for at man udadtil kan se perfekt ud.

Idealet ændrer sig selvfølgelig gennem tiden men det er mere modemæssigt. Man forventer stadig noget af kvinden. Ligestilling har ikke ændret kvindeidealet. Fra at det drejer sig om den perfekte husmor drejer det sig nu bare om den perfekte karrierekvinde. Det er som om kvinder ikke tager sig selv alvorligt nok i forhold til mænd. Det er bare skørt at vi stadig lader os presse under af nogle idealer som i aller højeste grad er opstillet af kvinder faktisk. Det er kvinder der siger at sådan ser den perfekte kvinde ud. Kvinder der går ned af gaden og gerne vil se lækre ud, de gør det ligeså meget for de andre kvinder der kommer gående forbi som for mændene. Kvinder har en meget underlig tanke om at mænd vi have en lille røv, hvor jeg tror at mænd er lidt ligeglade. Det er ikke mænd der har opstillet det, det er kvinder. Og hvis det er mænd så er det nogle forskruede nogen og der er langt imellem dem.

Reading pattern:

Kvindeblade gør mig vitterligt ked af det nogen gange. Det er et forfærdeligt billede de giver af sig selv og et forfærdeligt billede de giver udadtil. Jeg undrer mig over om de selv tror på alt det de skriver. De prøver at lade som om det er også kvinder, vi ved hvor hårdt I har det, samtidig med at de ikke laver andet end at slå kvinder I hovedet med hvor perfekte de skal være. Det er irrationelt og det er ubrugeligt. Det opstiller ’virkeligheden’ igennem deres råd. De fortæller os direkte hvordan vi er og hvad vi gerne vil have. Hvis man er lidt usikker på sin krop så bliver det ikke bedre af at læse de her blade. Folk bliver stressede og hysteriske omkring deres krop fordi det får de at vide i bladet.

Motivation:

God blanding af mode og noget piget sorority noget. Det snakker man jo heller ikke om. Man indrømmer jo ikke at man køber det for at få gode råd.

Jeg tror at de kvinder der køber det har et eller andet behov for at få at vide at de er ligesom alle andre. Og at det er okay at være sole, undskyld udtrykket. Man tænker at okay hende her har det også
hårdt eller hende har også været sin kæreste utro. Man kan være i det her kvindeunivers og så sidde og brøkke sig over hvor hårdt det er at være kvinde.

Relationship:

Ledere handler meget om 'situationen vi alle kender' og 'det er da også rart at se at andre har det sådan’. Polaroid billeder hvor man lærer moderadaktøren at kende. Fascinationen af karrierekvinden og så ser de godt ud på de her billeder. Polaroidbilleder er jo ikke et model billede men sender et signal om at se hvor skøn hun er på hendes helt egen naturlige måde. Man bliver fascineret og draget med ind i det der univers. Så bliver det sådan lidt ‘familiar’ vi kender hinanden agtigt.

Agency:

Jeg tror godt at kvinder kan føle at de har fået et eller andet trick som andre ikke har kendt og så går man ned og kober et eller andet product. Så på den måde er det bevidst. Men også ubevidst at man pludselig kommer i tanke om at nårh ja, den albue skulle da vidst også plejes. Jeg tror det er en god blanding.

Kvinder bliver MEGET let påvirket. Uha ja. Men jeg tror mange bilder sig selv ind at de ikke er blevet det. Eller de står nede i Matas og så tager de tilfældigt et product med uden at tænke over at det sgu da er fordi du lige har læst om det.

Udbud og efterspørgsel. Hvis folk ikke havde været tilfredse så kunne det jo ikke køre rundt. Så et eller andet sted så har kvinder et ansvar over for sig selv. Jeg kan ikke forstå hvorfor kvinder (Costume) ikke føler et ansvar overfor at opstille sådan et ideal.

Hyklerisk og hult at de siger vi skal hæve bmi tallet på catwalken men så ikke selv gør noget ved det. Kvinderne på Costume må selv have et usundt forhold til deres krop.

Forsider:

Måske fordi man ikke selv er ligesom modellen på forsiden så er der lidt en flugt i det. Man drages af det perfekte.

Sommer klar på 4 uger – det lyder som meget for mig. Altså jeg bliver sommerklar af at barbere mine ben. Uanset hvor strandklar jeg bliver så kommer jeg jo aldrig til at ligne hende.

Ved at kigge på forsiden så får man at vide at du er ikke perfekt og man ser så alt det man lige pludselig mangler. Man kober det fordi man tænker at der er tydeligvis meget jeg mangler at få styr på.
Jeg vælger det blad hvor der står mest om mode. Det blad tager jeg.

Body image:
Fashion feature med nogen kvinde: Befriende at det ikke er så opstillet i traditional forstand.

Moden i Costume har jeg ikke råd til. Det er ret uopnåeligt. Altså månedens must-have er en taske til 17.000 kr. Den kunne jeg jo ikke engang få råd til på et år hvis jeg sparede sammen. Så der opstiller de også et forkert signal i forhold til at se godt ud. Foreksempel at det er okay at gå i HM tøj, og du kan også se pisse lækker ud i HM tøj.

Det virker som om at deres målgruppe ofte er rige karrierekvinder. Men det bliver jo blandet med de her lidt teenageagtige ting. Og altså hvorfor er modellerne så 13 år?

Det der er typisk ved modebilleder det er at foreksempel så har hun benvarmere på og så ingenting på benene. Altså det er da meget få mennesker der kan gå sådan klædt. De der features er aldrig realistiske, hverken modemæssigt eller kropsmæssigt.

Det gør jo at kvinder aldrig kan komme til at se så perfekte ud som på billederne fordi vi ville være tvunget til at tage et par strømpebukser på foreksempel.

De kombinerer altid interviews med succesrige kvinder med en serie billeder af dem hvor de kommer til at ligne en model. De gør alle til et skønhedsideal.

Choice and independence:

Costume lægger i den grad op til at vi skal bruge penge og købe ting. Problemet er at Costume udkommer hver måned og så er der lige pludselig noget nyt man skal købe.

Det er pisse negativt fordi glæden bliver kortvarig. Endelig bliver man tilfreds med hvad man har, så får du lov til at have det sådan i 14 dage og så kommer der noget nyt man skal have. Jeg tror det er vigtigt at man kigger væk fra hvad sådan nogle blade siger og så indse at der er ingen grund til at købe nyt hver gang. Og dem der gør det, jeg gud vide om de er mere lykkefulde end os andre. Det er virkelig uhvælvede forstået. Det er en ond cirkel hvor du aldrig når målet. Hver gang du bliver fantastisk der, kan du aldrig forsøge at blive en anden sted.

Der er forskel på at sige at ‘sådan her er moden og det står dig frit for at købe den’ eller sige ‘sådan her er moden og prøv og tænk hvor fabulous du kommer til at se ud hvis du køber det’. Selvom de ikke eksplicit skriver at hvis du ikke køber det her tøj så er du grim og kedelig så er det jo det kvinder læser.
Jeg er meget bevidst om at jeg ikke vil lade blade og andre medier få mig til at tænke negativt om mig selv. Jeg hader at tvivle på mig selv pga sådan nogle ting her.

Jeg prøver aktivt i samtale med folk at snake idealt ned. Men jeg er glad for mode, jeg er glad for tøj og jeg vil gerne se godt ud og gøre noget for mig selv. Det skal helst være på et plan hvor jeg selv vælger det.

Det er vigtigt at holde fat i et realistisk billede og holde benene på jorden. Man skal huske at der er ingen der ser sådan ud i virkeligheden. De er alle blevet retouchet på en computer.

Jeg tror mange glemmer at tænke over al det arbejde der lægger bag billederne. Det kan jeg da også selv glemme at tænke over. Men heldigvis tænker jeg ikke at sådan vil jeg gerne se ud.

Butler:
Det er jo helt forrykt at man allerede inden barnet er født, vil vurdere udfra barnets kon, hvordan det vil få det sjovt. Det er jo ikke naturligt at kvinder elsker at lakere negle og mænd elsker at spille fodbold. Selvfølgelig er konservative forskellige men jeg tror da at hvis jeg havde fået biler dengang jeg var lille så ville jeg da også have haft sjov med at lege med dem. Folk tænker automatisk i to bokse.

Costume opfordrer stærkt til en performance af kvindekønnet og de få gange de ikke gør er det utroligt halvhjertet. Foreksempel hvis man interviewer en kvinde i militæret så spørger man alligevel hvad de gør for at føle sig feminine når de kommer hjem.

Godt blad?
Jeg synes de skulle holde sig til mode og hvis de kunne komme med nogle alternativer som folk rent faktisk har råd til.

Mht artikler så ville det være rart hvis de nogengange tænkte udenfor boksen med at det er kvinder der skriver til kvinder. Nogen gange kunne kvinder også have rigtig godt af at læse om nogen mænd. Eller læse nogle lidt dybere artikler. Skrive nogle virkelig dybdegående ting som er væsentlige i kvinders liv.

Det er ærgerligt at man ikke kan lave et blad der indeholder begge dele (mode og politik).

Jeg tror aldrig man kommer væk fra konceptet ’kvindeblad’. Jeg ville gerne have at vi bevægede os hen i mod et punkt hvor kvinder ikke havde brug for at købe de her blade, og få de der input. Det er jo først når man læser bladene at man får en ide om hvad man gør forkert. Det er jo det der er så usundt og derfor ville det være sundt aldrig at købe de her blade. Jeg tror de skader mere end de gavner.