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Creators	Forbes-Bell, Shakaila and Bardey, Aurore and Fagan, Patrick

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Testing the effect of consumer-model racial congruency on consumer behavior

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Shakaila Forbes-Bell, Aurore C Bardey 
and **Patrick Fagan**

University of the Arts London, UK

Abstract

Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) models continue to be underrepresented in advertising within the fashion and beauty industry. **[AQ: 1]** The present research project aims to evaluate the impact of same-raced model adverts on consumer behavior as well as testing consumer-model racial congruence with a specific focus on Black models and consumers, the latter of whom feel especially underrepresented in advertising campaigns. Two studies were conducted. In Study 1, 120 female participants (38 Black, 82 Caucasian) viewed 28 perfume advertisements featuring 14 Black and 14 Caucasian models. Participants rated their likelihood of purchasing the perfume and how much money they would be willing to spend. In Study 2, 99 female participants (34 Black, 65 Caucasian) made the same ratings in Study 1, but this time they rated images fragrances without any models present. Participants were divided into three conditions: (1) participants who received no priming, (2) participants were primed with images of Black models, and (3) participants were primed with images of Caucasian models. Both studies highlighted that Black participants showed an increased intention of buying as well as a willingness to spend a higher amount of money when the product advertised is accompanied by images of Black models. Consumer-model racial congruence was not supported for Caucasian participants. This article highlights a participant-model racial congruence for Black participants and underlines the positive impact of inclusive fashion on BAME consumers.

Keywords

consumer behavior, ethnicity, racial congruence

Literature review **[AQ: 2]**

Advertising's ability to mirror current cultural climates constitutes a "powerful societal force" (Williams, Lee, & Haugtvedt, 2004). However, in many ways, advertising can sometimes fall short

Corresponding author:

Aurore C Bardey, Fashion Business School, London College of Fashion, University of the Arts of London, 20 John Prince's Street, London W1G 0BJ, UK.

Email: a.bardey@fashion.arts.ac.uk

in its attempts to adapt to population shifts. For example, the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) population is continually rising, constituting 14% of the population in England and Wales in 2011; this figure has increased from 5.9% in 1991 (Bradford—Office for National Statistics, 2012). Although a move toward increased diversity in casting has been witnessed, BAME individuals are still often underrepresented in marketing and advertising campaigns despite their population growth (Sweney, 2011). A 2017 study by Lloyds Banking Group assessed more than 2,000 ads from the top 50 ad spenders and found that the number of BAME people featured in marketing campaigns has increased from 12% to 25% in the last 3 years (Lloyds Banking Group, 2017). However, the study also found that brands continually place minorities in supporting roles and are rarely ever cast as leads (Lloyds Banking Group, 2017). This research from Lloyds Banking Group included a quantitative study of 2,200 people in England and Wales, followed up with focus groups with some of these participants. The findings revealed that “nearly a third (32%) of black respondents said they were underrepresented in ads and 28% of Asian people felt the same. 29% of multi-racial people also felt their ethnic groups weren’t significantly portrayed in brand messaging.”

Studies have shown that consumer-spokesperson racial congruence (i.e., instances where the consumer and spokesperson hail from the same racial/ethnic group) induces favorable brand evaluations (Appiah, 2002). However, little is understood about how advert featuring same-race models effect spending habits. Given that BAME retail purchases account for a twelfth of all fashion spending within the United Kingdom (Race for Opportunity, 2015), this appears to be a significant oversight.

Ethnic minorities are “more saliently aware of their race” than ethnic majority persons “and consider their race a prominent factor in their interpersonal communications with Caucasians” (Elias, Appiah, & Gong, 2011). In a study conducted by Appiah (2002), 349 Black, Asian, Hispanic, and Caucasian students viewed a series of advertisements and then completed a questionnaire on their contents. About 60% of the adverts contained cues specific to a particular culture (Black or Caucasian; Appiah, 2002). Results revealed that Black participants rated adverts featuring Black spokespersons significantly more favorably than adverts featuring Caucasian persons. Moreover, results revealed that Black participants pay less attention to content exclusively featuring Caucasian spokespersons. Appiah argues that Black consumers fail to identify with Caucasian spokespersons and thus believe that the advertised product/service is not intended for them (Appiah, 2002).

Similarly, in a more recent study, Asian and Latino American participants were shown bank advertisements; half of the participants saw adverts including models that belonged to their own ethnicity, whereas the other half saw adverts that excluded models from their ethnicity (El Hazzouri, Main, & Carvalho, 2017). Results revealed that participants who saw the advertisement that featured a model of their own ethnic group evaluated the advertisement more positively than those who did not see their ethnic group represented (El Hazzouri et al., 2017). These findings are supported by the Lloyds report which found that 65% of respondents say they feel more favorable toward a brand that reflects diversity in advertising, whereas 67% of those surveyed expect advertisers to represent the diverse aspects of society (Lloyds Banking Group, 2017).

Despite this ingrained propensity to favor similar others, marketers still often shy away from including ethnic minority models in advertising campaigns (Sweney, 2011). This avoidance usually occurs for three main reasons. First, some marketers believe that market segmentation equates to market segregation, in that adverts featuring racially diverse persons may serve to alienate Caucasian consumers (Johnson & Grier, 2011). However, the finding that Caucasians, as well as Black ethnicity consumers rate adverts featuring Black models as more favorable than those exclusively featuring Caucasian models (Appiah, 2001), appear to contradict this statement.

Second, some marketers maintain the belief that “Black models don’t sell” (Freeman, 2014). The fact that Vogue Italia’s July 2008 “All Black Issue” featuring solely Black models were the

publications highest selling issue to date and the first issue to ever be reprinted (Mower, 2008) is just one of many examples to suggest that this belief holds little merit. Finally, some marketers argue that Caucasian models are just as effective as BAME characters in engaging BAME consumers and as such, deem racially representative adverts to be unnecessary (Askey, 1995). However, studies suggest that minorities often resist media images that fail to represent their ethnic group (Milkie, 1999) and said these publications might be looked upon as untrustworthy.

According to the 2012 “Multicultural Britain” report, the combined disposable income of BAME persons reached a staggering £300 billion in 2010 (Race for Opportunity, 2015). This disposable income is accompanied by increased expenditure as ethnic minorities have a spending power of £12–£15 billion per year (Institute of Practitioners in Advertising [IPA], 2014) within the United Kingdom alone. These figures underline the failure to target minorities under the impression that such groups do not spend.

As previously highlighted, ethnic minorities feel underrepresented in mainstream media, and this heightened level of awareness can be linked to Distinctiveness Theory. Distinctiveness Theory refers to “the idea that people define themselves on the basis of traits that are numerically rare in their local environments” (Grier & Brumbaugh, 2004) Being a numeric minority in any instance heightens the significance of an individual’s minority status (Brewer, 1999), and this is particularly true when considering the perceptually salient feature, that is, ethnicity. Studies have shown that distinctiveness effects how individuals respond to advertisements. Compared with other social categories (e.g., gender), ethnicity is a more meaningful self-defining concept that is associated with distinctiveness aside from its relative infrequency within a population (Grier & Brumbaugh, 2004). Therefore, BAME individuals constitute a distinctive group and as such, are more saliently aware and receptive toward BAME persons including those featured within advertisements (Grier & Brumbaugh, 2004). For example, the results of Deshpandé and Stayman’s (1994) study revealed that in recognition of their numerical minority position, BAME consumers are more sensitive to ethnic cues within advertisements. Same-ethnicity spokespersons were found to be more trustworthy and subsequently held positive attitudes toward the advertised brand (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994) **[AQ: 3]**

In addition to the Distinctiveness Theory, the Cross-Race Effect (CRE) is a form of own-race bias which can further explain why underrepresentation is felt so strongly among ethnic minorities. The CRE states that a person with a comparable race/ethnicity to one’s self is easier to recognize than a person belonging to a different race/ethnicity. In Phelps and Thomas’ (2003) study, participants were presented with images of 20 models (10 Black and 10 Caucasian) with unidentifiable faces alongside images of miscellaneous objects. Results revealed that the fusiform face area, the brain area specialized in facial recognition showed greater activation when participants viewed same race as opposed to other race faces (Phelps & Thomas, 2003). This heightened level of awareness suggests that minorities may be more likely to engage in advertisements featuring other minority persons. The latter sentiment is supported by studies which have shown that Black consumers pay more attention to and recall more content from media featuring Black models (Appiah, 2002; Williams et al., 2004).

In recent years, some brands have begun to take note of the positive impact of racial congruence in advertising. For example, in 2017 to promote the new Toyota Camry, Toyota released different advertisements targeting consumers from different ethnic backgrounds. The advert targeting African American consumers featured African Americans, the ad targeting Hispanics featured Hispanics, and the ad targeting Asian Americans featured Asian Americans (Maheshwari, 2017). Although the fashion and beauty industry has been described as “notoriously slow to act on matters of inclusivity” (Tai, 2018), in the last 4 years, the industry has made moves toward increased diversity. In 2015, just 17.2% of the models casted for Spring/Summer London Fashion Week were

BAME compared to 36.2% for the Spring/Summer 2019 shows (Tai, 2018); a figure more closely representing the ethnic makeup of London's in which the most recent figures estimate non-Caucasian as making up 40% of the population (Bradford—Office for National Statistics, 2012). When looking internationally, the percentage of non-Caucasian cover models on top international fashion magazines was 17.4% in 2015 and 37.7% in 2018 (Tai, 2018). It is imperative that the industry maintains this upward trajectory for several reasons chiefly because minority representation in mainstream media has an important by-product in its ability to legitimize and publicize the existence of these often-ignored ethnic groups (Chasin, 2000). Therefore, in such an increasingly racially diversified population, racially inclusive media is necessary to affect society as a whole positively. [AQ: 4][AQ: 5]

A host of research indicates that BAME persons are more likely to identify with other BAME spokespersons (Appiah, 2004), recall more content from BAME spokespersons (Appiah, 2002; Whittler & Spira, 2002), and rate BAME spokespersons more positively (Appiah, 2002; Whittler & Spira, 2002). The fashion and beauty industry relies heavily on marketing, often utilizing attractive spokespersons to engage consumers. The Match-Up hypothesis suggests that having a product endorsed by a physically attractive person will increase the attractiveness of the products (Till & Busler, 2000). However, research suggests that attractiveness is a multidimensional concept (Englis, Solomon, & Ashmore, 1994) encompassing several factors that makeup one's social identity, most notably race. Although fashion and beauty marketers are often described as "media gatekeepers," playing a crucial role in determining what is and what is not recognized as beautiful (Englis et al., 1994), one's cultural and ethnic group affiliation has been shown to circumvent this.

This article aims to evaluate the impact of same-race model adverts on consumer behavior as well as testing consumer-model racial congruence. Unlike previous research, the present research focuses specifically on fashion and beauty advertisements—chiefly perfume advertisements, as adverts of this type are highly visual (Fleck, Korchia, & Le Roy, 2012). Given the expansiveness of the perfume advertising industry (King, 2013) and its dependence on esthetic appeal, the present work will expand on the work of Appiah (2002) and will analyze responses to perfume advertisements exhibiting consumer–spokesperson racial congruence. The research objectives are to assess the impact of consumer-model racial congruence on purchase intention and the amount of money consumers are willing to spend. Two hypotheses are formulated:

H1: There is a racial congruence between the participant (consumer) and the model within the advertisement (spokesperson) participants.

H1a: The purchase intention will be higher for consumers for adverts with same-race models.

H1b: The willingness to spend money on the advertised product will be higher for adverts with same-race models.

H2a: Priming participants with images of same-race models will increase purchase intentions.

H2b: Priming participants with adverts of same-race models will increase the willingness to spend money on the advertised product.

Methodology

Prior to the main study taking place, two pilot studies were conducted. As the appeal of fashion and beauty adverts, in general, are subject to numerous factors, the stimuli required testing to ensure

that the results were obtained due to race congruence and no other extraneous factors such as model attractiveness. All of the models included in the stimuli material self-identified their race as either “Black” or “Caucasian.” However, given that some people’s race can be misidentified, a pilot study was conducted, again to ensure that the results were obtained due to race congruence. Studies 1 and 2 have been designed according to the pilot studies outcomes. Subsequently, pilot study results will be exposed in this section.

Pilot study

Participants. Seven participants (5 females and 2 males) were recruited for the first pilot study. Moreover, 3 out of the 7 participants self-identified their race as Black, 1 self-identified their race as Caucasian, 2 self-identified their race as Asian (Chinese and Indian), and 1 self-identified their race as Biracial (Black and Caucasian). Participants were aged 23.1 years. All participants gave their consent to participate in this study. This study has been approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Panel at London College of Fashion.

The second pilot study obtained 10 participants (8 females and 2 males) who were recruited for the second pilot study; 5 out of the 10 participants self-identified their ethnicity as Caucasian, 2 out of the 10 participants self-identified their ethnicity as Black, 1 out of the 10 participants self-identified their ethnicity as Chinese, and 2 out of the 10 participants self-identified their ethnicity as mixed-race (Black and Caucasian). Participants were aged 30.8 years. All participants gave their consent to participate in this study. This study has been approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Panel at London College of Fashion.

Materials. Models were recruited both from various modeling agencies and in response to a “Call for Models” advertisement posted via social media. Moreover, 30 models were recruited, and a headshot of each of them was taken. Out of these 30 models, 14 models self-identified their race as being Black, 14 as Caucasian, and 2 Biracial (Black and Caucasian). The models’ ages ranged from 16 to 27 years. All models gave full consent for their photograph to be used for the sake of the present research. Where models were below the age of 18 years, parental consent was given on their behalf.

Procedure. As research suggests that attractiveness judgments can be mediated by race and ethnicity (Englis et al., 1994), it was necessary to control attractiveness across both groups of models (Black vs. Caucasian). Participants were presented with a model headshot (see Figure 1(a)), and after viewing the image, they were instructed to judge the attractiveness of the model. There was no time limit for viewing the image. The headshot was not present during the attractiveness rating, and participants were unable to reexamine the image. Ratings were given on a Likert-type scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 = *extremely unattractive* and 10 = *extremely attractive*). The study continued in this manner for the remaining 29 images. The images were presented in a randomized order for each participant. After rating each image, participants provided demographic information including their gender, age, and race (Figure 2). [AQ: 6]

The second pilot study included the same headshots present in the first pilot study. However, after viewing each image, participants were asked to judge the race of the model out of the following two options: “Caucasian” or “Black.” As with the first pilot study, the headshots were not present while participants made this judgment, and there was no time limit for viewing the headshot. After all images were viewed and all ethnic judgments made, participants provided demographic information.

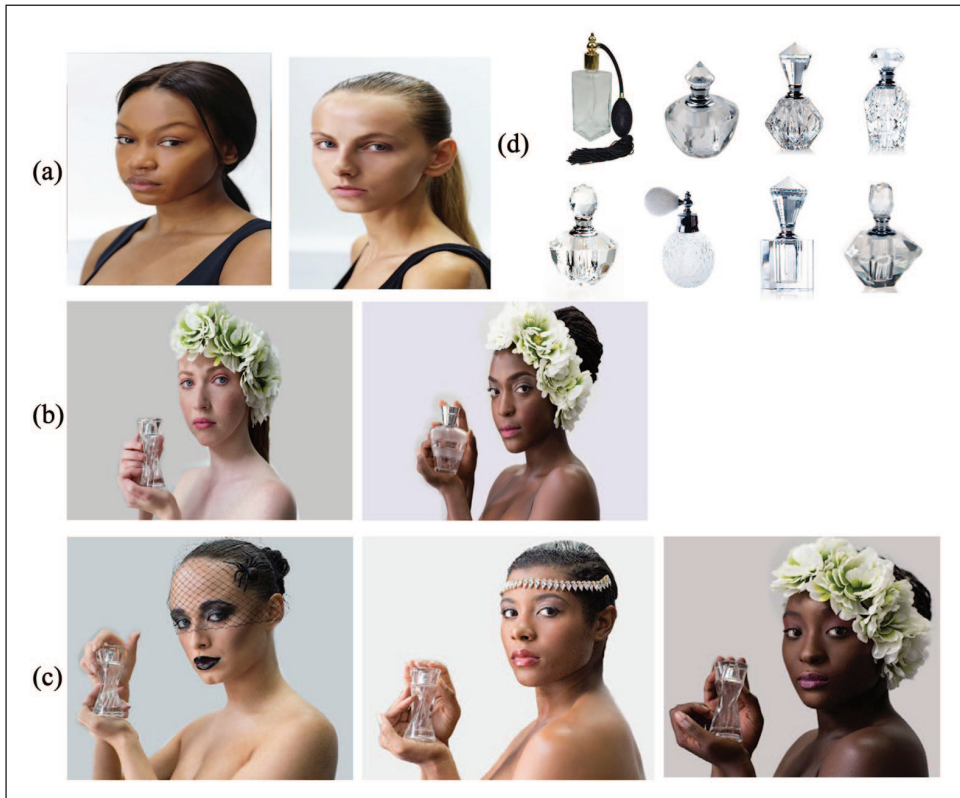


Figure 1. Example of mock-up adverts: (a) Example of two headshots. (b) Both White and Black models were featured an equal number of times in each style group. (c) Mock-up perfume advertisements, Gothic, floral, and glamorous styling (from left to right) all modeling perfume bottle no. 2. (d) Unbranded, clear perfume bottles used in Study 2.

Results. Regarding the first pilot study, one sample *t*-test analysis failed to show any significant difference between Black models' attractiveness (5.11 , $SD = 1.05$; $SD =$ standard deviation) and Caucasian models attractiveness (4.66 , $SD = 0.65$; $p > .05$). Regarding the second pilot study, participants were unanimous in their ethnic judgments for 28 models. However, some discrepancies appeared for 2 models. Indeed, 50% of participants indicated the race of these models as being Black and the remaining 50% indicated their race as being Caucasian. As a result, these 2 models were not included in the main study, and the 28 pictures have been used for Study 1 and Study 2.

Study 1

Participants. In total, 120 female participants (38 Black, 82 Caucasian) were recruited for Study 1. Cint, an online survey panel, was used to recruit participants using random and stratified sampling. Participants were aged 38.02 years. The consumer behavior of the participants was not specified. All participants gave their consent to participate in this study. This study has been approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Panel at London College of Fashion.

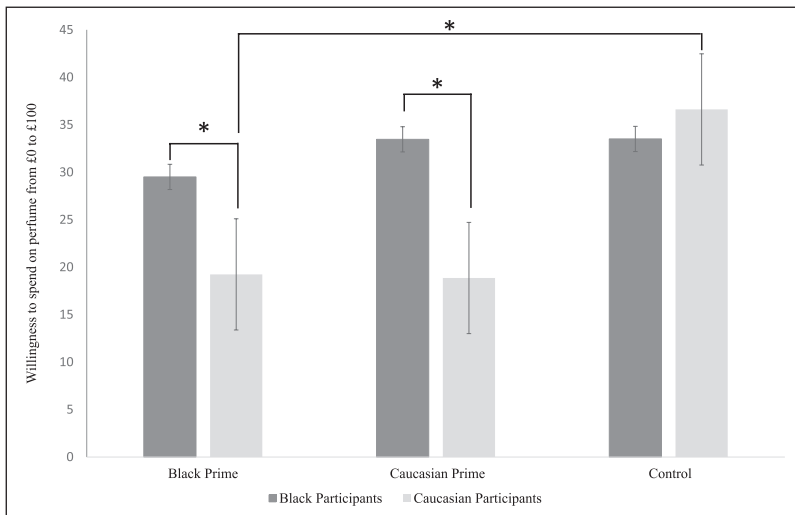


Figure 2. Study 2 results. Mean, standard deviation, and statistical outcomes for the purchase intention and willingness to spend for all participants, Black participants, and Caucasian participants for the Black prime (condition when participants were primed with a Black model advert), for the Caucasian prime (condition when participants were primed with a Caucasian model advert), and for the control condition (with no priming).

Moreover, 32 additional participants volunteered for this study but were not selected as 22 participants stated their race as being something other than Black or Caucasian, 5 stated their gender as being male, 2 failed to state their gender, and 3 participants failed to state their race.

Materials. Stimuli were 28 mock-up perfume advertisements with the models who featured in pilot studies 1 and 2. Each advertisement featured a single female model, head and shoulders shot, holding a clear perfume bottle. Three types of perfume bottle were pictured in advertisements. The perfume bottles were unbranded not to indicate any very well-known brands to ensure that perceptions of perfumes (and perfume advertisements) currently on the market did not affect participants' responses. Models were holding the perfume bottles in the same way to ensure consistency (see Figure 1(b)).

The 28 mock-up advertisements featured 14 Black and 14 Caucasian models as informed by the results from the second pilot study. The mock-up advertisements portrayed three types of makeup styles: "Floral," "Gothic," and "Glamorous" (see Figure 1(c)). The models were styled in different ways with different types of perfume bottles to be more representative of a wide range of real perfume advertisements and to distract participants from the true nature of the experiment—an investigation of the effect of consumer-model racial congruence. The "Floral" group included 5 Black and 5 Caucasian Models, the "Gothic" group included 5 Black and 5 Caucasian Models, and finally, the "Glamorous" group included 4 Black and 4 Caucasian models. Therefore, Black and Caucasian models were featured equal number of times in each style group. The mock-up advertisements portrayed three different types of perfume bottles. Bottle 1 was featured 10 times, bottle 2 featured 12 times, and bottle 3 featured 6 times. All three bottles were modeled by an equal number of Black and Caucasian models. The mock-up advertisements did not feature any text as research outlines that such advertisements rely predominantly on visual information (Tuna, 2004). The experiment was generated online via the Psych-Research.com study platform.

Procedure. Prior to the experiment taking place, informed consent was obtained. Participants were told that they were being invited to participate in a study entitled “Testing the Effectiveness of Perfume Advertisements.”

The first perfume advert flashed on the screen for 3 s, and the participants were required to make two judgments: (1) to rate their likelihood of purchasing the perfume (purchase intention) featured within the ad on a Likert-type scale of 1–10 (where 1 = *extremely unlikely to purchase* and 10 = *extremely likely to purchase*) and (2) to state how much they would be willing to spend on the perfume (amount willing to spend) on a scale of £0 to £100 (responses only allowed in whole integers). The same process followed for the remaining 27 perfume advertisements. All perfume advertisements were featured in a randomized order across participants (Table 1). [AQ: 7]

Study 2

Participants. A total of 99 female participants (34 Black, 65 Caucasian) were recruited for Study 2. Cint, an online survey panel, was used to recruit participants using random and stratified sampling. Participants were aged 37.84 years. The consumer behavior of the participants was not specified. All participants gave their consent to participate in this study. This study has been approved by the Psychology Research Ethics Panel at London College of Fashion.

Moreover, 19 additional participants volunteered for this study but were not selected as 1 participant stated their gender as being male, 1 failed to state their gender, 4 failed to state their race, and 13 participants stated their race as being something other than Black or Caucasian.

Materials. The stimuli for Study 2 included the headshots featured in the pilot studies. Based on the results from pilot studies, the headshots used in Study 2 included 14 Black and 14 Caucasian female models. Stimuli also included single images of 8 perfume bottles (see Figure 1(d)). The perfume bottles were unbranded not to indicate any well-known brands that may have affected participants’ responses. As this study was testing the effects of priming, the number of perfume bottles increased from 3 to 8 to make the results more robust. As with Study 1, the experiment was generated online via the Psych-Research.com study platform.

Procedure. Prior to the experiment taking place, informed consent was obtained. Participants were told that they were being invited to participate in a study entitled “Testing the Appeal of Perfumes.” Participants were then randomly allocated to one of the three conditions.

Condition 1—Control condition: one of the eight perfume bottles flashed on the screen for 3 s. After that, participants rated on a Likert-type scale of 1–10 (where 1 = *extremely unlikely to purchase* and 10 = *extremely likely to purchase*) how likely they would be to purchase the perfume previously depicted. Participants also rated how much money they would be willing to spend on the perfume on a scale from £0–£100. Participants could only respond to whole integers. The same two judgments were made after viewing the remaining seven perfume bottles.

Condition 2—“Black Prime” condition: at the beginning of the study, participants were primed with 14 headshots of Black Female models (models from pilot studies and Study 1). Each headshot flashed on the screen in quick succession for 10 ms. Headshots were presented in a randomized order for each participant. After viewing all headshots, participants made the same judgments on the 8 perfume bottles as in the control condition.

Table 1. Study 1 results: mean, standard deviation, and statistical outcomes for the purchase intention and willingness to spend for all participants, Black participants, and Caucasian participants for adverts featuring Black models (Black ads) and for adverts featuring Caucasian models (Caucasian ads).

	Purchase intention		Willingness to spend		<i>p</i>
	Black ads	Caucasian ads	Black ads	Caucasian ads	
All participants	4.38, <i>SD</i> = 1.89	3.92, <i>SD</i> = 1.79	22.59, <i>SD</i> = 14.77	20.27, <i>SD</i> = 13.85	<i>t</i> = 4.91, <i>p</i> < .05
Black participants	5.14, <i>SD</i> = 1.91	4.37, <i>SD</i> = 1.74	27.42, <i>SD</i> = 17.60	23.35, <i>SD</i> = 15.85	<i>t</i> = 3.51, <i>p</i> < .05
Caucasian participants	3.71, <i>SD</i> = 1.79	4.02, <i>SD</i> = 1.79	20.32, <i>SD</i> = 12.73	18.82, <i>SD</i> = 12.65	<i>t</i> = 3.70, <i>p</i> < .05

SD: standard deviation.

Condition 3—“Caucasian Prime” condition: at the beginning of the study participants were primed with 14 headshots of Caucasian Female models (models from pilot studies and Study 1) which flashed on the screen in a randomized order in the same manner as those in Condition 2. After viewing all headshots, participants made the judgments above.

Results

Study 1

A paired *t*-test revealed that purchase intention was significantly higher for advertisements featuring Black models than for advertisements featuring Caucasian models (4.38, *SD* = 1.89 vs 3.92, *SD* = 1.79; *t* = 6.15, *p* < .05). A paired *t*-test also indicated that participants were willing to spend more money on perfumes advertised by Black models (22.59, *SD* = 14.77) than those advertised by Caucasian models (20.27, *SD* = 13.85; *t* = 4.91, *p* < .05).

An independent paired *t*-test was conducted to find out the effect of the models' ethnicity on Black and Caucasian participants, respectively. Black participants were significantly more likely to purchase perfume advertised by Black models (5.14, *SD* = 1.91) than perfume advertised by Caucasian models (4.37, *SD* = 1.74; *t* = 4.65, *p* < .05). Similar to Black participants, Caucasian participants were also significantly more likely to purchase perfume advertised by Black models than perfume advertised by Caucasian models (4.02, *SD* = 1.79 and 3.71, *SD* = 1.79, respectively; *t* = 4.30, *p* < .05).

Our analysis revealed that Black participants were willing to spend a significantly higher sum of money on perfume advertised by Black models than on perfume advertised by Caucasian models (27.42, *SD* = 17.60 and 23.35, *SD* = 15.85, respectively; *t* = 3.51, *p* < .05). Caucasian participants were also willing to spend significantly more money on perfume advertised by Black models than on perfume advertised by Caucasian models (20.32, *SD* = 12.73 and 18.82, *SD* = 12.65, respectively; *t* = 3.70, *p* < .05).

Study 2

For the three conditions together, participants' willingness to purchase perfumes featured in Study 2 was 5.14 (*SD* = 1.71), and the amount of money participants were willing to spend on the perfumes was 30.18 (*SD* = 16.31).

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine whether there was a significant difference in the purchase intentions and amount of money willing to spend on perfumes between the three conditions (i.e., **Control, Black Prime, and Caucasian Prime**). Results revealed that overall, there was no significant difference in purchase intentions between the three conditions (*p* < .05). However, there was a significant difference in the amount of money participants were willing to pay for the perfumes across the three conditions $F(5, 93) = 2.91, p < .05$. Fisher's Least Significant Difference (LSD) post hoc test was conducted to compare the amount of money that Black and Caucasian participants were willing to pay for perfumes between all three conditions. Post hoc comparisons revealed that Black participants spent significantly more money (29.51, *SD* = 13.87) than Caucasian participants (19.24, *SD* = 11.93) on perfumes when primed with Black models. When primed with images of Caucasian models, Black participants were willing to spend significantly more money (33.47, *SD* = 16.76) on perfume than Caucasian participants (18.86, *SD* = 4.86). Caucasian participants were willing to spend more money on perfumes when primed with no models (i.e., the control condition, 36.62, *SD* = 18.16) than when primed with either Black models (19.24, *SD* = 11.93) or Caucasian models (18.86, *SD* = 4.86). Post hoc

comparisons indicated that the finding mentioned above was significant ($p < .05$). Finally, results revealed that there were no significant differences in the “amount of money willing to spend” on perfume between Black and Caucasian participants in the control condition ($p > .05$).

Discussion

The present research project aims to evaluate the influence of same-race model adverts on consumer behavior. It was hypothesized that participant-model racial congruence would positively affect consumer behavior by (1) increasing purchasing intentions and (2) increasing the amount of money participants were willing to spend on the advertised product (i.e., perfume).

For Study 1, the hypothesis was supported by Black participants. Black participants were more likely to purchase perfume when it was advertised by a Black model and were willing to spend a higher sum of money on perfumes advertised by Black models. These results are supported by a wealth of research (Appiah, 2002; Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994), which highlights the positive impact of ethnic target marketing on ethnic minority consumers. The data suggest that by failing to adequately represent ethnic minorities (Sweney, 2011) brands are not only failing to engage this growing consumer segment (Bradford—Office for National Statistics, 2012) effectively but are also failing to profit from the increased revenue there may be to gain from utilizing Black models in advertisements. Results also suggest that the match-up hypothesis, which states that people are more attracted to products endorsed by attractive persons (Till & Busler, 2000), is also attributable to ethnicity. Minorities find fellow (in-group) minority persons (Tajfel, Turner, Austin, & Worchel, 1979) to be more appealing (Leonard et al., 2008) and the present finding suggests that this appeal is translated to the merchandise that in-group members are associated with. Those against ethnicity inclusive advertising have previously argued that Caucasian spokespersons are equally as effective at engaging Black consumers as Black spokespersons (Askey, 1995). The present results appear to question this sentiment, as results from Study 1 demonstrates that Black participants are less likely to purchase a product endorsed by a Caucasian spokesperson thus emphasizing the necessity of racially inclusive advertising. **AQ: B**

Unexpectedly, results revealed that for Caucasian participants, consumer behavior was not positively affected by participant-model racial congruence. Caucasian participants also showed a preference for ads featuring Black rather than fellow Caucasian models, and they were also more likely to purchase perfume advertised by Black models. This finding appears to support the results of Appiah’s (2001) study which also found that both Black and Caucasian participants rated adverts featuring Black persons more favorably. These findings may prove perplexing when solely considering the results from the viewpoint of Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, Turner, Austin, & Worchel, 1979). SIT posits that individuals possess an ingrained propensity to favor similar others (Tajfel, Turner, Austin, & Worchel, 1979). Therefore, some may argue that it is unclear why Caucasian participants showed favorability toward Black models in the present study. However, when analyzing results in terms of Distinctiveness (Brewer, 1999), the findings become clear. Distinctiveness theory (DT) posits that being a numeric minority will increase the significance of an individual’s minority status (Brewer, 1999), and researchers argue that this is particularly true when considering ethnicity (Grier & Brumbaugh, 2004). Black individuals are a minority group across numerous populations (Bradford—Office for National Statistics, 2012) and as such, they are more ethnicity self-aware (Elias et al., 2011; Watson Thornton, & Davidson, 2011) than Caucasians. Furthermore, DT postulates that as a majority group, Caucasian persons are not as affected by ethnic representation (Brewer, 1999) which explains why they did not show a same-race preference.

It may also be possible that Caucasian participants' responses were an act of self-reproach insofar that, upon realization of the distinct underrepresentation of Black models across all media domains (Forbes, 2014) they responded positively to ads featuring Black models in hopes to circumvent this disparity. To further explore this line of reasoning, future research should attempt to implicitly uncover ethnic majority beliefs regarding racial representation within the media. The present findings should prove reassuring to marketers who incorrectly assume that increased racial diversity within ad campaigns may alienate Caucasian consumers (Johnson & Grier, 2011).

Results also revealed that Caucasian participants were willing to spend more money on perfume when a Black model advertised it as opposed to a Caucasian model. As previously highlighted by Nielsen (2013), 73% of Caucasian persons believe that Black individuals are influential to mainstream culture. Therefore, it may be the case that Caucasians were willing to spend more money on a product if a Black model endorsed it because they believe that an endorsement from such an individual speaks to the popularity of the product. Future research should attempt to replicate Nielsen's (2013) study within the United Kingdom to determine whether the latter reasoning is attributable to the population utilized within the present study. Even for brands with a large ethnic majority consumer base, the present findings suggest that racial diversity in advertisements may serve to affect consumer perceptions across all ethnicities and races positively.

The results of Study 2 only partially supported Hypothesis 2 for Black participants only. Results revealed that priming participants with either Caucasian or Black models had no significant effect on participants' likelihood of purchasing perfume. A wealth of research exists which demonstrates the appeal of same-race persons (Appiah, 2002) and the familiarity principle suggests that this appeal should be heightened the more we witness such persons (Zajonc, 1968). This article suggested an extension of the familiarity principle and argued that familiarity might also induce liking for products associated with a familiar person (i.e., priming with images of same-race persons will result in positive perceptions of products following this exposure). However, this reasoning was not supported by the present findings.

Although the finding was not significant, participants showed a higher propensity to purchase perfumes when not primed with either Black or Caucasian models, that is, when placed in the control condition. In Study 2, participants were primed with the headshots of the 28 models. When purchasing perfume, consumers are usually presented with highly stylized images of models (Tuna, 2004), such as those presented in Study 1. It may be possible that the simplistic styling of the models in the headshot images was deemed to be unusual when compared with typical perfume adverts and as such participants did not consider these images when rating their purchase intentions. Furthermore, according to the match-up hypothesis (Till & Busler, 2000), it may be possible that participants did not find these simplistic images to be attractive and as such, their purchase intentions were not affected by their presence.

The results of the "amount of money willing to pay" dimension were only partially supported by Hypothesis 2. When primed with headshots of models of the same race, Black participants spent significantly more money on perfumes compared to Caucasian participants. Although this finding appears to be a direct contradiction to results which found that priming did not affect purchase intentions, "trustworthiness" judgments may provide a possible explanation. For example, studies have shown that consumers find same-race spokespersons to be more trustworthy and find the products advertised by such spokespersons to be equally trustworthy (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994). Brumbaugh's (1993) study, found that consumers often make spontaneous inferences about products based on perceptions of the associated models/spokespersons. Therefore, it is possible that Black participants attributed the trustworthiness of the Black models to the perfumes that followed (prior purchase assumed) and as such, were willing to spend more money on them as they also appeared to be reliable (Brumbaugh, 1993; Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994).

Surprisingly, results also found that Black participants were willing to spend significantly more money than Caucasian participants when primed with Caucasian models. This finding is not supported either by research highlighting the positive impact of consumer-spokesperson racial congruence (Appiah, 2002) nor the findings of Study 1. As the present study also found that when receiving no priming, Caucasian participants were willing to spend the most money on perfume, it can be argued that Black consumers are more influenced by visual stimuli than Caucasian consumers. This finding may explain the results of Askey's (1995) study as it suggests that in general, Black consumers are more persuaded by attractive models, than Caucasian consumers. Although little research exists into racial differences in visual processing, the results from the present study suggest that such a discrepancy may exist.

Limitations and future work

The ages of the participants featured in both pilot study varied somewhat (23.1 years for Study 1 and 30.8 years for Study 2). Future studies should increase the sample size and ensure greater similarity between these groups to validate the findings further.

One variable that the present study did not control for was the complexion of the models, specifically the Black models featured within the stimuli. Colorism is referred to as "prejudice or discrimination against individuals with dark skin, tone typically among people of the same ethnic or racial group" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). Colorism is a particularly prevalent issue within the Black community (Okazawa-Rey, Robinson, & Ward, 1987) and within the fashion and beauty industry more specifically as Black models with a lighter complexion are often more widely represented (Keenan, 1996). Although the present study included Black models with a variety of skin tones, it is possible that consumer behavior may have been affected by consumer-model skin tone congruence. **[AQ: 9]**

Strengths and implications

The present study is one of the first to explore the effects of consumer-model racial congruence within fashion and beauty advertising specifically. Fashion and beauty media images are often viewed as determinants of beauty (Englis et al., 1994). Despite the continued growth of the BAME (Bradford—Office for National Statistics, 2012), BAME models are significantly underrepresented in such images (Forbes, 2014). As highlighted by Knobloch-Westerwick and Coates (2006), failing to witness images of fellow ethnic group members can negatively affect one's self-concept. Therefore, it is possible that this continued underrepresentation (Forbes, 2014) may foster negative associative reasoning (Bower, 2001) among BAME persons such as the belief that *if I'm not represented then I must not be of merit* (Bower, 2001). It is hoped that the present findings (i.e., that Black persons are not only more likely to purchase a product but are also willing to spend more money on a said product if a fellow Black person endorses it) will encourage brands and marketers to participate in more racially inclusive casting practices. Seeing fellow ethnic minority persons revered as a symbol of beauty may serve to improve the self-efficacy of the ethnic minority population thus, providing significant societal advantages.

The present study was conducted online and therefore was completed in naturalistic settings. This ensured external validity as it mirrored environments in which consumers often witness advertisements. It is, therefore, possible that brands adopting racial inclusivity within their marketing practices will be able to replicate the present findings. The present study is also pioneering in its choice of stimuli. The study utilized perfume advertisements featuring real models, in styles reflective of current fashion and beauty trends, a method rarely found in psychological studies.

This method not only further contributes to the ecological validity of the present findings but also heralds the generation of further psychologically focused, fashion and beauty research.

Finally, it can be argued that research into multicultural and inclusive marketing has lacked in recent years with fewer studies researching the effects of the models/spokespersons featured within advertising campaigns. The present study is one of the first to study how consumer behavior in terms of spending is affected by ethnic target marketing. Furthermore, the present research adds a necessary boost to the existing psychological literature by offering a wealth of explanations for the success of consumer-model racial congruence, a phenomenon which researchers often solely attributed to Tajfel, Turner, Austin, and Worchel's (1979) Social Identity Theory.

Conclusion

Overall, the present study has shown that inclusive fashion is an effective marketing tool to attract both ethnic minority and ethnic majority consumers. "Examining how minority groups are portrayed in advertising can provide information on how a minority group is viewed by society at large" (Taylor & Lee, 1994). Knobloch-Westerwick and Coates (2006) argue that witnessing the continued underrepresentation of one's ethnic group causes group members to feel devalued within society and in turn may negatively impact upon one's self-concept. [AQ: 10]

There has been a wealth of research highlighting a distinct lack of inclusivity in advertising and in the media more generally (Sweney, 2011), and yet, little has been done to remedy the situation (Forbes, 2014). Fashion and beauty media is influential by nature. It is hoped that if such brands adopt racially inclusive practices, other institutions will follow suit. The present study demonstrates that inclusive racial representation serves to foster a brand's economic development and research suggests that the causal effect of the practice on the self-concept of BAME persons is equally positive (Knobloch-Westerwick & Coates, 2006).

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ORCID iD

Aurore C Bardey  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8453-8814>

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