The Power of Social Media to Our Mind and Body:
Study of social media’s effect on young female’s perception regarding fitness in Sweden
Acknowledgement

The following thesis, worth 15 (ETC) credits, is going toward a Master degree with a focus in International Marketing at Jonkoping University. The thesis was conducted in Sweden.

After writing the last letter of this thesis, there are many people that we are greatly indebted to. First and foremost, we would like to thank Jonkoping University and our supervisor Dr. Christofer Laurell for his immense guidance, truly inspiring effort dedicated to reading and commenting on the draft. We are also grateful to Marco Eitel and Daniel-Yama Ahmadie for kindly support to give us feedback through every stage of this thesis development.

Special thank goes out to Daniel Hermosilla for his encouragement to continuously improve and inspiring comments.

We also owe special thanks to all female participants who shared their daily thought at fitness and social media and make this field research possible.

Finally, we are grateful for the support of our friends, family for emotional and economic support and enduring enthusiastic feedback no matter how far we are apart.

Mai Le Thi Ngoc
Jie Yang
Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the influences of social media in customer perception toward fitness. The main focus of this study are young females living in Sweden, age from 20 to 25 years old, with the purpose of gaining knowledge of social media’s role in their perception toward fitness & the phenomenon behind it.

The study can be a guideline for the fitness industry to gain customer insights in terms of what attitudes they hold and which platform has the most impact on social media users toward fitness-related contents.

The data for this study were collected from 17 semi-structured interviews in Jonkoping, Sweden. Qualitative research method was adopted in an exploratory nature with the aim of exploring the holistic picture of the topic. Content analysis with human coding was selected to acquire data for further explanations and formulation of recommended implications.

The result of this research shows the significant role of social media toward the perception of ideal body image. It also has been aided as a source of inspiration with regard of body transformation progress and a valuable tool for the suggestion of certain exercise & healthy eating. It must be noted that further research is suggested, as the finding is firmly placed on convenience sampling with specific demographic that can lead to certain traits on the use of social media sites.

Keywords: social media, customer perception, fitness, young females, Swedish market.
Table of contents

1. Introduction .............................................................................................................. 1
   1.1 Background ........................................................................................................... 1
   1.2 Problem statement ............................................................................................... 2
   1.3 Purpose ................................................................................................................ 2

2. Literature review ....................................................................................................... 3
   2.1 Media contribution towards fitness culture: ....................................................... 3
       2.1.1 Fitness culture: ............................................................................................... 3
       2.1.2 Perception in body image & body dissatisfaction ....................................... 5
   2.2 Culture & social norm ......................................................................................... 7
   2.3 Celebrity endorsement ......................................................................................... 8
   2.4 Feminism and fitness culture ............................................................................... 11
       2.4.1 Fitness clothing brands embrace the “girl power” idea ............................... 12

3. Theoretical application ............................................................................................. 13
   3.1 Theory of Planned Behavior ............................................................................. 13
   3.2 Theory of Trying ................................................................................................. 14
   3.4 Research question ............................................................................................... 16

4. Methodology ............................................................................................................ 16
   4.1 Research Approach ............................................................................................ 16
   4.2 Data Collection Method ................................................................................... 17
   4.3 Sampling: ............................................................................................................ 18
       4.3.1 Demographic of sampling ......................................................................... 19
       4.3.2 Sampling criteria ....................................................................................... 19
   4.4 Data Collection Process: .................................................................................. 19
   4.5 Data Analysis Strategy: The Gioia Method ....................................................... 20
   4.6 Validity and Reliability ..................................................................................... 21

5. Results/Empirical findings ....................................................................................... 22

6. Analysis .................................................................................................................... 34
   6.1 Changes in lifestyle ever since move into Sweden ........................................... 34
   6.2 Motivation to exercise ....................................................................................... 36
   6.3 Social media use ................................................................................................. 38
   6.4 The norm of following gym brand on social media ........................................... 39
   6.5 Online fitness group ........................................................................................... 39
   6.6 Accounts with fitness content on social media ............................................... 40
Figures
Figure 1-Planned theory ........................................................................................................... 13
Figure 2-Theory of trying ......................................................................................................... 14
Figure 3-Age distribution of interviewees ............................................................................. 22
Figure 4-Time living in Sweden .............................................................................................. 23
Figure 5- Gym Attendance Frequency .................................................................................. 24
Figure 6-The usage of different social media platforms ...................................................... 26
Figure 7-Following Celebrities on Social Media .................................................................. 32
Figure 8-The Gioia Analysis model ....................................................................................... 34
1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The rap sheet of beauty and diet gets longer every year. Magazine covers featuring females are basically dominated by thin-body images. In today’s society, people spend more hours on scrolling online and social media, than walking or engaging in other physical activities. The content that has been promoted by media have huge impact on our perception towards fitness and its culture. People are pursuing a fitness-lifestyle with the intention of gaining a better appearance or staying healthy.

The word “culture” has multiple meanings. In some extent, it refers to an appreciation of music, art, food and good literature. From a behavioral perspective, culture is the full range of learned human behavior and perceptions. According to Damen (1987), culture can be defined as day to day living pattern that reveals all elements of social interaction individually.

General consumer culture presents a consistent reminder that consumption is a historically shaped mode of sociocultural practice that emerges in the context of the structures and ideological imperatives of dynamic marketplaces (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Although consumer culture varies a lot in different products or countries, there is no doubt that the fitness culture belongs within consumer culture.

Fitness culture, can be considered as a global, social construct, that bonds people who share the desire and ambition to have healthy lifestyle. Those people share the same values, attitude, and models for fit-looking body in terms of what they should eat, how often they should exercise, with whom they exercise with, and according to what set of rules are regulated by this culture.

Fitness culture involves its industry which includes sportswear, equipment, nutrition, and fitness club. An industry report in Statistics and facts on Health & Fitness Clubs (2015) demonstrates the prosperity of this field. In the year of 2015, the global health club market had already reached $81.2 billion. There are 186,850 fitness clubs around the world. However, the competition has also reached the highest level than ever before. Pricing wars are fierce and cutthroat (Sena, 2017). Big brands spent huge budget on advertising and renting out the best locations. The economy of scale helps those big companies gain further advantages on cost and price. Sena (2017) pointed out that competition from facilities operated by universities or some medical centers. In addition, O2O (Online to offline) service that provides personal trainers and fitness apps (e.g. Nike+ Training Club and Keep) that teach you how to work out via smartphone have also heat up the competition currently.
1.2 Problem statement

Many scholars have demonstrated the influence from social media on consumer culture. Given this fact, the importance and necessity of this study comes from two points. Primarily this study provides specific understanding and insights of young female’s perception towards fitness and its culture under the influences from social media. Secondly, some marketing and managerial implications will be drawn based on those findings.

For this topic, the authors need to have a profound knowledge about social media and fitness culture. Thus, several problems should be responded to. Firstly, this thesis intends to investigate if social media forms fitness culture in digital world and which role it plays in consumer perception toward fitness culture. The second problem that needed to look at is the level of influence in different social media platforms in terms of fitness consumer culture.

1.3 Purpose

This thesis will probe into a step by step of examining in what type of content in social media and which channel specifically has stronger impact on young females’ perception towards fitness, the phenomenon behind it as well as the marketing implications.

The principal purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of social media on young female’s perception toward fitness culture in Swedish market.

Gaining an in-depth understanding on young female’s attitudes as well as the perception toward fitness culture in digital age will generate the development of marketing implication for the fitness industry in Sweden.

The introduction will present some background information about this thesis as well as its main purpose. Then move to the literature review which will look in-depth into some studies relating to the components of the topic. They include the impact of social media, general fitness culture, body image perception, body dissatisfaction, feminist view on fitness and the share manner of fitness brand and related theories of customer attitude. After a thorough review of existing studies, the research question of this thesis will be demonstrated. The next part will be primary research which includes qualitative research. The discussion and conclusion will be drawn shortly after.
2. Literature review

2.1 Media contribution towards fitness culture:

2.1.1 Fitness culture:

Studying the topic regarding the consumer culture so called “fitness culture”, most literature has noted that the fitness culture is growing with a broad perspective and formed by numerous factors. Some of them will be discussed later in this part, in terms of the growing market for smart phone's fitness applications, urbanization and the use of social media in fitness-related idea or purpose.

One of contributors of increasing fitness culture, in recent years, is the growing digital world which constantly increases an uncountable amount of fitness apps for smart phones. Technology writer, Chris Anderson, argued that one of the most remarkable shifts in the digital world recently is the changing from website based platform to “semi-closed platforms that use the Internet for transport but not the browser for display” (Anderson & Wolff, 2010). That is why there are thousands of mobile fitness apps for fitness tracking, suggested diet plan or online coaching in the market. The primary idea of these mobile apps is the access not only to a customized fitness management platform, but also provide access to communicate with people who share a common interest. That is described as “fitness group effect” which refer to the fact of people who want to share their fitness achievement and set goal, get inspiration from those who are similarly fitness-minded (Ilina, 2015).

In addition, Sassatelli (2015) in her recent research pointed out that as urbanization has increased in contemporary societies. Big cities have become inadequate places that remove the human body from its perceived natural conditions.

Fitness gyms are perceived as the ‘natural’ solution to the ills of a metropolitan living lifestyle. Fitness culture negotiated with the urban condition by the growing of “urban-style” of fitness gym that provides a full package: it is an elective place which serves all needs for transforming the embodied subject towards their fitness goals, by balancing act between the body and the mind-self. As a result, working in the gym and consuming fitness products/culture around this field a daily routine in a confined urban environment.

Moreover, social media plays a vital role in developing the idea of “fitness culture” among young people. Fitness culture can be consumed both in day-to-day communication and online dialogue. Some scholars claimed social media as a resource for fitness information. Feng and Xie (2015) suggest that the rapid adoption of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, as a source to gather and teach
ideas of health and fitness, has had a result in becoming a primary source for young adults seeking health information. Later on, Jong & Drummond (2016) claimed that social media enable rapid engagement within users toward online health information by its interactive nature and value insight of posted message’s popularity. A user can “like” or “share” posts as their instant feedback in active participation role in an online community. Online users that focus on health information and fitness, such as, healthy eating, fitness and bodybuilding communities, create an online fitness culture. The hashtag #fitspiration is popularly used within social media channel as one part of the online fitness culture. Research by Jong and Drummond (2016) on twenty-two female participants aged 18–24 in Australia showed that online sites that focus on fitness information exchange promotes exercise engagement, suggest healthy diet and inspiration for implementing this information.

Furthermore, beside the usage as a discourse for health information, some scholars claimed the fact that social media and online fitness culture directs users to achieve the ideal of a fit or athlete looking body. Jong and Drummond (2016) also pointed out some mutual understandings that are consumed throughout social media regarding values and power of the user within this online fitness society. For example, online users promote the particular idea of health and body ideal which presenting the information in the objective and empower manner. Supported this view, Wright (2009) stated that the message in social media regarding fitness focuses on individual responsibility to control body weight and a healthy lifestyle. The representation of a healthy body is considered as a morally responsible lifestyle choice, attitude and commitment to the rest of the community.

Moreover, some scholars see social media as one factor that contributes to body image concerns and consumer behaviors in both positive and negative way. Vaterlaus (2015) stated that it is relevant to be concerned about social networking sites influence on a persons’ health behavior. A fit-looking body is considered as a powerful icon for users within online fitness culture. This culture also shapes a platform in which health and feminine body is promoted effectively (Jong & Drummond, 2016). With the flexible visual format and content, social media play a significant role in influencing body image concerns negatively via social comparisons and peer normative processes (Perlott, 2014). However, his research was limited since the study tends to look at conventional mass media, such as, magazine and TV ads rather than social media, which leaves a huge gap, as there is a sharp fall in young women’s number of users in those media type and a continuous increase in the number of social media’s users from 18 – 29 years olds.
2.1.2 Perception in body image & body dissatisfaction

There is no doubt that beyond the idea of staying healthy, another important reason of popularity of fitness culture among women is having a body image, which is part of overall appearance.

A study done by Davison and McCabe (2005) draws several interesting findings. The first finding is that in their research, women are less satisfied with their current body image, and worries more about social physique at the same time. It means women are more concerned about how others evaluate their appearance negatively. Another finding indicates that women also like to engage in comparing appearances. In addition, the research suggests that age difference plays a significant role in satisfaction in body image: men and women around 30s to 40s are less satisfied with their current bodies.

The idea of body dissatisfaction has been perceived differently according to ethnicity. Grabe and Hyde (2006) did a meta-analysis study suggested that white women have greater body dissatisfaction than women of color. However, they also pointed out that the difference between white women and women of color is not particularly significant. For example, the comparison between white females and black American females only yielded a mean effect size of 0.29, a really small difference. The next two comparisons are between white females and Asian American females and White females and Hispanic females. The mean effect sizes of those two comparisons was close to zero which highlighting the small difference. The fourth and fifth comparisons were between Black American females and Asian American females and Black American females and Hispanic females. The effect size of Black American female and Hispanic female comparison was -0.18, suggesting that Hispanic females have higher body dissatisfaction.

Two years later, Grabe, Ward & Hyde (2008) did another study which suggests that the media which depicts the thin-ideal body image is indeed linked to women’s dissatisfaction with their own bodies and high investment in appearance. Furthermore, this research also indicates that women who have been exposed to thin-ideal media would score higher on measure that assess purging and bulimia. All those symptoms are the results of women pursuing the thin-ideal body image. Paquette and Raine (2004) suggest that media has powerful and unconscious impact on women’s perception of body image was mediated by women’s self-confident and self-critical, as well as their relationships with partners and other women.

There is another meta-analysis research which also compared the difference between white females and non-white females. According to Wildes, Emery and Simons (2001), white females has more eating disturbance than non-white females. The differences reach the highest level when the comparison is black females and white females.
regarding issues like ideal body shape and body dissatisfaction.

Body dissatisfaction does not only happen to younger women, it also appeared among middle-aged women and elderly women. Lewis and Cachelin (2001) suggest that middle-aged women have more drive for thinness, disinhibited eating compared to elderly women. Significantly, their research also indicates that elderly women reported body dissatisfaction and size preferences were similar to the younger women.

In the different view, some scholars found that females with different work or social role also have different perception on body dissatisfaction. For instance, Swami, Steadman and Tovee (2009) suggested that track athletes have the highest body dissatisfaction scores and the highest internalization of athletic media messages. In conclusion, this research concludes that women who participate in leanness-promoting sports usually have higher level of body dissatisfaction than women in other sports or non-athletes.

The danger of body dissatisfaction has also been examined by Keel, Mitchell, Davis and Crow (2001), they argue that depression may be a better choice of being a prognostic indicator of whether a person has body dissatisfaction. Moreover, further research (Stice & Shaw, 2002) indicates the danger of body dissatisfaction. It suggests that body dissatisfaction will increase the risk for bulimic pathology, and thus the prevention and treatment interventions should be enhanced by focusing more attention on body image disturbances.

Rysst (2010) explained the phenomena of the “heterogeneous assemblage of technologies” that people believe in their free of choice to do anything for their mantra which includes cosmetic surgery and training. As the research was conducted in Norway – a Scandinavian country that shares the similar cultural perspective to Sweden, the result of the research draws some remarked results. It claimed that body dissatisfaction, widespread particularly among women, seems to increase by internalized body ideal effects. Norwegian men and women in this research are affected by “healthism” and dominant body ideals depicted in media discourses concerning description of ideal bodies and their own body practices.

Likewise, Graydon (2008) in her article stated her concerns about how media distort the real idea of healthy body nowadays. She claimed that public discourses are distracting women away from what our bodies’ function, instead with images of how the bodies should be. The display of women’s body part becomes less realistic, that result in body dissatisfaction due to unfair comparison between public model and women in real life.

Additionally, a group of scholars (Dionne, Davis, Fox & Gurevich, 1995) found that the feminist attitudes of women in terms of physical attractiveness has a strong relationship with body dissatisfaction.
2.2 Culture & social norm

In terms of ethnicity and its impact on ideal body image, a study by Kernper (1994) about difference perception of ideal body between black women and white women in US indicates that white females wanted to be a smaller size than they currently were and felt encouraged by significant others to lose weight or reduce their size. On the other hand, black females did not appear to have as great a desire as white females to be smaller and they tended to feel that they are satisfied with their current body size and shape. In addition, this research indicates that social norms play a big role for different ethnic groups and their perceived ideal body size, shape and weight. For example, in the research, white females believed their male and female friends would prefer a smaller body size than the black females. When asked about the expected female body size at ages 20 and 40, black females selected a larger body size than white females.

This brings to the point that how sexual orientations effect perception of ideal body toward women. Existing literature showed that lesbian women have an unexpected result in terms of body dissatisfaction. Beren, Hayden, Wilfley and Grilo (1996) carried out a study which indicates that sexual orientation does not make any difference to women. Lesbian women and heterosexual women have many similarities on this issue.

Social comparison also plays a big role in body dissatisfaction. Two scholars Tiggemann and McGill (2004) suggest that exposure to body parts or full body images can both lead to increased negative mood and body dissatisfaction, while the amount of comparison processing was determined by both image type and instructional set. This study later indicates that the image type effects on mood and body dissatisfaction were mediated by the amount of social comparison reported. Expanded this findings, Strahan et al. (2007) found evidence that socio-cultural norms have a strong effect on woman’s satisfaction with their bodies, and the likelihood to be concerned with other people’s perception of their bodies. Media influence often encouraged woman to associate self-worth with body issues, therefore, woman who are constantly exposed to images of an ideal body type through media exposure, tended to be more self-aware and dissatisfied with their body image. In a second study, however, the authors found that social intervention could help teenage girls to place less value on body image to encourage self-esteem. If the idea that body image is center for self-esteem was challenged, woman would be less likely to place as much importance on body image.

Furthermore, an interesting study by Blair, Steele and Mills (2013) found that woman’s preferred body type was influenced by the perceived preference of their peers. Woman whose peers preferred a thinner body type, preferred a thinner body type for themselves, whereas woman whose peers preferred heavier body type also preferred a heavier body type for themselves. Blair et al found that the results were the same regardless of the
gender of their peers. In other words, women were influenced by other woman or by men equally. Furthermore, the study found that although peer perception influenced body preference, it did not impact on body dissatisfaction. Although women had a preference for their body type, they were not always unhappy with their body type. Blair et al found evidence that body dissatisfaction could result from perception of peer satisfaction. Woman who were unhappy with their bodies, normally perceived that their peers preferred a different body type.

Hence, media create and form social norms, a study done by Kernper (1994) found that parents also affect their daughters’ perception about body. Black females perceived parents would select a significantly larger ideal female body size than the size perceived by white females of their parents. An interesting result was also revealed in this research which suggests that family with higher level of decreasing socioeconomic status, females perceived their parents would choose a smaller body size no matter black females or white females. Support this view; Marwick (2012) notes that there is “positive, supportive social effects” which derives from shared information of apps users on social media.

2.3 Celebrity endorsement

Celebrity endorsement is known as common practice in the marketing strategy of major firms’, and there are no exceptions for the fitness and sportswear apparel industry. Studies indicate that celebrity endorsement is an effective way to boost a company's share price (Broughton, 2010).

This section will first explore the existing model that argues on the contribution of an effective celebrity endorsement, and then celebrity endorsement in contemporary fitness industry.

Since the late 19th century, celebrity endorsement has been applied in marketing communication in the retail industry. According to Erdogan (1999), it is safe to claim that celebrity endorsers are more effective than non-celebrity endorsers regarding increasing attitude towards advertising and purchase intention as long as there is matching link between endorser, product and target audience. Supporting this view, Business Mirror (2017) argued that using celebrity endorsers allow the firm to cut through the advertising clutter in the market far more effectively than not using celebrity endorsement. A research done by Assael (1984) suggested that celebrity endorsement is effective because it taps into consumers’ symbolic association to aspirational reference groups. Aspirational reference groups often inspire people in a lot of ways in terms of consumer behavior.
This brought forward the vital question that in which way, celebrity endorsement can win over customer heart and increase actual sale on product. In the light of academic finding, the level of effectiveness in celebrity endorsement, is moderated by several elements. Some scholars argue that it depends on celebrity attractiveness and credibility as known as the source credibility model - Kelman (1961) and Meenaghan (1995).

Moreover, Baker and Churchill (1977), Chaiken (1979), Debevec and Kernan (1984) argue that physical attractiveness tends to form customer’s positive perception toward the brand, which could be considered in the literature as the source attractiveness model. In addition, some scholars shared the view of predicting endorser’s performance on product-celebrity match. This finding developed under the product match-up hypothesis, that argue an effective advertisement should convey a congruent message of celebrity image and product characteristic (Erdogan, 1999). Besides these studies, level of involvement, target audience characteristics, and symbolic meanings of celebrities for example: personality, values, must also be considered.

When it comes to sportswear apparel, celebrity endorsement could be divided into two types: athlete and non-athlete endorsers. The level of effectiveness between those types varied in different cases.

Crown (2012) claimed the case of the endorsement between well-known British Olympian - Goldie Sayers and Panache Sports Bra is a good marketing practice. Which based on celebrity and expert endorsement credentials, several marketing buzz was created within media and social media encourage public figure to tweet #banishthebounce to create a conversation. This celebrity endorsement increases the sales of this sport bra line by 200 percent since its launch in October 2011. It could be seen that the celebrity endorsement process, in this case, works on the source credibility model, which was mentioned before. However, there is also a risk for company to tie up their brand with a celebrity on creditability and trustworthiness.

Hill (2012) argued that scandals, old age or underperformance of athlete celebrity could undermine the effectiveness of the sport brand ‘s advertisement. For example, Tiger Woods' extraordinary personal blow-up in 2009 resulted in Nike ‘s loss of sales of more than 1.6 million branded golf balls. He also pointed that the tighter terms of contract and shorter duration is current practice of the firms to choose another celebrity if things went wrong.

Besides, a study of Heidi & Janet (2012) tended to look at the impact of knowledge of an athlete's prior arrest or sexuality toward perceived trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise, as well as endorser-product fit and purchase intentions of customer. The research indicated that being openly gay or having been previously arrested had no impact on source credibility characteristics when compared to heterosexual/non-arrested athletes. They also claimed that product-endorser fit, which positively affected by
trustworthiness, attractiveness, and expertise, has importance influence on purchase intention.

Moreover, McCormick (2016) indicated that celebrity endorsement is still an effective tactic toward millennials. However, it is fundamental to consider the “right” endorser for certain product since the nature of media-saturated and cluster of products environment. Since major millennials are heavily social media user and technology-savvy, they could easily see if the endorser is not a genuine user of the brand. The study also shows that congruence between celebrities & the product is the most important factor that create positive attitude toward advertisements that were introduced to millennials as research’s participants. Unfamiliar celebrities could also lead to positive influence toward millennials’ attitude as long as there is “fit” relationship between endorser and product. Supposedly, when there is not a congruent relationship between unfamiliar celebrities and product, millennials is less likely to purchase the product. Noteworthy, there is a big gap between consumer attitude and intention to purchase that might derive from numerous reasons, inevitably one’s attitude toward the brand can impact consumption.

That is the case when the firm considers choosing non-athlete endorser over athlete celebrity for their brand due to its sparing endorsement exposure on media. Ellen (2016) pointed that the partnership between Barbadian pop star – Rihanna and Puma in the new sneaker line designed by the celebrity, contributes to the significant sales growth in the market. She claimed that Rihanna’s popularity boosts the firm’s female training segment that is considered as “a very attractive category”. Broughton (2010) found that celebrities promotes shareholder value over one, two and three-year periods, after study 700 celebrity appointment from 1985 – 2006. In addition, Creswell (2008) explained that human use our cognitive capacity to build a sophisticated informational and technological environment, however customer’s brain system tends to revert to raw association of celebrity and product when overloaded with information and stimulation. That is the reason why even savvy, rational consumers who understand that celebrities are aided to promote a brand might still rely on an endorsement and buy it anyway (Creswell, 2008). However, Creswell (2008) also stated the risk of using non-athlete endorsers is that spending much budget on campaign but not effectively draw attention of audiences toward product rather than the celebrity herself/himself. Another obstacles of the firm in finding partnership with celebrities is that they have to meet two criteria, which include matching characteristic and high exclusivity in the market.

In terms of non-athlete celebrities, it could be seen that there are numerous of celebrities who acknowledge of the fast growing fitness industry that made them join to the movement in the market. For example, Jennifer Lopez ‘s new launching in fitness industry by creating Lopez’s Ultimate Workout Pack in her body lab website. The Washington Post (2015) argued that fitness advices or products from celebrities like Jennifer Lopez or Tracy Anderson is misleading for buyers since the selling point of the
product based on the celebrity’s attractiveness rather than the practical of the fitness product.

Social media could also be seen as the source for creating new celebrities in fitness culture and generate many celebrity endorsements in this field that work mainly on the popularity of endorser. For instance, Instagram fitness trainer Jen Selter is well-known for her numerous butt selfies and workout, will become the first ambassador for Game Plan Nutrition company (PRWEB, 2013). With highly exposure in social media, those fitness models and popular celebrities play an important role in stimulating the fitness culture within community as a role model for social media users who interested in healthy lifestyle and exercise.

2.4 Feminism and fitness culture

Considered in light of contemporary researches, physical activities have a strong connection to gender roles in society. Thus, it is relevant to claim that feminism has significant part in fitness culture. Tolved (2013) discusses that sport has often served to emphasis traditional gender roles and perceptions by emphasizing the athleticism and masculinity of men. Segregation of all competitive sports and international competitions have increased division and ensured that women perceive themselves to be weaker and less athletically able than men. Tolved (2013) gives the example of Caster Semenya who was forced to undertake a gender test after excelling in athletic ability. Tolved points out that the commercialization of sport and leisure has played, and has more to play in woman’s “self-conceptions, subordination and emancipation” (2013, p 281). Although she makes the interesting observation that fitness is classified as only a leisure activity, whereas other sports such as football, which are mostly enjoyed by men, receive a higher status in the media.

A research focused on the online community, in this case, it is blog. The result also revealed an interesting finding. Andreasson and Johansson (2013) suggested that some of the blogs clearly build upon emphasized femininity, as a way of legitimizing and constructing appropriate female fitness. Furthermore, the research also found some tendencies of sexualization in text and imagery present in the blog.

In addition, Elizabeth (1989) claimed that the commercial of modern fitness image was portrayed in a strictly sexual light. She also wrote in her recent article that the idea of body composition in fitness undermines feminism. She believed that the definition of fitness that is consumed throughout society which being promoted by media and commercial will not helping to increase the lives of women.
In some way, there is the clash between social media and feminist. In the article of Hinckley (2016), he explained the situation of Facebook’s banned ads on the advertising of the plus-size model – Ms. Tess Holliday featuring a bikini. The purpose of the ad is promoting upcoming event “Feminism and Fat” from CLF – a Melbourne-based feminist group.

The other case is that ABC and NBC both refuse to feature the ad of one plus-size model wearing Lane Bryant's new lingerie line. The brand and its supporters claimed that there is an inequality decision compared to Victoria's Secret and others brands.

Finally, Huck (2000) claims that Nike utilized feminist rhetoric in their advertising campaigns which were “self-empowering encouraging, validating and accepting” (2002:5). She highlights common themes in Nike advertising campaigns through the 90s which are crucial to feminist theory, such as an emphasis on community, but with individual empowerment, and a desire for change and self-fulfillment. Nike used the image of the body as its central theme in its advertising texts to engage and motivate women. Nike was able to draw on the achievements of the women’s movement for empowerment, ensuring that women can relate to the strong message of the text. Huck argues that in the age of technology, people, and particularly women, have become much more body conscious and gives Nike credit for utilizing symbolism of the body.

### 2.4.1 Fitness clothing brands embrace the “girl power” idea

Glancy (2008) describes the discussion between Professor Megan Taylor Shockley and a large group of Converse history and physical education students in Hartness Auditorium. Glancy (2008) claimed that although there is likely a shift in advertising message from glamour to independent women power, those companies such as Nike, often send mixed message. For example, the fitness wear from this brand seems a lot tighter and harder to perform. Moreover, the aspirational model that they use, often appear unrealistic body types to most women.

Those mobile apps made by the companies, for example, Adidas, Timex and Garmin which help user to measure individually their calories burned and heart rate in order to achieve desirable fitness goals. Another outcome should be concerned from this mobile fitness app is personal empowerment (Millington, 2014)

Beyond the apps itself, user can also share their information in terms of diet and exercise or their daily measurement of calories burned or sodium intake, on their selected social sites. Millington (2014) claimed that integration increase communication within users as well as encourage app users to exercise due to social surveillance.
3. Theoretical application

3.1 Theory of Planned Behavior

In this section, the authors will explain the theories which will be used later in the methodology and discussion. There are two famous theories of models of consumer behavior. One is planned theory, and another one is theory of trying. The theory of planned behavior is established by Ajzen (1991). In his study, the models consist of three parts: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Those three factors together determine one’s behavior intention and leads to the actual behavior.

![Figure 1-Planned theory](image)

The attitude toward behavior is influenced by the behavioral beliefs and the evaluation of behavioral outcomes. The attitude toward behavior refers to the degree to which an individual holds positive or negative attitude toward the certain behavior. Subjective norm is influenced by the normative beliefs and the motivation to comply. Subjective norm refers to social pressure that is being received by an individual to carry out or not to carry out a certain behavior. Perceived behavioral control is influenced by the control beliefs and the perceived power. It refers to the degree of difficulty that is being perceived by an individual of
performing a behavior. In addition, Ajzen (1991) also suggested that perceived behavioral control reflect past experience.

In general, Ajzen (1991) indicates that if an individual has a more favorable attitude and subjective norm towards a certain behavior, and the better perceived behavioral control, the stronger intention should an individual has to carry out a behavior under consideration.

3.2 Theory of Trying

Whereas the theory of planned behavior, tend to argue the action or behavior of consumer as dependable variables; the theory of trying perceives action as a process or willingness. This theory intends to explain consumer behavior as a consequence of attempts, in which attempt is considered as both physical effort and mental effort. Customer attitude, in the light of theory of trying, is conceptualized accordingly to three elements of outcomes: attitude toward success, attitude toward failure and attitude toward the process. Moreover, behavioral norms, also plays the role as sub-factor that influence the intention to try of customer.

![Expanded Theory of Trying](image)

*Figure 2-Theory of trying*
The theory of trying has been tested in two contexts that related to fitness and physical exercise, which are: willingness to lose weight and intention to exercise. Bagozzi and Warshaw (1990) claimed that trying to lose weight was a correspondence of intentions to try and regency of past trying, rather than of frequency. The attitude toward failure and success could be seen as “goal attainment” which estimates the likelihood of succeeding or failing after trying. Those attitude and social norm influence to intention of one’s in his trying to lose weight. Moreover, Bagozzi and Kimmel (1992) also claim that attitude toward success and expectation toward success has strong influence on intention to exercise. Attitude toward failure and expectation of failure, on the other hand, has mixed support regarding intention to exercise.

Back to our topic, the original attitude that a young Swedish female has, towards working out in the gym, is the attitude towards behavior. Subjective norms explained that how much pressure a young female perceived from Swedish culture as well as online community on social media. Lastly, the perceived behavioral control explained how difficult/easy an individual think of the behavior - working out in the gym.

3.3 Synthesis

By combining two theories and existing knowledge of fitness culture and social media. This research examines three areas of relevant theories. The authors found that there is a lack of empirical study about the linkage between social media, consumer perception and fitness culture.

Some scholars, like Jong and Drummord (2016); Feng and Xie (2015), share the same view of the vital role of social media toward fitness culture through online communication. Rapid engagement and instant feedback are those traits that enhance the fitness culture surrounding consumers. Some other scholars view the way social media form fitness culture as a discourse for seeking health knowledge, a promoter for the idea of fitness body, an influencer of body image concerns and consumer behaviors. All those norms, ideas and belief that are consumed among online users of social media, shape the fitness culture and phenomena behind it. However, how deeply that concept goes into customer’s mind and their internal process of this culture shaping, is still in need of more empirical evidences. Especially, when the main focus is on young females at digital era who have greater concerns of their body image, pressure from social norms and play actively role in social media.

According to the theory of planned behavior, the first element is the attitude toward behavior. Celebrity endorsement and feminism in fitness perspective belong to this element. Celebrity endorsement often inspires people through the physical attractiveness and credibility which is aided as a source of positive attitude for consumers. In addition, the embracement of “girl power” in fitness culture also form
positive attitude within young females’ consumers. The second element of theory planned behavior is subjective norm which refers to social pressure that is being received by an individual to do exercise. Perception in body image and dissatisfaction, as well as the social norms belong to this element.

In terms of theory of trying, consumer attitude towards fitness culture in some extent could be the willingness to lose weight and intention to exercise. Within many possible variables, social media plays a certain role in influencing perception of consumer to try out exercise.

Using the existing literature in terms of this topic, the empirical findings of this thesis will fill in the gap of lacking knowledge of the linkage and impact of social media toward customer perception regarding fitness culture, with the main focus placed on young females living in Sweden.

### 3.4 Research question

The main research problem is described by the authors in the following manner:

1. To analyze, how social media can influence young female consumers’ perception in the light of fitness culture in Sweden?
2. What is the most powerful social media platform that affects young female’s perception regarding fitness-related content?

### 4. Methodology

#### 4.1 Research Approach

The fact that the thesis aims to find out about the in-depth insights of females’ perception who living in Sweden toward fitness and the culture/phenomenon behind it and to understand the context of social factors influence customer perceptions, refer to exploratory research approach. Malhotra and Birks (2008) claimed that it is meaningful approach of research in any given situation where flexibility and versatility is highly appreciated to discover new idea or insights. Hossain and Prybutok (2008) claimed that qualitative method enables researchers to carry flexible procedure and provide the nature of the research, which encourages participants to describe their feelings or attitude toward a specific topic.

A qualitative approach is thus of advantage, as it does not particularly test existing theory, but moreover discovers underlying concepts, opinions, attitude of a small group
of people. Hossain and Prybutok (2008) claimed that qualitative method enables researchers to carry flexible procedure and provide the nature of the research, which encourages participants to describe their feelings or attitude toward a specific topic. Qualitative research should be applied when the researcher rather to gain the holistic view of the topic than the sum of data, with the purpose of create theory grounded in the findings. A quantitative, in this case, could only find out the numerical pattern of variables identified and controlled but would not capture the idea and understanding of fitness culture and social media’s role in this marketing phenomena.

Regarding the choice of social media sites that the authors choose to study, there are two reasons that adequately motivate the authors of the thesis to put the lights on three main sites: Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Which include the popularity of the social sites that has been used among expected sampling group and the higher level of exposure of online communication between user and their friends toward online community compared to those applications like WhatsApp, Snapchat. Those motives of choosing the three social media sites will be discussed later in this section.

Joinson and Paine (2007) claim that in this type of media, social media users are sources, as well as receivers. Social media are perceived more personalized than conventional impersonal mass media. This allows users to bond with technology, focus the self-centered nature, illustrated by the contemporary expression (Facebook personal profiles, YouTube, selfies - digitized self-portraits). Self-disclosure plays the prominent role in social media communication. This term refers the Internet, Websites, and an array of social media sites—Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram and Pinterest—that create nature of user-generated communication on a plethora of handheld devices (Sundar & Limperos 2013). Interactivity is a key character that distinguishes contemporary social media technologies from conventional mass media (Eveland 2003).

Social media sites are a broad field with different platform and channels. Audience Project ‘s (2016) report in social media usage reveals that top 5 social media sites in Nordic countries are: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn and WhatsApp. However, it is desirable to focus this study in three sites: Facebook, Instagram and YouTube rather than other social media sites, since they are the most popular sites and also works as an interactive platform in terms of visual presence and instant communication within users like comment, “like”, “share” which would reveal more insights of consumer perception toward the main topic of the study.

4.2 Data Collection Method

At first stage, the chosen methods for collecting data were semi-structure interview and
online survey. The semi-structure interview is designed to gain the insights of consumer perceptions toward fitness. In order to support initially the interview, online survey also was sent out to the young female membership at certain fitness centers as well as online participants, with the purpose of finding if any pattern between the frequencies of social media use and how actively they are in their exercise routine. It also served as supportive mean to strengthen the findings of the interviews regarding which social media channel is the most effective channel to deliver fitness-related content to young females living in Sweden. However, due to the low response rate of online survey during the data collection process, the authors decided to shift the main focus of the study on semi-structured review as the single conducted technique to collect the data.

The main purpose of this study is to acknowledge the holistic picture from consumer’s perspective that consume the idea of fitness culture through social media as users, to gain in-depth understanding of consumer attitude toward this significant consumer culture. In order to acquire relevant data within the nature of the research, semi-structured interviews have been chosen as qualitative method. Semi-structured interview method offers authors the chance to gather data at its deepest sense and convenience of participants thanks to its loose structure (Malhotra & Birks, 2008). Moreover, the motive of choosing this method placed at its high reliability in terms of gathering customer perceptions that could be seen as multi-dimensions’ ideas, toward fitness culture.

In addition, the authors aim to study the use of social media in terms of frequency and daily routine’s influence as well as interviewee’s opinion about social and individual body image, which might be sensitive issue. Polite response from interviewee, in this circumstance, would be very misleading and affect to the study’s overall reliability. Thus, it is relevant to adopt semi-structured interview method that enable the authors to increase the quality of the research as it based on natural setting and reduce social pressure and judgment toward participants in comparison with other qualitative research methods like focus group.

### 4.3 Sampling:

Defining a target population for a marketing research is fundamental. Malhotra and Birks (2008) claimed that imprecise definition of target population would lead to poor quality and misleading result. Thus, in order to deliver reliable marketing research result, the sampling frame was considered by the authors as four main elements:

1. Demographic of the interviewees
2. The number of interviewees
3. Expected behaviors in terms of social media use. In this case, it is defined as actively social media users.
4. Expected behaviors in terms of exercise and fitness. In this case, it is defined as actively and committed to a regular exercise routine.

4.3.1 Demographic of sampling

When looking at the social media usage, it could be seen that social media is now well-established in everyday life. However, the most popular sites and the level of usage vary a lot in different demographic. Dave (2017) argue that it is desirable to look at the active account usage rather than the number of user accounts to get the good insights of the popularity among social media sites. Hence understanding the demographic that actively use social media sites is crucial when study the customer perception of Swedish social media users toward fitness culture. A report of social media across the Nordics (Audience Project, 2016) suggest two interesting points. Firstly, female tend to be more actively user in social network compared to male which counted 3.2 per person compared to men with 2.9 per person regarding usage level of social media. Secondly, the age group between 15-25 years old stands out as the most actively age group that keen on social media sites. Since the authors of the thesis tend to look at the perception of young female in Sweden toward fitness culture, it is relevant to conduct the study in the most actively social media user ages from 15-25 years old and living in Sweden. Furthermore, personal trainers and professional athletes will be excluded from the participants since those two groups of females do not have representative among our target group.

4.3.2 Sampling criteria

The semi-structure interview was conducted with 17 participants through convenience sampling, as it is efficient when time and financials are scarce (Saunders et al., 2016). There were four requirements in order to participate in the interview, first that all the participants frequently exercise in the gym or outdoor exercise and the second requirement, which was that the participant had not taken the survey, which was sent out before the in-depth interview. The third criteria are that all interviewees aged from 15-25 and currently are living in Sweden. Fourthly, all participants in the interview must also are social media users.

4.4 Data Collection Process:
All interviews were conducted in Jonkoping, Sweden with approximately one hour for each interview. Participants were briefly scanned in order to qualify how frequently they exercise, by interviewers. Participants then were invited to the individual interview via social media invitation, which helps the authors to qualify their participation rate in social media by the response time.

The interviews were conducted in person. Firstly, the fitness topic was presented and short open introduction about the authors and purpose of the study. During the interview, the interviewee was asked by the set of 15 questions regarding different themes, which include, demographic of interviewees (age, occupation, etc.), exercise pattern, behaviors and motivation, social media use, behavior and frequency, celebrity and social media, fitness-related questions. At each question being discussed, the interview probed and clarified the idea of interviewees regarding the perception/attitude toward fitness and social media, where the actual data was collected.

Each of interview were recorded, then transcribed word-by-word in the same day and put in category by specific number given for each female interviewees. Authors then summarized the raw data in order to capture the essential data (see Appendix).

4.5 Data Analysis Strategy: The Gioia Method

Although qualitative research approach’s advantage lies on its richness data and potential for discover, it is undeniable that the drawback of this approach also exist. Unlike quantitative approach that produces statistical data, qualitative research method has quite loose norms and rule for doing, analyzing the data due to its contextual data (Gioia, 2013).

There are two motives that strongly and firmly claim for relevant conduction of the Gioia Method as data analysis strategy of this thesis. First of all, this approach is purely pursuit the interpretive philosophy. It mainly concerns how people make sense of their life experience and how social factors got involved in this process under descriptive narratives. Secondly, this design approach enables authors to acquire the data for its “revelation”, “richness” and “worthiness” (Langley & Abdallah, 2011).

The logic behind this approach is that it tends to study one case at a time to discover distinctive insights rather than multiple cases on one key dimension. The single chosen case is based on “revelatory” logic where there’s highly potential chance that researcher can develop new insights from new phenomenon (Langley & Abdallah, 2011).

The data coding process begins with the overall data that captured from 17 interviews. Each author worked separately in transcribing the raw data from those interviews that
she or he holds. After filtering and summarizing the raw data, all fundamental sentences are collected to put in a spreadsheet with one column represent the “first-order” concept, the other column represent the code number of interviewees. The first order concept is allocation of all short sentences into category. Those concepts then were putting into ten “second-order” themes, which are in turn be categorized again into three “aggregate dimensions” where present the core concept of the two aforementioned theoretical backgrounds, which are: theory of planned behavior and theory of trying. This technique offers the authors a great control of analyzing each theme witch descriptive narratives and easy access to multiple references with original quotes from participants. After that stage, the authors could have a holistic picture of the data and elaborate on the contribution of the research.

4.6 Validity and Reliability

These two concepts are often discussed in evaluating quantitative as followed by Joppe(2000):

*Validity* - determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are.

*Reliability* - The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.

However, validity and reliability, from a qualitative point of view, are considered as its trustworthiness, rigor and quality (Golafshani, 2003). In other word, it considers the way that the study digging into and delivers “the truth”. To examine the quality of the research, trustworthiness is crucial critical point to look at. The data of this research were captured at its natural and original manner, considering the interviewees were motivated to voluntarily participate in the interview without incentive. The possibility of other research to replicate the result of the study is medium to high as the fact there is a same set of questions that were used during 17 interviews. Moreover, as the fact that all data resource was given as its original form, it also increases the rigor of the research. However, it is noted that there might be a minor amount of incorrect/impolite response from interviewee as the study touched some element from individual life habit and concerns. The result of the study might be affected accordingly.
Regarding testing the validity and reliability of the research, it is suggested to use investigation triangulation, which is defined as: “a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 126).

5. Results/Empirical findings

The authors have conducted 17 semi-structured interviews. The data and the findings will be present directly as follows.

First of all, the authors will present a summary of characteristics of those interviewees. Speaking of the demographics of those interviewees, the age of interviewees was between 20 years old to 25 years old. Over 50 percent of the interviewees are 20 or 21 years old. Six participants were 20 years old, four participants were 21 years old, two participants were 22 years old, one participant was 23 years old, three participants were 24 years old and only one participant was 25 years old.

![Age distribution of interviewees](image)

The nationality of the interviewees was made up from European countries (15 participants) like Sweden and Greece to Asian country like China (only one participant). There are only five native Swedish in the participants. The rest of interviewees have been living in Sweden for, from the shortest period of six months, to the longest period
of 9 years. Within this particular section, 43.8 percent of the participants have been living in Sweden for no longer than a year.

All the participants are students from Jonkoping University. Most of the interviewees are reading business, only two interviewees come from non-business majors. When it comes to the type of degree studied, 12 interviewees are in the bachelor degree and only five participants are in the master degree.

In order to determine how actively the interviewees are currently in their workout routines, and to explore their commitment to exercising as a part of their everyday life, all participants were asked about their frequency rate of exercise and where they were exercising. Regarding the frequency of participants in exercising, the most frequency rate of all participants is seven times per week. Moreover, the least frequency rate of all participants is once per week. The most popular frequency rate of doing exercise, which add up to 60 percent, in a week of major participants is 2-3 times per week, it depends heavily on their school or work schedule.
In terms of where the participants practice their workout routine, 15 participants said that they attend the gym for exercise. That was the majority of all interviewees. Most participants took up more than one type of exercise, either outdoor sports like jogging, running or exercising in the gym. However, the other option, which was doing outdoor exercises instead of at the gym, was taken as a substitute practice for not being able to go to the gym to the majority of the participatory group. Some of participants said they attend sports clubs like tennis or dance clubs to exercise. Besides, 6.25 percent of all participants said they have not been in the gym before and rather workout at home or doing sport in outdoor environment.

When it comes to the impact of living in Sweden in the context of fitness and fitness culture, surprisingly all the participants have a very positive and similar response. Sweden society in general, already has a highly vibrant fitness culture which affects everybody within it. As one of the interviewee, 05 said:

"when I was growing up, I did a lot sports, it's very common in Sweden, kids do sports, I play tennis, I played basketball in high school, but I can see the tendency as I grow older. I got less fitness, but you also feel competition, because you see everyone is being very fitness, being healthy, they eat healthy. This is another impact on me. Now even I
don't go, I still think about it: oh jeez, I really need to go to gyms now. I need to, I have that in my conscious.”

As another interviewee said similar thing:

“I would say that because I have the impression that here many Swedish people are very sporty and like to work out. You see them biking, you see them jogging. And I think when you’re surrounding is active and when they keep doing sport, then at least it influences me in a positive way. And also some fellow students said “Hey, let’s go to the gym. Do you want to join? Do you want to try it out?” So the society in general is very sporty and people are also very outdoorsy. Outdoors means they go outside, they run. The society in general but also friends, fellow students motivated me. I would say that.”

Of course, there are some participants who were not affected by the fitness culture of Swedish society at all. According to our data, 70.6 percent of all participants agreed that they have been influenced by the Swedish society’s fitness culture. When the authors asked them in what way they thought they were influenced by Swedish culture, the participants generally said a lot of things. The authors summarized those answers and they have a universal idea that is everyone is doing some exercises here in Sweden, no matter the age or the gender, it is a social norm here. So I have to and I should catch up with it.

When it comes to the most popular media sites that participants use in their everyday life, there are four sites that on top of the list as predicted in the aforementioned social media usage report in Nordic countries, which are: Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Instagram is the most popular site that 94.1 percent of total participants set up their account in this platform. The two following popular sites are Facebook, YouTube with 88.2 percent and 41.2 percent of total participants who use it on a daily basis.

The following table demonstrates the usage of different social media platforms across 17 participants. The green bar indicates the participant is using the particular social media platform and red bar indicates the participant is not using it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code number of interviewee</th>
<th>Instagram</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>YouTube</th>
<th>others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 6-The usage of different social media platforms*
It is noted that mostly participants use a combination of all different social network platforms with separated purpose. For example, interviewee 07 said that she uses Facebook for getting in contact, and communicating with her friends on a daily basis because everyone has Facebook to keep in touch by adding them. Whereas she uses Instagram as one channel to keep track of her close friends about how their everyday life is going, be updated with fields that she’s interested in like fitness, beauty and creating her own nice feeds with colors/filters. Besides, interviewee 13 explained that she uses Facebook for practically everything, such as contacting friends/classmates/work, due to its convenient Messenger function and popularity of Facebook, while Instagram is for following people not, just acquaintances, which are based on her interests. She also claimed that Instagram is more fun with colors and nice pictures compared to Facebook.

However, there are small proportion of participants who did not use Facebook as their main platform to communicate with their social networks since their demographic reason. Vicky and WeChat are two social media sites that are aided to substitute for Facebook to communicate with their social friends who comes from the same geographical context.

Moreover, as all participants use their different social media platform with different purpose, it comes to the vital question that which channels that they normally use for their fitness-related interest. Instagram and YouTube are the most two popular sites for that field of interest among 17 interviewees.

In terms of the frequency of using social media sites, there is quite a big gap between the least frequency of usage to the most frequency of usage that goes from 3 to 4 times with few minutes per day to 4 hours per day. To sum up, every interviewee uses social media very frequently on their daily basis, from the moments they get up and prepare to go to work/school, to when they were on their break or doing chores, and until before going to bed.

With the purpose of finding out how actively and committed an interviewee was to an online fitness community, all participants were asked if they’re involved in any online fitness group in social networking sites. As the data results revealed, 58.8 percent of total interviewees did not belong to any online fitness community. Especially, one interviewee admitted that she would like to join an online fitness group if she had more time for working out more seriously in the future, and could take fitness as her priority in life.

41.2 percent of total participants confirmed that they are members of online fitness communication. Additionally, more than half of this percentage are members of sport clubs from university or in the local sport community. When it comes to their
motivation for joining an online fitness community, most interviewees who belonged to this group said their main purpose for joining those online healthy communities are getting updated with club’s events and interacting with like-minded people. One interviewee also joined a vegan online group to get more information about nutrition and health facts from other members’ shared posts. Moreover, 14.2 percent of the group who stated to be interested in online fitness are member of Instagram-based fitness group named “Fit girl”. It was explained that this group was about gathering girls from around the world who are following practice according to the same workout book designed by Kayla Itsine – a famous fitness trainer from Instagram. On the Instagram site of this group, she tends to post mostly transformation picture or before-after picture of those girls who did great progress in transforming their body figure. The motivation of interviewees when joining this group is to getting inspiration to work out, eat healthy and overcome eating disorders. Another 14.2 percent of the group who are involved in online fitness community is the member of sport application’s users group. The motivation of joining this group is to read motivational quotes every day and interact with their friends who also join this club by “liking” those work out pictures or calories tracking notifications.

Furthermore, regarding how active the interviewees are in their online fitness group, most participants said they are not highly active. No one of those participants ever “comment” or “share” information from this online group on their own social media page. 14.2 percent of this group said that they like some pictures from this online fitness group, which has content about transformation pictures of group member who did great body transformation. The motivation of this percentage that like pictures from other members in the online fitness community is to show individual respect and motivation to others to keep going with their body transformation process. For instance, interviewee 09 explained about the way she gets into her online fitness group and how she feels as a member:

“A couple years ago, when I first joined, I feel like the way the PDF (workout book) is written, first of all, is really targeting. It’s going like altogether (workout routine and eating plan) like we’re all trying and we understand that you’ve worked hard. And when you join the fitness group to see all the girls are all trying. And they are not already in good shape. They also tried from the beginning, and it actually really helps you and motivates you to keep up.”

Speaking of whether the interviewees are following any social media accounts which post fitness content on a regular basis. The finding indicates that only three interviewees out of 17 said they are not following any those kind of accounts on any social media platforms. 82 percent of the interviewees are following those accounts.
Furthermore, within the 14 interviewees, only three interviewees mentioned that they follow those accounts on the Facebook, the rest 11 interviewees are all on Instagram. YouTube was mentioned four times.

The next problem is characteristic information of those social media accounts. According to the data, those accounts are made of three major types: friends who are on the social media platforms, celebrities who like to share or post fitness-related information and fitness-pros who share fitness-related information. Two interviewees mentioned that their friends post fitness content on a regular basis. Interviewee 14 said:

“Yes, I follow my friend who post a lot of training and fitness related stuff, but I follow her is not because of the fitness content in the first place.”

Fitness-pro takes another big portion of the accounts type. Those accounts are fitness coach, professional boxer, dancer and bodybuilder. One of the most important reason for participants to follow them is that those accounts post fitness related knowledge. Those accounts usually have a huge number of followers, and they are very active on the social media platform. They could be an individual personal trainer, or it could be a giant sports brand.

Interviewee 03 said:

“Yes, I follow Nike and some fitness blogger on Instagram. I can learn a lot of things from them, like the diet menu or some workout tips.”

With regard to the interviewee’s frequency of encountering fitness content on followed accounts on social media, 58 percent of total interviewees encounter fitness content every day. In details, this common frequency goes from 2-3 times per day to 1 hour and a half per day. It is noted according to the data collection that there is a difference in the frequency of encountering fitness content on different social media platform. For instance, interview 11 said she encountered those YouTube accounts that post fitness content 1-2 times per week while spending around 1 hour in Instagram’s account that post fitness content every day. 14.2 percent of total participants are not sure if they follow any account that post fitness content frequently. Major number of participants said that those posts about fitness content normally would appear in their New Feeds then trigger them to check the content unintentionally.

When it comes to the type of content that triggers the most interest on the social media, the interviewees gave a surprisingly similar answers, and the authors categorize them into three sections based on the different psychological need. Since the participants are allowed to mention inspirational content with other type of content, for example the
work out content, at the same time. Therefore, the authors will not demonstrate the number of the interviewees in the percentage style, which has the data overlap, instead of the direct data demonstration.

The first section is the content with inspirational short quotes, pictures or videos that can motivate the viewers. 7 out of 17 interviewees mentioned that content which inspire or motivate people can grab their attention most effectively. The two words “inspiration” and “motivation” have the highest frequency to be brought up in this conversation by the interviewee. Those two terms have been brought up by the interviewees 12 times in total. It totals to 52.2 percent of all the adjectives were used in this section.

The second part is the fitness related information or tips. Healthy low calories recipe and proper workout suggestions or tips are the two biggest concerns and interested topics among the participants. Therefore, the content which contains the recipe and workout tips can grab the attention from the participants. 10 out 17 participants mentioned that they are interested in that type of content. Terms like “tips”, “workout video”, “recipe” and “nutrition” count for up to 48 percent of all the description terms.

The last section is the before-after transformational comparison, it could be a picture or a video. Since it is quite unique and different with the other regular inspirational content, so the authors believe that it is better to make this part an individual section. The interviewees love to see the transformational content from other average girls. Seeing people work out with good results over six months can really trigger the interest of the interviewees, and motivate them to work harder or to not quite so easily. Interviewee 04 said:

“I like to see the comparison and get motivated. Because I can see the result so I can decide whether should I follow this diet recipe/workout routine or not.”

In addition, not a single interviewee mentioned the text type of content. All the interviewees only mentioned two types: picture or video. As interviewees said that it is easier and more effective to view. Also, it is much quicker to grab their attention.

Besides, all participants were asked if they ever shared their self-portrait photographs in the gym in order to investigate their attitude toward showing themselves while working out in the gym to their social networks. According to collected data, 35.3 percent of the total participants used to share their self-portrait while working out in the gym, to their friends on social media. The common motivation of interviewees to take self-portraits in the gym, then share on social media is to motivate others to commit to their physical training plan. Some interviewees said sharing fun and joy with their friends was their main motivation in sharing self-portraits in the gym. For example, interview 12 said she
normally send back her self-portrait photograph while exercise in the gym if she received the same from her friends. She also claims that it is the way she and her friends on social media share their same interest in fitness and motivate each other to go to the gym more often.

In terms of how frequently the interviewees share their self-portraits in the gym, the least frequent was once in a while, and the most frequent is once per two to three weeks. Additionally, the interviewee 09 said she only did once in the locker when the gym was empty.

16.7 percent of this group said they feel good about themselves after sweating and training hard so they would like to send those pictures to their friends on social media. The majority of participants claimed that they do not like the idea of taking self-portraits and share to their friends on social media. Some of them think it is embarrassing to take self-portrait in the gym, some others think there is no need to show others what they were doing in the gym.

Speaking of sharing diet or fitness information on social media, most of the interviewees are not very interested in this topic. 11 participants, which is 65 percent of total participants said they never share diet or fitness information on any types of social media platforms. Four interviewees said that they do share, but it depends on the content. For example, interviewee 15 and interviewee 10 said similar things:

“Yes, I share diet content when I was trying a new healthy food recipe.”
“Yeah, if it is interesting diet food. Because most of my friends are girls so I think they care about it too, that is why I share those picture on the Instagram”

Interviewee 14 said:

“Yes, I share them cause the healthy food I made help to inspire people.”

The remaining two interviewees said they rarely share that type content. One interviewee mentioned that she shares those content because of a function of the Nike+ app, which can help her to track the calories consumption on a daily basis, so she can have a better workout result throughout the period.

When it comes to celebrity and their influence in interviewee’s social media sites, 17.7 percent of total participants said they did not follow any celebrities that they like on her/his social media sites. 82.3 percent of total interviewees, said they did follow celebrities that they’re interested about.
Regarding the gender of those celebrities that interviewees follow on social media, the largest group, which counts 57.1 percent, followed mostly female celebrities. Furthermore, the second biggest group were interviewees who followed equally both male and female celebrities on social media that counts 35.7 percent of all interviewees belonged to this sector. In addition, the rest of the group followed more male celebrities then females.

![Following Celebrities on Social Media Chart](chart.png)

*Figure 7-Following Celebrities on Social Media*

In terms of the field those celebrities belonged to, 58.8 percent of them are placing their career mainly in entertainment industry, for instance, singers, actors, dancers, etc. Besides, 21.4 percent of this celebrity group is pursuing their career based on social media sites or online platform like Vlogger or Youtuber as a form of blog but mainly distribute by video category on YouTube (Wikipedia, 2017), or travel/beauty blogger.

Additionally, 35.7 percent of the group is fitness celebrities. One of the most popular reason that interviewees follow their celebrities on social media sites is to see their personal life, for example, their attendance in new events, nice meals, picture and workout routine.

When it comes to examining other reasons that make the interviewees work out, beside the purpose of staying healthy, the answers can be categorize into two sections. The first section is mental needs. Six participants said they feel like the work out makes them feel happy and satisfied.

Interviewee 02 said:
“Beside staying healthy, I would say work out for me is about self-image and self-confidence. Of course, it also comes down to the fit body, which can give me the self-confidence.”

Some participants in this section mentioned that work out is a habit. As interviewee 06 said:

“It has been a habit for me, my gym buddy who texted me to work out together, and it can fill up my schedule.”

Interviewee 07 said:

“I have this habit. Because it helps me to release the stress, working out is the only way that can help me to shake off my pressure out my shoulder.”

The second section is the physical need. 11 interviewees mentioned that beside the reason of staying healthy, they want to stay fit or lose weight.

In terms of the which channel of social media would the participants to be informed regarding fitness content, Instagram is no doubt the most favorable social media when it comes to this choice. 76.5% of all the interviewees said that they prefer Instagram to get informed fitness content. The term “Informed” includes advertisement and regular account posts. Facebook has been brought up 5 times from four interviewees. YouTube, in this research, is the least favorable social media to get informed.
6. Analysis

At the data analysis stage, all data was constructed through three steps, which are mentioned in the previous section with the inspiration from the Gioia framework of analysis strategy.

The data structure was built upon in a tree-shape figure with each concept linked to authors and underpinned by the first and the second order. The authors firstly started with “open coding” using the words of interviewees to build a cluster of short sentences/opinion that contain important data. At higher level of data analysis, “axial coding” - the process of relating concepts together was used to define core categories which so called “second-order” themes. Through further comparisons of data and merging theoretical framework, the data then arrive at the final stage – “aggregate dimensions” that reveal the most essence of data.

![Figure 8-The Gioia Analysis model](image)

6.1 Changes in lifestyle ever since move into Sweden

When the participants were asked this question, every participant had a smile on their faces. As the data from the interview has shown that all the interviewees have received positive impact from the Swedish society in terms of being fit or working out. The
social pressure of doing exercise is highly appreciated in Sweden. As living in the environment that is highly wellness-oriented like Sweden, participants observed the culture of sporty lifestyle here as well as received location-based advertising on social media.

Therefore, the authors argue that the subjective norms come from Swedish society is very positive. As subjective norms refer to social pressure that is being received by an individual to carry out or not to carry out a certain behavior (Ajzen, 1991).

For instance, the interviewee 01 said:

"One thing with my eating habit, one thing I noticed when I go to the supermarket everyone you can tell is making healthier choices, very different from London, London is 24hr shopping, 24hr junk food and the food I buy here is a lot healthier and it is a lot more of a panic because when I shop here in London they don’t split the meal into 2 when the pack in the bag so I feel like very rush to do things, I feel like I always go in because I’m quite nervous I just buy exactly what I need nothing more nothing less, so my life is changing because in London I could shop all that walk in the aisle and buy food, education has changed so much for me."

A lot healthier food choices in the supermarket makes the interviewee directly feel the changes in lifestyle and the positive subjective norms was formed within it.

Another interviewee 07 also discussed a bit her observation and experience on the healthy food from the perspective both outside of Sweden and inside of Sweden. She had a period of time living in California, USA. The differences on healthy food will be presented as followed:

The interviewee 07 said:

"people in the US are, they like to have different perception about what health is from here in Sweden and California, people are healthy there and there’s a lot of supply of healthy products and stuff, but still there’s a lot of, like, I don’t know how to explain it but in Sweden it is easier to find, like, healthy products that are without sugar and fat but in the us they can appear to be healthy but they can still have lots of sugar and consumers in the US, they are not as smart as Swedish, so they believe that if it said healthy on the label, so oh its healthy so I’m going to buy it but in Sweden we’re more like I’m going to look at the backside and check the ingredients because here we are more critical to the ingredients and food producer than in the US so do the comparison."

Interviewee 16 is a native Swedish female. According to her answers, we can also capture the sense which Swedish society does have a strong fitness culture has the
positive subjective norms, even though as she gets older she is not that activate on exercise.

The interviewee 16 said:

"when I grow up, I did a lot sports, it is very common, kids do sports, I play tennis, I played basketball in high school, but I can see the tendency as I grow older, I got less fitness, but you also feel competition, because you see everyone being very fitness, being healthy, eating healthy is another impact on me. now even I don't go, I think about it: oh jeez, I really need to go to gyms now. I need to, I have that in my conscious. So now I try to go the gym more often after the winter."

6.2 Motivation to exercise

When looking at the responses of participants in terms of their motivation to exercise. There are three top reasons that motivate them to exercise, which are presented accordingly from the most to the least mentioned response: to have nice body, to stay healthy and to feel good and gain self-confidence.

It can be seen that social pressure has its significant involvement in participant’s perception toward ideal body image. They all self-discipline themselves in a regular plan to go to the gym or do any outdoor exercise to practice and set their goal for their body. Some is about losing weight:

Interviewee 03 - “The goal is losing weight basically. I have to lose 10kg, now I lost like 8 something. It’s about the way you look in clothes and the way you feel. When I started feeling comfortable, I started feeling like my old body as it was in September 2016. I’m ok with that, I’m satisfied.”

Interviewee 04 – “Because I want to lose the weight. When I started to lose weight, I went to gym like 6 days a week. Then i started to like it, because I lost the weight I wanted. It becomes a fun thing; it becomes a part of my life.”

Some is about having a “beach body”, “stay fit and body shape”.
For example:

Interviewee 10- “I care about my figure. At least I can’t make myself too fat.”

Interviewee 07 - “I don’t want to have much fat, I want to look like I do today, maintaining and maybe toning my body a little more.”
The social pressure, which is considered as subjective norm accordingly to the theory of planned behaviors, effects on female’s perception of what does the ideal body image look like. It also shapes the certain scale of body figure like how much weight they should lose in order to look good and “fit”. Social pressure can derive from numerous sources, including social media as mainly part of modern communication. The following concepts from those two interviewees can reveal partly how the social media build up social pressure toward participants:

Interviewee 04 – “I think it is from the social media a lot, like on Instagram, you have all the fitness people. They put picture of exercises, and some have the YouTube channels.”

Interviewee 12 – “Women people in general should look the way the norm to follows. Because we have different stereotype for different gender like for women - you should have flat stomach, a big ass and you should be thick and skinny and for male - you should be big or strong, big arms big legs, stuff like that.”

Interviewee 06 – “When you check social media, Instagram for example, you see fitness account and people are very well in shape and you think: ‘Oh this is also something that motivates you to work on your body, your summer body…’ And I think this is also one fact that you work for certain, a run, those fellow students, friends and other people motivate you and of course when we are also on social media.”

Interviewee 07 – (Where do you get the idea of good body image from?)
“From the people I follow on Instagram. Today, I’m listening more about my own perception than other, so it’s hard to distinguish between what I gain and what I seen.”

Moreover, interviewee 12 also claim that social media put her in pressure by comparing herself to others, or looking at the picture then comes up with a thought of wishing to have body figure like presented in social media. In addition, social media is also immediate channel that deliver social pressure from peer group in terms of fitness motivation toward participants. Some of the interviews said the main motivation of working out in the gym is from friend influence, for instance, interviewee 06 shared her motivation to go to the gym in the winter:

“Oh this is also one fact that pushes me during winter.”
The other reason that make participants go to the gym, lies at the attitude toward behavior, in this case, is exercising. The data reveal that major of participants get motivated to work out at the gym because they think it’s healthy. The ideal of “going to the gym is healthy” is the positive attitude toward the behaviors, which might influence the participants through the online information/advertisement that taught them how to be healthy. Some interviewees stated that they feel guilty to not go to the gym; other said they feel good and proud of themselves after working in the gym. Those feelings like “my self confidence increases a little bit” or “just to feel good when I come out of the gym, I feel like I’ve done something good for the day” is the emotions that trigger from positive attitude toward behavior (exercise in the gym).

6.3 Social media use

As the data in the findings has indicated that Instagram and Facebook are the two most used social media platforms, Instagram is especially the most popular platform within this research. In addition, the data has suggested that one of the reason that Instagram becomes the primary choice and Facebook is no longer the most popular site, which is because the simplicity of the usage on Instagram and the overload friends on Facebook.

As the interviewee 15 said:

"It is Instagram; it is more popular. Facebook nowadays is packed with family, so I don’t like it anymore."

Interviewee 05 said:

"I don't use Facebook anymore, Instagram is the one, not much Snapchat, a little WhatsApp. I like Instagram because it is simple and direct, not like Facebook full of too many functions."

Interviewee 07 mentioned:

“I don’t know. It depends, I use Facebook on a daily basis to communicate with people, I use that a lot, I use Instagram more because I don’t know, I’m very interested in the how to, I don’t know a good explanation but. I don’t know, I mean there’s a lot of things, you can get so much from it, I follow people I’m interested in and I get a lot of value and stuff, so I mean I get a lot of daily inspiration I can keep track of my friends, what they’re doing, its actually be updated in what I’m interested in, but I post not a lot but I post pictures too on my own page and I think its kind nice to take a tour and create a good feed, a nice feed with the colors.”
6.4 The norm of following gym brand on social media

The data showed that participants hold a neutral attitude/perception towards the norm of following the gym brand where the participant exercise at, on social media sites. Those participants who hold a more positive perception toward this norm, are people who expect to see content on the gym brand’s social media site like class timetable, promotions, changes in schedule. Overall, there is positive attitude toward following gym brands in social media toward participants who wish to keep updated for practical reason. There is neutral attitude toward following gym brand in social media toward participants who wish to not receive promotions/news from the gym brand that they follow. The data also stated that there is not precise linkage between participants who exercise in the gym and their gym brand on social media. There is also no evidence that the gym where participants participate in creating any fitness community among gym members through their social media sites.

Interviewee 16 – “Yeah I forget it everyday...I should follow that, but also it’s promotion for them, and when u like the page someone will see that you like that page and they will check out that page and maybe they will sign into it because it looks nice.”

Interviewee 14 – “Sometimes they have offers and they also post things like new release and stuff or the group training or group exercises. They post those things on Facebook. So it’s quite nice to see something useful is coming out.”

6.5 Online fitness group

The aim of this question is to find the impact of being a member in online fitness community and to examine how actively the participant are in the group. Although there is a low rate of participants who are active in their online fitness group in terms of sharing/comment/likes, there are some noteworthy narratives that can be seen in the response of participants.

An online fitness group is considered as an online community/society in fitness-related concerns. A person who belong to that group, as a result, will consume the social norms and share the common belief/attitude with others group members. The fitness culture, in this case, was involved in day-to-day conversation and interaction among group members in terms of health information, inspiration, or sharing a common belief of an ideal body image. The fact that interviewees participate in online fitness group is defined as being surrounded in subjective norms from this online community, under the theoretical view.
Some interviewees said that they get inspired to work out from communication and seeing other member’s post in terms of their body figure, or good body transformation process or inspirational quotes.

The following is an example of Interviewee 07 regarding the motivation in joining online fitness group:

“To get idea from others, because there’s so much that I don’t know, because there’s so much that I get like tips and idea from others, and I think it’s valuable to be part of groups where people can share different perspective.”

She also confirmed that she takes inspiration from the group post of exercise/healthy eating suggestion which applied on her own practice in regular eating/exercise plan. It could be seen as her certain patterns of behaviors that influenced by subjective norms from online fitness groups via social media.

Moreover, following online fitness group also influence participants regarding their attitude toward trying. By seeing another group member who perform certain exercise and show signs of body figure development, for instance, sharing body transformation picture, the participant was motivated to try the suggested exercise routine.

Interviewee 09 – “ I feel inspired. Like if she’s doing it, I should try to.... And they are not already in good shape. They also try from the beginning, and it actually really helps you and motivates you with, like keep up.”

Seeing the other group member, in this case, is the group of girls who performed a same set of exercises accordingly to a fitness guidebook designed by Instagram fitness trainer, the participant’s perception is influenced to shape or change their attitude toward trying (performed a same set of exercises).

6.6 Accounts with fitness content on social media

The authors argue that the behavior of following accounts that post fitness content on a regular basis is influenced by the attitude toward behavior. Ajzen (1991) suggests that this type of behavior refers to the degree to which an individual holds positive or negative attitude toward the certain behavior. One of the fundamental principals on social media when you follow an account is because this account can interest you, or can bring you useful information. Thus, the participant has to start to like it in the first place to be able to click the following button.
As the interviewee 05 mentioned in her dialogue:

“Yeah, definitely, I start to follow one account recently, which it teaches you a 10-week exercise. Besides the fitness, there are diet, food, inspirational messages, things to make people feel confident.”

There is also a case can be analyzed by the theory of trying. The interviewee 12 mentioned:

“I guess its friend mainly, its like you see other people do these things so you want to try it yourself”

As Bagozzi and Kimmel (1992) suggested that attitude toward success and toward success and expectation toward success has strong influence on intention to exercise. Attitude toward failure and expectation of failure, on the other hand, has mixed support regarding intention to exercise. The posts from the friend can trigger the desire of having a fit-body of the participant, then this desire or expectation drives the participant to carry out certain behavior, which could be doing exercise or trying out a healthy food.

6.7 Main interests of fitness content

According to the data in the findings, it is clear that there are three main types of fitness content that the 17 interviewees showed the most interests. The first type of the fitness content is the content with inspirational short quotes, pictures or videos that can motivate the viewers. 41.2 percent of total interviewees mentioned this type of content is their favorite.

As interviewee 05 mentioned:

“Yeah, besides the fitness, there are diet, food and inspirational messages. Things that make people feel confident.”

The next type of the fitness content is the content with fitness related information or tips. Healthy low calories recipe and proper workout suggestions or tips are the two biggest concerns and interested topics among the participants. Therefore, 10 out of 17 participants pick it as their favorite.

Interviewee 13 said:

“Well, I don't follow recipes that much I don't want to buy all these expensive fitness foods and I don't think that is natural. I think mostly it is work out video because then I
get inspired of how to to it myself,”

**Interviewee 09** loved nutrition related content:

“What I like to see the most is nutrition one. Because I like food. And they give you many ideas like if you got the sweeter, you can make peanut butter with something healthy. It’s really gives you inspiration to how to make your meal.”

The last type of the fitness content is the content with before/after comparison, it could be a picture or a video. As the authors have mentioned in the finding, the interviewees love to see the body transformational content from other average females.

**Interviewee 04** said:

“I like to see the comparison and get motivated. because I can see the result so I can decide whether should I follow this diet recipe/workout routine or not.”

Those three types of content can be all categorized into the perceived behavioral control in planned theory. They are all helping the interviewee to improve their life quality from better mental status, exercise tips, better food and direct results. In the planned theory, Ajzen (1991) suggest that the perceived behavioral control refers to the degree of difficulty that is being perceived by an individual while performing a behavior. Back to this case, the degree of difficulty that is being perceived by the interviewee, of having a healthier life, is significantly reduced. Because the content teaches you how to make a healthier food, how to work out in an easier way, inspire the interviewees when they want to quit and how to get to the result (in the comparison-type content).

### 6.8 Perception of sharing selfie

The essence of this question is that it enables authors to gain underlying perception of participant toward their behaviors, in that case, is working out in gym and fitness-related activities. A shared self-portrait taken in the gym claimed that the owner holds a positive perception toward their behaviors and seeking social appraisal and approval from that certain behaviors through instant interaction from social media friends which include like, share, comment.

**Interviewee 17** said “I don’t have the need to show others that I work out.”

Or **Interviewee 10** – “When you’re taking selfie in the gym people are around and they can look at you when you’re taking picture. That’s embarrassing.”
By sending self-portrait taken in the gym back and forth with the participant’s friend, the interviewees are receiving social approval and interaction with their peers who have like-minded views toward fitness lifestyle. Some of the interviewees think this is a “fun thing to do”, some participants claim to “feel good about myself” and share it with the motive to “inspire others”.

This can be defined as attitude toward behavior according to the theory of planned behaviors. Noteworthy point is that no conclusion can draw from the fact that participants who does not share their self-portrait taken in the gym is holding negative attitude toward their behaviors since there are numerous reason could influence their choice of not sharing this content. One possible reason that was revealed in the data lies on the privacy concern of the participants on their social media.

6.9 Individual behavior on social media regarding fitness content

This question is little bit similar towards the question 6.9. In which, the authors argue that sharing content on social media is an indicator. It indicates that owner holds a positive perception toward their behaviors and seeking social appraisal and approval from that certain behaviors through instant interaction from social media friends which include like, share, comment. However, the difference in this question is that the content is non-selfie content, which requires much lower level of self-confidence. As Ajzen (1991) suggested that self-confidence have strong influence on people’s behavior. However, according to the data in the finding, 65 percent of total participants said they never share diet or fitness information on any types of social media platforms. The authors believe that it is mainly concerned with confidence as well. Some of the participants feel they are not professional enough on this issue.

As interviewee 14 said:

“No, never. It is not something that I dedicated my life to of course.”

Others feel that exercise is not that fun to share it on the social media. Interviewee 13 said:

“No, I haven’t. The thing is I work out out of necessity so if I could stay fit forever, stay alert forever without having to work out, I would totally do it so it is not really a big interest to that, I don’t think that it is the most fun thing ever to work out. Therefore, I’m not sharing it on my social media.”
6.10 Motivation of following celebrities on social media and its linkage towards fitness

In a nutshell, major participants who follow their celebrities on social media with the purpose of seeing more “personal stuff” from their admired one. They connected to their celebrities in order to check what they do in a day, the event that they went to, their foods, etc. When it comes to fitness celebrities on social media, for instance, online trainer, body builder, fitness model, the main motivation of the participants placed on getting inspiration and tips on training/eating from their followed celebrities.

For instance, interviewee said she would try the exercise routine of her beauty v-logger (YouTube) because she trusts the person. However, she also claimed that she would not try if it was diet, recipes, supplement (protein bar) because it is too commercial. Thus, celebrities on social media who share their fitness-related content create positive impact in customer perception and behaviors toward certain routines and fitness-related topics through their source of attractiveness, creditability and trustworthiness. This works the same way as celebrity endorsement in media generally.

Regarding fitness or athlete celebrities, the data captured some mentions of popular name of fitness model or online trainer on social media, for example, Kayla Itsine or Jen Selter. It showed that those social media sites did have influence on people who get interested by fitness content from the way it forms an Instagram fitness celebrity, raise people’s attention toward them to the way it gets people inspired and follow those Instagram fitness celebrities like other celebrities in general. Especially, one participant revealed the different feeling that she gets with an Instagram fitness celebrity with medium size of followers compared to other “big” Instagram fitness celebrity who reach a certain large number of followers.

Interviewee 07- “I feel connected and I talked with my 2 friends about this yesterday. People (Instagram users) who have between 5000 and 100000 followers, they have more actively engaging audiences than people with more than 1 million followers. For example, (one Instagram fitness celebrity) got like 1-2 million followers, I don’t feel connected to her because she so big, but I feel connected to people have like 150.000 followers.”

In conclusion, as living in an environment that is highly wellness-oriented like Sweden, participants observed the culture of sporty lifestyle here as well as received location-based advertising on social media, which partly influences on their perception toward fitness. In addition, following Instagram fitness celebrity and online fitness society also contribute to their perception of fitness as social influence. Perceived behavior control is the third factors that lead to customer behavior and
intention in aforementioned theory of planned behaviors. In this section, the authors aimed to analyze in what way social media contributes to a participant's perceived ease or difficulty of doing exercises.

From the data that we collected, it could be seen that transformation pictures of people who perform according to an advertised workout routine from a fitness brand/product or Instagram fitness celebrity, are those popular pictures that our participant reacted to actively. Popular reasons for liking/sharing those pictures on their social media account is that they feel inspired or want to show respect to those girls who did a good workout progress. The data also reveal that there is a vast percentage of participants who applied some certain routines that they found in Instagram pages/ YouTube channels that they followed, into their own exercise routine. By seeing those “normal people” doing exercise and their positive outcome that presented by a transformation picture, social media influence the perceived ease of exercise in the gym toward participants. One of participants said that she feels motivated after following one Instagram page that posts frequent transformation pictures of girls from around the world who are trying the same workout routine as provided by Kayla Itsine’s PDF fitness book. She tried the fitness book due to seeing other girls on Instagram achieve good result after a certain time. Some interviewees confirmed that they would apply new workout routines that have been seen on social media to their own workout routine.

Furthermore, according to data collected, cooking videos and pictures that contain healthy recipes on social media also play a certain part in influencing consumer perceived ease in pursuing a fitness lifestyle. Those short and easy recipes for cooking healthily in social media attract the majority of participants while browsing their newsfeeds. Since the cooking video and easy-to-find recipe made healthy cooking more easy, almost all participants claimed that they would love to try new recipes and cook healthily accordingly to those content on social media.

7. Conclusion

To sum up, the data and the content analysis from the interview can demonstrate a certain level impact from the social media towards young female’s perception in terms of fitness and its culture in Sweden. In particular, the most powerful impact is the pictures and videos from Instagram with inspirational content and body transformation progress picture can especially generate the participants’ positive perception toward fitness. According to the data and analysis, the inspirational content triggers the participants re-consider their current exercise plan/routine. If they are on the edge of giving up, those content likely to motivate the participants to commit to their fitness goal. Noteworthy, there is no clear empirical evidence that indicates how much inspirational content in exact can push young females to keep doing exercise. Another
clear boost comes from pictures that indicate body transformation progress. As we have mentioned in the analysis, the transformation from the before/after picture can demonstrate the result of certain workout routine or food recipe. With a clear instruction and simple causal demonstration toward the participants, they tend to try out the routine or recipes, which was used in that picture or video. The motivation of participants from trying those online exercise routine/recipes lies on the “look like” at ease of instruction given by fitness-related accounts.

Speaking of pictures, the text type of content on Instagram is out of the game. Not a single interviewee mentioned that text once in the entire research process. Picture and video is the main stream of the content type. Furthermore, the video that contains clear and useful message regarding the fitness content, and is short and interesting likely to catch the viewer's interests and get them go through the video.

8. Discussion

8.1 Limitation

Due to the lack of the time and resources, there are few limitations in this research. There are two clear drawbacks that derive from the research methodology that authors conducted in their research. First, it can be claimed that inductive approach and clustering in analyzing the research is heavily based on researchers’ own prejudice on how to analyze and classify responses into different categories. Malhotra and Birks (2008) also stated that it is hard to avoid research bias with qualitative technique due to researchers’ presence in the data collection process. Nevertheless, adapting other supportive techniques will lead to higher quality and credibility of research and lower the risk of research bias.

The most important limitation is that given the fact that Swedish society already has a strong fitness culture, each participants have been influenced by the vibe from the society. In addition, 90 percent of the interviewees are active in fitness. Thus, the authors cannot draw an solid conclusion on which of those three variables plays a dominant role on influencing young female’ perception. In particular, the authors cannot make the conclusion on whether the social media platforms play the main influencer on the perception. Given the fact that the authors were trying to find out influence from the social media towards the young females’ fitness perception, and the formation of a perception is a complex process, the weak elimination of other variables is the key limitation of this research.

Additionally, another limitation of this thesis is that authors lack of strong interview skills and experience, which could help the authors gain more useful data. For instance,
in the first four interviews, the authors could have let the interviewees speak more and deeper on certain questions to collect more empirical data, if the authors could engage the interviewees in a smoother way.

The last limitation during the data collection is that the sensitive topic about using social media, which is a common limitation of interviews. Interviewees may not be willing to discuss and reveal the true fact of their daily usage on social media. Topics like selfie sharing or hours spending on social medias can be easily told falsely, which then can jeopardize the reliability of the conclusions.

8.2 Managerial implication

This thesis has a number of implications for a marketing manager as well as social media management on the effectiveness of social media in fitness industry.

The authors would argue that Instagram and Facebook are the most popular channels that young females prefer to be informed about fitness information, such as, video instruction on how to perform physical activity in the gym or health information. According to all interviews that we conduct, Instagram is the most popular social media platform for posting exercise video, since its function of short video and ease of watching it on the site. Based on our findings, the data also revealed that Instagram is the most popular social media platform when it comes to advertisement. Thus, when it comes to target on young females in Sweden, companies like gym brands can know which platform can reach the highest number of users.

Moreover, with regards to the role played by social media in the perception of participants toward fitness culture, there are few potential for fitness center’s managers to influence social norms and attitude which might ultimately lead to changes in customer behaviors. The problem lies on how specific the marketing content target to different demographic category of every customer in a gym. The data claimed that healthy recipes that suggest how to cook a healthy meal, preps meal before working out or healthy cooking video are those contents that are the most attractive to young females from 20-25 years old.

Given the fact that most of our participants are not willing to share selfies in the gym, thus marketing managers should avoid marketing activity like selfie challenge if they want to promote any products.

In addition, few commercial fitness centers inform their customers to follow them on the social media sites but it seems ineffective. A key challenge to develop a better
strategy for those fitness centers is to keep customers connected easily to the company’s social media sites. It is also desirable to have committed direct contact from customer while working out in the gym.

8.3 Future research

As the topic is broad and hard to capture the multiple dimensions of consumer concerns, it is suggested to use another approaches as alternatives in order to increase its transferability and credibility. Ethnography and quantitative online survey could be two alternative methods that authors should take into consideration before conducting this research. In addition, Etiano (2009) stated that qualitative and quantitative could be synchronized for better result as two reasons: (1) Numerical value can suggest specific hypothesis and greater understanding, (2) qualitative data can be quantitatively coded in various ways without detracting from the qualitative information.

According to the first limitation, future research direction should try to eliminate the two variables as much as possible: (1) influence from society on the participants in terms of the fitness culture; (2) if the participant is already highly activate in fitness or not. Thus, the research could have clearer findings on whether the social media has the direct impact on young females’ perception. Future scholars need to find a society without a highly developed fitness culture or norms. In addition, since Instagram has an extraordinary high impact among the participants, future research could take a closer look at the young females’ usage of Instagram and the linkage towards the perception towards fitness and its culture.

In order to determine exactly how much influence social media has towards consumer fitness perception, a Mata-data analysis could also be used in the research, with the help of quantified relationship between each variables and result, then the research may draw a clearer conclusion on this topic.
9. Appendix

Semi-structure interview Questions:

1. What is your name? How old are you? Where do you come from and how long have you been in Sweden?
2. What is your occupation status?
3. How often do you exercise? Where do you exercise?
4. What kind of exercise that you normally do in the gym?
5. What motivate you to exercise_____?
6. Which social media sites do you mostly use? How long that you spend on social media everyday?
7. If you work out in the gym, are you following your gym brand on social media?
8. Are you a member of any online fitness group? How actively you are in that group in terms of sharing/ comment/like post?
9. Are you following any account which post fitness content on a regular basis? If yes, which kind of content interest you the most on social media?
10. How often will you encounter the fitness content?
11. Do you like to share selfie in the gym? Or while you are working out? What’s the frequency?
12. Have you ever shared diet and exercise information on social media?
13. Are you following any celebrity? Gender? Which field do those celebrities belong to?
14. Besides the purpose of staying healthy, is there any other reason that make you work out?
15. Which channel of social media would you prefer to be informed regarding fitness?

All interview transcripts are available upon request.
Reference


Eating Disorders, 20(2), 135-141.


Huck, Erin. (2000). *Nike, Feminism and Rhetoric*.


