

## Pressemitteilung

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## The thin ideal is far from ideal

Dieters who are repeatedly exposed to a photo of a thin model find it harder to lose weight, and may even gain weight. Being confronted with the 'thin ideal' (the visualisation of your goal) may not be as motivating as once claimed and can have precisely the opposite effect. This according to research by Anne-Kathrin Klesse, who will defend her PhD dissertation on Thursday 6 February at the Maastricht University (School of Business and Economics).

### Thin ideal

Thanks to the media, people are confronted on a daily basis with the social norm to be thin. Repeated exposure to images promoting this thin ideal can eventually impact one's self-esteem. Exposure to models with unrealistic proportions can convince people that their weight loss goal is unrealistic. "Dieters become demotivated, put less time and energy into what they believe is an impossible goal and eventually give up," says Anne-Kathrin Klesse. "An extremely thin model symbolises a goal that is far-removed from your current 'self'. This huge discrepancy leads to inconsistent behaviour, like eating unhealthy snacks."

Klesse conducted two studies consisting of two one-week diet programmes among first-year female students interested in losing weight. All participants were given a journal to track their eating habits over the course of the week. Half of the participants in study 1 were given a journal with a thin model on the cover, while the other half received a neutral diet-related photo (a measuring tape). In study 2, half the participants were given a photo of a thin model, while the other half were given a photo of that same model photoshopped to look 'normal' sized. The participants who were confronted with the thin model were significantly less confident in their ability to reach their goal, which was reflected in the results: the group that received the neutral photo lost weight, while the group that received the thin model were less successful and even gained weight.

Anne-Kathrin Klesse will defend her thesis 'Free as a bird? The effect of choice restrictions on consumer decision making' on Thursday 6 February at 16.00 at Maastricht University. Her research study entitled 'Repeated Exposure to the Thin Ideal and Implications for the Self: Two Weight Loss Program Studies' was published in the International Journal of Research in Marketing.

### Note for the press:

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