Sexually Objectified Male Portrayals in Fashion Advertisements

- Swedish Male Adults Perspectives and Attitudes towards the male portrayals and its Effects on Brand Image

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Author: Emma Stenson (S171732) & Kyoko Yamashita (S171188)

Supervisor: Viveka Torell
Abstract

**Background:** For decades, gender representation in advertising has occupied the attention of researchers, where especially advertising that depicts women sexually has been well examined. However, relatively few research works have investigated the sexualization and objectification of men in advertising, although it is starting to change.

**Research Purpose:** The purpose of this research is to analyze Swedish male's perspectives of male representations in fashion advertising, specifically, sexualized, and objectified male representations and its effects on brand image.

**Methodology:** For this study, a qualitative research method with a deductive approach was applied. The data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, using a topic guide based on the proposed analytical framework by Edell & Burke. 17 stimulus in the form of advertisements were chosen from internationally well-known brands as well as Swedish brands within the time frame of the last ten years, from 2013-2019. 17 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Swedish male adults between the ages of 25-57 were conducted.

**Findings:** The findings, in relation to RQ1, showed that the aspects emphasized by Swedish male adults in discussing sexually objectifying images of men in advertising are: “lack of reality”, “body focus and lack of purpose”, “lack of new-thinking” and “lack of inclusion and self-identity with brands”. The findings, in relation to RQ2 showed that the men’s negative feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes about and towards most of the brands and advertisements resulted in a negative or ambivalent brand image. An exception to this was the men’s positive feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes towards the American Eagle and Dressman which resulted in mostly a positive brand image.

**Conclusion:** In conclusion, the findings of this thesis confirms firstly that the aspects emphasized by Swedish male adults in discussing sexually objectifying images of men in advertising are: “lack of reality”, “body focus and lack of purpose”, “lack of new thinking” and “lack of inclusion and self-identity with brands”. Secondly, Swedish men’s attitudes towards sexually and objectified males in fashion advertisements resulted in a positive, negative, or alternatively, an ambivalent brand image being created, depending on the context the brand image was analyzed from.

**Theoretical Contributions:** This thesis contributes in several ways theoretically to literature on the topic of advertising, gender stereotyping and sexualization in relation to the advertising of males. Firstly, it highlights a modern phenomenon which has been overlooked in previous research. Secondly, it contributes to new areas of consumer attitudes, in this case Swedish male adults, which has not previously been thoroughly investigated. Lastly, this thesis contributes with updated, descriptive as well as specific information on the phenomena and ultimately creating and generating a better understanding of the phenomena: sexualized and objectified men in fashion advertising and the effects it has on brand image.

**Keywords:** Gender Stereotype, Sexual objectification, Advertising, Consumer attitudes, Male portrayals, Brand image, Attitude-towards-the-Ad model
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Emma Stenson
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<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>PI</td>
<td>Purchase Intention</td>
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<td>PQ</td>
<td>Perceived Quality</td>
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<td>PV</td>
<td>Perceived Value</td>
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1. Introduction

This chapter firstly introduces the readers of this thesis to the background and problematization of sexualized and objectified males in advertising. It further builds upon the need for further research to investigate sexualized and objectified male portrayals in advertising. Then, the purpose of the study and research questions are presented. The chapter concludes with an outline of the research.

1.1. Background

Fashion is continually constructed, changing and re-defined both culturally, socially, economically, aesthetically and politically (Mansour, 2018; Kim & Ahn & Forney, 2014). Throughout the course of history, fashion has acted as a mechanism for mankind to express aspects of culture, geography, climate, and personal preferences (Štefko & Steffek, 2018).

The traditional idea of fashion as only attracting and attracted by females has changed and men have started gaining interest in fashion too (McNeill & McKay, 2016; Shephard et al. 2016; Sadkowska, 2017). The view of the man as oblivious with fashion stems from the idea about men not having the time hence nor an interest for shopping (ibid). In the modern consumerist society, fashion has not only become more affordable and accessible, it has also offered consumers more than just a product itself. Men have in response to this started to seek desirable identities, styles and ideals (McNeill & McKay, 2016). As a result of that, fashion has for men further become a “self-modification tool” to achieve the desired styles, identities and ideals (McNeill & McKay, 2016, p. 143).

Along with the changes in men’s relation to fashion, the depiction of men in advertising also started to change. Gender representation of men in media are often used to depict stereotypical, traditional and patriarchal images of the man, which often originates back to his social status and social role (Rohlinger, 2002; Januário, 2012; Hearst Communications, Inc, 2019). However, as economic conditions for women changed, men became less confined to traditional ideals and begun to seek new identities. In response to that, the advertising of male portrayals changed (McNeill & McKay, 2016; Whipple & Courtney 1981). The defining of masculinity and male identity have throughout history not only included his behavioural features, but also his biological features (Januário, 2012). Traditionally, masculinity has been associated with physical strength, courage, heroism, but also to be successful, confident, self-reliant and staying strong in hard times (Kervin, 1990; Januário, 2012).

The 1980’s symbolized the time where the representation of males and the male body drastically changed. Economic and social conditions for women changed, and the need for
males to adhere to traditional and social roles decreased, which further influenced how they were represented in advertising (Januário, 2012). Since 1980s, the male body started to appear as a sex object, often unrealistic and idealized (Elliot et al. 2005). The trend of a healthy, muscular, aesthetically good-looking body became the norm for both hetero- and homosexual men. The 1980’s were also the time where big brands started to advertise as well as objectifying the norm (ibid).

Objectification refers to when “a person is judged for his or her usefulness and becomes a tool for one’s own purpose” (Vaes et al. 2011, p. 774). Sexual objectification refers to “the experience of being treated as a body (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others” (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, pp. 174). Objectification of men are centralized and often based on the male physique and men faces expectations from prevailing ideals to look muscular and lean, a sign of masculinity (Rollero, 2013).

This masculine characteristics of a muscular body can be traced long back in time. Masculine characters derived from the aesthetic concept of Greek art, which was the cult of the macho muscular body, and it continued to echo throughout the Victorian classical art (Januário, 2012). This muscular ideal was strongly represented in the paintings and sculptures of the time and those references are considered to this day to represent classic beauty (ibid).

The representation of aesthetically and muscular male-bodies in advertising are by some scholars seen as an opportunity sought by advertisers to stimulate consumption. This, as the advertising industry observes the behaviour of individuals and societies, and furthermore alerts them about developments in trends (Januário, 2012). However, such male ideals posed upon men may not always be realistically achievable (Pritchard & Cramblitt, 2014; Mulgrew et al. 2014). Alexander (2003) states:

> Branded masculinity is rooted in consumer capitalism wherein profit can be produced by generating insecurity about one’s body and one’s consumer choices and then providing consumers with the correct answer or product in articles and advertisements - (Alexander, 2003, p. 551)

Idealized body images represented in advertising can create a foundation of masochistic or punitive relationship with one's own body (Rohlinger, 2002). The gap between idealized body and one's own body results in low self-esteem, a distorted self-image and eating disorders which may even lead to changes to the body through “painful” plastic surgery (ibid). Applying social comparison theory to men, the study implies that the exposure of idealized images in advertisements lower self-esteem and self-perceived physical attractiveness of the male participants similar to the case with women (Gulas & McKeage, 2000). Furthermore, men showed an emotional discomfort caused by sexual imagery which lead to the adoption of various coping skills just like women (Elliott et al. 1995). Ultimately,
the alterations in the representation of male bodies in advertising has furthermore become pathological and negative for the psychological state of men (Januário, 2012; Alexander, 2003). This creates a situation where men experience anxiety with their bodies (ibid).

The impact of advertising on consumer behaviour is determined by various aspects. The psychological-cognitive, emotional and behavioural-ones are considered to play the most significant role (Susniene et al. 2008). It is also closely related to humans’ psychogenic needs, arised from psychological states of tension such as the need for recognition, esteem, or belonging (ibid). Considering these factors, the reason for male consumers psychological illness lies in their unmet psychological and emotional needs due to the gap created through the ads.

1.2. Problematization

Such negative consequences caused by the representations in ads on consumers could lead to cynical consequences to brands as well. Especially in the age of digitalization, consumers have become more empowered and informed (Terkan, 2012; Childs & Jin, 2015). Consumers are constantly “on” and connected. The ability to connect with others allows them to be better informed through online searches and, product reviews, and experience shared on blogs and other social media (ibid). They are more volatile since other alternatives and options are one click away, as well as more conscious, value-oriented and in search for authenticity. Consumers are, furthermore, seeking personalization and seamlessness, thereby more demanding both online and offline. These consumer characteristics and behaviours have changed and challenged the brand-consumer relationship (ibid). Consumers today choose the advertisements and advertisers have to excite and pursue consumers more than ever before (Anon, 2015). Traditional advertising as a persuasion model seems no longer to be functioning and marketers need to move forward to be more integrated in their roles as communicators, to fit in the modern cultural contexts. Therefore, in order to be successful in marketing communication, it is vital for advertisers and brands to be in line with consumers’ interests and social values.

In addition to addressing the importance of consumer attitudes towards brands, brand image is also a significant element within effective and successful brand management since it is a way for brands to distinguish themselves from competitors (Kim & Seo & Chang, 2017) and a favourable brand image could lead to purchase (Alhaddad, 2015) which is the ultimate goal for any kind of business practices.

However, when it comes to the studies on the relations between brand image and consumer attitudes, specifically regarding male portrayals of its objectification and sexualization in advertising, there are no study investigated previously.
For decades, gender representation in advertising from the female perspective has occupied the attention of researchers, with regards to their sexual depiction (Bratu, 2013; Rollero, 2013; Pack & Nelson & Vilela, 2011). Although research on advertising and its effects on self-esteem and body dissatisfaction has been investigated, it has further and mainly been done so, by concerning mainly the female perspective. Although some research on the topic in relation to men exists, it appears that it it has yet been thought of as mainly concerning women (Kumari & Shivani, 2012). Some research still has a basis in men's studies, for instance, research on men has mainly been concerned within the areas of pornography, homosexuality, sports, military service, and fatherhood (Craig, 1990), however in fact, many of the studies are clearly conceived as research on women rather than men.

1.3. Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is to analyze Swedish male adult’s perspectives of male representations in fashion advertising, specifically, sexualized and objectified male representations and its effects on brand image. Thereby, the proposed research questions underpinning this Master’s thesis are:

Q1: What aspects are emphasized by Swedish male adult’s when they discuss advertisements with sexually objectifying images of men?

Q2: How do Swedish male adult's attitudes towards brands portraying sexually objectified men in fashion advertisements influence brand image?

1.4. Delimitation

This research will focus on Swedish male adults in the ages between 25 to 57 and reflect their feelings, judgements, attitudes and beliefs. This study only focuses on Swedish males because first of all, this study aims to explore the male perspectives of the visual images, specifically male portrayals in the advertising of male fashion brands, but also Sweden is among the most gender equal society in the world (World Economic Forum, 2018) yet, the only Nordic country that lacks clear regulations against sexual advertising therefore sexist advertising still exist. From this perspective, it is interesting to investigate Swedish consumers, specifically, male consumers perspectives towards sexually and objectified male portrayals in advertising.

1.5. Disposition

This study will begin with a literature review, introducing a foundation of literature sufficient
for this research. The section will include literature on advertising, stereotypes and sexual objectified male portrayals as well as the consumer attitudes towards such advertising and the concept of brand image. Then the study progress to present the analytical framework of the study derived from literature review and with the accordance to the problematization. Thereafter, methodology of the study will be presented. This section demonstrates the research philosophy, design, and approach, as well as data collection and analysis methods. The section ends with presenting the trustworthiness and authenticity of this study. The following chapter will account for the empirical data and analysis, where the findings are discussed according to the context of the previous literature. The discussion part will examine the findings and analysis of this research in comparison with previous literature on the topic. Lastly, the conclusion part will present and conclude the main findings from the study in relation to the purpose and research questions, as well as highlighting the theoretical contributions and practical implications. Limitations and suggestions for future research will also be presented.
2. Literature Review

This chapter introduces the readers into literature on the topic of sexualized and objectified males in advertising. The literature review focuses on the topic from a Western perspective which is gathered mainly from online academic journals derived from databases like ProQuest and PRIMO (from The Swedish School of Textiles) as well as books and similar relevant contents. The first part presents the concept of advertising and its relation to gender stereotypes and sexualized phenomena, including historical movements with regard to advertising regulation in Sweden. The second part presents a background of stereotypical male portrayals as well as the changes in representation of men in advertisements. The third part addresses the consumer attitudes in relation to advertising in general as well as the male consumer attitudes towards sexist advertising. Lastly, it presents the concept of brand image in relation to purchase intention and advertising.

2.1. Defining Advertising

Advertising is in today's competitive environment crucial to any businesses, regardless of their industry (Kumar, 2015). The word to “advertise” is of latin origin, derived from the word “advertere“ meaning “turn towards” (Stevenson, 2010). The main goal of advertising for any business is to draw attention to products as well as the publicity of them, that hopefully results in a purchase by consumers (Kumar, 2015). Advertisers use different ways and different persuasive methods to announce and communicate their products, as consumers are motivated and persuaded differently (ibid). Advertising is also important from a competitive perspective, in that it aims to hopefully limit the competition between companies (Terkan, 2014).

Advertising is under continuous change due to cultural, societal, political and economic factors and has undergone substantial changes especially due to globalization and technological advancements (Kumar, 2015; Terkan, 2014). The major effect of this change is that it has empowered consumers into favourable positions of choosing and evaluating brand advertisements (Terkan, 2014; Nielsen Company, 2015; Tiwari & Yadav, 2017; Perlado-Lamo-de-Espinosa & Papí-Gálvez & Bergaz-Portolés, 2019).

Anon (2015, p. 171 ) states:

Over the years advertising has changed dramatically, not only in style but in its approach, meaning and substance. What started as a tool controlled by the few to reach the many has been virtually flipped upside down, with technology enabling consumers to choose the advertising campaigns they allow into their lives. This changing relationship and shift in power require an increasingly sophisticated, subtle approach to advertising.
Advertising in itself has been defined widely and variously in academic research. On one hand, advertising, as mentioned above is seen as an important marketing tool to foster more buyings. Bai (2018 p. 841) defines advertising as “[…] a form of communication for marketing and used to encourage, handle or convince listeners (sometimes a specific group) to continue or take some new actions”. Burns & Mullet & Bryant (2011, p. 561) views advertising as a “strategy” where “[…] companies buy space or time in print, broadcast, or electronic media to promote their lines to retailers and consumers”. Ekström, K.M. et al. (2017, p. 39) defines advertising as “[…] messages concerning new products and new ways to consume”.

Advertising appears furthermore to not only be viewed by scholars from economic contexts, also sociocultural contexts. Burgh-Woodman (2018, p. 1) refers to advertising as a “cultural wallpaper”, in that advertising can be found almost everywhere in people’s everyday-life (Burgh-Woodman, 2018, p. 1). Januário (2012, p. 489) views advertising as a “social chronic” where:

[…] advertising speech establishes a dialogue between social events, trends, desires, expectations, and behaviour of the target audience: advertising attempts to reflect its creative design in our socio-economic, political, and cultural reality. As a form of cultural production, advertising discourse will be conceived through the representations of consumption, recorded in this format and the social meanings belonging to each social group to which it applies.

This quote illustrates the epistemological stance of this thesis, as it gives priority to the subjective understanding of phenomena that this thesis aims to adopt. This, as the quote further underlines the importance of factors such as trends, social events, desires, expectations and behaviour of consumers. This definitions will therefore be the definition used.

### 2.1.1 Advertising and Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes refers to beliefs and expectations that a culture holds about males and females (Curun & Taysi & Orcan, 2017; Birknerová et al. 2018). It has been defined as the ”beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of certain groups” (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996, p. 240). Some scholars argue that societies have well-established beliefs about masculinity and femininity (Epure & Vasilescu, 2014; Wharton, 2005). Wharton (2005) refers to this as “the socialization process” where

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2 Stereotypes themselves describe “a standardized view or a common image of group of people that ignores normal individual human differences” and are characterized by “a specific set of features, motives, values and behavior as part of each person.” (Wines 2006 from: Epure & Vasilescu, 2014, pp. 641).
individuals take on gendered qualities and characteristics and acquire a sense of self (Wharton 2005 p. 31). In advertising, men and women are targeted differently, not only because of the individual or personal differences between the genders but also because of the social differences between them (Epure & Vasilescu, 2014; Moraru & Zetes, 2015; Pavel, 2014; Berariu & Pop & Nemes, 2015). The authors refers to this as “[…] the perfect image of a patriarchal society” (Epure & Vasilescu, 2014, p. 647).

Gender stereotypes are commonly used in advertising and products are often promoted and tailored to attract either specifically males or females (Birknerova et al. 2018; Moraru & Zetes, 2015, Epure & Vasilescu, 2014; Pavel, 2014; Johnson & Grier, 2012). Goffman (1979) states that, “Gender stereotypes are instilled in today’s society, and are clearly being undertaken in media consumption and especially in advertising, as reproductive of social realities and ideologies” (Goffman, 1979, p. 42). As the author describes, gender stereotypes can be used in advertising to establish social norms and values, to express culture, or communicate an ideal image of males and females (Epure & Vasilescu, 2014; Pavel, 2014).

In the work of Epure & Vasilescu (2014), the authors states how the practise of gender stereotyping in advertising can be partly responsible for people's already existing stereotypical images of the respective gender (Epure & Vasilescu, 2014). If gender representation is communicated maliciously or dishonestly, advertising can lead to unintended messages being communicated to consumers (Ibid). Furthermore, it could contribute to inflame already existing stereotypical ideas regarding the genders and eventually lead to a distorted perception of reality (Epure & Vasilescu, 2014).

### 2.1.2 Sexualization in Advertising

In addition to gender stereotypes, advertising also frequently uses sexual images, as these images are perceived and assumed to attract more attention from buyers (Fasoli et al. 2018; Moraru & Zetes, 2015). Sexual appeals are often associated with the degree of nudity. However, it also concerns other areas, clothing, physical attractiveness, actions, behaviours and overall contextual features (Reichert and Ramirez, 2000).

The positive side of using sexual images in advertisements is that they tend to get more attention by consumers and stay longer in their minds than other advertisements since highlighted sexuality in advertisements are found to be more attractive by consumers (Whipple & Courtney, 1981; Wirtz, Sparks & Zimbres, 2018). Nudity and sex portrayals also provokes attention and increase audience engagement (Lysonski, 2005). As a result, sexual contents trigger positive emotional response and sexual arousal, while creating an overall positive attitude towards the advertisements (LaTour, 1990). Advertisements with sexual representations therefore, can be considered as effective marketing strategies (Dudley, 1999).

On the other hand, other researchers state that such advertisements cause no effect on consumers or even negative effects on recall and brand attitude (Alexander & Judd, 1978;
Due to the positive effects and advantage of using sexual image in advertising for marketers, sexualized representation has been in much of the marketing communication. However, due to the rapid emergence of such representation in media, movements against such phenomena also be seen, especially in Nordic countries. Since the 1970s, sexist advertising has been on the political agenda in the Nordic countries and each Nordic country has introduced regulations during this period in this area (SWL, 2019). Although Sweden has the law to ban the advertising directly to children, in terms of regulation towards sexism advertising, Sweden is rather behind. Even though it has been the attempt to introduce new regulation to ban sexist advertising, the attempt was denied because the legislation against sexist
advertising may contravene the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression and the Freedom of the Press Act (ibid). Sweden is regularly ranked near the top of global gender equality indexes, but Sweden is the only country among Nordic country not to have the regulation towards sexist advertising and in fact, a 2016 study from the Swedish Women's Lobby and organizations in Denmark and Norway labelled Sweden as the "worst Nordic country" at tackling sexism in advertising (ibid).

Today, the Swedish advertising industry is subject to self-regulation, with the Advertising Ombudsman's guidelines (RO, 2019) and according to this guideline, advertisements should not depict women or men as "mere sex objects" or in other ways which are devaluing and clearly sexist (RO 2019). However, the body only has the ability to make judgments on adverts, not to impose sanctions (ibid).

Despite the lack of a clear regulation towards sexual advertising, some changes starts to happen as people's awareness towards sexualized portrayals in advertising have increased. In 2018, Stockholm banned sexist advertising in public spaces (Edward 2018). This new measures will allow the city council to remove any ads that break the guidelines. It applies to around 700 billboards in Stockholm public spaces. Although, places which are not the property of the city such as ads on public transport, run by the regional government won't be affected, it is highlighted as a significant change.

2.2 Masculinity and Society

2.2.1 History of stereotypical images of men

Masculinity, as described earlier, is constructed in a social, cultural, and political contexts. Januário (2012, p.491) depicts the sociologist Robert Connell (1995), now Raewyn Connell, arguments that masculinity, because of its sociocultural and political contexts, should be seen as “a process of social discourse, prepared by a series of interactions that are sometimes conflicting and changing.”

The definition of masculinity is in continuous change in different times and places. Kervin (1990) took this perspectives and aimed to find whether the representation of men and the definition of masculinity have both changed or remained the same in different times. He investigated the content analysis of visual representation of men in the 1930s and 1980s in Esquire³ magazine, known as the first men’s apparel trade magazine with exclusive distribution through haberdashery stores (Hearst Communications, Inc, 2019). His findings suggest that the advertising during the 1930s showed distinct different roles between males

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³ *Esquire* was founded in 1933 and defines itself as “the only general-interest lifestyle magazine for sophisticated men” while reflecting and celebrating what it means to be a man in contemporary American culture (Hearst Communications, Inc, 2019).
and females and the basic role of males was to be breadwinner for a wife and family. In other words, the ability to provide was a significant factor for men. In addition to this muscular stereotype, products associated with power, prestige and glamour, and connotation of upper-middle or upper class environment were also found in the advertising in the 1930s. This can be explained by Rohliger (2002, p 61) who states that products has been considered as an “extension of the owner” and associated with the masculine role of power, performance, and precision. He argues that products therefore reflect not only the level of physical but also financial power as well as technical expertise (ibid).

Other factors of typical male roles were also found in his findings (Kervin, 1990). The typical male roles have been described as success, having other’s admiration, confident, self-reliant, strong in trouble times and no feminine characteristics (idib). This also resonates with the four main male sex roles that David and Brannon (1976) describe - 1) the stigma of femininity, 2) success, status and the need to be looked up, 3) toughness, confidence, and self reliance and 4) the aura of aggression, violence, and daring. It also resonates with Franklin (1984) ‘s list of traits of male roles including the willingness to engage in violence when necessary,dominance over others, and dedication to work, where the portrayed men were mainly from middle or upper class as well as educated and worldly males (ibid).

The trait to describe male identity has been related to behavioral actions such as how to dress, walk and behave extended to his work and the constitution of his family. It is also reflected in biological value such as fitness, muscles, physical strength but also qualities of the biological and psychological value such as speed, courage, distinction, and heroism (Januário, 2012). Kervin’s (1999) study reflects such traditional masculinity role and male representation.

2.2.2 A Change in stereotypical images of men from The 1980s

Some of the traits in the representation of men from the 1930s, such as muscular stereotype, products associated with power, connotation of upper class environment and lack of diversity still remained in advertising in the 1980s (Kervin 1990). For instance, the 1985 Hart Schaffner and Marx advertisements still showed male as “Big Wheel” (ibid), someone who are so important that he is the biggest wheel on the carriage (UD 2019). Clothing, accessories, behaviors of the models, and settings also connoted an upper-middle or upper class environment (Kervin 1990). The lack of diversity was still observed, except for one black model, no minorities appeared (ibid). The representation of men in 1930s was identified by its characteristics of men as admirable ones (ibid). In order to achieve this stereotypical image of men, many images were created in a way that male models were set in a place in the advertising that the audience needed to look up on (ibid). The advertisements in 1980s were not created in the same way as in the 1930s, however camera angle was still set slightly lower in order to keep the “admiring” position to the viewers (ibid).
However, significant changes were also observed around 1980s, especially in terms of sexualization or “feminization” of men. First, the male models became younger, usually seeming to be in their 20s (Kervin, 1990). Second, comparing to 1930s ads which represented men through work as a great importance of masculinity, such association was changed to the representation of “leisure time”. This explains that the importance of masculinity was no longer required for his professional success. However, Kervin (1990) also pointed out that this wasn’t due to the pursuit of pleasure but rather as an emergence of another area to prove himself. In short, such representation still connoted confidence and self-reliance, a stereotypical masculinity.

Another significant change observed around this time was that women began to demand and be in charge of a new image and representation of themselves from both an economic and societal perspective (Januário, 2012). Due to the shift in economic base from manufacturing to service during post-industrial era, females became more confident and self reliant. Along with the “feminization of the workforce”, advertisers started to seek new market and appeal to the “liberated women” who gained financial power and freedom of purchasing (Barthel, 1994, Ehrenreich, 1983).

Consequently, advertisers started a process of sensitization of men and the search for a new male identity (Januário, 2012). Garboggini (1999) cited by Januário (2012) argument that this new man is “increasingly frequent in advertising, sensitive and participative man, represented since the second half of the 1990s” (Garboggini, 1999, p. 26). With that, the advertising world surrendered to a new brand of representation of the man who simultaneously prized virility and sensitivity (Barthel, 1994, Ehrenreich, 1983). Furthermore, this transformed the new male consumers into a consumer through legitimizing of male freedom and beauty” (Barthel, 1994, Ehrenreich, 1983).

These changes can be explained by Ehrenreich (1983) who argues that men have become less committed to the traditional breadwinner roles and more self-centered. In other words, changes in the social, cultural, technological fields as well as consumption habits have all contributed more or less to men’s increasing interests for fashion and beauty (Januário, 2012). As described earlier, historically, masculine roles have been defined by power of choice and not by beauty and fashion. While the masculine gender role has emphasized power in different situations and conditions, feminine gender role encourages to please themselves or others (Barthel, 1994).

This coding of “femininity” in mens’ representations started to be seen as a new trend and further allowed men to express own identities and facilitate engagement (Januário, 2012). At the same time, as more and more women were coded to be tough and confident as well as equal to men, men needed to become more masculine (ibid). The author refers to this as an “emerging impact of new forms of masculinity” (Januário, 2012, p. 492). The male body as a
result, started to appear as a sex object, often with unrealistic and idealized characteristics (Elliot et al. 2005). The trend of muscular bodies became an aesthetic norm for both hetero- and homosexual men and well-known brands such as Calvin Klein which started to fetishize the norm (Connel, 1995).

In 2000, new portrayals of men appeared beyond the traditional and social roles previously mentioned. There were naked bodies in sexy positions, with a decidedly different ideal of beauty. The female body has been exposed in a recurring position with naked representations as an object of desire and it was time for men to be exposed that way too.

This notion of beauty and success associated with the controlled and disciplined physical image continued to spread in advertising (Januário, 2012). Although many body forms are portrayed in advertising and according to different aspects in relationship to different ethnic groups, gender, and class, they perform similar functions (ibid). Moreover, they are “bodies-products” imbued with their own meanings, and the imagination expected of a given product (ibid).

The end of the twentieth and early twenty-first century were marked by a new conception of male representations. Advertisements started to target men differently by portraying men’s own new identities and attitudes toward society, rather than by portraying women as objects to foster the consumption by men (Januário, 2012). The powerful brands of fashion, accessories, and fragrance started to presenting him in an entirely new way in their communication. Even further, they consider a hint of femininity within the thin smooth features of this modern man. As a result, the image of the rugged men lost the ground to a vain good-looking man (ibid).

2.3. Consumer Attitude and Advertisements

Consumer attitude is defined as a positive or negative propensity to emotionally respond or behave towards something (Kursan Milakovic & Mihic, 2015). More specifically, attitude towards advertising refers to “a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner to advertising in general.” (Lutz, 1985, p.16). Attitudes towards advertisements thus influence the recognition of brands and the beliefs about brands’ attributes (ibid) and the way one interprets varies and is very personal or subjective (Khandeparkar & Motiani, 2017). Consumer attitudes are also affected by culture, thereby how one perceive the message of, for instance sexism in the advertisements varies with different nationalities.

Advertising is considered one of the most influential aspects of consumers’ attitude formation towards brands with regard to their products and services (Schiffman, Wisenblit & Kanuk, 2010). A strong connections, therefore, can be seen not only between consumer
attitude and advertising but also brand, and purchase intention (Ha, John, Janda & Muthaly, 2011; MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989; Mehta, 2000; Mittal, 1994; O’Donohoe, 1995).

Authenticity is one of the significant areas of consumer attitude towards advertising. Authenticity refers to different constituent such as reality or truth (Kennick, 1985), sincerity, innocence, and originality as well as being natural, simple and honest (Boyle, 2006). A study of retouching effects in advertisements on consumer attitude by Schirmer et al. (2018) suggest that the retouch-free advertisements show positive effects on viewers’ appearance satisfaction, attitude towards the ads as well as purchase intentions due to its authenticity or its realistic and meaningful components. Even though retouching in advertisements are expected by the consumer, it is more preferable for consumers if brands do not use them (ibid).

Congruity or relatedness between the appropriateness of applying sexual content and its relation to the product and brand also play a significant role for consumer attitudes. When there is a congruity, consumers show more positive attitude (Orth & Holancova, 2004) while when advertisements portray a lack of congruity between the sex role portrayal and the products, the negative attitudes are observed (Chang & Tseng, 2013; Peterson & Kerin, 1977). With the congruity, consumers recall the products or brands more (Rouner, Slater & Domenech-Rodriguez, 2003) and ultimately lead to higher purchase intention (Sherman and Quester, 2005). As described earlier, advertising also needs to entail congruity in the context of the products being advertised and the purchaser of the product (Barnes & Lough, 2006; Chang & Tseng, 2013; Peterson & Kerin, 1977). Literature on this topic shows that when congruity between the product and the consumer matches, that brand attitude equally increases (Orth & Holancova, 2004).

2.3.1 Male consumer attitude and sexualized advertising

Men’s response to idealized and sexualized portrayals of men appeared to be negative. The work by Barry (2014) who investigated men’s responses to diverse male models, showed men’s aversion towards idealized bodies, rejection of masculinity as a symbol of masculinity, and wishes to see more diverse models in fashion advertising. Furthermore, body anxiety and negative perceptions of advertisements were expressed by participants when idealized models were shown. On the other hand, body satisfaction and favourable perceptions of advertising were communicated by the male respondents, when their bodies were reflected on the models. His further research on men’s motives for consuming fashion (Barry, 2015), revealed that the motivation lies in the benefits that fashion could provide, such as expressing identity, cultivating success and facilitating engagement. However, the positive outcomes were decreased by the pressures of body anxiety, exclusion and sartorial stress.

Another study by Elliot et al. (2005) who used interpretative methodology, explored men’s reactions to the representation of male bodies in advertising, specifically when men were
portrayed in a sexual or naked pose. His investigation was to see whether or not men felt that being objectified or exploited in advertising in the same manner as women. The result showed the emergent interpreted theme - homophobia, gender stereotyping and the legitimizing of exploitation, and the use of sexuality in the marketing. Furthermore, representation of idealized male images in advertising had an advert effect on their self image and self-esteem.

2.4. Brand Image

Brand image is an essential component to the formation of brands and refers to the entire impression consumers holds about a brand (Kim & Seo & Chang, 2017; Kapferer, 2012; Kapferer, 2017; Edell & Burke, 1987). Kapferer (2017) defines brand image as “the ways in which the brand attempts to meet customers’ psychological or social needs.” (Kapferer, 2017, p. 187).

Through advertisements, brands communicates values, functions, features, personality and rewards which becomes the base of the brand image that consumers develops (Kapferer, 2012). Establishing a strong brand image can be a way for brands to distinguish themselves from competitors (Kim & Seo & Chang, 2017). Additionally, a favourable brand image is an advantageous asset that eventually could lead to purchase (Alhaddad, 2015). In fact, companies in modern times are to a greater extent concerned about their reputation and image as the fast spreading of information can affect their reputation and image negatively (Kapferer, 2012). Furthermore, consumers have become more empowered and informed due to the digitalization (Terkan, 2012; Childs & Jin, 2015). This, as the digitalization has further reversed the relationship of power in advertising, where consumers choose the advertisements and advertisers has to excite and more than ever before pursue consumers (Anon, 2015; Terkan, 2014).

Several studies on the topic of brand image have found congruence between the product and consumer to be a significant factor for the development of a positive brand image (Crespo-Hervas & Alguacil & Núñez-Pomar, 2018; Rhee & Johnson, 2012; Kim & Seo & Chang, 2017). This as, the greater the fit or similarity between the product and the consumer is, the greater the potential is that the consumer will develop a positive perception and brand image towards the brand, ultimately leading to purchase (Kim & Seo & Chang, 2017; Crespo-Hervas & Alguacil & Núñez-Pomar, 2018).

Riezebos (2003) offers theoretical perspective of brand image, by constructing a model “the processes of inductive inference on brand image” that outlines how brand image is formed in the minds of consumers (Riezebos, 2003, p. 66). According to the model, the evaluation of a brand by the consumer depends on three factors; the marketing communications, consumption experiences and social influences (ibid). The marketing communication refers
to the creation of the brand image and is conducted by the company itself (ibid). Consumer experiences refers to the experiences that the customer has with the brand and constitutes a part of the perceived brand image (ibid). Social influence refers to opinions and beliefs held by others (ibid).

It is important that the company gets the first impression of the brand image for customers right, as it can otherwise be surprisingly challenging to change the brand image, once already established (ibid). The model encourages companies to highlight the ”core associations” of its products, to establish and generate links between the consumers and their perceived brand image (ibid). It is an advantageous position as the company is in charge of the direction of what the brand image should (hopefully) represent to consumers (ibid). The ideal for any company is that the marketing communication and consumer experience match, although it is not always the case (ibid) and as described earlier, it has become more challenging due to the digitalization (Anon, 2015; Terkan, 2014).
3. Analytical Framework

This chapter addresses the analytical framework by drawing upon the literature review, especially with the focus on the Attitude-Towards-the-Ad model in order to obtain the different factors that consumers have towards advertisements as well as brands and the relation between their attitudes and the brand image.

3.1 Introduction to the Analytical Framework

Analytical framework derived from the literature review with regard to sexual and objectified male portrayals in advertisements as well as brand image is presented in Figure 1 below. The main analytical framework is drawn on the Attitude-Towards-the-Ad model by Edell and Burke (1987) which is a common theoretical framework used for the studies on consumer attitudes towards advertisements. This model is useful for analyzing how advertising can impact brand attitudes by considering four various factors: Feelings, judgement, belief and attitude.

Figure 1 describes how, from the exposure to the advertisement, one can develop and form an attitude towards the brands. Edell and Burke (1987) state that judgement (cognitive) and feeling (affect) are two independent evaluation system and they are developed in consumer's mind as soon as they are exposed to particular images in advertisements. Feelings is more predominant and occurs more rapidly than judgement, especially with non-verbal cues. It is important to analyze arising feelings of consumers since senses are one of the most important aspects of impact and it is the process of primary cognition (Susniene, 2008). Feelings provoked by the advertisements can lead to certain attitudes towards advertisements as well as certain belief about the brands. At the same time, judgement forms beliefs about the brand and attitudes towards advertisements.

A belief is one’s idea regarding something based on actual knowledge, an opinion or ideological conviction and it could be functional or emotional in nature (Ekström, 2017). An attitude is an individual’s conscious or subconscious to an object or a phenomenon which either openly displayed or hidden (ibid). It could also be cognitive or emotional to an object or a phenomenon (ibid). A consumer’s attitude towards a brand is relatively stable over time and mirrors the consumer's overall impression of the brand (Day, 1969; Dick & Basu, 1994; Jacoby, 1971). Sometimes, consumers form beliefs about the brands as soon as being exposed to certain images in advertisement. In the end, judgement, feelings, belief about the
brand, and attitudes towards advertisements form attitudes towards brands.

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 1. Illustration of different factors to influence brand attitude derived from components in the Attitude-Towards-the-Ad Model by Schiffman, Wisenblit & Kanuk (2010)**

Several researchers suggest the direct relationship between brand attitudes and brand image with the means of advertisements. Advertising can have both positive and negative effects on consumer attitudes towards brands (Batra & Ray, 1986) and play a significant role to form brand image in consumers’ minds (Aaker and Biel, 1993). Feelings and attitudes towards the advertisement can also affect brand image, either directly or indirectly via brand attitudes (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 1993). As described earlier, advertising, specifically highlighting sexuality can provoke attention and increase audience engagement (Lyonski, 2005), which trigger positive emotional response and sexual arousal, while creating an overall positive attitude towards the advertisements (LaTour, 1990). On the other hand, inauthentic, unnatural and unoriginal advertisements obtain critiques (Cornelis & Peter, 2017) and negative association with brands decreases brand evaluation and purchase intention (Um, 2013).

Considering these relationships, it can be stated that attitudes towards brands with regard to its representation in the advertisement influences brand image. Thereby, the analytical framework was adapted from Schiffman, Wisenblit, & Kanuk (2010) to connect attitudes towards brand and brand image. Figure 2 demonstrates the adapted analytical framework. The figure shows, from the exposure of the advertisement, feelings are formed from the advertisement as well as judgement about the advertisement. Both could form both attitudes towards the advertisements and belief about the brands as explained above. All the four
components lead to form the attitudes towards brands in the end and lead finally to brand image.

Figure 2. Illustration of analytical framework adapted from Schiffman, Wisenblit, & Kanuk (2010)
4. Methodology

In this chapter, outlining how this research was conducted is presented and motivated. First, descriptions as well as rationales for the research philosophies, design, approach, data collection method and analysis are given. Then, the qualitative measurements of trustworthiness and authenticity of this study is presented.

4.1 Research Philosophy

The purpose of this thesis is to analyze Swedish male's perspectives of male representations in fashion advertising, specifically, sexualized and objectified male representations and its effects on brand image. The purpose and research questions further determined the methodology chosen for this thesis.

For this thesis, a subjective ontological position was chosen as a subjective understanding for the words in relation to the research phenomena is considered as required for fulfilling the purpose and answering the research question. Subjectivism is where the researcher asserts that “social phenomena are created from the perceptions and consequent actions of social actors.” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p. 132). This thesis also adopts elements of social constructionism (relativist), which is where the researcher “views reality as being socially constructed” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012, p. 132). The authors of this thesis acknowledge that several truths of reality may exist rather than one single truth, especially since realities can change and this research further concerns the reality of several participants contributing to this study.

This thesis also adopts the epistemological position of interpretivism as the interpretivist approach encourages an understanding for the distinctness and uniqueness of human beings (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Bryman & Bell, 2015). The chosen stance is further motivated by the purpose of this research, which is to analyze Swedish male's perspectives of male representations in fashion advertising, specifically, sexualized and objectified male representations and its effects on brand image. To fulfill the purpose and answer the research questions, a subjective understanding of the research phenomenon is seen as necessary and required. The chosen stance is further motivated by its appropriateness with qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

4.2. Research Design

In order to grasp the subjective meaning of the research phenomena, this thesis adopts a qualitative research design (Bryman & Bell, 2015). A qualitative research design aims to generate a better understanding of the phenomena or social reality and enables the researcher to explain phenomena and reality from both the researchers’ and the respondents’
perspectives due to the depth of the collected data (ibid). The option of choosing a qualitative research design is further motivated by this opportunity for generating rich and detailed data (ibid). This corresponds well with the purpose of this thesis, since major emphasis will be on words when analyzing the research phenomena and the social reality as opposed to focusing on measurements and numbers, as in the case with a quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). It can also be useful for the creation of theory as opposed to theory testing (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

Based on the reasonings provided by Bryman & Bell (2015) and Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2012) a qualitative research design is believed to offer the authors of this thesis the potential of diggin in into the meanings of the male respondents. Furthermore, the design would allow for valuable insights to be gained, concerning the male participants experiences and interactions with the advertisements which further resonates well with the purpose of this thesis.

4.3. Research Approach

This research adopts a deductive reasoning approach, as the purpose of this thesis is not to contribute with new theory but to rather use an already developed a theory to explain the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Furthermore, the theory is used to ultimately explain the findings in relation to the existing theory (ibid). This research approach is appropriate and relevant as the male respondents’ feelings, attitudes, judgements and beliefs will be placed in the context of an already developed theory and then analyzed and discussed.

4.4 Data Collection Method

This section presents and describes the rationale for the methods used to collect the data underpinning this thesis. It further motivates the chosen methods of data collection for particularly the semi-structured interviews, topic guide, choice of stimuli, sampling strategy, pilot study and data analysis.

4.4.1 Interviews

To generate a better understanding for the research phenomena underpinning this thesis, semi-structured, in-depth interviews was chosen. Bryman & Bell (2015) defines semi-structured interviews as “a context in which the interviewer has a series of questions that are in the general form of an interview guide but is able to vary the sequence of questions.” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 728). Interviews are suitable for qualitative research as it enables for rich, in-depth information to be collected which can further create an extended understanding for the research phenomena (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).
Semi-structured interviews were conducted, one by one and in a face-to-face situations, in order to avoid the risks of the participants being influenced or intimidated by others (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). In order to gain as trustful and honest responses from the men, an intimate atmosphere was created between the interviewers and the interviewees. This enabled not only the male respondents to speak freely, instead of limiting their answers but also the authors of this thesis as interviewers to observe non-verbal communication (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015).

In total, semi-structured interviews are perceived as most useful and suitable for this research as it has a greater opportunity for catching the men’s perspective while still gaining insight into their feelings. This further aligns and resonates well with the purpose of this thesis as well as the philosophical stances taken. Choosing semi-structured interviews allows further the authors of this thesis the possibility of gaining rich, detailed data as Bryman & Bell (2015) suggests. Rich and detailed data are believed to be needed, necessary as well as required in fulfilling the purpose of this research.

4.4.2 Topic Guide

Topic guide refers to an outline of key issues and areas of questioning for the purpose of guiding a qualitative interview (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). One of the main advantages of using topic guides lies in its flexibility since it makes it easier to adapt and modify the questions as the interview goes more in-depth (ibid). With topic guides, deep or hidden insights into the research phenomena becomes obtainable with the use of additional questions (ibid). Topic guides can also lead the interview while elaborating answers with practical examples and supplementary questions (ibid). It also enables to investigate the chosen topics by revealing hidden thoughts, eliciting personal opinions, subconscious motives and attitudes (ibid).

The topic guide of this thesis is composed and based on the components of - feelings, judgement, attitudes towards advertisements, belief about the brand and attitude towards brands - from Attitude-Towards- the-Ad model by Edell & Burke (1987). The interviews are structured to first make clear the format of the interview. Then the ethical considerations was presented for the male participants. After that, the interviews are further constructed to inaugurate with a short small talk, in order to make the male respondents feel comfortable and relaxed.

The format of the interviews are structured in a way to be discussed with the usage of opening and closing questions as well as questions based on the components from the theoretical model with the relation to advertisements. The male respondents were exposed to the advertisements before the questions begun. The opening questions had the purpose of grasping the men’s generic impressions towards the advertisements. This was done with the intention that it would allow the males’ to describe the advertisements from a broader
perspective that might be uncovered in their feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes. The questions related to the advertisements are phrased and done with the intention of grasping the men’s overall feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes as well as their views on brand image and buying behaviour tendencies towards the advertisements. The questions related to advertisements enable to detect patterns and further insight into the research phenomena.

Finally, the closing questions hide the purpose of grasping the men’s specific thoughts and ideas in relation to their feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes towards the advertisements. Such specific questions further enabled for the males to connect the points and summarise their thoughts according to their own terms to rediscover and reveal their thoughts, which also give us the chance to gain additional or deeper insight into the research phenomena.

4.4.3 Choice of Stimuli

Stimulus helps interviewees to explore their feelings and attitudes by reflecting, commenting, and explaining what is visually seen by the eyes. The stimulus or advertisements in other words, that which portrays objectified and sexualized males was chosen, based on the analytical framework, the Attitude-Towards-the-Ad model by Edell and Burke (1987).

In order to find relevant advertisements for this thesis, certain strategies were applied. Firstly, advertisements were chosen from both established and internationally well-known brands; Calvin Klein, Emporio Armani, Boss, Diesel, Ralph Lauren, Dolce & Gabbana, Ermenegildo Zegna, Hanro and American Eagle as well as the Swedish brand Björn Borg and Dressman, mainly from their respective underwear campaigns which summed up to 17 advertisements. They were selected within the time frame of the last ten years, from 2013-2019. They were found mainly in social media including Instagram and Youtube.

The reason for choosing advertisements from underwear campaigns was that those advertisements portray clearly the sexualized and objectified male depictions which made it easier to gain consumers’ perspectives regarding this particular representation of males, relating to its sexuality and nudity. The chosen advertisements depicts hyper muscular and lean bodies of men, described earlier as an emerging new male identity.

In addition to those advertisements, underwear advertisements which depict more diversity and inclusivity in terms of bodies, age and ethnicity were also included. This was due to great interests to gain new perspectives of descriptions of nudity and sexulization. Inclusivity and diversity in advertising, including body positivity, have gained more attention in recent years, especially along with the #me too movement and “femvertising” which is an advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls (Skey,

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4 Except one advertisement since the particular ads was significant in terms of very muscular description and having lots of men in the ads.
2015). However, as described earlier, the movements and attention within the diversity and inclusivity are still limited in female terms. Therefore, including descriptions of men with more natural and modern body types would encourage the different perspectives of the male respondents’ opinions with regard to the topic.

### 4.4.4 Sampling strategy

A sample refers to “the segment of the population that is selected for investigation” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 187). Sampling strategy then, refers to the strategy adopted in the choosing and carrying out of the sampling task (ibid).

For this thesis, a purposive sampling strategy has been adopted mainly because of its suitability with the nature of this research. The goal of purposive sampling is “to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions that are being posed” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 429). Purposive sampling is especially suitable with a smaller sample size but where the researcher still wants to generate rich content (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

As the purpose of this research is to analyze Swedish males’ adults perspectives of male representations in fashion advertising, specifically, sexualized and objectified male representations and its effects on brand image, a total of 17 men between the ages of 25 to 57 were chosen as the sample size for this thesis. The rationale for the variation in ages of the males are motivated by the author’s of this thesis desires to discover whether sexual objectified males in advertising and its influence of brand image is perceived differently between men and whether their different ages could be a determining factor for it. Also, previous research on male attitudes has been limited to either youths or homosexuals. Due to financial, time and access-related limitations, it is believed that the sample size of this thesis are motivated as well as realistically achievable.

Background information about the Swedish adult male’s participating in this research is outlined and described below, in Figure 3. The table describes the participants’ name, age, interests, education, profession, place of living as well as dates and duration of the interview. This information is believed to be of importance due to this research being qualitative in nature. Also, by providing this information, it is not impossible that the background information could be useful in the analysis and discussion of the men’s perceptions, feelings, attitudes, beliefs and judgement towards the advertising.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Interests</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Place of living</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Duration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Albin</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Golf, friends, hockey</td>
<td>Half university degree</td>
<td>Working at VIC</td>
<td>Gothenburg</td>
<td>4th April</td>
<td>27:39 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesper</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Sports, friends and family</td>
<td>Economic Degree from Örebro</td>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>Mariestad</td>
<td>23rd April</td>
<td>49:00 min</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Japan, Video games,</td>
<td>BA in linguistics</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>Stockholm</td>
<td>31th March</td>
<td>32:31 min</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 3. Information about interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Interests, Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andreas</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Basket, fashion, sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan*</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Energy, Technology, BA in Energy Engineering, Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christophe</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Programming, Technology, Video games, Engineering, Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Food, Japan, Video games, BA in three-D design computer graphics, Sales for Import Goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emil</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Playing with his kids, BA in Education/Teaching certificate, Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Japan and Japanese culture, video games, animation and movies, BA, Animator and 3d graphics visualizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Tennis, sports, Fashion, Civilkonom Degree from Handels, Communication Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tommy*</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Music, Sports, Training, University, Teachers Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob*</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Sports, Travel &amp; Technology, BA in Management, BA in Applied Science, Finance &amp; Educational Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Cooking, Hanging out with friends, Making beer, Boats, University, IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnus P.</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Friends, family, High School Diploma, Working at VIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magnus K.</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>Sports, friends, family, Computer-system related degree from Karlstad, IT - Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lars</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>Tennis, friends, family, High School Diploma, Working at VIC, previous experience as self-employed, owned Redbergstvätten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tor-Björn</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Golf, friends, family, LHS (Livets Härda Skola), Owner and founder of VIC Textiltvätt AB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*means anonymous

4.4.5 Pilot Study

Two pilot interviews were conducted in order to test the structure, the topic guide, questions and choice of stimuli. It also had the purpose of validating its relevance and suitability with the chosen stimuli. In the test, advertisements with visible brand names could increase more stimulating exchanges. Having merely image seemed sometimes lead to participants’ confusion. With brand names, participants seemed more easier to connect to the research questions as well as to have more connections and awareness to those brands, which brought more interesting insights in relation to the concept of brand attitude and brand image. Thereby, advertisements or stimuli with visible brand names were chosen as the final materials. Sexualized images of men with women were also included to test, however as the advertisements were from a campaign for lip sticks, rather targeting women. They increased the confusion of participants and thereby were excluded from this research.
4.4.6. Procedure

A total of 17 semi-structured interviews were conducted from March 27th to April 22nd. The interview lasted between 26 minutes to 93 minutes, with an average of 44 minutes, as this duration of interview seemed to gain the most relevant in-depth information as well as to generate enough stimulating and interesting exchanges. Each interview was conducted by one of the authors of this thesis. All interviews were conducted in a relaxed environment such as participants’ houses, apartments or rooms. Two interviews were conducted through skype. One interview was conducted through written-based materials due to the participant’s busy schedule. Nine interviews were conducted in English by one of the authors of this thesis and other eight interviews were in Swedish by another author of this thesis, as some of the participants expressed their comfort and easiness to explain and discuss the topics in Swedish. Interviews conducted in English was transcribed directly in English. The procedure for the interviews conducted in Swedish was that the author after having recorded the interviews, listened and simultaneously translated and transcribed the interviews from Swedish to English. To ensure the interviews were transcribed with the greatest degree of accuracy the author used help tools such as tyda.se and thesaurus.com.

Starting with a short introduction, research purpose was explained to the participants and ice breaking questions and conversation were done with the purpose to reduce the tension and increase the comfortability (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Each interviewee was asked for consent of audio-recordings as well as for the use of their names or remaining as anonymous. All the interviewees agreed with audio recordings while some wished to use nicknames, or just first names. All the interviewees agreed to share their age, occupation, educational level, their interest and place of living.

4.5 Data Analysis

In research, the collection of data in an efficient and structured way are crucial (Bryman & Bell, 2015). All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed accurately. During the transcription, audio recording was listened to carefully while searching for details and avoiding risk to miss anything significant caused by immediate contextualization (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Sorting, getting familiar with data, and reflecting upon research questions - for instance, if these data support existing knowledge or answer previously unanswered questions - were examined.

Then open-coding approach was used to analyze empirical data. With this approach, relevant and significant words and quotes were highlighted and all the data was categorized under different themes, while referring back to analytical framework to evaluate and criticize the components - feelings about the advertisements, judgement about the advertisement, beliefs about the brand, attitude towards the advertisement, attitude towards the brand - as well as
brand image. Appendix B describes examples of quotes by interviewees based on the analytical framework with various factors. The table enables to identify patterns to lead relevant and common findings, discover similarities, differences, frequencies or sequences. It also identifies themes relevant for exploring the influence on brand image.

4.6 Trustworthiness & Authenticity

Trustworthiness and authenticity are criteria measures frequently used to determine the quality of qualitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

Trustworthiness refers to “a set of criteria advocated by some writers for assessing the quality of qualitative research.” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 729). Trustworthiness includes the criteria of; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The trustworthiness of credibility refers to acknowledging that in research several descriptions of social reality can exist and researchers are encouraged to use respondent validation or triangulation to achieve credibility (ibid).

*Transferability* deals with whether the research holds a “thick description“ or “rich accounts of the details of a culture“ (Geertz, 1973, in Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 402). Transferability tells whether other reading the research can apply and connect the findings of the research to other environments (ibid). This thesis is believed to entail a high degree of transferability mainly because of the in-depth, semi-structured interviews which are seen as a key element in equipping this thesis with rich descriptions.

*Dependability* concerns the auditing of the research process as a whole and whether evidence of the research process are kept, saved, transcribed, organized and structured in a reachable manner for the researchers (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The authors of this thesis have to the best of their knowledge ensured that a highest possible degree of dependability are kept by working organized, structured, smart, effectively and systematically together. This includes working in Google Docs to ensure both authors are updated and can see and make changes directly. The interviews conducted were recorded, saved as well as transcribed and transcriptions of the interviews were made available in a separate “interviews“ folder in Google Docs.

*Confirmability* is about acknowledging as a researcher that an entire research based on objectivity is beyond the bounds of possibility (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This criteria measure also concerns the “good faith“ of researchers, in that the researcher should not in any way allow his or her personal values or theoretical stance steer answers or results of the research in a specific direction (ibid). For this thesis, the semi-structured interviews included questions like: “What do you feel...“, “What is it more specifically that makes you feel that way...“, “How do you feel...“, “Do you see any similarities or differences...“ and “How would you describe...“. The “how, “what“ and “do you“ further emphasising the personal
interpretations and perceptions of the interviewees towards the advertisements. The way the questions were phrased also allowed for a subjective answering by the participants.

Authenticity refers to “the wider political impact of research“ (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 403). This criteria measure includes the criteria of fairness, ontological authenticity, educative authenticity, catalytic authenticity and tactical authenticity (ibid).

*Fairness* asks the question of whether “the research fairly represent different viewpoints among members of the social setting" (Bryman & Bell, 2015, p. 403). This thesis is believed to fairly represent the different viewpoints of males in relation to the social phenomena, mainly as the men included in this research represents males of different ages and backgrounds. The interviews were further conducted individually with each participant, with the purpose of enabling them to express, discuss, and present views without intervention from others.

*Ontological authenticity* concerns whether the research contributes to a better comprehension of the social environment (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This thesis is believed to contribute to a better comprehension of the social phenomena studied in relation to the social environment that it operates in. Although, this thesis is a not a generalization nor a mere representation of men’s attitudes in general towards sexualized and objectified male portrayals in advertisements and their influence on brand image. It is a sample-based representation of some Swedish men’s perspectives towards sexualized and objectified male portrayals in advertisements and their influence on brand image, at one specific time.
5. Empirical Data and Analysis

This chapter presents the main findings derived from the 17 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with Swedish men. A summary of the main findings will be also presented.

5.1 Introduction to Findings and Analysis of the 4 Themes

This section addressing the correspondence to RQ1: “What aspects are emphasized by Swedish male adult’s when they discuss advertisements with sexually objectifying images of men?” presents the findings of the four identified aspects/themes derived from the open-coding analysis approach. The four identified themes were ‘lack of reality’, ‘body-focus and lack of purpose’, ‘lack of new-thinking’ and ‘lack of inclusion and self-identity with brands’. Quotes, descriptions and explanations are used to explain and clarify the aspects emphasized by the men.

5.1.1 Lack of Reality

This first theme represents and reveals the male respondents’ perceptions towards the advertisements which according to them appeared to represent hyper-fit males. The men used the words of “unrealistic”, “exaggerated”, “unnatural” and “body-builders“ in their descriptions of the ads. The men expressed in particular the six packs of the models, which seemed to be for them, unrealistic features expected by realistic men and this appeared to be their main motive for their perception of the ads as lacking a reality.

The shared views by the men contributed to a consensus of the advertisements as not representing reality, hence realistic males and male bodies. Although a majority of them asserted a fit body as looking good, it evidently had to be within the frame of what is realistically achievable. The shared view of the ads as “unnatural” concerned not only the appearance of the male models, but also the construction of the advertisements as “unnatural”, referring to the surroundings, settings and the contexts that the advertisements are depicted in.

Starting from the beginning, the lack of reality according to the men mainly concerned their perception of the advertisements as being “unrealistic” and “exaggerated”, in that the advertisements represented hyper-fit male bodies. This view appeared not to be age-related, as all of them shared a similar consensus. Albin, a 25 year old man, that enjoys sports and fitness, expressed his thoughts about the hyper-fit masculine bodies. He stated, “Hmm. I may feel that it is extremely exaggerated. It is hard to believe that it is for real. Especially considering how fit most of them are.”

This view of the ads as representing hyper-fit male bodies was further experienced by older men, like men in their 20’s as well. For instance, Fredrik, a man close to his 40’s, with
extended knowledge and professional experiences within visual images and representations as an animator and 3D graphic visualizer, explained:

I feel like most of these brands are trying to market through highly sexualised models. Calvin Klein, Emporio Armani, Derek Rose, Hugo Boss, Diesel, Polo Ralph Lauren, Dolce & Gabbana, Ermenegildo Zegna and Björn Borg are all doing the same thing, trying to market using male muscular models that don't look like real people. - Fredrik (39).

The other men, also in their 40’s and 50’s, with a decent interest for fashion and looking stylish, touched upon in similarity with Fredrik, the represented hyper-fit male bodies as not representing reality. Lars explained:

[...] I think fit men look good, although these are very much exaggerated.
Real, realistic men do not look like that. - Lars (56)

The quote presented above demonstrates not only the men’s thoughts of the advertisements as “unrealistic” and “exaggerated”, but also their wishes to seek more realistic representations of males and male bodies in advertising as the “unrealistic” and “exaggerated” portrayals made them feel skeptical, critical and sometimes even dubious.

The lack of reality expressed by the male respondents did not only concerns the hyper-fit bodies. Some men further mentioned the facial expressions of the male models as a part of their ”unnatural” and ”unrealistic” perceptions of the ads. Alan expressed his thoughts and feelings in relation to this:

[...] other guys have mean looks in their faces so it is like trying to give a feeling about that they are dangerous. I start to think why they try to give that feeling? Is it try(ing) to appeal a men? [...] does (do) these kind(s) of thing(s) really talk to a man? I don't think so. It's more like domination thing [...] it should be more equality in the relationship so feels a little bit weird about he look(s) so angry and muscular and dominant. - Alan* (28)

In addition to the hyper-fit male bodies represented in the advertisements, the male respondents also indicated their views about most of the advertisements to be “made-up” constructions, rather than genuine attempts to try to represent realistic males and male bodies. Carl explains:

[...] I think it is the concept of we’ll take a good-looking, super fit model, that shows off his six pack and then make a good picture. From that, it becomes generic, and an obvious construction. Also a bit boring as it doesn’t stick out. It becomes just one out of hundreds [...]. - Carl (40)
The quote above by Carl in particular is interesting. He framed his and the other men’s perceptions of the ads as lacking a reality in a well-described way, where the “obvious” and “staged construction” of the ads according to him, insufficiently succeeded to represent a realistic representation of male and male bodies.

When the male participants were asked about whether the ads had an effect on their buying intentions, it appeared from their various answers that the ads did not stimulate an explicit urge. From their answers, it seemed that their lack of buying intention had to do with their perception of the ads as being inadequate in pursuing them or their previous experience vs non-experience to determine their buying intention. The inability of the ads to pursue the men into purchasing the underwear was expressed by some of them. For these men, this was mainly related to the hyper-fit male bodies represented in the ads, which made them consider the ads as “unnatural” and “unrealistic”. Albin, the 25 year old man stated:

[...] I am not getting the feeling of that I want this (referring to Diesel, Appendix I specifically, but also most of the ads) just because the advertisement shows this. A bit idiotic maybe. It's a feeling of nonsense. [...]It's not representing reality [...] I am not very affected by the advertisements to be honest. - Albin (25)

For two of the younger men, similar in age to Albin, it appeared that their buying intentions increased if they could identify themselves with the brands. Likewise, their buying intentions decreased if they could not identify themselves with the brands. Magnus K, the 52 year old man expressed similar feelings but also explained the fit of the underwear to be a contributing factor in his decision-making when buying underwear. He explained:

With the brands of Calvin Klein, Armani and Boss, where the models looks like bodybuilders with minimal underwear, no, I don’t feel any buying intentions[...]. - Magnus (52)

Carl, the 40 year old man and a communication consultant that enjoys looking stylish discussed in the interview with him, his previous experience and non-experience with brands to be the major determining factors of his buying intentions for underwear brands. On the question of whether the advertisements shown to him, influenced his buying intentions. he explained:

Not spontaneously, but unconsciously, it might surely do because that is the way advertisements work. The brand plays an important part for me to some extent but there are other parameters as well, such as price and quality [...] So to answer your question, it comes more down to what underwear brands I have used before rather than the advertisements. - Carl (40)
The male respondents expressed clearly their considerations towards the majority of the advertisements as representing a lack of reality, the inability of the advertisements to realistically represent males and male bodies.

However, two advertisements in particular; American Eagle and Dressman, evoked quite reversed feelings and perceptions by the men, in contrast to the other advertisements. In describing the American Eagle and Dressman advertisements, the men used words of “natural”, “realistic” and “normal”. The men’s perceptions of these two advertisements as “natural”, “realistic” and “normal” were furthermore not age-related as all the men expressed similar perceptions. The men expressed the two ads in terms of realistically representing males and male bodies.

Albin, a 25 year old man, in an interview with him, noticed the different types of bodies represented in the ads and stated, “[...] American Eagle deviates from the others. They seem to be sane minded. They have different body types. The whole-body spectrum was included in that picture [...]”

The perception of the two advertisements further evoked similar positive feelings expressed by the other men. Quotes described below follow extractions of some of the men's’ thoughts around the two advertisements:

[…] American Eagle feels like a representation of how approximately most men look like [...]. - Magnus P (51)

I like American Eagles, because they do not look so serious, it is a natural setting attached to the construction of the picture and the males are laughing. It looks and feels more natural [...]. - Tor-Björn (57)

They seem to have more fun with the marketing and photo shoots, and I really like the slogan [...] "Underwear for perfect men" and then the picture is a row of men with all kinds of body types, implying that you're perfect no matter what you may look like (referring Appendix R & S). - Fredrik (39)

Evidently, the men’s perceptions towards the advertisements of American Eagle and Dressman concerned not only the physical appearance of the male models, but also the whole construction of the ads as “natural”, “realistic” and “normal” as the men expressed.

In summary, the analysis of this theme revealed that the male participants perceived the majority of the advertisements as not representing a realistic image of males and male bodies. The male bodies represented in the ads were often considered as “unnatural”, “exaggerated” and ”unrealistic” according to them. The men’s perceptions were mainly concerning the
physical appearances of the models or the constructions of the advertisements. An exception to this, was the advertisements by American Eagle and Dressman. Here, the men’s perception of the two ads were described in opposite terms of the others, and words such as “natural” and “realistic” was used to describe them.

5.1.2 Bodily-focus and Lack of purpose

Regarding the second identified theme, it became evident that the male participants felt that the advertisements shown to them primarily advertised hyper-fit men instead of advertising the products, that the advertising was initially intended to advertise. The male participants used the words “bodily-focused”, “bodybuilders”, “exaggerated” and “unrealistic” in their descriptions of the ads. Their views specifically concerned the physical appearance of the male models in the ads. This, as a majority of the men mentioned or indicated the represented hyper-fit male bodies in the ads to display “exaggerated” and “unrealistic” ideals of men. Where the advertisements as a result of that lacked the purpose which was initially intended for. The attention given in the ads to the male body as a hyper-fit body further resulted in a frustration felt by some of the men.

The body-focus and lack of purpose described by the men, were captured and framed well and the men evidently had much to add and say on this topic. Tor-Björn, a 57 year old man, framed his overall perspectives of the body-focused and lack of purpose. He explained:

The models, that have bodies which 99% of the world male doesn’t have and also in an age span that only covers 5-10% of the target group[...]. - Tor-Björn (57)

The body-focused and lack of purpose were further expressed and elaborated on by the other men and followed a similar path. Quotes below follow extractions of the thoughts and feelings that the men expressed in relation to this theme:

[...] it feels very body-focused [...] it feels like the ads are not for me at all. I realize that I will not look like this with the underwear on [...] most models look like bodybuilders [...]. - Magnus (52)

[...] I understand myself that it is not as attractive in advertisements to look at a larger model. I get that. But it is surely exaggerated. Most men do not have a six pack. - Lars (56)

One of the male respondents observed the placement of the logo in some of the ads in relation to the body-focus. According to him, the placement of the logo could be a technique used by advertisers to steer attention to specific body features, but the technique did not attract him, rather, the placement of the logo steered away his attention and focus from the
underwear. He clarified:

... but if you look at Boss, Calvin Klein, Zegna and Diesel, they place the logo in a way that the focus is drawn more to the body than to the underwear or the logo. That I don’t like [...] I don’t like the small underwear that appears to be too small for the models like with Boss and Diesel. It is obvious that it is not the logo that you should pay attention to, it is the six pack and their bodies. It becomes so bodily-focused[...]. - Jesper (26)

The hyper-fit male models in the advertisements further made the two younger men in particular to experience body pressure in relation to their own bodies. One of them stated:

In general, I feel that I have to work on my own beach body. Seeing the models gives me some sort of a benchmark of what I should look like and I feel that I have to work on it [...]. - Jesper (26)

Despite the male respondents’ somewhat overall agitated feelings towards the advertisements as being “body-focused”, “unrealistic“, “exaggerated“ and “lacking a purpose”, many of the male participants claimed not to be affected by the ads and the degree of affection indicated to be partly age-related.

In contrast to Jesper’s experienced body pressure as a result of seeing the ads, the men in their 40’s and 50’s expressed a more relaxed perception of the ads in relation to themselves. These men could still hold a belief that the advertisements should include a wider representation of male and male bodies to make the ads more realistic, but the male bodies in the ads shown to them, did not appear to cause these male participants to feel the body pressure that Jesper experienced.

Below follows an extraction of how the male participants, in the ages of 40-57 viewed the effects that the advertisements had on them:

 [...] For the advertisements with the bodybuilder models, Boss, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Zegna and Calvin Klein (referring to Appendix C, D, F, G, L, M, N) they feel mostly plain, and I just browse through them. - Carl (40)

 [...] Advertisements do not bother me, I am not easily insulted by advertisements [...]. - Lars (56)

Magnus K. elaborated on this topic and provided a wider view of the affection by the advertisements. He stated:

 [...] It is sometimes hard with brands because often you think that the brand in
itself is the most important aspect, but there can be other important factors, too. I also think that the largest part, brands are about conveying feelings and that is something you are creating yourself, too based on what you are seeing. It is also unavoidable not to do that, since it is public advertisements and you see them everywhere [...]. - Magnus K (52)

Another interesting finding in relation to their perceptions of the ads as “body-focused”, “unrealistic” and “exaggerated”, were that the majority of the male participants had neutral attitudes towards the brands. The reason for this was based on that the men appeared to rely more on previous experience with brands that they were familiar with before. For that reason, according to themselves, they felt unable to express an attitude towards brands they had no experience of using. The extraction of quotes below describes the men’s perspectives on this:

[...] I don’t devote too much time on underwear, I buy Björn Borg and A-Z. Also, I haven’t tried most of the brands so it is hard for me to have an attitude about them, so neutral I would say. - Lars (56)

Some of these brands I use myself and with those brands I have been satisfied with their products. To those certain brands I am positive. I cannot say that I am negative towards the other brands. I guess you can say that I am neutral to the brands that I haven't tried [...]. - Albin (25)

Beside the male respondents’ overall perceptions of the ads as “body-focused”, “exaggerated” and “unrealistic”, the men expressed reversed perceptions in relation to this theme, of the advertisements by American Eagle and Dressman. As opposed to the words used for describing the other ads, the men did instead use the words “realistic” and “normal” in their descriptions of the ads. Below follows an extract of quotes:

[...] American Eagles shows that “This is how you can also look”. That feels healthier and is perhaps smarter, also? They signalize that “We do underwear for males, it works no matter how you look, you’re good as you are and we got the underwear for you” [...]. - Carl (40)

[...] The American Eagle advertisement is quite fun because they do the complete opposite from many of the other advertisements here. I think this could be an advantage for them. I can see myself buying underwear from them. I react because they have done the complete opposite, I think it's more funnier that way. It could be that you choose them, just because of that [...]. - Albin (25)

Evidently, from interviewing with the male respondents and as shown in the extracted quotes above, the advertisements by American Eagle and Dressman evoked the positive perceptions
about the advertisements and the brands. Magnus K, explains his view of the ads as “natural” and “realistic”. He stated:

[...] and here in the American Eagle advertisement something really happens, you have different types of bodies, representing how men really look [...]. - Magnus K (52)

And he concluded:

[...] you have to deviate from the normal. American Eagle in this case is a deviation, and a normal one actually. - Magnus K. (52)

In summary, the analysis of this theme revealed the men to perceive a majority of the advertisements as “body-focused”, “unrealistic” and “exaggerated”. Their perception concerned mainly the male-models displayed in the ads or the construction of the ads. An exception to this, was the ads by American Eagle and Dressman which according to the men displayed realistic males and male bodies in a natural setting.

5.1.3 Lack of new-thinking

In interviewing with the men, it became apparent that the men’s feelings towards the ads followed a similar format. In particular, with the advertisements concerning Calvin Klein, Armani, Hugo Boss, Diesel, Dolce & Gabbana, Polo Ralph Lauren, Zegna and Björn Borg, the men expressed those advertisements as lacking a new-thinking. The lacking of a new-thinking according to the men concerned the models that appeared in most cases to just “pose for the camera” with the intention of showing off their muscular bodies. Their arms are often placed at the sides and this was viewed as not to hide the defined and highlighted six packs. The men noticed that there was not one advertisement from the brands, where the models smiled. The construction of the advertisements, the colors, and setting were also noticed as being the same. For instance, some of the men mentioned the color setting of black and white was used in the majority of the ads.

In the interview with Lars, a 56 year old man, who believes it is important to dress and look properly but not necessarily having the latest fashion brands. He said: “My first impression is that almost all the advertisements look the same to me.” Carl related the lack of new thinking that nothing appeared to really happen in the advertisements. He said:

[...] It is standard in some way to show male underwear like this, pretty normal, not much new-thinking, nor something super crazy over it. It does not really bother me anyway[...]. - Carl (40).

Most of the men perceived the advertisements as “generic” and followed a similar format.
The men used words such as “choreographed”, “same concept”, “expected”, “boring”, “obvious construction”, “standard” and “plain” in their description of their judgements about the advertisements. This was well-described by Carl. He explained:

[...] I think it is the concept of ‘we’ll take a good-looking, super fit model, that shows off his six pack and then make a good picture’. From that, it becomes generic, and an obvious construction. Also, a bit boring as it doesn’t stick out. It becomes just one out of hundreds [...]. - Carl (40)

Some of the men elaborated on the lack of new thinking by stating that when advertisements are constructed like this, it doesn’t catch their interest, because firstly, it is not appealing to them, secondly, it is so common to show male underwear like this, that the men according to themselves assumed or expected no other way. Magnus P, a 51 year old man with an interest for sports and sporting clothes, said: “You are so used to this type of advertisements that you barely look, at least I don’t. [...] It is like you almost take it for granted[...].”

One men elaborated even further on the lack of new thinking by additionally contributing with his own thoughts about what would be required from male underwear brands to catch his attention and increase his interests. In his view, the similar construction used for advertising male underwear, did evoke his judgement of the advertisements as lacking a new-thinking. From that, the advertisements of the brands didn’t appear to acquire any value for him. He stated:

[...] for me to gain some attraction to a brand, there must be a message, perhaps environmentally friendly underwear. A new brand just for the sake of it, is nothing for me. You have to deviate from the normal [...]. - Magnus K (52)

In similarity with the findings presented for the two previous themes, the advertisements by American Eagle and Dressman were perceived differently in terms of the construction of the ads. The different construction and approach of representing male bodies and underwear, were pointed out and highlighted by all men. Albin, a 25 year old man, expressed his thoughts on the construction as well as a potential buying intention in relation to the American Eagle ad. He explained:

[...] The American Eagle advertisement is quite fun because they do the complete opposite from many of the other advertisements here. I think this could be an advantage for them. I can see myself buying underwear from them. I react because they have done the complete opposite. I think it's funnier that way. It could be that you choose them, just because of that [...]. - Albin (25)
In summary, the findings of this theme disclosed the men’s perception of the ads as lacking a new-thinking. This specifically concerned the men’s perception of the ads as being similar in construction, by using hyper-fit male models in a “unnatural” setting. Different results were derived from the ads by American Eagle and Dressman in which the male participants perceived the ads as representing more realistic male and male bodies in a natural setting.

5.1.4 Lack of inclusion and self-identity with the brand

Most men also expressed a lack of inclusion and self-identity with the brands. More specifically, the men felt that the advertisements were either directed to a specific age group (often a younger age-group) or displayed models with specific physiques that the men could not identify themselves with. Based on those reasonings, the men, especially the older men felt excluded.

The men’s feelings of exclusion evoked by most of the ads (except for Dressman and American Eagle) was explained by the assumed limited age ranges of the models that the men identified. The appearance of the models, the smooth and wrinkled-free skin along with the unrealistically fit physiques provided them with the assumption that the models could not be middle-aged or over. Lars, the 56 year old man, stated: “Most of the brands feels more targeted to younger males […]”.

Lars further meant that it was not only the young-looking models that made him feel excluded, but also the construction of the advertisements that further made him feel a lack of self-identity with the brands. He along with some of the other men brought up the Diesel advertisement in particular, where the male models take a selfie in the mirror. He, like some of the other men expressed their lack of self-identity here as the trend of taking selfies were not something they did for common.

Tor-Björn, who enjoys golf and other sports sensed the exclusion, from both a physically and age-related perspective. He explained and confirmed the feelings of exclusion:

The models, that have bodies which 99% of the world male doesn’t have and also in an age span that only covers 5-10% of the target group[...]. - Tor-Björn (57)

Magnus K indicated in similarity that the exclusion he felt, was both age-related as well as physically-related. he said:

[...] It feels very body-focused [...] It feels like the ads are not for me at all. I realize that I will not look like this with the underwear on [...]. [...]Most models look like bodybuilders[...]. - Magnus (52)
Magnus P, in similarity, added to this:

[...] I mean, you know that the underwear will not look like the same on your own body[...]. - Magnus P (52)

As opposed to the exclusion and lack of self-identity with the brands that a majority of the male respondents felt, the advertisements by American Eagle and Dressman brought the reversed perceptions. Instead, the men expressed a sense of “inclusion” and “self-identification” with the two brands. These reversed feelings was based on the men’s perceptions of the ads as “natural” and “realistic”, as the ads according to them represented male and male bodies of different types and ages. This perception was shared by all men, regardless of their ages. Jesper, who earlier expressed a body pressure in relation to most of the advertisements, now expressed a sense of inclusion and self-identity with the advertisement. He stated:

[...] American Eagle feels like a brand that includes everyone and are for all types of males. - Jesper (26)

In summary, the men experienced a sense of exclusion as well as an inability to identify themselves with most of the advertisements and brands. The exclusion felt by the men related to the advertisements being perceived as targeting a younger audience. The hyper-fit male models in the ads further made the men unable to identify themselves with the brands and the advertisement. In similarity to the findings of the previous themes presented, the advertisements by American Eagle and Dressman brought the perception of being included as it was possible for the male participants to identify themselves with the models in the ads.

5.2 Findings and analysis in relation to the Attitude-Towards-The-Ad- Model

In this section addressing RQ2 “How do Swedish male adults attitudes towards brands portraying sexually objectified men in fashion advertisements influence brand image?”, the findings of the men’s attitudes in relation to the adjusted theoretical framework is presented. Quotes, descriptions and explanations are used to explain and clarify the attitudes emphasized by the men.

5.2.1 Feelings from & attitudes towards the advertisements

For what regarded the men's’ negative feelings from the advertisements shown to them, it appears that a majority of them felt critical, skeptical, bored, annoyed and dubious. Frustration but also pressure was reported by two males.
The feelings indicated by a majority of the men appeared to be directly associated to the hyper-fit male bodies in the ads and construction of the advertisements. Magnus K. explained:

[...] it feels very body-focused [...] it feels like the ads are not for me at all. I realize that I will not look like this with the underwear on [...] most models look like bodybuilders [...]. - Magnus (52)

Magnus’s answer indicates both “skeptical”, “annoyed” and “dubious” feelings towards the advertisements and his feelings concerned specifically the hyper-fit male models. This, as he felt the models in the ads did not represent realistic male and male bodies that he could identify himself with. He continued: “It feels like they have worked a lot with highlighting the muscles, too much, with lights and perhaps make-up as well“.

Carl indicated a “boring” feeling from the advertisements, as each of the advertisements were more or less structured the same way. He stated:

[...] I think it is the concept of ‘we’ll take a good-looking, super fit model, that shows off his six pack and then make a good picture’. From that, it becomes generic, and an obvious construction. Also a bit boring as it doesn’t stick out. It becomes just one out of hundreds [...]. (Carl, 40).

The other men further indicated “annoyed” and “dubious” feelings from the advertisements in relation to the hyper-fit male bodies represented. Christopher* stated: “to me there are little bit feel dated [...] feels like 10, 15 years ago and I honestly thought maybe they stopped these kinds of advertising” (Christopher*, 36).

Tor-Björn, one of the other men explained:

I feel frustrated, because the ads are so bodily-focused. Calvin Klein, Armani, Boss, Diesel, Dolce & Gabbana and Zegna[...]. [...] I do not feel that I identify myself with them[...]. (Tor-Björn, 57).

Jesper indicated a feeling of pressure from the advertisements as he felt the advertisements indirectly communicated a reference point for how an acceptable body of a young man like him should look like. He explained:

In general, I feel that I have to work on my beach body. Seeing the models gives me some sort of a benchmark of what I should look like and I feel that I have to work on it [...]. (Jesper, 26).
It was the ‘one-concept-fits-all’ approach where hyper-fit models are used in the ads, that resulted in the male respondents’ “critical”, “bored”, and “annoyed” feelings and making it hard for them to identify themselves with the models.

The “critical”, “skeptical”, “annoyed” feelings expressed by the men did further cause them to mainly develop a partly a neutral and partly a negative attitude towards the advertisements. The findings further indicated that in some cases, the attitude formation was based on their own experiences with the brands and in fact, most men had not tried all of the brands. Carl, a 40 year old man, said: “Neutral I think. For me it’s hard to have an attitude about advertisements, or brands that I have not used.

The findings also showed that the men’s neutral attitude towards the advertisement were determined by the unnatural appearance of the models, or the generic construction of the models. Jesper, who stated earlier his unfavor for unnatural models, indicated an ambivalent attitude towards the advertisements. He said:

    Overall it’s 50/50 I would say, 50% positive, 50% negative, maybe a bit more negative. Because of the models being too fit or the underwear that the models have being too small. - (Jesper, 26).

In contrast, the advertisements by American Eagle and Dressman evoked positive feelings such as feelings of amusement, creativeness, inspiration and happiness feelings. The men’s feelings mainly concerned the realistic male and male bodies and the natural setting of the ads. Below follows quotes by some of the men illustrating this:

    [...] American Eagles shows that ‘This is how you can also look’. That feels healthier and is perhaps smarter also? They signalize that we do underwear for males, it works no matter how you look, you’re good as you are and we got the underwear for you. - Carl (40)

    [...] The American Eagle advertisement is quite fun because they do the complete opposite from many of the other advertisements here. I think this could be an advantage for them. I can see myself buying underwear from them. I react because they have done the complete opposite, I think it's more funnier that way [...] Albin (25)

The men’s positive feelings of the ads further made them to develop a neutral or a positive attitude towards the two ads. Their neutral attitude as stated earlier concerned their previous experience vs non-experience with the brands. However, it appears that the men did develop a positive attitude towards the two ads by American Eagle and Dressman. This, as their perception of the ads concerned the realistic male and male bodies that the ads displayed. An extract of quotes by some of the men follows below:

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[...] American Eagle feels like a representation of how approximately most men look like [...] - Magnus P (51)

I like this picture with American Eagle, you have different males with completely different bodies, looking more like natural people. There is a joy over the picture, the people are smiling [...]. - Magnus K (52)

[...] In the American Eagle, there you have different types of bodies, not only perfect ones, so that one distinguishes itself from the others as it is closer to reality [...] - Carl (40)

5.2.2 Judgement about the advertisements and belief about the brands

The men’s negative judgements about the advertisements were expressed with the words of “expected”, “boring”, “obvious”, “standard”, “plain”, “choreographed” and “staged”. The men’s judgements mainly concerned the hyper-fit male models and the generic construction of the advertisements as discussed earlier. Carl explained:

[...] For the advertisements with the bodybuilder models (Boss, Armani, Dolce & Gabbana, Zegna and Calvin Klein) they feel mostly plain, and I just browse through them. - Carl (40)

Like some of the other men, Magnus P. judged some of the advertisements as “boring” and “plain”, in that the ads according to him lacked a happening and that the underwear in the ads were not aesthetically attractive. He said:

[...] Heines and Uniqlo are a bit boring, so I don’t really like them but I don’t dislike them either. It’s just that it does not really appear clearly and obvious what they sell and more could have happened in the advertisements. The underwear did not look too good as well. - Magnus P. (51)

The male respondents’ also indicated their experience and non-experience with the brands to determine their judgement about the brands. Lars explained:

[...] I don’t devote too much time on underwear, I buy Björn Borg and A-Z. Also, I haven’t tried most of the brands so it is hard for me to have an attitude about them, so neutral I would say. - Lars (56)

Considering the men’s judgements about the advertisements as “expected”, “boring”, and “choreographed” it becomes evident that the male participants seemed to share the belief of
most of the brands (except for American Eagle and Dressman) to have followed the direction of ‘one-concept-fits-all’ approach. Carl explained:

[...] I think it is the concept of ‘we’ll take a good-looking, super fit model, that shows off his six pack and then make a good picture’. From that, it becomes generic, and an obvious construction. Also a bit boring as it doesn’t stick out. It becomes just one out of hundreds [...]. (Carl, 40).

On the other hand, the men expressed reversed judgements towards the American Eagle and Dressman advertisements. The men’s judgements of the ads were expressed with the words of “unexpected”, “fun”, “genuine” and “untypical”. According to the men, their judgements concerned the realistic male and male bodies and the natural construction of the ads. Some of the male respondents explained:

[...]American Eagles shows that ‘This is how you can also look’. That feels healthier and is perhaps smarter also? They signalize that ‘we do underwear for males, it works no matter how you look, you’re good as you are and we got the underwear for you [...]. - Carl (40)

I like American Eagles, because they do not look so serious, it is a natural setting attached to the construction of the picture and the males are laughing. It looks and feels more natural [...]. - Tor-Björn (57)

[...] you have to deviate from the normal. American Eagle in this case is a deviation, and a normal one actually. - Magnus K. (52)

The men’s positive judgement about the American Eagle and Dressman ads further appeared to make them develop the beliefs towards the two brands as including males of all ages and body types. Quotes below by one of the men explains:

[...] American Eagle feels like a brand that includes everyone and are for all types of males. - Jesper (26)

5.2.3. Attitudes towards Brands and Brand image

The men expressed “critical”, “skeptical” and ”bored” feelings from most of the advertisements. The men also developed a judgement about most of the ads as “expected”, “boring”, “obvious”, “staged” and “choreographed”. Furthermore the men shared the belief of most of the brands to have followed a ‘one-concept-fits-all’ approach. These feelings, judgement about the ads, attitudes towards the ads, as well as the belief about the brands in
turn, caused them to develop mainly and surprisingly a neutral attitude towards the brands, although negative attitude was expressed by some of the men.

The men’s neutral attitudes depended on their experience vs non-experience with the brands, as many of the men expressed their inabilitys to state negative attitudes towards brands they had not used before. Carl explained, “Neutral I think. For me it’s hard to have an attitude about advertisements or brands that I have not used”.

In addition to experienced- or non-experienced based judgements, the models as well as underwear’ unnatural physiques and shapes or fits were based on for the brand attitude formation. Jesper, for instance, indicated an ambivalent attitude towards the brand. He said:

Overall it’s 50/50 I would say, 50% positive, 50% negative, maybe a bit more negative. Because of the models being too fit or the underwear that the models have being too small. - (Jesper, 26).

Furthermore, the men’s mostly neutral attitude towards the brands ultimately appears to have created a negative or alternatively an ambivalent brand image. Even though, the men expressed neutral attitudes, the overall perceptions, including feelings, judgements and beliefs the men had of most of the ads were still negative.

Comparing to the neutral and negative attitudes formed by most of the ads, the men expressed mostly a positive attitude towards the brands of American Eagle and Dressman, although a neutral attitude was still expressed by some of the men. The men’s positive attitudes towards these brands were created mainly due to the representations of realistic males and male bodies that the men highlighted. Magnus K, like most of the other male participants explained:

I like this picture with American Eagle, you have different males with completely different bodies, looking more like natural people. There is a joy over the picture, the people are smiling [...]. - Magnus K (52)

[...] In the American Eagles, there you have different types of bodies, not only perfect ones, so that one distinguishes itself from the others as it is closer to reality [...] - Carl (40)

The neutral attitude towards the brands held by some of the men, concerned their familiarity vs non-familiarity with the brands. These men expressed an inability in stating a positive attitude for a brand they had no experience of using. Additionally, the men’s mostly positive attitude towards the American Eagle and Dressman ad appears to have created a positive brand image as the men’s overall perception, including their feelings, judgements and beliefs of the two brands were expressed in positive terms.
5.3. Summary of Findings

The findings, in relation to RQ1, showed that the aspects emphasized by Swedish male adults in discussing sexually objectifying images of men in advertising are: “lack of reality”, “body focus and lack of purpose”, “lack of new-thinking” and “lack of inclusion and self-identity with brands”.

“Lack of reality” and “body focus and lack of purpose” referred to the men’s perception of most of the ads as displaying hyper-fit males in an unnatural setting. “Lack of new-thinking” referred to the men’s perception of most of the ads to display mainly hyper-fit males in an unnatural construction. “Lack of inclusion and self-identity with brands” referred to the men’s perception of the ads as excluding them for mainly targeting a younger audience with mainly hyper-fit males. Also, the young and hyper-fit male models made it hard for the men to identify themselves with the brands.

In contrast to the negative and ambivalent perception the men expressed for the four aspects. The men expressed in relation to the four aspects reversed perceptions towards the American Eagle and Dressman ads. Their positive perception towards the two brands concerned the realistic representation of male and male bodies that the ads displayed.

The findings, in relation to RQ2 showed that the men’s negative feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes about and towards most of the brands and advertisements resulted in a negative or ambivalent brand image. The men’s ambivalent or negative brand image was related to their feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes about most of the brands and ads to display hyper fit males in a generic and unnatural setting. An exception to this was the men’s positive feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes towards the American Eagle and Dressman which resulted in mostly a positive brand image. The men’s positive brand image was related to their feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes about these brands to display realistic male and male bodies in a natural setting.
6. Discussion

6.1 Introduction to Discussion

The sections below will present the discussion of the findings in comparison with previous literature and based on the adjusted analytical framework. A summary of the discussion will then be presented.

6.1.1. Introduction to Discussion of the 4 Themes

This section with correspondence to RQ1 of “What aspects are emphasized by Swedish male adults’ when they discuss advertisements with sexually objectifying images of men?“, presents a discussion of the four themes/aspects in relation to previous literature on the topic. All four themes shows a significant connection to brands and brand image.

6.1.2 Lack of Reality

From the findings and results, it became apparent that the men perceived the advertisement shown to them as lacking a reality. The lack of reality expressed by them was specifically and directly related to either the hyper-fit male models in the advertisements or the construction of the advertisements as a whole. On the contrary, the men perceived the advertisements of American Eagle and Dressman as realistic and natural because of its representation of males and male bodies as well as the natural construction of the advertisements.

Although, the intention of advertising is ultimately to evoke interest, an interest that hopefully results in a purchase (Kumar, 2015), it appeared to have the opposite effect in the male participants case, as they expressed critical, skeptical, and even dubious feelings towards most of the advertisements. The men’s interpretations of them as “unnatural”, “exaggerated” and “unrealistic” further confirms Khandeparkar & Motiani (2017) explanations that understanding of advertising depend on individual interpretations. The individual interpretations of the advertisements that the men expressed, although being similar to different extents and degrees, may further be explained by their various ages.

Elaborating further on to this, the individual interpretations by the men towards most of the advertisements may further be due to the societal, cultural, political as well as economic contexts that Januário (2012) explains. This, as it can be assumed that the male respondents in this study due to their different ages have grown up in times where different societal, economic, cultural and political conditions prevailed, which further and most likely have influenced their individual interpretations of the advertisements.
Cornelis and Peter (2017) stated in their research that as long as the advertising image that is being portrayed are not misleadingly exaggerating the effects of the product advertised, it can be acceptable. Although, the men expressed negative or ambivalent feelings towards the advertisements which according to them displayed exaggerated and hyper-fit male bodies. The men did in general hold the belief about a realistic fit body to look aesthetically good. For some of them, a fit body, within the frame of being realistically achievable, were seen as positive and lead to some admirance.

From such a perspective, it further aligns partly with Elliott et al. (2005) findings that suggest that realistic male bodies can be subject for admiration. It also confirms further what Schirmer et al. (2018), Boyle (2006) and Kennick (1985) concluded that consumer values authenticity in advertising, in the form of reality-based representations. This was evident in the men’s evaluation of the advertisements where both positive and negative feelings and judgements were expressed. With the ads that the men expressed greater positivity towards, the American Eagle and Dressman ads, words of “realistic” and “normal” were used. For the ads that the men expressed in less positive terms, the men used the words of “unnatural”, “exaggerated” and “unrealistic”.

The men’s positive and negative perceptions towards the advertisements may further be explained by the congruence relationship which states that consumers seek to look for products and brands that relates to their self-concept (Orth & Holancova, 2004; Chang & Tseng, 2013; Peterson & Kerin, 1977). In the case with the men, they expressed an inability of most of the advertisements to genuinely represent realistic males and male bodies. In particular, it was the hyper-fit male bodies in the ads that concerned them. This may suggest that the men somehow didn’t perceive the ads to congrue with the self-concept they had of themselves. This becomes further interesting with what Birknerová et al. (2018), Epure & Vasilescu (2014) along with Wharton (2005) discuss, of what could be interpreted as a congruence form, but from a cultural perspective. These scholars explained how cultures’ often have established and “clichéd” views of males and females, which further often determines what should be seen and regarded as masculine vs feminine.

Considering the findings of the men’s attitudes and feelings for this theme and from this perspective, it could additionally be that the men didn’t identify themselves with the established portrayals of males and male-bodies that most of the advertisements displayed. Moraru & Zetes (2015) and Pavel (2014) said that gender stereotypes are frequently used in advertising and the findings from the analysis suggest that the men perceived such gender stereotypes in the advertisements to emphasis similar characters such as hyper-fit male models.

The “lack of reality” expressed by the men did not only concern the physical characteristics of the male models but also the construction of the advertisements as a whole. This can be explained by Reichert & Ramirez (2000) who argued for how sexual appeals may not always
be concentrated to physical attractiveness and attributes, as actions, behaviours and overall contextual features can also contribute to create sexual appeals. The men perceived the overall contextual features of the ads as “unnatural” and “exaggerated”, partly from the physical appearance of the male models, but also from the context in how the models were displayed. This “unnatural” context was perceived by the men as a “made-up” construct, not reflecting the realistic perspective of males and male-bodies.

Epure & Vasilescu (2014) found that gender stereotyping in advertising are often a reflection of already long-established, historical roles assigned to the genders and males have often been illustrated in advertising to display the role of the successful and powerful man. This may therefore suggest that the advertisements attempted to display the male models accordingly and not only through physical attractiveness, but also with the overall context.

### 6.1.3 Bodily-focus and lack of purpose

The second theme revealed that the men perceived a majority of the advertisements as primarily being focused towards the advertisement of hyper-fit males, rather than primarily focusing on advertising the underwear. More specifically, the men felt that the advertisements appeared to represent “exaggerated” and “unrealistic” ideals of male and male bodies and this in turn, weakened the initial purpose of the ads. In contrast, the men perceived the American Eagle and Dressman ads to depict realistic representations of males and male bodies.

The importance of congruence to develop positive attitudes was demonstrated by Orth & Holancova (2004), Chang & Tseng (2013) and Peterson & Kerin (1977). The men’s perception towards most of the ads as “body focused” indicated a lack of congruence as the hyper-fit male models caused them to react and perceive the ads as not being compatible to them.

Although, as Kumar (2015) stated, the major goal of advertising is to hopefully evoke a purchase intention within the consumer, however the usage of hyper-fit male models appeared not to evoke any explicit purchase intentions for most of the men. For most men, their purchase intentions were mostly determined by their previous experience vs non-experience with brands. The underlying reasons for this could be interesting to discuss further as previous literature along with the men’s attitudes and feelings towards the advertisements are suggested to provide some clues to this.

Fasoli et al. (2018) explained how sexual images that display various forms of nudity can be used to acquire the attention of potential consumers. Whipple & Courtney (1981) brought up the advantages of using sexual images in advertising as sexual images induce attention and tend to stay longer in people’s minds. With these claims in mind, it may appear logical that the men should have responded differently. As Khandeparkar & Motiani (2017) stated, the
ability to make sense is further a question of individual interpretations and the inability of most of the advertisements to induce positive attitudes and feelings may be explained by this.

Another possible contributing factor and an interesting one, could be the cultural aspects that the men are living in. This would align with what Januário (2012) suggests, that male representation and masculinity is formed culturally, politically and socially. In interviewing with the men, many of them brought up the ‘body-focus and lack of purpose’ in the advertisements from the sense that they meant that the ads did not represent the true representation of males and male-bodies. This is interesting, considering that Sweden is one of the top countries in terms of gender equality (SWL, 2019). The male participants negative perspectives towards the hyper-masculine male bodies in the ads might additionally be due to its gender equal cultural quality.

Another key concern that the men brought up within this theme, was the generic construction of the advertisements in displaying hyper-fit male bodies. This would confirm the findings by Epure & Vasilescu (2014), Birknerova et al. (2018) and Moraru & Zetes (2015) who stated that gender stereotyping is a common practise in advertising. Some of the men mentioned the commonality of using hyper-fit males in advertising and how the common usage of them, was something they almost took for granted.

6.1.4 Lack of new-thinking

The findings for this theme revealed that the male participants experienced the advertisements as a lack of new-thinking. It appeared that the same format of the common usage of male models with unrealistically fit physique in the advertisements brought about the feelings.

Birknerová et al. (2018) in similarity with other scholars, established that it is common practise in advertising to use stereotypical representations of genders. Despite its commonality used in the ads, the usage of gender stereotypical representations appeared not to attract men. They preferred more realistic males and male bodies, as Kennick (1985) and Boyle (2006) described that consumers value authenticity in advertisements.

The men’s shared values for more authentic representations in advertisements are interesting considering Januário’s (2012) perspective that stereotypical gender representations are often a reflection of traditional social roles in cultures. In this sense, since Sweden is known for its gender equality society (SWL, 2019) where a dominant masculinity are not necessarily encouraged or valued, the stereotypical gender representations depicting power, dominance and aggressiveness, for instance were perceived rather inauthentic to the Swedish male participants.
Elaborating further on, stereotypes were defined as the ‘beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of certain groups’ (Hilton & Von Hippel, 1996, p. 240). The definition of stereotypes further suggests that the beliefs ultimately results in some sort of generalization towards what the beliefs are based on. Evidence of such generalization were found in the men’s descriptions of the advertisements as “generic”, “expected”, “obvious”, “standard” and “plain”. Epure & Vasilescu (2014) suggested that advertising also assists in the formation of people’s stereotypical images of males.

In the work of Epure & Vasilescu (2014), the authors stated the reasons for using stereotypes in advertising to range from maintaining social norms to advocating for the ideal image of genders. This was perceived as partly true for the men in this study, as they assumed that the male models in the ads represented some sort of a social ideal image of males and male bodies. However they did not necessarily agree with it. This can further be related to the men’s wish for the authentic values of naturality, honesty, reality and sincerity (Boyle, 2006 and Kennick, 1985) as described earlier.

Another important aspects highlighted by the men is that the advertisements could have been better tailored and adapted to males in general by displaying realistic male and male-bodies. That way, it can not only attract males of different types, but also males of all ages. This aligns with scholars on the topic of advertising and gender stereotyping who have argued for the significance of tailoring and adapting to the gender in the advertising in order to evoke attraction (Vysekalová a Mikeš, 2010 in Birknerová, et al. 2018).

The men didn’t perceive most of the ads to be directed to females, however, the scenario shouldn’t be totally ignored. Because, according to Epure & Vasilescu (2014) men in similarity with women can be viewed as visual pleasure. Also, sexual elements in advertising evokes interest and engagements to opposite sex (Whipple & Courtney, 1981; Wirtz, Sparks & Zimbres, 2018; Lysonski, 2005). Also, according to Januário (2012) and Raewyn Connel (1995) masculinity is a construct formed by cultural, social and political contexts, and gender is a big part of the contexts. Although, none of the men directly stated the hyper-fit male and male bodies to be directed to a female audience, their answers highlighting its “generic”, “staged” and “boring” construction can imply their unconscious awareness to confirm this “norm” within visual communications, specifically advertising.

6.1.5 Lack of inclusion and self-identity with the brand

The findings for this theme revealed that a majority of the male participants experienced an exclusion and a lack of self-identity with the brands due to the frequent uses of younger models and hyper-fit male models.

Congruence between brands and consumers is a significant elements as a greater degree of congruence between a consumer and a brand often leads to a positive brand image being...
developed by the consumer (Barnes & Lough, 2006; Chang & Tseng, 2013; Peterson & Kerin, 1977; Orth and Holancova, 2004). A majority of the male participants expressed their inability to identify themselves with the advertisements and the inability further led them to feel excluded. The men’s sense of exclusion was due to the lack of congruence between the men and the advertisements.

Furthermore, Januário (2012) states that masculinity is formed culturally, socially and politically. This means that the men have formed their own perceptions of masculinity from their cultural, social and political environments that they have grown up with, in this case Sweden, one of the most gender equal societies. This in turn, may have influenced the men’s congruence with the ads as they may not have agreed on the masculinity that the ads represented.

Another interesting aspect to discuss in relation to the sense of exclusion the male respondents felt, is firstly the study by Mulgrew et al. (2014). The authors explained how stereotypical ideals can, with time, emerge into a normalizing idea about the ideal body. One of the younger male respondents, Jesper, explained how the ads provided him with a reference point of ideal bodies around his age. Secondly, he expressed a sense of exclusion due to the pressure to work on his own body to achieve the ideal look presented in the ads. Epure & Vasilescu (2014) explained how stereotypical representations of gender can be used to communicate such ideal images of genders. It can be observed that Jesper assumed the hyper-fit male models in the ads to represent an ideal image of men of his age. Thirdly, based on the concept of congruity by Orth and Holancova (2004), self identity that Jesper had to himself and the brand image may not have matched, since the hyper-fit male models unable him to identify himself with them. This gap caused Jesper to experience body anxiety. This align with Barry (2014) who found in his study on representations of idealized bodies in advertising and their potential negative effects on male consumers. The work by Barry (2014) also showed that exposenent to body ideals caused body anxiety and negative associations with the advertisements, especially when the body ideals deviated too far from the consumer's own body.

A majority of the males felt that the advertisements was targeted towards a younger audience and the Diesel advertisement with the males taking a selfie was brought up in particular to illustrate the males point. The literature explains that younger male models became a common feature in advertising around the 1980’s as a result of the different depiction or image that advertising of males now started to seek (UD, 2019). Perhaps, the usage of younger male models could also be explained by the feminist movements as well as social, political and economic changes that Januário (2012) views as contributing factors to the new emerging forms of masculinity.
Overall, the males feelings of exclusion and lack of self-identity with the brands were influenced and confirmed by the concept of congruence as well as socio cultural contexts. This may show that the advertisements have been communicated unsuccessfully.

6.2. Discussion in relation to the Attitude-Towards- The- Ad-Model

This section with correspondence to RQ2 presents the discussion of the findings in relation to the previous research as well as adjusted analytical framework.

The findings and results showed that the men’s negative feelings, judgements, beliefs and partly negative and neutral attitudes towards most of the advertisements created mostly a neutral or negative attitude towards the brands and furthermore a negative or ambivalent brand image. Negative brand image was reflected on the decreased purchase intentions as well as perceived quality and values of the brands. Figure 4 shows the summary of how various factors contribute to the brand attitude formation by the men, as well as the effect of the consumer brand attitudes on the brand image.

![Figure 4. Illustration of the findings, based on the adjusted analytical framework, Part 1](image-url)
The findings also showed that the men had positive feelings, judgements, beliefs and mostly neutral but also positive attitudes towards the ads by American Eagle and Dressman. This created mostly positive attitudes towards the brands and furthermore a positive brand image. Brand image was reflected through a somewhat increased purchase intention, although in most cases, it seemed to have no effect on the purchase intention, as well as the increased perceived quality and values. The Figure 5 describes the summary of how various factors contributed to the brand attitude formation by the men as well as the effect of the consumer brand attitudes on the brand image.

![Figure 5. Illustration of the findings, based on the adjusted analytical framework, Part 2](image)

As described earlier, Kennick (1985) and Boyle (2006) argue for the importance of authentic values in advertising as consumers value them over inauthentic. This is confirmed as the negative brand attitudes towards the brand which sometimes led to negative brand image was mainly due to most of the ads representing unrealistic hyper-fit male models in an unnatural context. Also, the men wished to see more realistic male and male bodies in advertisements as they saw in the American Eagle and Dressman ads in relation to natural representations.
The concept of congruence has been a significant factor in this study. The men’s negative attitudes towards the brand resulted in a neutral and negative brand image, which may further be explained by the congruence relationship that Orth and Holancova (2004) talks about. According to these scholars, consumers seek to search for products and brands that relate to their self-concept. The men’s negative alternatively neutral brand image suggests that it may have been that the men didn’t congruent with the male and male bodies in most of the ads which led them to develop a neutral, negative brand image.

With regards to male representations in advertising, Januário (2012) explains how male representation and masculinity in advertising is formed by cultural, political and social contexts. The men of this study, have grown up in cultural, social and political contexts where gender equality is prevailing (SWL, 2019). This is suggested further to be a contributing factor as well as explaining the men’s neutral and negative brand image towards most of the brands. In contrast, the men developed mostly a positive brand image towards American Eagle and Dressman brands because of its representations of diversity and inclusivity which is valued and emphasized specifically in gender equal societies like Sweden.

Literature on male representation in relation to gender stereotyping could for instance additionally explain the men’s negative and neutral brand image towards most of the brands. Epure & Vasilescu (2014) and Moraru & Zetes (2015) states that gender stereotyping in advertisements are frequently used and males have often been portrayed in a way that reflects their traditional social roles. The authors also explain how gender stereotyping in advertising can be used to promote an ideal image of genders (ibid). As described earlier, it could be that the men perceived the male portrayals in the ads to reflect traditional social roles or ideal images of men that they didn’t identify themselves with.

Barry’s (2014) study found that negative mental associations with advertisements are created when body ideals are displayed in ads. The men in this study expressed negative mental associations (feelings and judgements) in relation to most of the ads by using words of “unnatural”, “exaggerated” in their description of their “critical” and “skeptical” feelings towards the ads.

Reversed mental associations (feelings and judgements) was expressed in relation to the American Eagle and Dressman ads, where the men used the words “natural”, “fun”, “genuine”, “realistic” in their descriptions of their feelings towards them as “happy”, “creative” and “inspirational”.

As described in the results, overall, in relation to most of the brands, the men developed a negative alternatively an ambivalent brand image towards them. Brand image is according to Edell & Burke (1987) and Kapferer (2017) the ‘total perception’ of a brand that a consumer has. Overall, the total perception the men had towards most of the brands was mostly
negative and this suggests that most of the advertisements shown to the male participants were not efficiently communicated.

6.3. Summary of Discussion

In summary, the discussion in relation to RQ1 and RQ2 shows that gender stereotyping in advertising is a frequent tactic used by advertisers to promote ideal representations of gender as well as demonstrating traditional social roles (Epure & Vasilescu, 2014) although the men in this study appeared to not identify themselves with the ideals or roles. The reasons for this could be explained by the congruence relationship that Orth & Holancova (2004) explains but also the importance of authentic representation in advertising as Kennick (1985) and Boyle (2006) demonstrated.

It was the male models or the constructions of the ads that specifically determined the men’s ambivalent, negative and positive brand images. The men’s negative, ambivalent brand image specifically concerned the men’s total perception of the brands to use hyper-fit males in an unnatural construct. Reichardt & Ramirez (2000) explained how contextual features can contribute to create sexual appeals too, as sexual appeals are not solely dependent on physical features. Fasoli et al (2018) and Lysonski (2005) further demonstrated how sexual images in advertising can evoke consumers interest and engagements. Elliot et al (2005) stated how men can be subject for visual pleasure too.

However, the male participants of this study yet developed a negative alternative an ambivalent brand image towards most of the brands. A possible contributing factor for the men’s negative, ambivalent brand image towards most of the brands may be confirmed by Januário’s (2012) explanations of masculinity as a construct which is formed culturally, politically and socially. Furthermore, the male participants lives in social, political and cultural context where gender equality is highly emphasized which might have influenced and contributed to their total perception towards the brands and advertisements.

Ultimately, advertising in its foundation aims to evoke interest and ultimately lead to purchase (Kumar, 2015) however, it becomes evident that with the male respondents of this study, the advertisements didn’t evoke the explicit intended intention. This may further suggest that the inability of most of the advertisements (except from American Eagle and Dressman) to communicate authentic representations of male and male bodies was unsuccessful. This confirms the importance of advertisements to be adapted and adjusted to the gender that the advertisement intends to target, in order avoid dishonest and maliciously information being communicated (Vysekalová a Mikeš 2010 in Bírknervá, et al. 2018; Epure & Vasilescu, 2014).
7. Conclusion

In this section, the conclusion of this thesis based on the findings, analysis and discussion will be presented to fulfill the purpose of this research and to answer the research questions.

7.1 Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to analyze Swedish male adult’s perspectives of male representations in fashion advertising, specifically, sexualized and objectified male representations and its effects on brand image. The research questions sated:

Q1: What aspects are emphasized by Swedish male adult’s when they discuss advertisements with sexually objectifying images of men?

Q2: How do Swedish male adult's attitudes towards brands portraying sexually objectified men in fashion advertisements influence brand image?

The findings of this thesis confirms that for RQ1 the aspects emphasized by Swedish male adults in discussing sexually objectifying images of men in advertising are: “lack of reality”, “body focus and lack of purpose”, “lack of new thinking” and “lack of inclusion and self-identity with brands”.

The men’s overall perception towards most of the brands can be summarised as: ‘Established underwear brands that depicts hyper-fit masculine male bodies, with a tendency of excluding as well as lacking the ability of advertising male underwear with the purpose it was actually intended for’. An exception to this was the advertisements by American Eagle and Dressman that according to the men “depicted realistic males and male-bodies in natural settings, and furthermore contributed to the perception of inclusion as well as the ability to identify themselves with the brands”.

In conclusion, for RQ2 the findings confirms that Swedish men’s attitudes towards sexually and objectified males in fashion advertisements resulted in a positive, negative, or alternatively, an ambivalent brand image being created, depending on the context the brand image was analyzed from.

In conclusion, it was the men’s negative feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes about and towards most of the brands and advertisements that ultimately created the negative or alternatively the ambivalent brand image. In the case with the American Eagle and Dressman ads it was the men’s positive feelings, judgements, beliefs and attitudes towards them that created the positive brand image.
7.2 Theoretical Contribution

This thesis contributes theoretically to literature on the topic of advertising and sexually and objectified advertising of males in various ways.

This thesis highlights as well as providing insights into a modern phenomena which is not only limited to women as sexualized and objectification in fact happens to men too, however it has rather be ignored. Previous literature has though mainly focused on sexualization and objectification from the women’s perspective. Therefore, this thesis firstly contributes with a general overview within the areas to generate a total and further understanding of the problematization brought up in this thesis, by covering the areas of sexualization in advertising, consumer attitudes, brand image and purchase intention.

This thesis also contributes by highlighting current literature by providing updated, specific and descriptive information on the topic of sexually and objectified males, such as how the image of the man has been portrayed throughout modern times. Male bodies in advertising and its effects on brand image have also been highlighted.

Furthermore, this thesis contribute to new areas of the study on consumer attitudes from a cultural perspective by highlighting Swedish consumer attitudes which have not discovered widely yet.

In short, the thesis contributes with a better understanding of sexually and objectified male portrayals in fashion advertising and the effects it has on brand image further from a Swedish males consumer perspective.

7.3 Practical Implications

The findings of this thesis are of relevance and importance for both advertisers, marketers, brands, consumers, potential consumers of brands as well as everyone involved in the creational process of advertising.

Firstly, this thesis contributes with practical knowledge that marketers and advertisers can apply in their efforts towards creating a successful brand management by aligning with the modern consumers values and beliefs. The findings of this thesis can help brands, advertisers and others involved in the advertising process to enhance their understanding of how feelings, attitudes, beliefs and judgements towards their brands and advertisements ultimately affect the brand image developed by their consumers, as well as purchase intention. This way, marketers and advertisers especially those who are stuck in the old way of marketing communication and experience slow growth or decrease in their profit can find new solutions
or directions. It can also be a guide for new brands for their successful modern brand management with the practical knowledge of modern male consumers values such as authenticity while providing the means for self identity expressions.

Increasing more authentic and natural representations in the ads means that male consumers could gain positive body images through the ads and this menomina could solve the issues previously mentioned such as body anxiety, lowering self image and self esteem that men started to face.

7.4 Limitations and Future Research

This thesis is not without its limitations in that it may have impacted the trustworthiness or authenticity of this research as well as the quality of the thesis.

The first limitation of this thesis concerns our sampling method. The samples could have been better by selecting men who are more fashion-conscious and familiar with the brands. That way, more interesting results could have been achieved. However, the strength of this research also lies in its wider perspectives of male consumers attitudes towards fashion brands.

The second limitation of this study concerns the potential missing of words and meanings in relation to the transcription of the interviews as half of the interviews were conducted in Swedish and then translated to English. Due to word and lingual differences, some words may or cannot be fully translated with the exact meaning and may therefore have impacted the trustworthiness and authenticity of the results in this research.

The third limitation of this research concerns the potential bias of social desirability in relation to the interviewees. Social desirability is defined as “A distortion of data that is caused by respondents attempted to construct an account that conforms to socially acceptable model of belief or behaviour” (Bryman & Bell, 2015, pp. 728). It can for that reason not be entirely excluded that the respondents’ in this thesis answered in a way they knew would not deviate too much from what is thought of as socially acceptable but which in this case, further may have affected the results of this thesis.

The fourth limitation of this study concerns the limited numbers of the participants. Although this qualitative research with semi-structured interviews enabled to authors of this thesis to generate a wider and in-depth perspective of male consumers attitudes, it is not enough to generalize the results. For the future, it might be interesting to investigate quantitative research to gain big numbers to catch the general consumer attitudes towards the visual representations within the selected topic.
Finally, the age diversity of the male respondents’ may have impacted the trustworthiness and authenticity of this thesis in that it does not focus specifically on a specific age-group or generations. For instance, young adults are considered one of the most influenced age groups by brands, thereby it would have been interested in focusing on different age groups. That way, the results can be analyzed in accordance to specific schemes.

Considering these factors, for future research purposes, firstly, an investigation into the other perspectives than merely male perspectives of the research phenomena is suggested. For instance, the perspectives of females and homosexuals towards sexually objectified male portrayal in fashion ads can further provide academia and the advertising industry with not only significant and interesting insight but also with tools for how to approach the research phenomena in their professions. It is also interesting to investigate the topic from different cultural perspectives. For instance, Japan is still ranked as 110th in gender equal ranking according to Global Gender Gap Report (GGR, 2018). It would therefore be interesting to investigate the phenomena with a case study focusing on specific culture which can additionally provide valuable data and material for comparison for future research.

Additionally, this study highlighted the portrayals of men, since a major part of previous research has been devoted towards female portrayals and the female perspective. However there are other areas such as portrayals of disabled people, elder people and homosexual people which are still limited or excluded from the studies. Therefore, for future research, it is interesting to include such groups and how they are represented through advertising as well as the consumer attitudes towards such descriptions and its effect on brand image.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, quantitative research on this topic is encouraged as it is interesting to gain consumer perspectives in much bigger scale that could not be achieved through qualitative research.
References


https://www.researchgate.net/publication/301625494_Images_of_Men_and_Masculinity_in_the_Mas
s_Media_A_Selected_Research_Bibliography [Accessed 30th May 2019].


Appendix A

Topic Guide

Section 1
1. Approach
With friendly greeting, explaining who we are and appreciating the interviewees for their participation to the interview. A short introduction of the topic, explanation of the use and purpose of the interview, as well as mentioning approximate duration of the interview.

2. Ethical Consideration
Regarding personal information such as age, occupation and other backgrounds are asked either before or after the interview. Interviews were asked if they accept their own names or prefer to be called by a nickname or anonymous for the case of using their materials for this Master Thesis. Interviewees were also asked if they accept audio recording during the interview. Interviewees were also told that there is no need to answer any questions against their wish as well as their right to stop the interview anytime they wish. Any questions regarding interview process was asked before the actual interview.

3. Ice - breaking question
Ice - breaking questions were done in order for the interviewees to feel comfortable with the interviewer as well as the setting. Also, their interests (e.g. sports or fashion) are asked.

Section 2
Opening questions
Exposure of objectified male portrayals in advertising
Present (number) advertisement to the interviewees.
Example of questions:
a) What are your first impression of these advertisements ?

Section 3
Key topics
Topic 1: Feelings from the advertisements
Example of questions:
a) What are your feelings when you see these advertisements ?
b) What makes you feel that way?

Topic 2: Judgement about the advertisements
Example of questions:
a) What do you like/dislike about these advertisements?
b) How would you refer to similarities and differences in these advertisement?

Topic 3: Belief towards brands
Example of questions:
   a) What are your general impression of the brand?
   b) How would you describe the brand (e.g. with adjunctive, experiences)

Topic: Attitude towards brands
Example of questions:
   a) What is your opinion on these brands?

Topic: Influence on brand image
Example of questions:
   a) How these advertisements change your perception of the brands when you see these ads? Any new thoughts about the brands?
   b) How these advertising influence your buying intentions?

Topic 3: Attitudes towards the advertisements
Example of questions:
   a) How would you describe your attitude towards the advertisements? (e.g. Positive or negative)

Section 4
Additional Questions
   a) How do you define “masculinity?”
   b) What do you think about “homosexuality?”

Section 5
Closing Questions
   a) Is there anything that you would like to add?
Appendix B

The following tables presents examples of the quotes by interviewees derived from themarized components based on the analytical framework.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feelings from the advertisement (affect)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples of words used (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>critical, skeptical, bored, annoyed</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>and dubious, frustration, pressure</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of quotes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...] I think it is the concept of ‘we’ll take a good-looking, super fit model, that shows off his six pack and then make a good picture’. From that, it becomes generic, and an obvious construction. Also a bit boring as it doesn’t stick out. It becomes just one out of hundreds[...]. (Carl, 40).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel frustrated, because the ads are so bodily-focused. Calvin Klein, Armani, Boss, Diesel, Dolce &amp; Gabbana and Zegna[...]. [...] I do not feel that I identify myself with them[...]. (Tor-Björn, 57).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, I feel that I have to work on my beach body. Seeing the models gives me some sort of a benchmark of what I should look like and I feel that I have to work on it[...]. (Jesper, 26).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of words used (2)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>amusing, creative, inspiring, happy</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of quotes:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...] American Eagle feels like a representation of how approximately most men look like [...] - Magnus P (51)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like this picture with American Eagle, you have different males with completely different bodies, looking more like natural people. There is a joy over the picture, the people are smiling[...]. - Magnus K (52)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...] In the American Eagles, there you have different types of bodies, not only perfect ones, so that one distinguishes itself from the others as it is closer to reality[...]. - Carl (40)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judgements about the advertisements (cognitive)</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Examples of words used (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>expected, boring, obvious, standard, plain,</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>choreographed and staged</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of quotes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[...] For the advertisements with the bodybuilder models (Boss, Armani, Dolce &amp; Gabbana, Zegna and Calvin Klein) they feel mostly plain, and I just browse through them. - Carl (40)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Heines and Uniqlo are a bit boring, so I don’t really like them but I don’t dislike them either. It’s just that it does not really appear clearly and obvious what they sell and more could have happened in the advertisements. The underwear did not look too good as well. - Magnus P. (51)

I don’t devote too much time on underwear, I buy by Björn Borg and A-Z. Also, I haven’t tried most of the brands so it is hard for me to have an attitude about them, so neutral I would say. - Lars (56)

Example of words used (2)
‘fun’, ‘genuine’ and ‘untypical’.

Examples of quotes

American Eagles shows that ‘This is how you can also look’. That feels healthier and is perhaps smarter also? They signalize that ‘we do underwear for males, it works no matter how you look, you’re good as you are and we got the underwear for you[...]. - Carl (40)

I like American Eagles, because they do not look so serious, it is a natural setting attached to the construction of the picture and the males are laughing. It looks and feels more natural[...]. - Tor-Björn (57)

you have to deviate from the normal. American Eagle in this case is a deviation, and a normal one actually. - Magnus K. (52)

Beliefs about the brand

Examples of words used (1)
Expensive, Highly sexualised, Fake glamour, ‘one-concept-fits-all’

Examples of quotes

Fredrik 39 "I feel like most of these brands are trying to market through highly sexualised models. Calvin Klein, Emporio Armani, Derek Rose, Hugo Boss, Diesel, Polo Ralph Lauren, Dolce & Gabbana, Ermenegildo Zegna and Björn Borg are all doing the same thing, trying to market using male muscular models that don't look like real people."

Tommy* (40) "[...] dorch gabbana for me is plastic, sleesy, expensive, fake glamour brands [...] little bit braddy, spoiled upper class. [...]"

Alan* (28) "[...] I don't have her any regular thinking about that. I don't go around each day thinking oh yeah that's [the] underwear [brands] I don't care for that kind of stuff"[...] I start thinking about expensiveness in older brands[...] So they got the high prices already and they stayed in that way and is there opposite for new brands. they're trying to sell its more cheaper [...]"

Examples of words used (2)
Inclusive, Diverse, Fun

Example of quotes
American Eagle feels like a brand that includes everyone and are for all types of males. - Jesper (26)

### Attitude towards the brand

#### Negative and neutral attitude formation

Examples of quotes:

Albin (25) ‘Some of these brands I use myself and with those brands I have been satisfied with their products. To those certain brand I am positive. I cannot say that I am negative towards the other brands. I guess you can say that I am neutral to the brands that I haven't tried. The only way for me to be negative about a brand is because of the advertisement maybe. If you can’t complain about the product I feel that I cannot be negative towards it or towards the brand I think’.

Magnus (52) ‘Neither positive or negative. I have no relation to any of the brand, more than Diesel then. It is sometimes hard with brands because often you think that the brand in itself are the most important aspect, but there can be other important factors too, such as quality and price. I also think that to the largest part, brands are about conveying feelings and that is something you are creating yourself too based from what you are seeing. It is also unavoidable to not do that, since it is public advertisements and you see it everywhere’.

#### Positive attitudes formation

Examples of quotes:

Lars (56) ‘I like American Eagles because they do not disappear, they have different types of models’.

Andreas (28) ‘Then maybe Heines and American Eagle, those ads I can maybe identify myself with. they feel more natural’.

### Negative influence on Brand Image

**Reduced purchase intention, reduced perceived quality and value**

Examples of quotes:

Jacob* (41) ‘I almost make me less likely to wanna buy them [...] I will be happy to look like that but the work goes with it and maintain you gonna be a bit of obsessive [...] I just go for the basic products that’s gonna do their job [...] none of them gonna influence my buying behaviour positively for the brands’

Albin (25) ‘I am not getting the feeling of that I want this (Diesel, nr 14 specifically, but overall most of them) just because the advertisement shows this. A bit idiotic maybe. It's a feeling of nonsense. it's not representing reality. I am not very affected by the advertisements to be honest’.  
Alan*(28) "My buying intentions for pictures doesn't go higher when I see the pictures. The anger men doesn't talk to me and their sexuality doesn't appeal to me so doesn't make me wanting the brand or the underwear more[...]”
Positive influence on Brand Image
Not affecting purchase intention, but increased perceived quality and value

Examples of quotes:

Alan* (28) "[...] more happy pictures and fun pictures tend to get stuck into my mind more and when they got stuck into my mind for longer time period, there are higher chance for me to buy it. (however he said in the end, in his case, price and sustainability are those mattered. he also said "(referring Appendix 14 (Hanro, 2018) it's not as much as muscular, so he looks more like a normal guy so [...] when a person try to buy the pants, yeah he looks more normal, just like me [...] but again does people really think like that? I can look like this guy in this underwears, I don't think so[...])"

Fredrik (39) "[...] brands like Hanro, Hanes, Uniqlo and American Eagle where they use models who look more like real people and focus more on the product that they're trying to sell. I personally feel more inclined towards buying these brands."

Fredrik (41) “I like that one (Appendix 16). I never heard about that brand before so that makes me a bit interested in to see what more they have. And They have little bit of color…”
Appendix C

New campaign: Calvin Klein's first-ever Super Bowl commercial, showed Mr Terry flexing his muscles while wearing nothing but a pair of Calvin Klein briefs 2013  
Appendix D

JASON MORGAN FRONTS 2015 EMPORIO ARMANI UNDERWEAR CAMPAIGN
Source:
Appendix E

Derek Rose: Hipster Trunks 2016
Source: https://thejourney21.wordpress.com/2016/03/07/derek-rose-hipster-trunks-review/
Appendix F

Source: https://www.thetrendspotter.net/17-best-mens-underwear-brands/
Appendix G

Boss Hugo Boss Bodywear Ad Campaign Fall/Winter 2014/2015
Source: http://theessentialist.blogspot.com/2014/08/boss-hugo-boss-bodywear-ad-campaign.html
Appendix H

The New Diesel HERO Fit Underwear campaign has just been released and has gone viral with top male models Tyler Maher, Christian Hogue and Maximillian Silberman shooting selfies and posing in candid shots wearing the brands new line of underwear. 2015
Source: https://www.bangandstrike.com/bangtalk/diesel-hero-fit-underwear-campaign-has-top-male-models-shooting-selfies/
Appendix I

Source:
Appendix J

Source: https://www.thetrendspotter.net/17-best-mens-underwear-brands/
Appendix K

Source: https://www.pinterest.se/pin/215821007127050098/
Appendix L

Source: https://thesocioartist.wordpress.com/2010/08/16/attraction-is-becoming-rocket-science/
Appendix M

Dolce and Gabbanas and D&G summer 2007 campaigns
Appendix N

Appendix O

Source: https://issuu.com/hanro_of_switzerland/docs/hanro_181_endconsumerfolder_men
Appendix P

Bjorn Borg Men's Underwear Collection 2016, April 2016 (lookbook/catalog), Model: Isha Blaaker
Source: https://models.com/client/bjorn-borg
Appendix Q

UNDERWEAR  Enjoy comfort and ease of movement with fine materials and patterns.
Appendix R

American Eagle, Body-Positive Mens Underwear Campaign... Because The Real You Is Sexy! #AerieMan, 2016.

Appendix S

UNDERWEAR FOR PERFECT MEN

Source: 2015 Dressman
https://girltalkhq.com/underwear-brand-dressmann-just-made-a-badass-statement-for-positive-male-body-image