

Men and their perception of gender stereotypes used in print advertisements

Master Thesis



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Statutory declaration

We declare in lieu of an oath that we have written this master thesis ourselves and that we have not used any sources or resources other than stated in the reference list. We further declare that we have clearly indicated all direct and indirect quotations. This master thesis has not been submitted elsewhere for examination purposes.

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Abstract

This thesis deals with the question of how men perceive the usage of gender stereotypes in print advertisements. After reviewing existing literature in the field of gender stereotypes and their utilization in advertisements, a research gap has been identified in two areas: male gender stereotypes and perception of advertisements. Hence, this thesis combines these two aspects in an attempt to contribute to filling the aforementioned gap. The empirical data for this study was gathered through fourteen semi-structured in-depth interviews with male customers of apparel who have German citizenship. The outcome was coded manually.

The findings of this study revealed that the participating men reacted more positively towards traditional stereotypes of men and women. Any depictions that did not show men as muscular, powerful or strong were considered unmanly and evaluated more negatively. In addition, it was found that while women tend to struggle with discriminating depictions, the interviewed men stated they do not feel restricted when being put into a category.

In conclusion, the outcome of this study implies that traditional stereotypes and classic gender roles are still deeply anchored in the participants' minds. It is argued that as long as advertisers reproduce these traditional images in advertisements, the mindset of men will not change. This, in turn, can make a change in people's mindsets and a move towards a more equal society difficult.

This study is limited to a small sample of apparel customers and is therefore not generalisable.

Key words: gender stereotypes, traditional stereotypes, masculinity, femininity, advertising, perceptions

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1 Introduction

This thesis aims to contribute to the existing body of research about gender stereotypes in advertising by examining men's perception of the display of both female and male models in print adverts. It is intended to explore how men perceive these depictions, what feelings and opinions they elicit and whether men are aware of gender role specific portrayals used in advertisements. The researchers argue for the importance of this study for two reasons: First, the majority of the research done in this field has focused on women: how they are depicted in adverts and how women perceive these portrayals. Secondly, there seems to be the general idea that images used in advertising can impact negatively on people's lives because they promote unrealistic body images, traditional gender roles or the superiority of certain social groups. Yet most studies have analysed the content of the advertisements and have neglected to investigate how customers perceive these images and interpret them respective to their individual circumstances. Hence, the objective of this thesis is to examine men's perceptions of male depictions in print adverts in an attempt to help fill the research gap around male stereotypes in advertising. The purpose of this study is to understand how men evaluate stereotypical portrayals and whether these images are really perceived as drastically as assumed by some researchers and individuals from the general public.

The following chapter provides the background of the study and how the research question was derived. Firstly, it is explained what gender stereotypes are and why they might be utilized by marketers. The next section then shortly presents the negative effects gender stereotypes can have on individuals and thereby argues for the importance to analyse perceptions. It continues introducing previous studies, which have mostly focused on women and how they are affected by gender stereotypes. This lack of research about men leads to the research objective of analysing male customers' perceptions and attitudes towards current print advertisements. Finally, the relevance and contribution of this study are highlighted.

1.1 Background

Gender issues in advertising have been an increasingly interesting topic for researchers since the 1960s (Eisend, 2010). A vast amount of studies have been conducted to analyse the display of men and women in print advertisements (e.g. Bolliger, 2008; Elliott & Elliott, 2005; Robertson & Davidson, 2013; Zotos & Tsichla, 2014), radio advertisements (e.g. Furnham & Schofield, 1986; Furnham & Thomson, 1999; Monk-Turner et al., 2007 cited in Eisend, 2010, p. 426) as well as television commercials (e.g. Gilly, 1988; Knoll & Eisend, 2011; McArthur & Resko, 1975). The findings generally confirmed that even though the roles of men and women in society have changed over the past five decades, advertisers still tend to rely on a stereotypical display of males and females in advertisements.

Gender specific stereotypes are based on cultural interpretations and classifications of roles associated with men and women. It is important to keep in mind that there is a difference between sex and gender. While sex is a biological binary concept that segments individuals into male and female (Basow, 1992 cited in Bolliger, 2008, p. 46), gender is “a term defined by society and its cultural norms” (Bolliger, 2008, p. 46). In addition, Bolliger (2008, p. 46) points out that masculine gender roles are widely associated with strength, power, aggressiveness and success, while female roles are usually connected to warmth, supportiveness and submissiveness.

Knoll & Eisend (2011, p. 869) refer to Vinacke (1975) to define stereotypes as “a set of concepts pertaining to a social category” and link further to Ashmore & Del Boca (1981) to identify gender stereotypes as “beliefs that certain attributes differentiate women and men”. Yu, Yang, Lu & Yan (2014, p. 145) argue that stereotypes are one of many cognitive shortcuts that people use in order to navigate through complex daily life. The authors continue pointing out that people make use of stereotypes when they encounter a new person about whom they do not (yet) have individuating information. Stereotypes themselves do not necessarily have to be negative judgements and they can prove to be quite useful in everyday life when one is missing orientation. However, it is important to take into account that stereotypes are always

oversimplified concepts, and using them can lead to misunderstandings, misjudgements and hurtful evaluations. Stereotypes become especially problematic if they restrain life choices and opportunities for people belonging to a certain social group (Knoll & Eisend, 2011).

Lafky, Duffy, Steinmaus & Berkowitz (1996, p. 380) explicate that the reason why advertisers still rely on stereotypical displays of men and women is that these concepts provide a shortcut that allows consumers to readily identify for whom the product is intended. This view is supported by Wolin (2003, p. 111), who explains that gender often serves as a segmentation strategy since gender divisions are, on the one hand, easily understandable for customers. On the other hand, they provide large and profitable segments for marketers in which impacts of change and responsiveness can be clearly measured. Almost all products on the market are gendered, and through consumption choices individuals can symbolise and reinforce their belonging to a certain group. Several authors (e.g. Safta, 2013; Schroeder & Zwick, 2014; Wolin, 2003) contend that because of the reasons presented, marketers are slow or unwilling to dispense the use of stereotypes, since these perception clichés allow them to communicate a magnitude of things to the audience without actually saying them.

1.2 Research problem

The following section was designed to provide a deeper understanding of how the research question was derived. Whilst reviewing existing literature about the usage of gender stereotypes in advertising, it was noticeable that the majority of the studies focused on women as well as the content of the advertisements. A research gap was identified regarding men, on the one hand, and the perception of adverts, on the other hand. Hence, this study combines these two aspects by analysing men's perceptions of gender role specific portrayals in print advertisements.

Therefore, the subsequent part of the thesis examines gender stereotypes in general and the negative effects advertisements might have on individuals,

the importance of analysing perceptions and finally stereotypical displays of women in advertising.

1.2.1 Gender stereotypes and negative effects of adverts

Knoll & Eisend (2011, p. 869) explain that gender stereotypes consist of four different components: trait descriptors (e.g. caring, successful), physical characteristics (e.g. height, hair-growth), role behaviours (e.g. leaders, followers) and occupational status (e.g. housewife, mechanic). Each component comprises certain traits, which are respectively associated closely with either men or women. While the authors point out that stereotypes do not always have to be negative judgements, there are others that claim that the usage of gender stereotypes in media, such as advertising, can have negative effects on society and individuals within this society. Navarro-Beltra & Llaguno (2012, p. 172) refer to Shaw (1994) to emphasize that modern media reproduce and maintain current gender ideologies. Various authors (e.g. Black, Marola, Littman, Chrisler & Neace, 2009; Lafky et al., 1996; McArthur & Resko, 1975) argue that media are contemporary means to express cultural ideals and voice concern about what future generations will learn from these depictions. According to Black et al. (2009, p. 882) children organize the world into schemata and as soon as they understand that they are a boy or a girl they start to classify objects and activities according to gender. As they grow up, what they see, what they are taught and what they learn from looking at other people will shape their own sense of self, their actions as well as their self-esteem and attitude towards others. Hence, Black et al. (2009) argue that since children are confronted with stereotypes from an early age, they internalize them, which leads then to a cycle of reproduction.

However, stereotypes cannot only potentially influence children negatively, but they can also have unfavourable repercussions for adults. Feminists, scholars, activists as well as conscious consumers have argued for many years that women are depicted inferior in comparison to men (Lafky et al., 1996), which will be discussed in detail in subchapter 1.2.3. Thomas & Treiber (2000) argue that not only women, but also various racial or religious groups such as African-Americans or Jews are faced with adverse stereotypes. In

addition, several authors (e.g. Elliott & Elliott, 2005; Zotos & Tsichla, 2014) describe that not only the use of stereotypes in adverts can have a negative effect on individuals, but also the immaculate and unrealistic body images that are communicated through advertisements can impact a person's self-confidence and sense of self-worth and lead to unnatural behaviour such as anorexia, bulimia or excessive exercise. Some people even opt for plastic surgery in order to reach their beauty ideal, which is presented to them in magazines, TV commercials, billboards, movies and other media (Elliott & Elliott, 2005, p. 4).

1.2.2 The importance of perception

Given these drastic effects that images distributed in the media can have on people's life, the authors argue that it is important to analyse how people perceive advertisements. Since the majority of the studies so far have focused on the content of the advert, yet neglected how these images are received by consumers, the researchers believe that it is important to study perceptions. This will help to get a better understanding of the emotions and ideas that advertisements convey to people, and what messages people deduce from adverts. Hall (1980 cited in Livingstone, 1998) is seen as a pioneer in identifying the importance of how people perceive texts (note, this could be a book, movie, image and other creative work) and paved the way for reception theory. More explicitly, audience theory argues that

"audiences are not merely passive receptacles for imposed meanings [...] but rather individual audience members who are actively (albeit often unconsciously) involved—both cognitively and emotionally—in making sense of texts." (Oxford University Press, 2015)

This means that it cannot be claimed that the meaning of a text is predetermined, since it depends on the audience to interpret the text. It is done individually, through perception, comprehension, interpretation, evaluation and response. Hence, "meaning is the product of a negotiation between the audience and the text in a particular context of reception" (Oxford University Press, 2015) and it is argued that each individual uses media for their own purposes. For this reason, no general statements can be made

about how audiences perceive texts (or in case of this study advertisements) and therefore analysing perceptions was seen as essential. Since the interpretation of texts is done individually, it is strongly dependent on the person's situation and circumstances in social, financial, cultural, educational and other contexts. Thus, the authors of this study argue that the only way of understanding what meaning is attributed to advertisements and whether they actually have such a drastic effect on people's life is by asking individuals and analysing their responses.

1.2.3 Gender stereotypes of women

The majority of previous studies have focused on the display of women in advertisements and the way these images affect them. The role of women in society has changed quite drastically since the 1960s due to the feminist movement. Women started to acquire higher education and to move into the job market, distancing themselves from the classical image of the stay-at-home wife who looks after the children. The demand for equal opportunities for men and women grew steadily and led to women pursuing executive positions, which were previously dominated by men. In summary, this movement not only resulted in women having an increased disposable income on hand, but also in changes to the occupational, social and domestic structures (Zotos & Tsichla, 2014).

However, it seems that these societal changes have been slow to translate into the advertising sector. Feminists, scholars as well as the general public often criticize marketers for the use of images such as:

"portrayals that [are] unrealistic and limited; pictures of women as sex objects, "happy housewives" themes of females as incompetent, portrayals of womens' dependency upon men; and underrepresentation of working women" (Wasson, 1973; Courtney and Whipple, 1983 cited in Zotos & Tsichla, 2014, p. 446)

Zotos & Tsichla (2014) proceed to elaborate that this ongoing debate is likely to be the reason for the continuing interest that researchers show in this topic. It seems that after facing strong criticism in the past some marketers have

shifted to a more equal portrayal of men and women in advertising, yet research also confirms that stereotypes are still heavily communicated through adverts.

What is interesting to see is that within different generations of women there are also differences as to which depictions are perceived as offensive: older women, on the one hand, tend to be more critical towards the sexual and empowered depiction of female models. Younger women, on the other hand, seem to be more angered by the traditional display of women as housewives and caretakers of the family. These findings reconfirm that stereotypes are not a constant idea but can change over time, since they are connected and based on cultural and social situations.

In contrast to the vast amount of existing literature, which examines the female portrayal in advertisements, the study at hand focuses on men – both how they are depicted in advertisements and how these images are perceived by male consumers. Several authors (e.g. Elliott & Elliott, 2005; Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010) confirm that male gender stereotypes in advertising is an under-researched topic and that hardly anything is known about the impact or the effectiveness of using different male portrayals. Hence, the focus of this thesis is placed on men, since the authors believe that in order to complete the research field of gender stereotypes research about men needs to be conducted.

1.3 Research objective

For this reason, this research project aims to explore the perceptions and attitudes of male customers towards male portrayals in print advertisements. The objective is to find out whether male consumers are aware of stereotypes used in adverts, which portrayals they perceive as stereotypical and how they feel about the usage of gender specific images and roles.

Consequently, the following research objective was formulated:

Analyse male customers' perceptions and attitudes towards current print advertisements.

The topic and research aim were purposefully kept quite broad at the beginning in order to keep an open mind during the data analysis process. Determining particular topics to look out for in advance can limit the focus to certain words or aspects of the interview, and important information that might not fit into these predetermined categories could be lost.

1.4 Research question

In order to achieve the above-mentioned research objective, the following research question has been developed:

“How do male customers perceive gender stereotypes in print advertisements?”

Since this is a rather broad question it was decided to limit the scope of the study in two ways: Firstly, the focus was placed on one country only, namely Germany. Traditional gender roles and ideas of masculinity are different from country to country, depending on their culture. Hence, while limiting the generalizability of the study, narrowing down the subject of the study was believed to make the findings more specific and meaningful. Secondly, print advertisements were selected from just one product category, specifically the fashion industry. The purpose was again to increase the significance of the findings, as different depictions are used across product categories. Comparing these would have been too broad and was simply not possible within the limited timeframe of this study.

1.5 Relevance and contribution

This thesis contributes to the on-going debate about stereotypical gender portrayals in advertising by extending knowledge into the under-researched niche of male portrayals and their corresponding perceptions.

The topic of stereotypical displays of gender roles used in advertisements has been widely researched over the past five decades. From as early as the 1960s researchers have shown interest in this field and have conducted studies to analyse how men and women are portrayed in advertisements (Eisend, 2010, p. 418). Due to changes in society in this time frame, the topic has remained compelling, as scholars have been intrigued to see whether these changes are reflected in the depictions of male and female models in adverts. Even though eventually some changes were visible, the consensus was that marketers were slow to adapt to and reflect these 'new' gender traits (Knoll & Eisend, 2011). It seems that because of this tardiness, or some might even call it ignorance, to abandon the utilization of stereotypical displays, scholars keep coming back to this topic. The aim might be to alert the public and society that these depictions are still there and that as long as people are confronted with them on a daily basis, whether they actively acknowledge them or just absorb them subconsciously, changes towards a more equal society will be improbable.

Eisend (2010, p. 418) argues that this vast body of research conducted about gender stereotypical images in advertising, especially in more recent studies, reflects ambiguity towards the direction in which advertisements are developing. While some authors (e.g. Wolin, 2003; Furnham & Mak, 1999 cited in Eisend, 2010, p. 418) observe that marketers are using slightly less stereotypes in advertisements and see this cautiously as a positive development, others (e.g. Ganahl et al., 2003; Milner & Higgs, 2004 cited in Eisend, 2010, p. 418) dispute this view and contend that women are still victims of stereotypes and that the situation has become even worse. The reason for these varying findings might be due to cultural and timing differences in the execution of these studies. However, given the fact that this ambiguity exists, it is safe to assume that gender stereotypes in advertising will still be the focus of various studies to come in the future.

As explained earlier, most of the existing literature about gender stereotypes in advertising is centred on women and how females are depicted in adverts. This might well be due to claims made by feminists as well as the general

public that women are portrayed inferior to men and that the use of these stereotypical images limits choices and chances for women in real life. It seems that examining whether or not these claims are true, or if the depiction of women has changed over the past fifty years, is a field of great interest to a multitude of researchers. Furthermore, as Knoll & Eisend (2011) explain, unhappiness and dissatisfaction with unequal or offensive portrayals of men and women in advertising are a concern for governments worldwide. In 2008, the European Parliament has therefore issued a resolution with regard to gender stereotypical images used in adverts and has asked member countries to monitor advertisements more critically and to avoid stereotypical displays. Hence, various countries have funded research conducted in this area, and since women are perceived to be the ‘victims’ of stereotypes, more research has been focused on them.

In contrast, hardly any research has been conducted solely about male depictions in adverts. The reason for this, again, might be the fact that these kinds of studies usually focus on the victimized groups in society that may face discriminating or inferior associations. These groups are in most cases minorities or groups in society that are generally perceived less powerful, such as women. (Thomas & Treiber, 2000)

White men, on the other hand, were hardly ever confronted with or connected to diminishing depictions. On the contrary, throughout history, they were usually seen as in charge, the one who holds the power and in some cases even as oppressors. The discussion about the domination of men with regard to the subordinate position of women in society has emerged in the 1980s among sociologists. In this regard, the term ‘hegemonic masculinity’ was established, which was mainly coined by Australian sociologist Connell. Wedgwood (2009) explains that hegemonic masculinity “refers to particular kinds of behaviour and ways of being, which are made culturally dominant and come to be seen as the pattern of masculinity in general” (Kessler et al., 1982, p. 10 cited in Wedgwood, 2009, p. 331). This concept has been developed and refined over time and Connell & Messerschmidt (2005, p. 832) add that this term can be “understood as the pattern of practice (i.e., things

done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue." Relating to the idea of a dominant man in Western societies, one can argue that this notion is reflected in a white and heterosexual person, who is characterized as courageous, aggressive, independent, adventurous and tough (Donaldson, 1993, p. 645). Homosexual men or men with effeminate characteristics are often considered subordinate, just like women, and are met with hostility in today's Western society dominated by white and heterosexual men. Donaldson (1993, p. 648) looked more closely at this topic and put it in a nutshell:

"Antagonism to gay men is a standard feature of hegemonic masculinity [...] Such hostility is inherent in the construction of heterosexual masculinity itself. Conformity to the demands of hegemonic masculinity pushes heterosexual men to homophobia and rewards them for it, in the form of social support and reduced anxiety about their own manliness. In other words, male heterosexual identity is sustained and affirmed by hatred for, and fear of, gay men."

This, to some extent, still holds true for modern times and seems to also be reflected in advertisements.

Most information that can be found about men in adverts has been collected for comparative studies about men and women. Some examples for this comparative information include male versus (vs.) female speakers used for voice overs, male vs. female product experts, male vs. female product endorsers, percentage of males and females used for adverts, etc. (e.g. Gilly, 1988; Knoll & Eisend, 2011; McArthur & Resko, 1975). In general, these studies confirmed that male voices are used more often for voice overs in adverts, men appear as experts on the product while women are assigned the role of the product user and endorser and, in general, more males than females appear in commercials. However, very few researchers have given their full attention to examining how men are displayed in adverts or how men perceive the way male models are displayed in adverts. As mentioned before, various authors (e.g. Gilly, 1988; Navarro-Beltra & Llaguno, 2012) call attention to the fact that (gender) stereotypes are reproduced in adverts, which makes them omnipresent in people's minds, or at least in their

subconscious. Hence, if the stereotype of white men as powerful, strong and superior to other groups in society is constantly reproduced in adverts, men will continue to see themselves this way and will most likely also act accordingly. This, the authors deem, can have an impact on society as a whole, as it makes the change towards less discriminating and more equal opportunities considerably more difficult.

Moreover, men might also be subjected to oppressive stereotypes. Elliott & Elliott (2005) acknowledge this lack of research about men in advertising and argue that men, just like women, are confronted with unrealistic body images, objectified sexual portrayals and stereotypical categories such as successful businessmen, serial womaniser or rebellious outcasts. They continue pointing out that, again just like women, these depictions put pressure on men, and not living up to or being able to fit into these categories can have drastic effects on their self-confidence and happiness and therefore impact their quality of life.

Furthermore, the majority of previously conducted studies have focused so far on content analyses (e.g. Knoll & Eisend, 2011; Kolbe & Albanese, 1996; Thomas & Treiber, 2000). Researchers have analysed print advertisements as well as television commercials to see which stereotypes are used in adverts and what roles men and women are typically displayed in. These studies have provided great insights into the extent to which stereotypes are used and have confirmed that gender specific roles and images are still heavily relied on by marketers. Nevertheless, they have in most cases neglected consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards the usage of stereotypes in adverts and the advertisements in general. Some studies have been conducted in which perceptions of and reactions to certain advertisements have been examined. However, the focus of these studies was yet again placed on women (either women reacting to advertisements or men and women reacting to stereotypical female depictions).

Hence, the authors argue that it is important to examine male images in advertising and, more importantly, to understand how these images are

perceived by the viewers and what they communicate to them. The objective is to understand how they see the modern man, what feelings and associations current displays elicit, and what they take away or see as the message from the adverts. The aim is to contribute to the little research that has been done about men and male stereotypes in advertising and to take a step towards filling the existing research gap in this area. This is done by highlighting men's perceptions towards male gender stereotypes in print advertisements. The intention of this study was not only to provide an overview of the existing research in this field, but also to contribute new knowledge through interviews. By asking men how they feel about the adverts it was hoped to gain insights about men's perceptions and preferences. Through questions such as what they like and dislike about the adverts, whether the adverts contain stereotypical images for them and what they would change if they could, the authors aspired to get an idea about which displays are favoured by men.

1.6 Chapter outline

The first chapter was designed to provide an introduction to the topic at hand. The background of the study was examined and it was described how this study extends existing knowledge in this area. The second chapter deals with the theoretical framework used to interpret the empirical material gathered through the interviews. Special focus is placed on stereotypical portrayals of men that can be found in advertisements as well as theories regarding what form of display is most effective in engaging customers' interests. Chapter number three is dedicated to the methodology and research design used in this study. It explains how the data was collected and the reasons behind the methodological choices. In chapter four the selected adverts for this study are presented and chapter five continues analysing and discussing the findings in detail. Chapter six provides a conclusion and the answers to the research question are presented. Finally, limitations of the study as well as opportunities and topics for future research in this area are provided.

2 Theoretical framework

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of how masculinity is defined and interpreted, specifically in the German culture since this is the subject of this study. Furthermore, typical male depictions that are used in advertising are presented, alongside a model provided by Yuan & Shaw (2011 cited in Tan, Shaw, Cheng & Kim, 2013) that allows a classification of male portrayals in adverts into four categories, which in turn can be subdivided into seven different types. The chapter also touches upon two theories that are related to gender stereotypical displays in advertising, namely the classic theory and the stereotype content model. Finally, the concept of identity and identity construction through consumption are referred to, since a person's identity is assumed to have a large impact on how visual stimuli are perceived.

2.1 The masculine gender role

As mentioned in the first chapter, it is important to keep in mind that masculinity and femininity are socially and culturally constructed concepts. While the biological terms of sex, namely male and female, are mutually exclusive and generally applicable, the terms masculinity and femininity are subject to interpretation. Cultural differences can be detected and what is perceived as masculine in one country might not be true for others. (Bolliger, 2008, p. 46)

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003, p. 1010) defines masculinity as "the features and qualities considered to be typical of men". Tan et al. (2013, p. 238) refer to Craig (1992) and Goffman (1979) to reinforce that "[m]asculinities and male bodies are socially and historically constructed, created, and reinforced by social expectations based on shared meanings, especially by gender display in the mass media". Since this study focuses on the perception of male displays in advertising by German men, the German idea of masculinity will be referred to within this thesis, which is similar to the ones found in most Western societies. Bolliger (2008) argues that typical characteristics that are associated with men and masculinity in these

countries are strength, power, success, competence and aggressiveness. His physical appearance also reflects strength - he is athletic and well trained and shows off defined muscles. He is hard working and has a successful career, thereby providing for his family. In his free time, on the one hand, he likes to be outdoors, be active and engage in some form of physical exercise. On the other hand, he also likes to spend his free time with his family and unwind from his stressful life as a businessman. (ibid)

It is important to understand that Germany ranks rather high on Hofstede's masculinity index. Out of a range from zero to 120, Germany scored 66 points (Clearly Cultural, 2015). The index refers to the "distribution of roles between the genders" (ibid) and aims to provide an idea of what motivates people in the respective country (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). The relatively high number assigned to Germany indicates that its culture supports assertive and competitive behaviour and that male values are defined as maximally different from female values. Furthermore, it implies that "society will be driven by competition, achievement and success" (The Hofstede Centre, 2015). In contrast, countries that rank low on the masculinity index are associated with a modest and caring culture, and values associated with masculinity and femininity are similar. Countries with the lowest number on the masculinity index are, for example, Sweden with only five points or Norway with eight points.

It seems that understanding this index and being aware of what the numbers imply is crucial for the study at hand, for it supports the claim that ideas of masculinity and femininity are socially and culturally constructed and can vary across countries. More importantly, however, it provides an even better idea of how masculinity is constructed in the German society, which is the focus of the study at hand, namely as substantially removed from feminine traits. In other words, in order for the German man to be seen as 'manly' he needs to epitomise traits associated with masculinity such as "assertiveness, material success, self-centeredness, power, strength, and individual achievements" (Clearly Cultural, 2015). At the same time, he needs to be as far removed from feminine features as possible, both in his qualities as well as in his physical appearance.

2.2 Male stereotypes in advertising

Due to this interpretation of masculinity and the features associated with the male gender role, stereotypes developed that represent all or some characteristics inherent to a ‘real man’. These stereotypes make use of certain physical attributes and qualities as well as gender specific items or occupations, in order to communicate ‘maleness’. Consequently, these characteristics and traits are then adopted and used in the advertising industry. As mentioned earlier by Wolin (2003, p. 111), gender is an easy way to categorize products and to segment markets, and therefore classically male and female portrayals are used to make the distinction for consumers as easy and straightforward as possible.

Typical postures and settings that are frequently used in advertisements depict male models in occupational or athletic surroundings, for example at work in their office or outdoors engaged in some form of physical activity. They seem to be in control, confident and strong. One image that has gained popularity over the past couple of years is the ‘erotic male’, where men are portrayed in suggestive and sexually desirable situations. These images are designed to appeal to women as well as the ‘new’ male customer, who cares about his appearance and is not afraid to use products, which have traditionally been classified as feminine, such as beauty products. Rohlinger (2002) argues that while these images should symbolize freedom and power to make their own choices, they ultimately objectify men in the same way as women and encourage unrealistic body ideals.

Tan et al. (2013, p. 239) refer to Yuan & Shaw (2011), who derived seven different types of masculinity belonging to four distinct categories in order to subdivide and differentiate male portrayals in advertising. The first category is called ‘vigorous and macho’ and comprises the ‘touch and macho’ and ‘vigorous and sunny’ types. The second category, namely ‘refined and sophisticated’ includes the ‘refined and gentle’ and ‘stern and sophisticated’ types of masculinity. ‘Trendy and cool’ is the third category and it entails only one type, which is named identically. The fourth category, which is labelled

'other', contains the 'sensual and sexy' and 'androgynous' types of masculinity. Each type of masculinity will be explained in the following section:

The first type, called 'tough and macho', contains the traditional image of the lonely cowboy. The model has an athletic physique with defined muscles and sharp facial features. His attitude conveys determination, toughness and resolution and his look is usually quite unkempt and wild.

Secondly, the type 'vigorous and sunny' comprises the boy next door image, represented by a tanned and coy looking model with an innocent smile on his face. He is dressed casually and conveys an air of amiableness.

Models that appear cultured, well-mannered and intellectual can be classified as 'refined and gentle'. Their appearance is classic and clean, their hair is tidy and they are dressed in a preppy style, which often includes wearing glasses.

'Stern and sophisticated', the fourth type, is reserved for middle-aged men with successful careers. The models often wear suits and impress the viewers with a confident look that speaks of maturity and reliability.

The next type is termed 'trendy and cool' and refers to adverts displaying models in trendy clothes, provocative postures and conveying a rebellious temperament. They appear distanced from the viewers by using numb or aloof facial expressions and appear indifferent to viewers or to even leer at them.

Type six, 'sensual and sexy', describes models that wear revealing or tight clothes or are presented in their underwear. They usually look away from the camera and are positioned in postures and settings designed to arouse sexual desire in the viewers. However, these settings can often seem quite unnatural to onlookers.

Finally, the type 'androgynous' describes displays that are not characteristically manly. The models often appear feminine, wear make-up and assume a dependent and delicate posture.

In addition to these different types of models in adverts, Yuan & Shaw (2011 cited in Tan et al., 2013, p. 239) have also defined roles that the models can assume within advertisements. These roles include a professional or occupational role, in which the model is presented within a working

environment and professional attire. The entertaining role is usually assumed by celebrities such as athletes, actors, musicians, etc. In a familial role, the model is displayed in a domestic setting, as a father or husband, while in the recreational role the model is engaged in a leisure activity such as exercise or outdoor activities. Finally, and very common in the fashion industry, models can assume a decorative role to solely convey their looks and display the product.

2.3 Gender stereotype theories

When looking at related literature to the topic, two theoretical approaches about the usage of stereotypical images in advertising are referred to frequently: the classic theory, which refers to negative effects after breaking traditional gender roles, in contrast to the rather newly developed stereotype content model (Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010).

2.3.1 The classic theory

The classic theory indicates that “every divergence from the normative element of the stereotype runs the risk of being evaluated negatively” (Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010). Put differently, this means that every aspect of an advertisement that is not coherent with a stereotypical image embedded in people’s minds will not be perceived positively. This theory is coherent with the idea presented by Yu et al. (2014, p. 145) that stereotypes are cognitive shortcuts, which are used in everyday life to understand situations and to allocate information. Hence, according to this theory, if a display in an advertisement is not conform to a traditionally appointed gender role, the information will be perceived as confusing by customers. This, in turn, will lead them to disregard the advertisement or even develop negative feelings that might transfer onto the product or even the brand. In short, pursuant to the classic theory, gender role specific and stereotypical portrayals will work best in adverts, since they make the categorization process easier for consumers.

2.3.2 The stereotype content model

In opposition to this theory, Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu (2002) have developed the stereotype content model. This model, as the name indicates, focuses on the content of the stereotype and evaluates it along two dimensions: warmth and competence. Fiske et al. (2002) claim that regardless of whether the stereotype displayed is conform to or breaks with traditional images, it always contains a mixture of these two dimensions. A businessman, for example, can according to this model be classified as high in competence but low in warmth, while the display of a family father will be rated high in warmth but low in competence. The four authors (2002) continue elaborating that by using this model, stereotypes held towards various social groups can be subdivided into four categories: paternalistic (high in warmth, low in competence), contemptuous (low in warmth, low in competence), admiration (high in warmth, high in competence) and envious (low in warmth, high in competence).

Table 1
Four Types of Out-Groups, Combinations of Status and Competition, and Corresponding Forms of Prejudice as a Function of Perceived Warmth and Competence

		Competence	
		Warmth	Low
Warmth	High	Low	High
		Paternalistic prejudice Low status, not competitive Pity, sympathy (e.g., elderly people, disabled people, housewives)	Admiration High status, not competitive Pride, admiration (e.g., in-group, close allies)
Low	High	Contemptuous prejudice Low status, competitive Contempt, disgust, anger, resentment (e.g., welfare recipients, poor people)	Envious prejudice High status, competitive Envy, jealousy (e.g., Asians, Jews, rich people, feminists)

Table 1: Stereotype content model (Fiske et al., 2002, p. 881)

This model offers a more complex perspective on stereotypes than the classic theory and argues that attitudes and prejudices are most likely affected if social circumstances change. The stereotype content model has been tested and has throughout gained empirical support. The findings show that

paternalistic images are received more positively than, for instance, envious images and in general images that were rated high on the warmth dimension have triggered more affective responses. If these findings can be taken as indications for the study at hand, this would explain the usage of classic stereotypes for women in advertising. The image of a housewife (=paternalistic), for example, works better than the image of a businesswoman (=envious). For men, however, this model poses a direct contrast to the classic gender roles, since it suggests that the image of a disabled man in a wheelchair (=paternalistic), for instance, might be more effective than the image of an athlete (=envious). If these findings prove to be true, using stereotypical displays of male models in adverts, simply from a marketing perspective, would not be justifiable anymore, as non-traditional displays would be more appealing to consumers and therefore more effective in swaying their purchase decision.

There are ambiguous findings about which of these two strategies is more effective to use in advertisements. Even though the aim of this thesis is not directly to explore the effectiveness of advertisements, the findings can nevertheless be linked to these theories and it will be interesting to see which portrayal will be evaluated more favourably by the participants - the classic stereotypical display of males or the non-traditional portrayal.

2.4 Identity

Several definitions for the term ‘identity’ exist, which have been defined and refined over the years. For instance, identity can be described as “people’s concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others” (Hogg and Abrams, 1988), as “relatively stable, role-specific understandings and expectations about self” (Wendt, 1992) or as “mutually constructed and evolving images of self and other” (Katzenstein, 1996 all as cited in Fearon, 1999, pp. 4-5).

Fearon (1999, p. 2) explices that the current concept of identity can be interpreted in two ways, namely in a personal and in a social context. On the

one hand, within the social context, identity defines a social category that consists of a group of people who share certain features, attributes and characteristics. There is often a predetermined set of rules, which decides whether a person can be seen as a member or not. On the other hand, in the personal context, identity is defined as the sum of personal traits and characteristics, which distinguish the individual from other people. Usually, the individual person takes pride in these characteristics and therefore regards them in most cases as “socially consequential but more-or-less unchangeable” (*ibid*).

According to Hall & Du Gay (1996, p. 17), a person’s identity is not a stable and constant construct of the self, but is frequently adapted and changed over time. As a person encounters him- or herself in different surroundings or situations, certain aspects can be added to the personality, which in turn will change the person’s identity. Furthermore, they argue that a person’s identity cannot be seen as a single piece. Instead, it is fragmented and “multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions” (*ibid*).

Contrary to the belief that personal identities are built on similarities that can be detected in the people surrounding an individual, Hall & Du Gay (1996, p. 17) argue that identities are built based on differences. Understanding one’s unique traits and characteristics can help a person to determine his or her strengths and weaknesses. In short, by comparing oneself to others and by defining what one lacks it is easier to understand oneself and therefore to construct one’s identity. Basically, through exclusion of certain aspects this concept functions as a guideline for identification. The individual can thereby form a clearer picture about the self.

Given these different perspectives on identity, it can be said that it is hard to find a uniform and all comprising definition for this concept. In summary, identity can be seen as a concept that people develop about themselves, which is influenced by their cultural, social and economic environment. They

assume this concept as their personal identity, which can change over time as they evolve and find themselves in different situations and surroundings.

2.4.1 Identity construction through consumption

One of the researchers investigating the meanings of possession is Belk (1988, p. 139), who states that “[o]ur possessions are a major contributor to and reflection of our identities.” He points out that all individuals attach a particular meaning to certain products and concludes “that we are the sum of our possessions” (*ibid*). Therefore, he framed the concept of the extended self, which implies that the self is not only built upon purchased products, but also on how people perceive each other. He continues explaining that “[t]he notion of extended self is a superficially masculine and Western metaphor comprising not only that which is seen as ‘me’ (the self), but also that which is seen as ‘mine’” (p. 140). In sum, Belk underlines the fact that people do not only use objects to create their own self and to distinguish themselves from others, but that possessions serve as cues to get an impression of other human beings.

Schroeder & Zwick (2004, p. 21) devoted attention to the topic of how the masculine identity is connected to consumption as it plays a central role in constructing, maintaining and representing male bodies. The authors start from the premise that the male body is “a discursive ‘effect’ created at the intersection of consumption and several marketing discourses such as advertising, market segmentation, and visual communication [...]” (*ibid*). They elaborate further that almost every product is gendered, which applies to products both for men and women. As Schroeder & Zwick note, “[m]ost ad campaigns invoke gender identity, drawing their imagery primarily from the stereotypes iconography of masculinity and femininity.” (pp. 21-22). In this way, advertising creates a “system of difference” resulting in “iconic masculine activities such as shaving the face, driving fast cars, having a hearty appetite, smoking cigars, and drinking liquor [which] are juxtaposed to feminine visions of applying makeup, driving a minivan, eating ‘light’, doing the laundry, and decorating houses.” (p. 22).

As mentioned earlier, the masculine gender role in contemporary advertising is, among other things, associated with power, and thus, Rohlinger (2002, p. 61) concludes that “[p]roducts are juxtaposed with images of power, which suggests that the product is an extension of the owner”. In addition, Rohlinger refers to Glassner (1995), Messner (1995) and Pleck (1995) and derives the finding that “society ranks men according to physical strength and athletic ability” (p. 62), while very strong men are regarded masculine and weaker men are perceived rather feminine. This, in turn, has an impact on mass-produced goods which are associated with masculinity (*ibid*). Nevertheless, Rohlinger adds that nowadays gender role perceptions are more relaxed, and therefore, ads show more and more non-traditional depictions as well (*ibid*). She explains that especially the gay liberation movement in the 1960s called the stereotype of how a “real man” had to look into question.

Hence, these findings regarding the connection between identity and consumption (or possessions) proved helpful in evaluating the outcome of the interviews. The interviewees were asked with which male depictions they can identify and for what reasons. It will be interesting to see whether the male participants will favour the traditional masculine gender role that is associated with physical strength and power, or whether they consider non-traditional depictions more favourable.

3 Methodology

As the objective of this study is to explore how men perceive gender stereotypical displays in advertisements, it appears most appropriate to answer the research question by adopting a research design that aims to investigate the respondents' opinions, attitudes and perceptions towards the particular depictions. Hence, the most suitable method to understand how men perceive particular portrayals might be to involve the participants in a conversation and to gather, literally, words. This calls for a qualitative research design as it involves words rather than numbers (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 386), while in-depth interviews seem to be the preferred data collection technique "to probe deeply and open up new dimensions and insights" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012, p. 342). This approach is in line with the social constructionism paradigm, which claims that "reality" is not objective and exterior, but is socially constructed and given meaning by people" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012, p. 23) and that "people make sense of the world especially through sharing their experiences with others via the medium of language." (*ibid*) However, it should be noted that this study is limited to a small sample of fourteen German men only and that the small selection of ads were solely taken from the fashion industry. The reasons are presented subsequently in this chapter.

The following chapter was therefore designed to guide the reader through the methodological choices that were taken by the researchers to answer the research question and to demonstrate how the data collection process was carried out. Hence, this section begins with explaining the literature review procedure and continues with the research design. The chapter then proceeds with the data collection process and analysis and further touches upon a critical reflection on the data collection process. The penultimate section discusses ethical considerations before it closes with aspects that concern the credibility of the research findings.

3.1 Literature review

In order to obtain an overview of what is already known about gender stereotypes in advertising, the researchers commenced with a literature review.

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2012, p. 102) explain that the purpose of reviewing existing literature is to “discover what is already known within a particular field and to identify gaps in the literature”. Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 91) agree with Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2012, p. 102) that familiarizing oneself with the topic and the prior conducted research is essential in starting a research project.

Existing literature, which was reviewed for this research project, included books, journals, articles, as well as information gathered through online databases. Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 92) point out in this regard that it is crucial not only to reiterate the work that has been done by others, but to be able to interpret their work, apply it and use it to justify the importance of your study.

The analysis of existing literature and theoretical frameworks constitutes an important element of this study and was for this reason integrated into the writing process. Moreover, it can be argued that reviewing literature will allow readers to get a better understanding of the topic and the context of the study. According to Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 91) it can also demonstrate to readers that the authors of this study are familiar with and knowledgeable about the topic, which in turn can enhance the credibility of this study. Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, (2012, p. 103) explain that on the basis of existing sources the researchers are able to explain the background of their research idea and to depict the path from a broad research field to a narrowly focused research question that shall be investigated.

For this particular study, existing literature about gender stereotypes in advertising was reviewed. It was aimed to cover female as well as male stereotypes and different types of media such as television commercials, printed or radio advertisements. Even though the research question only focuses on male stereotypes in fashion print advertisements, a broad

literature review allowed the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the research field and to possibly identify a research gap. Through the attempt to fill the research gap, the researchers hope to contribute new findings relevant to this particular research field.

One must keep in mind that gender stereotypes in advertising represent a rather large field of research. Hence, a lot of studies have already been undertaken regarding this topic. However, due to access and language constraints, but most importantly due to the limited amount of time available for this study, it was not possible to review all existing data.

3.2 Research design

The most applicable research approach to this project appeared to be the inductive one, which implies that “theory is the outcome of research” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 13). To put it another way, this means that the researchers first collect data concerning a particular topic, then draw a conclusion from the findings, and eventually are able to formulate a theory. Nevertheless, Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 13) caution that while the inductive method is “an alternative strategy for linking theory and research”, one should be aware that this approach comprises deductive characteristics as well. For instance, the analysis of some data sets will often already lead to theory. Hence, the researchers might then want to adapt some parts of the data collection in order to explore whether these encountered theories hold true.

In addition, Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009, p. 127) point out that the inductive approach emphasizes “gaining an understanding of the meanings humans attach to events, a close understanding of the research context, the collection of qualitative data, a more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progresses, [...] less concern with the need to generalise” and therefore data collection methods and techniques were applied accordingly.

For this particular research project, it was aimed to collect data about perceptions and attitudes towards gender stereotypes in print advertisements through semi-structured in-depth interviews among male clothing customers.

Subsequently, the intention was to draw conclusions from the findings and to formulate a theory of whether current print advertisements used in the fashion industry are appealing to its customers or whether a different display would be more pleasing.

In order to answer the research question of this study, a mono method was chosen, which is the “us[age of] a single data collection technique and corresponding analysis procedures” (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 151). Thus, a single qualitative data collection technique, namely the semi-structured in-depth interviews, and its associated qualitative data analysis procedures were applied to this research project.

3.3 Data collection

In order to answer the research question satisfactorily, a qualitative research approach was adopted. This approach was carried out based on fourteen semi-structured in-depth interviews with a photo elicitation technique and it is explained more explicitly in the following sections.

3.3.1 Qualitative data

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2012, p. 127) explain that “[b]efore adopting any method of data collection, it always helps to be clear about the overall objectives of the research.” As the objective of this study is to explore how men perceive fashion advertisements and the male stereotypes depicted in these, the underlying object of study is attitudes. Hence, the most appropriate and efficient way to determine attitudes towards a certain phenomenon seems to be talking to the relevant target group, which signifies that basically “words” are required to be gathered. For this reason it appeared more suitable to use a qualitative approach for this study than a quantitative one, as “qualitative research tends to be concerned with words rather than numbers” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 386). Moreover, the research approach for this study was defined to be inductive, which supported a qualitative research design as well (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 386).

As a last point, one should keep in mind that a qualitative research design might enable the researchers to collect rich and detailed data, but it will always be limited to only a few participants - in our study: fourteen interviewees. Hence, it should be considered that the findings from this sample cannot be seen as representative for the general population.

3.3.1.1 Semi-structured in-depth interviews

In order to support and extend the information provided through the literature review, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with fourteen male customers of apparel. In-depth interviews are the key method to "discover[...] the views, perceptions and opinions of both individuals and groups through the language they use" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012, p. 126). In other words, the aim was to get the participants to open up and to gain in-depth knowledge about their honest perceptions and feelings towards male gender stereotypes in advertising. It was chosen to use a semi-structured approach for the interviews, as this allows the researchers to be flexible in adding or skipping questions from the predetermined interview guide. Interviewing each participant individually ensured that the interviewee did not feel influenced by other people, which in turn hopefully allowed the participant to reveal his true thoughts and opinions about the topic.

Due to the fact that the researchers decided to focus on the perceptions and attitudes of German men who buy their own clothing, the interview guide was created in German. Conducting the interviews in the mother tongue of both the researchers and the interviewees helped to express oneself better. In comparison, a foreign language might limit the ability to articulate oneself properly. The interview guide consisted of a set of approximately 25 questions (variations were possible depending on the interviewee and the topics he talked about), which were subdivided into five major topics. A detailed description of the interview guide can be found in 3.3.1.3. Contingent upon the answers of the interviewees, the semi-structured nature of the interview guide allowed the researchers to pose follow-up questions at any time and to discuss additional topics mentioned by the interviewees that were not included beforehand in the interview guide.

3.3.1.2 Photo elicitation

The interviewees were confronted with six examples of printed fashion advertisements that portray men in different situations. A detailed description of the adverts as well as pictures can be found in chapter four. The reason for including visuals in the data collection process was that they “allowed the possibility for new connections and relationships to emerge that would otherwise remain hidden from view [...]” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012, p. 152). According to Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 202), this method can be defined as photo elicitation and it allows participants to reflect upon their opinions and feelings that they associate with the setting at hand. Therefore, the interview questions were intended to prompt the interviewees to reveal their view on the advertisements provided, whether they can identify with the displayed persons, and what they would alter in these advertisements if they had the chance to. The aim was to yield new insights through this line of questioning, which can then be formulated into a theory in order to answer the research question.

As the amount of print advertisements in the fashion sector exhibiting male stereotypes is rather vast, it was for this reason difficult to analyse this subject matter as a whole. However, six print advertisements displaying men in different situations were chosen based on the masculinity types identified by Yuan & Shaw (2011 cited in Tan et al., 2013, p. 239), as explained in chapter two. These ads were shown to the participants for interpretation during the interviews, giving the interviewees concrete examples to refer to. The purpose of these ads was to obtain a clearer picture of how men perceive male stereotypes used in printed fashion advertisements. The pictures were used with the intention to stimulate conversation, to provide the interviewees with the opportunity to make concrete statements about what they see and to express their feelings towards the depiction (e.g. what they like or do not like about it, what they would like to alter or what they would prefer to see instead, if they can identify with the displayed person or not, etc.)

3.3.1.3 The interview guide

The structure of an interview is a crucial aspect of the research design (McGivern, 2009, p. 203). An interview guide was therefore created, which can be found in the Appendix. For structural purposes and to get a clear picture of the different components involved in this research project, the interview guide centred on three main aspects: perceptions, identification with the model and situation displayed, as well as potential alterations that would make the ad more appealing to the customer. The interview guide was then split into five distinct sections as follows:

1. Introduction
2. Main body
 - a. Buying behaviour and experiences with advertisements in the clothing sector
 - b. Attitudes and perceptions towards the selected adverts
 - c. Stereotypes in advertising and self-recognition
3. Closing questions

McGivern (2009, p. 203) points out that an introduction is indispensable “from an ethical point of view and in order to put the respondent(s) at ease.” Hence, the interviewees were provided with an interview agreement that they were meant to sign, which stated the topic and the purpose of the study, indicated the procedure and length of the interview, assured confidentiality and anonymity, asked them for their consent to be recorded on tape, informed them that they could end the interview at any time, and explicated that there are no right or wrong answers.

After the interviewees had signed the agreement, they were provided with the six selected advertisements, as well as with sufficient paper and a pen to note down their thoughts. The interviewees were asked to put down their thoughts in regard to what they see in the ad, how they feel about it, what they like and do not like, and whether they see themselves in the depictions. In addition, they were inquired to fill in a thought bubble, which would reveal the potential thoughts of the portrayed models in the ads. The participants could take as

much time as necessary to complete their notes and the thought bubbles. Afterwards, the recording started and the interviewees were asked to shortly introduce themselves.

Following the introductory part, the interviewees were asked more general questions to build rapport between the researchers and the interviewees (McGivern, 2009, p. 203). These questions were meant to explore their buying behaviour regarding clothing, whether they get inspired by advertising or display dummies in store, whether they read magazines targeted towards men, if they notice advertisements in magazines, whether they examine adverts in detail or if they skip them right away, etc. This section of the interview guide helped the researchers to receive background information about the interviewees and to get a first glimpse of their general awareness of, interest in, and experience with clothing, advertising and men's magazines, where these adverts can be found most often.

The second part of the main body revolved around the attitudes and perceptions of the interviewees towards the six chosen advertisements one by one. First, they were asked to describe the ads in their own words and then they were inquired to express their thoughts about the adverts, to state what they liked or did not like about them, what they would like to alter if they could, whether the adverts were appealing to them or not, and eventually, if they could identify with the depicted persons. The answers to these questions provided the researchers with an idea of how the interviewees feel and think about the chosen ads, how they are perceived and what kind of emotions they evoke as well as an indication of what type of advert is appealing to them and why.

The third section of the main body went into more detail and dealt with questions revolving around the depictions and the identification with the portrayals. Furthermore, the interviewees were asked whether they are aware of stereotypes in advertising and about their opinions of and experiences with stereotypical portrayals. Finally, they were requested to particularise their idea of a 'perfect advert' for men's clothing that is appealing to them. This part of

the interview gave an insight into how the interviewees see themselves and which identity they assume, exposed how they perceive stereotypical portrayals, and enlightened the researchers about the features and characteristics that an appealing advert in the clothing sector should comprise.

The closing chapter entailed questions that prompted the interviewees to shortly summarise their likes and dislikes towards advertising in the fashion sector and they were given the opportunity to add further aspects or questions related to the topic that had not been discussed before. If no additional information was given, the recording on tape stopped. Afterwards, the interviewees were informed that they will receive the transcripts shortly in order to verify their answers. Moreover, they were encouraged to contact the researchers in case of any questions or further remarks. Eventually, the researchers thanked the interviewees for their time and for the insights they gained.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face and, since all participants consented to it, all conversations were audio-recorded and transcribed to minimize the risk of misrepresentation and loss of data. As soon as a transcript was completed, the researchers started to analyse the data by coding it manually.

3.3.1.4 Sampling and participant selection

As the research question aims to examine how male customers perceive gender stereotypes in print advertisements used in the fashion industry, the selected interviewees had to fulfil a small number of criteria: they had to be German citizens, male, 20 to 35 years old and they had to buy their own apparel. As consumers of men's clothing they are targeted by fashion companies and are therefore subject to their advertising activities. It did not matter whether the participants were vivid readers of men's magazines or whether they were fashion-conscious or not. Instead, it was crucial that the interviewees were willing to express their opinions about and perceptions of the advertisements.

Due to the limited time frame of ten weeks and the clear idea of the target group, the purposive sampling method was chosen as its goal “is to sample cases/participants in a strategic way, so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions being posed” (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 442). This is in line with Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2012, p. 228) who argue that this method is chosen when the “researcher has a clear idea of what sample units are needed [...].”

Therefore, fellow students from the German community in Lund, Sweden were contacted and asked to be interviewed in the period of 1st to 20th April 2015. In order not to influence the participants in any way prior to the actual interviews, it was only mentioned to them that the topic of the study was to examine their opinions on a selection of print ads from the clothing sector. Each potential interviewee that was contacted was willing to participate right away.

For this particular study, the researchers followed the theoretical saturation approach. Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 719) define it as “the point when emerging concepts have been fully explored and no new theoretical insights are being generated.” This saturation occurred after fourteen interviews, as no new or relevant data had emerged. Due to the fact that the interviewees were assured confidentiality and anonymity, the interviewees were given pseudonyms for this thesis. A list with all fourteen interviewees as well as their age and occupation can be found below in Table 2:

Name	Age	Occupation
Hubert	25	Student
Fred	24	Student
Harald	27	Student
Vincent	33	Engineer

Siegfried	27	Student
Sebastian	27	Student
Jürgen	30	Student
Florian	28	Trainee teacher
Philipp	31	Account manager
Giesbert	23	Student
Bruno	24	Student
Maximilian	24	Student
Klaus	25	Student
Fridolin	24	Student

Table 2: Interview participants

3.3.1.5 Pilot testing

In order to test how well the interview guide works, two pilot tests were carried out. These pilot studies helped the researchers to realize that the interviewees should have an unlimited amount of time to take notes instead of the projected twelve minutes with regard to the six advertisements. Moreover, it was found that some questions needed improvement and a different phrasing in order to be understood by the interviewees. In addition, more open-ended questions were included in the final version of the interview guide in order to stimulate conversation and give the interviewee the opportunity to fully express himself.

3.4 Data analysis

The analysis of the data for this study is based on grounded theory. According to Strauss & Corbin (1998, p. 12 cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 576), this framework can be defined as “theory that was derived from data,

systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another.” Due to the fact that this strategy of qualitative data analysis is a “more ‘open’ approach to data analysis” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012, p. 166), the seven main stages suggested by the three authors were followed in order to analyse the empirical data.

This approach is considered to be rather time-consuming and chaotic (*ibid*), and therefore it was beneficial to have audio-recorded and transcribed all the interviews beforehand to facilitate the data analysis process. First, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data through re-reading all the transcripts and the notes from the fieldwork diary. Afterwards, a reflection upon the findings from the literature review took place. The next step was then to generate codes, which involved breaking down data into different components (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 577). It was paid close attention to the advice of Charmaz (2006 cited in Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012, p. 167), who cautions that these codes should be precise, close to the data and simple. Therefore, the coding process was kept in German and only quotations used in the data analysis part of the thesis were translated into English by the authors. Due to the fact that this process is highly iterative, it was sometimes necessary to recode the data. These codes were then assigned to different themes manually in an Excel spreadsheet. The decision to use manual methods was based on the fact that both researchers have analysed data manually before and were inexperienced in working with data analysis programs. Eventually, the findings were re-evaluated after the codes and themes were discussed with the assigned supervisor.

3.5 Critical reflections on the data collection process

This part of the research project deals with a critical reflection on and evaluation of the data collection process by the two researchers.

First of all, the fact that all potential participants approached for this study were willing to be interviewed right away, posed a good starting point for this

research. However, the majority of the interviewees declared at the time of the interview that they might not be of much help to the researchers, as they feel that they are not experts in this field or mentioned that they are not particularly interested in fashion or fashion advertising. Due to the purposive sampling method, mostly fellow students were approached and they were aware of the researchers' academic background in marketing. This might have led them to the assumption that their expertise in marketing is required, rather than their standpoint as a consumer. Another potential explanation for this attitude might be the fact that they are either not interested in fashion at all or they do not consider fashion a typical topic for men to talk about. Nevertheless, as the purpose of the study is to examine their perceptions of advertisements, they were assured that there are no right or wrong answers to the questions and that only their opinions mattered.

Another finding of the research process was that some participants were not willing to get really involved with the advertisements and they were reluctant to reveal their opinions, thoughts and feelings. Some even argued that the ads did not trigger any emotions at all. This behaviour could be explained in the way that some men might feel uncomfortable to express their feelings and therefore do not want to talk about them. These participants did not really open up to the researchers and often tried to answer questions with a short 'yes' or 'no'. On the contrary, others were more open and more willing to share their experiences, opinions and feelings. When asked what they see in a particular ad, they did not only describe the obvious (e.g. it is an ad in black and white), but they also read something into the ads (e.g. projected themselves onto the model and situation displayed or assigned certain characteristics and traits to the models). The fact that most of the participants were willing to open up to the researchers has led to the depth and variety in the outcome for the benefit of this study.

One part of the interview guide was a thought bubble completion, which prompted the participants to fill them in with possible thoughts or words that the depicted models might say or think. Several participants found it difficult to fill in these thought bubbles for particular depictions, when they were not able

to see themselves in the picture. However, whenever they could identify with the person or situation depicted, they were more likely to find some words or thoughts that would fill the thought bubble.

Last but not least, it is pertinent to mention that the participants did not experience any difficulty to describe how a typical man should look or which physical characteristics he should embody. Nevertheless, when asked whether they can identify certain stereotypical displays in the particular ads, they were not able to understand the term 'stereotype'. This might be due to the reason that the participants are not even aware of stereotypical displays because they have these stereotypical images deeply anchored in their minds.

3.6 Ethical considerations

This section is meant to discuss the ethical issues that might have an influence on the research project and it provides an overview of how potential ethical challenges were diminished that came along with this study at hand.

Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 128) explicate that ethics are a crucial part to consider in business and management research. They continue explaining that it is important for researchers to be aware of the ethical implications that are inherent to certain choices within the research design. Bryman & Bell refer to Diener & Crandall's (1978) classification of ethical principles into four categories: harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy and deception.

To minimize the occurrence of ethical issues as much as possible, the MRS Code of Conduct (McGivern, 2009, p. 26) was adhered to throughout the research process. This means that, first of all, all respondents had the opportunity to participate on a voluntary basis. The data collection technique applied in this study, namely the interview, can be classified as rather ethical in contrast to, for example, the observation technique, in which people are included in a study without prior consent. By agreeing to the interview, the respondents implied that they are aware of being the subject of the study and

expressed their consent to participate. Still, to reach an informed consent (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 190) all respondents received explicit information about the full extent and purpose of the study, the use and access of data and about their right to remain anonymous. All the data that was collected through the interviews was analysed and handled anonymously and confidentially, and used for the purpose of this research only. In addition, participants had the opportunity to review and verify the written transcripts of the audio-recorded interviews. The measures explained here are in accordance to what Bryman & Bell (2011, p. 122) point out, namely that “[e]thical issues cannot be ignored, in that they relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research and of the disciplines that are involved.”

Another factor, which might have had an impact on this research project, is the power relationship between the university or the supervisor and the students. The terms and regulations provided for reference by the university impacted, for instance, “what is to be researched, when, by whom; how information is to be gathered and used; and how the products of research are to be evaluated” (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012, p. 76). Due to the fact that the frame of reference was clearly communicated by the university prior to the research phase, the researchers did not experience any power struggles. Since this research project was not conducted for a specific company, access to internal data was not an issue that hindered the data collection process. Furthermore, the assigned supervisor designed a schedule with fixed meetings and deadlines. This tight planning helped the researchers fundamentally to carry out the research according to schedule and to not experience any difficulties with the limited time frame of ten weeks. The relevant literature for this study could be accessed through the university database as well as other physical and online sources that are available to the general public. Moreover, contacting and getting access to male customers of clothing that were willing to participate in this study did not pose a difficulty.

3.7 The credibility of research findings

Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p. 156) state that “[r]educing the possibility of getting the answer wrong means that attention has to be paid to two particular emphases on research design: reliability and validity”. Therefore, to ensure the credibility of the findings of the study at hand, a closer look will be taken at these aforementioned criteria. One should keep in mind though, as Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2012, p. 70) point out, “that depending upon where people stand on the epistemological continuum, they are likely to use different criteria for judging the quality of research”.

3.7.1 Reliability

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009, p. 156), “[r]eliability refers to the extent to which your data collection techniques or analysis procedures will yield consistent findings.” The authors refer to Robson (2002, cited in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 156-7) who alerts researchers to four major threats regarding the reliability of research findings, namely: subject or participant error, subject or participant bias, observer error and observer bias.

As long as the responses of the participants are more or less consistent, one can assume that their answers reflect their honest thoughts. Furthermore, they had the chance to verify their answers by reading through the interview transcript, which was forwarded to them. Since the participants got the opportunity to review their responses, the random participant error can be assumed to be rather low.

The risk of subject or participant bias can also be considered as fairly reduced since the interviewees were less likely to be influenced by others when responding to the questions. Even though there is no obvious reason for why interviewees should change or adapt their answers in order to please the researchers, one should not rule out the possibility that participants might respond in the way they think the researchers want them to. It is important for the researchers to acknowledge this possibility.

The observer error can be minimized by designing a structured interview guide. McGivern (2009, p. 47) explains that in qualitative research “[t]he less structured and less standardised approach can, however, mean that it is relatively low in reliability”. Hence, to counteract this error, semi-structured interviews have been chosen as the most suitable data collection technique.

Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009, p. 297) remind researchers about the fact that “we cannot avoid observer bias. All we can do is to be aware of the threat to reliability it poses and seek to control it.” They continue explaining that one way to reduce this bias is to use informant verification, which is why the transcripts were reviewed by the respondents.

3.7.2 Validity

According to Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill (2009, p. 157), validity describes “whether the findings are really about what they appear to be about.” In addition, Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson (2012, p. 127) argue that pilot testing is an effective way to try out and adapt the interview questions. This can increase the validity of the research. Hence, it was chosen to conduct two pilot interviews for this study prior to the main data collection process.

3.7.3 Generalisability

Generalisability refers to “the extent to which one can generalize from the observations at hand to a universe of generalizations. The set of all conditions of measurement over which the investigator wishes to generalize is the universe of generalization” (Malhotra, 2010, p. 289). Since a relative small amount of interviews were conducted and because of the purposive sampling method, the findings and conclusions presented in this thesis may not be generally applicable.

4 Selected advertisements

It was decided to focus on advertisements from the fashion industry for different reasons. First of all, it was important to narrow down the frame in which the research will be carried out. There is a vast amount of advertisements targeted towards men in the world, all promoting different products. On the one hand, it would be too broad to analyse advertisements from all product categories in one study, as it would simply not be possible to collect, analyse and compare this vast amount of data within ten weeks. On the other hand, different products are obviously marketed in different ways and by using different images. What is appropriate in order to highlight one product's specific features will most likely not be the most effective way to market another. Therefore, comparing displays across product categories would be insignificant. Hence, focusing on one product category helped to make the research more specific and thereby more accurate and meaningful.

Furthermore, fashion is a rather large industry that is assumed to be of interest to the majority of men. Fashion in general seems to be a more accessible topic than beauty products or specialist items, since most people in Western societies need clothes. Hence, the authors expect that most men shop for clothing items regularly and are therefore confronted with and maybe even aware of an extensive amount of advertisements in this category. Apeagyei (2011, p. 242) argues that the need for fashion goes beyond people's basic needs and its utilitarian purpose because apparel is also utilized by both men and women as a custom of self-expression and image projection. Thus, consumers try to identify themselves with the clothing they purchase, which are conveyed and advertised through fashion images in the media. In this regard, Santaella, Summers & Kuttruff (2014, p. 9) add that "fashion advertisements for apparel and accessories use images not only to help consumers visualize products, but also to invite the readers to escape and immerse themselves in flights of fancy when they use such products."

Lastly, the fashion industry works quite heavily with print advertisements. They can be found among others on billboards, in magazines and are even

sent out to customers via direct mail. Advertising in the fashion sector is, however, considered a delicate subject. O’Neil (2014, p. 641) points out that the fashion sector is subject to more and more advertising regulations due to “misleading practices, which include the use of digital modification software and unrealistic claims about the results of cosmetic products.”

Therefore, fashion advertisements were defined as the best fit for this study, since they are widely available, yet they often cause controversy as they use a variety of gender specific images. Hence, they were considered interesting by the authors to analyse and compare.

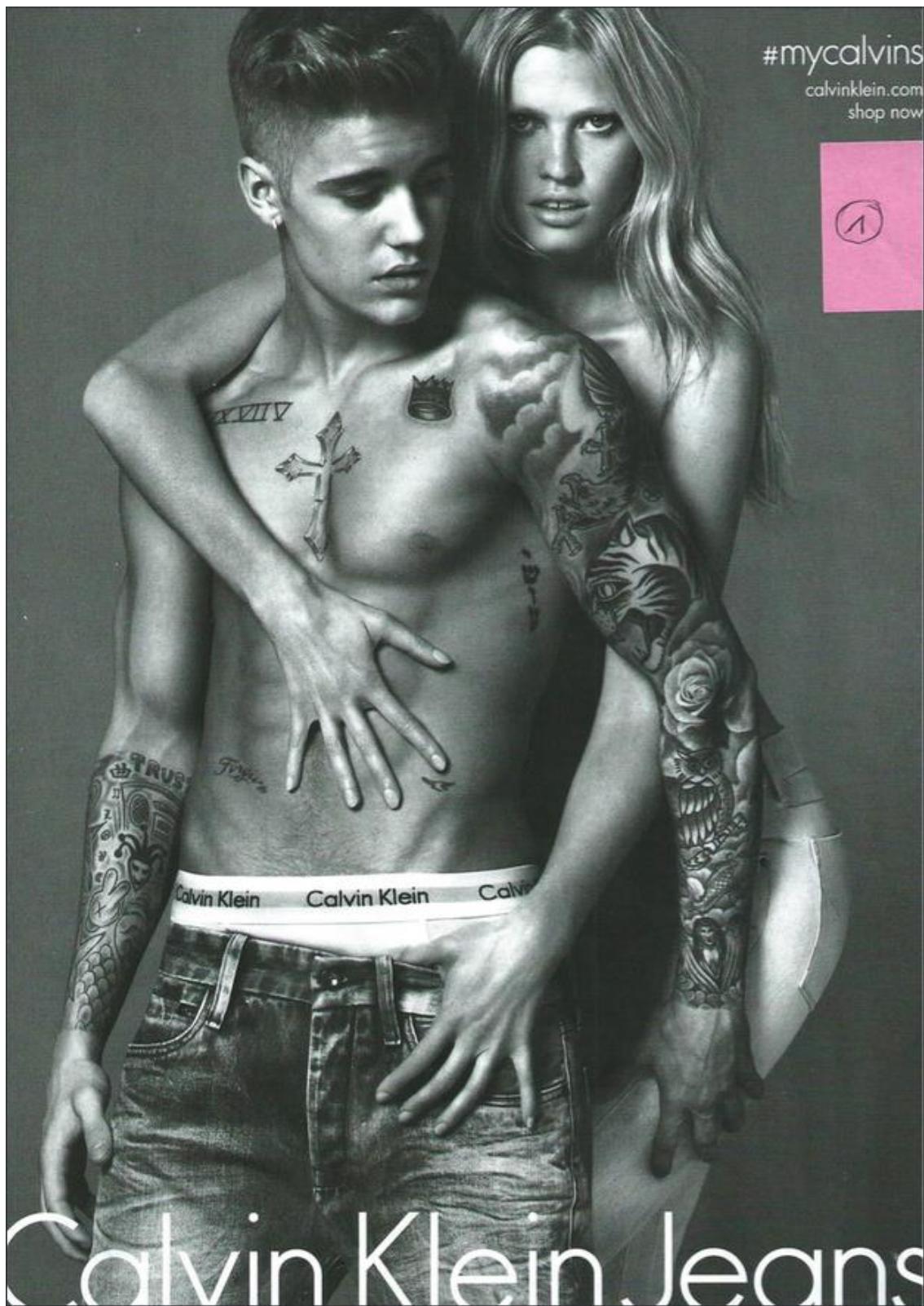
In order to find the most suitable print advertisements for this study, men’s magazines that were available in stores at the beginning of this study on 19th March 2015 were randomly selected. These magazines were then scanned for advertisements for clothing targeted towards men. The magazines from which the ads were selected are GQ, King and Café. The idea was to confront the interviewees with different types of ads and male depictions in order to explore their perceptions towards them. Eventually, six advertisements were selected that can be classified according to a scheme by Yuan & Shaw (2011 cited in Tan, et al., 2013, p. 239). This classification is grounded on two variables: masculinity type and roles. On the one hand, they identified seven types of masculinity that can be placed into four categories, namely: vigorous and macho, refined and sophisticated, trendy and cool and other. On the other hand, they identified several roles that models can take on in advertisements, namely: professional/occupational, entertaining, familial, recreational, decorative and other. It is pertinent to note here that even though Yuan & Shaw have identified seven different types, only six masculinity types are represented in the selection of advertisements for this study. This is due to the fact that the type ‘refined and gentle’ could not be found in the three reviewed magazines. However, this does not pose a constraint to this study, as this masculinity type is similar to the ‘stern and sophisticated’ one and therefore this type can be seen as representative of the ‘refined and sophisticated’ category. Based on Yuan & Shaw’s scheme, the following six advertisements were chosen:

4.1 Calvin Klein jeans

This advertisement is in black and white and depicts a man and a woman. The male model wears jeans and underpants by Calvin Klein and he is placed in the centre of the advertisement. His upper body is naked and he is embraced by a woman who stands behind him. His torso is muscular and both his arms as well as some areas of the chest are covered with tattoos. He drops his gaze and does not look into the camera. With his left hand he grabs the woman's left thigh. The woman looks straight into the camera and has her right hand positioned on the abdominal muscles of the male model, while her left hand is placed on the upper parts of his jeans. The half-naked models occupy most of the space, while the jeans might represent only one fourth of the print ad.

This advertisement got selected for the study at hand due to its distinct nature, in particular the presence of naked models and the implied sexual meaning. According to Courtney & Whipple (1983 cited in Reichert, 2002, p. 243), sex in advertising can be defined as “sexuality in the form of nudity, sexual imagery, innuendo and double entendre ... employed as an advertising tool for a wide variety of products.” Reichert (2002) argues that Calvin Klein advertisers are prone to use sex in their promotional messages. He explains further that they use ads that “feature provocative images of well-defined women (and men) in revealing outfits and postures [...] to cultivate a[n] ubiquitous sex-tinged media presence.” (p. 242).

According to Yuan & Shaw (2011 cited in Tan, et al., 2013, p. 239) this particular advertisement might embody the masculinity type ‘sensual and sexy’ characterized by “tight clothes [...], the model usually looks away from the camera and refrains from appearing smart and sophisticated or springy and sunny.” Moreover, this advertisement combines two roles: the entertaining role and the decorative role. The man takes on the entertaining role as the male model featured in this advert is Justin Bieber, a Canadian singer and songwriter. The woman, however, takes on a decorative role “appear[ing] solely for [her] lure and look” (*ibid*).



Picture 1: Calvin Klein ad (GQ, 2015)

4.2 Boomerang

This colourful ad shows two men wearing clothes from a collection by Boomerang. Both models have medium-length hair and the one with dark hair on the left hand side has a beard. This man looks straight into the camera. He wears beige shorts, a shirt underneath a blue sweater and a casual blue coat on top of it. He keeps his right hand in his trouser pocket and puts his left arm around the other man's shoulder. The man on the right hand side has no facial hair and turns his head away from the viewer. He wears a casual blue jacket, a tie and a jeans shirt with a yellow overall. His right arm is put around the other man's hip, while his left hand is hidden in his trouser pocket.

Based on Yuan & Shaw's (2011 cited in Tan, et al., 2013, p. 239) scheme, these two models can be classified as 'trendy and cool' because they are "[c]lothed and accessorized in the latest fashion [...]. [Their] facial expression is either numb or aloof, thereby creating a sense of distance between [them] and [their] viewers [...] assum[ing] the attitude of indifference [...]" (ibid). In addition, both models may take on the decorative role as they appear for their look only and are not engaged in any sort of physical activity.

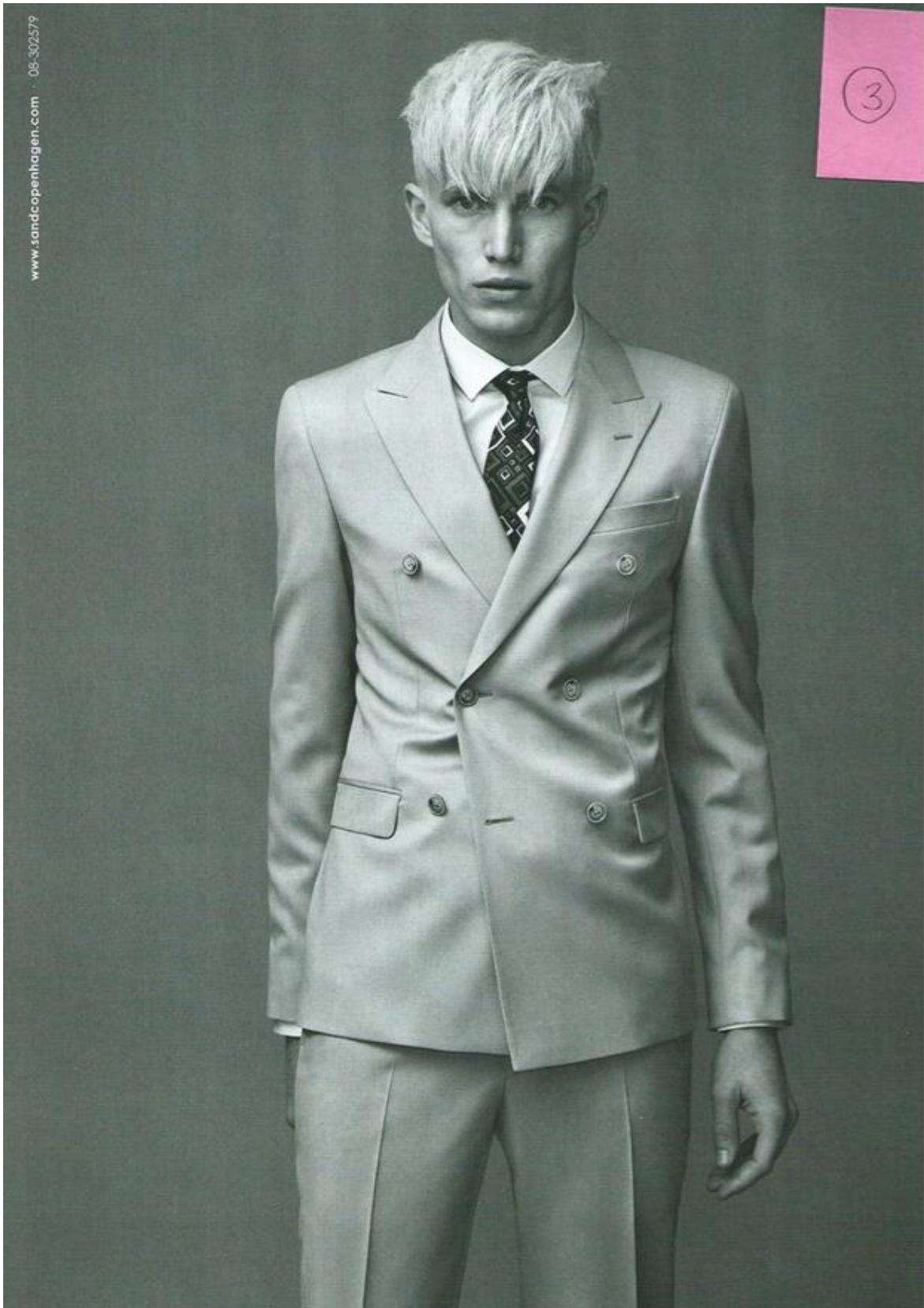


Picture 2: Boomerang ad (Café, 2015)

4.3 Sand Copenhagen

This ad in black and white displays one male model that looks straight into the camera and thereby into the eyes of the viewer. His face is slender and his light hair covers his forehead as well as his eyes slightly. He wears a bright, double-breasted suit and a white shirt with a patterned tie. His arms are hanging down on the sides of his body, while his left arm is right next to his hips and the right hand is slightly hidden behind his body.

According to Yuan & Shaw (2011 cited in Tan, et al., 2013, p. 239) this ad would embody an ‘androgynous’ type of man with a feminine touch, since he displays “exquisite features [and] appears in a more delicate [...] posture”. He takes on a decorative role as he is displayed solely because of his look and is, similar to the two men in the advertisement by Boomerang, not engaged in any form of activity.



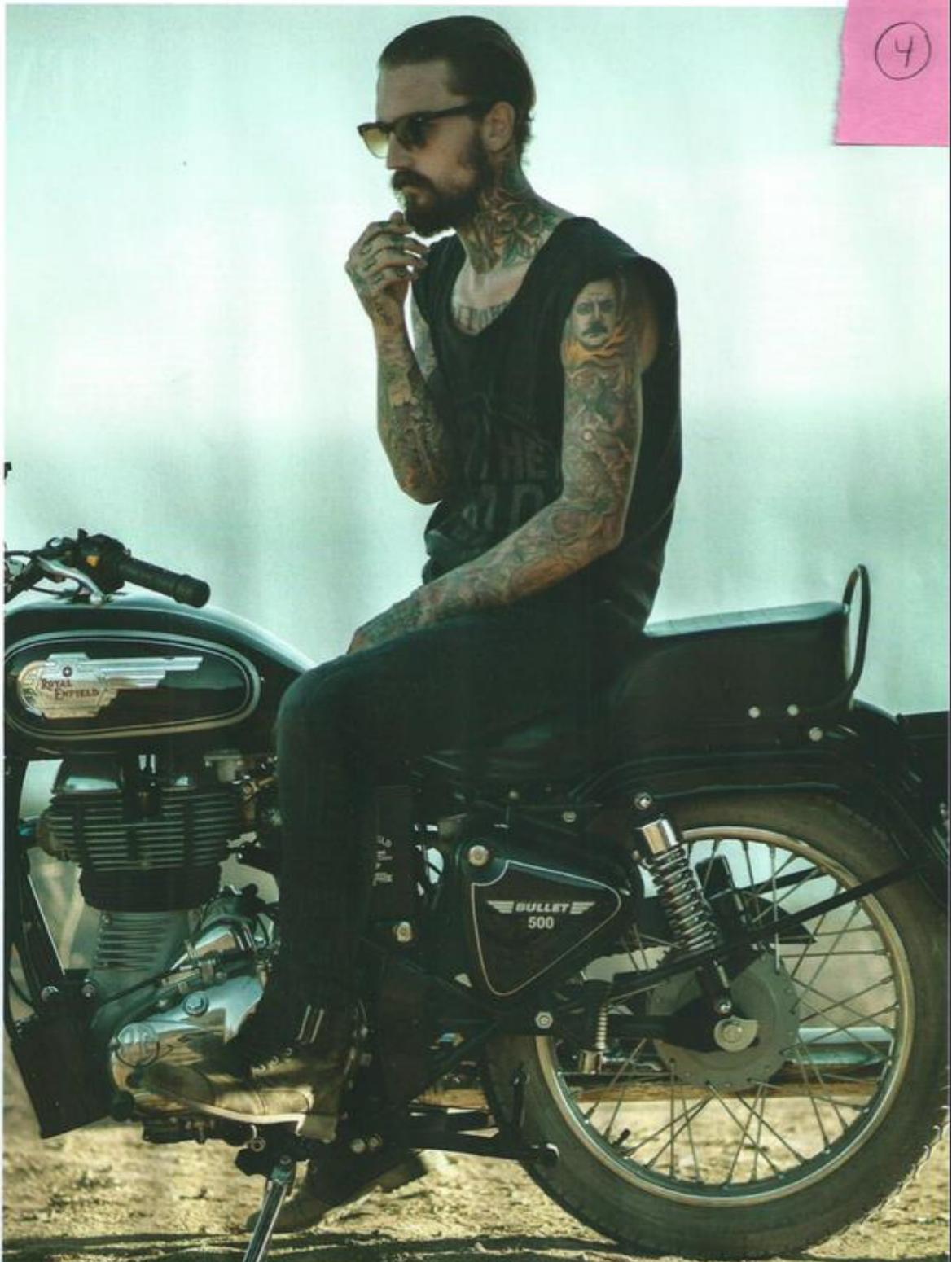
Picture 3: Sand Copenhagen ad (King, 2015)

4.4 Adrian Hammond

This advertisement is in colour and displays a man sitting on a black motorcycle assuming a relaxed pose. He wears a black muscle shirt, black jeans and dark boots. His body is covered with tattoos, he wears a full beard and his hair is backcombed. His eyes are covered by dark sunglasses and he looks away from the camera. His right hand is raised to his chin, giving the impression that he is lost in thought, while his left arm rests on his left thigh.

This ad portrays the ‘tough and macho’ (Yuan & Shaw, 2011 cited in Tan, et al., 2013, p. 239) kind of man with a “determined [...] facial expression. The sharp, angular lines of his face speak of toughness and resolution [...], the model appears – in either expression or posture – nomadically unkempt, strong-willed and lion-hearted”. He seems to take on the recreational role as he “is staged to appear engaging in a certain kind of recreational activity, such as exercise, outdoor activity, swimming, boating, sailing, etc.” (*ibid*).

(4)



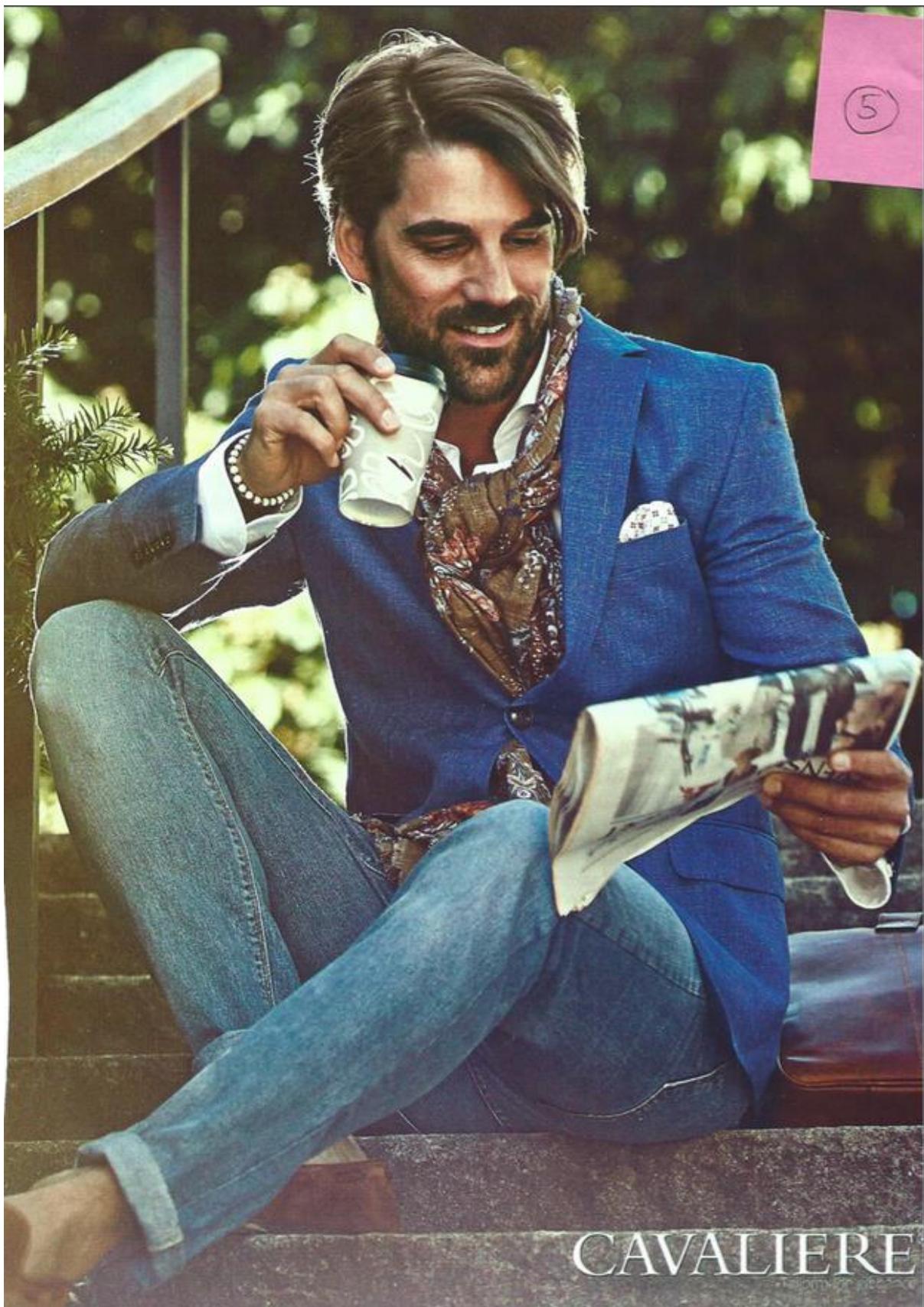
ADRIAN HAMMOND
SPRING SUMMER 2015

Picture 4: Adrian Hammond ad (King, 2015)

4.5 Cavaliere

This colourful advertisement portrays a man sitting cross-legged on stairs in the outdoors. He has brown hair of medium-length and is bearded. He creases his face into a smile, while looking into the newspaper in his left hand. He holds a takeaway coffee cup in his right hand, which is slightly bent towards his mouth. He wears a white shirt underneath his blue jacket with a coloured breast pocket handkerchief. In addition, he wears a white bracelet around his right wrist and a colourful scarf around his neck. His jeans are rolled up and one can see his naked ankles because he does not wear socks in his brown, leathery summer shoes. A brown leather bag is placed next to him on the stairs.

Based on the scheme by Yuan & Shaw (2011 cited in Tan, et al., 2013, p. 239), this advertisement can be placed in the ‘vigorous and sunny’ category as “[I]like a boy next door, the model often wears a coy, innocent, and brilliant smile [...] His clothing is sporty and casual. His look and posture are those of someone who is amiable and easy-going”. Since he sits outside, reading the newspaper and drinking coffee, he fulfils the recreational role.



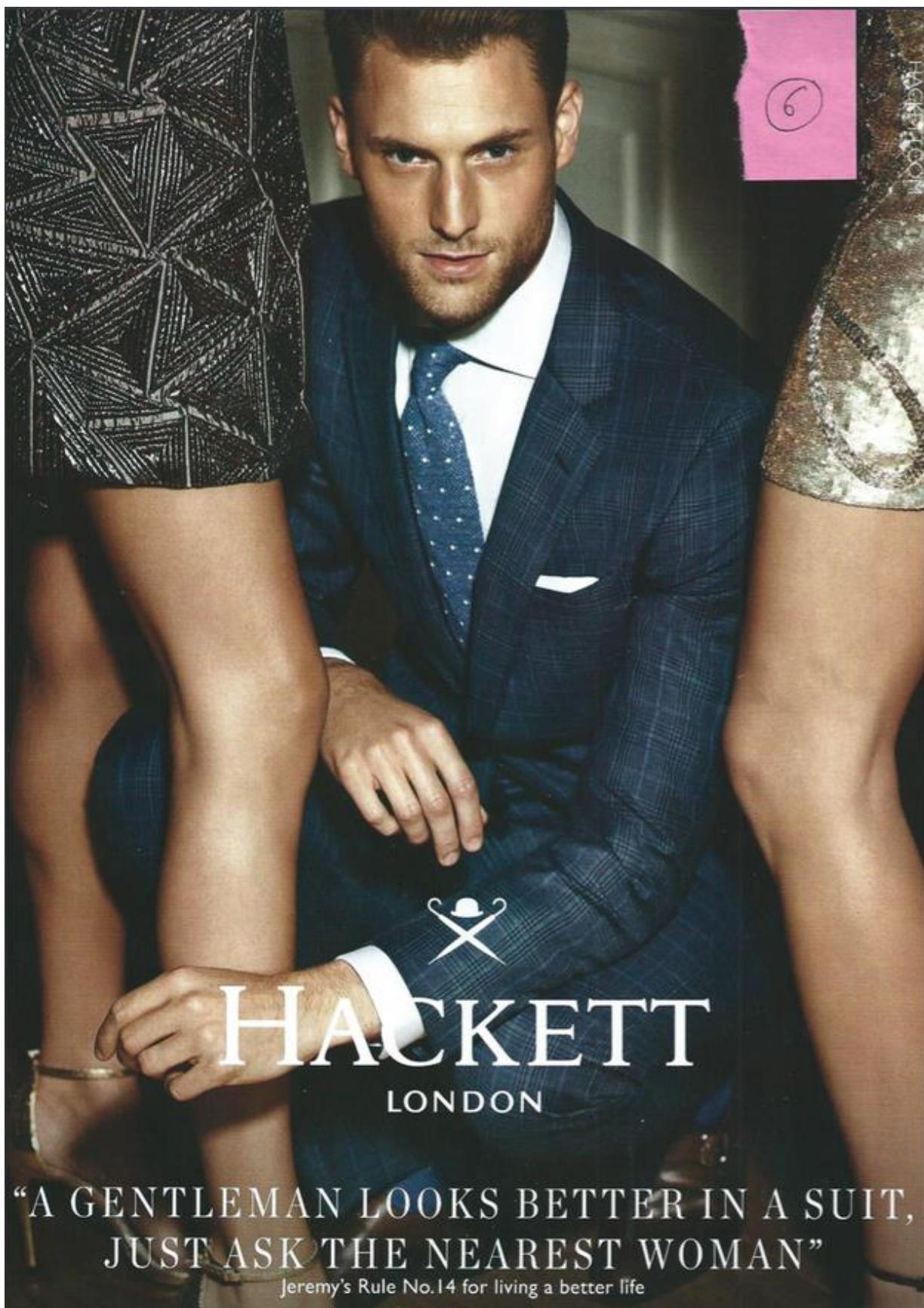
Picture 5: Cavaliere ad (King, 2015)

CAVALIERE

4.6 Hackett London

The man portrayed in this advertisement wears a blue suit by Hackett London with a white shirt and a blue tie with white dots. He has rather short and dark hair and he is bearded. The male model squats and is surrounded by two female pairs of legs, one on the left and one on the right side. The women wear golden skirts and golden high heels and are only to be seen from the hip downwards. The man looks straight into the camera in a mischievous way and puts his left hand around the right leg of the woman on the left hand side. The following phrase is placed on the bottom of the advertisement: “A gentleman looks better in a suit, just ask the nearest woman” – Jeremy’s rule no. 14 for living a better life.

Following the masculinity index by Yuan & Shaw (2011 cited in Tan, et al., 2013, p. 239) this model can be described as ‘stern and sophisticated’. Yuan & Shaw define this type in the following way: “With a confident and firm look, the model impresses the viewers as mature and reliable. He is dressed in formal attire (usually suits). He is a man of some age, with wrinkles upon his face. His gaze is focused. He is often a man with a successful career” (*ibid*). As he appears only for his look, he can be classified to assume the decorative role.



Picture 6: Hackett London ad (King, 2015)

5 Data analysis

According to the authors' expectations, not all of the advertisements shown to the respondents were perceived in the same way. Throughout the interviews as well as during the process of coding and analysing the empirical material, it became obvious that the adverts triggered a lot of different emotions, which resulted in contrasting attitudes towards the images. Some of the adverts were perceived, and therefore also evaluated, more positively, while others faced heavy criticism and it was clear that the participants wanted to distance themselves from these depictions. The common factor by which this evaluation was influenced the most seems to be the participants' idea of masculinity and how a man should be portrayed. The adverts that were congruent with this image were generally received more positively, while those that contradicted this idea evoked negative responses¹.

Overall, tension within four recurring themes was detected throughout the analysis of the interviews. In this context, tension refers to a contradicting evaluation of the advertisements within each of these four themes: authenticity, accessibility, masculinity and tolerance. Each theme is discussed in detail in the following section, explaining how the respondents communicated contrasting views, which in turn resulted in the decision to structure the data analysis chapter based on friction. Furthermore, there was one aspect in regard to advertisements in general that was mentioned by all interviewees, namely the fact that they seemed to think themselves too smart to be influenced by advertisements. This aspect is explained at the end of this chapter.

5.1 Authenticity vs. inauthenticity

One topic that was discussed in all interviews was authenticity. Participants referred to this when describing if what they saw in the advert was believable to them or not. This was applied both towards the person or the models

¹ Since the interviews were conducted in German, all quotes that are used in this chapter were translated into English by the authors.

displayed in the advert, as well as the situational context that these people were portrayed in. Some of the adverts were perceived as more authentic than others, for various reasons that will be discussed below.

5.1.1 Authenticity in relation to the model

Especially the first picture that was shown to the respondents, the Calvin Klein advertisement, was heavily criticized for its lack of authenticity. This was mostly connected to the two models that are displayed in this advert. Firstly, participants argued that the choice of Justin Bieber (a famous Canadian singer and songwriter) was a mismatch for the brand, since in their opinion he does not represent the values and the masculine ideal that Calvin Klein usually stands for. They explained that in their opinion this advert was targeted towards a much younger target group and that in general the association with Justin Bieber harmed the brand more than it benefited Calvin Klein's image. Several respondents perceived the ad as childish, and since this is not what they generally associate with Calvin Klein, they perceived the image as inauthentic. Some of the participants referred to other famous endorsers that have worked for Calvin Klein, such as David Beckham or Mark Wahlberg, who were perceived to be manlier, and therefore a more authentic match for the brand:

"When I think about Calvin Klein, I think about Mark Wahlberg and this perfect body image, without any ornamental paintings on it, which I liked a lot better." (Fred)

Another thorn in the respondents' eyes was the vast amount of tattoos sported on both arms as well as the chest of the young singer. This was maybe reinforced by the strong personal dislike most of the participants already felt towards the endorser. However, respondents that did not recognize the singer remarked negatively on this aspect as well. The personal attitude of the respondents towards tattoos might have played into this issue as well, since some of them were more open towards body art, while others stated that this would never be an option for them. However, the general impression, which the respondents agreed on, was that the male model was too young to have this many tattoos. Some participants even thought that they

were only painted on for the advertisement and not real. Overall, the amount of tattoos heavily dented the credibility of the advertisement:

"I think the concept in itself is good but I just don't buy it, as it displays really young models that are heavily tattooed... for me that is too trendy and not one hundred per cent honest." (Philipp)

The advertisement for Adrian Hammond, on the other hand, which also shows a man fully covered with tattoos, received praise for its authenticity and credibility. Even though most of the respondents said that this advert displays an extreme type and that they themselves would not go this far with body art, they stated that this man represented the classic 'rocker image' to them and that the tattoos fit his personality. The model in this advert is older than the model in the Calvin Klein advert, either in his late thirties or early forties. The participants believed that this man has made this choice for his body and his appearance, and they agreed that it suited his type and his personality:

"It is manlier and I think it is also authentic, it is believable, you buy into the image, with the tattoos and the beard, it is not a hundred per cent well groomed, it looks good and it is kept very basic." (Philipp)

One final aspect of the Calvin Klein advertisement that reduced the credibility for the respondents was the female model that was displayed alongside Justin Bieber. For some of them this was the first thing that they noticed when looking at the advert, for others it took more time, but eventually all of them pointed out that the female model seems to be a lot older than the male model. Not only did this pairing not match their idea of how a male and female couple should be (which will be explained and analysed in more detail in chapter 5.3.2), but most of them argued that if this was a real life situation, these two people would not be together. For them, it was too obvious that this was an advert, it was too apparent that these two people had been paired up through unnatural circumstances and that they did not have a real connection or chemistry between them. The large age difference as well as the stiff and contrived posture the two models are displayed in communicated implausibility to them. Many participants stated that a female partner in a similar age group to the male model, as well as a more natural posture in

which the female model does not look directly into the camera, would have increased their perception of authenticity for this advert.

However, the models in the Calvin Klein advert were not the only ones that faced criticism with regard to authenticity. Some of the respondents also perceived the two men depicted in the advertisement by Boomerang, as well as the man in the Sand Copenhagen picture as inauthentic. The reason for this was the fact that in their opinion these depictions were too extreme, both with the type of clothing that they displayed as well as the male models presenting them. They argued that these adverts did not show an authentic male image that is applicable to a broad audience:

"What I also don't like are these extreme male models, like him for example with his haircut [note by the author: participant is referring to Sand Copenhagen advert], or these two who also look a bit sleazy [note by the author: participant is referring to Boomerang advert]... these two for example [note by the author: participant is referring to Cavaliere and Hackett London adverts] look a lot more authentic... it is like watching a fashion show, where you see all these clothing items and styles and most of the time... you might find them in the metropolises, but in smaller cities nobody would ever walk around like that." (Fred)

In contrast to this, the models used in the adverts for Adrian Hammond, Cavaliere and Hackett London were perceived as authentic and believable. When looking at these adverts and talking about them, the participants communicated that these models appeared real and seemed to be showing their true personality to the viewers. Participants stated that the models in these adverts were dressed and groomed conforming to their personality, and the advert does not try to bend them into something they are not. They thought that these men could be random men that one could pass by on the street, and this connection to real life is what made the advert authentic to them.

5.1.2 Authenticity in relation to the situation

Another aspect of authenticity that was brought up by the respondents referred to the situational context in which the model was displayed in the

advert. There was a stark contrast between the situations in which the models were displayed in the different advertisements: The first three adverts that were shown to the participants (Calvin Klein, Boomerang and Sand Copenhagen) displayed the male model solely as presenter for the product itself, they were not engaged in any activities and the primary purpose was to give the viewer an idea of what the clothes would look like. The last three adverts (Adrian Hammond, Cavaliere and Hackett London) depicted the models in different situations, such as riding a motorbike, drinking coffee and reading a newspaper or at a party surrounded by women.

All participants agreed that the displays that provided them with context or displayed the model engaged in an activity were more authentic. They criticized the first three displays for being too stiff, too blunt and too obviously recognizable as marketing. Most respondents argued that for them understanding the surroundings and the situation that the person is in, as well as the emotions that are conveyed through the display, have a critical impact on authenticity. This, in turn, has an impact on their opinion of the product and the brand in general. It could be seen from their answers that the adverts that were categorized as authentic received more positive feedback overall, and also the products that were displayed in these ads were evaluated more positively.

Summing up, the adverts from Calvin Klein, Boomerang and Sand Copenhagen were perceived as inauthentic, as the models were clearly posing for a picture and no person would find themselves in this situation in real life. In contrast, the adverts from Adrian Hammond, Cavaliere and Hackett London were evaluated as authentic, since the participants thought they either captured a moment in the life of this person or because there were other elements incorporated that allowed them to understand the situation and story behind the picture:

"I think this advert is really cool, I think it is definitely one of the most appealing ones. It shows on the one hand the fashion-conscious side of this man, and I think this is absolutely believable that he really looks like this and was not just styled this way for the picture, and on the

other hand it reflects everyday life.” (Philipp, referring to Cavaliere advert)

“I think this provides a good contrast, because in picture number 3 [note by the author: Sand Copenhagen advert] the focus is clearly on the fashion item itself and nothing else, whereas in picture number 4 [note by the author: Adrian Hammond advert] they skillfully use other elements in the background in order to underline the message they want to send.” (Giesbert)

“The way she touches him, touches his pants but looks into the camera at the same time – it could not be more contrived in my opinion.” (Harald, referring to Calvin Klein advert)

5.2 Accessibility vs. inaccessibility

Another common thread, which was addressed by all the interviewees in one way or another, was the distinction between accessibility and inaccessibility. These terms concern the interviewees' perceptions towards the portrayed persons as well as the situational context presented in the ads, both in terms of how easily a particular position or role can be obtained and of how likely a desired state of mind or situation can be achieved. While some adverts proved to be accessible ideals that are more likely to be reached, others were perceived as dream images that appear unlikely to be accomplished.

5.2.1 Accessibility in relation to the model

In this regard, body image was an overarching and recurring topic, which most of the interviewees evaluated in the sense of how achievable the different depictions of men in the advertisements appear. In this case, the researchers observed a clear distinction between a depiction of a 'dream image' and an 'ideal'. On the one hand, dream images seemed improbable to emulate and these depictions were, as a result of this, critically judged by the interviewees. On the other hand, ideals were seen as portrayals that can be reached but require some work. In contrast, these displays were often met with positive appraisal.

First and foremost, the Calvin Klein advertisement was evaluated as a rather unreachable depiction and was consequently viewed with a negative connotation by the interviewees. The fact that the male model displayed in

this ad is a famous singer, which most of the interviewees recognized at the first glance, might also play an important role in terms of inaccessibility. Looking at a very athletic and muscular celebrity, who is embraced by an attractive, half-naked woman, might have given the interviewees an impression of the model that is beyond reach for an ordinary student or employee. Hubert and Fred, for instance, took notes for advertisement one, in particular ‘perfection’ and ‘photo-shopped’, which indicates that this depiction of Justin Bieber is an alienated image that has to be digitally enhanced. One could even interpret this act of dissociation as a sign of envy because this portrayal is a depiction that the interviewee would like to achieve, but at the same time, he knows that this is out of his reach. Hubert even uses the word ‘dream body’ in an undertone of irony to express the distance to the model depicted:

“Well, the first ad with Justin Bieber ... his dream body is clearly in the foreground, but this does not appeal to me because I am not a Justin Bieber supporter and I don’t think that this depiction is aesthetic [...].”
(Hubert)

In addition, the participants were asked to complete a thought bubble with words or thoughts that the models might express in the depiction. In this case, most of the interviewees even granted Justin Bieber the trait of being irresistible, again with an ironic undertone:

“Uh, she is hot for my knickers.” (Harald)
“We are both so indefinitely attractive...” (Fred)
“I sure have her.” (Siegfried)
“I am the coolest and nobody is able to hold a candle to me.” (Maximilian)

Maximilian even confessed that the depiction of the models in advertisement one is a wishful thought, however, he could not identify with it. Nevertheless, he admits that he would desire such a situation, as it would allow him access to another world. Hence, most of the participants admitted that they associate the model depicted with perfection or attractiveness. However, at the same time, they reveal that this depiction of a photo-shopped celebrity appears inaccessible to them, which does not result in positive acknowledgement.

In stark contrast to the perception of the Calvin Klein advert were the reactions regarding the advertisements by Cavaliere and Hackett London, which were evaluated positively in terms of accessibility. These ads, which displayed more natural male models without extreme features, were perceived more positively. Moreover, the interviewees were able to see themselves in these particular ads.

The advert by Cavaliere was evaluated positively, as most of the interviewees were able to identify themselves with the person depicted. His appearance was considered neat and the participants could imagine themselves to sit on the stairs, to drink coffee and to read a newspaper. For instance, Harald found the male depiction in this advert most appealing as he sees an illustration of a 'sunny boy' in this ad, which he likes to think of himself as well. The majority of the interviewees linked positive emotions like happiness and relaxation to the model depicted, as he embodies a desirable state of mind. Even though this ad presents just a snapshot in time, most of the participants were able to make statements about the occupation of the model and about his character. He was mostly characterized as a dynamic and confident business person, who is detail-oriented and open-minded.

A similarly positive attitude was triggered when evaluating the male model in the advertisement by Hackett London. The depicted man was perceived by most of the interviewees as a desirable ideal that appears to be successful in all life aspects. In the way that the model was depicted, most of the respondents associated a successful businessman or womanizer with him:

"My first thought is that he looks like a successful businessman who is currently attending an after work-party, he looks very neat [...] in general, this ad out of all the others is most appealing to me." (Fred)

"[...] because there is something written on the bottom and this reminds me of 'How I Met Your Mother' [note by the author: a TV series] and Barney [note by the author: Barney Stinson, a character in this particular TV series] ... and this appears positive to me. [...] So this is, for whatever reason, - that probably gives a deep insight – really positive to me." (Vincent)

On that note, Vincent connects the depiction of the model in advertisement six with Barney Stinson, a character in a TV series who plays the role of a successful business person and who takes on the serial womanizer-role throughout the show. This might imply that this character illustrates a desirable ideal that Vincent would like to achieve, as he has positive connotations with the successful businessman and womanizer.

In general, the researchers observed that the models displayed in advertisements by Cavaliere and Hackett London served for interviewees as future projections of themselves. For instance, Maximilian who is studying marketing suggested that the model in advertisement five (Cavaliere) could be a marketing manager and Jürgen, who has a background in finance, assumed that the male model in advertisement number six (Hackett London) could be a banker. Both incidences show that they tend to project their desired jobs to the model depicted, as this model is presented in the way that they would like to see themselves in the future.

In contrast to the distinct examples for inaccessibility (Calvin Klein) and accessibility (Cavaliere and Hackett London), the advertisement by Adrian Hammond was mostly appealing to interviewees who themselves possess or ride a motorbike. Siegfried explains why:

“At the first moment it appears to be an authentic picture: a tattooed, ordinary dude [who] appears casually dressed, sitting on an old motorbike, I like it – I myself ride a motorcycle that is why I like motorbikes.” (Siegfried)

This, again, shows that the depictions that the interviewees could identify with appear to be more accessible than other depictions. It was also conspicuous that none of the interviewees would see themselves in advertisements two (Boomerang) and three (Sand Copenhagen). Mostly they argued that these depictions were strange, unusual and hard to identify with.

5.2.2 Accessibility in relation to the situation

Another topic that stood out in conjunction with accessibility was the interviewees' evaluation of the situational context in which the model was depicted. In this instance, there was a clear distinction between the different ads, as advertisements number four, five and six (Adrian Hammond, Cavaliere and Hackett London) were perceived as favourable among the interviewees and as the ads number one, two and three (Calvin Klein, Boomerang and Sand Copenhagen) were perceived rather neutrally or negatively. Regarding this noticeable distinction it is pertinent to mention at this point that the three first-mentioned advertisements depict models that are engaged in a particular activity, which can be similar to a situation in real life. In contrast, the last-named ads present the products without being put into a situational context. This aspect of situational contexts and how it is perceived as authentic by the interviewees has been discussed before in chapter 5.1.2.

The ad by Adrian Hammond was in general perceived positively among most of the interviewees as it elicited positive feelings and associations with the situation presented. In this particular case it appeared that the clothes were of secondary importance and even though most of the interviewees could not identify with the portrayed person, the focus was on the setting: the motorbike, the landscape and the feelings they connect with it. Even though not all of the interviewees considered the man depicted in this ad as appealing, due to his tattoos and unkempt beard, they were fond of the overall situation displayed. The participants connected with this photographed situation words such as:

*"Easy-going", "relaxed" (Florian)
"Adventure", "modern American Wild West", "live your dream",
"summer feeling" (Bruno)
"Freedom", "a desire for vacation", "road trip" (Klaus)*

Similarly positive associations came up with regard to the advertisement by Cavaliere, as this situation appeared to be desirable for all interviewees as well. Most of the interviewees described the situation as relaxed and connected it with a lunch break during spring or summer. The person appears to be happy and delighted and he must live a desirable life. Also, this ad

captures a moment, which could be similar to an everyday situation that the interviewees can relate to. When asked what it is that is most appealing about this advert, Fridolin put it in a nutshell:

“Because that guy looks really relaxed, I think he is well-dressed, he takes a break since he has a cup of coffee in his hand and he reads a newspaper and that is a scenery that I like, ... I consider it worth striving for to sit somewhere and to drink coffee and to read a newspaper.” (Fridolin)

The setting in the advertisement by Hackett London was also evaluated positively by most of the interviewees. The fact that the male model wears a suit and is surrounded by women's legs gave most of the participants the impression that he had attained success: both on an economic and personal level.

In contrast, advertisements one to three (Calvin Klein, Boomerang and Sand Copenhagen) stood out for their lack of a situational context. Since the first and third ads were depicted in black and white, these ads were perceived as rather cold and clinical and consequently most of the interviewees could not project themselves into the ads.

To sum up, it can be stated that the advertisements, which promote the products in a true-to-life way or a real-life situational setting, help the participants to imagine themselves to be in a particular situation. The positive emotions that are connected to, for instance, the American dream, freedom, road trip, holidays and so forth make the advertisements more likeable. Situations as depicted in advertisements four to six (Adrian Hammond, Cavaliere and Hackett London) create a desirable situation or desirable lifestyle, which appears achievable for most of the interviewees. In contrast, advertisements one to three, which lack a situational context, were perceived less accessible.

5.3 Masculinity vs. femininity

Another major theme, which was touched upon by all interviewees, was the tension between masculinity and femininity. In particular, the participants argued which advertisements they consider manly, which ads possess feminine features, and how they perceive the relation between men and women in advertisements.

5.3.1 Masculinity

When asked to explicate their definition of manliness in terms of physical attributes or qualities, all the interviewees came up with descriptions that are in line with the traditional stereotype of masculinity. Most of the participants coincide with their perception of masculinity:

" [...] tall, well relatively tall, in my opinion neat as well, well-built, well at least not overweight [...] the same goes for the clothing style ... everyone should decide it by himself, but it should be neat." (Fred)

According to the interviewees, a man should be tall, well-built, bearded and should have a well-groomed appearance in order to be considered a real man. Others even mentioned that particular activities like riding a motorbike or certain professions like being a pilot are manly. This shows that the participants still carry a traditional image of a man in their mind, which is associated with strength and power.

One interviewee went even further in the way that he projects the physical features, which he relates to masculinity, to personality traits of men in relation to women:

"[He should be] tall and muscular, I don't know why [...] These are characteristics that one connects with strength and ... I think a man should be someone for the woman or partner to rely on, especially in the area of responsibility, but also in the physical sense... I don't know why it is like this, but it is somehow a pervaded stereotype that the woman should be protected by the man. This then leads to my perception of being tall and muscular in order to give shelter to someone." (Fridolin)

According to him, men should embody the physical characteristics of being ‘tall’ and ‘muscular’ that are traditionally associated with men. He cannot even articulate why he has this perception of a man in his mind. However, this also gives an insight into how he sees womankind, namely as the weak gender, maybe even subordinated, which needs to be protected by the ‘stronger’ men.

Thus, it was no surprise that the male depictions in the advertisements by Adrian Hammond, Cavaliere and Hackett London were considered manlier than the male portrayals in the advertisements by Calvin Klein, Boomerang and Sand Copenhagen. Subsequently, advertisements four to six were evaluated more positively as they were in line with what the participants perceived as masculine.

Some of the interviewees perceived the advertisement by Adrian Hammond as manly because of the setting and the activity the model is captured in. Riding a motorbike, standing in the desert and looking like a rebel, who does his own thing, was considered manly. This also relates back to the notion of accessibility, as this picture reminded the participants of a desirable situation, which they would like to be in themselves.

The ad by Cavaliere was also in line with the perception of manliness that most interviewees have anchored in their mind. He is bearded and well dressed and was therefore evaluated positively. However, many respondents claimed that wearing a scarf and a bracelet is not manly at all. Thus, if they were given the chance to alter the ad, they would have recreated exactly the same ad but without the accessories because they are perceived to be too feminine.

The advertisement presenting Hackett London embodies characteristics that the participants considered manly. A man with a three-day beard who wears a suit and is surrounded by two women was seen by many interviewees as the prototype of manhood. He looks neat, he is well dressed and this ad projects the image that the man is admired by women. This man was connected with

attributes such as being a successful businessman or a womanizer only due to the setting that he was positioned in.

Nevertheless, most of the interviewees clarified that the depiction of an ordinary, average man is preferred when it comes to advertising for apparel, as they would like to identify themselves with the model depicted. If the model is depicted in an exorbitant manner that is alienated and not close to real life, the ad was evaluated more negatively. One interviewee made clear of what a typical man should look like:

"Well, [he should have] a fashion-conscious appearance, not macho-like because this does not represent the average man, not too conspicuous, neither too introverted nor too extroverted, thus a confident appearance, but not extremely noticeable." (Bruno)

On the other hand, the participants also had a clear picture of what a man should not look like. The men displayed in the advertisements by Calvin Klein, Boomerang and Sand Copenhagen were not in line with the interviewees' notion of manliness and were often evaluated as 'too feminine', 'too metrosexual' or 'too young':

"[...] this feminine side, which you see more often these days, is not my thing at all. A man has to look manly. [...] Typically manly is definitely a beard. [...] He should not be too lanky, as I said this whole feminine thing is not my thing, he should be strong, maybe muscular, but not necessarily muscular." (Klaus)

The male model in the advertisement by Calvin Klein was mostly connected with the modern beauty ideal, which most of the interviewees considered too feminine. The following example cites Klaus who, again, expressed his aversion for this modern beauty ideal:

"[...] what I don't like about [the ad] is this vanity of the man. He is depicted in a feminine way. Even though he has tattoos, he is pictured as feminine and this I do not consider interesting to me." (Klaus)

According to the majority of the participants a real man should be strong and hairy and the model in this advert does simply not fulfil these criteria. Even

though the model appeared to be muscular, several interviewees doubted the authenticity of this body and suggested that it must have been photo-shopped. Other participants also explained that the model is too young to be a real man. For example, Siegfried is very clear in the distinction between a man and a boy:

"Well, as I differentiate between a man and boy, I think these clean-shaven, very perfect models, that preferably even pluck their eyebrows... they are awful. Well, men like the ones in ad number 5 or 4 are men to me [...]." (Siegfried)

The advertisement by Boomerang was also criticized by many interviewees. They said that displaying two men who embrace each other was considered to be gay, because a real man would never hug a friend like this. In addition, most of the interviewees argued that the man on the left hand side is manlier than the model on the right side. This can also be due to the fact that the left man is bearded and does not wear extraordinary trousers like the model on the right side. These strikingly yellow trousers were consistently met with dislike by the interviewees.

The advert by Sand Copenhagen in fact evoked many strong and negative reactions from the interviewees. They criticized that the proportions of the depicted man does not conform to their idea of masculinity, as broad hips and slender shoulders are more associated with females. Some interviewees even insulted the model depicted, indicating their intolerance towards particular depictions. More issues regarding in/tolerance will be discussed in chapter 5.4.

To sum up, the traditional image of a man is still anchored in most of the interviewees' minds. According to them, masculinity is still connected with being tall and strong, while deviating features were perceived unmanly and met with dislike or even disgust.

5.3.2 The relationship between men and women in ads

Two of the ads, namely the one by Calvin Klein and the one by Hackett London, did not only feature men but also women. In the Calvin Klein ad there is one half-naked woman depicted, who throws herself at the male model in front of her. In the latter ad, one can see only two pairs of female legs that can be assigned to two women, who are surrounding the male model that is squatting on the floor.

A general finding that could be gained through the evaluation of the interviewees' perceptions towards the ads was that women, who are often used as part of the setting in an ad, work well in attracting the interviewees' attention. In the ads by Calvin Klein and Hackett London the women or the women's legs served as an eye-catcher to arouse attention. Most of the interviewees admitted that the women depicted in the ads definitely upgrade the image:

“... if solely the man would have been displayed, then I would consider this ad rather blank.” (Klaus, referring to Calvin Klein advert)

“[...] but you look at it anyway. Thus, if you browse [the magazine], you immediately stop there. But I cannot explain why. Maybe it is not even a good thing or not right, but it is just like that.” (Fridolin, referring to Hackett London advert)

„I mean even if this sounds a bit stupid, but sure: speaking of myself or for men in general: when there are women’s legs and the man [in the ad] is courted by women ... this attracts definitely more attention to the ad in contrast to when he is the only one squatting there.” (Florian, referring to Hackett London advert)

While these above-cited interviewees were honest about the fact that the displayed women have actually triggered their attention to the particular ads, others acted more with reserve. They said that this 'sex sells' image would not work for them, but they could imagine that others would buy into it. One of them was Bruno, who assumed that this notion of 'women fancying men in suits' would work in general for catching men's attention as it might boost their self-confidence.

On the other hand, others were more critical towards the depiction of men in relation to women. Bruno considered these kinds of depictions in which women serve only as part of a setting in the following way:

"... a bit sexist ... as it is going in the direction of a macho ... because the man is in the foreground and she darts at him from behind, however he is definitely in the foreground. [...]" (Bruno, referring to Calvin Klein advert)

Another aspect, which was touched upon by several interviewees was the confusion that they encountered when looking at the woman displayed in the advertisement by Calvin Klein. They criticized that the woman looked much older than Justin Bieber and argued further that this depiction of a man together with a woman does not match their notion of a couple. This is in line with their traditional image of a man, who is not only taller and stronger than the woman, but also older. Thus, this depiction did not appear natural to the interviewees and when asked what they would change about the ad, most participants said that they would establish a more natural pose between the man and woman.

"[...] and I think that the woman looks much older than him and all of this is just sick... thus, I don't like it at all [...]." (Maximilian)

Nevertheless, the opinion about the depiction of the man in relation to the woman in the Calvin Klein advertisement and in the advertisement by Hackett London was diverged. While most of the interviewees perceived the first ad as inauthentic and even sexist, they liked the depiction of the women's legs in the last advertisement. Some even called the Hackett London ad an authentic and equal depiction, even though one could solely see the women's legs. A reason for this might be the fact that most of the interviewees could see themselves in the man depicted in this ad and that the women surrounding them would be a desirable situation.

All in all, it can be observed that stereotypical thinking is prevalent in most of the interviewees' minds. Due to the fact that they have a clear image of masculinity, it allows them to classify men according to several categories. In

fact, the respondents approved of the usage of stereotypes and said that this made it easier for them to identify what was targeted towards them and what they could disregard. They also criticized adverts that they could not classify as a certain type and perceived them as confusing. Even though the six chosen ads already embodied several stereotypes, some interviewees would have made them even more stereotypical, if they had the chance to. Fridolin gave one example, which expressly underlines this stereotypical thinking. When asked what he would change in the ad by Hackett London, he would make the image of the successful businessman even more stereotypical:

"Do you watch 'Suits'? [note by the author: a TV series] ... Such a guy, so ... I'd still say Harvey [note by the author: Harvey Specter, a character in this particular TV series] more than Mike [...] somehow in his office, perhaps sitting at a table, on the computer, in the background the Manhattan skyline and in a nice suit [...] with an expensive whiskey [...]?"(Fridolin)

5.4 Tolerance vs. intolerance

The final theme that transpired throughout the interviews and even more drastically when analysing the empirical material in detail was tolerance for certain depictions, or more importantly the lack thereof. This topic was already briefly touched upon in the theme masculinity vs. femininity in chapter 5.3, where it was explained that certain depictions were perceived as more congruent with the participants' ideas of masculinity than others. However, when using the term tolerance the researchers do not refer to what the respondents perceived as masculine or feminine, but to the harsh and pejorative judgment with which the adverts were met that did not meet the participants' expectations of a 'real man'.

The one advert that was perceived as the least manly display and was therefore met with most intolerance was depiction number three by Sand Copenhagen. The participants disliked and criticized all aspects of this advert: the haircut of the male model, his facial expression, his feminine body proportions, his unnatural posture and also the clothes that he was wearing. When talking about this advert, most of the respondents resorted to

the usage of strong emotional and in some cases even offensive language. It appears that these strong emotional reactions were not just related to personal likes or dislikes. Some of the participants seemed to be genuinely offended by the display; otherwise they probably would not have deemed it necessary to utilize such abusive language:

"I am extremely bothered by the proportions displayed in this advert, the fact that he has broad hips and narrow shoulders, also the suit looks strange and... his hair and also his gaze... it's as if they took a haircut from a Manga Comic and put it onto a sixty year old man suffering from cancer... I think this is totally weird, and also the fact that he looks directly at me bothers me to be honest." (Giesbert)

"The first thing I thought was, okay, what a freak! He gave me the impression that he is helpless and completely worn out. And I also thought to myself: if you advertise a suit, why would you, at least in my point of view, put this guy in one that is way too small?" (Vincent)

As can be seen from these excerpts from the interviews, the participants did not hold back in communicating just how vexed they were by this display. The word 'freak', which is defined as "a person, animal, or plant with an unusual physical abnormality" (Oxford University Press, 2015), will in most cases be interpreted as an insult and already gives a good impression about how intolerant the respondents were towards displays that did not agree with their idea of masculinity. However, a small number of respondents went even further and attributed negative character traits and qualities to the model displayed based on his physical appearance, even though they had no information about his personality. While the advert in general was perceived as cold and unemotional (mostly due to the black and white design), participants perceived the male model with ambiguity: the majority stated that he appeared in equal shares threatening and confused. On the one hand, they ascribed menacing qualities to him and described him as 'aggressive', 'challenging', 'creepy' and in some extreme cases they even attributed mental instability to him by identifying him as a 'serial killer' or a 'person prone to run amok'. On the other hand, the participants almost victimized him by describing him as 'helpless', 'lost' and 'confused'. Since they did not see him as a 'real man' because of his appearance ('too skinny', 'too feminine', 'ugly clothes'),

they automatically assumed that he was weak and could not stand up for himself. It might also be that the terms ‘lost’ and ‘confused’ related to his masculinity, meaning that because the model does not conform to their idea of maleness, he does not fit into a certain category and was therefore considered adrift.

Throughout the analysis, there was one statement regarding this advert that was especially noticeable in terms of intolerance:

“When I first looked at this advert I thought hell no, that’s an absolute no-no! I don’t like this... he looks like a mobster from the 30ies, this whole vintage style, that’s just nasty; visually I don’t like it at all. And I definitely wouldn’t want somebody that I have to look at every day to run around like this!” (Fridolin)

While all participants expressed intolerance towards the display through the depreciative terms they used to describe the advert, this participant was probably most straightforward about it. Tolerance means that one is “able and willing to accept other’s opinions or behaviour, even though one might not agree with it” (Oxford University Press, 2015). This also entails giving others the space and freedom to express themselves and unfold their personality, which - given the last sentence of the quotation - this participant is clearly not willing to do in this case.

The second advert that was shown to the participants for the brand Boomerang was also met with intolerance by some of the participants, even though the negative reaction was not quite as harsh. It was further noticeable that interpretations for this advert varied, which in turn had an impact on the degree of tolerance with which this advert was perceived. As already explained in the theme about masculinity vs. femininity in chapter 5.3, the depiction of the two men standing arm in arm was identified as gay by many of the respondents, even if the advert did not openly communicate this. Others, while admitting that the thought that these two men might be more than friends had crossed their mind, chose to interpret the gesture as amity. However, the fact remains that all participants, to a certain degree, identified

this display as homosexual, even though some of them discarded this notion on second thought and decided on a different interpretation. Those who perceived the relationship between the two men as friendship evaluated the display more positively and showed more tolerance towards the male models. While they still wanted to distance themselves from the depiction and make sure to communicate that they would never be seen in such an intimate position with another man, they were more accepting and agreed that each person has a different way to show affection:

"Well no, I think the two are... I think they are decent displays. I don't know, I probably wouldn't – if we are talking about a buddy – I wouldn't necessarily put my arm around his hips, but hey, each to his own."
(Siegfried)

In contrast, other participants were not quite so liberal in their judgment. They argued that this was not a natural position for two men to be in and therefore chose to categorize it as gay. The general consensus that the respondents reached was that the advert wanted to provoke people and thereby grasp their attention, since they could not see another reason for why these two men should be depicted in such an intimate posture. Even though the language and terms the participants used to describe this advert were not as derogatory as in the first example, it could easily be understood that they did not feel comfortable with this depiction. Many participants stated that the advert was confusing for them and it was described as 'too gay to be straight and too straight to be gay' (Giesbert). Moreover, when contemplating the depiction, the participants asked rhetorical questions, such as 'Why two men?', 'Is that really necessary?', 'Why do they have to hug each other?', 'What am I supposed to think about this?', etc. Some participants even interpreted the averted gaze of the left man as shame or disgust towards this intimate embrace, asking himself why he has to do this. Their animosity towards the display became even more obvious when the respondents were asked what they would change about the depiction if they could. The majority confirmed that they would either display the two men further apart or would remove one model completely from the advert to eliminate the ambiguity with which this picture can be perceived.

It was interesting to see that when first asked about their opinion and thoughts about this advert, the participants freely talked about how they perceived it as gay or at least as ambiguous and expressed their dislike towards this depiction. However, when probed about why or what it is that bothers them, they all backtracked and stated that they were not bothered by it, just confused and wondering about the situation. The majority, when prompted about it, explained that they had no problem with depictions of homosexuals and they seemed to try hard to appear more tolerant than they actually were, which can be seen from this excerpt from Vincent's interview:

Vincent: "Yes, the second display... well the first thing that I asked myself was: Why two men? I mean, OK, you can do it, but really? Is that necessary?"

Interviewer: "Why? What bothers you about this depiction of the two men?"

Vincent: "No no, I am not bothered by it at all! I just noticed, but it really doesn't bother me."

This pattern could be detected for all interviewees who interpreted the depiction as gay. It seems that they wanted to communicate their opinion about it, but at the same time they wanted to make sure not to come across as homophobe. Hence, they looked for less drastic expressions to ensure to distance themselves from the depiction while simultaneously appearing open-minded.

Curiously, they did not show this sensitivity towards the male model in the advert for Sand Copenhagen. Here, they expressed their dislike freely and were not concerned with appearing tolerant towards another human being. It seems that they did not find it problematic to attack an individual; however, they did not want to be perceived as hateful towards a social group.

In contrast, the other four images that were shown to the participants throughout the interviews were met with tolerance and in some cases even respect. The reason for this is most likely the fact that these four images were more congruent with the respondents' idea of masculinity. Even though there were some aspects that they disliked about the models displayed (for

example too many tattoos, clothing items, accessories, etc.), they were more accepting of the differences in taste between themselves and the men depicted.

5.5 Smarter than the ad

There was one aspect with regard to advertising in general that was brought up by all respondents in the beginning of the interview, namely the fact that they hardly pay attention to advertising and they were not familiar with male portrayals. When they were asked about their shopping behaviour for clothes in general, most of them replied that they usually know exactly what they want and that they shop as necessary, meaning that they only go into clothing shops if they need a specific item. They further stated that they noticed printed adverts when looking through magazines, for example, but they hardly acknowledge it or look at it further:

"For example when I read through 'Spiegel' [note by the author: German magazine] and some advertisement is printed on one page, then I don't pay attention to it but completely blend it out." (Harald)

It seemed that they wanted to communicate that they are too smart or knowledgeable to fall for advertisements. They argued that when looking at the adverts they understood the concepts or the feelings and attributes the marketers wanted to convey to them and persisted that it did not have any effect on them. The general opinion was that they knew what they wanted, that they understood and saw through the adverts, that this would work on other people but not themselves and that their mind could not be swayed through adverts:

"Yes, I am only concerned with the product itself, if the item is something that stands for itself and if it could fit me, I know that the people displayed are models, and I know that this is advertising and that they try to persuade me in one way or another, but I focus on whether this is the right style for me..." (Hubert)

"For me... as I said before, I am absolutely convinced that my purchase decision is neither positively nor negatively influenced by this." (Vincent)

It seems that they wanted to convey the impression that they are secure in their choices and their idea of themselves and that they have their own opinions. This might also be related to their idea of masculinity and that a 'real man' should be strong and self-confident. These attributes might not only translate into his appearance, but also into his behaviour and actions. Therefore, they might think that a real man is strong and confident in his personality, and is not swayed in his opinion by others or by something as primitive as advertising.

To conclude the data analysis chapter, four major themes emerged repeatedly throughout the interviews, namely authenticity, accessibility, masculinity and tolerance. The outcome of the data analysis may be summarised as follows:

The first theme, which represents the tension between authentic and inauthentic aspects of the advertisements, revealed that the adverts that were perceived as authentic were evaluated more positively by the interviewees. Regardless of whether the participants discussed the model or the situation displayed in the ads in terms of authenticity, the positive appraisal for both aspects was similar. According to the interviewees, it was perceived authentic when the products were put into a situational context (e.g. riding a motorbike, drinking coffee or attending a party) that they could relate to, while ads, which solely displayed a model as a presenter for the product itself, were considered inauthentic. Moreover, the models displayed had to conform to the interviewees' notion of an ordinary man or had to be identified as a member of a certain group (e.g. rocker image with tattoos) in order to be perceived authentic, while men with extreme features were considered rather inauthentic.

The second theme depicts the distinction between accessibility and inaccessibility in terms of how easily a particular position or situation in the ads can be reached by the interviewees. Overall, the findings imply that the interviewees distinguished between desirable ideals, which are likely to attain, and dream images that seem unlikely to be accomplished. The more

accessible a model or a situation in an ad appeared, the more positive was its perception among the interviewees. On the one hand, more natural models without extreme features or activities that resemble real life situations allowed the interviewees to see themselves in the particular ads, and were therefore perceived more positively and accessible. On the other hand, depictions that appeared to be strange and unusual or situations without a particular activity proved hard for the interviewees to identify with, and therefore these depictions were evaluated negatively as well as inaccessible.

The third theme regarding the tension between masculinity and femininity demonstrates that the traditional stereotype of masculinity, which is associated with strength and power, is still anchored in the participants' mind. For one, models that embodied manly characteristics (e.g. beard, muscles) or performed manly activities (e.g. riding a motorbike) were perceived positively among the interviewees. In contrast, models that did not conform to the interviewees' idea of masculinity (e.g. too young, too feminine or too metrosexual) were evaluated negatively and were even met with dislike or disgust. In addition, women were mostly perceived as an eye-catcher or an accessory that would attract the interviewees' attention and that would upgrade the advertisements. Moreover, women had to fulfil the traditional stereotype of femininity by appearing womanlike, by being younger in contrast to men and by seeking protection by men.

The fourth theme discussed which depictions were met with tolerance and intolerance, respectively. Portrayals that were congruent with the participants' idea of masculinity were tolerated, while deviant displays from a 'real man' were often received with harsh and pejorative judgment. For instance, men with effeminate traits were met with dislike and some interviewees appeared even offended by such depictions and tried to distance themselves from these advertisements.

These findings imply that stereotypical thinking is still prevalent and anchored in the interviewees' minds. Even though they consider themselves too smart to fall for advertising, the participants tended to be swayed by ads that used

stereotypical displays. They have a clear image of masculinity and femininity that allows them to classify men and women according to several categories. However, each portrayal, which deviates from traditional gender role images, results in confusion or dislike. Hence, the usage of traditional stereotypes was approved by the interviewees as through this it becomes easier for them to identify for whom the advertised products are intended.

6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore men's attitudes towards gender stereotypes used in advertisements by analysing their perceptions of male depictions. In order to ensure the significance of the findings, the authors decided to focus on a small sample of fourteen German participants who were provided with six sample adverts currently used in the fashion industry. Being aware that the findings of this study are not representative for a larger population, the authors strongly believe that this is a valuable contribution towards filling the existing research gap around men and their perceptions of gender stereotypes in adverts.

In conclusion, it can be deduced from the findings that the men included in this study reacted more positively towards classically masculine displays. The participants confirmed that the image of a man that is manifested in their mind is still one of success, strength and being the protector for their partner and their family. These qualities, in the participants' minds, are also mirrored in a man's physical appearance through a tall, fit and muscular body that is well groomed and looks representable. Adverts that used this kind of imagery to promote a product were perceived to be authentic and were met with positive feedback and tolerance. Images that did not rely on this stereotypically masculine depiction, however, evoked a number of negative feelings in the respondents, such as confusion, disgust and the wish to distance themselves from these depictions. The strong verbal reactions elicited by these adverts, as well as the repeated affirmation by the respondents that they could in no way relate to these images, might imply that the classic gender roles and ideas of masculinity and femininity are still deeply anchored in peoples' minds and the interviewees seemed to strive to conform to these ideals. The adverts that depicted the male models either as a successful businessman or as an established personality with freedom to make their own choices were identified as ideal images by the respondents, which they thought was worth attaining and where they would like to see themselves at some point in time. On the contrary, images that did not correspond with their idea of masculinity were perceived as unnatural and something that the respondents did not want

to be related to under any circumstance. This might also be connected to a certain concern about what other people think about them with regard to their maleness. The ideas of masculinity and femininity are deeply embedded in society and are passed on from generation to generation. Therefore, men might fear that they will be judged or that their own masculinity will be put into question if they sympathise or show interest in these non-traditional displays. These findings might serve as an example of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which tends to be still prevalent in most Western societies. The image of a white and heterosexual man, who symbolizes power and strength, is considered superior in contrast to homosexual men or men with effeminate characteristics. This explains why the depictions in the advertisements by Boomerang and Sand Copenhagen were met with harsh words, dislike and even abusive language.

6.1 Findings in relation to gender stereotype theories

Furthermore, the findings from the interviews support the classic theory with regard to using stereotypes in advertising, which argues that any deviations from traditional gender roles are more likely to be evaluated negatively. The participants perceived the images that were not conform to traditional categories as confusing and therefore evaluated them negatively. Moreover, most of them confirmed that if they saw these adverts in magazines they would disregard them, which is indeed what the theory indicates.

The findings from the study at hand therefore contradict the stereotype content model developed by Fiske et al. (2002), which predicts that paternalistic depictions that communicate warmth to onlookers should be received more positively than envious images that communicate competence. For the respondents of this study the opposite was true: they praised the depiction of the businessman and defined it as an ideal image that they want to achieve for themselves. Simultaneously, they received the more effeminate depictions negatively, even though according to this model these should communicate more warmth.

6.2 Findings in relation to identity

Moreover, another remarkable finding of this study was that the interviewees tried to see themselves in the advertisements or even attempted to project themselves onto the model and situation presented. Whenever they could identify with the models displayed, these depictions were linked to positive emotions and were generally evaluated more positively. In contrast, portrayals that were hard for the participants to identify with were often met with indifference or dislike. It was interesting to observe that authenticity and accessibility seemed to be closely linked to identification. Yet it was difficult to determine whether they could identify with the depictions because they were perceived as authentic and accessible, or whether the fact that they could identify with the depiction led them to classify these adverts as authentic and accessible.

Hence, it can be argued that the findings of this study fall into line with Fearon's (1999) understanding of identity. He explicated that identity can be seen from two different angles: the social and personal context. Concerning the social context he explained that identity defines a social category that consists of a group of people who share particular features, attributes and characteristics. The findings of the interviews revealed that the participants were able to classify the models in the advertisements into different social categories depending on a particular set of characteristics. For instance, the model displayed in the advertisement by Adrian Hammond took on the identity of a 'rocker' due to features such as a motorbike, dark clothes, tattoos and an unkempt beard. These particular features helped most of the interviewees to realize that due to the lack of these features they would not be considered as members of this specific social category. On the contrary, the participants who also possess a motorbike were more likely to identify with the person depicted in the ad and to develop a feeling of belonging to this social group.

From the perspective of the personal context, Fearon (1999) explices that identity can be seen as the sum of personal traits and characteristics, which distinguish the individual from others. This identity can be expressed through

a set of particular attributes, desires or activities. Relating to the findings of the study at hand, it can be observed that many participants were able to identify with the models depicted in the advertisements by Cavaliere and Hackett London as they possessed desirable attributes (e.g. neat clothing, groomed appearance) and were presented in a worthwhile situation (e.g. relaxing with coffee and a newspaper, at a party surrounded by women). Due to these particular attributes, the interviewees were able to project certain personal traits and characteristics (e.g. successful in all life aspects, dynamic, confident, open-minded) onto the models.

The findings of this study are also in line with Belk's (1988, p. 139) concept of the extended self, who claims that "we are the sum of our possessions". The interviewees, in fact, attached a certain meaning to particular items of clothing, which would be congruent with the proverb 'clothes make people'. For many participants wearing a suit, just like the model in the advertisement by Hackett London, represents success. It is therefore a desirable clothing item, as this possession would serve as a cue for other people to get an impression of the wearer and to associate him with success. Through particular choices of clothing, the interviewees are trying to construct or extend their own identity allowing them to be members of particular social groups.

6.3 Male vs. female stereotypes

Since this study was focused on the perception of male stereotypes in adverts it was interesting to see that the men included in the study seemed to prefer categorizations of men in advertisements, while women, as can be seen from the examples provided through the literature, incline to avoid being put in a particular category. For instance, the majority of the male interviewees stated that they do not feel constrained when being put into a category. Some interviewees even said that they consider stereotypical images helpful as they facilitate the conception of an ad because mostly they can identify with a particular type of man or with a situation displayed. Some interviewees stated that they prefer to see a traditional notion of a man displayed in an ad

because then they know what kind of values this ad is trying to convey. On the other hand, they found it difficult to categorize men displayed as in advertisement number three (Sand Copenhagen), since this depiction does not correspond with their idea of a traditional man. The convenience of stereotypical depictions was also discussed and highlighted by several authors (Lafky et al., 1996; Wolin, 2003; Yu et al., 2014) because stereotypes can serve as cognitive shortcuts that people use to navigate through the complexity in everyday life. Moreover, stereotypes in advertising are generally easy to understand and they help consumers to identify for whom the product is intended. The positive attitude towards gender role specific images displayed by the interviewees stands in direct contrast to the attitude of women portrayed in the literature, who appear more critical towards the stereotypical depictions used in advertisements. This is most likely due to the fact that women are often displayed inferior compared to men. Frequently, women are depicted as sex objects, happy housewives or as incompetent and dependent on a man. Studies that focused on the perception of female depictions in adverts by women (e.g. Theodoris, Kyrousi, Zotou & Panigyrakis, 2013; Veloutsou & Ahmed, 2005) confirm that women tend to view advertisements more critically and are more easily offended by their content.

When looking at the usual German gender roles² and the stereotypes that are connected with masculinity and femininity, it is comprehensible why the interviewees might be less concerned about categorization and being

² The findings deduced from the interviews seem to be in line with the high numbers assigned to the German speaking countries on the masculinity index scale presented by Hofstede (1980). The index, as explained in chapter two, classifies the culture in these countries as more masculine, meaning that they “strive for maximal distinction between what women and men are expected to do” (Jandt, 2009, p. 171). This attitude was confirmed and communicated by the respondents at several occasions throughout the interviews and provides a further explanation to why an effeminate depiction of male models was met with considerably strong criticism. Since the aim of men from Germany seems to be, according to this index, to be as different in their features and appearances to women as possible, it is understandable that the participants in this study evaluated the classically manly displays more positively than those, which displayed models with feminine features or characteristics. However, we are aware that Hofstede’s index is a rather generalized concept, while our findings are limited to a small sample. Hence, we did not see it as appropriate to assume our findings as representative for his concept and therefore we considered it essential to mention it here but not to build our concluding arguments on his theory.

stereotyped. As mentioned before, women are in many cases displayed in inferior positions to men and in general there is a lesser variety in categories applied towards women than men. Simplified, these categories are housewife, businesswoman or sexy ‘It-Girl’, and each of these categories seems to be afflicted with negative associations, such as stupid or uncaring. In contrast, one could argue that men are used to being depicted in powerful and desirable situations, while at the same time being able to fit into a variety of categories: successful businessman, rebellious freedom-lover, active sportsman, caring father, etc. Each category seems to be equally accepted by society and because these stereotypes are mostly associated with positive attributes, men might not mind fitting into these categories. On the contrary, the participants in this study indicated that they tend to work towards belonging to a certain group and are happy for people to identify them as a member. This was made clear when the respondents were asked about what they would change in the adverts presented to them if they could. Almost all participants leaned towards alterations that would make the advert more stereotypical and more easily categorisable. For example, advertisement number six (Hackett London) displayed a man in a suit at a social event, most likely a cocktail party. Participants identified him as a businessman, and consequently asked for him to be displayed in an office, maybe working on a computer. Advertisement number two (Boomerang) displayed two men standing on a beach with their arms around each other. Respondents were confused by this image as it could not be easily categorized, so they stated that one man should be taken out of the advertisement to eliminate the ambiguity and should be engaged in a physical activity, to align more closely to the sporty image.

All in all, this study complements previous research about gender stereotypes in advertising in the way that it examined men’s perceptions of stereotypical displays in print ads based on reception theory. Previous research had focused on content analyses (e.g. Kolbe & Albanese, 1996; Thomas & Treiber, 2000; Knoll & Eisend, 2011) neglecting the perception of the actual consumers of the advertised products. Nevertheless, this particular study at hand also confirmed the findings of prior research that gender stereotypical

displays are still heavily communicated through advertisements. However, contrary to Elliott & Elliott (2005), who cautioned that men are also subject to oppressive stereotypes, the participants of this study confirmed that they in fact feel comfortable with stereotypical displays. While the two authors asserted that men are also confronted with unrealistic body images or stereotypical categories such as the successful businessman or the serial womaniser, the study at hand revealed that, for instance, the depiction of the successful businessman turned out to be one worth striving for. Hence, the interviewed men communicated that they do not feel restricted when being put into a desirable or dominant category. In contrast, it seems that women are still struggling with discriminating depictions in advertising because they are continuously displayed inferior compared to men.

6.4 Limitations and future research

This study is subject to several limitations, which make a generalization of the findings impossible. These limitations are presented in the following section, alongside recommendations for future research in this field.

For one, it needs to be kept in mind that the study at hand focuses on only one nationality, and in addition the sample size of fourteen participants selected for the study was rather small. Moreover, all the interviewees were between 23 and 33 years old with an academic background. Thus, replicating this study with participants of another age group or another educational background might have yielded different results. This, in turn, means that the findings might not be representative for all German men, let alone for men from different national or cultural backgrounds. It could very well be that the same advertisements would be perceived differently if the study was to be carried out in another country, thereby yielding different findings from the ones presented in this thesis.

Furthermore, one must be aware that the concept of interviewing reflects subjective and personal conclusions, which implies that limitations on validity are naturally given. In addition, it is likely that the results were influenced by

the researchers, in particular through manually coding and interpreting the data according to the grounded theory strategy.

Another limitation, that has also been referred to by Knoll & Eisend (2011, p. 883) is the seasonal bias induced due to the fact that all advertisements that were selected for this study were published in March issues of magazines. Even though the idea was to choose the most recently released fashion adverts to understand how men perceive current displays and “[c]hoosing one month at random is a common practice in most [...] studies dealing with gender roles in advertising” (*ibid*), it is recommended that future studies include advertisements from several periods of the year in order to avoid seasonal bias.

The reason for most of these limitations presented was the limited timeframe of only ten weeks provided to complete this thesis. While the authors believe that the findings presented in this paper are relevant and contribute to the relatively small body of research that can be found about gender stereotypes in advertising with regard to men, they accept that the findings are not generally applicable. Hence, future research could extend these findings by the following suggestions:

First of all, the current study could be replicated in various countries with participants from different cultural contexts, social groups, age ranges and ethnicities. On top of that, several interviewees were curious to know how women would react and perceive the six selected adverts. Thus, a comparison of perceptions towards the same ads by men and women could reveal new insights.

One suggestion to replicate this study is to build the approach to these studies around Hofstede’s cultural dimensions theory (1980), by selecting several countries that score differently on the masculinity-femininity index. It could be interesting to explore whether men’s perceptions of stereotypes in advertising differ across high and low masculinity index countries.

Due to the fact that the six selected advertisements for this study at hand only displayed white men, a further suggestion would be to carry out a similar

study with a different selection of ads that includes minorities. It would be interesting to see whether a dark-skinned businessman would yield the same positive appraisal as it did for advertisement six in this study.

Another option for future studies could be to confront the interviewees with stereotypes in different media. This study focused solely on men's perception of a small amount of print ads. Several studies have focused solely on TV, radio and print advertisements based on content analyses (e.g. Furnham & Thomson, 1999; Monk-Turner et al., 2007 cited in Eisend, 2010; Kolbe & Albanese, 1996; Thomas & Treiber, 2000; Knoll & Eisend, 2011). Hence, it would be advisable to explore men's perceptions in TV, radio or new media such as websites, blogs, social media and so forth in future studies.

Moreover, this thesis focused on print ads from the fashion sector only. Since stereotypes are disseminated in other industries as well, future studies could investigate further sectors or product categories. As one of the interviewees mentioned in the study at hand, stereotypes are also prevalent in advertising used in the automobile sector or in the tobacco industry.

Another approach to explore perceptions towards stereotypical displays could be to conduct a quantitative study with larger samples to collect numerical data, which could then enhance the generalizability of the results. For instance, a correlation analysis could yield new insights about the degree of relationships between different variables.

One final suggestion for future research would be to explore whether there is a relationship between stereotypes and consumers' purchase intentions or behaviour. It could be relevant for marketers or advertisers of several industries to know whether the current displays of men and women in advertising are appealing to the target group or whether a particular depiction is more effective than others in stimulating buying behaviour.

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Appendix: Interview guide in English and German

Introduction

- Name
- Age
- Nationality
- Occupation

Purchase behaviour and experiences with fashion advertising

1. How and where do you buy clothing? (Online shops, traditional stores, etc.)
2. When you go shopping:
Do you buy your clothing items as needed or do you just stroll around to see what is on the market?
3. Which factors could possibly influence you when you go shopping?
4. Do you think that advertising has an influence on you?
 - a. Does advertising entice you to buy particular clothing items or do you seek inspiration from display dummies or advertisements in the shop? Or do you go straight to the clothing items you need?
5. Do you read men's magazines? (E.g. GQ, Men's Health, Instyle men, Gala men, etc.)
 - a. If yes: To what extent do you notice print ads in magazines?
 - b. Have you noticed print ads from clothing manufacturers? Do you pay attention to them?
 - c. If no: Do you read other magazines in which you might have noticed print ads for fashion?
 - d. Do you dwell on these ads or do you change pages right away?
Why?

The six ads are shown to the participant and he has time to write down his thoughts concerning the following questions: What is your first impression? What do you see? How does this ad make you feel? What do you think? What do you like / do not like about the adverts? Do you see yourself in the ad?

Thought bubble completion: Respondents fill in what the person depicted in the ad might be thinking or feeling.

Perceptions and thoughts towards each of the six selected print advertisements

6. What was your first impression?
7. Please describe in your own words what you see in this ad.
8. What do you think about this ad? Does this ad remind you of something?
9. Do you like the ad? Why or why not?
10. What do you think about the presentation of the models? Can you identify with the person depicted?
 - a. Is it important for you to be able to identify yourself with the person in the ad?
 - b. Does an ad, with which you can identify, lead you to purchase the advertised product?
11. Do you think that this ad promotes the product effectively?
 - a. Does this ad make you want to buy this product? Why or why not?
12. If you could alter this advertisement: what would you change and why?
13. What did you write in the thought bubble?

Discussion about all the ads and stereotypes in advertising

14. Which ad did is most appealing to you? Why?
 - a. Which one do you consider most natural? Why?
15. With which depiction can you identify the most and with which portrayal not at all?
16. What is typical manly for you? How should a typical man look like? Which physical characteristics should he embody?
17. Have you ever noticed particular stereotypes in advertising?
18. Which of these ads contain stereotypes for you? Which stereotypes can you identify in these ads?
19. What is your opinion about stereotypes used in advertising?
 - a. Do stereotypes facilitate the perception of the ads or do you feel restricted as it tries to put you into a certain category?
20. In your opinion: how should the “perfect” ad for men’s clothing look like?

a. If more adverts would be in line with your “perfect” ad: do you think that you would dwell on these kinds of advertising?

21. Can the presentation of the models in the ad change your mind about a brand or a particular clothing item?

Closing questions

22. Could you tell us in your own words what you like about advertising in the fashion sector or what you do not like, respectively?

23. Are there any other thoughts about gender stereotypes in advertising that you would like to share with us?

Interview Leitfaden

Einleitung

- Name
- Alter
- Nationalität
- Tätigkeit/Beschäftigung

Kaufverhalten und Erfahrungen mit Werbung für Kleidung

1. Wie und wo kaufst du Kleidung ein? (Online, im Geschäft, etc.)

2. Wenn du Kleidung einkaufen gehst:

Kaufst du dann nach Bedarf oder gehst du auch in Geschäfte um einfach mal zu schauen was es auf dem Markt gibt?

3. Welche Faktoren beeinflussen dich wenn du Kleidung kaufst?

4. Findest du, dass Werbung einen Einfluss auf dich hat?

a. Lässt du dich durch Werbung zum Einkauf verleiten oder durch Schaufensterpuppen im Geschäft inspirieren? Oder suchst du gezielt nach Kleidungsstücken?

5. Liest du Männermagazine? (z.B. GQ, Men's Health, Instyle men, Gala men, etc.)

a. Falls ja: Inwiefern achtest du auf gedruckte Werbungen in Magazinen?

b. Sind dir dort Werbeanzeigen von Kleidungsherstellern aufgefallen?

Schaust du dir diese an?

- c. Falls nein: Liest du andere Zeitschriften in denen dir Werbungen bzgl. Kleidung aufgefallen sind?
- d. Schaust du dir die Werbung an oder blätterst du bei Werbung für Kleidung weiter? Weshalb?

Die sechs Werbungen werden dem Interviewpartner gezeigt und dieser hat Zeit um seine Gedanken nieder zu schreiben: Was siehst du? Was fühlst du und denkst du? Was magst du an der Werbung und was magst du nicht? Siehst du dich selbst in der Werbung wieder?

Komplettierung der Gedankenblase: Die Interviewpartner füllen die Gedanken der dargestellten Models aus.

Wahrnehmung von und Gedanken gegenüber den gezeigten Werbungen

6. Was ist dein erster Gedanke?
7. Bitte beschreibe in deinen eigenen Worten was du in dieser Werbung siehst.
8. Wenn du diese Werbungen siehst, woran denkst du? Erinnern dich die Darstellungen an etwas?
9. Was denkst du über diese Werbung? Gefällt sie dir oder nicht? Weshalb?
10. Wie denkst du über die Darstellung der Modelle? Kannst du dich mit der gezeigten Person identifizieren?
 - a. Findest du es wichtig, dass du dich mit der Person in einer Werbung identifizieren kannst?
 - b. Verleitet dich eine Werbung, mit der du dich identifizieren kannst, auch dazu das Produkt zu kaufen?
11. Findest du diese Werbung vermarktet das Produkt effektiv?
 - a. Motiviert dich diese Werbung das gezeigte Produkt zu kaufen? Warum / warum nicht?
12. Wenn du diese Werbung ändern könntest, was würdest du ändern und warum?
13. Was hast du in die Gedankenblase geschrieben?

Vergleich der Werbungen und Stereotypen in der Werbung

14. Welche Darstellung gefällt dir am besten? Welche Darstellung findest du am natürlichsten? Weshalb?
15. In welcher Darstellung kannst du dich am ehesten identifizieren und in welcher Darstellung siehst du dich gar nicht wieder?
16. Was ist denn für dich typisch Mann? Wie sollte ein typischer Mann aussehen? Sollte ein richtiger Mann bestimmte Merkmale aufweisen?
17. Hast du jemals bestimmte Stereotypen in der Werbung wahrgenommen?
 - a. Falls ja, welchen?
18. Welche dieser Werbungen enthalten Stereotypen für dich? Welche Stereotypen sind deiner Meinung nach in den Werbungen dargestellt?
19. Was denkst du über Werbungen die Stereotypen beinhalten?
 - a. Erleichtern Sie die Wahrnehmung der Werbung oder schränken sie dich ein weil sie versuchen dich in eine bestimmte Kategorie zu stecken?
20. Wie sollte eine "perfekte" Werbung für Männerkleidung deiner Meinung nach aussehen?
 - a. Würden alle Werbungen deiner Vorstellung von perfekter Werbung nachkommen, würden dich Werbungen im Allgemeinen mehr ansprechen?
21. Kann die Darstellung von Männern in Werbung deine Meinung über eine Marke oder ein bestimmtes Kleidungsstück ändern?

Abschluss

22. Kannst du mir abschließend in deinen eigenen Worten erzählen was dir an Werbungen im Kleidungssektor gefällt bzw. nicht gefällt?
23. Gibt es noch weitere Gedanken zum Thema Stereotypen in Werbungen bezüglich Männer die du mit uns teilen möchtest?