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Handledare: Jörgen Eksell
Examinator: Marja Åkerström

Non-stereotypical advertising – Everyone’s included?
*A qualitative study of non-stereotypical advertising through a
postcolonial perspective*

MELINDA HOLM & EMMA HOLMBERG

Lund Univeristy
Institution for Strategic Communication
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Abstract

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A qualitative study of non-stereotypical advertising through a postcolonial perspective

The study aims to problematize the new marketing trend of non-stereotypical advertising from a postcolonial perspective and to contribute with knowledge on how Western power structures influence non-stereotypical advertising. Much of the research on the topic of advertising has focused on its effectiveness. The study, which combines the research fields of advertising, stereotypes, intersectionality and postcolonialism, should be viewed as a contribution to already existing research. A multimodal semiotic analysis was used to analyse the empirical material and the results show that the intersectional awareness of the sender influences the non-stereotypical representations in the advertising. Moreover, a lack of intersectional awareness implies a higher presence of discrimination in non-stereotypical advertising. The postcolonial perspective criticizes non-stereotypical advertising and the study implies that communication in advertising is tainted by Western worldviews and thereby reproduces existing inequalities in society. The study provides practical implications for how semiotic resources can be used to deemphasize Western power structures in non-stereotypical advertising. This knowledge can be useful for future strategic communicators that will operate on a global and multicultural market, but is also of value for whomever wishes to reflect upon advertising's role in creating inequalities in society.

Keywords: Postcolonialism, stereotypes, semiotic resources, intersectional awareness, non-stereotypical advertising

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1. Introduction

In the following section, an introduction to the relationship between advertising, stereotypes, postcolonialism and intersectionality is presented. Later, we identify research gaps within these topics and problematize non-stereotypical advertising. The purpose and research questions of the study are presented followed by an account of the given limitations.

In the Western multicultural society communication between people of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds is constantly present. This multiculturalism is an effect of globalization, where communication beyond geographical borders connects people, creating a diverse and culturally enriched society. Yet, the Western worldview is accepted as the dominant and therefore, discrimination leading to inequalities in society is present in its communication, including advertising. Advertising, as a mass communication medium, is a powerful tool organizations use to reach a wide audience with persuasive messages (Pollay, 1986). In today's Western society advertising can be problematic as stereotypes are frequently occurring in the marketing communication (Hinton, 2003). The stereotypes used in advertising are often built on pre conventions and generalizations about e.g. gender, age and ethnicity and are often negative portrayals of people or groups (Fagerström, 2008; Hinton, 2003). The use of stereotypes in advertising has become a norm and many scholars have analysed the cultural and social consequences of this (Hawkins & Coney, 1976; Lundstrom & Sciglimpaglia, 1977; Kay & Furnham, 1975). However, some organizations choose to break this norm by communicating non-stereotypical representations in their advertising. These non-stereotypical representations are visible through communication and thereby, cannot be studied without insights from the field of strategic communication. With this new trend of non-stereotypical advertising intersectionality, and in particular intersectional awareness, becomes a useful term

for understanding the effects of the non-stereotypical representations. Intersectionality is described as an understanding for how people are discriminated against on more than one level by different representations in society (Edling & Liljeros, 2010), and thereby it is relevant for the strategic communicator to possess an intersectional awareness in today's multicultural society.

Visual representations of people or groups reflect how they are treated in reality and can be manifested in advertising (Hall, 1997). Advertising communicates these visual representations through the use of semiotic resources, such as body language, music, speech, artefacts and composition, and can be interpreted in different ways depending on the cultural background and worldview of the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In non-stereotypical advertising the semiotic resources are used to communicate representations that break stereotypes. This is a new way of advertising that will most likely grow along with our globalized and multicultural society.

1.1 Problem definition

Many scholars have been fascinated by the use of stereotypes in advertising and a great deal of research can be found on the effectiveness of using stereotypes to market a brand (Johnson & Grier, 2012; Zawisza, Luyt, Zawadzka, & Buczny, 2016; Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010). On the other hand, there are many studies that overlook the effectiveness and instead focus on the influence stereotypes have on society. Stereotypical representations of gender, age or ethnicity in advertising and their influence on society in the form of discrimination, have been well researched (Eisend, 2010; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Chen, 2015; Rössner, Kämmerer, & Eisend, 2017). Chu, Lee & Kim (2016) explores the new trend of non-stereotypical advertising and its marketing effectiveness. This is one of the few studies on this new trend, yet it overlooks how these non-stereotypical representations can be discriminating. Creating advertising that is free from discrimination is difficult since people are discriminated against on more than one level (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). One way to understand how representations in advertising can be discriminating on different levels is through an intersectional awareness. Surprisingly, only a few studies were found that apply an

intersectional perspective on research within advertising (Behm-Morawitz, 2017). To contribute to the limited amount of research this study explores the effects of intersectional awareness on discrimination in non-stereotypical advertising. This study is relevant to strategic communicators who wish to communicate non-stereotypical advertising and also for whomever wishes to reflect upon their part in the production of inequalities in today's multicultural society. Inequalities between people and groups in Western societies will always be shaped by the history of colonization and this is reflected in today's communication (Young, 2003). Therefore, this study problematizes the use of non-stereotypical advertising and adopts a postcolonial perspective to criticize how Western power structures influence discrimination in non-stereotypical advertising.

Studies on stereotypical representations in advertising are in general characterized by quantitative research methods, which aim to identify specific stereotypical representations (Zotos & Tsihla, 2014). Lacking, are studies with a qualitative methodology that aim to gain an understanding for how and why stereotypical representations are used. This study's multimodal semiotic analysis fills the qualitative research gap since the study goes beyond identifying representations, and instead problematizes their use in advertising.

1.2 Purpose and research questions

This study departs from a postcolonial perspective and aims to problematize non-stereotypical advertising, by examining signs of discrimination in non-stereotypical representations. Furthermore, the study aims to contribute with knowledge on how the Western worldview influences non-stereotypical advertising and reproduces inequalities. To meet the aim of the study we intend to answer the following research questions:

- How are semiotic resources used in the advertising to communicate non-stereotypical representations?
- How does intersectional awareness influence the presence of discrimination in non-stereotypical advertising?
- How do Western power structures reproduce inequalities in non-stereotypical advertising?

Finally, we will discuss how semiotic resources can be used in non-stereotypical advertising to deemphasize Western power structures and what the practical implications for the field of strategic communication might be. The research questions will be answered by examining three advertising campaigns produced by the Swedish lifestyle and fashion retailer, Åhléns. The campaign '*Break the clothing power order*' aims to highlight how people can dress beyond gender specific clothing norms constructed by society. With the campaign '*All countries country*' Åhléns aims to communicate a multicultural message and thereby break ethnic stereotypes. Finally, '*Clothes have no age*' encourages people to dress beyond what is considered age appropriate clothing.

1.3 Limitations

This study has been conducted within the field of strategic communication. Thereby, the study is limited from immersive knowledge from other fields of science that could provide a different point of view. A feminist perspective or sociological approach might show different results on the subject. Furthermore, the study is limited to results achievable through a multimodal semiotic analysis. Using a different analysis method, such as discourse analysis or rhetoric analysis may shed light on other aspects of non-stereotypical advertising. An alternative comparative analysis of more than one brand might also generate a more general conclusion. The empirical material is limited to advertising campaigns and not all marketing communication efforts of the brand, which could have provided a more nuanced picture of intersectional awareness in the advertising. We have chosen to examine gender, age and ethnicity from an intersectional perspective. This limits the study since an analysis of other categorizes such as class, sex and religion might have provided a different result.

1.4 Disposition

This section of the paper aims to give an overview of the layout for this study and help the reader efficiently navigate through the text. The bachelor thesis is composed of six chapters. Chapter one presents our problem definition, research

questions and limitations leading up to the disposition for this study. Chapter two introduces previous published research, identifiable trends and areas in which this study can contribute with knowledge. The following section, chapter three, introduces the theoretical framework from which the analysis of this study stems. The framework discusses theories of advertising, stereotypes and intersectionality. Chapter four of this paper describes the methodological stance as well as the empirical material and the analysis methods of this material. Subsequently, chapter five analyses the empirical material where theories from the theoretical framework in chapter three are applied. The concluding section of this paper, chapter six, discusses the findings from the analysis where we seek to answer the study's research questions and complete the intended aim of the study. We as researchers also utilize this section to reflect upon the outcomes of this paper and propose directions for further research within the field.

2. Previous research

In this section of previous research, studies on the topics of stereotypes in advertising, intersectionality in advertising and semiotic analysis of advertising will be presented. An account of previous research on these topics is relevant to the study as it further explains the identified research gap presented in 1.1.

2.1 Stereotypes in advertising

Stereotypes in advertising have interested scholars for the last five decades (Grau & Zotos, 2016). A particular focus is put on the effectiveness of using stereotypes in advertising, especially gender role portrayals (Johnson & Grier, 2012). The interest has been concentrated to *what* stereotypes are used in advertising and in recent years, the social consequences of using them (Grau & Zotos, 2016). Currently, a decrease of stereotypes in advertising has been documented (Eisend, 2010). Chu et al. (2015) confirms this by reporting a gradual increase in the use of non-stereotypical representations, especially adopting male models to endorse traditionally stereotypical female occupations or products. These non-stereotypical representations have raised questions concerning the effectiveness of advertising adopting non-traditional or traditional stereotypes (Zawisza, Luyt, Zawadzka, & Buczny, 2016). Studies on the subject are concentrated on examining the effects of using non-stereotypes in advertising, generating a variety of findings that show a documented greater effectiveness of advertising with non-traditional representations (Jaffe & Berger, 1994; Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010). This study also focuses on the use of non-stereotypical representations in advertising, but unlike previous studies which focus on the effectiveness, this study problematize the non-stereotypical representations by examining signs of discrimination through an intersectional perspective. In addition to the extensive research on gender role portrayals in advertising, an impressive body of studies also examine ethnic stereotypes. Research on race-stereotypes in advertising often accentuate the effectiveness and social

influence of using ethnic representations (Johnson & Grier, 2012). A study made by Pollay (1986) investigates how old-established stereotypes can be nurtured by using ethnic stereotypical portrayals in advertising. Moreover, results from a study conducted by Johnson & Grier (2012) show that social consequences of race-stereotypes in advertising is damaging and also contributes to a decrease in effectiveness of the advertising. Unlike these studies, we do not focus on the effectiveness of representations of people in advertising, instead we aim to investigate signs of discrimination that lead to inequalities in these representations. Moreover, research on stereotypes in advertising concerning age is limited and not as developed as research on gender roles and ethnicity. Studies we found mainly target how elderly people are being perceived in society through representations in advertising (Chen, 2015). Hummert (1993) conducted a study of how representations of elderly people reproduce stereotypes of this group resulting in both negative and positive stereotypes being reinforced. According to Chen (2015) the examination of stereotypes of elderly people highlights and creates awareness about ageism. In accordance to Chen (2015), this study contributes with awareness about age discrimination as it examines signs of discrimination in the representation of elderly people.

2.2 Intersectionality in advertising

Research on intersectionality in advertising is limited and not as elaborated as research on stereotypes in advertising. There are studies with an intersectional perspective focusing on representations of sexuality, age, race or gender in advertising (Del Rosso, 2017; Gill, 2009; Quiroz, 2013). Through an intersectional lens, these studies aim to shed light on power structures in society. A study conducted by Del Rosso (2017) investigates how representations of beauty and body images are presented in advertising through a discursive analysis. Rosalind Gill's (2009) study on women of colour in personal advertising is one of the few studies adopting a semiotic and visual approach on intersectionality studies in advertising, an approach this study also embraces. Other studies examining advertising by applying an intersectional perspective often focus on sexuality and the representations of sex in advertising (Gill, 2009; Moorman & Harrison, 2016). The study conducted by Gao and Kerstetter (2016) focuses on

the intersected identities of age, gender and ethnicity, as our study also does. However, their focus is on tourism marketing and how to target older females, while our study intends to contribute with knowledge on how intersectional awareness affects the presence of discrimination in non-stereotypical advertising. From the conducted research review on the topic, no studies were found that explicitly examines intersectionality in non-stereotypical advertising.

2.3 Semiotic research of advertisements

The nature of advertising has long been a favoured topic for semiotic research (Peaverini, 2014). In 1986 the first international conference on marketing and semiotics was held at Indiana University. At the conference semiotics was introduced as a useful analysis method for discovering the complexity of advertising (Zakia & Nadin, 1987). Sun (2015) has chosen a social semiotic analysis to study representations present in advertising. The study explores the representations of women in advertisements marketed in colonial Macau. Much like the nature of our study, Sun (2015) acknowledges the effects of colonialism. However, the study lacks acknowledgement of intersectionality and how it influences the representation of the women. Most commonly, research that adopts a semiotic analysis method on advertising has empirical material limited to one single communication medium (Al-Momani, Migdadi, & Badarneh, 2016; Mortelmans, 1998; Sharma & Gupta, 2015). McVee and Carse's (2016) research on the storyline in "The Chinese Professor", a political advertisement, is one of the few multimodal semiotic analyses on advertising that we found through our literature review. McVee & Carse (2016) state that their article is a contribution to a still growing body of work within multimodal social semiotic research, since most studies are mainly conducted as social semiotic research. Tan & Chae (2015) use a multimodal analysis to examine two advertisements, but unlike this study, their focal point is on a discourse analysis and not a semiotic analysis. Semiotic studies have long been focused on discourses, avoiding analysis of sound, speech and music (van Leeuwen, 1999). As our study adopts a multimodal semiotic analysis, the semiotic resources of music and speech will be analysed focusing on the semiotics instead of discourses. In addition, our study is to be regarded as a contribution to the limited field of multimodal semiotic analysis on advertising as

it applies a postcolonial tradition, a combination that allows us to expose power structures, hierarchies and intersectional awareness through examining semiotic resources.

3. Theoretical framework

In the following section, relevant theories of advertising, stereotypes and intersectionality are introduced and will later be applied in the analysis. The theoretical framework also presents the adopted perspective of postcolonialism which is present throughout the study.

3.1 Postcolonialism and intersectionality

Western society has a history of colonisation that still to this day influences existing values and worldviews. In the 19th century, Europe ruled much of Asia, Africa and Latin America and the people and cultures of these colonized countries were portrayed as inferior compared to the West (Young, 2003). The postcolonial perspective sees modern society as being shaped by its history of colonisation and that existing structures in society work to maintain inequalities between the West and the non-West. These inequalities are present in countless social texts, such as media reports, marketing campaigns and trade policies and express a form of latent colonialism (Prasad, 2005). The radical agenda of the postcolonial perspective is to “demand equality and well-being for all human beings on this earth” (Young, 2003, p. 7). Postcolonialism main focus has long been to expose power structures that lead to discrimination based on race and ethnicity (Young, 2003). Edward Said is considered to be one of the first authors on this subject. His book *Orientalism* (1978) criticizes how the Western world perceives the Orient as exotic and explores how the postcolonial period has shaped the societies and people of the East. However, in recent years feminist theories and the study of inequalities between genders have claimed a much larger role within the academic discipline (Young, 2003). The term ethnocentrism is associated with the postcolonial perspective and refers to a lack of acceptance and understanding for other cultures and worldviews. There is a belief that one’s in-group, or own culture, is superior to out-groups (Berry & Kalin, 1995). Postcolonialism criticizes the West’s relationship with the people of its former colonies and how it views

them as their out-groups. The analysis of this paper departs from a postcolonial perspective and in section 5 we problematize how a Western worldview can be an obstacle when communicating non-stereotypical representations in advertising. We analyse signs of discrimination against different ethnicities and in addition we have also chosen to follow the new development in the postcolonial tradition, and analyse signs of discrimination against gender and age.

Within the postcolonial tradition, scholars have developed an interest for how different signs of discrimination intersect and this is referred to as intersectionality. Through an intersectional perspective people's experiences, identities and opportunities are determined by how society represents them (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). Women of colour for example, are discriminated against not only for the colour of their skin but also for their gender. Here, representations of ethnicity and gender intersect to form new dimensions of discrimination against women of colour (Celis, Severs, & Erzeel, 2016). In this study we have chosen to use the term *intersectional awareness*, which is introduced by Curtin, Stewart and Cole (2015) in their article on intersectional awareness and social change. The term is used to describe a person's understanding for intersectionality and how it can lead to social change behaviours and positive attitudes towards other people or groups. In section 5.2. we analyse non-stereotypical representations of gender, age and ethnicity to see how intersectional awareness influences the presence of discrimination in non-stereotypical advertising. The globalization of Western society has brought forth the need for intersectional awareness since a larger group of different people interact (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). Over the past five decades Sweden has become more multicultural and as a result new forms of discrimination are created. To avoid communicating inequalities in advertising the need to recognize the interactions of different groups has increased and an understanding for intersectionality becomes important (Edling & Liljeros, 2010).

3.1.1 Ethnicity

The definition of ethnicity varies and it seems to be difficult to find one universal definition that scholars all agree upon (Eriksen, 1993; Wikström, 2009). The term stems from a legitimate need to discuss and articulate differences between people.

With a foundation in culture theories, the term ethnicity has developed as a modern and neutral way to do so (Hall, 1997). In this study we have chosen to adopt the definition used by Hjerm and Peterson (2007) and Ålund (1997), which states that ethnicity, refers to the culturally foreign groups with minority status, lower class or migrants. Seen through a social constructivist perspective, ethnicity is not something static but rather social, flexible, contextual phenomena that are shaped by the communication between people and groups (Hjerm & Peterson, 2007). A central aspect of ethnicity is the idea that there is a ‘we’ and ‘them’, and ethnicity then becomes a term used to refer to people placed in the ‘them’ category. In Sweden the ‘white European’ is seen as a representation of the normal, obvious ethnicity by which all other differences are met. Ethnicity thereby becomes an outlet for a form of Western ethnocentrism that views all those who do not fit into this category as a deviant from the norm (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). Common ethnic stereotypes are representations of African Americans as entertainers and athletes or Asian Americans as technologically savvy (Johnson & Grier, 2012). Pollay, (1986) describes how ethnic stereotypical portrayals are able to shape attitudes and relationship toward other cultures as well as nurturing old-established stereotypes.

3.1.2 Gender

The term gender became popular in the early 1970s as it was used to address differences between men and women that could not be linked to biological characteristics (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). According to Hirdman (2010) the process of gender construction implies a hierarchical dimension where one gender is dominant over the other. In today’s Western society the male is dominant over the female making masculinity the norm and femininity a divergent from the norm. Inequality between the genders is constantly being reproduced in societies discourses, norms and stereotypical representations of what is male and what is female (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). Advertising plays an important role in molding people's perception of social reality and scholars have therefore long been interested in the effects of stereotypes, particularly on gender representation in advertising (Grau & Zotos, 2016). Women are stereotypically portrayed in advertising as more decorative, modest and family oriented while men, in

contrast, are presented as professionals and authoritarian. It is very seldom that a woman is portrayed in a stereotypically male way (Uray & Burnaz, 2003; Reichert & Carpenter, 2004). The posture of a person in advertising is also accentuated to communicate characteristics pertaining to stereotypical representations of femininity and masculinity (Pearson, 1985). Gender role stereotypes in advertising are able to reinforce and create new stereotypical values of gender in society (Eisend, Plagemann, & Sollwedel, 2014). Furthermore, the differences between male and female are emphasized in several stereotypical representations in society. One widely accepted gender stereotype in Western society is that the colour pink is for girls and blue is for boys, this notion can influence a person's everyday decisions, such as their choice of clothing (Navarro, Martínez, Yubero, & Larranaga, 2014).

3.1.3 Age

In addition to age being a biological phenomenon it is also a socially constructed concept that shapes our attitudes and actions (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). Our age can be seen as a reflection of the social and historical contexts that we move between as we age. Society has created norms that regulate what is considered normal behaviour for specific ages, i.e. it is normal for a child to engage in play but not an adult (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). We are subscribed different social roles and obligations according to what age we are. Age is then used to categorize and generalize individuals, much like the characteristics of stereotypes (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). These generalizations about the abilities and responsibilities of different generations lead to stereotypification of individuals based on their age and these stereotypes are then often reproduced in advertising (Hinton, 2003; Chen, 2015). Butler (1969) addresses the issue of stereotypes based on age and coins the term 'ageism' to explain a social phenomena of prejudices by one generation towards another. The older generation is often the subject of this prejudice and ageism describes the younger generations uneasiness and distaste towards growing old (Butler, 1969). However it is not only negative stereotypical representations of elderly people that can be harmful and demeaning, the positive stereotypes are also problematic. Chen (2015) describes how representations of elderly people in advertisements, as youthful, competent and affluent can be

harmful in the sense that they lead to a denial of aging and the older generation who deviate from these representations are labelled as failures. Examining stereotypical representations of older people in advertisements can increase awareness for ageism and uncover hidden power structures (Chen, 2015).

3.2 Advertising as communication

Marketing assumes the task of communicating and informing a need to the public (Varey, 2002). This communication is partly managed through advertising with the persuasive task to convey the benefits and positive aspects of a brand (Pollay, 1986). The communicated message in advertising is often positive, attention-getting and entertaining (Eisend, 2016). However, it is important to view advertising as more than a conveyor of messages. Advertising should also be seen as strategic communication, which organizations use to reach their organizational goals (Varey, 2002). A challenge in advertising lies with ensuring clear and consistent communication that aids consumers in their decision-making process. This challenge can be overcome by acknowledging advertising *as* communication, instead of a just as simple marketing means (Varey, 2002). As the advertising industry develops so must the definitions describing the field (Eisend, 2016). Dahlén and Rosengren (2016) recently provided a new working definition of advertising as “brand-initiated communication intent on impacting people” (p. 334). The word communication in the definition is central and Eisend (2016) argues that communication is the aspect of advertising that sets it apart from other marketing disciplines. Although communication has been a part of previous advertising definitions, Dahlén and Rosengren’s (2016) definition extends the influence of communication in advertising even further. This study is conducted within the field of strategic communication and therefore has adopted the definition of advertising *as* communication, provided by both Dahlén and Rosengren (2016) and Varey (2002). Most scholars support the statement that advertising is initiated by brands, also referred to as the sender (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016) and further identify advertising as mass communication (Fiske, 2011; Dyer, 1982). Mass communication refers to the communication of messages on a large scale with the aim to persuade the mass public (Dyer, 1982). This form of communication has long been used to develop or hinder various

social attitudes (McQuail, 2006) and has been considered a one-way communication medium, which implies a transmission perspective (Fiske, 2011). With the development of theories that support a sense making communication perspective and subscribes more power with the audience, mass communication has been criticized by scholars for its belief that the audience accepts all messages (Carey, 2009). However, recently with the development of the digital era, there has been a shift in research towards considering mass communication as a 'mediation' process of contact and meaning between people and groups (McQuail, 2006).

3.2.1 The 'mirror' versus the 'mold' argument

Advertising has long been an integrated part of society and appreciated for its ability to reach a large audience (Varey, 2002). As Bergström (2012) describes, the characteristic of advertising classifies it as mass communication, which is often delivered in the shape of visual communication. The aim of any visual communication is to deliver a message, and in the case of advertising the main target is to communicate a persuasive message (Pollay, 1986). Given the persuasive character of advertising, its efforts can be considered a formative influence within society (Pollay, 1986; Bergström, 2012). The formative influence is manifested by the constant presence of advertising's persuasive messages in our everyday lives (Pollay, 1986; Dahmén & Rosengren, 2016), which has sparked a debate concerning advertising's consequences for society (Garu & Zotos, 2016; Eisend, 2010). The debate has developed two opposing points of view; the 'mirror' versus the 'mold' argument. The 'mirror' argument regards advertising as a reflection of dominant discourses and values in society where the advertising acts as a lens through which social phenomenon's can be pictured. Thereby, there stereotypes presented in advertising reflect already accepted stereotypes in society (Pollay, 1986; Grau & Zotos, 2016). An interpretation of this point of view is offered by Zotos and Tsihla (2014), who suggest that the impact of advertising has no significance for society since advertising is merely a reflection of already prevailing values, which have been created in a large social context. Furthermore, they argue that advertising follows the dominant values in society affected by the political and socioeconomic environment. In contrary, the 'mold' argument views

the impact of advertising as having a significant influence on society. Instead of considering advertising as a reflection of existing values and discourses, the 'mold' point of view suggests that advertising shapes, or 'molds', society and has the ability to impact social values of the audience (Pollay, 1986). Schroeder and Zwick (2004) offer their interpretation of advertising as being the brickstone in the creation of stereotypes such as gender identity, masculinity and femininity. The opposing arguments play an important role when studying and analysing advertising's impact on society. The authors of this study support the 'mold' argument with the knowledge that visual representations of people and groups in advertising influence how they are treated in reality (Hall, 1997).

3.2.2 The identification of stereotypes

Stereotypes can be described as general, oversimplified images of social groups in society (Stier, 2009; Hinton, 2003). Most often researchers agree upon the general definition of stereotypes, yet the explanation of why and how they are present differs (Hinton, 2003). A stereotype is composed of different components that determine why a person or group fits a certain stereotype. Groups of people are recognized by traits, such as ethnicity, age and gender and through these traits people are able to distinguish a specific group from the masses (Hinton, 2003). The people belonging to the group are also subscribed additional traits, which are often based on specific personality features and physical characteristics. Thereby, stereotypes can be harmful since all people belonging to a group are individually ascribed that group's stereotypical traits (Hinton, 2003). Hinton (2003) also defines stereotypes as generalisations that are not representative for the majority of people, a definition this study also shares. It is important to recognize that one stereotype can be used to identify different groups, and different groups can be ascribed the same stereotype (Stier, 2009). Stereotypes are expressed through social interactions and language. By observing and analysing linguistic, textual and visual expressions, stereotypes can be identified (Hinton, 2003). Through a multimodal semiotic analysis this study will analyse these expressions in the form of semiotic resources in order to identify non-stereotypical representations in advertising.

The stereotype content model introduced by Fiske, Cuddy, Glick and Xu (2002) argues that stereotypes can be identified by analysing the dimensions of warmth and competence communicated. The model focuses on the content of stereotypes where competence is represented by status, and levels of warmth are represented by feelings of competition. These dimensions of warmth and competence can mix, creating a mixed stereotype where e.g. high levels of warmth is related to low levels of competence and vice versa. These mixed stereotypes are according to Fiske et al., (2002) common because of their functionality. As a result of the combination of perceived warmth and competence four stereotypes can be identified. The first stereotype group is referred to as the paternalistic stereotype and is identified as high in warmth and low in competence. This is used to stereotype e.g. elderly, and housewives and perceives them as incompetent but compassionate, sympathetic and tender. On the contrary, the envious stereotype is regarded as high in competence and low in warmth and is often identified with competitive, high status people e.g. Asians, feminists or rich people. The third stereotype group is the admiration stereotype, which is characterized as being high in both competence and warmth. This stereotype is identified with high status people that we feel no competitiveness with, e.g. close allies or people part of the in-group. On the contrary the contemptuous stereotype is characterized by low competence and low warmth. This stereotype is used to refer to people that society view as low status e.g. people belonging to the lower class or welfare recipients (Fiske et al., 2002).

4. Method

The following section will describe the qualitative methodology of this study by initially presenting the scientific approach followed by an account of the applied analysis methods. The section finishes with a method reflection where the scientific quality is ensured.

4.1 Scientific approach and choice of method

This bachelor thesis is written within the framework for strategic communication with the aim to answer research questions of *how*. Bryman (2016) states that a qualitative method is preferred when answering questions of how and therefore, this method is adopted in this study since we examine how semiotic resources and intersectional awareness are present in non-stereotypical advertising. Moreover, our ontological approach is formed by a social constructionist perspective, which views the society as socially constructed by interactions and those living in it. The ontological approach is a result of the adopted postcolonial tradition that applies a critical perspective and seeks to expose power structures and inequalities in society (Prasad, 2005). Moreover, postcolonialism emphasizes the relationship between the West and other cultures affected by colonialism (Prasad, 2005). In addition, a social constructionist viewpoint on advertising is applied as it considers realities in society as socially constructed. This viewpoint on advertising is the foundation of our reasoning of advertising's ability to mold and create changes in society, which makes it an important starting point for this thesis. The social constructionist approach is also reflected in the choice of the multimodal semiotic analysis since it recognizes semiotic resources as motivated communicative elements of the sender. Thereby, the resources are considered socially constructed and a means of making meaning (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

4.1.1 Selection and limitations

Backman (2008) describes how the qualitative research process initially starts with collecting the empirical material followed by formulating the research questions. This study is based on a qualitative approach with the purpose of extracting thorough knowledge from a limited amount of empirical material. In order to answer the study's research purpose, advertising campaigns from the fashion and lifestyle retailer, Åhléns, was chosen. We started by analysing all press material and advertising found on Åhléns' Mynewsdesk and official YouTube channel. From this review of press material and advertising, three recently published campaigns were chosen to constitute the empirical material. From each campaign three to four photographs and all available campaign films were chosen to give an extensive empirical range on our topic of non-stereotypical advertising. Altogether, the empirical material is composed of seven campaign films and thirteen images. Rose (2012) argues that when using any kind of semiotic analysis, which this paper does, the selection of empirical material does not need a rigorous sampling procedure, instead the selection can be based on interest. We've chosen the selection of empirical material specifically to meet our three selection criteria; recently published, multimodal and communicates non-stereotypical representations. The material is based on a selection criteria, which Patton (2002) describes are determined by the set research purpose. Furthermore, Patton (2002) describes how qualitative research seeks to find extensive and profound material aligned with the research purpose, making our selection more content oriented, focusing on quality rather than quantity. The criterion for the campaign to communicate non-stereotypical representations is connected to the identified research gap presented in the problem definition, section 1.1, where previous research mainly focuses on the effect of stereotypes in advertising. This criteria is also set to meet the purpose of examining the presence of discrimination in these representations. The criteria that the material should be recently published is based on our pre-understanding that non-stereotypical representations in advertising is a new and important research topic for communication and marketing scholars and therefore we want to contribute with an analysis that provides an up-to-date knowledge within the field. Since representations in advertising have the ability to affect society and the people

living in it, analysing out-dated campaigns may provide us with an inaccurate understanding of how these representations can influence today's society. Multimodal campaigns using visual, textual and aural forms as a criterion in our selection process is based on the understanding that communication efforts of today often use multiple communication forms (Jewitt, 2009; Rasmussen, 2014). A multimodal campaign is thereby relevant to analyse in order to provide up-to-date research. To only use images would merely provide an understanding for the visual expressions and thereby, the analysis would lose an extended understanding of multiple semiotic resources that all have potential to create meaning (Jewitt, 2009).

4.1.2 Motivation of Åhléns as the empirical material

Åhléns is a Swedish fashion and lifestyle retailer with an expressed social commitment (Åhléns, 2017). The company's marketing manager has explicitly stated that the company “wants to help with working against stereotypes and breaking norms” (Dagens Media, 2016). Since Åhléns uses non-stereotypical and norm-breaking advertising, their campaigns follow the recent trend presented by Chu et al. (2016) of non-stereotypical representations in advertising. The limited amount of research found on the topic, presented in the problem definition section 1.1, sparked an interest for investigating how non-stereotypical representations in advertising can be problematic. This makes Åhléns' stated non-stereotypical advertising campaigns an optimal choice for our empirical material. Based on their statement we make the educated assumption that the main representations in the campaigns are intended to be non-stereotypical, this assumption is the basis for our analysis in section 5 of this study.

4.2 Analysis method

In the following section, the analysis methods of the multimodal semiotic analysis, hermeneutic circle and abductive approach will be presented followed by a description of how they are applied in the study.

4.2.1 Multimodal semiotic analysis

The multimodal analysis is inspired by semiotics most common in communication studies, and has developed from the field of social semiotics (Rasmussen, 2014). It is used to study how different communication practices compose messages using textual, aural, linguistic, spatial and visual forms, also referred to as semiotic resources. Social semiotics differs from traditional semiotics primarily on its perception of signs. Advocates for traditional semiotics see signs as arbitrary, built upon agreed conventions, while advocates for social semiotics consider signs as semiotic resources motivated by the sender and thereby never arbitrary (Rasmussen, 2014). In social semiotics the semiotic resources are chosen intentionality to communicate a specific message, thereby the meaning of a semiotic resource varies depending on the intention of the sender and how they use the resource (Rasmussen, 2014). This study adopts the social semiotic definition of signs as motivated and therefore, traditional semiotics and influential researchers within field will not be discussed. Furthermore, a multimodal analysis refers to how various forms of communication are created, how the messages interact and what they convey to the society as a whole (Jewitt, 2009). The multimodal approach encompasses a wide range of resources and communicational contexts and is useful when exploring empirical material from a social and cultural stance (Jewitt, 2009). The analysis method can therefore be used to expose patterns in communication efforts and develop an understanding for common characteristics of different communication forms, such as aural, textual and spatial forms and how they work within a social and cultural context (Rasmussen, 2014). The multimodal semiotic analysis provides tools to make descriptions and interpretations of what is expressed in images and films (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001). In this bachelor thesis multimodal semiotics is used as a tool for the analysis to interpret the non-stereotypical advertising campaigns, as the aim is to problematize these. A key concept in multimodal analysis is the assumption that communication uses multiple resources and that the resources have equal potential to create meaning; in that sense communication and interactions are multimodal as they are expressed by different communication forms, i.e. speech and images (Jewitt, 2009). van Leeuwen (2005) explains that the use of semiotic resources are regulated by discourses of gender, social class, race, institutional norms and other forms of power structures in society. This makes it relevant to

study how the semiotic resources are used to communicate non-stereotypical representations created by society.

We adopt a multimodal semiotic analysis that combines theories from both multimodal analysis and social semiotics. The multimodal semiotic analysis is applicable within studies of strategic communication as it identifies and analyses patterns in an organization's communication (Rasmussen, 2014). In our study, the multimodal semiotic analysis is used as a tool in the first step of the analysis to identify how semiotic resources are used to communicate non-stereotypical representations in advertising and to expose potential interpretations of the empirical material. Since the advertising campaigns in this study use several different forms of communication, such as aural and visual forms, the multimodal semiotic analysis is used to analyse these as the multimodal approach enables analysis of more than one communication form. The results from the multimodal semiotic analysis lay the foundation for a deeper analysis where theories of discrimination and the postcolonial perspective are applied to a social context. This is done in order to fulfil the purpose of this study.

4.2.2 Practical application of a multimodal semiotic analysis

A multimodal semiotic analysis allows an analysis of semiotic resources and their communicated potential meanings (Rasmussen, 2014). In this analysis we will focus on the semiotic resources of speech, music, body language, artefacts and composition. van Leeuwen (2005) defines semiotic resources as “the actions and artefacts we use to communicate, whether they are produced physiologically [...] or by means of technologies” (p. 3). In this section an account of the how the resources can be examined and interpreted will be presented which is further developed in the analysis, section 5.

Austin (1962) introduces the term ‘speech act’, which describes language as a way to make a statement and carry out actions. Halliday (1985) states that the ‘act’ of speaking implies giving and receiving a response, and thereby speaking becomes an interaction that is dependent on the intentions of the speaker and the effect it has on the listener. In sounds some aspects are more dominant than others, e.g. in music when one instrument or voice is emphasised, which is referred to as a ‘homophonic’ sound (van Leeuwen, 2005). This can also be seen

in dialogic interactions where one individual or voice carries more weight, which creates the homophonic voice that reflects social dominance (van Leeuwen, 2005). Body language is another semiotic resource used to communicate meaning, and includes facial expressions, eye contact, a smile etc. These communicate different messages depending on how and when they are used. van Leeuwen (2005) explains that the gaze of a person in an image can either ‘demand’ or ‘offer’ something. If the person in the image looks directly at the viewer this ‘demands’ interaction and a relation from the viewer. A direct gaze then becomes more personal, while an indirect gaze becomes impersonal. The gestures we express when interacting, such as facial expressions or posture, reflect what is considered appropriate for the given situation, age, gender or ethnicity of the persons involved. By using semiotic resources, such as body language, that are not ‘appropriate’, the sender goes against socially defined norms of the specific context (van Leeuwen, 2005). The composition of an image can also go against what is considered appropriate. van Leeuwen (2005) defines composition as the arrangement of elements on a surface, e.g. people on a screen or abstract shapes on a canvas. In the Western world, elements placed to the left signal the ‘given’ and ‘unquestionable’, while elements to the right signals the ‘new’ and ‘debatable’ (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006). The placement of elements can also form what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) refer to as vectors. These are lines, formed by something like a gaze, an extended arm or an artefact, which connects the people in the image with other people or ideas. Artefacts is another form of semiotic resource which includes all things made by humans, such as clothing and accessories. What we wear for example is used to communicate our identity and to say something about our environment (van Leeuwen, 2005). Using many different semiotic resources contributes to what Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) refer to as modality. This means that images and films are produced with a lot of details, which can express a depth through the placement of elements, use of color, light and sound. This created depth contributes to the information in the image or film being perceived as reality or truthful by the viewer.

4.2.3 Hermeneutic circle

The key element to a successful and credible qualitative study is most often the use of an established method of analysis (Bertilsson, 2014). One of these established methods is the hermeneutic circle. The foundation of the hermeneutic circle is based on a relationship between the ‘parts’ and the ‘whole’ and moreover a knowledge that the meaning of parts only can be understood in relation to the big picture and vice versa (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2008). In the analysis of this paper, section 5, we systematically shift between analysing individual images and films, which become the ‘parts’, and analysing the campaigns as the ‘whole’. This shift is used to gain a better understanding for the representations in the non-stereotypical advertising and to identify how the communication expresses forms of discrimination. Through the multimodal social semiotic analysis the semiotic resources that create meaning in each image and film are analysed to understand how they are used to communicate non-stereotypical representations. Each semiotic resource is identified as a building block that is a part of a larger message. Rasmussen (2014) describes how semiotic resources should be analysed separately to discover their full meaning making potential. Later in section 5, we shift to an analysis of the non-stereotypical representations in a wider social context through adopting a postcolonial perspective. The ‘parts’, or semiotic resources, are then used to understand the ‘whole’, how non-stereotypical advertising creates inequalities in society through a postcolonial perspective. Applying the hermeneutic circle in the analysis implies an examination of each “part” as well as an interplay between them in order to understand the “whole” and what it communicates. Bertilsson (2014) describes how this back- and- forth reading between “parts” and the “whole” enriches the analytical interpretations of the empirical material. The process of consistent back- and forth- reading resulted in a deeper understanding for how semiotic resources can be used to deemphasized power structures that lead to discrimination in non-stereotypical advertising. To avoid overlooking information in the ‘parts’ and the ‘whole’ an analysis guide is used in the analysis to systematically review the empirical material (see appendix 2).

4.2.4 Codes and themes

Qualitative research is known for collecting and analysing empirical material that is somewhat chaotic and disorganized (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). An abductive approach is applied in the coding and thematisation of the empirical material in this study as we categorized the empirical material in accordance with themes from our theoretical framework as well as themes that became apparent in the material along the way. We shift between answering questions of *what* and *why* when sorting the material. The *what* can be found in the form of the substantial empirical material, e.g. what people in the advertisement are wearing, and theories from our theoretical framework are then applied to the material. While the *why* is in the content and the constitutive empirical material, e.g. why the people in the image are wearing specific clothes. This shifting between *what* and *why* when analysing the material is what Gubrium and Holstein (1997) refer to as analytical bracketing. Furthermore, we have sorted the information in the empirical material under major themes, i.e. symbols of non-stereotypical representations and expressions of discrimination, that emerged from the empirical material and the analysis itself. Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015) encourages researchers to sort their empirical material by themes but also advises the research to be aware of their own subjective influence on the sorting process and how it can limit the results. In section 4.3 of this paper we follow Rennstam and Wästerfors (2015) advice by critically reflecting over how our Western background as two Caucasian female researchers influences and limits our analysis of the empirical material. The sorting process is a recurring part of the analysis and each time the empirical material is sorted the coding becomes more stable (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2015). The further along we come in our sorting process it evolves from a spontaneous form to a more focused form, and new themes, such as Western power structures, emerge. The sorting and thematisation of our empirical material guides the analysis of this paper by providing an overview of the empirical material. This method keeps our analysis aligned with the purpose and research questions of this study and helps us as researchers navigate the material.

4.3 Method reflection

The multimodal semiotic analysis method is subject to different forms of critique. One critique is the method's ability to draw conclusions and parallels from e.g. a gesture or facial expression and the meaning linked to it. When analysing semiotic resources with a multimodal approach the assumptions made are often generalizations (Myers, 2003). Thereby, the semiotic resources and their meaning making abilities lack a context oriented approach. As researchers, we are aware of this notion and therefore argue in section 5.1 that our interpretation of the semiotic resources in the analysis should not be understood as social semiotic 'laws' applicable to all multimodal advertising. The postcolonial perspective, which this study also adopts as a complementing analysis method can also be criticized. Postcolonialism is a perspective which uses dense and difficult vocabulary that can be confusing for those unfamiliar with the subject (Prasad, 2005). Therefore, the study has tried to use understandable words throughout the study and clearly explain difficult concepts in section 3. Hopefully, this makes the postcolonial approach of this study more understandable and familiar for both academics and practitioners. Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose the two concepts of trustworthiness and authenticity as fundamental criterion for the assessment of qualitative research. The concepts are based on a notion that there are many, or at least more than one, possible interpretation of the reality which researchers examine. In this bachelor thesis, we have tried to meet the criteria of trustworthiness by being transparent throughout the study. This is done by thoroughly describing the research process step by step in section 4, and describing the applied theories together with the empirical material. Moreover, all empirical material is attached as an appendix to create transferability together with the detailed descriptions of the research process, which is a sub-criteria to trustworthiness. The second sub-criteria of trustworthiness is confirmability and refers to the ability to validate and prove the strength of the study. To meet the sub-criteria of confirmability, we have an understanding for that the qualitative research we have conducted does not imply objective results. The interpretations made are subjective interpretations of the social reality being studied. This is aligned with the social constructionist perspective this thesis adopts. Merriam (1994) states that the risks with subjectivity can partly be managed by an

accurate and transparent account of the research process, which is presented in section 4.1.2. We also confirm that we have not intentionally based our interpretations of the empirical material or conclusions on personal values. We, as researchers, are aware how our Western background and Caucasian ethnicity influences the interpretations made in the study, especially since we adopt a postcolonial perspective. However, we have throughout the study been aware of this notion and thereby aimed to include perspectives and theories from a diverse selection of authors with different genders and ethnicities. This is done to not intentionally let our personal values affect the research. The second criteria introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is authenticity and refers to the ability to confirm that the results give an legitimate and fair image of what has been research. However, this criterion is most relevant for studies that conduct interviews or observations (Bryman, 2016).

5. Analysis

The analysis below is divided into three analytical steps. The first step uses a multimodal semiotic analysis to examine the empirical material and answers the first research question. The second and third step criticizes the empirical material by adopting a postcolonial perspective and answers the remaining research questions.

5.1. Non-stereotypical representations through semiotic resources

In the following section the non-stereotypical representations communicated in the advertising campaigns will be examined through an analysis of semiotic resources. A focus will be put on the semiotic resources of speech, music, body language, composition and artefacts. It is important to state that these semiotic resources and how they are used should not be understood as social semiotic laws that apply to all advertising communication (Rasmussen, 2014). Qualitative research methods merely aim to shed light on one possible interpretation of the empirical material. Rasmussen (2014) describes how these resources should be analyzed separately to discover their potential of making meaning, which is done below.

5.1.1 Music and speech

The aural dimension of advertising is considered an important semiotic resource and we will therefore analyse speech and music in the following section. The campaign ‘*All countries’ country*’ consists of four films with characterizing music. In film *I* the music is composed of a man playing the charango, a traditional South American string instrument. The charango melody is what van Leeuwen (2005) would call the ‘homophonic’ sound. The ‘homophonic’ sound is the dominant melody, which makes all other sounds secondary. The charango

music can be viewed as a cultural sign, indicating the couple's ethnic background as South Americans. This charango music in combination with the traditionally Swedish visual symbols, such as the falu-red colour on the house and the coniferous forest in the background, allows the viewer to reflect upon what is considered a stereotypical Swedish symbol.



Film 1

The semiotic resource of music in combination with the traditional Swedish visual symbols are used to create tension in the film. This tension creates the non-stereotypical representation of the charango music as a Swedish cultural symbol, and thereby challenges what is to be considered traditional cultural representations of Sweden. According to van Leeuwen (1999) music has the ability to set the mood in a film. In the campaign '*Clothes have no age*', film 6, a fast, high-pitched music intensifies along with the film creating a revolutionary mood. The created mood can be associated with youth power movements in society and thereby the semiotic resource of music strengthens the idea that the elderly people in the film are breaking societal norms against elderly. The music is used to set the mood for the advertising campaign and create a feeling with the viewer that the message is of a revolutionary and boundary breaking character. According to the stereotype content model presented in section 3.2.2, elderly people are most often stereotyped by high warmth and low competence. The music in film 6, on the other hand creates a mood and tension where the elderly people are portrayed with high competence, challenging the society by a clothing revolution. The music in combination with elderly people is thereby used to create a

non-stereotypical representation of the elderly as revolutionaries. In all films selected for the empirical material the music is carefully chosen to align with the intended objectives of the campaigns. The music, as a semiotic resource is setting the mood, creating contradictions that enhance non-stereotypical representations of the people in the films.

Along with music, speech is an additional aural dimension of semiotic resources and a common theme in all campaign films where one person has the dominant vocal role. This can be seen in in film 1, where the woman narrates the story by telling the viewer which ingredients she uses. When doing this, the woman has a Spanish accent and also expresses words in Spanish. In films 2 and 3 the men also say words in foreign languages. Austin (1962) introduces the ‘speech act’ where language is seen as the dominant resource for making a statement. In films 1, 2 and 3 Åhléns makes the statement, by using the semiotic resource of speech, that people who speak a foreign language should be considered Swedish. By allowing the main characters to speak words of their native language in combination with Swedish words with an accent, the speech is used to communicate a non-stereotypical representation of what is to be considered traditional Swedish speech.



Film 7

In film 7 the story of how female fashion has developed over the years in Sweden is narrated by a male voice. This on the contrary creates a stereotypical representation in the non-stereotypical advertising by allowing a man to narrate the female history. The semiotic resource of speech is used to communicate that

the male voice, and thereby the male gender, is dominant. This contributes to the stereotypical representation of men in advertising as the professional and authoritarian gender and makes the female gender inferior (Uray & Burnaz, 2003; Reichert & Carpenter, 2004). In film 6 the elderly women are the dominant voices, which communicates a non-stereotypical representation of women. A tension is created between women as revolutionaries, by allowing them to speak up in the campaign and the stereotypical portrayal of women as modest and decorative in advertising (Uray & Burnaz, 2003; Reichert & Carpenter, 2004). This communicates a non-stereotypical representation of women as dominant through the semiotic resource of speech.

The examples above show how the semiotic resources of speech and music are used to create a mood and tension in the films. A strong mood can create associations to certain values and when paired with a person or group this creates non-stereotypical or stereotypical representations. A strong tension between stereotypical speech and music and representations that breaks these is used to signal who is dominant in the film and to communicate non-stereotypical representations in advertising. However, we found that the semiotic resources of speech and music also create stereotypical representation.

5.1.2 Body language

Body language and facial expressions are semiotic resources that communicate different messages depending on the context (van Leeuwen, 2005). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain how a person's gaze in an image can either 'demand' or 'offer' something to the viewer. Image 2 is of a man with Middle Eastern facial features positioned in the center of the image, slightly leaning forward, with a direct gaze into the camera. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) his direct gaze 'demands' involvement, respect and interaction from the viewer. The facial expression creates a connection between the Middle Eastern man and the viewer that signals an equal relationship between them. This can be seen as a non-stereotypical representation of Middle Eastern men in Western advertising since people with Middle Eastern backgrounds are stereotypically portrayed by negative 'them' group representations (Hoewe, 2014). According to the stereotype content model introduced in section 3.2.2, if the man in the image was portrayed

as someone of the ‘them’ group he would be represented as having low competence and low warmth. However, because the man in the image is gazing directly at us, he is signalling involvement and authority (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) which are characteristics we associate with the ‘us’ group. Thus, by using the semiotic resource of the direct gaze a relationship with the viewer is formed that communicates a non-stereotypical representation of the middle eastern man as ‘one of us’.



Image 2

In image 12 we see a woman positioned on a stool. Just like in the image 2 mentioned above, the woman is gazing directly into the camera, demanding authority and involvement. Her feet are resting on the stool, legs wide apart and she is leaning forwards with her arms casually resting on her legs. Overall her posture in the image is open, wide and relaxed, a body language, which the women in image 7 and 13 also express. An open posture, which demands the use of large spaces, is typically associated with masculinity and power. A more closed-off posture is associated with inferiority and femininity (Dow & Wood, 2014). Posture is a resource for communicating certain characteristics, especially stereotypical representations of gender roles and ideas of femininity and masculinity (Dow & Wood, 2014). Positioning the woman in a wider, open pose in image 12, the semiotic resource of body language is used to communicate her as more powerful. This can be seen as an effort by Åhléns to break the stereotypical portrayal of the female gender as inferior and weak in comparison to

the male gender. This is further strengthened by the woman's direct gaze mentioned earlier which challenges the viewer to form a relationship with the subject instead of objectifying her. The woman's whole body is slightly turned towards the left. The left knee together with the rest of the body forms a vector pointing to something unknown outside of the image. She is also leaning forward, the vector pointing down towards the bottom of the image. As mentioned in 4.2.3 a vector is a line formed by an object or person that signals a connection with whatever is on the other end of the vector (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).



Image 12

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) also mention that vectors pointing to the left of an image indicate the 'given' or the 'general', and vectors pointing towards the bottom indicate 'facts' or the 'truth'. With this information the analysis can be made that the woman is positioned towards the left to indicate that the representation of her as a female with dominance is a 'given'. This can also be seen in image 9. Using body language to form a vector pointing downwards signals that the female gender has always been dominant and that this is a fact and not something that can be questioned.

Through the examples above we can see that the semiotic resource of body language is used to create a relationship, or lack of relationship, with the viewer. A strong relationship leads to the viewer feeling more involved and connected

with the characters in the images or films. This can communicate non-stereotypical representations of groups that are otherwise represented as low status with little involvement from the viewer. Body language can also be used to associate a person or group with ideas, i.e. the ‘new’, the ‘given’, through the use of vectors. Pairing a stereotypical body language with a certain person or group, such as a stereotypically masculine posture with a woman, creates a tension between these. This tension, created by the semiotic resource of body language, is used to communicate non-stereotypical representations.

5.1.3 Artefacts

All campaign images and films are composed of a large number of artefacts that communicate non-stereotypical representations. In the campaigns ‘*Clothing has no age*’ and ‘*Break the clothing power order*’ clothing is a central artefact. According to Western standards, the people in the campaigns are dressed in a non-stereotypical way, which shows Åhléns aim to shed light on clothing stereotypes in society. In image 13 four people of different ages, genders and ethnicities are lined up, wearing different types of clothing. Firstly, the man to the left is all dressed in pink, a colour traditionally regarded as female (Navarro, Martinez, Yubero, & Larraga, 2014).



Image 13

This is also seen in image 10 and 11 where clothing as an artefact helps to break the stereotypical representation of pink as a feminine colour, by being worn by

men. The colour of the characters' clothes, furthermore, breaks the stereotypes of dressing according to gender stereotypes in Western societies. According to van Leeuwen (2005), clothing signifies identity through unwritten codes and these are challenged in the images. This is done when the men wear pink, which may signal that they embrace a more feminine identity, establishing a non-stereotypical representation of men as able to embrace a feminine side. Western society has established certain clothing norms, which are rules of dressing based on unwritten traditions (van Leeuwen, 2005). Through these unwritten traditions, skirts, bracelets and necklaces are considered feminine artefacts. In image 10 and 13 the men are dressed in a garment, most likely to represent a skirt. The man in image 13 is furthermore, accessorized with a necklace and bracelet. When Åhléns consciously dress men in skirts in combination with feminine accessories they are establishing a non-stereotypical representation of the male gender role as more feminine. Clothing is used to signal masculinity and femininity and can create non-stereotypical representations of gender when worn by the opposite gender. In campaign '*Clothing as no age*', elderly people are dressed in what is to be regarded as 'young' clothing. This creates a non-stereotypical representation of wearing socially constructed age restricted clothes. Since rules of dressing are based on unwritten traditions (van Leeuwen, 2005) 'young' clothing being worn by elderly people creates an image that is in conflict with existing clothing norms. In the campaign '*All countries' country*', image 4 and film 1 the woman is wearing earrings in vibrant colours, which can be viewed as a cultural symbol of South America. Together with the man holding the charango as mentioned in 5.1.1 these artefacts enhances the ethnic background of these characters. Thereby, the artefacts as a resource, create an association of the characters belonging to the 'them' group. This is also seen in film 3, where the Middle Eastern man is holding traditional Moroccan pottery. This is a cultural symbol, which enhances the stereotypical representation of him as belonging to another culture than the Western. On the contrary, the Swedish couple in film 4 is holding an Asian noodle salad, which is not a traditional symbol for their ethnicity or cultural background. The analysis can be made that other ethnicities than those considered Western in the campaign, are stereotypically represented as belonging to the 'them' group by the use of artefacts to represent foreign cultural symbols. These

stereotypical representations of ‘us’ and ‘them’ are further discussed from a postcolonial perspective in section 5.3.

In summary, the semiotic resource of artefacts is used to enhance ethnic representations and cultural backgrounds by presenting an artefact as a cultural symbol, which in combination with the person connected to it, creates a stereotypical or non-stereotypical representation. In addition, the artefacts of clothing are used to break feminine and masculine stereotypes, which is seen in the campaign ‘*Break the clothing power order*’ where feminine garments and colours are worn by men. As a semiotic resource, clothing is also used to create conflict between existing clothing rules and gender stereotypes.

5.1.4 Composition

The way elements are placed and arranged within a semiotic space are resources that communicate with the viewer (Rasmussen, 2014). The composition, i.e. layout, colour saturation, lighting, placement of elements, in the campaigns reveal different stereotypical and non-stereotypical representations. In image 6 the vibrant colour of the woman’s clothing is in contrast with the darker, less saturated background. This ‘highlights’ or emphasises the importance of the woman, which Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain can serve as a tool to help the reader interpret the image. Her bright highlighted colours can be interpreted as a non-stereotypical representation of women as authoritarian as she is allowed to stand out in her environment. In contrast to the previous analysis, one can argue that the bright primary colours of her clothing can be associated with happy, almost childlike, emotions. The semiotic resource of colour is thereby used to represent her as an entertainer in her environment and contributes to already existing stereotypical representations of African Americans as entertainers (Johnson & Grier, 2012). How the picture is framed and how close the subject in the image is to the viewer is an important resource for communicating different relationships. Edward Hall (1969) states that the distance we keep between others and ourselves indicates how close of a relationship we have with that person. In image 6, the elderly woman is framed with a long shot, which allows the viewer to see her whole body. This creates a distance between the viewer and the woman, signalling an impersonal relationship between the two (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001).

This is further strengthened by the fact that she is wearing sunglasses, which hinders the viewer from making eye contact with her and forms a detached relationship. This detached relationship may be a resource Åhléns uses to communicate a non-stereotypical representation of elderly people as independent. According to the stereotype content model, explained in section 3.2.2, elderly people are stereotypically portrayed as warm but lacking in competence. By creating a distance between the viewer and the woman in the image a non-stereotypical representation of her as competent but not warm is communicated to the viewer. An interesting observation is made that in the two other images (see image 5 and 3b) belonging to the same campaign, the characters are framed in a medium shot, and have direct eye contact with the viewer. This creates a more personal and social relationship. The difference between the subjects in the images is their ethnicity, the subjects in images 5 and 7 are Caucasian and the woman in image 6 is African American. This signals a lack of intersectional awareness in the advertisements, which we discuss in more detail in section 5.2.



Image 6

Image 8 is part of the advertising campaign '*Break the clothing power order*'. In the image we see a man and a woman standing in front of a light pink background. They are framed with a long shot, which, as mentioned above,

creates a detached and impersonal relationship between the characters and the viewer. Furthermore, the man and the woman are looking down at the viewer. This, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) signals that the characters have power and authority over the viewer and their surroundings. By using the composition to associate authority with the characters, Åhléns represent the man and woman as competent but detached and lacking in warmth. According to the stereotype content model these types of representations are common when portraying feminist roles. The analysis can then be made that Åhléns uses composition to associate the characters with power that communicates gender equality through stereotypical representations of feminist values. Furthermore, the shadows in the image create a vector pointing towards the upper right. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) a vector pointing in this direction signals the ‘idealized’ and ‘new’. The direction of the vector in image 8 is used to signal the future, where gender-neutral clothing is socially accepted as the norm.



Image 8

The semiotic resource of composition is used in the campaigns to create contrasts between elements and signal what is dominant in the image or film, e.g. by using bright colours with a dark background. This can communicate non-stereotypical representations of people or groups that are not usually

represented as dominant or vice versa. The composition, much like the body language in section 5.1.2. can also connect elements with certain ideas or values. As mentioned above, the placement of the characters form vectors that connect them with ideas such as the ‘given’ or the ‘new’. This can create non-stereotypical, but also stereotypical, representations depending on which value a character is connected with.

5.1.5 Concluding analysis

Åhléns strategically uses semiotic resources, such as music, speech, body language, artefacts and composition to communicate non-stereotypical representations in their advertising. The semiotic resources work to expose stereotypical representations of gender, age and ethnicity and communicate non-stereotypical representation of these by creating a tension between what the viewer expects and what is actually communicated. Semiotic resources are also used to emphasize or deemphasize elements in the images or films to communicate non-stereotypical representations. In image 6 the composition emphasizes the African American woman and thereby makes her the dominant element. This creates non-stereotypical representations by exposing how the African American ethnicity and the female gender are stereotypically represented without dominance. However, the analysis shows that a single semiotic resource has the ability to create both stereotypical and non-stereotypical representations, depending on how they are used. This can be problematic when creating non-stereotypical advertising since the sender might not be aware of the different representations one semiotic resource can create and this can lead to discrimination of certain people or groups. We will discuss the implications of this further in section 5.2. of the analysis. According to Rasmussen (2014) it is important to shed light on how different semiotic resources complement each other to communicate a message. Previous research with a social semiotic analysis, presented in section 2.3, is usually limited to one communication medium and thereby also limits the diversity of semiotic resources (Al-Momani, Migdadi, & Badarneh, 2016; Mortelmans, 1998; Sharma & Gupta, 2015). The multimodal approach of this study allows a deeper understanding of how different semiotic resources, both visual and aural, are used to communicate

non-stereotypical representations in advertising. The semiotic resources create tensions and emphasis in the images and films, and become a tool used to contradict stereotypical representations and through this communicate non-stereotypical advertising.

5.2. Intersectional awareness

In section 5.1 above we identified non-stereotypical representations of gender, age and ethnicity through a multimodal semiotic analysis. In the following analysis we examine signs of intersectional awareness in these non-stereotypical representations and how it influences the presence of discrimination in the non-stereotypical advertising. Alvesson and Sköldberg (2008) explain that the foundation of the hermeneutic circle is based on the knowledge that meaning of parts can only be understood in relation to the big picture. In this section a postcolonial perspective, through the identification of intersectional awareness, is applied with the aim to analyse our empirical material in a wider social context.

5.2.1 Ethnic discrimination

Ethnicities that are different from what society views as the ‘normal’ ethnicity are stereotypically represented in advertising as low class, immigrants or the ‘them’ group (Hjerm and Peterson, 2007). In the non-stereotypical representations of gender and age, communicated by Åhléns, discrimination against ethnicity is present. This can be seen in the campaign ‘*Clothes have no age*’ where the African American woman is portrayed as an entertainer through the use of semiotic resources, seen in section 5.1.4. However, all other characters with Caucasian ethnicity are portrayed as dominant. These are stereotypical representations of ethnicity that lead to a discrimination against the African American ethnicity by portraying it as less dominant than the Caucasian. The analysis can be made that Åhléns has overlooked that the African American woman is not only her age but also her ethnicity and this signals a lack of intersectional awareness. According to Curtin et al. (2015) intersectional awareness describes a person’s understanding for intersectionality and how it can lead to social change behaviours and positive attitudes towards other people or groups. Lack of intersectional awareness, in a campaign that wishes to break age

stereotypes, has led to a discrimination against the African American woman because of her ethnicity. The same lack of intersectional awareness can be identified in the campaign '*Break the clothing power order*' that aims to communicate non-stereotypical representations of gender. The characters in the campaign film 7 are Caucasian and there is no representation of other ethnicities present. Thereby other ethnicities in the campaign are represented as less dominant in comparison when the emphasis is put on the Caucasian ethnicity. The result is a discrimination against other ethnicities. With no intersectional awareness, the ethnicity of the people in the images and films is overlooked when communicating non-stereotypical representations of gender and the advertising then becomes discriminating against different ethnicities.



Film 7

In Western society a form of Western ethnocentrism is present, which acknowledges all people belonging to the Caucasian ethnicity as 'normal'. This leads to the discrimination against people belonging to other ethnicities since they are represented as 'outsiders' (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). Ethnic discrimination is expressed in the campaigns when a non-stereotypical representation is interpreted as stereotypical. When Åhléns communicates non-stereotypical representations it is done from a Western worldview, further discussed in 5.3, which influences how they portray ethnicity in the advertising. How a person's ethnicity can lead to discrimination against them is often overlooked when communicating non-stereotypical representations of gender or age. This is because Åhléns, in these cases, lack an intersectional awareness that would allow them to see the

different ways a person in the films or images might be discriminated against because of their ethnicity.

5.2.2 Age discrimination

In addition to the analysis of ethnic discrimination, which is the main focus within the postcolonial perspective (Young, 2003), our analysis extends to include discrimination against age as well. The campaign '*Clothes have no age*' has tried to eliminate signs of discrimination against elderly people by presenting them in a non-stereotypical way. This is done by the use of different semiotic resources to emphasize the elderly as dominant and competent. However, in the campaign's films and images, see film 6, signs of discrimination of elderly are apparent. This is seen when the semiotic resources, such as artefacts and body language, communicate the message that successful ageing is linked to being youthful. Chen (2015) describes how non-stereotypical representations of successful aging as youthful become problematic as they lead to a denial of aging. This can discriminate elderly people who do not fit the non-stereotypical representation. Thereby, Åhléns has overlooked the different ways a person can be discriminated against because of age and this signals a lack of intersectional awareness. The analysis can be made that non-stereotypical representations of age can still lead to discrimination when there is a lack of intersectional awareness. In the campaign '*All countries' country*', the films and images are presented to communicate non-stereotypical representations of ethnicity. The elderly characters in the films and images are always presented as part of a couple, while the young characters are presented by themselves or together with children. The use of composition as a semiotic resource emphasizes the elderly characters as couples and represents them as dependent and less dominant compared to the younger characters. The non-stereotypical representation of ethnicity therefore becomes discriminating against age when the campaign overlooks how the characters can be discriminated against on more than one level. Breaking the Western society's stereotypical representation of ethnicity is the main focus of the campaign and as a result discrimination against age and also gender, discussed in 5.2.3 below, are present in the non-stereotypical representations. Thereby, there is

a lack of intersectional awareness that increases the presence of discrimination against elderly people in the advertising.



Image 1

In summary, discrimination against elderly people is present in the non-stereotypical advertising campaigns. When portraying elderly people as youthful, through the use of different semiotic resources, it contributes to Western society's obsession with youth. The analysis is made that even though a non-stereotypical representation that breaks age stereotypes is communicated, discrimination can still be present if an intersectional awareness of different forms of aging is lacking. A Western worldview can influence the intersectional awareness of different forms of aging, leading to discrimination of the elderly. It is the intersectional awareness of the sender, in this case Åhléns, which determines if discrimination is communicated through the use of different semiotic resources in the advertising.

5.2.3 Gender discrimination

There is an inequality between genders in Western society that is communicated through advertising, societal discourses and stereotypical representations. In the campaign '*Clothes have no age*', which aims to communicate non-stereotypical representations of age, women in the images and films are given lead roles and emphasized through the use of semiotic resources. The women are portrayed as the dominant gender and thereby they break the stereotypical representations of women as inferior since the male gender is stereotypically considered dominant in

the Western society (Edling & Liljeros, 2010). This indicates an intersectional awareness from Åhléns since they have understood that an elderly woman is not only discriminated against because of her age, but also because of her gender. Understanding how age and gender interact has allowed Åhléns to avoid gender stereotypical representations that discriminate against women. Curtin et al. (2015) explain that intersectional awareness can lead to positive attitudes towards people or groups and generate social change. Thereby, the analysis is made that through an intersectional awareness the campaign has avoided the presence of gender discriminations and instead communicated non-stereotypical advertising that generates positive attitudes. Although the campaign ‘*Clothes have no age*’ shows an intersectional awareness, which leads to the absence of gender discrimination, it is important to acknowledge that ethnic discrimination is present in the campaign. This discrimination is discussed in section 5.2.1, and indicates that Åhléns intersectional awareness only reaches so far.



Film 6

They have understood the intersection of age and gender but overlooked other discriminating factors such as ethnicity. Full intersectional awareness is difficult to achieve since Åhléns is limited by Western society's values, this notion is explored further in section 5.3 below. Lack of intersectional awareness is also identified in the campaign ‘*All countries' country*’ where discrimination against women is present in the communication of non-stereotypical representations of ethnicity. In the images and films, all the female characters are portrayed together with other characters. This represents the women as dependent and weak in comparison to the men who are portrayed as the independent, more dominant gender. The inequality between which gender is represented as dominant leads to

the gender discrimination of women as they are represented as weak and less dominant. There is a lack of awareness for how gender and ethnicity intersect in this campaign and this has led to gender discrimination being present in the non-stereotypical advertising.

In Western society, gender implies a hierarchical dimension where one gender is dominant over the other (Hirdman, 2001). In campaigns where Åhléns shows signs of intersectional awareness by representing women as dominant, they manage to communicate non-stereotypical advertising with little gender discrimination. However, this intersectional awareness seems to be limited since other forms of discrimination, such as ethnic discrimination, instead become present in the advertising. In the campaigns that aim to communicate non-stereotypical representations other than gender, such as '*All countries' country*', the communication is discriminating against women. This is due to a lack of intersectional awareness, which leads to the disregard for how gender is portrayed in the other non-stereotypical representations. The result is non-stereotypical advertising that is gender discriminating.

5.2.4 Concluding analysis

In Åhléns non-stereotypical advertising we have found that discrimination against age, gender and ethnicity is present, in some campaigns more than others. In section 5.1 the analysis shows that representations in advertising can be both stereotypical and non-stereotypical. Thereby, discrimination can be expressed through stereotypical representations in advertising, but can also be present in non-stereotypical representations. To avoid communicating discrimination in advertising, an intersectional awareness can create an understanding for how one representation can be interpreted in different ways. Previous research, presented in section 2.3, uses an intersectional lens to shed light on power structures and inequalities in society (Del Rosso, 2017; Gill, 2009; Quiroz, 2013). The analysis can be made that intersectional awareness can be used in advertising for its ability to expose inequalities and thereby help minimize the presence of discrimination in the communicated representations. When there is a lack of intersectional awareness the presence of discriminating representations is higher. Therefore, non-stereotypical advertising does not imply that the communication is free from

discrimination since it is the intersectional awareness of the sender, which determines if what is being communicated contains discrimination or not. Moreover, a lack of intersectional awareness can be identified in Åhléns advertising campaigns since there are no representations of the Asian ethnicity. When excluding an entire ethnicity it can be discriminating to those that do not identify with the advertising. Awareness for how people are discriminated against on more than one level can shed light on the possible ways a non-stereotypical representation might still be discriminating.

5.3 Non-stereotypical advertising through a postcolonial tradition

An intersectional awareness can be used to understand how different forms of discrimination interact in non-stereotypical advertising. Åhléns show signs of intersectional awareness in certain campaigns where they have managed to communicate e.g. non-stereotypical representations of age while also avoiding discriminating representations of gender. However, the intersectional awareness seems to only reach so far and other forms of discrimination, such as ethnicity, are then overlooked. The cause of this might be that Åhléns operates and communicates from a Western society where its values and worldviews limits the possibility for full intersectional awareness. According to Young (2003), modern society and the institutions that operate in it are shaped by the West's history of colonization, and power structures in society work to maintain inequalities between the West and the non-West. When Åhléns overlooks how a non-stereotypical representation of e.g. age might also be discriminating against ethnicity it is the result of Western power structures that maintain the idea that certain ethnicities are superior to others. Their intersectional awareness of ethnicity is therefore limited by these power structures and as a result discriminating advertising is communicated that creates inequalities between ethnicities. The same is true when Åhléns overlooks the presence of gender or age discrimination in their films and images. Much of the discrimination is communicated through stereotypical representations of 'us' and 'them'. The 'us' group is emphasized as dominant and is represented by characters that follow Westerns norms of gender, age and ethnicity. This is put in contrast with the

‘them’ group that are portrayed as less dominant and represented by those who deviate from Western norms. This expresses Åhléns Western ethnocentrism and how it influences the non-stereotypical advertising that leads to inequalities in society. Judging other cultures and values by the standards of Western society when communicating non-stereotypical advertising can become problematic in a time of globalization and multiculturalism. This since it limits the intersectional awareness and only allows the sender to see one out of many possible interpretations of the non-stereotypical representations. The result is representations that are discriminating against age, gender or ethnicity. Bessis (2003) takes this notion one step further and argues that European colonialism actually introduced the era of globalization and that therefore it is a concept shaped by Western values. This would imply that Åhléns attempt to communicate non-stereotypical advertising in a time of globalization is restricted by the influence of colonialism and creating inequalities through their advertising is inevitable.

Åhléns advertising campaigns all express high modality through the use of expressive details, depths, sound, colour and lighting. All these aspects contribute to the information in the images and films being perceived by the viewer as a true reflection of reality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The discriminating representations in the non-stereotypical advertising might then be interpreted as a true representation of gender, age and ethnicity and the inequalities in Western society are normalized. An example of this is when Åhléns communicates gender discrimination through the representations of women as less dominant than men. The modality of the campaign invites the viewer to interpret this representation as the truth and this creates inequalities between the genders. Advertising can be viewed as a formative influence that has the ability to impact the social values of the audience (Pollay, 1986). Thereby, the representations of gender, age and ethnicity communicated in Åhléns campaigns influence how society discriminates against these. Through a postcolonial perspective all advertising, even non-stereotypical advertising, is tainted by Western power structures that create inequalities. An intersectional awareness can minimize the presence of discrimination in the communication but full intersectional awareness will never be achievable as long as the communication is created with a Western ethnocentrism. Åhléns non-stereotypical advertising is a mass communication

medium and reaches a large audience with its messages (Fiske, 2011; Dyer, 1982). Therefore they have a responsibility to reflect on the presence of discrimination in the communication, which can be done through an intersectional awareness. Only then can non-stereotypical advertising be viewed as a tool to change social behaviour and deemphasize Western power structures.

6. Discussion and conclusions

In the following section, a conclusion of the analysis will be discussed followed by an account for the practical implications this study brings to the field of strategic communication. Lastly, suggestions for further research on the topic of non-stereotypical advertising will be presented.

The purpose of this study is to problematize non-stereotypical advertising produced in Western society and contribute with knowledge concerning how Western power structures influence discrimination and inequalities in non-stereotypical advertising. The results of the analysis show that representations in non-stereotypical advertising can be both non-stereotypical and stereotypical, which can lead to different forms of discrimination. The conclusion is drawn that an intersectional awareness with the strategic communicator can serve as a tool to highlight the different interpretations of the representation and thereby create an awareness of how the representation can be discriminating. Even if intersectional awareness can be used to identify signs of discrimination, the awareness is limited by existing power structures and values formed by Western society. One way to contribute to a more equal society with less discrimination is to deemphasize the influence of these Western power structures, which can be done by the use of semiotic resources in communication. After identifying possible discriminating elements in the non-stereotypical advertising, through an intersectional awareness, the semiotic resources can be used as a tool to portray those considered inferior as more dominant. This deemphasizes Western power structures that discriminate certain people or groups since visual representations reflect how people are treated in reality (Hall, 1997). However, a representation can be both stereotypical and non-stereotypical depending on how the semiotic resources are interpreted and thereby the representations will be discriminating in some way. This paradox makes the idea of non-stereotypical advertising difficult; can it ever be truly non-stereotypical? According to the results of this study the answer seems to be no.

Furthermore, the conclusion is drawn that non-stereotypical advertising can be problematic in a multicultural and globalized society when the advertising is produced with a Western ethnocentrism that communicates Western values. Not only will the advertising reproduce already existing inequalities in Western society, but the risk is that these values will be adopted by other cultures since advertising is a form of mass communication that has the power to mold society's values (Pollay, 1986). The formative influence of advertising might lead the people and groups that Western society communicate as the 'them' group to accept discriminating representations of them as truthful. If this is true the consequence might be the spread and fortification of discriminating Western worldviews outside the borders of Western society. To avoid this from happening the strategic communicator has a responsibility to consider how the advertising is shaped by Western worldviews that create inequalities between people. Although the communicator can never fully be free from the Western influence she or he can work towards gaining a broader intersectional awareness. The strategic communicator can then create advertising with as little discrimination present as possible, which is hopefully a step towards deemphasizing Western power structures and creating a more equal society. This responsibility becomes even more important in today's multicultural society where advertising is interpreted by people with other worldviews than the Western.

This study has provided an insight into the practical implications for the future strategic communicator that will operate on a global and multicultural market. Latent colonialism is present in countless social contexts, including marketing campaigns (Prasad, 2005) and the strategic communicator must therefore reflect on how Western worldviews influence what is being communicated. The new trend of non-stereotypical advertising will only continue to grow and therefore this study, which provides an understanding for its influence on society, is valuable. The results of this study contribute significantly to the existing research within the field of advertising. The analysis of gender, age and ethnic discrimination in non-stereotypical advertising expands on Chu's et al. (2016) research, which is limited to the analysis of non-stereotypical gender role advertising, and contributes with a more diverse perspective on non-stereotypical representations. Furthermore, this study steps away from the traditional focus on stereotypes effectiveness in advertising (Johnson & Grier, 2012; Zawisza, Luyt,

Zawadzka, & Buczny, 2016; Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010), and instead adopts a critical perspective on how stereotypes in advertising create inequalities in society. This study is not only relevant to the field of strategic communication but also for whomever wishes to reflect upon their part in the production of inequalities in today's multicultural society. The reader is provided with knowledge on how different forms of discrimination and inequalities can be expressed in non-stereotypical advertising and thereby given means to detect them. In today's multicultural society it is important for each individual to responsibly consume advertising by being critical towards how it creates inequalities in society.

Finally, the results of this study should not be interpreted as absolute, but should instead be viewed as one possible interpretation of the empirical material. When applying a postcolonial perspective it is important to reflect upon how the Western background of the authors has influenced the results. These are factors the reader should take into consideration throughout this study.

6.1 Suggestions for further research

Throughout the course of this study we have reflected on how other research methods might provide other interpretations of the empirical material. Interviews from a sender's perspective might have given a wider understanding for how the intersectional awareness and worldview of the sender influences the outcomes of non-stereotypical advertising. In contrast to the sender perspective of this study, a recipient perspective on non-stereotypical advertising could provide an understanding for how it can be interpreted as discriminating by the viewer. We also suggest that researchers analyse global advertising campaigns, which this study did not have the resources to do, in order to gain a more global perspective on non-stereotypical advertising. The results of this study show that non-stereotypical advertising is problematic since it can never be free from discrimination. Additionally, we encourage other researchers to further investigate these results.

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Appendix 1

Campaign – 'All countries country'



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



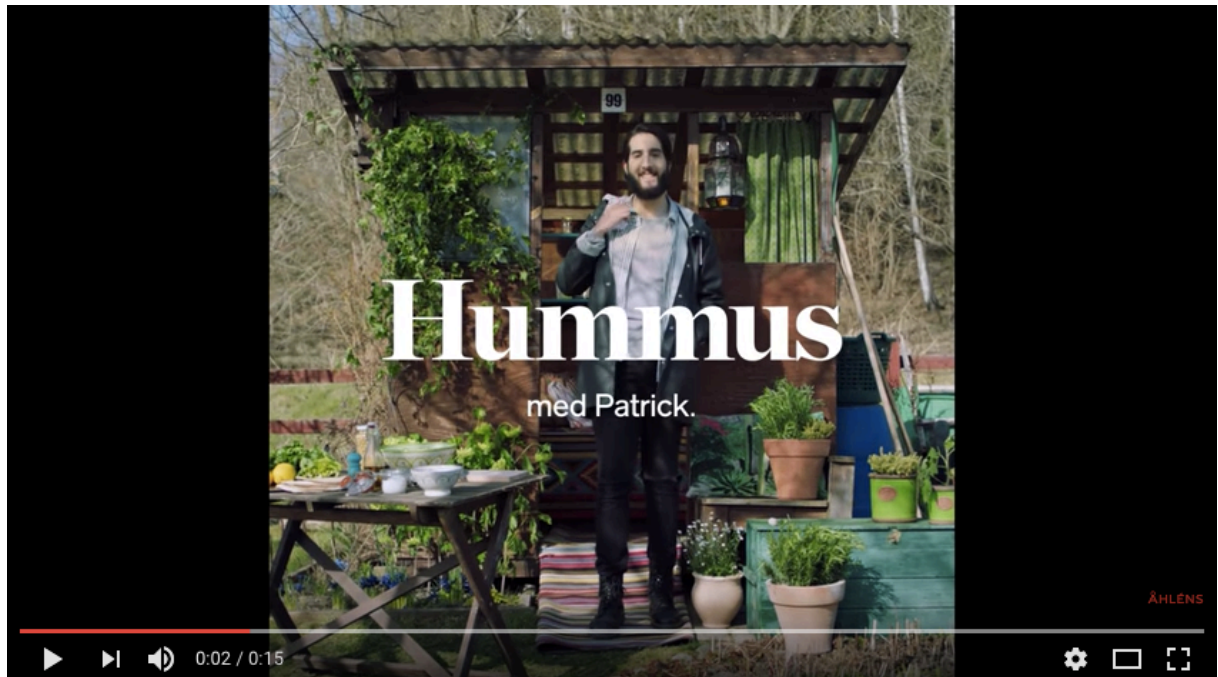
Film 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5C0BgODMQwI>



Film 2

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMoBv4V0D2w>



Film 3

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jn4nst-7b00>



Film 4

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XUYIODC5Xkw>



Film 5

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1N6ZUUNt7BI>

Campaign – 'Clothing has no age'



Image 5



Image 6



Image 7



Film 6

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JMmafE6BMk>

Campaign C – 'Break the clothing power structure'



Image 8



Image 9



Image 10



Image 11



Image 12



Image 13



Film 7

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iv_hHjEDl8A

Appendix 2 - Analysis guide

Analysis guide

1. Who/what can be identified in the image/ film?
2. How are the people being portrayed?
3. How is age represented and generalised in the image/film?
 - a. Is the representation discrimination? And how?
4. How is ethnicity represented and generalised in the image/film?
 - a. Is the representation discriminating? And how?
5. How is gender represented and generalised in the image/film?
 - a. Is the representation discriminating? And how?
6. What signs of intersectionality are present?
7. What are the effects on discrimination?
8. What Western values are present?
9. How are the Western values expressed?