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Mundane Resistance to Feminism

Exploring men's resistance to feminism through femvertising commercials

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Authors: Frida Andersson & Sofie Tersmeden
Supervisor: Peter Svensson, Associate Professor at Marketing



Abstract

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Authors: Frida Andersson & Sofie Tersmeden

Supervisor: Peter Svensson

Key words: Feminism, Femvertising, Mundane Resistance, Brand Activism, Male Perspective.

Thesis purpose: The purpose of this thesis is to investigate how men express mundane resistance to feminism, when being exposed to femvertising. By fulfilling this purpose, we aim to contribute with a societal perspective to the current stream of research on femvertising and brand activism.

Methodology: The thesis is based on qualitative research through a combination of data from a focus group, a netnographic focus group and telephone interviews with men. We have used an inductive research approach, where we have worked closely to the empirical material.

Theoretical perspective: The theoretical perspective consists of a combination of concepts and models, all within the topic of mundane forms of resistance. With a starting point in Foucault's (1978) description of power and resistance, and Scott's (1989) concept of everyday resistance, we have built our theoretical framework. These authors' works have been complemented by Johansson and Vinthagen's (2016) analytical framework, as well as everyday resistance in the context of organizational studies (Prasad & Prasad, 2000; Fleming & Sewell; Collinson, 2000).

Empirical data: The empirical foundation comprises 19 semi-structured interviews with men, a focus group with nine male participants and a netnographic focus group on the discussion forum Flashback. The sample is diverse regarding age, occupation and level of education.

Findings / Conclusion: The findings from the study were summarized into the five themes where mundane resistance is expressed: *Feminism as a Zero-Sum Game*, *Exclusionary Feminism*, *Commercialized Feminism*, *Normalized Feminism* and *Exaggerated Feminism*.

Practical implications: Our contribution is mainly theoretical, but for companies using femvertising commercials, it is important to note that they are reproducing an image of feminism that may, or may not, be representative for the movement.

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1. Introduction¹

Sweden is the first country in the world to have a feminist government (Government Offices of Sweden, 2019), and is the most gender equal country in Europe, seen to the European Gender Equality Index latest data (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020). The political climate is contributing to a strong egalitarian public narrative in Sweden. The overall goal of men and women having the same power to shape society, and their own lives, is what the Swedish government strives to achieve (Regeringskansliet, 2017). This main goal is achieved through the navigation provided by six sub goals within the fields of business, power, health, education, unpaid domestic work and male violence against women. Another concrete example of how gender equality is expressed in daily life is the distribution of parental leave. Stay-at-home dads are no rarity in Sweden anymore. There is a trend of more Swedish dads staying at home, taking care of their children, compared to previous years (Försäkringskassan, 2020). In 2019, 30 percent of the parental days were used by men and 70 percent by women (Försäkringskassan, 2020). Since 2005, these numbers represent an increase of 87,5 percent in the category of men (Försäkringskassan, 2020).

Another example of progress in the field of gender equality is the new sexual offence law, introduced in Sweden in 2018, making the lack of consent a determining factor (Holmin, 2018). Before the new law's implementation, violence, threat or constraint had to have occurred for the perpetrator to be convicted (Holmin, 2018). This was a large step in a more gender equal direction for Sweden. Further on, in 2018, the government body Jämställdhetsmyndigheten was founded, with its purpose to assure that the gender equality prioritizations of the Swedish government is being followed, and to contribute to an efficient way of performing politics within the field of gender equality (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, 2019). These are just a few examples of how Sweden is working toward being a gender equal country. Together, these measures contribute to the process of shaping the country's public narrative and changing societal norms. Just by looking at these structural changes in society, Sweden seems to be a country where gender equality is something that everyone promotes. Actually, that seems to be the case, at least if you look at the number of Swedes agreeing with the statement "there is no need to achieve gender equality", which only three percent of the respondents did (Statista, 2019). However, at the same time as gender equality seems to have become a certainty in

¹ This is a development of two previous assignments in the courses BUSR31 and BUSP37

Sweden, there is still a growing opposition present in society, mostly among men. With some simple research on the internet, one can find a lot of extreme opinions on the topic of feminism. For instance, on the Swedish discussion forum Flashback, this quote was shared:

“Unfortunately, many incompetent people use the feminist ideology as a selfish tool to cover up the fact that they failed with their own lives. No, they are not counteracted, the patriarchy has not prevented them in any way. They are simply too lazy/unintelligent to educate themselves, get a career, find a good man”
(Translated from DaChief, 2018)

This radical type of resistance is present in other communities too. Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut (2020), translated to The Swedish Defense Research Agency, researched the internet-based subculture *incels* (i.e. involuntary celibacy), that mostly attract heterosexual men. They found that this group often expresses hate toward women, describing them as natural resources that everyone should be entitled to, rather than individual human beings. The incels have also been shown to celebrate murderers. About ten deadly attacks in the world have been committed by individuals, part of the incel-culture. Lastly, they found Sweden to be a country with a lot of incels, given the size of its population, with 240 Swedish forum visitors per million inhabitants, compared to 43 American per million inhabitants. Lerner (2019) has also written an article on the topic of incels, illustrating the subculture through a quote that was shared by a member on an online forum, saying that all women deserve to be raped, just because he did not have a partner. This group of men often attacks feminism, blaming it for their lonely lives. The values among this growing group of incels in Sweden is in great contrast to the official public narrative of Sweden being a gender equal country that promotes equal rights for both women and men.

Parallel to this, a mundane form of resistance, that is less radical, is also present in today’s Swedish society. In a study presented by Statista (2020), almost a fifth of the Swedish population agreed with the statement “I’d feel uncomfortable if my boss was a woman” and 14 percent of the Swedish respondents thought that a man who stays home to take care of his children is less of a man. The group of people with such opinions is not very large and the society is not dominated by incels either. Most people are not misogynists or radical anti-feminists. That does not necessarily mean that there is no other form of resistance present in today’s Swedish society. Despite the radical elements of the anti-movement, the mundane resistance can be even more dangerous.

A form of mundane resistance to feminism has also entered the political sphere. In 2010, the conservative and nationalist party Sverigedemokraterna entered the Swedish parliament, represented by 20 members. When asked if they are a feminist party, Sverigedemokraterna's Party Secretary answered no (Sveriges Radio, 2014). They were the only party in the parliament with that answer. Despite this, on their website, Sverigedemokraterna still say that they promote that "everyone should have the same rights, be held equal to the law and feel safe in society" (translated from Sverigedemokraterna, n.d.). The party's mundane resistance becomes more present when looking into their opinions about the feminist measures presented by other parties in the parliament. Sverigedemokraterna state that they are against quota systems, governmental regulations regarding parental leave and that they want to dismantle Jämställdhetsmyndigheten, the government body for gender equality (Sverigedemokraterna, n.d.). On the website of Sverigedemokraterna's youth association, Ungsvenskarna, they call themselves non-feminists and clearly demonstrate their disagreement with approaches such as gender pedagogy (Ungsvenskarna, 2020). These following quotes illustrate their political standpoint on feminism today: "no matter what you think about a quota system, in practice it's discrimination" and "we do not think that you should disturb children's development with political experiments. Mental and physical differences between the genders are a scientific fact" (translated from Ungsvenskarna, 2020). The party, with its values, have shown to attract more male voters than female. Last year, 28,5 percent of all Swedish men would vote for Sverigedemokraterna, compared to 14 percent of Swedish women, meaning that their voters consisted of twice as many men as women (Thurfjell, 2019).

At the same time as Sverigedemokraterna is growing in popularity among men, men's tendency to call themselves feminists is decreasing. On behalf of the Swedish newspaper Svenska Dagbladet, the research company SIFO performed a study on people's self-identification with the feminist movement, by asking people if they call themselves feminists (Kudo, 2018). The results showed that in 2014, 40 percent of Swedish men, over 30 years old, chose to call themselves feminists. Four years later, only 28 percent did, illustrating a decrease of 30 percent. Parallel to this development among men, the trend for women is moving in an opposite direction. In 2014, 53 percent of women called themselves feminists, which is a number that increased by around 4 percent the following four years. The largest increase among women was in the age group of 15-29 years, where 72 percent call themselves feminists. Seen to these numbers, the feminist debate is becoming more polarized, even though we seem to live in a more gender equal country than ever, given the structural changes in society and the official

public narrative. The statistics from SIFO illustrate a growing resistance among men. Even though many of these men probably are in favor of normalized female rights, such as voting and working, this form of mundane resistance can still be harmful. It can be a symptom of something bigger, something that might threaten the progress of the whole feminist movement.

Tötterman Andorff (2019), the General Secretary for the Swedish fundraising foundation, Kvinna till Kvinna, supporting women's rights organizations in conflict and crisis regions, has also reflected upon the potential threat of feminist resistance. She discusses how Swedes might dismiss the more radical acts of resistance in other parts of the world, such as anti-abortion movements, by seeing them as "another type of crazy" that we are far away from here in Sweden. At the same time, she problematizes how politicians in the Swedish parliament are talking about "genus nonsense" and that feminists have no idea about "normal women's" needs. These expressions show that we still experience resistance, also in Sweden, even though it might be different from the radical examples. With such an incomplete image of what forms resistance can take, where radical resistance is seen as the only form, the quiet, mundane resistance tends to go by unnoticed.

Parallel to the growing mundane resistance to feminism, the character of the movement has also changed. The new kind of feminism, which is not as radical and revolutionary as its predecessor, is called *postfeminism* (Nas, 2016). The late 20th century's kind of postfeminism was spread through popular culture and combined mainstream, commoditized and individualized versions of feminism (Genz, 2009). This kind of feminism focuses on empowering women and is sometimes referred to as "feel good femininity" (Lazar, 2014). It is important to stress that postfeminism is not the only type of feminism in society today. Lewis, Benschop and Simpson (2017) discuss how this new type of feminism can be seen as a fourth wave of feminism, with its origin in the technological opportunities created through social media. Even though postfeminism can be seen as a fourth wave of feminism, the different waves may, and do, exist simultaneously (Lewis, Benschop & Simpson, 2017). The relationship between the first waves of feminism and postfeminism is described by McRobbie (2004, p.255) as a "double entanglement", meaning that postfeminism acknowledge some feminist values and simultaneously attack other ones. A channel where this type of modern feminism is being expressed is through advertisement, and more specifically through *femvertising*, defined by Sheknows (2014) as "advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages and imagery to empower women and girls".

Whether femvertising is feminist or not is difficult to give a short answer to. Since the purpose of femvertising is to reach gender equality, the technique can be considered to be aligned with feminism (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). On the contrary, femvertising also encourages consumption, which contradicts the purpose of feminism since feminism is more about changing social policies and norms and should not be a matter of money or purchase opportunities (Ramazanoglu, 1989 in Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). There is thus an inconsistency within the concept femvertising. Incorporating the feminist movement in one's advertisement, to increase company profits, is seen as exploitation by some. Marketing consultant Katie Martell in "Calling Bullsh*t on Faux Feminism as a Marketing Commodity" (2017, 00:20:53) refers to this type of advertisement as *Faux Feminism* and defines it as "the exploitation of feminism by advertising". She means that it symbolizes an illusion of societal progress.

The commercial agenda behind feminist messages, and exploitation of the movement by companies, is hardly a new phenomenon. Ever since the 1970s, marketers have tried to associate the meaning of women's emancipation with commercial products (Goldman, Heath & Smith, 1991). In women's magazines, feminism is often illustrated as opposed to the patriarchal hegemony, but still falls back under the capitalist hegemony (Goldman, Heath & Smith, 1991). Goldman, Heath and Smith (1991) have coined the concept *Commodity Feminism*, referring to feminism as a commodity instead of a political ideology. The authors mean that advertisers sell feminism through a product, which becomes an object made to "stand for, or made equivalent to, feminist goals of independence and professional success." (Goldman, Heath & Smith, 1991, p.336).

When studying femvertising, the issue of combining profit and politics becomes prominent. Given the problematic aspects of Commodity Feminism (Goldman, Heath & Smith, 1991), femvertising is a relevant choice of platform when studying mundane resistance among Swedish men. Femvertising can be seen as an area of exposure between men and feminism, where the mundane resistance is to be discovered and further investigated. As mentioned earlier, postfeminism is excluding a lot of the inequalities, and issues, that constituted the feminist movement's early days. Instead, postfeminism has a close relation to consumption and popular culture, making it a more controversial kind of feminism. Additionally, this type of "girl power feminism" might contribute to increasing the barriers of entry for men.

Going back to the statistics of less men identifying as feminists, some might say that it is a small and insignificant problem, compared to the frightening statements made by anti-feminists. Radical resisters with extreme opinions will always exist, no matter what topic, but they are often a small minority. The problematic aspect of this quiet and mundane resistance is that it risks getting a wider spread in society and going by unnoticed, making it difficult to tackle. It is not very likely that all remaining 72 percent of the Swedish men, that did not call themselves feminists, are radical anti-feminists. Therefore, a focus on fighting the radical resistance would be an inefficient focus. This large group of non-feminist men comes with greater risks, due to its size and large potential impact. If the development continues in the current direction, this form of mundane resistance risks becoming normalized. As a consequence, normalization of even more radical statements can be the potential future scenario.

With this in mind, the following research question will be answered in this thesis:
How do men express mundane resistance to feminism when being exposed to femvertising?

In order to answer this research question, men's expressions of mundane resistance, referring to what they say and how they talk about femvertising and feminism, is what we aim to investigate further.

1.1 Purpose

Given the research question above, the purpose of this study is to investigate how men express mundane resistance to feminism, when being exposed to femvertising. Mundane resistance is silent and subtle and hence often disregarded, wherefore we aim to shed a light on this form of resistance. The large group of men not supporting today's feminist movement, indicate that some aspects of modern feminism are turning men into opponents instead of allies. Achieving gender equality without having all genders onboard seems to be a difficult task, wherefore we find it important to make the mundane resistance heard. Our purpose is therefore to contribute with knowledge about mundane resistance among men, in the context of femvertising, and thereby include a societal perspective to the research stream of femvertising.

2. Literature Review²

In this literature review, current research in the fields of brand activism and femvertising will be presented. Later, we will discuss what position we aim to take in the academic discussion and how to contribute to the current stream of literature.

2.1 Brand Activism

Femvertising, as the topic of this study, can be seen as a product of current branding trends. These trends are always changing, which Holt (2002) has discussed in his model of branding and consumer culture. In his model, he shows how different paradigms shift when consumers become knowledgeable and reflexive toward the previous branding approaches. The first paradigm the author presents is the *modern branding paradigm*, built upon cultural engineering and abstraction. During this time period, in the first decades of the 1900s, it was desired to use brands to express social and moral ideals. Here, linkages were created between products and personal characteristics, which through a parental voice told consumers how to live. Resistance started to develop over time, as consumers felt stupid and used, when trying to fit into a company-created template. The author further explains how, in the 1960s, the *postmodern branding paradigm* started to develop. Here, consumers saw themselves as projects under construction, where brands became central in consumers' self-creation processes. In order to survive market competition, it was crucial for brands to be perceived as authentic. When the brands were perceived as authentic, original and disinterested, consumers used brands as resources to form their identity projects. Later, the denial of the brands' profit motives became a subject to criticism. This opened up for discussions about a *post-postmodern branding paradigm*. Here, Holt (2002) explains that brands no longer can hide their commercial motives and therefore, there will be a shift from focusing on authenticity to brands as cultural resources. When this article was written in 2002, Holt predicted that successful brands in the future would provoke, inspire and stimulate consumers, and that people would demand from companies to act as loyal community citizens, taking civic responsibility.

The discussion about the post-postmodern branding paradigm is aligned with the field of *brand activism*, which is a research field that has been explored by quite a few researchers. Kotler and Sarkar (2017) describe that historically, brands could be successful by positioning their

² This is a development of two previous assignments in the courses BUSR31 and BUSP37

products as better than its competitors, but nowadays they are expected to get involved also in societal issues. The authors describe that brand activism is a natural evolution of corporate social responsibility, and is based on a value-driven approach. One aspect of brand activism is *social activism*, which consists of issues related to, for instance, equality and gender (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). Hence, one could argue that femvertising is a form of social brand activism. Sarkar and Kotler (2018) also mention that when brands are expected to take a stance in, often polarized, questions, this can entail a loss of one segment of the market. Despite this loss, the authors mean that often, this is still a profitable move to make.

Brand activism, and the attitude towards it, has been investigated by several researchers. Shetty, Belavadi Venkataramaiah and Anand (2019) researched this field by exploring millennials' perceptions of brand activism. The study showed that millennials prefer to buy products from brands that support a cause, aligned with the brand's own personality, compared to products from non-activist brands. The generation of millennials were also shown to be more conscious regarding environmental, political, cultural and social issues in society, compared to older generations, wherefore brand activism is favorable for companies to use in order to reach and retain this customer base. The results were irrespective of gender, meaning that no significant difference was present among male and female millennials' attitudes toward brand activism. Another interesting finding is that the type of cause used in the advertisement affected the reactions among the millennials. The degree of emotional bonding, i.e. the closer the cause was to the heart, the less price sensitive they were. Additionally, the perceived authenticity of the activism had an impact on their attitudes. If the engagement seemed to be fake or insincere it often resulted in resistance, or even boycotting of the brand.

Another contribution to the stream of research, focusing on consumers' attitudes toward brand activism, was performed by Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020). They investigated the effect of brand activism and identified an asymmetric effect of brand activism on consumers attitudes, intentions and behavior. The consumer-brand disagreement, i.e. when the consumer did not agree with the brand's stand, was shown to result in a decrease in brand attitude, which was in contrast to the case of consumer-brand agreement, that did not show any significant effect on brand attitude. The overall findings in this study is that brand activism comes with great risks, from a company perspective, since the negative effects are much larger than the positive ones. A consumer agreeing with the company's stance, was explained not having a very large impact, due to it being expected or ought to.

As shown by the results of these studies about attitudes toward brand activism, emotions play an important role, which Hong (2018) further researched. In his dissertation he investigated consumers' emotional responses toward brand activism. One of the three main findings from the study was that *boycotters* and *buycotters*, i.e. punishers and rewarders, differ in their experienced emotions. For boycotters, gratitude and anger impacted their response, as in contrast to the buycotters, whose intention was influenced by elevation, authentic pride and gratitude. However, gratitude was shown to be the only emotion that significantly impacted all dependent variables (brand attitude, boycott intention, buycott intention and behavior intention). Consumers who experienced high levels of gratitude were shown to be more likely to get a positive brand attitude and support the brand by buying their products, and hence be less likely to boycott them. Finally, public support was found to have a moderating role on the impact of gratitude on brand attitude. Romani, Grappi, Zarantonello and Bagozzi (2015) also contributed with an emotional approach to brand activism, by researching how brand moral violations lead to anti-brand activism. The authors showed that feelings of hate is a mechanism that makes anti-brand activism emerge, due to a brand's moral violations. Empathy was identified as its boundary condition.

Manfredi-Sánchez (2019) had another approach to the topic of brand activism, by researching different marketing campaigns and came to a conclusion about which characteristics, and political messages, were present. As a part of the conclusion, the author found that a progressive type of feminism, as in contrast to a controversial or conservative kind, was present in these advertisements. Further on, Lazar (2006) identified, through a discourse analysis, four ways that so-called *Power Femininity* in modern advertisement is articulated. The categories presented were *Empowered Beauty*, representing advertisements where the beauty brands act as empowering agents, contributing to women fulfilling their full beauty potential. The second category mentioned was *Knowledge as Power*, meaning that the advertisements included educational elements by arranging workshops, seminars, sessions and so on. *Agentive power* was the third category, where Power Femininity is related to women's ability to take charge. This agentic power was expressed through the aestheticization of their body, or consumption of beauty products, and can be classified as either transformative or resistive. The fourth category, mentioned in the article, is *Sexual Power*, where female sexuality is presented as powerful. Women are presented as active and desiring subjects, where a shift was made from seeing this as a sign of women's exploitation to a sign of female empowerment.

2.2 Femvertising

Most of the current research on femvertising has quantitatively tested different hypotheses. Sternadori and Abitbol (2019) investigated if gender impacts attitudes toward femvertising, where they hypothesized that women's attitudes toward femvertising would be more positive than men's. The results showed significance between men and women, meaning that the hypothesis was supported. Another hypothesis that they tested was if the relationship between gender and attitude toward femvertising was mediated by feminist self-identification and support for women's rights. The result was that both support for women's rights and feminist self-identification partially mediates the relationship between gender and attitude toward femvertising. The study also showed that political orientation and the tendency to trust ads are direct, or indirect, factors affecting the general attitude toward femvertising.

Other researchers have also been interested in consumers' attitudes to femvertising. Drake (2017) investigated how consumers respond to female empowering advertisements compared to advertisements without a feminist message. He found that the respondents who had watched the "fem ads" had a more positive attitude to the brands and ads, than the respondents looking at the "non-fem ads". Additionally, the study showed that "fem ads" had a positive impact on purchase intent. Finally, viewers of the "fem ads" had a stronger emotional connection to the brands, compared to the viewers of the "non-fem ads". Åkestam, Rosengren and Dahlen (2017) had similar findings, showing that femvertising generates higher ad and brand attitudes than traditional advertisements. Women were shown to self-identify with the ad and embrace the message. The fact that femvertising often challenges gender stereotypes could explain this result, according to the authors.

Femvertising messages have for a long time been regarded as lacking in legitimacy, since few companies have gender equality and female empowerment as their main purpose of existence (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). Consumers purchase intention, in the context of femvertising, is affected by the perceived company-cause fit, i.e. how legitimate and authentic the social effort is regarded (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019). If there is a perceived congruence, the consumer's purchase intention is increased by femvertising (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019). Also, Johnston and Taylor (2008) touched upon the subject of legitimacy, arguing that there is reason for suspicion regarding profit-driven corporations engaging in female empowerment, since this can lead to *feminist consumerism*, rather than grassroot activism. The authors understand that corporations use these kinds of messages since it is profitable. However, they are still concerned

about the fact that feminist consumerism tends to minimize, or ignore, structural gender inequalities. Since the brand is the primary concern, these issues might be hard to overcome.

As women's purchasing power and economical independence increase, they become a business opportunity for companies. This can explain the growing marketing trend of femvertising (Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). In their study, Kapoor and Munjal (2019) found that a positive attitude toward femvertising increases the intention to spread the word and talk about the campaign, but does not increase purchase intention. Further, these intentions vary among consumer age groups. The propensity to seek out emotional situations, enjoy emotional stimuli and use emotions while interacting were also factors influencing the attitude toward femvertising. The authors further investigated the potential of femvertising as a tool to reach societal change. The respondents regarded femvertising as being effective in increasing self-esteem, and promoting female empowerment, but they did not believe that femvertising can help in removing social taboos or reaching gender equality. Lastly, the respondents viewed femvertising as "just another strategy of companies to promote their products/services" (Kapoor & Munjal, 2019, p.151). These results illustrate a skepticism toward femvertising due to the respondents' perception of femvertising lacking positive societal impact and instead only is about generating profits. In line with this study, Abitbol and Sternadori (2016) have investigated young adults' perception of femvertising by large corporations. They found that consumers sometimes can hold conflicting views simultaneously, on the one hand feeling suspicious of the messages, because of the commercial interest of the sender, but on the other hand being supportive of this pro-social attempt by corporations. The authors were critical toward how femvertising promotes consumption in order for women to overcome their insecurities. They mean that the messages in femvertising rarely mention that the reason for women's insecurities is not a sign of personal weakness or unintelligence. Rather, these insecurities and self-doubts can be explained by "longstanding gender hierarchies that praise them [women] not for their brains, wit, work ethic, athleticism, or resilience, but predominantly for their appearance." (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, p.131).

The term feminism can be perceived to be closely related to femininity and being feminine, due to the similarity between the words. There are perceptions in society that feminist men possess stereotypical feminine characteristics, such as being weak, emotional and submissive (Andersson, 2009). It seems like, possibly because of these perceptions, some men have a hard time identifying as feminists. Conlin and Heesacker (2017) wanted to investigate the

significance of the wording by comparing the word 'feminist activism' with 'gender equality activism'. They found that men, to a higher degree, report to participate in 'gender equality activism' compared to 'feminist activism'. Further, the men who self-identified as feminists reported higher participation in gender equality activism, compared to those who did not. Their conclusion is that the feminist movement would benefit from being more inclusive toward men, and that the word 'feminist' still is stigmatized.

A possible way to overcome this stigmatization is through positive experiences. For instance, men who read a positive portrayal of a feminist man show higher solidarity with feminists (Wiley, Srinivasan, Finke, Firnhaber & Shilinsky, 2013). Despite the word being stigmatized, there are still men who do identify as feminists. Holmgren (2007) interviewed Swedish men engaged in feminism and found that they found a contradiction between being masculine and being a feminist. In order for feminist men to manage this contradiction, some choose to differentiate themselves from other men while others show reflexivity toward this contradiction.

2.3 Positioning in the academic debate

Most research on the topic of brand activism has focused on consumer attitudes, in order to advise companies on what approach to take and hence have more of a managerial perspective (e.g. Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020; Shetty, Belavadi Venkataramaiah and Anand, 2019). Holt (2002), with his different paradigms, has a societal perspective on the phenomenon. Some of these studies have touched upon the topic of resistance, by exploring what feelings might cause boycotting (e.g. Hong, 2018; Romani et. al, 2015). However, there is still a lot of room for complementary research within this field of consumer resistance, in the context of brand activism. The same applies to the academic debate about femvertising. Most of the studies have quantitatively tested the impact of femvertising on certain aspects of consumption. Many researchers have investigated how consumer attitudes, toward the brand or ad, are affected by femvertising, compared to traditional advertising (e.g. Åkestam, Rosengren & Dahlen, 2017; Drake, 2017; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). Studies have also investigated if the use of femvertising leads to an increase in purchase intention. Here, the results diverge among studies, where some show support for an increase and some a lack of support (e.g. Drake, 2017; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). Another aspect of the stream of studies, within brand activism, is that the participants are mostly women (e.g. Åkestam, Rosengren & Dahlen, 2017; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019; Abitbol

& Sternadori, 2016; Drake, 2017; Lazar, 2006), or a combination of men and women (e.g. Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019; Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019; Shetty, Belavadi Venkataramaiah & Anand, 2019; Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020), where attitude and purchase intention seems to be higher for women than for men (Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019). Also, in order for femvertising to be impactful, the message needs to be perceived as authentic (e.g. Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019; Johnston & Taylor, 2008).

After reviewing a large, and diverse, collection of studies on the topic, one can see how a deeper focus on the resistance, and more specifically the mundane resistance, is not present. Further, most previous research has mainly taken a female perspective, wherefore we would like to understand how femvertising is perceived by men, and investigate their resistance. Additionally, the managerial perspective, where the findings aim to be used by companies to improve their businesses, was seen to dominate the academic discussion. Based on the literature review, we could identify the gap of a male perspective on mundane resistance, where the findings are more focused on societal benefit, rather than solely on companies. The findings from the studies that touched upon resistance did not explore it extensively, leaving room for further research, which we to some extent aim to fill. A societal perspective tends to be forgotten when only focusing on increasing profits for companies, instead of the eventual damaging consequences of the movements that companies use through their brand activism. This gap in the literature stream is relevant to fill, since the discussion of brand activism and femvertising lack a more critical perspective, where the potential damaging effect on the movements is highlighted. By focusing on the societal aspects of companies being engaged in these issues, we wish to contribute to a more representative and diverse debate. Since the nature of mundane resistance is silent and less visible, it is important to study it in detail, in order for this form of resistance to be understood. By this study, we wish to not only identify mundane resistance, but also to deeper understand the meaning of it.

3. Methodology³

In this section, we will describe our methodological choices made throughout the process of this study. We will describe the starting points, as well as the process of data collection in practice. We conclude the chapter with a comment on the study's quality and how we analyzed the data.

3.1 Writing a Master's Thesis in spring 2020

This spring, the whole world is going through a crisis. The pandemic of Covid-19 has so far affected the majority of countries around the world. Sweden has chosen a different approach in handling the situation compared to most other countries, where we are trying to continue our daily lives as far as possible. Even though Sweden is more open than most countries, the process of writing a Master's Thesis is still being affected. Since the 18th of March, all universities are practicing distance teaching, which means that digital meetings are the new common. For this Master's Thesis, the original plan was to follow up on the pilot study from the course BUSR31, which was a focus group study on the same topic. Our original plan was to conduct more focus groups. In the current situation, it is not a good idea to organize a meeting for a group of people that normally never meet each other. To reduce the risk of the infection being spread, we chose to change our choice of methods accordingly.

3.2 Inductive approach and Grounded Theory

In contrast to quantitative data, it is quite difficult to find a definition of qualitative data. Therefore, the term is often described by stating what it is not. It can be defined as "pieces of information gathered in a non-numeric form" (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015, p.129). Further Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) highlight the qualitative method's interactive and interpretive process, where the researcher often strives to explore the research participants' experiences and perspectives. With the purpose of exploring men's expressions of mundane resistance, a qualitative research design was considered suitable. Since the aim of this study is to capture the mundane resistance, and this, per definition, is something silent and less visible, we needed to choose a method that would allow us to dig deep into the topic. A qualitative method was shown to be beneficial since it allowed us to gain a deep understanding of mundane resistance, which is something the participants were not always aware of

³ This is a development of two previous assignments in the courses BUSR31 and BUSP37

themselves. Additionally, topics and viewpoints that were not thought of in advance by us as researchers were possible to be included through our choice of method, enriching the results through a more complete picture. Therefore, an open and semi-structured qualitative approach was applied, in order to fit the purpose of the study.

Since the purpose of the study is to investigate expressions of a relatively new phenomenon, that we had little knowledge about, the empirical findings were used to shape the thesis's direction, instead of applying a pre-planned path, steered by theory. Our project started with gathering data, from which the research question was formed. Later, theory helped explain and understand the findings and also to frame the study. The initial analysis was made completely empirically, without applying existing theories. Such an approach, where the study often results in the development of theory, is called *induction*, as in contrast to *deduction*, where instead the theory and hypotheses influence the empirical research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). An important aspect to add however, is that the research approach can be seen more as a scale or tendencies, instead of a definitive category, where you are either inductive or deductive (Bryman & Bell, 2015). With such a way of looking at it, our approach was clearly more inductive than deductive, but still with some deductive elements. Our deductive elements are described by Bryman and Bell (2015) as an iterative strategy, where the researcher goes back and forth between data and theory. Since a pilot study had been made, before starting this research project, we already had a pre-understanding of men's attitudes to femvertising, something that influenced the data gathered in this thesis. However, the pilot study had a different research question, hence we did not have a complete picture of the phenomenon investigated in this study. Additionally, new methods of data collection were added in this project, in order to develop upon the field of resistance. These changes were made based on gained pre-understanding of the topic, adding some deductive elements to an otherwise inductive approach.

With an inductive approach of this kind, where emphasis is on the empirical findings, our process has similarities with *Grounded Theory*. Bryman and Bell (2015) explain how Grounded Theory involves an iterative process, where the data gathering and analysis often occur in parallel. Throughout the process of interviewing, the data from the finished interviews was reviewed and reflected upon, ending up in an extended topic guide. The more interviews that were completed, the clearer it became which interesting concepts were present. Therefore, the focus of the interviews changed a bit as time passed, in order to extend knowledge within those

relevant and prominent fields. The findings also made it necessary to adapt the original research question, in order to match what was present in the data.

In Grounded Theory, Bryman and Bell (2015) describe that the theoretical contributions can be either categorized as *Substantial Theory* or *Formal Theory*. What is explained to be the difference between these two types of theory, is that Substantial Theory is related to the specific situations in which the theory was generated. A Formal Theory does not have to be related to the specific research field. Instead, Formal Theory has a higher level of abstraction and can therefore be applied to other areas too. To achieve this type of Formal Theory, data gathering in contrasting situations is required (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Our focus has not been on achieving Formal Theory, wherefore we have not gathered and analyzed data in different situations. The insights or assumptions that we have achieved from our research are hence more aligned with Substantial Theory, even though they would have required a bit more testing to fully belong to that category of findings. However, theory does not necessarily have to be the final outcome of Grounded Theory. Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest that concepts, categories, characteristics (of a category), hypotheses and theory can be the results of Grounded Theory. What is most aligned with the results of our study are categories and concepts.

3.3 Methods of data collection

In order to gather data for this study, three different methods were used, which all entailed communication and interaction with people. Since we investigated a, for the participants, potentially unknown form of resistance, it was crucial to have an interactive part in the process of data gathering. Being able to ask follow-up questions, and modify the questions depending on what was mentioned, was necessary, in order to receive an exhaustive picture of the participants' opinions and thoughts. The first method used was a focus group, performed when conducting the pilot study for this project. The second method was a netnographic focus group, where we posted questions in the discussion forum Flashback and interacted with the respondents. The third and main source of data was 19 semi-structured interviews with Swedish men. Since the study took place in Sweden, and we wanted to make sure that the language would not be a hindrance, all interviews were conducted in Swedish. The three sources of data are constructing empirics with different characteristics and also played different and complementing roles. The two first methods were mostly used as a foundation for the third, and

main, source of data. Therefore, all of the sources are equally important, even though the last is the one most visibly present in this thesis.

3.3.1 Femvertising commercials

For all methods of data gathering, three different commercials from Dove, Nike and Audi, see Appendix 1, were used as examples of femvertising. The Dove commercial is called Evolution and illustrates a woman being transformed by makeup and photoshop. At the end of the commercial, the edited image of the woman is put up on a large billboard followed by the text “no wonder our perception of beauty is distorted”. Finally, Dove encourages the viewers to take part in the Dove Real Beauty Workshop for girls. The second commercial, that was shown, is the Nike commercial called Dream Crazier. This commercial shows different sport related events of famous female athletes with a narrator commenting things such as “if we show emotion, we’re called dramatic” giving different scenarios of when women are called crazy today. Later, the narrative voice makes a historical comparison by giving examples of what was regarded as crazy in the past, such as “but, a woman running a marathon was crazy”. They end the commercial by saying “so, if they wanna call you crazy, fine, show them what crazy can do” and the written quote “it is only crazy until you do it”. The third, and final, commercial is called Daughter and was made by Audi. The film shows a soapbox car race, where a girl is competing with the boys, while a deep narrative voice, having the role of her father, is discussing her potential struggles growing up as a girl in today’s society. When the race starts he says “what do I tell my daughter? Do I tell her that her grandpa’ is worth more than her grandma’. That her dad is worth more than her mom. Do I tell her that despite her education or drive, her skills, her intelligence, she will automatically be valued less than every man she ever meets.” After the girl wins the race, the father and daughter walk up to an Audi car while the narrative voice says “or maybe I’ll be able to tell her something different”. The commercial ends with the quote “Audi of America is committed to equal pay for equal work” and “progress is for everyone”.

Three factors influenced our choice of commercials: stereotypically male or female industry, stereotypically male or female product and male or female characters present in the commercial. Starting with Dove, they were chosen since they represent a stereotypically female industry, by offering beauty and hygiene products, and highlighted an issue most prominent for women. Further, there is only a woman present in the commercial. In contrast to this, we also chose to

include the Audi commercial since they sell cars, a stereotypically masculine product and industry. That commercial also had a male narrator, which enhanced male representation. Finally, Nike's commercial was chosen since they have large customer bases of both men and women and centered their commercial around sports, which historically has been mostly an activity for men. All together, these three commercials are examples of femvertising in different ways. These three commercials were meant to inspire a diverse discussion about femvertising in general, rather than specifically about these three commercials and companies. Since they are different in many ways, we hoped that this would illustrate the category of femvertising in a somewhat representative way, making the results a bit more generalizable.

3.3.2 Focus group

When conducting the pilot study for this thesis, a focus group was chosen as a method for data gathering. With the study's purpose in mind, a focus group was considered suitable, as it enables a group discussion among chosen individuals (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Carson, Gilmore, Perry and Gronhaug (2001) introduce the concept *Group Effect*, referring to the interactive part of focus groups and the possibility for participants to ask questions and explain themselves to each other. The authors mean that this effect strengthens the quality of the responses and opinions gathered. Further, the authors explain how focus groups are distinguished from other qualitative types of methods, by offering a collection of views, achieving a balance of different opinions. This was something we noticed in the focus group, where a discussion with different points of views contributed to interesting insights.

Before starting the discussion, we asked the participants for informed consent to record the discussion (Bryman & Bell, 2015) and provided some general information about the study. After that, we asked the participants to make their own name signs, as an ice-breaking activity, which is claimed to be beneficial for the discussion climate by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson and Jaspersen (2018). After this, the participants were shown the three femvertising commercials. Further, we followed our topic guide, see Appendix 2, with more general questions in the beginning, leaving the most sensitive ones to the end (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). In general, we aimed to use an informal language, not frightening the participants with academic concepts (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018), as we wanted the participants to feel that their knowledge level was enough, and hence that their contribution was valued.

One of us was assigned the role as assistant moderator, responsible for the structure of the discussion, in terms of keeping the discussion on the right track. The other one was moderator and asked the questions from the topic guide and managed the time plan (Carson et. al., 2001). Our own low involvement, due to the loose structure of the research method, made it possible for the participants to discuss freely and steer the conversation in a direction they found interesting and relevant. By only using a topic guide, with more general areas of discussion, as recommended by Easterby-Smith et al. (2015), the conversation was guided, but not controlled, by us as researchers.

A potential risk with using a focus group is the negative effects of social pressure on the quality of data (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Feminism can be a sensitive topic, and some people might have controversial opinions. Sharing strong opinions with a group of unknown people might be sensitive, resulting in limited, and potentially flawed, empirical gatherings. To minimize this risk, most of the participants were acquainted with at least one person to make the situation a bit more relaxed. At the same time, a lot of the respondents were unknown to each other, intended to bring a serious tone to the debate. The strive for a relaxed, yet professional, atmosphere was a way to compensate for the potential power imbalance that could have arisen if we, as two women, were to ask sensitive questions to a group of men. By this, we hoped that the possibility for the participants expressing their true opinions would be increased.

The focus group study was performed a month before than the two other methods of data collection. The results were analyzed separately, and a conclusion from it was drawn. In this thesis, the data from the pilot study was primarily used as inspiration for the coming data gatherings, but some quotes were also included in the analysis. From this, we had gained a better understanding for which topics were interesting, and which questions appeared to be more irrelevant. With this in mind, we knew that we wanted to have a different research question for this study and thereby slightly change direction to focus more on mundane resistance.

3.3.3 Netnographic focus group

The second method of data collection used was a netnographic focus group. We choose to call it a netnographic focus group, since the format lies somewhere in between a netnography and an online focus group. Kozinets (2002) describes netnography as a way to study cultures and communities, naturally occurring online. He contrasts this method with interviews, and focus

groups, and means that the researcher takes a more observing role, and hence is less obtrusive. He describes that the purpose is to observe naturally occurring behavior, wherefore the researcher should try not to interfere. For this study, the online discussion forum Flashback was chosen. This forum can, according to Kozinets (2002), be characterized as a *multi-user dungeon*. The author describes such forums as not very market-oriented, but rather a general chat room, where a variety of different subjects can be discussed. Since our purpose was to discuss a general topic, rather than a specific product or brand, we thought that this kind of forum was best suited. Further on, with almost 1.3 million users and the slogan “freedom of speech for real” (Flashback Forum, 2020), we thought that Flashback would result in many honest responses. In 2018, Flashback was used by a third of the Swedish internet users over 16 years, but only 1% used it every day (Internetstiftelsen, 2018). The users are primarily men, mostly between 26 and 35 years old, living on the countryside with a high income (Internetstiftelsen, 2018). Hardly no one uses their real name as username on Flashback, wherefore most users are anonymous and perhaps more prone to express their true opinions. This usage of pseudonyms is confirmed to be a benefit, since it helps the users hide their identities and express opinions on sensitive topics (Bryman & Bell, 2015).

The purpose of this data method was to investigate what Flashback users thought about femvertising and feminism and search for a more radical form of resistance. In order to start a discussion, we created an account using a pseudonym and started a topic for anyone to discuss. In order to attract male respondents, our profile was a man with a stereotypical manly picture of the logo of the rock-band AC/DC, see Appendix 3. Before posting, we observed how Flashback users typically formulate themselves and tried to adapt our language accordingly. We posted two separate discussion threads with one week in between. The first topic was about the opinions on femvertising. In this question, we linked the three commercials. The second topic was focused around the question if they would call themselves feminists or not. When users replied, we interacted with them in order to enrich the material and get a better understanding for their opinions. In that way, we acted both as a moderator and participant. Even though this method provided valuable insights for this thesis, we are aware of its potential ethical issues. The data being naturally occurring, meaning that the participants were not aware of the fact that they were being studied, which means that informed consent was impossible to achieve. This contradiction is problematic, since naturally occurring data can be valuable for many different types of studies, where the same ethical issue always will be present. In our case, we tried to compensate for this downside by following some of the key principles in

research ethics, recommended by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015), regarding anonymity, privacy and harmlessness. An advantage with the choice of Flashback is that the users, as mentioned above, are using pseudonyms. In this way, the participants were already anonymous. In order to enhance their privacy, we chose to anonymize their pseudonyms, so that their Flashback profiles were protected. By taking these measures, we believe ourselves having ensured that no harm was done and, by that, having compensated for the absence of informed consent.

There are different types of internet based focus groups. Bryman and Bell (2015) categorize these groups as either *synchronous* or *asynchronous*. Given the authors' definitions, our netnographic focus group can be categorized as asynchronous, meaning that the interaction between the participants is not happening in real time. Everyone was not constantly online, instead, they logged in and responded whenever they wanted to. This form enhanced our data gatherings, since there was no pressure to synchronize different schedules for the online participants. Instead, there was freedom for everyone to enter the discussion whenever they wanted to. By using this type of focus group, the participants had time to think through their answers, wherefore they probably were more thought through than spoken words. In this way, this data source contributed with other types of opinions, than the other two methods. Being more well-planned than spontaneous reactions, the answers were often detailed and illustrative. However, a negative aspect that we experienced with asynchronous groups, is that it can be difficult to retain the participants' engagement and interest, when they do not get instant responses (Bryman & Bell, 2015). We tried to compensate for this by interacting with the participants and asking follow-up questions, specifically directed to each user.

Netnographic focus groups are also explained to help overcome the obstacles of getting access to participants that otherwise can be difficult, or even impossible, to get access to (Bryman & Bell, 2015). As the topic of resistance was brought up during the pilot focus group, we wanted to further investigate this topic. In doing so, we were interested in capturing radical opinions, expressing a strong resistance. In order to reach these potential anti-feminists, who we had no connection to otherwise, we chose to use Flashback. As the research question of this thesis handles the issue of mundane resistance, we thought that a starting point in the more open resistance could be beneficial. The mundane resistance can be seen as less visible attempts to express the same resistance as the radicals. By studying the radical resistance, which Flashback helped us to do, we developed an understanding for how this resistance can be expressed. This

entailed that the netnographic focus group helped us develop a sensitivity toward what we should be looking for in the coming interviews. When studying the passive, mundane resistance, we knew what to pay attention to, since the Flashback study had shown us how this could be expressed in a more dramatic way. Hence, this source of data mainly, but not only, played the role of guiding us in what we should later be observant of.

3.3.4 Semi-structured interviews

The third, and largest, source of data in this project is 19 semi-structured interviews with men born from 1939 to 2002. The interviews were, due to Covid-19, conducted over telephone, instead of in person. The fact that the interviews had to be conducted over the phone resulted in both advantages and disadvantages. It enabled a greater geographical reach, since we could interview people from all over Sweden, which would not have been possible otherwise. A negative aspect that we experienced with telephone interviews, is the loss of communicative signals present in the interviewees' body language (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Small subtle signals expressed through body language and different facial expressions were not possible to include, due to this choice of method. Why we did not choose to use video calls were mainly because of two reasons. Firstly, since the topic could be perceived as sensitive, it is possible that the interviewees would feel more comfortable if they did not show their face. Secondly, we were going to include older interviewees that did not have the technology needed, and therefore we chose to apply the same technique for all interviews, in order to generate the same type of content and data.

Regarding the questions for the interviews, a new topic guide, see Appendix 4, was created, with inspiration from the pilot study and the netnographic focus group. The purpose of the topic guide was to act as a starting point in the interviews and guide the conversation, but also to leave room for flexibility regarding follow-up questions and the order of questions. This is called *semi-structured interviews*, i.e. guided open interviews (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). Easterby-Smith et al. (2018, p.139) further defined this type of interview as being "based on a list of questions that can be addressed in a more flexible manner". Given our inductive approach, aligned with Grounded Theory, a semi-structured interview design was chosen to generate relevant and rich data. We applied such an approach by letting the interviewee steer the direction of the conversation and adapted the questions accordingly. We used the technique Easterby-Smith et al. (2018) call *laddering up and down*, meaning that we

used different levels of abstraction. By laddering up, and raising the level of abstraction, we asked questions such as “why do you think like that?”. To concretize and lower the level of abstraction we asked the interviewees to give practical examples. The combination of these two approaches gave a good understanding of their opinions. We found that many interviewees could easier describe opinions in theory, i.e. on a high level of abstraction, than giving practical concrete examples.

The interview questions were divided into different categories. The first category was ice breaker topics, such as giving information about the study, saying that the interviewees were going to be anonymous and asking for consent to record (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Bryman and Bell (2015) highlight the importance of recording qualitative interviews, since it is important to notice what the interviewees are saying and how they say it. Therefore, it can be difficult to take notes while at the same time come up with relevant follow-up questions. Since we recorded the interviews, our possibility to be reflective and adaptive to what was brought up during the interview, was enhanced. This enabled us to be fully concentrated on the interviewee and strive to reach a better flow. By this, we tried to create a conversational feeling, rather than an interrogative. After the ice breaking questions, the interview was focused on quite open questions about the commercials and the interviewees reactions to them. Due to these questions being very wide and open, many of the interviewees already touched upon topics that were planned to be covered later. Another category in the topic guide was about the interviewees view on femvertising, in terms of the message in the commercials, the characters, etcetera. This category was followed by another one regarding their view on feminism in general. Finally, the different categories were joint by questions about their opinion on the eventual impact of femvertising on the feminist movement.

3.4 Sampling strategies

Overall, when developing a sampling strategy for this study, we intended to include as many different perspectives as possible, within the group of men. In order to do so, we primarily used a purposive sampling strategy.

3.4.1 Sampling strategy for focus group

When deciding the number of participants for our focus group, we looked for information about what a suitable amount would be. According to Bryman and Bell (2015), a group of six to ten

participants is a common size, wherefore we chose to invite ten people and ended up with nine, due to one drop-off the same day. Since the focus group took place before the outbreak of Covid-19 in Sweden, it was possible to arrange a physical meeting. In order to have a diverse group of participants, we used a *purposive sampling strategy* where our own judgement regarding the participants' potential contributions was the basis for the recruitment of the participants (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). With this strategy, we aimed to get a sample that reflected the variation that exists in the main group, i.e. men. We chose three stratification criteria: age, profession and educational level, see Appendix 5, in order to achieve systematic variation in what was being discussed, and interesting insights from different perspectives (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Since a focus group requires a physical meeting, geographical limitations in terms of accessibility affected the sampling strategy, resulting in having participants currently living in southern Sweden. With the study's purpose in mind, we aimed to create a quite heterogeneous group of participants, something that enabled a broad discussion with a great number of opinions. On the other hand, the homogeneity of only including men was a way to gain more insights into the male perspective of the topic, and hence answer the research question.

The focus group participants belonged to either the group of Millennials, born 1981-1996, Generation X, born 1965-1980 or Baby Boomers, born 1946-1964 (Dimock, 2019). These participants from different generations have grown up in different time periods when different societal norms and gender stereotypes were present, which probably has influenced their opinions and perspective. With the purposive sampling strategy and the participants' potential contribution in mind, it was relevant to have a spread in ages in order to get a diverse range of perspectives. Regarding the participants' professions, we aimed to invite participants with different occupational roles, since that might be a factor affecting one's point of view. For example, one of the participants in the focus group had worked in the advertisement industry, which made him analyze and notice certain aspects of the commercials that the others ignored. If all participants would have had a professional background within marketing, there is a risk that the focus would have been too much on the commercials' quality, rather than their messages and the phenomenon of femvertising. Other participants worked in male-dominated industries and were thereby probably used to a certain way of working, surrounded by male colleagues. Their perspective and opinions might therefore be different from others' who worked in other industries. Finally, we aimed to achieve a spread in educational level, since that might influence one's perspective too. If you are highly educated and have been able to

practice your critical thinking and analytical skills, your analysis might be different from someone who lacks a higher education. The type of education can also influence your point of view, wherefore we aimed to achieve a spread in their educational fields. However, some participants with a different education than the rest, cancelled, which resulted in the fact that most participants with a higher education studied something related to engineering.

3.4.2 Sampling strategy for netnographic focus group

For the netnographic focus group, a purposive sampling strategy was applied once again. By including these opinions in our sample, we increased the variation of opinions and therefore also got a fairer representation of reality. However, a flaw in studies using non-probability sampling designs, such as ours, is the fact that it is not really possible to apply the findings to the larger group, in this case to all Swedish men (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). We tried to minimize this disadvantage as much as possible, and therefore decided to also include Flashback users, often with quite radical and strong opinions. Including these extremes was a way to include as much of the spectrum of opinions as possible, which also, to a certain extent, is aligned with a *maximum variation sample* (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) describe this as an attempt to include the extremes of a phenomenon, in order to achieve a wide range of opinions and point of views. The participation in the discussion on Flashback was of course optional, meaning that the ones who replied became a part of the sample. Probably, the opinions gathered through Flashback are more extreme than those of an average person, since the ones taking the time to respond probably have a strong opinion, and hence an urge to express it. Also, since the forum allows the people to be anonymous, they can express more extreme opinions than our interviewees probably felt comfortable doing. In total, this data source generated 99 replies from 34 different users.

3.4.3 Sampling strategy for semi-structured interviews

For the interviews, we used a combination of *purposive sampling* and *snowball sampling* (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). The first interviews were conducted with young men, engaged in the youth association of the party Sverigedemokraterna. On their website, they write that they are a non-feminist party (Ungsvenskarna, 2020). Additionally, they are known to have quite strong opinions and are hence, by many, regarded as controversial. We chose to include these interviewees since they would contribute with a non-feminist perspective to the study. In order to reach out, we contacted all of their spokespersons and interviewed the ones who agreed. We

complemented these types of interviewees with another part of the political spectrum, namely the left-wing parties Feministiskt Initiativ, a feminist party, and Vänsterpartiet, a socialist party. By contacting the youth association of Vänsterpartiet, we got in contact with two active members. On Feministiskt Initiativ's web page of different spokespersons, we contacted one of the men who agreed to an interview. So, the overall sampling strategy regarding these politically active interviewees was purposive, since we chose them based on what perspectives we thought they would contribute with. By only choosing the more "extreme" parties, we, to some extent, applied a maximum-variation sampling strategy for these interviewees as well.

We did not want all interviewees to be politically active, since that is not the purpose of the study. Therefore, we also asked men in our circle of acquaintances, based on the same stratification criteria as used for the pilot study, i.e. age, profession and educational level, since we thought that these would influence their responses and perceptions (see Appendix 6 for more information of the sample of interviewees). After having contacted men that we were acquainted with, and that had not been a part of the focus group in the pilot study, we needed a few more interviewees from Generation X and Baby Boomers. Therefore, we used a *snowball sampling strategy* to get in contact with such interviewees. One of the focus group participants asked a few of his friends who agreed to be interviewed.

The number of interviewees ended up being 19 in total. This number of interviewees was based upon saturation in the data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In a quite early stage of the interviews, common themes and opinions were expressed by the interviewees. However, some new aspects were added, wherefore we kept interviewing. At the end, we felt that the interviewees expressed a view that had already been expressed by others, and realized that we had reached a level of saturation in the data.

3.5 The quality of the study

The quality of the research can be evaluated using different criteria. We have chosen the four criteria of LeCompte and Goetz (1982), adapted for qualitative research:

External reliability addresses the issue whether other researchers would get the same findings if they were to conduct the same study. This is the degree of which the study can be replicated, something that often is difficult to achieve in qualitative research, since it is dependent on the

social setting and the researcher has an active role in the process of data creation. Since the researchers are a part of the process of data construction, we have tried to explain our roles, in order to strengthen the replicability, and hence the external reliability (Easterby-Smith et al., 2018). However, it will be hard to replicate the study since the focus group participants, and hence the power dynamics between them, will differ. In the same way, the individuals participating in the netnographic focus group and the interviews contribute to the research with their individual perspectives, something that always will differ when other people participate in the study. We have tried to be open about how the participants have been chosen and what each individual was thought to contribute with, something that probably will enhance the replicability of the study. Further, the fact that we used three commercials as a starting point for the discussion can also enhance the replicability, since the same commercials can be used in future studies. This was also a way to prime all participants in the same way, something that can be done similarly in future studies.

To achieve high *internal reliability*, it is desired that all researchers in the team perceive the same things, given the same conditions. In this study, we have closely collaborated with each other and discussed the findings throughout the whole process. Even though we are equally informed about femvertising and have read the same literature, our preconceptions about feminism might differ due to previous experiences before this project. These preconceptions may have affected how data was constructed and interpreted, wherefore it was of great importance that the analysis was made together. Moreover, our roles during the focus group, allowing us both to ask for further explanations from participants, reduced the risk of misinterpretations. However, a potential factor that may lower the internal reliability is the fact that we, due to sickness, were unable to participate together in all interviews. Probably, the understanding for each individual's standpoints is higher for the researcher who is taking an active role in the interview, since small signals and ways of expression can easier be perceived. To compensate for this risk, the one of us who was not present during the interview always listened to the recording in order to better understand the interviewees way of speaking. Also, the person who did not hold the interview got to transcribe the material to get familiar with it.

External validity is the degree to which the observations made can be generalized to new social situations. This is often a weakness in qualitative research because of the sample's characteristics. In our study, this is a limitation of the quality, since we do not know what the results would have been if other participants had been chosen. Probably, the sample is not

representative for all men in Sweden, which makes it hard to generalize the results as opinions of this social group. However, since the purpose is of an explorative kind, the participants were not recruited with generalizability in mind, rather with the aim to investigate how they, as an example of men, express mundane resistance. When conducting the interviews, we reached theoretical saturation, since we realized that the same answers were getting repeated, and few new insights were gathered in the last interviews (Bryman & Bell, 2015). This fact probably enhances the generalizability of the study.

Internal validity is the degree to which the observations represent some parts of reality. In high quality research, there should be a congruence between the observed phenomena and the theoretical notions developed from them. The data in this study consists of the expressions of mundane resistance mediated through spoken or written language. Since the participants describe their truths, the data can be considered to represent a part of their reality and hence having high internal validity. However, a potential threat to internal validity is the *observer effect*, which is the tendency for participants to modify their behavior in a situation when knowing they are being observed (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982). There is a risk that our focus group participants and interviewees felt pressured to express opinions that are not really true, since they knowingly participated in a study with the purpose of contributing to research. If this happened, it is possible that it happened unconsciously, wherefore it is difficult to find out whether or not it was the case. In contrast to this, there is probably less of an observer effect for the Flashback-users, since they were anonymous and were not aware that they were being studied.

Further, the conclusion of this study is summarized into the five male views of feminism. To achieve these, three examples of femvertising commercials were used, with the purpose of representing femvertising. However, with these commercials, there is a risk that our analysis, and hence findings, are based too much upon these specific examples, rather than femvertising as a general concept. If that is the case, the congruence between our contribution and what is being observed is not as high. If this is the case or not is hard to know for sure, since we are unable to test our findings by showing different commercials. However, many of the study participants were familiar with the idea of femvertising beforehand, why the influence of the three commercials probably was not as high as it would have been otherwise.

The topic of feminism is something that we have quite strong opinions about. Even though we strived to be neutral when talking to the study participants, it is important to acknowledge the risk of one's personal opinions shining through. This can be a deficiency in the study and something that lowers the internal validity, due to the risk that we saw what we wanted to see. Also, when interviewing the people from Sverigedemokraterna, we were interviewing people from a party that is critical to immigration and multiculturalism, something that we do not support ourselves. Even though our questions were not touching upon these matters, they were still mentioned by these interviewees. There is a risk that we, even though we tried not to, were more critical to what they said in general, since we knew that we do not stand for the same fundamental values. It might be the case that we unconsciously looked for more radical opinions by these people, also regarding femvertising. We knew beforehand that they were not feminists, but because of their other values, there is a risk that we exaggerated when interpreting their answers, unintentionally. If this has happened or not is impossible to say, since that would have happened unconsciously. However, if that was the case, it could have reduced the congruence between what was meant by the participants and our developed theoretical concepts.

3.6 Data analysis

The process of the analysis of the data was a time-consuming phase of the project. In the process, the material from all three data sources were used together in order to make one united analysis. In this project, we as researchers had an influential role in how to interpret data. Hence, the analysis should, partly, be seen as a product of our interests and preunderstanding. The process of analyzing can be divided into three different steps: sorting, reducing and arguing. These steps were, in practice, overlapping.

3.6.1 Sorting

As stated by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), the data gathered from qualitative methods would be helped by a *thematic sorting*, in order for it to be graspable. This process revolves around the goal of finding recurring content or elements. Given our research question, we were interested in exploring both what the study participants said, but also how they said it. We started the process by doing a first sorting digitally. Here, the parts from the transcriptions that were not relevant were excluded. This first sorting resulted in 78 pages with transcribed quotes from participants from all data sources. We printed these and cut out each quote in order to be able to sort them into categories. This way of analyzing the data improved the efficiency when

re-sorting and testing changes to the classifications (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). The goal of this process is to go from reproducing the spoken words of the participants to actually interpreting it, through the creation of theoretical labels when sorting (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). We performed several rounds of sorting, to improve our categories and be able to interpret them, which often is needed for qualitative research (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). By spending a lot of time with the material, we were able to get a great structure of the empirical content which is beneficial for achieving stability, clarification and structure in the study (Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018).

After having read through all the material together a few times, we did a preliminary theme structure. This structure of themes was developed completely from the empirics, hence through induction (Ryan & Bernard, 2016). Since we did not have a final research question, the material was kind of diverse and could have answered several different research questions. Therefore, in the first round of thematic sorting, we did three separate suggestions for a theme structure. All of these consisted of overall themes with subheadings and arrows to symbolize how these were connected. This first round of theme identification resulted in many themes, which according to Ryan and Bernard (2016) is a good thing. With many themes in the beginning, a better analysis is possible, since more material is being used when deciding which themes are the most important ones and their relationship to each other. In line with the authors suggestions, the themes were primarily developed through two techniques; looking for repetition and looking for similarities and differences in the material. Some examples, for instance quota systems, were commonly mentioned by the interviewees. Hence, it became a theme.

With this primary structure in mind, we sorted the material accordingly. If we felt that a category was not suitable after all, we did not force the material into it, but instead came up with a new one if needed. When reading through the quotes together we asked ourselves ‘what is happening here?’ and ‘what does this mean?’. These guiding questions helped us to look beyond, when needed, what was said literally, and rather why this was expressed in this way and in that context. The first round of sorting took a long time, but it was a good way to really get to know the material by heart. When all of the material was sorted into the three different theme structures, we realized that the material was too rich and too diverse to answer only one research question. Hence, we had to choose one of these theme structures and start to reduce the material.

3.6.2 Reducing

Reducing the material is, according to Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018), necessary in order to manage the process of analysis. This entails both reducing the number of categories, but also the content within each category. In order to fulfill the aim of a qualitative approach, it is impossible to analyze everything in detail. Our process of reduction started with a revision of the research question. With the sorted material in mind, we chose the parts we thought were most interesting. In practice, this entailed choosing one of the theme structures as a starting-point. We started with reading through the quotes from those piles to gain a deeper understanding of which views of feminism were expressed. From this, we came up with three themes, and sorted the material accordingly. After this, we read through the quotes from the other two theme structures once more, to see if there was still relevant material. We included the relevant quotes in our existing themes, but also came up with two new themes. When reducing the number of quotes in each subtheme, we strived to identify different ways of exemplifying the category. When several quotes illustrated the same thing, we only kept the most illustrative example. This phase of reducing the material was, partially, taking place together with the arguing process. How we reduced our material exemplifies how we as researchers are a part of the process of creating the findings. If other researchers would have been exposed to the same material, it is possible that another research question, and hence findings, would be the outcome of this study.

3.6.3 Arguing

Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018) describe that the sorting and reduction faces need to be complemented by arguing, in order for the researcher to say something. Inspired by the *excerpt commentary units technique*, we looked at the excerpts in the reduced material and tried to understand them from a larger perspective. We wanted to get the full picture of an individual's attitude by analyzing all of his statements together, with potential contradictions in mind, to understand what he truly meant. In line with Rennstam and Wästerfors's (2018) recommendation, we strived to identify the *whats and hows*. Consequently, we looked at both what was said, literally, in the quote, but also in what way it was expressed. The *hows* could be for example by using words signaling disgust or by laughing. This strategy was a way to further understand what the quote was about. In this way, the analysis was, at its first step, made completely from the empirics. In contrast to having a theoretical framework to guide the process of creating themes, our process was from an empirical starting point. However, after the

empirical analysis had been made, we understood that with the help of established theory, we would get a better understanding of the phenomena we had identified. Since we had found signs of mundane resistance from the empirical analysis, we wanted to complement the analysis with theory about this form of resistance. In order to do so, we used different established concepts on the topic, from a variety of research fields. With this knowledge, we read through our empirical analysis and made connections to what other authors had found. In this process, we saw how the phenomena we had identified empirically could be better understood by using other authors' descriptions and explanations. In this way, our analysis was empirically founded, but strengthened by existing theory.

In this phase of the project, we had to translate the quotes to English. In doing so, we aimed to always try to capture the meaning of the quote, rather than translate it word-for-word. In some cases, this was not as easy as one could imagine. For instance, sometimes words were used inaccurately in Swedish, which led to the quote having a different meaning than what was meant by the person saying it. In those cases, we aimed to look beyond the meaning of each word and catch what message was intended to mediate by the participant. Also, when participants used sayings, these were sometimes hard to find an equivalent translation to. In those cases, we used a more general translation of the meaning.

4. Theory

There are multiple definitions, and usages, of the word *theory*. Abend (2008) argues for the importance of this word in research, and outlines different explanations, or levels, of theory. In this thesis, resistance theory is used as what Abend (2008) calls *theory₃*, meaning that it is an overall perspective. From this, we used theory about resistance as our fundamental worldview from which we interpreted our observations. In practice, this means that we, in this thesis, have chosen to include the participants descriptions of feminism that could be interpreted as a sign of resistance. In order to further understand the resistance present in men's expressions, we have also used theory at a different level. In the process of analyzing our observations, the usage of theory is mostly aligned with what Abend (2008) calls *theory₃*. This definition of theory describes how theory can be used to understand a phenomenon in the social world, which is what we aim to do in this study. Abend (2008) distinguishes *theory₃* from previous levels of theory, by meaning that this usage of theory is not about causal relationships or explanations, rather, *theory₃* is about understanding the meaning of certain phenomena. In this study, the usage of theory also has the purpose to enable a deeper understanding of the meaning of the resistance present in men's views of feminism in femvertising. With the help of concepts from theory in other research fields, a greater understanding for what we have identified empirically could be achieved.

4.1 Mundane forms of resistance

In this chapter, we will describe how different authors have established concepts and theory in the topic of mundane resistance. When using the term *mundane resistance*, we refer to all kinds of resistance that is less visible and obvious than what, commonly, can be called *resistance*. Since different authors use different terms to describe this kind of resistance, we distance ourselves from choosing one name, but instead use the term *mundane resistance*.

“Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.” (Foucault, 1978, p.95). When using Foucault's (1978) proposition of the relationship between resistance and power, it can be argued that power needs to be understood in order to understand resistance. Foucault (1978) see power as relational and ubiquitous. The author does not think of power as structural or institutional, instead power is everywhere around us because it comes from everywhere. With its intertwined

relationship with resistance, the existence of power is dependent on a variety of forms of resistance, and these forms of resistance are ever present where there is power.

When thinking of resistance, violent demonstrations and mass strikes may come to mind. However, there are also milder, and less visible, forms of resistance. Scott (1989) has been interested in what he calls *everyday resistance*, as a contrast to confrontational actions or protests. While having the same goal, the everyday resistance is quiet, less visible, actions. When avoiding an open attack, the everyday resisters draw less attention upon themselves. Therefore, this technique is safer and further, it requires little, or no, collective organization. As illustrated, everyday resistance has many advantages, and in addition, it can also be an effective way to reach the ultimate goal. Hence, it can be a carefully prepared strategy of resistance. The motive behind this type of resistance is rarely revolutionary, and these actions do not attempt to challenge existing power relations. Furthermore, Scott (1989) explains how one of the main characteristics of this type of resistance is disguise. When taking on actions of everyday resistance, the resister wishes to be anonymous and that the action will never be detected. These actions of non-open protest can, according to the author, be a threat to current norms in society. However, the everyday resistance can be transformed into more direct and open forms of resistance, and the everyday resistance can be seen as a way to look for openings in the opponent's defense.

Building on the concept of everyday resistance from Scott (1989), an analytical framework has been developed by Johansson and Vinthagen (2016). While criticizing Scott for using a Marxist framework, the authors have instead used a Foucauldian perspective on power. In this, power is seen as relational and omnipresent, and power and resistance is seen as in a complex interplay. In contrast to how Scott (1989) describes resistance as a somewhat mechanical response to structural power, Johansson and Vinthagen (2016) define resistance as an open, and continuous, process. In order to understand everyday resistance, the authors argue that the research should incorporate both power and resistance, as they are evidently connected. In an attempt to further understand everyday resistance, the authors suggest four different dimensions as a starting point for the analysis. The first dimension is *repertoires of everyday resistance*. When using the concept *repertoires*, the authors refer to a number of culturally learned routines, shared by a group of people (Tilly, 1995 cited in Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). These routines can be behaviors, subcultures or discourses, and they are continuously changing and dependent on the context. The authors further describe repertoires of everyday resistance as:

“[...] a combined result of the interplay between social structures and power relations, as well as activists’ creative experimentation with tactics and experiences of earlier attempts to practice resistance, together with the situational circumstances in which the resistance is played out.” (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016, p.421).

Further, the authors illustrate how the repertoire of everyday resistance is available in certain social contexts for people practicing resistance by specific techniques.

The second of Johansson and Vinthagen’s (2016) dimensions is *relationships of agents*. This dimension is about the people who are practicing the everyday resistance, and their relationships to each other. In order to understand the resistance, the individuals, or groups of people, practicing the resistance need to be analyzed, but also their relationship to the people with power. The agents are described as complex social identities, constructed in a relationship to someone else, such as the relation between employee/manager, and dependent on the context. The everyday resistance can be seen as a process and interaction in different relationships. These relationships are between different agents, the ones performing the resistance, the opponent of the resistance and the people observing the resistance. A common hold opinion is that resistance is performed by an oppressed group, as a protest to the dominating group. However, this has started to change, and nowadays, dominating groups, with structurally more power, can be the ones performing resistance. It is though important to note that everyday resistance should be understood by an intersectional analysis. To only regard one group belonging is not sufficient, as power, and hence resistance, is a relational process dependent on more than one identity.

The third dimension of resistance, according to Johansson and Vinthagen (2016), is the *spatialization of everyday resistance*. This dimension is about how everyday resistance always is taking place in a certain social space. The social and the spatial is continuously interwoven, and the actions of resistance are practiced in, and through, a certain space. This means that the everyday resistance is situated in a socialized space, but at the same time the social is becoming spatialized. Finally, the fourth and last dimension is by Johansson and Vinthagen (2016) named *the temporalization of everyday resistance*. By this dimension, the authors argue that everyday resistance is organized and practiced through, and in, time. The temporalization and the spatialization of everyday resistance is intertwined, and when time and space are seen as socially constructed, they are connected to power. The control of time and space is a way to exercise power (Foucault, 1991 cited in Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). Examples of resistance

in the dimension of time can be to show up late for work, run personal errands on work hours or to just slow down the pace.

The silent, non-revolutionary resistance is a topic many researchers have investigated. In organizations, the balance between employees' resistance and management's attempt to control is a common part of the daily operations. In their article, Prasad and Prasad (2000) distinguish between *routine resistance* and *organized collective resistance*, where the former describes "less visible and more indirect forms of opposition that can take place within the everyday worlds of organizations" (Scott, 1985 in Prasad & Prasad, 2000, p.388). In their study of an organization going through a change, the authors identified three different types of routine resistance, executed discursively. All these types of resistance are hard to identify, since they are often hidden.

The first type of resistance, identified by Prasad and Prasad (2000), is called *owning resistance*. This resistance was self-named by the employees, as it was a conscious attempt to be confrontational or oppositional toward the management. One way to exercise this resistance was by continuously interrupting the managers and asking questions related to other topics than what was being discussed at the moment. The important thing about this type of resistance is that the employees themselves communicate that it was a strategy to execute resistance. The actions by themselves, without the explanation, can be seen as just mundane behavior, without further signs of resistance. Their own interpretation of these actions as resistance was a way to self-identify as an independent individual with a free will.

Further, Prasad and Prasad (2000) called the second type of routine resistance *naming resistance*. The authors explain that this type of resistance was constructed through language, when someone named an action as resistance. These actions or incidents were always attributed to someone else, and consequently, the individual naming the resistance never identified with the action. This complex form of resistance affected the management's attempt to control in several ways. Firstly, it led to a celebration of heroes in the organization. Those were the people presumed responsible for the actions, which were explained as a way to stand up against management. Secondly, the actions showed how vulnerable the management was. Having people in the organization consciously sabotaging and resisting against management showed a weakness of the control by management. This weakness could then be used as an advantage for the employees.

Finally, Prasad and Prasad (2000) identified *indirect resistance* as the third type of routine resistance. This type of resistance was described as when managers interpret behaviors by the employees as being disruptive, but at the same time knows that the behaviors were not an intentional attempt to resist. For instance, it could be when managers identified actions that they thought of as “passive aggression” or “dumb resistance” (2000, p.399). This type of discursive resistance was only shaped by managers, as the employees did not interpret these non-confrontational actions as resistance. However, managers were uncertain whether these actions were a clever way to resist unnoticed or a result of the employees being uninformed. This became problematic for the managers as they could not punish the employees for actions they did not know the reason behind.

In conclusion, the results from Prasad and Prasad (2000) indicates that resistance is discursively produced, not only by employees but also by managers. They also show how resistance not always is a conscious and deliberately planned act, but also can be unintentional. Further, the routine resistance can be exercised by those who want to prevent the resistance from happening in the first place. Finally, the authors mean that when viewing routine resistance as a discursive phenomenon, it implies that “[...] the act and art of resisting is both planned and accidental, strategic and spontaneous, often retrospectively constructed, but always emerging out of the local interpretations and discourses of multiple organizational actors” (Prasad & Prasad, 2000, p.402)

Other authors have also been interested in resistance in other forms than the immediate visible. Fleming and Sewell (2002) describe resistance with their concept *švejkism*, referring to a character in *The Good Soldier, Švejk*, written by Jaroslav Hašek. In his novel, he describes how
“[...] Švejk always got by, doing just enough so that he appeared to be doing his duty and serving his own ‘interests’ without drawing sufficient attention toward himself to make him subject to the worst excesses of army discipline.” (Hašek, 1973 cited in Fleming & Sewell, 2002, p. 863).

This type of resistance is hence more hidden than traditional resistance, such as strikes and protest, and therefore more difficult to notice. In practicing *švejkism*, the most important methods of resisting is through irony and cynicism. This becomes a way to outsmart the ones with power, by carefully choosing which battles to take.

There seems to be several different types of resistance present in our society. Collinson (2000) have identified a type of resistance, practiced by male workers, which he calls *resistance through distance*. This was an attempt for workers to resist by distancing themselves from the management, both physically and symbolically. The distancing resulted in a counter-culture, and the workers tried to differentiate themselves as much as possible from the managers. The self-differentiation also became a part of a process of identity construction. The workers would emphasize how they were unlike the managers, and they sometimes consciously withheld information. However, the author explains how this strategy of resistance was not as successful as the workers would first imagine, and the resistance also involved compliance and consent. This contradiction in the discourse resulted sometimes in conflict, also between workers. This ambiguity can be the consequence of resistance through distancing primarily being a temporary attempt to escape demands, rather than a deliberately thought through strategy of protesting.

5. Analysis

In this chapter, we will illustrate how the study participants have reflected upon the messages in the femvertising commercials and explain how this can be interpreted as acts of mundane resistance, with the support of existing theory. Further, we used quotes showing different aspects of the same viewpoint in order to get a wide coverage of the five different themes.

5.1 Feminism as a Zero-Sum Game

A common opinion shared by most of the interviewees was that neither men nor women should have more advantages or benefits than the other. Johan illustrated this by the following quote:

“Actually, I think that these commercials were very good and I think that, personally, I rather relate them to gender equality than to feminism because I don’t think that they demonstrate that women should have more benefits or obligations, and so on. In fact, I think they [the commercials] show a perspective that is very much related to gender equality.”

As mentioned in the quote above, Johan indicates that feminism is about giving women more benefits than men, which he views as something negative. It seems like Johan thinks that gender equality is not achieved by lifting either women or men above one another. Instead, he has more of a relative approach, comparing men and women as separate groups, when determining if something is equal or not. Lifting one of the genders above the other and putting that group more in focus seems not to be a sign of gender equality for him. Another interviewee confirms this view by giving an example of how the Audi-commercial could be improved and focus more on gender equality:

“[...] Just like the example I gave earlier with Audi, that you could have a female driver on a race track and a male and that both finish at the same time, to symbolize, on a moderate level, that they are the same and that they can perform the same and achieve equally high results. And instead of extending it to 110 percent, can’t you keep it at a moderate 50 or something?” (Mattias)

The usage of percentage to explain gender equality is a clear way of showing the view of gender equality as a zero-sum game. If one side increases the other one will decrease as a result. This view on feminism means that improvement of women’s position in society will only be beneficial for women. Society is divided into groups where improvement in one will not benefit the whole, it will benefit a part of it at the expense of another. A given opportunity for someone

means a lost opportunity for another. The quote by Mattias illustrates how increased power for women results in resistance among men. This is aligned with how Foucault (1978) describes the interconnection between power and resistance. Only if none of the genders are given more privileges, and through that also power, the men will not resist. Mattias wishes to “keep it at a moderate” level, which signals how he objects giving one group more power. However, he neglects to see how many men have structurally more power than women, and how lifting women could result in an equal level between the genders. This is an example of how not only the oppressed group in society can resist (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). As Foucault (1978) highlights, power and resistance is not static but shifting dependent on context. In some situations, women can be the ones with power and in other situations have a lack of it, which affects the resistance. In situations where men feel that their power is being threatened, as in the commercial when the boys lost the race, men tend to find reason to resist.

An anecdote presented by the interviewee Thomas illustrates how the view of Feminism as a Zero-Sum Game can be shaped through political motions:

“[...] We [FI, a feminist party] filed a motion to replace the statue of a male soccer player with a female soccer player outside old Ullevi and then it was a lot of discussion and it awoke a lot of feelings. Some say it’s just silly symbolism, but everything contributes to how we, what value we attach to male and female in society.”

The example above gives an explanation for how feminism can be perceived as a zero-sum game. Here, a statue of a man is to be replaced by a statue of a woman. The motion was not about adding a statue of a woman next to the existing one. The lost space for male representation can then be interpreted as unequal and only beneficial for women. With this example, it is easy to understand why some men consider feminism to be a zero-sum game, since this illustrates how a man, or a statue of a man in this case, is being torn down in order to be replaced by a woman. The fact that a lot of people were upset by the motion shows how soccer, and sports in general, is considered to be a space for men. By suggesting to replace a male soccer player with a female one, the male space is being invaded and threatened by women. Further on, that view causes everyday resistance, where the actual resistance against equality within sports is hidden behind the discussion of a statue. In this way, the everyday resistance against feminism is disguised as resistance to the change of a statue, aligned with how Scott (1989) presents

disguise as a main characteristic of everyday resistance. The threat against the male space of sports becomes a source of spatialized everyday resistance (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016).

If you see feminism as a weight bowl, where an increase in one side will decrease the other side as a consequence, the empowerment of women can be frightening, since it means that men will have a lower position in society. Another interviewee shared this view that female empowerment might result in gender inequality:

“Because, if it only is empowerment, then there is a fine line when you empower women more than men, and then it becomes unequal the other way around. And what I mean is that it’s difficult to know where that line is. And if you only push for female empowerment and not gender equality, it can easily be the outcome [...]”
(Fredrik)

Here, Fredrik highlights the risk of crossing some kind of line where the power structures are flipped over, where men are in lower rank in society and have less privileges than women. This is a scenario that should be avoided, wherefore female empowerment and feminism is something potentially dangerous or threatening for men. In the quote, an explicit explanation of the risk of feminism is communicated. It also shows how feminism is a zero-sum game, and hence something threatening to male power. By that, resistance is the obvious outcome. A more defensive and resistant approach due to this mentioned risk of changed power dynamics between men and women is present on Flashback:

“The ones that do not wake up will become slaves. Just saying. This applies to both men and women, but since men currently have a disadvantaged position, it’s men’s turn to get their piece of food that they so kindly have refrained from when lifting up the woman... But if the man refrain from their piece of food for two weeks more, in order to feed the woman with strength, then the man will die in the process.”
(User 1)

This quote expresses the view of feminism and female empowerment striving to fight men and take over their power and privileges, turning men into losers. This quote is an example of the more radical opinions that could be found on Flashback. As in contrast to other comments on the topic, this Flashback-user expresses a conscious attempt to be oppositional to the feminist movement, by claiming that women are about to gain more power than men. Such an approach is aligned with that Prasad and Prasad (2000) call *owning resistance*, since the user would probably agree upon that he is a resister of the feminist movement. Additionally, he uses a

technique where he describes the supporting men to be stupid and fooled by the women, when not realizing that they will lose their privileges. Prasad and Prasad (2000) also mention the ones owning their resistance as people who self-identify as someone with a free will, independently from the group opinion. The Flashback-user dramatizes the men's loss, when exemplifying with something as essential as food. Probably, he is talking about power or privileges in society, but wants to exaggerate in order to be heard. He also distinguishes himself from the greater mass by talking about others as un-woke followers, indicating that he has taken a smarter position that will not turn him into a "slave".

Additionally, Alexander presented his thoughts on what might cause resistance among men, and was also concerned about the power dynamics between genders:

"[...] Because all radical feminists with pink hair that are on Facebook and that are in the media, the only thing they do is to throw shit at men. [...] They try to start a war between two genders, which will not benefit them in the end." (Alexander)

Alexander presents a very negative view on feminists claiming that their actions will not benefit any group in society. With his description of radical feminists, he tries to self-differentiate from this group of people, which is a way to resist through distance (Collinson, 2000). By his quote, Alexander ridicules the group of radical feminists by using stereotypes that he does not identify with. Additionally, he frames the feminists as violent and the root cause of the issues we are facing in the feminist debate. Also, he is putting the blame on feminists as the ones creating the division between genders that has led to polarization. Both these two quotes are in contrast with Mohamed's, another interviewee, thoughts of this phenomenon. When discussing feminism, Mohamed related it to a story about his white friends who felt discriminated when they applied for jobs, due to companies trying to get a diverse workforce:

"[...] Nobody likes change when you are a part of the dominant group. No, maybe it's not that unfair as you would like to put it. It's a change that is perceived as unfavorable for you, but rather, it might just be a rebalancing."

Mohamed illustrates that it can be perceived as negative to men when women are given more power and privileges, but he means that this is a matter of rebalancing an unfair situation. With this example, he describes how men can consider it unfair, but that he believes that men have to take a step back and look at the bigger picture, which is that women have a lower position in

society and therefore need to be empowered in order to achieve gender equality. All this can then be seen as a reaction to a fear of losing one's power.

Another explanation to why men might be resistant toward feminism is mentioned by Karl:

"[...] The ones that I have talked to about those kinds of things are often men that sort of think that, or that don't want to realize that, we live in a patriarchy and instead say that we live in an equal world and that feminists then think we should live in a matriarchy."

This quote by Karl is interesting since it highlights denial of current power structures and norms in society as a potential factor of resistance toward feminism and, once again, that feminists advocate female superiority and a matriarchy. Yet again, the quote illustrates the view of a zero-sum game, where the world has to be either a patriarchy or a matriarchy, and hence having either men or women as winners, instead of both. Karl's expressing that he thinks that other men "don't want to realize that we live in a patriarchy" signals a view of this group of men not wanting to admit to the problems Karl means society is facing. As aligned with Fleming and Sewell's (2002) concept of *švejkism*, these men are satisfying their own self-interests by not seeing societal structures that are benefitting men. With such a point of view, where structural patriarchal issues are denied, there is no longer any reason to change in order to solve these issues. By his description of the men he has talked to, Karl creates indirect resistance by depicting these men as "dumb resisters" (Prasad & Prasad, 2000). In this, Karl sees these men's lack of understanding of the fact that the patriarchy exists as a way to indirectly resist this structural inequality.

The reason why some think we already have achieved gender equality and are unwilling to see structural injustice might be explained through Daniel's comment:

"As I said earlier, that on paper you probably have achieved some stage of gender equality today. You can't hinder a woman from applying for an education or a job, or so. [...] Limitations that earlier maybe were more tangible, that it was maybe not even possible as a woman to apply for an education or getting a job, that those limitations might be more in peoples' heads today, kind of. That you unconsciously limit yourself as a woman [...]"

According to Daniel, the societal issues regarding gender equality are less tangible and visible today. Instead, more limitations might be present in structures, norms and so on. If you only

review current laws and written regulations, you might get an incomplete image of the current situation. Such an argument might explain why some people think feminism is unnecessary and will only result in women getting a better position in society than men.

An example that many of the interviewees used to illustrate the idea of Feminism as a Zero-Sum Game is through quota systems. Hans presented this opinion through the following quote:

“The premise is that if you work, then of course you should be paid the same, no matter who you are. Then, if you have a board and there are eight men, and always have been, it is not right that they will get fired just because they should have a lady there. Then, the fact that it is a lady, if she is better qualified then she should be in. It is kind of, but then the men are not supposed to be fired just because they should have it a little equal. Then they [the women] have to wait until they [the men] retire.”

From this quote, you can read that the interviewee think that one should be hired solely based on your qualifications, which many other interviewees agree upon. However, when it comes to a quota system where the recruiter has decided to hire a woman, many of the interviewees saw it as discriminating against men since they are not competing on the same terms, which they find unfair. An interesting and contradictory view to this, present in this quote, is that regardless if a woman is more qualified or not, she should never be able to get the position that a man currently has. Then she needs to wait until he retires. A woman doing a better job than a man with better qualifications is only approved if she does not perform well at the expense of a man losing privileges. Then the debate does not really seem to be about having the “right” person in the position. Instead, men should continue to dominate, and if there is room for women to enter, and they have great qualifications, they are allowed to enter. Hans expresses that the strive for gender equality has to take its time, it is not something that should be speeded up, for example through an unfair quota system. In this way, he is expressing a temporalized everyday resistance, with the goal of slowing down the process, in the same way as workers resist by lowering their pace of work (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). The part where Hans says that women will “have to wait until they [the men] retire” is also a way to express temporalized everyday resistance and legitimize one’s passivity, by referring to it being an act of inequality to let a woman take over a man’s position without his consent. If all men should retain their privilege until they voluntarily give them up, the process of achieving gender equality will probably be slowed down.

Overall when talking about a quota system, it seems to be the overstepping in control that people are negative toward:

“[...] It is not about this thing if it should be half men half women, I still think that, but you cannot steer in such a way. But probably, it can be so that women do not want to take on, going in boards either, maybe they decline.” (Gunnar)

With this quote, Gunnar says that he has a positive attitude toward the balance with fifty percent women and fifty percent men, but he does not support achieving it through a quota system. An alternative approach is not presented either. Additionally, regarding the reason why boards and workplaces are not balanced, with as many female employees as male, he explains it by making women responsible, meaning that women actively are declining the possibility to have such a board position. No deeper analysis and questioning of current norms and structures, that might be the reason why a non-representative group is dominating in boards and managerial positions, is made. When suggesting that women are underrepresented in boards because they decline, Gunnar’s opinions can be interpreted as an indirect resistance, and more specifically “dumb resistance”. His opinion can be the consequence of being uninformed (Prasad & Prasad, 2000), but he still opposes the strive for a more gender equal world, by giving a simplified analysis of the current situation.

Another common theme discovered in the interviews is the opinions that the type of feminism shown in the commercials is a women’s movement exclusively for women. In this way, the men expressed a feeling of not belonging in the movement.

“According to me, this is more women for women. Like empowerment so to say. And it’s not like let’s work together so that everybody can have the same possibilities or that everybody shall be the same in this. Like in the Nike commercial, it’s women who struggle a lot and reach fantastic prosperity, but face resistance in the society. For me, it’s very much a women’s issue for women, and not like let’s handle this issue together as a society [...] And in the same way in the Dove commercial, they talk about female beauty and not beauty in general. They don’t touch upon male ideas or the unrealistic expectations there are on men, even if they are not about beauty, there are absolutely other expectations that are hard to live up to. In that way, I believe these [the commercials] are more related to feminism according to my definition of what feminism is about.” (Fredrik)

This quote illustrates how Fredrik separates a women's movement from something the whole society aims to reach. He believes that the commercials show this kind of feminism, which is aligned with his own definition of feminism. This kind of female empowerment is, for him, something that benefits solely women. When linking femvertising and feminism to only women, he is dividing men and women into separate groups, where women can become the opponent. This is related to Johansson and Vinthagen's (2016) dimension of everyday resistance called relationship of agents, referring to, for instance, the relationship between the resister and people of power. Johansson and Vinthagen (2016) conclude that the preconception that resistance always comes from an oppressed group is no longer true. On the contrary, the resistance can come from a group, or individual, with structural dominance. By this, it becomes possible for men with power to resist against women with less power. The second part of the quote further highlights how Fredrik sees that there are male issues related to the themes in the commercials, which are not commented or highlighted. He sees that there are problems in the society that men face, but since the commercials exclude these issues they are more feministic. Also, he makes a distinction between women's struggle and a collective, societal struggle. Since the commercials focus on women, he feels that there is no communal aspect of the struggle.

This view of feminism being primarily concerned with women's rights and their potential benefits, and hence not about men's rights, also appeared in the interviews when discussing feminism in general:

"[...] in my world, feminism is that you are concerned about the woman's right. They only focus on that the woman should have it better. That's how I view the feminists. They are not concerned about what's best for men in any way, they only focus on the women. Gender equality is that everybody has the same value and the same rights." (Bengt)

In this description of feminism, the interviewee expresses that he defines feminism as only working for what is best for women. He sees that this is in contrast to men's rights since the feminists are only concerned about women. Also, he contrasts feminism with gender equality by defining gender equality as something everybody benefits from, but feminism only benefitting women and hence a view of it as a zero-sum game. From this view of feminism, it is understandable that men can be afraid of losing their privileges and power, when the feminist movement is seen to only care about women's rights. If one sees this as a potential outcome, it is easy to understand why resistance is regarded as necessary.

The viewpoint that feminism can be something bad, or potentially dangerous for men, was expressed in several ways by the interviewees. In the following quote, a focus group participant describes the definition of feminism:

“[...] it’s intentionally fuzzy so that no one can say that they are not feminists, and then it becomes a bit absurd, right? It’s a so-called persuasion definition. If you have studied philosophy in school, you see that this concept is a spot-on persuasion definition. It’s not a good concept for a man. For a women, it can be a good concept.” (Participant 8)

In this quote, a skepticism toward the concept can be deduced. He explains that the concept is not good for men, which is somewhat aligned with previous statements explaining that feminism is about women’s rights exclusively. This quote also illustrates a sense of superiority, where the participant explains that he is well-informed and educated and therefore knows something the others are not aware of. His knowledge in philosophy helps him see through the concept of feminism and helps him to not get fooled like the others. His conclusion is however obvious; feminism is not a good concept for men. This quote expresses some kind of sovereignty where Participant 8 sees himself outsmarting the ones with power, in this case the feminists. Such an approach is aligned with the concept of švejkism (Fleming & Sewell, 2002).

Despite that a great majority of the interviewees saw Feminism as a Zero-Sum Game that will benefit women at the expense of men, some presented a view where all groups in society would benefit from a gender equal society:

“[...] And what it seems like, I don’t think men have as much to lose, more like the opposite, we have a lot to gain from it. But the traditional male dinosaur has a lot to lose by it, and then it might be difficult to be objective.” (Oskar)

As opposed to some of the previous statements, Oskar means that most men will benefit from a more gender equal society. However, he acknowledges that it might be difficult for the privileged man to put his own personal interests aside in order to benefit the whole society. Bengt presented a similar view:

“What I think has happened the past two generations is that it has become a softer society, we do feel better. If all women would had been leading in the world then we would have had a completely different view of the world.” (Bengt)

Bengt's quote is very interesting since he earlier presented a negative image of feminism, saying that it only is about empowering women at all cost. Overall, everyone agrees upon the goal of having a gender equal society, but are passive or objectors to current paths toward achieving that goal, such as a quota system. Given that, it seems like many men are not really that prone to implement the changes needed to achieve that goal. Here we can see a great gap between theory and practice.

To summarize, the view of Feminism as a Zero-Sum Game is a way for men to express mundane resistance as they show how men do not benefit from feminism. This is illustrated by examples of how feminism can be a way to enhance women's status at the expense of men's. By having a logical explanation to why men should stay out of the feminist movement, they legitimize their skepticism.

5.2 Exclusionary Feminism

Many of the participants agreed upon that feminism is something for women and not for men. There was also a confusion about the term feminism and its relation to being feminine. *"But feminism is too much femininity in my opinion [...] I don't like when men are dressed like women"* (Lars). This person has a hard time separating feminism from femininity, probably because of the similarity between the words. Because of this, he relates feminine behavior to the concept of feminism, and explained in the interview that he would not self-identify as a feminist because of it. This shows how he self-differentiate himself from femininity, and hence feminism, and therefore he will not identify as a feminist. This self-differentiation can be interpreted as a way for him to resist through distance (Collinson, 2000), but can also be the outcome of not knowing the meaning of the word feminism. Related to this, a participant in the focus group related feminism to being a woman:

"If we look at basically almost everything that is considered feminist, it has, in some way, a starting-point from female experiences. And that is something a man per definition cannot have." (Participant 8)

This shows how he believes feminism is something that men cannot be a part of, because of the lack of female experiences. Once again, there is a clear division between men and women, where feminism is related to women and their rights and experiences and men are being excluded. Through this segregation, Participant 8 self-differentiate himself from women and feminists (Collinson, 2000), and describes this as the explanation why he cannot be a feminist.

By claiming that it is impossible for him to be a feminist, Participant 8 express everyday resistance (Scott, 1989) and avoids the pressure of further taking a stance in the debate. Another interpretation might be that this statement is an act of “dumb resistance” (Prasad & Prasad, 2000), where he has misinterpreted the term feminist, and thereby do not understand that he can be one.

Another interviewee had a contrasting opinion of the relationship between feminism and femininity: *“I believe everybody can be feminists, even if you’re not a girl. And there’s a quite big difference for me between being feminine and being a feminist” (Per)*. It can be assumed that this person is aware of some kind of similarity between being feminine and feminist, but he distances himself from that opinion. It seems like the opinion that feminism is only for women is a top-of-mind reaction for him, but that he has reflected upon this and has come to the conclusion that everybody can be feminists, despite gender. In the way he expresses himself, there seems to be a preconception that feminism is related to femininity and women, but he has decided not to fall for this. However, he feels the need to explain that he sees a difference between “being feminine and being a feminist”. This shows a fear of being associated with femininity, something he wishes not to be.

Another opinion that was mentioned repeatedly was that femvertising, in some cases, can be perceived as consciously excluding men as a target group. This was expressed on Flashback when discussing femvertising:

“It’s good when companies show their political standpoint – because then you know which not to buy from. Audi, Gillette, DICE and SAS are typical examples of companies who threw themselves into the field of being a Social Justice Warrior and lost many, many billions in the running. The best thing was when the feminist CEO of DICE (I think it was) talked to the media soon after the storm of critics and said that “okay, but if you don’t like our commercials don’t have to buy from us” – with the consequence that they lost many billion when the sales dropped. If you treat your main customer group as shit it’s not that surprising that they go somewhere else and buy from the competitors instead. Get woke – go broke.” (User 2)

This person is expressing his very negative opinion on femvertising and companies using this kind of advertisement. He feels like men are treated badly when companies use these commercials. As a consumer, supporting their business financially, he wants to be treated with respect. For him, feminist advertisements lead to a boycott of the company. This is a way for

him to punish the company in the only way he as a consumer can. In this way, he can express his power as a consumer. This becomes a way for him to perform owning resistance, as it is a conscious act to stop buying products from this company (Prasad & Prasad, 2000). He further uses the argument of reduced sales as a way to exemplify the negative outcome of these commercials. He calls the companies Social Justice Warriors, which for him is something companies should stay out of. He also expresses that “it’s not surprising” that the male target group wants to boycott the companies when communicating these values. This signals that he takes it for granted that their values are opposition of what is good for men. This can also be the consequence of a perception of feminism that is exclusively for women, and at the same time is bad for men.

As opposed to previous statements about exclusionary feminism, one interviewee felt that the advertisement by Audi was a way to please men.

“They express that this was a commercial for men made by men, where they try to express equality [...] I think that Audi thinks that it’s easier for men to relate to this situation, this daddy’s girl, father daughter relationship or what to say.” (Daniel)

Here, Daniel focuses on the fact that in this commercial, there was a man speaking and delivering the message. It seems like the fact that there is a man in focus makes it easier for men to feel included and seeing themselves as the target group. At the same time, it seems like Daniel thinks that the commercial’s male perspective is a way for the company to prevent losing profits from male customers. Trying to satisfy both women and men by having a “women’s issue” communicated by men, there is a risk that it is not enough for either group or that the message is perceived as insincere. The commercial also points out a situation that many men can relate to, which makes it easier for them to feel included. When the feminism shown is pointing out a situation that men can relate to, it seems like feminism does not feel as excluding as when it is more about women’s issues.

When discussing the Audi commercial, one of the interviewees mentioned that he felt like they try to depict men as the bad people. He said that: *“it feels like they [Audi] blame all men. So that’s very feminist. But Nike is more like, yes we can have children and then come back on the tennis court one more time” (Alexander)*. Here, he describes the feminism in the Audi commercial as blaming men. This can contribute to the viewpoint that feminism is for women exclusively, and hence not for men. It can be understandable that men do not want to identify

as feminists if they feel like feminism is a movement that blames men for everything that is bad in our world. With such a view, the resistance toward feminism can easier be understood. The blaming of men creates two oppositional groups, where men can feel like the oppressed ones. The exclusion, and blaming, of men enhances the sense of belonging in one or the other group, depending on gender. Further, this enhanced the segregation between the resisting men and the oppositional agent, i.e. the feminists (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). On the contrary, the quote also illustrates that the interviewee sees another type of feminism too, a feminism that is more supporting for women without blaming men. That type of feminism is probably easier for men to relate to and encourage, since they do not have to be afraid of being blamed.

Several interviewees mentioned that they could see a type of feminism where men are being blamed. They talked about men in general, as a group, rather than individuals.

“FI [a feminist party in Sweden] were engaged in a few things some years ago where you could think of all men as rapists and that all sexuality between man and woman meant abuse from the man, and so on. That kind of feminism can also exist, which doesn't concern gender equality but rather is a fight between genders.” (Peter)

This quote exemplifies how the interviewee sees that this type of feminism is also a feminism that can co-exist in the society. He sees how feminism sometimes blames men and wants to point them out as violent and dangerous. Further, he separates this type of feminism from gender equality, since this type of feminism is more of a battle. Earlier in the interview, Peter mentioned that he would not identify as a feminist, because he does not like these kind of labels. However, this quote gives another explanation, where a distancing from the term feminist seems to have its roots in preconceptions of a more radical type of feminism that is excluding men. Because of this, he would rather identify as being in favor of gender equality, something he sees as positive for both genders. By this identification, he differentiates himself from feminists (Collinson, 2000) and legitimate why his resistance comes from a good place on well-informed grounds. In his description, he sees men and women as opposing groups with different agendas. When men are feeling blamed in this way, they probably feel excluded from feminism, and pointed out as the perpetrator. Probably, they do not feel like feminism is a movement for them, and rather, that they should try to distance themselves from it in order not to be blamed.

A common opinion expressed in the interviews was that men can never fully understand how it is to be a woman. This can, to a certain degree, explain the feeling of being excluded by the feminist movement. For instance, this was expressed as:

“[...] you have to realize that as a man you have like a limited opinion or right to express your opinion in this matter. It simply isn't about men. And certainly also be humble about the fact that the woman has been oppressed through all times.”
(Daniel)

This is an expression of how men have to take a step back and understand that feminism is more about women. Daniel mentions that men have “a limited opinion” on these issues, which can explain why men feel excluded and that feminism is not for them. This is something that came to another interviewee's mind when being asked if he could relate to the characters in the commercials. He answered that:

“No, I would lie if I say that I can identify or relate to any of them [the characters]. It's like this, it's minus 20 degrees in Antarctica, you can understand that it is minus 20 degrees but can you actually know how it is to be there?” (Mohamed)

This metaphor explains how you can understand something in theory but that it is still not the same as having practical experience of something, further resulting in a sense of exclusion among men. In this case, the interviewee feels that he can understand the problems exemplified in the commercials, but it is still not fair of him to say that he completely understands them. This also illustrates how feminism, and the fight for women's rights, is a bit distanced from a male perspective. From such a point of view, the man is inferior, as they lack female experiences. Seeing from the concepts of power and resistance (Foucault, 1978), women have more power, embedded in their interpretative prerogative. This gives an unbalanced power dynamic between the genders, turning some men into resisters. One can also imagine that some men have heard this argument when discussing feminism with women. It is a way to kill the debate and make it impossible to argue against if a woman says to a man that he can never understand because he is a man. For most men, this is something that will never be changed, and hence the female perspective can never be achieved. To know something in theory, but not in the everyday life, was further expressed by Karl:

“I will never live as a woman in this society, I will never experience how the patriarchy is expressed. It's like, I can understand it in theory, I can work for it not being as it is today, and I try to, I call myself a feminist, I participate in

demonstrations, I am involved in the struggle for a more gender equal Sweden and a more gender equal world. But that doesn't mean that I will understand how it really is to be a woman in Sweden or in the world."

Even though Karl is actively participating in the struggle for women's rights and hence, probably, is well-informed in the matter, he understands that it is impossible for him to actually know how it is to be a woman. However, he has chosen to still be involved in the debate and participate in the feminist movement, hence participating in more open and confrontational forms of resistance (Scott, 1989). Still, he thinks that women have interpretative prerogative in the issue and hence he is taking a more supportive, rather than primary, role.

To sum up, the view of feminism as exclusionary is a way for men to perform mundane resistance as they disassociate themselves from the movement. Some think that feminism is a way to consciously exclude and blame men. Also, feminism is described as closely linked to being feminine and also an impossibility for men, due to the lack of female experiences. By providing these descriptions of what feminism is, the men are mundanely resisting by distancing themselves from being part of the movement.

5.3 Commercialized Feminism

Femvertising, being a product of profit driven companies, naturally led the discussion to the topic of companies' roles in feminism. In the descriptions of the feminism present in femvertising, Fredrik mentioned how feminism is being transformed into a commodity, as in contrast to the original purpose of feminism. This transformation was perceived as negative and potentially harmful:

"If we look at the environmental issues and greenwashing, this is an example of how I perceive that the question isn't as strong when everybody ridicules it. The companies have understood that it's an important issue for people, but normally the companies don't care about it. Of course, there are those who care, but it feels like there's always doubt. You always think 'does the company actually care about this or are they only doing it to make money?' when a company is taking a stance. All this creates a problem for the question itself. Like this, I think the question loses its legitimacy when it's getting commercialized. This was a long description, but I think it can be harmful when you commercialize important questions. [...] It's problematic because the purity in the question disappears. It's all about selling stuff instead of actually making a change." (Fredrik)

In this quote, the interviewee compares femvertising and feminism with greenwashing and the climate crisis. Fredrik identifies a risk with companies engaging in femvertising, since he is afraid that feminism will lose its urgency. His description illustrates how he is not sure whether or not the the feminist engagement comes from a genuine place, or if the company's profit interest is the main driver behind these commercials. He has seen this problem in the issue of the climate crisis, where he believes that companies have recognized a demand that can be satisfied with environmentally friendly communication. Now, the same tactics can be implemented considering feminism, wherefore feminism is at the risk of being diluted. The quote illustrates how Fredrik experiences an inconsistency between commercial interests and societal issues, where the societal issue in general can lose its legitimacy when companies are trying to use it to earn profits. In his opinion, most companies are not engaging in these issues out of altruism. His preconception is that the profit motive always comes first. How companies or other actors benefit from societal movements was illustrated from several interviewees.

“There’s always a risk that something is getting hijacked or taken over by stronger forces. There isn’t a single political movement or societal trend that hasn’t been taken up by commercial forces. But there’s no reason to try to forbid it or change it, it’s just the way it is. Like, the green wave is being hijacked by the business world, the LGBTQ-movement has definitely been hijacked and the gender equality movement will also be hijacked. And overall the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, and most importantly, there’s not so much we can do about it. I’m trying to take a more analytical approach toward this, rather than a judgmental approach.” (Thomas)

Here, the same phenomena is being illustrated but from a more neutral perspective. The interviewee can see benefits with companies taking a stance and engaging in societal issues, and tries to focus on them, since he cannot change the fact that companies will try to benefit from this. He calls these actors “stronger forces”, which signals that there is not much to do about it and therefore, a passive approach is the only option. He seems to believe that the most rational approach is trying to benefit from these actors' involvement and just accept what cannot be changed. By the involvement of companies in these issues, a new agent is added (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). This involvement creates new relationships between the agents, as well as changes the current ones. Depending on your initial position, the companies can become either an opponent or ally. For example, if you are a feminist who support the way companies promote feminism, that becomes an important relationship. When the resisters then have two agents, i.e. the companies and the feminists, the resistance might change. As a resister, one can decide who

to aim your resistance toward, depending on what will have the largest effect. Since many already might be quite skeptical toward large multinational corporations, their exploitation of feminism can easily be used as an argument in the resister's favor.

Fredrik, could see two sides of the story regarding companies' involvement in feminism. Even though he was skeptical toward the authenticity of companies taking a stance, he could still see some benefits:

“It's hard to say, they are raising the question which is good. Sensitive issues should be raised, the more the better. But yet again, there's a risk to ridicule the question. [...] But I also think it's hard to avoid. It's hard to own a question and not let others use it.”

Just like Thomas, the interviewee can see two sides of this matter. The benefit is the exposure effect and the contribution to normalize and challenge current norms. The disadvantage is the risk that the movement itself is losing its importance. In this argumentation by Fredrik, cynicism regarding the ability to prevent the feminist movement from being exploited and diluted by companies is a way to perform resistance (Flemming & Sewell, 2002). There is no given answer on how to overcome this disadvantage, and once again a sense of hopelessness is exposed. Since no alternative path is presented, Fredrik is left with the only option of doing nothing to prevent such an outcome. Once again, a passive approach is shown and a lack of decisiveness, blaming the uncontrollable forces of companies.

Many of the interviewees were critical toward companies delivering feminist messages because of their profit motives and hence absence of authenticity. Even though the interviewees found the commercial's message captivating, the fact that the sender was a company destroyed the message:

I liked it [the Audi commercial]. I liked watching it, but at the same time the other cerebral hemisphere knows that this is just advertisements. It's not made to help people. Sneakers and cars, they're not made to help people. They're made to make money. And they will say anything to make you buy their products. [...] When the Audi appeared, the magic was gone. Well, I liked it [the Audi commercial]. It was capturing all the way. But then they walked toward the car and 'poff', that was it. Imagine if it had been an organization that helps women, or an educational

organization that especially helps uneducated women or someone like that who actually will help the girls.” (Nils)

Here, the interviewee illustrates contradictory feelings toward the commercials. He describes how the message was captivating and that he, in one way, enjoyed them, but later reminded himself that companies are the senders of the messages. He is skeptical toward the authenticity behind the initiatives and compared their business models with NGOs’, where he feels like the latter actually helps women for real. Even though Nils seems to want to be positive toward the commercial, the lack of authenticity makes it impossible. This is aligned with a Flashback comment:

“At the end, it’s all about selling. None of these companies actually cares about these questions, they’re only following trends like everybody else. If we look at 10 years ago, there was something else we were communicating in ads and used as inspiration to sell products. And that’s what these companies want to do, to sell. And people are thinking “I’m buying X because they support”. It’s companies we’re talking about. Not Martin Luther King.” (User 3)

This person sees femvertising as a trend that companies are capitalizing on. He does not seem too surprised of the phenomenon, rather he sees it as something that has always happened and always will happen. In his formulation, it can be interpreted that he has a rather harsh tone toward those who are falling for this trick. He cannot really believe that people think that they are helping someone, when they support companies with feminist advertisements. Since many companies have power, and somewhat are trying to take control over the movement, resistance is a natural consequence, as in line with Foucault’s (1978) argument. When companies are engaging in the feminist debate, the resistance is entering a new space (Johansson & Vinthagen). When he distinguishes companies from Martin Luther King, he is making an obvious contrast between the two different spaces that now are united through commercialized feminism. Such an integration becomes a source of critique, due to the different spaces being perceived as having conflicting agendas.

Some regarded the commercials as political, and hence not in the companies’ area of expertise.

“They [the commercials] were very ideological, mostly directed toward left-wing liberals and feminists. [...] According to me, a company shouldn’t take a stance like this, but should be objective and only focus on their product. But they’re trying to reach a certain target group here and that is the left-wing liberals and the feminists.

[...] I don't believe companies should take on the role of trying to teach people how to behave or which ideologies to believe in." (Mattias)

Mattias regards the commercials as political, and that the companies are trying to convince the audience in supporting a certain ideology. He has identified which ideology he believes the companies and the commercials stands for, and that this is a way to reach this target group. Mattias has a background within politics, which can be a reason why he wants to separate ideologies from the business world. Probably, he believes that politicians and parties are better suitable actors in trying to inform the public in different standpoints. He describes the commercial as something for “left-wing liberals and feminists”, which are ideologies that are in great contrast to his own party. This can be a way for him to distance himself from the message, since he has a strong identity to his party and their ideology. Still, the opinion that companies should not be political was shared by others, non-political people. Once again, spatialization of everyday resistance as a dimension is present (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). Companies acting as politicians with a political standpoint combine two different social spaces, which creates controversy. One potential reason why Mattias is expressing such a strong discontent to this development, might be because there is not a lot, if any, representation of his own political opinions in the commercial sphere.

Another comment from Flashback aligned with the previous argumentation, is the following:

“Companies can do whatever they want, but personally I don't like when they're trying to raise us. Gillette was the worst example I have seen so far and now I never buy something from them or from Procter & Gamble (other than mistakenly) and will not do so until they have publicly apologized. (User 4)

Here, the person is illustrating how he is against companies taking a stance. He is referring to a commercial made by Gillette with the purpose of challenging current male stereotypes and behaviors referred to as toxic masculinity. This commercial has apparently offended him so much that he has decided to boycott not only the brand but also the mother brand. When using the word “raise” he indicates how he feels reduced into a child when companies are communicating such messages, and how he believes that companies are not the right actors to do so. Companies are taking on a parental role of power, where consumers are lower in rank, which creates resistance (Foucault, 1978). The Flashback-user believes that the company should apologize, which implies that he believes that they have done something wrong and that they should feel ashamed and hence apologize for their behavior.

Another interviewee talked about the lack of authenticity in the messages. He could only see that the companies are doing this because they want to look good.

“The problem for me is when I see Nike it’s like ‘but you don’t care. You are only doing this to sell stuff.’ I think it’s so transparent. I’m not against it, good representation is good, because they’re showing how it actually is. But the problem is when there’s no deeper message than ‘we’re good, and you should know it’. [...] Companies’ goal is to make money, otherwise they will go down. They can’t afford that kind of morality, and then it gets transparent.” (Gustav)

Gustav is talking about how he perceives everything to be a surface with no substance behind. He believes the companies want to show off a façade of caring, when they deep down only have profit interests. He says that the companies “can’t afford” to engage in these issues. When he phrases it like that, it seems like he sees profit and morality as two opposites that can never go hand in hand. An opposing view could have been to see that companies can take a genuine stance out of benevolence, but still profit from it. For instance, communicating the importance of gender equality and having a gender equal board, which could be beneficial for the operations of the whole organization. Gustav’s view seems to be something else than that, where he believes that companies never engage fully, but rather takes the easiest approach in order to look good. With this view, engaging in feminism will only be a financial strain, and hence in contrast to making profit. The fact that Gustav still mentions that there are benefits with feminist representation, no matter what forum, gives the quote another dimension. As a politically active feminist, Gustav seem to have companies, and all other actors working for a more gender equal society, as allies. However, the relationship between them, i.e. the politically active feminists and companies, do not seem to be completely free from conflict. On the one hand, he has to stand behind the companies working toward the same goal as himself since it benefits the movement that they in some way both are a part of. On the other hand, the profit motives dilute the perceived authenticity, wherefore the companies also might be seen as opponents, threatening the power of the feminist movement.

Some of the respondents described how they think that the companies are taking advantage of the societal movement. This was, for instance, described as “*parasitizing*” (Participant 8) and hence perceived as negative.

“This [femvertising] is like a trailer on the societal development. Free-riding on a trend that someone else is driving. I don’t consider them [the companies] as drivers of the trend. They are just free-riding on the trend that someone else is running. That makes me think it’s negative.” (Participant 8)

This focus group participant believes that the companies are using the fact that feminism is perceived as trendy. He has a negative attitude toward the fact that the companies are not the ones who run the trend, which signals a lack of authenticity. Also, he thinks the companies are “free-riding”, which can be interpreted like he does not think they have done anything to earn the credit they receive. The companies do not need to do any of the hard work but they can still profit from the trend. Further, when he illustrates this as a “trailer”, he means that the trend comes first and then, maybe after a while, the companies realize that they can make use of this trend, which also signals the lack of a genuine interest in the issue. Participant 8 was never very positive toward feminism and claimed that it was not a good term for men, as mentioned in the first section of the analysis. Therefore, the criticism toward the company's exploitation of feminism seems to be only one aspect out of many that he does not agree with, when it comes to feminism. When companies are becoming an agent (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016), this agent can be perceived as easier to fight, compared to the feminists. Therefore, resistance toward companies engaging in feminism becomes an efficient approach as it is easier to legitimize. Thereby, the resister is more protected from criticism from others. As aligned with the concept of owning resistance (Prasad & Prasad, 2000), Participant 8 disguises his resistance toward feminism with criticism toward companies. By this, he can trick his opponent into not seeing him as a resister.

Just as people have been shown to be critical toward companies taking a stance, several of the study participants expressed skepticism toward consumers being able to buy ideological standpoints:

“They are trying to build a brand that says that if you wear Nike you care about these questions. And at the same time, whichever company can have the same branding. It’s not unique for Nike that women perform well and it’s not something you get from wearing Nike products.” (Fredrik)

The commercialization of feminism enables identities to be bought. Fredrik describes how he thinks that Nike wants the consumer to connect feminism with their products, which he thinks is untrue. He sees how they are trying to package an ideological identity, that is not unique for

their company, and sell it as a product. This identity can then be expressed through wearing the products. By this, the companies are simplifying what feminism is about and thereby disregard the real issues. As explained in the previous quote, also this becomes a way to change the focus away for feminism, and instead criticizing the company.

Skepticism was expressed by several interviewees, but there was less of it when a connection between the company's products and the message was seen:

"I think it's about, at least for Audi and Dove it's about enhancing the company's image, to show that 'we stand for the new, the good' no matter what it is about. And right now, it happens to be good for them to identify with strong women, and that's why they do it. I don't think it comes from, what shall I say, a kindhearted place. They are doing it because it happens to be profitable right now. Nike, I haven't decided on that one yet. I think Nike have been involved in various very immoral things such as child labor, slave labor and such. I'm not completely sure of it, but if that's right they're just as bad as everyone else. But if they haven't, I believe their commercial was slightly more genuine because they highlighted so many different people and different sports and they have actually been there and developed the equipment." (Oskar)

In the beginning, Oskar shares a similar viewpoint as the previous interviewees, where he sees that feminism is something that happens to be trendy at the time, and hence something the companies can profit from. In the second half of the quote, he reflects upon how he feels slightly different about Nike. Even though he first mentions how he thinks they have acted very immorally, he can still see that there was a connection between the commercial and the products they are selling. Despite him mentioning that he is not sure whether or not the rumors about Nike are true, he still chooses to mention how this product-commercial connection comes to his mind. It seems like this is of such importance to him that he mentions it, even though he is not sure whether or not Nike is "just as bad" or not. This illustrates how the commercial can be perceived as more authentic when the message is connected to their business operations. This connection between the product and the commercial seems to be an important factor in reducing the resistance toward companies using femvertising.

Furthermore, some interviewees were skeptical toward what the companies communicate in comparison to what they actually do:

“It was something that they [Audi] were in favor of equal pay. And I’m sure they are and I’m sure they have written documents that prove it, but if we look at their whole supply chain and look at how an Audi car is produced and how women’s equal pay is handled in the whole production chain, then I’m not so sure anymore.”
(Thomas)

In this quote, Thomas shows skepticism toward what is happening behind the scenes. This is an example of how the perceived lack of authenticity can take place on different layers. Here, the interviewee is certain that the company has proof of being committed to equal pay, but he questions the relevance of the proof. This skepticism is regarding what, in many cases, cannot be seen, and hence are often easier to hide. Another interviewee questioned the overall authenticity in using advertisements as a means to reach gender equality.

“If Nike for real wanted to be feminists, they would have sponsored trade unions in female-intensive industries in Bangladesh or something. That would have been more feminist of Nike than to do a freaking ad [...] If large corporations for real would have wanted to, they would have boosted trade unions with a majority of women, they would have boosted women’s aid organizations in these areas. There are a lot of things that I believe would make a greater change than their commercials.”
(Gustav)

Here, the interviewee expresses his criticism toward the overall use of commercials with the purpose of helping someone. When using the term “for real”, he indicates that just doing commercials is not enough in order to be feminist. He exemplifies measures he believes would contribute more than the commercials. In terms of the relationship between the two agents companies and consumers, there is a risk that it is harmed when the companies do not act in accordance with their promises (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). When those inconsistencies are being discovered by the consumers, the trust risks being lost and the resistance enhanced. This can explain how both Thomas and Gustav are feeling skeptical toward what the companies are actually doing.

Another opinion of the skepticism and lack of authenticity when companies are mediating these kinds of messages was stated by Karl:

“The commercial alone, I would say is feminist. But the people that have made the commercial and the reason why the commercial is made and all these underlying interests conspire with the gender-power order and therefore the commercial is,

even if it is feminist in its message and its attitude it still becomes anti-feminist and also patriarchal. So there really is two sides of it.”

This quote illustrates an opinion that a company can never be a true feminist because of its profit motive. There is a connection made between a company which is a part of the capitalistic system and the enforcement of the gender-power order, where the conclusion is that a company cannot mediate a feministic message. Even when they try to, and the message at first glance is perceived as feminist, the underlying reasons behind the commercial make it anti-feminist. This illustrates why there can be a perceived lack of authenticity and what lies behind this perception. In this quote, the interviewee expresses how he sees the commercials as feminist when disregarding all surrounding circumstances, but when these are taken into consideration the feminist message is lost. This quote by Karl once again illustrates how companies might act both in the role as oppressors and saviors, since they both are trying to fight the patriarchal structures at the same time as they are profiting from their existence.

A contrasting view to this negative attitude toward companies using feminism in their advertisements, was expressed by Oskar who meant that companies are a part of societal change:

“If there’s going to be a change in society, no matter what the change is about, the companies must join and agree upon it. If there are large companies that are actively working against something, it will not help. [...] So you need to have the companies on board. But the initiatives shouldn’t only come from the companies.”

Here, the interviewee means that despite him seeing other actors than companies as more suitable as drivers for change, he still acknowledges the importance of convincing companies to agree. He can see how the companies have great power in our society today and if they are working against the change, it will be very hard for the society to actually change. From Oskar’s quote, it seems like he has a different view on companies and their power. He believes the companies have always had power, but that now they have the possibility to use it in order to achieve societal change.

When femvertising is used as the area of exposure between men and feminism, the men’s mundane resistance is directed toward the companies. Their profit motives, their lack of authenticity and the fact that they are selling ideological identities are highlighted as negative aspects of this phenomenon. The men perform mundane resistance to feminism by directing

criticism toward the commercial agenda behind femvertising and companies instead commenting on the messages presented in the commercials.

5.4. Normalized Feminism

The messages, mediated through the femvertising commercials, were discussed by many of the interviewees. Some thought the opinions and statements were common sense and some thought they were more radical. Further on, during the focus group, Participant 1 discussed the effects of normalization on a company level:

“It [other companies working with social sustainability] stresses other companies to work for similar things, as mentioned. And in that way it [femvertising commercials] can actually make a difference in the fight. But in the fight for what I think about gender equality and what the average person thinks about gender equality, maybe not. [...]”

Here, Participant 1 makes a distinction between the effect on companies and the effect on people in general. Participant 1 self-differentiates himself from the group that will be influenced by such commercials, which is a way to resist through distancing (Collinson, 2000). Somewhat it seems like it might be a sign of weakness to admit being influenced by a company. As mentioned in the previous chapter about feminism as a commodity, people tend to be negative and quite suspicious toward companies taking a stance, due to their financial motives. However, if no one would be affected by the message in the commercials then there would probably be no reason for companies to keep creating such videos.

Some of the interviewees seem to think that we already have come a long way in the normalization process, and have achieved a high degree of gender equality, wherefore femvertising more or less is unnecessary:

“I think that the greater majority share these opinions [from the commercials], I do think so. I think it is a very little group that does not share these [values]. But, there are probably perceptions in society that this group is bigger than it actually is. [...] I do not think that there are that many Swedish citizens that think women should have less rights, I have a hard time seeing that. Because we have come so far in society.” (Johan)

According to Johan, the messages in the commercials are more or less common sense, i.e. a view that most people share today in Sweden. From this quote, it does not seem like Johan

thinks that the commercials state something radical in any way. The type of feminism in the commercials is therefore seen as quite mainstream and conventional. Bengt agrees upon this view and thinks that the commercials will not have a great effect: “[...] *They are quite mild [...] no one will get pissed by it and in today’s news feed, I think it just passes by without you thinking much about it*” (Bengt). With this quote, Bengt highlights a potential risk with presenting a relatively vague and mainstream type of feminism, which is that it will have a little or no impact on those receiving the message. A more controversial depiction would maybe result in people being “pissed by it”, which companies are avoiding by these mild commercials. When describing feminism as normalized, this legitimizes why there is no need to get involved in the debate. By stating that we have already reached a certain level of gender equality, which turns these messages into common sense, the motive for being engaged in the issue is being reduced. These statements become a way for the men to perform švejkism, as they easily can get by doing just as much as needed (Fleming & Sewell, 2002).

Why the messages in these commercials are perceived as mainstream by some might partly be explained by the perception of feminism being trendy. An example of this was presented by Karl:

“[...] I think, just the fact that this type of commercial is made is a positive thing, but that it also is about that it is trendy to be a feminist right now, and that’s why it [the commercial] is made.”

Karl shared his view on why these types of commercials are made, i.e. that it is trendy right now. Something being trendy often means that you are exposed to it to a great extent, eventually turning it into something normalized. In the case of femvertising, it seems like it is not something that people are shocked by or in opposition of. The risk associated with people agreeing is something that Thomas see with this type of mainstream and trendy feminism:

“[...] Everyone wanted to get on that train and it got widely accepted [the #MeToo movement]. But since there were no dividing lines, since there was not any one that stood against that wave back then, there was no concrete result from it. There were no new political suggestions, there were no changes in our society, it was just ‘yes this is wrong’. And then a few years later society goes back to normal [...]. I think that the fact that this late modern feminism becomes too fuzzy or diluted is a symptom of when something becomes like this: ‘yes we all are supporting this, this we should not make politics out of’, then it gets diluted.” (Thomas)

To just illuminate issues, like the wage gap and disoriented beauty standards, without taking action and implement measures to fight them, might result in what Thomas mentions in the quote above, namely that the whole movement gets diluted. It does not require much effort to just agree with a problem and be against something in theory. The quote highlights the problems associated with just focusing on attitudes and not actions, which Mikael further develops:

“[...] I would say that all parties that are in the Swedish parliament are at least pro gender equality, then they have different views on how it, well the course of action to take in order to reach an equal society. And in none of those commercials did they touch upon what approach to take to reach an equal society. Instead, as I interpret it, the message is just that it is not like that at the moment. And I guess I can, yeah, agree on that to a great extent.”

From Mikael’s quote, one can tell that he sees the feminist debate as polarized, when talking about the course of actions and not when discussing goal of equality. Therefore, saying that you are pro gender equality, is not a statement at all, since it is already a mainstream opinion. If the commercials are increasing the feeling of feminism as mainstream, there is a risk that men can perform švejkism, and thereby get by with only stating to agree without doing anything more (Fleming & Sewell, 2002). If the amount of people supporting gender equality is used as a way to measure the success of the whole movement, there might be a risk that the development stagnates. However, from the interviews, it seemed like most men were negative toward most courses of action to reach gender equality, and also unable to give a better idea on how to reach the goal. It seems like this vision of gender equality is easy to agree upon, but hard to make personal sacrifices for.

Another interesting thing mentioned by a few of the interviewees was that the feminist movement focuses on small and quite insignificant issues instead of the larger ones. Johan gave an example of this opinion:

“Today I interpret feminism more like they are focusing on a lot of questions that circle around the real problems we see in society. I don’t think feminism today is taking vigorous effort against the issues that are threatening gender equality today. Today, they are focusing on being seen with symbolic questions, such as gender neutral bathrooms.”

Johan is showing a negative view on the feminism present in our society today. He means that feminism ignores the “real problems”, which can be interpreted as a sign of passive aggression

(Prasad & Prasad, 2000). It feels like Johan is frustrated about the fact that he sees large threats to gender equality, which feminism ignores and instead focuses on “symbolic questions”. The distinction between real problems and symbolic questions is a way for Johan to show mundane resistance against feminism, by exemplifying how unnecessary its work is. Johan previously claimed that the femvertising commercial that he saw, only showed opinions that everyone in Sweden can agree upon instead of more radical values. Therefore, he does not categorize them as feminist:

“I actually think these commercials are very good and I think, personally, I relate them more to gender equality than feminism actually because I don’t think they communicate that women should have more benefits or obligations. [...] They [the commercials] have a female perspective, but as mentioned earlier, I think none of the commercials show anything radical, it is only to show that women should have the same possibilities to succeed.”

Johan would not say that the commercials are related to feminism since they do not express radical ideas or that women should have more benefits than men. Such a view can be understood better with Foucault’s (1978) description of the relation between power and resistance. When exposed to already normalized issues, such as the ones expressed in the femvertising commercials, Johan sees no threat to his position in society, and therefore feels no need to resist. Instead, when discussing radical types of feminism, that he perceives promotes a zero-sum game with women having more privileges than men, he resists as his power is threatened. He associates feminism only to the radical branch within feminism, which he has negative associations to. He thereby applies resistance through distance (Collinson, 2000), by self-differentiating from feminists that are explained to focus on insignificant issues. When only associating feminism with actions that he sees as radical and unnecessary, he explains how his standpoint, with a moderate degree of gender equality, is the majority’s opinion.

Mattias also agrees upon the fact that there are different types of feminism where one is better than the other:

“Real feminism is that kind of feminism that tackles current societal issues regarding gender equality where you don’t try to mix in extreme, left-wing liberal ideas. For example, what we could see during feminism’s first and second wave, where you fought for women’s rights to vote and stuff like that. [...] But as you can see today, you try to get more financial contributions for menstrual art at

Stockholm's subway or gender studies and stuff like that. [...] That is not real feminism in my opinion, instead that is a type of feminism that has been hijacked by Left-Wing Liberals and Cultural Marxists."

Mattias brings an interesting dimension to the discussion of normalization. He is against radical feminism since he thinks it focuses on small and insignificant problems in society and that larger, and more structural, issues should be in focus. However, most interviewees agree upon the perception of Sweden being a developed country in terms of gender equality, wherefore women are no longer fighting for things such as the right to vote. Feminism has changed due to women's improved position in society and therefore, some interviewees, like Mattias, do not see this as real feminism anymore. The early adopters, i.e. the first ones raising an issue or questioning current norms, are often seen as radical. However, after it is normalized in society, it becomes something we all take for granted, such as women having the right to vote in Sweden. Even though that is not radical anymore, it probably was back in the beginning of the 1900s. By comparing contemporary issues with outdated ones the argumentation tends to become quite incomplete. With such a comparison, he ignores how the discourse in society has changed. To say that you support something today, that was radical 100 years ago, does not give a good indication of your values today, since you do not know how you would have responded 100 years ago. Mattias means that the fight for women's suffrage is "real feminism", which becomes a bit misleading since the temporal dimension is not taken into consideration (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016). Mattias neglects the fact that this fight, back in the 1900s, was, by many, seen as something progressive and radical. He describes how he does not support the exaggerated feminism he sees in society today, which can be compared with how he probably would not have supported women's right to vote, if he lived during this time period. By focusing more on an outdated period in history, instead of relevant issues today, Mattias avoids confronting modern struggles. His argument is based on an issue that was relevant in a different time and space (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016), why the comparison becomes irrelevant.

Mohamed gave a completely different point of view on the topic of what issues are relevant, and thought that even though an issue might be small, it can even be of greater importance than the larger ones:

"They [the commercials] highlight these very small things that every time goes unnoticed by oneself. It is like saying this: 'I am not a racist' but you say, well, small racist jokes all the time. But that is exactly what is racist about it. How often does

someone do something extremely racist? [...] Because it is not often that people do these large things. [...] Like groping for example, or saying something straightforward. And that is wrong. But, these small subtle things that we constantly are doing over the day, are showing systematic actions.”

From Mohamed’s quote, you can tell that he thinks that the small comments all together constitute the larger structures in society. Then of course it can be seen as nothing when you make a “small” sexist comment or joke but it is contributing to an unequal society. For other interviewees, when they discuss how contemporary feminism is focusing on the wrong thing, they mean unimportant things with low impact. As a contrast, Mohamed means that there is too much of a focus on larger, tangible actions instead of small, subtle things that occur more frequently, and therefore are more important.

From this subchapter, mundane resistance to feminism is expressed by the opinion that feminism is normalized and mainstream. This description of feminism legitimizes passivity, by claiming that there are not any problems in society left to be solved. The femvertising commercials was seen to mediate a view of feminism as mainstream opinions, and can therefore lead to these viewpoints.

5.5 Exaggerated Feminism

Some interviewees perceived the commercials as radical, which is in great contrast to the other widely shared opinion among the rest of the interviewees saying that the messages in the commercials is common sense and a conventional opinion. Alexander and Mattias thought that the commercials focus on the wrong things and claimed that the content of the commercials is radical: *“I think it [the commercial] has a negative impact, because it shows none of the important points. They are just filled with propaganda”* (Alexander). Mattias gives a similar view: *“I think it was quite radical rhetoric used in all of them. It becomes more or less a propaganda movie for left-wing liberal ideas and feminist ideology”*. The usage of the term “propaganda” indicates that both Mattias and Alexander see the commercials as a way to convince and force an opinion upon the viewers, which often is seen as something negative. By labeling the commercials as propaganda, they give a reason for not supporting them, without having to further explain why. Hereby, they are resisting through distancing by self-differentiating from feminist who promote propaganda (Collinson, 2000). It seems like if you relate the commercials to feminism, and you see feminism as something radical, it will affect how you see and perceive the message in the commercials. That the negative perception of

feminism is transmitted to the perception of the commercials, even though they might not mediate a very radical message. Like some kind of defense mechanism preventing people from fully taking in the message in an objective way. As explained by Scott (1989), there is a risk with the everyday resistance that it can transform into more visible and direct form of resistance, due to the normalization process of such resistance. These interviewees who expressed a perception of femvertising commercials as extreme and radical might be a result of the mundane resistance developing into more direct forms.

Another negative opinion of the commercials mentioned by some of the interviewees is that the commercials mediate an image of reality that is not completely true. Mattias discussed an exaggerated image of feminism:

“They [the people behind the Audi commercial] are indicating that there’s someone who argues that this daughter’s grandpa is worth more than her grandma. Which I don’t think is the case. Even though the commercial is from the USA, I don’t think that’s the case there either, that a larger amount of people would argue that one gender is worth more than the other and are saying that one is worth more and the other less.”

Here, Mattias argues that the image that the commercial mediates of the current state in society for women is exaggerated and wrong. He has a hard time believing that someone would actually say these things, and he distances himself from it. He has understood the commercial as they are talking about human value, rather than opportunities and structures, which makes it hard for him to believe. This exemplifies how Fleming and Sewell’s (2002) concept of švejkism can be expressed. Mattias diminishes the issues, and thereby also the reason to act. By this, he gets along by not reacting at all. Also, Oskar mentioned that he believes that the Audi commercial is exaggerated:

“It feels like they are trying to give us the image that to succeed as a girl is an extreme underdog movement. And I’m not sure that’s the case anymore, at least not here in Sweden. I have to say that I’ve been very protected, I haven’t seen that much discrimination, especially since I’m a white guy in Sweden, what can I do? And, as far as I can see, my wife is working in a female-intensive occupation, it’s hard to see, to get personal input in the matter. But I wonder if it really is that extreme, that women have to fight and bite with their teeth in order to progress in their careers nowadays, I don’t think so. I get the feeling that they’re trying to beautify, to make a Hollywood-picture of this that doesn’t necessarily have to be true.”

In this statement, Oskar explains that he has a hard time believing this image, since he has not seen it himself. He is aware that he is privileged, and hence protected from discrimination, but he still thinks the message is exaggerated in order to sell. This illustrates how the lack of experience can make it hard to understand the situation. If he has not seen it with his own eyes, he cannot really believe it is true. The quote illustrates an ambiguity, where he at one hand thinks the message is exaggerated because of his lack of personal experience, but at the other hand he reflects upon his lack of experience and therefore is unsure. Also, he does not see a solution of how he can be more enlightened and says “I’m a white guy in Sweden, what can I do?”. This illustrates that he sees that he is from the most privileged group with highest status in society, something that, in many cases, shield him from discrimination. He also describes how women around him also are shielded and that he therefore lacks personal experiences from them too. An explanation why these messages are exaggerated was made by Erik:

“I believe that when you broadcast these kinds of advertisements on the American or European market, you are trying to convince the people that there’s a problem that you are making bigger than it actually is [...] Some of the narratives in the commercials, for instance women’s wages, is something that modern feminists have magnified. It’s a question you often mention when discussing modern gender equality politics [...] When I look at feminism today, I especially see left-wing radicals who almost try to create problems in the society for very small groups, where there maybe doesn’t even exist a problem. I think about people who believe they have a third gender or people who want separate locker rooms for transgender people and so on. In my world, that’s a non-existing problem because they’re such a small group of people who are affected by these questions. It feels like feminism has gone from being something noble that all sane-minded people agree with, to being a left-wing radical movement that tries to create problems instead of having problems.”

Erik thinks that this commercial is an example of how modern feminists operate today. He sees it as a way to convince people that there are problems in society that actually are not real problems. Erik presents his opinion that these issues or problems present within small minority groups, are both made up and irrelevant to handle, since they do not affect the greater part of the population. With his quote, Erik reduces the relevance of these issues and therefore also goes by without doing anything at all, as aligned with švejkism (Fleming & Sewell, 2002). He does not mention why these companies would want to convince someone of problems that do not exist, which makes it a bit hard to fully follow his argumentation. He compares this kind of

modern feminism with previous types of feminism, which he considered was something everybody could go along with. He also mentions that nowadays feminism is left-wing radical, which is the opposite of the ideology his party identifies with. This is probably a way for him to self-differentiate, and thereby distance himself from feminism (Collinson, 2000). To call feminists left-wing radicals is probably meant to be something of an insult to them, since it for him is far from what he would like to identify with. Further, he contrasts being “sane-minded” with being a “left-wing radical”, something that signals that a left-wing radical is not really sane. He seems to believe that the radicals have turned feminism into an unnecessary movement that tries to create problems instead of solving the problems that actually exist.

In line with the previous arguments that an exaggeratedly negative image of women’s position in society was communicated through the commercials, one interviewee took this a step further.

“Nike doesn’t picture women as a victim in society, but Audi does. [...] I almost think they oppress women. It’s like, it’s something in it that says that women are worse than men, even if they want to be better. In a way, it’s killing dreams because it’s saying all the time that this won’t work out because you’re a woman.”
(Alexander)

The focus in this statement is on how the commercial is negative for women. Alexander states that Audi almost oppresses women by the message in their commercial, which signals that they are picturing women in a way that is not true. This is in line with previous statements about femvertising mediating a false reality image. He has a focus on the woman in his argument, where he almost thinks that Audi puts the blame on women, rather than on men or the system. In this way, Alexander changes the roles by claiming that it is the companies that are the oppressors, instead of men. By such a point of view, with changed relationships between agents (Johansson & Vinthagen, 2016), men are no longer the ones that should be blamed for the inequalities. Focusing on negative aspects of feminism through shedding a light on issues in society seems to be seen as something bad.

To summarize, some participants viewed the femvertising commercials as a way to mediate an exaggerated form of feminism. By highlighting this kind of feminism, the participants perform mundane resistance by explaining why feminism should not be desired. When describing how feminism creates problems, rather than solve them, the participants are resisting what they see that feminism tries to obtain.

6. Concluding discussion

In the final chapter of this thesis, we will summarize our findings and contributions. Also, we will discuss the topic of femvertising in a broader perspective and give recommendations for future research.

6.1 Conclusion

In this study, we have identified that men express mundane resistance through five separate views of feminism, present in femvertising. These views, we have decided to call: *Feminism as a Zero-Sum Game*, *Exclusionary Feminism*, *Commercialized Feminism*, *Normalized Feminism* and *Exaggerated Feminism*. The individuals often held multiple views simultaneously, which sometimes were contradicting.

First, the view of Feminism as a Zero-Sum Game was identified, meaning that feminism was perceived to empower women at the expense of men. Mundane resistance was used to legitimize their passivity, by the explanation that they, as men, would lose their privileges if feminism would proceed. In that way, feminist measures were not seen to promote gender equality and therefore, their mundane resistance was justified. Instead, they wanted measures where both men and women were promoted at the same time and in the same way, since that was perceived as a proof of gender equality.

Second, Exclusionary Feminism was another view of feminism that the men had, referring to the view that feminism is a movement for and by women. The feeling of, or choice to believe that, men are being excluded by feminism was also a way to express mundane resistance, and thereby legitimize passivity.

Third, we found men to perceive femvertising as promoting Commercialized Feminism. This means that feminism is transformed from an ideological movement into a commodity that can be sold and bought. Since most people are negative toward the eternal exposure of advertisements in general, it seems to be accepted to be in opposition to commercials where companies only are trying to trick you into buying their products. The mundane resistance was expressed by directing the focus on companies' financial interest and lack of authenticity, and that they are not suitable actors to be engaged in feminism. By criticizing the actors' lack of authenticity, and thereby shifting the focus from the issue to the actor, resistance toward the

modern feminist movement could be disguised. They resisted without advocating any alternatives, wherefore we saw this as an act of mundane resistance.

Fourth, many men shared the view of femvertising showing an already normalized feminism. Through that, the importance of the feminist movement, and its progress, was diminished. The men expressed mundane resistance by reducing the problems, and thereby justifying why no actions need to be taken.

Fifth, a contrasting view to Normalized Feminism is that some men found the feminism shown in the commercials to be exaggerated. When the messages were perceived as political, the focus was shifted to criticizing the political ideology behind it, rather than the message itself. This was another way to disguise their mundane resistance, where the men avoided to take a stance in the actual issue. Instead, they could direct their focus, and anger, toward the radical extreme, and ignore everything else that they might agree upon. By this focus, their preconceptions of feminism could always be confirmed.

6.2 Theoretical contribution

In this study, we have shown how mundane resistance is present in men's descriptions of feminism. We have identified five views of feminism, mediated by femvertising, that men hold; Feminism as a Zero-Sum Game, Exclusionary Feminism, Commercialized Feminism, Normalized Feminism and Exaggerated Feminism. These views of feminism can be held simultaneously, as well as separately, and can all be interpreted as expressions of mundane resistance. Further, it seems like the mundane resistance can be the result of conscious opinions and disguised ones, but can also be entirely unconscious.

6.3 Practical implications

As this study has a societal, rather than managerial, perspective, our contributions are mainly theoretical. However, some practical notions can still be highlighted. Our findings of femvertising contributing to the expressed mundane resistance, is an insight relevant also for companies. If men express resistance, it does not seem to be a beneficial strategy, at least not in this customer group. Also, it is important for companies, using femvertising, to understand their responsibility, as they influence the view people have on the feminist movement. This

ethical aspect is therefore important for companies to take into consideration, before creating femvertising commercials.

6.4 Discussion

All five views of feminism have one common denominator, namely mundane resistance. Further, when taking a closer look, they seem to be united also by distancing. By seeing feminism as exclusionary, commoditized, normalized, exaggerated or a threat to male privileges, different ways to legitimize distancing can be achieved. With such a perspective, a passive approach can be excused. The fact that the same message in the femvertising commercials were perceived as both radical and normalized, depending on the interviewee, is interesting in itself. This result indicates that there is more to the topic than what meets the eye, meaning that when discussing the commercials, several elements are influencing the opinions.

As mentioned in the introduction, Sweden is a country that has come a long way when it comes to structural and concrete measures of gender equality. Laws, regulations and other tangible aspects of feminism have already been achieved. We are even the first country to have a feminist government. Since we constantly are being exposed to these values, saying that men and women are equals, the values are being instilled into the population. However, if one is not willing to change and adapt in order to achieve this goal, it can be questioned if gender equality actually is instilled in society, and something everyone genuinely desires to achieve. To be against gender equality is a radical and norm-breaking statement, risking oneself to be associated with anti-feminists. The opposite, to be in favor, does not seem to mean that much practically, but is rather a theoretical vision. The presented measures to reach gender equality were criticized by most study participants, without promoting alternative actions, wherefore one can wonder whether or not these people really want to achieve gender equality in practice. In our society today, the strive for gender equality is normalized and seen as a certainty in the discourse. To talk and think positively about gender equality is a part of the Swedish public narrative, which is mediated by politicians and the media. This official self-image of Sweden shapes the discourse, where gender equality is explained to be an important value. The indirect pressure from society, rooted in the public narrative, to act and think in a specific way might be why many men feel a need to disguise their opposition. Therefore, this might be a factor influencing men to perform mundane resistance, as a way to avoid confrontation regarding these norm-breaking opinions, and thereby decrease the risk of becoming an outcast. Also, many might never reflect upon whether or not they are in favor, since it is an opinion that is

expected to be held. But, when being against all measures to reach gender equality, it is difficult to understand why the person still claims to be in favor of that ultimate goal. Are they really in favor of gender equality, or are they just thinking that they are? Are they unconsciously resisting, or are they consciously disguising their resistance?

Even though Sweden can be seen as a pioneer within gender equality, a form of distancing from feminism is happening in the political sphere. Sverigedemokraterna, the Swedish nationalist and conservative party that distance themselves from feminism the most, might play some kind of role in development of men's mundane resistance. Having a party in the Swedish parliament claiming to be in favor of gender equality, but not being feminists, might be a way to normalize and legitimize mundane resistance. With growing support from Swedish male electors, Sverigedemokraterna's passive and distanced approach to feminism is being spread. When Sverigedemokraterna associate feminism with radical left-wing values, the party might contribute to a polarized feminism. They are contrasting radical feminism with the gender equality their party is promoting, and by that, they normalize a passive approach. Feminism becoming intertwined with Swedish political parties risks forcing people to be either for or against, depending on which party you vote for. Another aspect of the political development can be found in current statistics. Sverigedemokraterna has about twice as many male voters as female and at the same time, a decreasing amount of men identify as feminists today. This development raises thoughts concerning if there might be a correlation between the right-wing's development and the decreasing number of male feminists. Also, it seems like the usage of the term feminist reveals your political belonging, rather than indicates your worldview and values.

As mentioned above, political parties are being associated with feminism. Also, politics is being mixed with marketing through the growing trend of brand activism. Through this combination, two conflicting logics are being mixed. Politics is about changing norms and convincing voters that one's party promotes the most efficient lines of actions in order to reach a better society. Also, it is about power, where the right arguments can be a way to gain political power. Marketing, on the other hand, is about selling products and convincing consumers that they have an unfulfilled need. Companies, that produce femvertising commercials, use the same arguments as feminist politicians, but with a different purpose. When politics and marketing are being combined through brand activism, the logics behind these two worlds meet, something that can create friction. The human mind often wants to sort different impressions into categories, in order to better understand and grasp them. In the case of femvertising, this

might be a difficult and frustrating task, due to the merge of the two logics. Which will be the dominating logic? Many people have a negative, and skeptical, fundamental attitude toward advertisements. There can be an inherent notion that the sender wants to trick the consumer into buying their products. This feeling of suspiciousness might then be transferred to the message promoted by the commercial, which in the case of femvertising is about politics and feminism. Therefore, in the case of femvertising commercials, a possible scenario is that the consumer transfers the feeling of suspicion into feminism, and hence believes that feminism, in some way, wants to trick you. Also, if the commercials' messages are seen to be political, and thereby include the element of power, resistance might be the outcome. If a commercial only is promoting a product, without relating it to politics, the consumer can get a negative attitude, but will probably not resist. On the contrary, when there is an association with politics and power, all of a sudden, there is something inherent in the message that can be a subject to resistance. However, there are also consumers who have positive attitudes toward the ideology promoted in the femvertising commercials, wherefore there is a chance that this positive attitude will rub off on the brand.

Another effect of the combination of politics and marketing is the commodification of social movements or ideologies, which comes with the risk of dilution. Therefore, when discussing femvertising, it is important to highlight the risks associated with the commodification of feminism. When feminism becomes mainstream and accessible to everyone, the movement tends to lose its dynamic forces of polarization. When there are extreme opinions, in both ends of the spectrum, a debate is the natural outcome. With a debate, there is probably a greater chance that changes will be implemented, compared to if everyone just agrees. With such a view, the commodification of feminism comes with the risk of the movement losing its political force, and hence progression. The commercialization is making feminism more accessible, since you can just buy a product and thereby show your feminist identity. With the increased accessibility, a feminist engagement requires less effort, wherefore the respect for the movement is decreased. Since many people easily can become feminists, by simply purchasing a girl power T-shirt, the substance behind the feminist identity is reduced. By giving the same label also to the ones with a higher level of engagement, such as feminist demonstrators, the level of engagement will no longer differentiate you from the rest. Also, the financial element of companies' profit motives risk diluting the movement and making people lose respect for it. The driving factors being money, instead of frustration and the fight for equal rights, affects the purity of feminism. By focusing on postfeminist discourses, such as girl power, the structural

inequalities risk being forgotten, and hence perceived as exaggerated when being mentioned. The postfeminist messages, that take up a lot of media space, occasionally diminishes other issues, wherefore feminism can be seen as unnecessary. The feeling of feminism as unimportant, and that gender equality already has been achieved, can result in mundane resistance against its urgency.

At a first glance, the mundane resistance against feminism can be perceived as a relatively small problem, compared to more radical opinions present in society. However, it is important to acknowledge how this form of quiet resistance can be transformed into more radical forms of resistance. The danger with mundane resistance is that it is at the risk of being, to a large degree, spread in society. Over time, this silent resistance risks changing the norms and becoming the common held opinion. If the feminism present in femvertising is perceived as reasons for resistance, the mundane resistance might increase along with the increasing popularity among companies to use femvertising. Our study indicates such a development, however more research on the topic needs to be done to understand the phenomenon even better. Also, to investigate the mundane resistance is a way to prevent it from going by unnoticed. Detecting it is the first step in handling it. We found five views of feminism in our study, however there are probably more to explore, wherefore further research needs to be done in the field. Also, there might be other contexts than femvertising where these views of feminism are being mediated. Therefore, it can be of interest in future research to explore other areas of exposure between men and postfeminism. Another alternative approach, for further research, could be to look into other areas within brand activism, to see if mundane resistance toward other movements, for instance the green movement, the black lives matter movement or the LGBT-movement, can be the outcome of such marketing.

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Appendix 1: Links to femvertising commercials

Dove commercial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U>

Audi commercial: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1iksaFG6wqM>

Nike commercial:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=87&v=whpJ19RJ4JY&feature=emb_logo&fbclid=IwAR2pAg-

[SeSOuGXwxyzS3IrSzHMuXDIC9oHWT25vXtiQDow3MCjQQkABYKpg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=87&v=whpJ19RJ4JY&feature=emb_logo&fbclid=IwAR2pAg-)

Appendix 2: Topic guide focus group

Starting point: we will inform the participants about us and the study, without mentioning the exact purpose. We will not use the word feminism, since this can be a word with negative connotations. Instead we will use “gender equality”. However, the term “feminist” will be used, with the purpose of exploring the potential reasons behind why they use or not use the term themselves. We will ask for their consent to record and inform them about their anonymity.

Topic Guide - Swedish version:

Ice breaker:

- Vi berättar om oss själva.
- Vi berättar om studien i termer av:
- Vad studien handlar om - manligt perspektiv på viss typ av reklam som vi kommer exemplifiera genom tre olika reklamfilmer från Dove, Audi och Nike.
- Anonymitet
- Pilotstudie
- Finns inget rätt eller fel svar.
- Att vi kommer spela in svaren.
- Uppmuntra till att utveckla svaren genom att motivera varför de tycker som de gör. Inte enbart svara ja eller nej.
- Be deltagarna presentera sig själva för övriga i gruppen.

Inledande frågor:

Först kommer vi spela upp tre reklamfilmer från Dove, Audi och Nike.

- Vad tyckte ni om reklamfilmerna?
 - Varför?
- Vilken av reklamfilmerna väckte mest känslor hos dig?
 - Kan du utveckla?
- Hur skulle du beskriva dessa typer av reklam?
- Vad tycker du om sån här typ av reklam?
 - Varför?
- Kan du ge exempel på en eller flera reklamer som du gillar?
 - Varför tror du att du gillar den/de?
- Vad ska en bra reklamfilm innehålla enligt dig?

Huvudämnen:

Syn på femvertising:

- Vad tror ni denna typ av reklam vill förmedla? Vilket budskap?
- Hur tycker ni karaktärerna i reklamfilmerna framställs?
- Tycker ni det är positivt eller negativt?
 - Varför?
- Kan du på något sätt identifiera dig med karaktärerna i reklamfilmerna?
 - Med vilka?
 - Hur? (Vilka aspekter?)
- Tror du denna typ av reklam har en påverkan på samhället?
 - Varför? Varför inte?
 - Hur?
- Vad tycker ni om varumärken som tar ställning i samhällsfrågor?
 - Varför?

Syn på feminism:

- Vad är er syn på jämställdhet? • Varför?
- Hur skulle du beskriva/förklara vad jämställdhet är och vad det inte är?
- Skulle du kalla dig själv för en feminist?
 - Varför? Varför inte?
- Hur skulle du beskriva en feminist?
- Hur tror du denna typ av reklam påverkar kampen för jämställdhet?
 - Positivt, negativt, eller inte alls?
 - Utveckla varför?
- Tycker du denna typ av reklam är ett bra sätt för att uppnå jämställdhet eller inte?
 - Varför? Varför inte?
 - Vad tror du hade varit ett bättre sätt?

Avslutande frågor:

- Är det någonting ni vill tillägga till diskussionen?
- Har ni några frågor?

Topic Guide - English version:

Ice breaker:

- We present ourselves to the participants.
- We tell them about the study in terms of:
 - Anonymity
 - Pilot study
 - There's no right / wrong answer
 - Is it OK to record?
- Please motivate your answers and develop as much as you can

Opening questions:

- First, they will see three commercials from Audi, Dove and Nike.
- What did you think about the commercials?
 - Why?
- Which commercial awoke most emotions? • Can you elaborate? Why?
- How would you describe these types of commercials?
- What do you think about these types of commercials?
 - Why?
- Can you give an example of a, or several, commercials you like?
 - Why do you think you like it? Please elaborate.
- What elements should a good commercial contain?

Key topics:

- What is the message this type of advertisement wants to mediate? (note to self: hopefully they will mention brands taking a stance / gender equality / etc)
 - PLAN B: Do you think they want to engage in some kind of social issue with this message?
- How are the portrayals of the characters in the commercials?
 - Is this positive or negative?
- Can you relate or identify with people in the commercials?
 - Why? With whom?
- Do you think this type of advertisement has an effect on society?

- Why, why not?
- How?
- What do you think about brands that take a stance on societal issues? (purpose driven marketing)

Feminism

- What is your view on gender equality?
- What would you say gender equality is and what is not?
- Would you call yourself a feminist and why/why not?
- How would you describe as a feminist?
- How do you think this type of commercials affect the fight for gender equality?
- Do you think this type of commercials are good for achieving gender equality or not? Why?

Closing questions:

- Is there something you want to add?

Appendix 3: Flashback profile

Our profile on the discussion forum Flashback

The screenshot shows the Flashback forum interface. At the top, the 'Flashback' logo is displayed with a spider icon. Below the logo, the forum statistics are shown: '35 092 besökare online' and '67 007 192 inlägg • 1 293 065 medlemmar'. The main profile area for user 'sebbz1' includes a profile picture of the AC/DC 'Back in Black' album cover, the text 'Senaste aktivitet: Idag 14:58', and membership details: 'Medlem', 'Reg: 2020-03-24', and 'Inlägg: 12 (0,40 inlägg per dag)'. There are also links to 'Hitta inlägg av sebbz1' and 'Hitta ämnen startade av sebbz1'. To the right of the profile is a search bar with the text 'Sök ...' and a search button. Below the search bar are radio buttons for 'Visa ämnen' (selected) and 'Visa inlägg', and a link for 'Avancerad sökning →'. Below the search bar is a button labeled 'Nytt idag' and a box showing '59 medlemmar'. At the bottom of the profile area is a section for 'Varningar och avstängningar'.

Appendix 4: Topic Guide Interviews

Swedish version:

Ice breaker:

- Vi berättar om oss själva.
- Vi berättar om studien i termer av:
 - Masteruppsats i marknadsföring
 - Vad studien handlar om - manligt perspektiv på viss typ av reklam som vi kommer exemplifiera genom tre olika reklamfilmer från Dove, Audi och Nike.
 - Anonymitet
 - Intervjuar dig som privatperson, inte företrädare Ung Vänster (olika bakgrund & värderingar)
 - Finns inget rätt eller fel svar.
 - Att vi kommer spela in svaren.
 - Uppmuntra till att utveckla svaren genom att motivera varför de tycker som de gör. Inte enbart svara ja eller nej.

Inledande frågor:

Först kommer vi spela upp tre reklamfilmer från Dove, Audi och Nike.

- Vad tyckte du om reklamfilmerna?
 - Varför?
 - (kan du tänka dig att handla dessa varumärkens produkter?)
- Hur skulle du beskriva dessa typer av reklam?
 - Vad tycker du om sån här typ av reklam?
 - Varför?

Huvudämnen:

Syn på femvertising:

- Vad tror du denna typ av reklam vill förmedla? Vilket budskap?
 - Vad tycker du om budskapet?
 - Vad tycker du om reklam som förmedlar denna typ av budskap? (*ställ följdfrågor - kan du ge ett exempel på det? Varför?*)
 - Vad tycker du om företag som tar ställning i samhällsfrågor?
 - Bra, dåligt?
 - (*Vilka bättre lämpade?*)
- Hur tycker du karaktärerna i reklamfilmerna framställs? (*kanske kommer inte på stereotyper/identitet*)
 - Tycker ni det är positivt eller negativt?
 - Varför?
 - Kan du relatera till karaktärerna? (vilka, hur?)

Syn på feminism:

- Kan du beskriva vad jämställdhet är?
 - Utveckla, illustrera, sätt i sammanhang.
 - Historiskt och idag, skiljer det sig? Utveckla!
- Finns det någon koppling mellan jämställdhet och feminism?
- Skulle du kalla dig själv för en feminist?
 - Varför? Varför inte?

- Eventuellt om de beskriver kvinnans roll: *Vad ser ni är männens roll i jämställdhetsfrågan?*
- Hur skulle du beskriva en feminist?
- Hur skulle du beskriva feminismen idag?
 - Historiskt och idag, skiljer det sig?

Samhällspåverkan

- Anser du att denna reklamkategori är relaterat till feminism, jämställdhet, eller inget av det?
 - Till Vänsterpartiet: Vilken typ av feminism tycker du reklamen visar? Är det representativt för dagens feminism? (om positiv): Kan det även vara negativt för feminismen? Känner du som man dig inkluderad/exkluderad?
 - Tror du denna typ av reklam påverkar jämställdhetsrörelsen? (hur?)
 - Positivt, negativt, eller inte alls?
 - Utveckla varför?
 - Tycker du denna typ av reklam är ett bra sätt för att uppnå jämställdhet eller inte?
 - Varför? Varför inte?
 - Vad tror du hade varit ett bättre sätt?
- Ev. Varför tror du att vi ser en växande motståndsrörelse?

Avslutande frågor:

- Är det någonting ni vill tillägga till diskussionen?
- Har ni några frågor?

English version:

- We tell the interviewee about ourselves
 - We are talking about the purpose of the interview regarding:
 - Master thesis in marketing
 - What the study is about: male perspective of a certain type of commercials that will be exemplified through the three commercials by Dove, Audi and Nike.
- Inform about anonymity
- For those who are politically active, we are interviewing them as individuals, they do not need to feel that they should represent their party.
- There is no right or wrong
- Ask for consent to record the answers.
- Encourage them to elaborate the answers by motivate why they think what they think. Not only say yes or no.

Opening questions:

- What did you think of the commercials?
 - Why?
 - (Could you imagine yourself buying the brand's products?)
- How would you describe these types of commercials?
 - What do you think about these types of commercials?
 - Why?

Main topics:

Opinion of femvertising:

- Which message do you think these commercials want to deliver?

- What do you think about the message?
- What do you think about commercials delivering these types of messages?
(follow up questions - can you give an example? Why?)
- What do you think about companies taking a stance on societal issues?
 - Good or bad?
 - (Which actors are better suited?)
- How do you think the characters in the commercials are presented? (Maybe they will talk about stereotypes/identity)
 - Is this positive or negative?
 - Why?
 - Can you relate to any of the characters? (which, how?)

Opinion of feminism:

- Can you describe what gender equality is?
 - Elaborate, illustrate, put into a context!
 - Historically and today, is there any difference?
- Do you see any connection between gender equality and feminism?
- Would you call yourself a feminist?
 - Why? Why not?
 - (If they describe the women's role): *What do you see as men's role in the issue of gender equality?*
- How would you describe a feminist?
- How would you describe feminism today?
 - Historically and today, is there any difference?

Societal effect

- Do you consider this category of commercials being related to feminism, gender equality or neither?
 - To Vänsterpartiet: Which type of feminism do you think the commercials show? Is it representative for today's feminism? (If positive): Could it also be negative for feminism? Do you, as a man, feel included/excluded?
- Do you think this category of commercials affect the fight for gender equality? (how?)
 - Positively, negatively, or not at all?
 - Elaborate why?
- Do you think this type of commercial is a good way to reach gender equality or not?
 - Why? Why not?
 - What could be a better way according to you?
- Eventually: Why do you think we can see growing resistance?

Concluding questions:

- Is there something you would like to add to the discussion?
- Do you have any questions?

Appendix 5: Focus group participants

Participants:	Year of birth:	Occupation:	Level of education:
Participant 1	1996	Student (electrical engineering)	University education
Participant 2	1995	Student (electrical engineering)	University education
Participant 3	1992	Student (data engineering)	University education
Participant 4	1992	Student (teacher)	University education
Participant 5	1989	Student (industrial engineering and management)	University education
Participant 6	1966	Salesperson	Upper secondary education
Participant 7	1965	Chef	Upper secondary degree
Participant 8	1956	Technical coordinator	University education
Participant 9	1955	Graphic designer	Cooperative education

Appendix 6: Interviewees

Name in this thesis	Year of birth	Politically active?	Occupation	Level of education
Karl	2002	Yes, VP	High school student	High school
Mattias	2001	Yes, SD	High school student & working for Ungsvenskarna	High school
Erik	1997	Yes, SD	Working for SD	High school
Daniel	1996	No	University student	University
Alexander	1996	No	Entrepreneur	High school
Mikael	1994	Yes, SD	Working for Ungsvenskarna	University
Gustav	1994	Yes, VP	Working for Ung Vänster	University
Johan	1994	Yes, SD	Working for Ungsvenskarna	Collage
Fredrik	1993	No	University student	University
Oskar	1993	No	Working within IT	University
Mohamed	1993	No	Working at a bank	University
Thomas	1973	Yes, FI	Working for FI	University
Bengt	1966	No	Construction consultant	High school
Gunnar	1966	No	Insurance advisor	High school
Nils	1959	No	Sales person, technology sector	High school
Peter	1958	No	Artist	Collage
Per	1955	No	Sales person, food sector	Elementary school
Hans	1944	No	Senior citizen	Elementary school