Understanding Advertising Stereotypes

Social and Brand-Related Effects of Stereotyped versus Non-Stereotyped Portrayals in Advertising

Nina Åkestam

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This thesis examines consumer responses to stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising. More specifically, it investigates the impact of stereotyped versus non-stereotyped portrayals in terms of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation on social effects, such as social connectedness and empathy, and brand-related effects, such as ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions. While most advertising portrayals are to some extent stereotyped, non-stereotyped portrayals have grown in popularity in the past decade. Still, advertising research has rarely compared the effects of these different portrayals. The studies that have typically focus on social effects or brand-related effects, and do not study them simultaneously. This dissertation thus contributes to the advertising literature by comparing effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals, and by connecting social effects to brand-related effects.

The thesis presents empirical findings from five articles featuring a total of twelve experimental studies. The results indicate that non-stereotyped advertising portrayals of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation can lead to improved social as well as brand-related effects. They further suggest that social effects may influence brand-related effects. The social and brand-related effects are affected by consumer attitudes toward the stereotyped or non-stereotyped social category, and by the cultural context of the portrayal. The findings indicate that advertisers have much to gain from adapting a more mindful approach to the portrayals featured in advertising.

Nina Åkestam
is a researcher at the Center for Consumer Marketing at Stockholm School of Economics.

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To
Anton and Gil

Foreword

This volume is the result of a research project carried out at the Department of Marketing and Strategy at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE).

This volume is submitted as a doctoral thesis at SSE. In keeping with the policies of SSE, the author has been entirely free to conduct and present her research in the manner of her choosing as an expression of her own ideas.

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When I started my Ph.D. studies, I heard the phrase "stand on the shoulder of giants" for the first time. I didn't really get what it meant (neither did I get the difference between mediation and moderation), but nodded in understanding and went off to secretly google it (as I did with mediation and moderation). The meaning turned out to be that scientific work builds on all the work that has been done before it. That is, of course, true of this dissertation as well. But in order to complete it, there are a few particularly strong, smart, and kind giants who have offered me their shoulders, and without whose help I never would have reached my goal. So, a few acknowledgements are in place.

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Stockholm, November 1, 2017

Nina Åkestam

Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

The majority of advertising has historically portrayed people in a stereotyped manner (Eisend, 2010). A stereotype is, in a specific cultural context, a generalized and widely accepted belief about the personal attributes of members of a social category, such as gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation (Taylor and Stern, 1997). Stereotypes are dynamic and can change over time (Eisend, 2010). It has been suggested that stereotyped advertising portrayals can reinforce stereotypes that exist in society at large (such as women being family oriented, or certain ethnic minorities having specific occupations, Eisend et al., 2014). Portrayals of people featured in advertising can thus have an impact on how people see themselves and others (Pollay, 1986). While stereotypes in themselves are not harmful and can help simplify communications, they can also shape people's expectations and thereby limit the possibilities for self-realization of individuals belonging to stereotyped social categories (Knoll et al., 2011; Taylor and Stern, 1997).

In an attempt to avoid contributing to such limiting stereotypes, several large advertisers including, for example, Unilever and Proctor and Gamble (Sweney, 2016), have started featuring non-stereotyped portrayals in their advertising. A non-stereotyped advertising portrayal shows a person in a way that does not adhere to the stereotype for the social category to which they belong (Taylor and Stern, 1997). In 2015, the most talked about Super Bowl spot was Always' *Like a Girl*, which questions why doing something "like a girl" means doing something poorly. By October 2017, it had over 64 million views on YouTube and had won awards for advertising creativity

and advertising effectiveness, as well as for corporate social responsibility (CSR) effectiveness. Other brands, including Axe, Dove, IKEA, and Target have also challenged stereotypes in terms of, for example, masculinity, beauty, and family constellations in their advertising, receiving much media attention (Mahdawi, 2015). Further, in 2015, the advertising award show Cannes Lions introduced the Glass Lion, celebrating advertising that addresses gender equality issues. This development has been encouraged by, for example, the British Advertising Standards Authority (ASA), that released a report in 2017 concluding that "stereotypes in ads can contribute to harm for adults and children" and calling for stricter guidelines and the banning of ads that "promote stereotypes or denigrate people that do not conform to them" (Magra, 2017, p. 1). Such initiatives indicate that the use of stereotyped portrayals in advertising is at a turning point. While some brands explore non-stereotyped portrayals, encouraged by consumers and regulating authorities (such as the ASA), the majority of advertising does not (Eisend, 2010). Consumers are thus simultaneously surrounded by both stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals, and advertisers making campaign decisions face several options for how to portray people in their advertising. Understanding consumer reactions to stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising is thus of great importance to advertising research and is the focus of this thesis.

1.1 The research problem

Traditionally, advertising has been seen primarily as a tool to generate effects that benefit the brand (Eisend, 2016). *Brand-related effects*, defined as consumer reactions that are related to the sender and/or the persuasive purpose of the ad (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Eisend, 2016), have thus been the focus of most advertising research (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016), and are of great importance to most brands (Eisend, 2016). However, this narrow view of the potential effects of advertising has been questioned (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016). It has been proposed that, in order to fully understand the impact of advertising, *social effects* on consumers also need to be taken into consideration (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016). Social effects are consumer reactions, such as social connectedness, empathy, or self-

esteem that need not be related to the sender or the persuasive purpose of the ad (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016). Social effects can be a tool to improve brand-related effects (Eisend, 2016), or be desired effects in their own right (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016). Despite several calls for more research on advertising's social effects (Defever et al., 2011; Rosengren et al., 2013), only one percent of academic advertising research articles published from 1980 to 2010 studied social effects (Kim et al., 2014).

The social effects of advertising have, however, been frequently discussed in neighbouring social science fields, such as psychology, sociology, and philosophy. Theories from these fields often assume that the social influence of advertising is negative (Pollay, 1986). They tend to focus on advertising that is, for example, idealized (Richins, 1991) or sexist (Sengupta and Dahl, 2008). Further, the studies rarely include measures of brand-related effects. This has led to different schools of thought that have little in common in terms of methods and concepts, and to two bodies of literature on advertising effects that are rarely connected. This in turn means that the existing literature indicates that advertising almost always generates positive brand-related effects (as discussed in the advertising literature) and negative social effects (as discussed in the psychology/sociology literature). However, this alignment is a result of the traditions of brand-related effects research and social effects research, respectively.

For the topic of thesis, the discussion of brand-related and social effects is particularly interesting. The use of stereotyped portrayals is often criticised based on its presumed social effects on, for example, self-esteem (Pollay, 1986; Taylor and Stern, 1997; Mastro, 2009). Non-stereotyped portrayals have, on the other hand, been proposed to generate other types of social effects, for example, in contributing to a more diverse society (Mastro, 2009). Further, it has been proposed that social effects may impact advertising effects (Eisend, 2016). When investigating consumer reactions to stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising, this thesis thus focuses on social as well as brand-related effects. What is more, it aims to investigate social and brand-related effects simultaneously, and find potential empirical connections between the two. While it has been theoretically proposed that social effects would have an impact on brand-related effects

(Eisend, 2016), this has, to the author's knowledge, not been empirically investigated. This thesis thus conducts such an empirical investigation.

Further, the social effects literature often concludes that the observed effects (for example, in terms of reduced self-esteem or increased body-focused anxiety) occur after exposure to *advertising*. However, the effects observed by, for example, Halliwell and Dittmar (2004) and Martin and Gentry (1997), do not stem from advertising *per se*, but from certain kinds of portrayals featured in advertising. As the majority of advertising portrayals have traditionally been stereotyped (Eisend, 2010), social effects have mostly been observed after exposure to such stereotyped portrayals. However, advertising portrayals need not be stereotyped. In fact, anecdotal evidence suggests that an increasing number of portrayals in advertising are non-stereotyped (Mahdawi, 2015). Different advertising portrayals should generate different social effects. This thesis thus compares the social effects of advertising featuring different types of portrayals.

What is more, research on non-stereotyped portrayals is scarce, with the exception of stereotypes in terms of female body size (Bian and Wang, 2015; Bissell and Rask, 2010). While there is ample research on the frequency and nature of stereotyped portrayals in advertising (Eisend, 2010; Mastro, 2009; Milner, 2007), few studies have extended their investigations to include non-stereotyped portrayals. Additionally, few studies have compared the effects of different levels of stereotypicality. Although the limited literature suggests that non-stereotyped portrayals in terms of female body size can have a positive impact on social effects (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004) and brand-related effects (Antioco et al., 2012), little is known about whether these effects would hold true for other types of non-stereotyped portrayals. This thesis thus studies several types of non-stereotyped advertising portrayals, not limited to female body size.

Finally, in terms of media and audience, this thesis investigates portrayals featured in mainstream advertising. As opposed to niche advertising, which aims to reach a niche audience (for example gay men, or people of a certain ethnicity) often through niche media outlets, mainstream advertising typically uses broad media channels to reach a mainstream audience. A mainstream audience thus consists of people with different backgrounds. Previous literature has often assumed that the main reason for featuring

non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising is to reach new target audiences identifying with the non-stereotyped portrayal (Oakenfull et al., 2008; Puntoni et al., 2011). Consequently, studies have primarily investigated effects of such portrayals on consumers identifying with the portrayal (for example, minority consumers), contrasting them with the reactions of consumers who would not identify with the portrayal. However, the increasing use of non-stereotyped portrayals in mainstream advertising (Mahdawi, 2015) suggests that this view may be limiting. By adapting a mainstream approach to advertising portrayals, this thesis thus studies the effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals on all consumers, including those who belong to the group featured in the advertising, as well as those who do not.

1.2 Purpose of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to improve the understanding of social and brand-related effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in mainstream advertising. Through empirical investigation of consumer responses to advertising portrayals that are stereotyped and non-stereotyped in terms of sexual orientation, gender, and ethnicity, the thesis intends to make a contribution to advertising literature and practice.

1.3 Thesis outline

The thesis consists of eight introductory chapters and five empirical articles. First, I discuss the existing literature on stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising, and proceed with a section on the theories upon which the empirical articles in this thesis build. This is followed by a section on research methodology that aims to clarify the scientific approach and hence what the reader can expect from the empirical articles, after which the empirical articles are introduced. I further discuss the thesis' contribution to advertising research and practice, followed by a section on the thesis' limitations and suggestions for future research. Finally, the articles and their twelve empirical studies are presented in their entirety.

Chapter 2

Stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising

Stereotyped portrayals in advertising have received much academic and practical attention in recent decades (Hatzithomas et al., 2016). The literature thus far has focused on three main areas: the nature and frequency of stereotyped portrayals in advertising (e.g., Eisend, 2010; Knoll et al., 2011; Hatzithomas et al., 2016; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos, 2009), the social effects of stereotyped portrayals on consumers (Davies et al., 2002; Dittmar and Howard, 2004; Richins, 1991), and the impact of stereotyped portrayals on brand-related effects (Bower, 2001; Eisend et al., 2014; Kyrousi et al., 2016). This chapter reviews the existing literature that serves as a point of departure for this thesis.

The literature on stereotypes in advertising uses several different definitions of what constitutes a stereotype (Eisend, 2010). For example, stereotypes have been defined as general beliefs about traits and roles, psychological characteristics and behaviours (Plakoyiannaki and Zotos, 2009), beliefs that certain attributes differentiate people of different social groups (Ashmore and Del Boca, 1981), or prevailing attitudes about the attributes of stigmatized groups (Davies et al., 2002). Other studies discuss the topic of stereotypes without defining it conceptually (e.g., Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004; Maher et al., 2008; Mastro, 2009). What is more, the literature uses several different conceptualizations of advertising that could also be defined as stereotyped. Such concepts include advertising that is "ideal-

ized" (Richins, 1991), "unfriendly" (Van Hellemont and Van den Bulck, 2012), and "objectifying" (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). Often, different concepts are used interchangeably and lack definitions (cf. Richins, 1991). Further, partly as a result of the different concepts and definitions, the operationalization and measures of stereotypicality vary widely across studies. To improve the understanding of the effects of advertising stereotypes, it is thus important to clearly define what constitutes a stereotype, and which theoretical concepts and operationalizations will be used. For the purpose of this thesis, a stereotype is defined as a generalized and widely accepted belief about the personal attributes of members of a social category, such as gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation (Grier and Deshpandé, 2001; Mastro and Stern, 2003; Taylor and Stern, 1997). Stereotypes are specific to cultural contexts and can thus be dynamic and change over time (Eisend, 2010). A stereotype is created when a specific image or story is conveyed over and over again. By itself, the image or story would not generate any particular effects, but when repeated, it becomes a generally accepted belief about members of a specific social category or group (Taylor and Stern, 1997). As such, stereotypes offer a way to simplify and systemize information, and help make sense of the world. Stereotypes can concern any type of social category, such as gender, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, religion, or occupation. For example, gender stereotypes are beliefs that certain attributes differentiate women and men (Eisend, 2010; Knoll et al., 2011). When we see a person with long hair from behind and immediately assume that the person is a woman, we use a stereotype to systemize information. This example is a *general stereotype* that applies to most contexts in contemporary Western culture. We would make the same assumption if we saw the person on the street, at work, or pictured in a newspaper or ad. What is more, stereotypes can pertain to several different social categories simultaneously. An Asian woman may thus be stereotyped as a woman, as a person of Asian ethnicity, and/or as an intersection of the two (Mastro, 2009; Taylor and Stern, 1997).

The frequent use of stereotypes in advertising has further led to a set of *advertising stereotypes*, such as portrayals of women, professionals, and families that are specific to the advertising context. Advertising stereotypes often present people who are quite unusual in the real world in terms of, for ex-

ample, ethnicity, body type, and attractiveness, as being the norm (Richins, 1991; Bissell and Rask, 2010). An advertising portrayal is considered stereotyped when it portrays people in a way that is consistent with a general stereotype, an advertising stereotype, or both.

A non-stereotyped advertising portrayal shows a person in a way that does not adhere to the stereotype for the social category to which they belong (Taylor and Stern, 1997; Mastro and Stern, 2003). Again, there are two ways in which this can occur. First, the portrayal can present a person not adhering to a general stereotype for the culture in question. In a contemporary Western context, an example would be a girl presented as interested in science, or a man portrayed as a knowing and competent parent. Second, it can portray a person who is not usually featured in advertising for that product category, thereby not adhering to an advertising stereotype. An example would be an ad featuring a same-sex romantic couple, or an underwear ad featuring a model that is heavier than normal advertising models. Such persons would indeed be common in society, but in advertising they are unusual, and thereby represent non-stereotyped portrayals. Non-stereotyped portrayals are different from non-traditional stereotyping (Eisend et al., 2014). The first challenges stereotypes, while the latter plays with stereotypes in a humorous manner. While both are used in advertising (Eisend et al., 2014), the focus of this thesis is on non-stereotyped portrayals. What is more, non-stereotyped portrayals are not limited to counter-stereotyped portrayals. While counter-stereotyped portrayals would actively contradict or discuss a stereotype (à la Like a Girl), a non-stereotyped portrayal can also be devoid of stereotyping altogether. This means that non-stereotyped portrayals can range from counter-stereotyped to neutral in terms of stereotypicality.

There is a vast literature documenting the use of stereotyped portrayals in mainstream advertising (e.g., Eisend et al., 2014; Furnham and Paltzer, 2010; Zimmerman and Dahlberg, 2008). Content analyses of advertising in several different media (such as print ads and TV commercials (TVCs) and markets (such as the United States, Britain, South Africa, Japan, and Germany) (Eisend, 2010; Eisend et al., 2014; Maher et al., 2008, Mastro and Stern, 2003; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos, 2009) have shown that a majority of mainstream advertising portrayals are stereotyped. Further, it is well estab-

lished that the world depicted in mainstream advertising is different from the real world (Eisend, 2010). In mainstream advertising, people with certain features (e.g., attractive, white, skinny, heterosexual, successful, cf. Elliott and Elliott, 2005; Eisend, 2010; Gulas and McKeage, 2000; Martin and Kennedy, 1993) are over-represented, while other groups are under-represented. Although people with other features have been featured in niche advertising targeting certain minorities (for example, gay men or Hispanics), they have been largely absent, or heavily stereotyped, in advertising targeting a mainstream audience (Oakenfull et al., 2008; Mastro, 2009; Bissell and Rask, 2010).

In all content analyses reviewed for this thesis, the researcher(s) have coded the advertising content for stereotypicality according to a number of fixed rules. The portrayal is thus stereotyped according to the researcher(s), rather than according to consumers. Still, most definitions of stereotypes include an aspect of stereotypes as general (Plakoyiannaki and Zotos, 2009), widespread (Taylor and Stern, 1997), or prevailing (Davies et al., 2002). Whether the opinion of the researcher(s) is in fact "general" or "widespread" is, however, not measured. This means that there is a risk that a portrayal which the researcher codes as stereotyped would not be interpreted as such by consumer, and vice versa. This is a limitation that should be kept in mind when examining the findings presented below.

This section presents some of the most common stereotyped advertising portrayals within the categories of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. Table 1 focuses on gender stereotypes, Table 2 on ethnicity stereotypes, and Table 3 on sexual orientation stereotypes. The procedure for creating the tables was similar. Thus, the process for creating Table 1 will be described in detail, while for the remaining two tables, the process will be described briefly.

Table 1 is based on content analyses and meta-studies of stereotyped advertising portrayals found in TVCs and in print media ads. While some studies cited in the meta-analyses date as far back as 1978, most studies concern the nature and frequency of stereotyped portrayals in the 21st century. The topic of gender stereotyped portrayals in advertising has been heavily researched. Several content analyses (e.g., Eisend et al., 2014; Knoll et al.; 2011; Furnham and Chan, 2003; Plakoyannaki and Zotos, 2009) have

explored the frequency and nature of portrayals of gender in advertising. Content analyses conducted from 1978 through 2004 have been subject to a meta-analysis (Eisend, 2010), providing a good overview of the use of such portrayals across several markets, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Turkey, New Zealand, South Africa, Japan, Zimbabwe, Mexico, Denmark, Singapore, and Serbia. A summary of the findings of this meta-analysis can be found in Table 1. For a detailed description of the methodology of the meta-analysis, please refer to Eisend (2010).

The meta-analysis did not include portrayals stereotyped in terms of physical characteristics (such as body type) for women and men. However, a plethora of studies (e.g., Gulas and McKeage 2000; Gentry and Harrison, 2010; Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004; Richins, 1991) argue that the vast majority of advertising portrayals feature women of a slim body type and men of an athletic body type. With some exceptions (e.g., Plakoyannaki and Zotos, 2009), this argument has not been supported by extensive content analyses. As a result, these stereotypes are listed with limited information in terms of frequency. In the table, *stereotyped* portrayals and their relative frequency are listed. This means that to create *non-stereotyped* portrayals, these stereotypes should be avoided or contradicted.

Table 1. Gender stereotyped portrayals in advertising

Portrayal	Component	Frequency	Market	Media	Source
Women as younger	Physical	3x more likely	Global	TVC and radio	Eisend, 2010
Women as sex objects	Physical	31.52% of ads	U.K.	Print	Plakoyiannaki and Zotos, 2008
Women of a slim body type	Physical	Avg. model is 20% underweight	Global	N/A	Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004
Men of an athletic body type	Physical	N/A	Global	N/A	Harrison and Genry, 2010

Women as passive	Role	4x more likely	Global	TVC and radio	Eisend, 2010
Women as dependent	Role	4x more likely	Global	TVC and radio	Eisend, 2010
Women as product users	Role	3x more likely	Global	TVC and radio	Eisend, 2010
Women in a domestic environment	Role	3.5x more likely	Global	TVC and radio	Eisend, 2010
Women concerned with physical appearance	Role	45.90% of ads	U.K.	Print	Plakoyiannaki and Zotos, 2008
Men as an authority	Role	3x more likely	Global	TVC and radio	Eisend, 2010

The use of ethnically stereotyped advertising portrayals has also been subject to a number of content analyses, reaching the conclusion that the majority of ads are ethnically stereotyped (e.g., Bailey, 2006; Mastro and Stern, 2003; Milner, 2007; Taylor and Stern, 1997). For example, white/Caucasian people constitute the majority of all advertising models, but only around 16% of the world's population (CIA World Factbook, 2017). When other groups of people are featured, they are often portrayed in a stereotyped way (e.g., Asians as being tech-savvy; Taylor and Stern, 1997). For some ethnic groups, such as native populations, research is scarce or non-existent (Mastro, 2009). Further, the existing research has mostly been conducted in a North American context, potentially biasing the findings. These limitations should be kept in mind when examining Table 2.

Table 2. Ethnically stereotyped portrayals in advertising

Portrayal	Component	Frequency	Market	Media	Source
Individuals as white	Physical	83%, 9%, 25%, 35%	U.S., Ghana, Kenya, South Africa	TVC	Mastro and Stern, 2003; Milner, 2007
Children as white	Physical	82%	U.S.	TVC	Maher et al., 2008
Latinos as attractive	Physical	63%	U.S.	TVC	Mastro and Stern, 2003
Latinos as very thin	Physical	60%	U.S.	TVC	Mastro and Stern, 2003
Asians as very thin	Physical	59%	U.S.	TVC	Mastro and Stern, 2003
Whites in a major role	Role	90%	U.S.	TVC	Taylor and Stern, 1997
Whites giving orders	Role	34%	U.S.	TVC	Mastro and Stern, 2003
Latinos sexualized	Role	46%	U.S.	TVC	Mastro and Stern, 2003
Blacks as entertainers or athletes	Role	32%, 56%, 47%, 61%	U.S., Ghana, Kenya, South Africa	TVC	Bailey, 2006; Milner, 2007
Blacks in a minor role	Role	73%, 67%	U.S., U.K.	TVC	Maher et al., 2008; Sudbery and Wilberforce, 2006
Blacks in food ads	Role	18%, 79%	U.S., U.K.	TVC	Mastro and Stern, 2003; Sudbery and Wilberforce, 2006
Asians working	Role	44%	U.S.	TVC	Mastro and Stern, 2003
Asians working with tech	Role	25%	U.S.	TVC	Taylor and Stern, 1997
Asians as passive	Role	58%	U.S.	TVC	Mastro and Stern, 2003

For portrayals of sexual orientation, no content analyses have (to the author's knowledge) been published in the advertising, marketing, or communications literature. However, it has been suggested that heterosexual couples are over-represented in mainstream advertising (Oakenfull et al., 2008). Although up to 10% of the population in Western countries live as openly non-heterosexual, such couples and families are rarely featured in mainstream advertising (Oakenfull et al., 2008). This indicates that there is a strong heterosexuality stereotype in mainstream advertising portrayals. What is more, there are likely other sexuality stereotypes in advertising (for example, with regard to gender identity) that have not yet been addressed in the advertising literature. However, more research is needed to establish the frequency and nature of these stereotypes in different markets. Thus, Table 3 features the very limited information for portrayals stereotyped in terms of sexual orientation.

Table 3. Sexual orientation stereotyped portrayals in advertising

Portrayal	Component	Frequency	Market	Media	Source
Couples as heterosexual	Role	Vast majority	Global	N/A	Oakenfull et al., 2008

The aim of Tables 1-3 is to provide the reader with an overview of some of the stereotyped portrayals most frequently featured in advertising. The tables should not be seen as exhaustive lists of all stereotyped portrayals that exist in advertising. Rather, the hope is that they will work as a tool for advertisers that wish to adhere to, or contradict, stereotyped portrayal.

Chapter 3

Towards a framework for understanding social and brand-related effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising

This section presents a theoretical framework for understanding social and brand-related effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped advertising portrayals. It reviews and discusses previous research to find potential connections between the two types of effects. Further, it proposes three psychological processes that can help propel the understanding of how advertising portrayals may generate such effects.

The theoretical framework is presented visually in Figure 1. It proposes that advertisers create ads featuring stereotyped or non-stereotyped portrayals. Consumers are then exposed to these ads, and respond in terms of social effects, brand-related effects, or both. The framework further proposes that social effects can have an impact on brand-related effects. The reasons for these propositions are discussed in detail in the sections following Figure 1.

Figure 1. Summary of theoretical framework
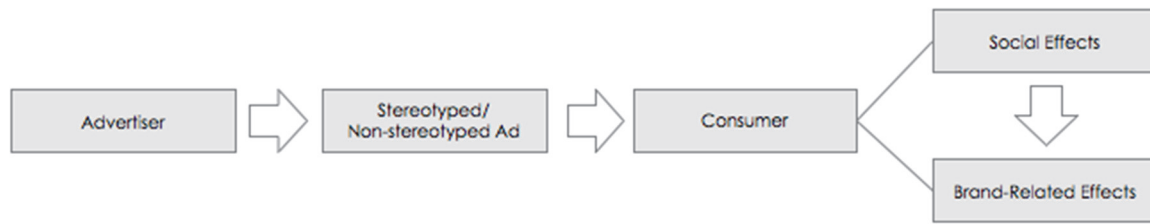
3.1 Social effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising

Social effects are effects on individual consumers that need not be related to the sender or the persuasive purpose of the ad (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016). Examples of such effects could be impact on mood and feelings (such as empathy; Escalas and Stern, 2003; and social connectedness; Lee and Robbins, 1995), body ideals (Bissell and Rask, 2010, social comparison (Gulas and McKeage, 2000), creativity (Rosengren et al., 2013), and benevolent behaviours (Chang, 2014; Defever et al., 2011). As such, social effects are a subgroup of effects that are sometimes referred to as the unintended (Pollay, 1986) or extended (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016) effects of advertising. While unintended or extended effects could refer to any advertising effects that are not brand-related (such as effects on economic growth, littering, or public transport funding), social effects concern consumers' well-being and their relationship to other people. This topic has stimulated increasing interest in the advertising literature in recent years, with several calls for more research (e.g., Eisend, 2010; Rosengren et al., 2013).

Studies on the social effects of advertising typically view advertising as having a significant social impact (Pollay, 1986; Richins, 1991; Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). From this perspective, advertising is seen as a *mold*, or *distorted mirror*, of society (Pollay, 1986). According to the theory of the distorted mirror, advertising does not reflect all of society, but the parts that are useful for the advertisers, in that they could inspire people to increase

consumption. This leads to certain ideals being more frequently shown in advertising, which in turn leads consumers to believe that these ideals are more important than others. Stereotyped advertising portrayals are, according to the theory, one way of conveying ideals that help increase consumption. When consumers are repeatedly exposed to stereotyped portrayals, these stereotypes take up more room in consumers' minds, leading them to believe that such over-simplified versions of reality are in fact true. This is closely related to cultivation theory often discussed in communications research (Mastro, 2009), which suggests that media use plays a meaningful role in viewers'/consumers' cognitive development, including intergroup behaviours. It has been proposed that the consumption of advertising could generate similar effects in consumption of, for example, TV shows (Maher et al., 2008).

The main criticism against the use of stereotyped advertising portrayals is thus that they can lead to over-simplification, which can, in turn, limit the possibilities for self-realization of individuals belonging to a group that is frequently stereotyped (Knoll et al., 2011). This would be particularly true when real-world contact between the stereotyped group and other social groups is scarce, as the stereotype replaces the real assessment of a person (Taylor and Stern, 1997). For example, someone who has never met an openly homosexual person is likely to expect such a person to act in a manner that is consistent with a gay or lesbian stereotype. This could have negative effects for the assimilation and integration of social groups, in that it reduces feelings of social connectedness and empathy.

Further, the possibilities self-realization for a person belonging to a stereotyped group would be limited, regardless of whether the stereotype is generally seen as positive (such as Asians being hard-working) or negative (such as African Americans being lazy) (Taylor and Stern, 1997). In both cases, there is a risk that real people would be judged based on the stereotype, rather than their own individual features. For example, a teacher who, based on a stereotype, expects Asian students to outperform in academic subjects, may ignore or discourage students' personal preferences (such as an interest that does not conform to the stereotype, like art or sports).

Many studies have attempted to empirically assess the social effects of stereotyped advertising portrayals. According to social comparison theory

(Festinger, 1954), stereotyped advertising portrayals (particularly in terms of attractiveness and body size) will lead to a comparison process where the consumer is bound to come out on the negative side, thereby leading to feelings of inadequacy (Richins, 1991). Thus, many of the most cited studies are concerned with effects such as body satisfaction (Richins, 1991), body-related anxiety (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2004), self-satisfaction (Wan et al., 2013) and self-objectification (Fredrickson and Roberts, 1997). The results indicate that exposure to stereotyped advertising portrayals can indeed, at least temporarily, limit individuals' well-being (Richins, 1991; Wan et al., 2013), as well as their possibilities for self-realization, for example, in terms of academic performance (Davies et al., 2002; Steele and Aronson, 1995).

Recent studies have, however, moved beyond social comparison theory to explore other types of social effects. The results indicate that emotions and values from advertising can transfer to consumers and have an impact on their feelings (Nairn and Berthon, 2003; Zhang, 2009) and their behaviour (Defever et al., 2011; Rosengren et al., 2013) in unrelated situations. For example, exposure to advertising (for an insurance company) stressing values of benevolence can make consumers more willing to donate blood (Defever et al., 2011). These results indicate that, depending on what it portrays, advertising can generate different social effects. It is thus not advertising *per se* that generates the social effects, but rather, the portrayals featured in advertising. If the nature of advertising portrayals changes, then so should the social effects.

As stereotyped portrayals have been suggested to generate social effects that limit consumers' well-being, non-stereotyped portrayals could, at least under some circumstances, be expected to enhance well-being. Although research on the social effects of non-stereotyped advertising portrayals is limited, the studies that have to date addressed the topic have indeed found support for such an expectation. A number of studies focusing on the impact of non-stereotyped portrayals in terms of female body size have found that exposure to average sized (vs. thin) advertising models may reduce women's body-focused anxiety (Dittmar and Howard 2004, 2005; Halliwell et al., 2005), and improve self-esteem (Loken and Peck, 2005; Martin et al., 2007; Mills et al., 2002). However, the social effects of non-stereotyped

portrayals of other stereotype categories (such as sexual orientation and ethnicity) and stereotype components (such as role or occupation) have, to the best of my knowledge, not been addressed. This opens the door for further investigations to improve the understanding of how non-stereotyped portrayals may impact consumers, beyond female body-size.

3.2 Brand-related effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising

Brand-related effects are consumer reactions, such as behaviours, choices, or attitudes that are related to the sender and/or the persuasive purpose of the ad (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Eisend, 2016). Among the most frequently studied brand-related effects in the advertising literature are ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions (Kim et al., 2014). Positively impacting these effects are typically seen as the end goal of advertising. It has even been suggested that "advertising always intends to trigger a specific effect, namely a brand-related reaction that is supposed to benefit the brand" (Eisend, 2016, p. 355). In the advertising literature, stereotyped portrayals' potential to generate positive brand-related effects has thus been the main focus. Stereotypes are not necessarily negative judgments and can simplify communications. This is the main reason that they are considered helpful tools for advertisers, as advertising needs to be processed quickly and with minimal effort (Johnson and Grier, 2012). Going further, Courtney and Whipple (1983, p. 203) proposed that "advertising messages must employ stereotypes, because stereotypes are a shorthand which helps to convey ideas and images quickly and clearly". Further, stereotypes can be used as a humorous element in advertising, which could also have a positive impact on brand-related effects (Eisend et al., 2014).

Still, studies have repeatedly found that advertising featuring stereotyped portrayals generates lower levels of ad, brand, and product attitudes, as well as purchase intentions, than advertising without such portrayals (Eisend et al., 2014; Feiereisen et al., 2009; Huhmann and Limbu, 2016; Martin et al., 2007), while non-stereotyped portrayals, primarily in terms of female body size, generate positive results (Bian and Wang, 2015; Bissell and Rask,

2010). This is, however, not always the case. For some consumers and in certain circumstances, stereotyped portrayals may generate positive brand-related effects. For example, consumers high in gender-related prejudice respond more positively to advertising featuring gender stereotypes, than to advertising not featuring such stereotypes (Orth and Holancova, 2003).

What is more, several studies have found that consumers react differently to stereotyped portrayals in advertising, depending on whether they belong to the stereotyped group or not (Aaker et al., 2000; Deshpandé and Stayman, 1994, Grier and Deshpandé, 2001). Generally, the results indicate that while people belonging to the stereotyped group would report negative brand-related effects, people not belonging to that group would react in a neutral or even positive manner (Johnson and Grier, 2012). Further, the literature suggests that advertising featuring minorities resonates well with people identifying with that minority, but generates neutral or negative reactions from majority consumers (Aaker et al., 2000; Puntoni et al., 2011). This is largely an effect of low perceived targetedness, as consumers who do not feel targeted by an ad tend to respond more negatively to it, as they feel left out (Puntoni et al., 2011). Such effects have been observed for advertising featuring non-stereotyped portrayals of sexual orientation (Oakenfull et al., 2008; Puntoni et al., 2011), as well as ethnicity (Aaker et al., 2000; Columb and Plant, 2010; Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999; Mastro, 2003; Stayman and Deshpandé, 1989), leading to the conclusion that advertisers should avoid non-stereotyped portrayals of sexual orientation and/or ethnicity in their mainstream advertising.

However, this literature makes several assumptions that can be challenged. First, it typically studies the effects of niche advertising on a mainstream audience. Such advertising often features themes and symbols that are difficult to interpret for the majority of a mainstream audience (Oakenfull et al., 2008). This would in turn lead to lower levels of perceived targetedness with a mainstream audience, which in turn has a negative impact on brand-related effects. However, these effects may not be the result of the non-stereotyped portrayal in itself, but rather a result of the majority of consumers feeling left out (cf. Puntoni et al., 2011). It is thus possible that mainstream advertising, devoid of exclusionary themes and symbols, featuring the same portrayals would render different results.

Second, the literature largely disregards the notion that social identity is a fluid concept that changes over time and situation (Tajfel, 1974). As shown by, for example, Stayman and Deshpandé (1989), even though consumers may objectively belong to a certain minority (such as Chinese-Americans), the subjective identification with that minority, and consequent consumption choices, is highly context dependent. All human beings are many things. A person can identify as a mother, a CEO, a lesbian, a Christian, or a dog-owner (or all these things at once), depending on the context and the person's role in that context. Indeed, Grier and Brumbaugh (1999) found that perceived ad targetedness is affected by several different factors, such as distinctiveness (of the portrayed group and of one's own group), expertise (of the consumer with regard to social dynamics), power (between groups), and stigmatization (of the portrayed group). Again, the perceived targetedness, rather than the consumers' social category, serves as the better predictor of brand-related effects.

Third, while social identity may seem straightforward when discussing relatively clear social categories such as gender or ethnicity (although, again, gender and ethnic identity can be fluid), it is difficult to apply with other social categories. For example, the literature often assumes that only homosexual men can perceive themselves as targets of an ad featuring a gay couple (Bhat et al., 1998; Puntoni et al., 2011). Still, it does not make the same assumption with regard to hair colour, height, body type, age, or personal interests. For these categories, consumers are expected to identify with the people in the ad regardless of their similarities or dissimilarities. From a practical perspective, this is necessary, as no advertising portrayal can represent anyone completely. All mainstream advertising thus implicitly rests on the assumption that people can feel targeted by advertising that portrays people who are to some extent different from the consumers themselves. It can hence be argued that mainstream advertising targets a mainstream audience, regardless of the characteristics of the people featured in the ad.

Previous research shows that consumers can readily define themselves and/or other people as the target audience of different kinds of advertising (Dahlen et al., 2013, 2014). The simplest solution to the problem of targetedness would thus be to suggest that all people can potentially feel targeted by all ads, and that consumers themselves can decide if they are the target

of an ad or not. The perceived targetedness (reported by the consumer in an interview, or in the case of experimental studies, in a questionnaire) should thus be the variable of interest in empirical studies. This still allows for the use of social identity theories (Aaker et al., 2000), but rather than the researcher assuming that a certain consumer (based on superficial features such as reported age or gender) would be able to identify, consumers themselves get to make this distinction. Not only is this more theoretically valid, but it should significantly simplify empirical studies, especially when studying social categories that can be difficult or sensitive to capture objectively.

In sum, the existing literature suggests that the brand-related effects of stereotyped as well as non-stereotyped advertising portrayals are largely dependent upon perceived targetedness. Generally, however, consumers respond negatively (vs. positively) to stereotyped portrayals (vs. non-stereotyped portrayals) by which they feel targeted.

3.3 Connections between social and brand-related effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising

While it is well established that advertising can generate social effects (consumer reactions that need not be related to the sender or the persuasive purpose of the ad, Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016), as well as brand-related effects (consumer reactions that are related to the sender and/or the persuasive purpose of the ad, Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016), the advertising literature seldom addresses brand-related and social effects of advertising simultaneously. This leaves the question of the potential connections between the two types of effects open for investigation. Brand-related effects could have an impact on social effects, social effects could have an impact on brand-related effects, or they could impact each other.

The main connection suggested in the literature is that social effects would have an impact on brand-related effects. Eisend (2016) proposes that social advertising effects are a means to generate brand-related effects, which are the end-goal for advertisers. Anecdotal evidence indicates that

social effects could indeed have an impact on brand-related effects. For example, Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty, encouraging women to appreciate themselves regardless of their looks, has run for over a decade (Natividad, 2017). Other campaigns claiming the wish to generate social effects and reporting positive business results are IKEA's "Where Life Happens" campaign, showing acceptance of different family constellations (Nudd, 2016), and Honey Maid's campaign "This is Wholesome", taking a stand on inter-racial marriages (Solomon, 2014).

In terms of social effects having a negative impact on brand-related effects, companies like H&M, Gucci, and Pepsi have in recent years been heavily criticized for promoting stereotypes in their ads, resulting in large amounts of negative PR, and in some cases, the pulling back of major advertising campaigns (Greaves, 2017; Watercutter, 2017). In 2013 and 2014, American Apparel faced several organized boycotts as a result of their advertising, which many consumers thought to be sexist, stereotyped, and degrading to women. Consumers even asked *not* to get the products they bought in a branded bag, as walking down the street with an American Apparel logo would be a social no-no (Winberg, 2014). In this case, consumers did not protest the brand's products, but the brand's advertising, which was thought to contribute to gender inequality. Although gender inequality would typically be considered a social advertising effect, in this case, it had an impact on the brand.

Anecdotal evidence thus suggests that social and brand-related effects are connected so that social effects impact brand-related effects. An opposite relationship (brand-related effects leading to social effects) has not been proposed in the literature. What is more, there is little evidence of negative social effects (as defined by the consumer, such as reduced levels of social connectedness) leading to positive brand-related effects (such as improved ad and brand attitudes), and vice versa. Although some scholars (and popular wisdom) have suggested that advertising intentionally makes consumers feel bad about themselves, which would make them consume the advertiser's product in an effort to feel better (Pollay, 1986), no studies have, to the author's knowledge, found any empirical evidence of such a connection.

However, Eisend (2016) goes beyond proposing that social effects would impact brand-related effects, to suggest that the point of generating

social effects is to improve brand-related reactions as consumers reward brands (through, for example, brand attitudes or purchase intentions) for reflecting values that they share (Eisend, 2016). Effects that are typically considered social, such as effects on consumers' self-esteem, can thus be defined as brand-related, as the only reason for advertisers to generate them would be to improve other brand-related effects, such as ad and brand attitudes. According to Eisend's (2016) view, then, campaigns such as Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty should be seen as tool to build a brand that appeals to women sharing the opinion that all women are beautiful, and that the advertising industry should not contribute to unrealistic standards of beauty. Whether the campaign actually changes the way women feel is beside the point. However, this reasoning focuses on advertisers' intentions, rather than consumer responses. Although understanding advertisers' intentions can be of interest in advertising research, such intentions are typically not studied. Indeed, Eisend (2016) does not cite any empirical studies to support the claim that advertising "always intends to trigger a specific effect, namely a brand-related reaction that is supposed to benefit the brand" (p. 355). Rather, the majority of advertising research (as well as this thesis) takes a consumer perspective, studying individual consumer responses to advertising (Kim et al., 2014). Thus, it can be argued that a working definition of advertising effects should be guided by consumer responses, rather than the advertiser's intentions. As such, consumer responses that are unrelated to the brand and the persuasive purpose of the ad would be considered social effects, and effects in their own right, regardless of the advertiser's intentions.

What is more, Eisend's (2016) reasoning does not indicate that social effects are unimportant; on the contrary, it suggests that social effects may indeed have a significant impact on brand-related effects. Still, only around one percent of studies in advertising research include social effects (Kim et al., 2014). One reason for this could be the narrow view of advertising as a means to generate brand-related reactions that benefit the brand. In defining social effects as effects in their own right, their existence is acknowledged, whether in connection to, or separate from, brand-related effects. As such, studying social effects could actually lead to an improved understanding of brand-related effects.

Further, Dahlen and Rosengren (2016) suggest that because of the increasingly social nature of advertising, as well as new, pervasive advertising formats and general societal trends, social effects will play an increasingly important role if advertising is to stay relevant, and even survive, in the long run. If consumers deem advertising to do more harm than good, there is a significant risk that advertising will face further regulation and even complete bans (as for outdoor advertising in Sao Paolo, Brazil). Although it can be argued that this is but another way to benefit the brand (by, for example, ensuring the possibility to advertise in the future), seeing social effects as merely one of many tools to generate brand-related effects risks underestimating their importance.

In sum, this thesis sees social and brand-related advertising effects as separate types of effects. It further proposes that social effects can have an impact on brand-related effects, but that they can also, under certain circumstances, be of interest in their own right.

3.4 Understanding consumer responses to stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising

The connection between social effects and brand-related effects has received increasing academic attention in recent years (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Eisend, 2016), but it has mainly been discussed at a general level. To further the discussion, this thesis proposes three psychological processes that could help improve the understanding of consumer reactions to stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising, and how social effects may be connected to brand-related effects. These processes will be briefly presented below, and further discussed and tested in the empirical studies. The proposed processes are not the only ones that could explain the effects, nor are they mutually exclusive. However, they do provide a point of departure for understanding the different effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped advertising portrayals, and how these effects are connected.

3.4.1 Cognitive priming

Cognitive priming is an implicit memory effect, where exposure to one stimulus affects the response to other stimuli (Meyer and Schvaneveldt, 1971). An example of priming would be how exposure to gender-stereotyped advertising (stimulus one, also referred to as a *priming cue*) affects female students' performance on a subsequent math quiz (stimulus two. Davies et al., 2002). The priming cue (an ad featuring gender stereotyped portrayals) activates certain pre-existing mental schema (for example, regarding gender stereotypes in society in general), which then automatically evokes behaviour consistent with the activated schema (for example, acting more in line with stereotypes of one's own gender) (Davies et al., 2002).

In the advertising literature, priming effects have been observed from stimuli featuring themes as diverse as gender (Davies et al*.,* 2005), race (Steele and Aronson, 1995), age (Bargh et al., 1996), and homosexuality (Angelini and Bradley, 2010). Priming theory has primarily been used to explain brand-related advertising effects such as brand attitudes and product choice (e.g., Chartrand et al., 2008; Yi, 1990). Some studies also show that advertising can prime cognitive and social processes not related to the brand and product featured in the advertising, but to other aspects of its content, such as stereotypes, creativity, or values (Davies et al., 2002; Defever et al., 2011; Rosengren et al., 2013).

Self-categorization theory proposes that the salience of social groups is not fixed (Turner et al*.,* 1994). This means that people can be primed to accentuate differences or similarities between groups, as well as abstraction levels of different categories. It could therefore be argued, in line with the reasoning of Brumbaugh and Grier (2006), that non-stereotyped portrayals could prime consumers to start thinking about other people and their social properties, thereby temporarily affecting consumers socially through a process of changing self-categorization.

Non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising would lead to thoughts that reflect the fact that they are unusual (Brumbaugh and Grier, 2006, Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999). Previous research shows that such portrayals induce more self-relevant, critical thinking than ads featuring stereotyped portrayals (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999). It is therefore likely that consumers exposed to non-stereotyped portrayals will think more about the people

in the ad (e.g., "they are gay", "they are in love") and their relationship to the consumer him/herself ("I know that feeling"), thereby increasing the salience of higher-level social categories ("romantic couples"). This process would be moderated by consumer attitudes towards the people (for example, a specific minority) featured, so that consumers with positive attitudes towards the minority would experience such a process, while consumers with negative attitudes towards the minority would not. As consumers with negative attitudes towards the minority would likely not perceive themselves as the target of an ad featuring minority portrayals (Aaker et al., 2000), their thinking would be neutral ("this is not for me"), rather than strongly negative.

For consumers with a positive attitude towards the minority, the process of thinking more about the people in the ad would generate several different psychological reactions that could be defined as social effects, for example, social connectedness and empathy. Given that previous research has found consumers more likely to think about the people in the ad and their relationship to each other, when exposed to non-stereotyped portrayals (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999), such portrayals should have a positive impact on how close we feel to other people and our ability to feel for others. For consumers with a negative attitude towards the minority, no such social effects would be expected as a result of these consumers not feeling targeted by the ad.

As for the connection between social effects and brand-related effects, social effects would mediate brand-related effects as the consumer (with a positive attitude towards the minority) "rewards" a non-stereotyped ad or brand for making them feel better in terms of, for example, social connectedness or empathy (see Rosengren et al., 2013 for a similar idea with regard to ad creativity). Similarly, consumers would "punish" a stereotyped ad or brand for making them feel less connected. Based on cognitive priming theory, it can thus be expected that, for consumers with a positive attitude towards the minority, non-stereotyped portrayals make consumers feel better, which in turn has a positive (mediating) impact on brand-related advertising effects. The opposite can be expected of stereotyped ads.

This reasoning is expanded and empirically tested in Articles 1 and 5.

3.4.2 Reactance

Reactance is another psychological process that could explain the effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising. Previous research shows that consumer reactions to advertising are dependent on their perceptions of its intended audience (e.g., Dahlen et al., 2014; Marshall et al., 2008). Ads, both in terms of what they say and how they say it, suggest to the consumer who she is and who she could be. This information is then used by consumers in forming perceptions of themselves (Dahlen et al., 2014; Mehta, 1999).

In discussing stereotypes in advertising, this is particularly interesting. For consumers who feel targeted, it suggests that portrayals in ads will be seen as self-relevant and processed accordingly. Over time, being exposed to advertising using stereotyped portrayals will put pressure on the audience to behave in a manner that is consistent with these stereotypes (Casper and Rothermund, 2012). This limits the personal freedom of consumers, thereby introducing a tension which is likely to lead to reactance (Thorbjørnsen and Dahlen, 2011). When personal freedom is reduced, eliminated, or threatened, people will experience a state of arousal (*reactance*, Brehm, 1966) that induces attempts to re-establish the threatened behaviour. Stereotyped advertising portrayals would thus limit the target audience's perceived range of alternatives (regarding, for example, what it means to be successful or attractive), and would generate higher levels of defensive reactions (Henderson-King et al., 2001; Wan et al., 2013).

Non-stereotyped portrayals, however, put less strain on the audience to comply with a specific stereotype and thus lead to more possibilities to relate to the portrayals used. By being more open to the target audience creatively decoding and deconstructing meanings (Puntoni et al., 2011), non-stereotyped portrayals thus reduce the risk of ad reactance.

Reactance theory further proposes that an individual experiencing reactance to a stimulus becomes more resistant to persuasion. In an advertising context, this would lead to lower levels of brand-related effects, as the consumer defends herself by concluding that "I'm not wrong, they are" (e.g., Ha and McCann, 2008; Obermiller et al., 2005). As consumers are expected to experience higher levels of ad reactance to stereotyped advertising, this

would in turn lead to such advertising generating lower levels of brand-related effects. For non-stereotyped portrayals, the opposite is expected.

This reasoning is expanded and empirically tested in Studies 2 and 4.

3.4.3 The influence of presumed influence

A third psychological process that can help explain the effects of stereo-typed and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising is the influence of pre-sumed influence. This is a perspective on stereotypes that has been largely overlooked by the literature.

Research on the influence of presumed influence (IPI; Gunther and Storey, 2003) has shown that the expected impact of advertising on other people affects consumers' reactions to a wide range of stimuli (Eisend, 2017; Sun et al., 2008). The theory suggests that consumers are aware of the persuasive agenda of advertising, and that they believe others to be more affected by persuasion attempts than they themselves are (Dahlen et al., 2013). This belief mediates their reaction to the advertising, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. The IPI model (Gunther and Storey, 2003)
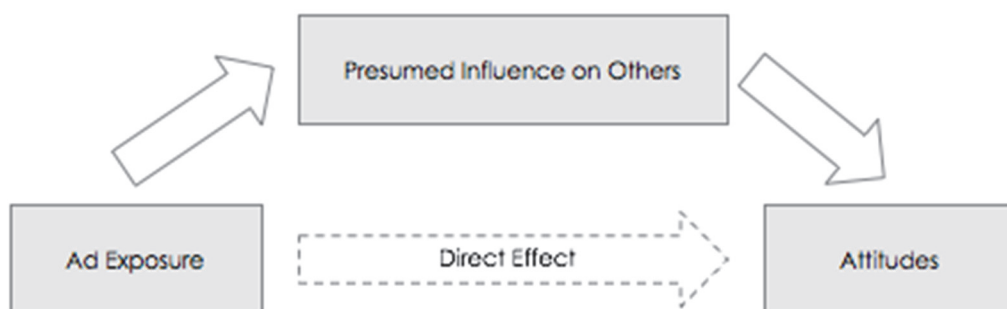
Presumed influence can be either positive or negative (Noguti and Russell, 2014), meaning that consumers can presume that advertising, depending on its message, theme and portrayals, will either help or harm others (Eisend, 2017). In the case of stereotyped advertising, there are several reasons why consumers might expect it to cause harm. In recent years, criticism against the effects of stereotyped advertising images (Bian and Wang, 2015; Eisend, 2010; Eisend et al., 2014) has been intense. For example, the 2008 resolution from the European Parliament, explicitly discouraging advertisers from relying on gender stereotypes, has been adopted in the form of legislation (for example, in the United Kingdom and Denmark) or industry self-regulation (in Germany and Sweden) (Van Hellemont and Van Den Bulck, 2012). It is thus likely that some of the arguments against stereotypes have reached consumers through mainstream media. As a result, consumers would believe stereotyped advertising to be potentially harmful to others, in much the same way that previous studies have shown with regard to offensive advertising messages (Dahlen et al., 2013) and gambling advertisements (Youn et al., 2000).

Further, consumers adapt their behaviour according to their beliefs about how advertising affects others (Gunther and Storey, 2003). Thus, when consumers perceive advertising to be harmful to others, they dislike the advertising (McLeod et al., 1997; Youn et al., 2000). This attitude could arise simply out of concern for others (Eisend, 2015). It has also been described as a result of assumed social pressure—'if others are harmed by it, I don't want to disagree with them' (Dahlen et al., 2013). Another potential explanation would be affect infusion (Lee and Schumann, 2004); as the consumer reacts negatively to the assumption that a stereotyped portrayal would harm others, this negative affect is transferred to the source of the problem, i.e., the ad and its sender (the brand). Taken together, this suggests that advertising featuring stereotyped portrayals would be assumed to harm others, and thereby generate negative brand-related effects. The opposite would be expected for non-stereotyped portrayals; as consumers believe that they help, or at least not harm others, such portrayals would generate positive brand-related effects.

This reasoning is expanded and empirically tested in Studies 3 and 4.

Chapter 4

Research methodology

The relationships proposed in Chapter 3 are assessed in five articles featuring twelve empirical studies. Before introducing the articles, the scientific perspectives and procedures of these empirical studies will be addressed.

4.1 Research perspective

This thesis applies a consumer perspective to study the effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped advertising portrayals, which has three main implications. First, the individual consumer, rather than, for example, a firm or a lawmaker, is the unit of study. I thus investigate the effects on the attitudes and behaviours of *consumers*. The theory is concerned with consumer effects and the proposed psychological mechanisms take place in the mind of the consumer. Consumers (as opposed to, for example, advertising professionals) further constitute the sample for all empirical studies.

The second implication is that consumers define what is a stereotyped or non-stereotyped portrayal. As mentioned in Chapter 2, in previous studies (e.g., Eisend, 2010; Eisend et al., 2014; Knoll et al., 2011; Richins, 1991) the researcher(s) have decided whether the advertising portrayal should be coded as stereotyped or not. However, because a stereotype is defined as a *generalized and widely accepted belief about the personal attributes of members of a social category* (Taylor and Stern, 1997), it is difficult for researchers to show that their own idea of what is stereotyped is indeed generalized and widely accepted. This issue can be resolved by letting consumers themselves decide

if an advertising portrayal is stereotyped or not, and then use this assessment for further analysis. In the view of this thesis, a portrayal is thus stereotyped (or non-stereotyped) if the consumer considers it so. For all empirical studies, consumers thus rate the level of perceived stereotypicality of the portrayals either in a pre-test, as a manipulation check in the main study, or both (please refer to the individual articles for a thorough description of the measures and procedures used). This makes it possible to conclude that it is in fact the stereotyping, rather than anything else, that generates the effects observed, as it allows for statistical analyses to directly relate the level of perceived stereotypicality to any observed effects.

The third implication is that consumers decide whether they are the target of an ad. Social identities are largely fluid, making it difficult for a researcher to decide *a priori* who will feel targeted by a specific ad or campaign. As perceived targetedness is an important mediator of reactions to stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals (Aaker et al., 2000; Puntoni et al., 2011), this is a challenge in terms of research design. The participants in the experiments in this thesis thus constitute a general audience, consisting of people of different genders, ethnicities, ages, sexual orientations, and other attributes. In Articles 2 and 3, however, participants consist of young women only, in an effort to replicate and build on the findings of previous studies. When necessary, perceived targetedness is measured and its impact on the effects is analysed.

4.2 Scientific perspective

This thesis assumes a deductive approach to research (Hunt, 2014). Thus, hypotheses are generated from theory and tested in empirical studies. The main reason for this methodological approach is that this thesis adds to the existing literature on advertising effects, where the deductive approach is dominant (Deshpandé, 1983; Hunt, 2014). Further, this approach is suitable to the research area and to answer the research questions posed in the articles.

The empirical studies in this paper are quantitative studies with experimental designs, placing much emphasis on replicability, reliability, and validity. There are several advantages to using an experimental research

design. First, it allows for the establishment of causality (rather than correlation) (Spencer et al., 2005). This has been described as the *raison d'être* for experiments (Perdue and Summers, 1986). As the researcher controls the stimuli exposure, it can be concluded that the exposure causes whatever effects are observed. For the purpose of this thesis, an experimental study design increases the possibilities to conclude that the stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals are, in fact, causing the social and brand-related effects studied.

Second, experiments allow for the isolation of effects. As the stimuli are similar, with the exception of the manipulated variable (in this case, the degree of stereotypicality), any observed difference between groups most likely stems from this manipulation (Perdue and Summers, 1986).

Third, experiments, as a quantitative method, allow for the assessment of psychological processes of which the participant may not be aware. This is particularly interesting when investigating effects of stereotypes, which are often so embedded in culture that people act on them unconsciously (Taylor and Stern, 1997). Compared to qualitative designs, experimental studies would capture the effects of such embedded cultural cues more adequately.

What is more, demand effects (participants answering what they think the researcher wants to hear, or what they think is socially desirable) tend to decrease when participants take part in an anonymous experiment, compared to when they are interviewed (Lynn and Lynn, 2003). Most people do not want to see themselves as largely affected by advertising (Dahlen et al., 2013). Further, most people do not consider themselves to be either victims of stereotyping or guilty of it (Davies et al., 2002). This makes the effects of advertising portrayals in general, and stereotyped advertising portrayals in particular, sensitive to demand effects (Eisend, 2017), further favouring the experimental research design in this case.

Although there are many advantages to the deductive experimental approach, it is by no means without limitations. The dominance of the deductive approach in the advertising research field limits the contributions of the field in general, and increases the risk of scholars overlooking important perspectives (Holbrook and O'Shaughnessy, 1988). A more inductive approach could thus bring several new perspectives to this thesis.

One of the most significant limitations of the deductive experimental approach is that an experiment can only answer the questions that the researcher has asked *a priori*. As such, the researcher's assumptions and prejudices may influence the experimental design and the experiment's results (*experimenter bias*, Sackett, 1979). As the effects of non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising have received scarce academic attention, conducting inductive qualitative studies before deductive studies could provide interesting perspectives and potential ideas for further experiments. For example, such studies could find potential social effects, as well as connections between social and brand-related effects, not yet discussed in the literature.

Further, although experiments can show causality, this causality is limited to variables included in the experiment. There is thus a risk of leaving out important explanations for the effects that would be captured using qualitative methods where the participants can explain their reasoning (Kardes, 1996). An inductive approach could thus provide new perspectives on the on-going discussion of social effects as merely a means to generate brand-related effects (Eisend, 2016), or as effects in their own right (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016). Interviews with consumers and advertisers could add important empirical evidence to this, to date, largely conceptual discussion.

Experimental methodologies have further been criticized for their proneness to data-mining (Lynn and Lynn, 2003). As establishing significant statistical differences is often required for publishing (*confirmation bias*, Jonas et al., 2001), this can tempt researchers to "mine" data to find such differences. Examples of mining would be adapting hypotheses to findings (rather than rejecting the original hypotheses), excluding original hypotheses from the study because no support was found in the data, discarding outliers from the dataset, or adding more participants to the study to get significant results. To settle such concerns, the studies in this thesis have been conducted strictly following the methodological procedures recommended for experiments (Lynn and Lynn, 2003). These are described in detail in the article manuscripts.

Taken together, there are several advantages and disadvantages to experimental research designs than the reader should keep in mind when examining the empirical studies.

4.3 Procedure: Experimental research design

The empirical studies in this thesis are all of an experimental design. Strict measures were taken to adhere to the methodological procedures recommended for experiments (Lynn and Lynn, 2003). Participants (individual consumers) were thus randomly allocated to groups, and exposed to different stimuli (conditions). The stimuli consisted of advertising featuring stereotyped or non-stereotyped portrayals. All studies had a full factorial between-subjects study design, meaning that each participant is exposed to only to stimuli that was either stereotyped or non-stereotyped. The stereotypicality of the portrayals was isolated as much as possible to avoid confounding effects. Reactions were measured using different methods, such as thought listing (e.g., Studies 1.1 and 2.3) and multi-item questions. The effects reported were then compared between groups using statistical methods, such as t-tests (e.g., Studies 1.1 and 2.1), bootstrapping mediation analyses (e.g., Studies 1.1, 2.1, and 3.1), and MANCOVA analyses (e.g., Studies 4.1 and 4.2). If significant statistical differences were found between groups, and these differences were in line with what was proposed in the hypotheses, the hypotheses were considered supported (Kardes, 1996). The specific methodology for each study is described in detail in the article manuscripts.

Chapter 5

Introducing the articles

The empirical section of this thesis consists of five articles featuring twelve empirical studies. The articles are published, or intended for publication, in academic marketing and advertising journals. Articles 1, 2, and 3 have been accepted for publication, and the remaining manuscripts have been submitted for possible publication. The five articles investigate different categories and components of stereotyped and non-stereotyped advertising portrayals. This chapter briefly introduces the articles which can be found in their entirety in Chapter 9.

Article 1

Title: Think about it: Can portrayals of homosexuality in advertising prime consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy?

First author. Co-authored with Sara Rosengren and Micael Dahlen. Published in European Journal of Marketing (2017).

The first article uses cognitive priming theory to explore the impact of mainstream advertising featuring non-stereotyped portrayals of sexual orientation on social effects, in terms of consumer-perceived *social connectedness* and *empathy*. It also investigates the impact on brand-related effects in relation to *ad* and *brand attitudes*.

In three experimental studies, we compare the effects of advertising portrayals of homosexuality to advertising portrayals of heterosexuality. Study 1 (N=229, student sample) uses a thought-listing exercise to explore whether portrayals of homosexuality can evoke more other-related thoughts, and whether this affects social connectedness and empathy. In Study 2 (N=529), we replicate the findings from Study 1 while introducing *attitudes toward homosexuality* as a boundary condition. Further, we measure brand-related effects in terms of ad and brand attitudes. Study 3 (N=173) replicates the findings from Study 2 while controlling for gender, perceived similarity, and targetedness.

The results show that non-stereotyped portrayals of homosexuality in advertising can prime consumers to think about other people, thereby positively impacting social connectedness and empathy. What is more, these social effects mediate brand-related advertising effects. In line with previous studies of portrayals of homosexuality in advertising, the effects are moderated by attitudes toward homosexuality.

The article reveals that non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising can generate social effects that enhance consumer well-being. By showing how portrayals of homosexuality can increase social connectedness and empathy, the article adds to the discussion of the pros and cons of advertising on a societal level. Further, it determines that social effects are connected to brand-related advertising effects, as consumers reward advertising that makes them feel good with positive ad and brand attitudes. The finding that portrayals of homosexuality in advertising can affect consumers socially in terms of social connectedness and empathy should encourage marketers to explore the possibilities of creating advertising that benefits consumers and brands alike.

Article 2

Title: Advertising "like a girl": Towards a better understanding of "femvertising" and its effects

First author. Co-authored with Sara Rosengren and Micael Dahlen. Published in Psychology and Marketing (2017).

The second article uses reactance theory to explore the impact of gender-based stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals on brand-related effects in terms of *ad* and *brand attitudes.*

This paper investigates the impact of femvertising, defined as advertising that challenges traditional female advertising stereotypes. More specifically, it hypothesizes that femvertising (vs. traditional portrayals of females in advertising) will reduce ad reactance among a female target audience, and that this in turn will enhance ad and brand attitudes. In three experimental studies, we compare the effects of advertising featuring non-stereotyped female portrayals (femvertising) to advertising featuring stereotyped female portrayals (traditional advertising). Study 1 (N=149, women aged 18-41) addresses stereotypes in terms of physical characteristics, and uses a one-way between subjects experimental design to explore whether femvertising (non-stereotyped portrayal) vs. traditional advertising (stereotyped portrayal) can evoke lower levels of ad reactance, and whether this affects ad attitudes. In Study 2 (N=346, women ages 18-40) we replicate the findings from Study 1 for stereotypes in terms of role behaviours, using real femvertising ads from real brands. Further, Study 2 uses a thought-listing exercise to explore whether stereotype thoughts occur with participants without probing. Study 3 (N=96, women aged 17-45) replicates the findings from Study 2 while controlling for brand familiarity and offense. Study 3 also captures effects in terms of brand attitudes.

The results show that the proposed logic holds across print and digital media for five different product categories, and for femvertising focusing on challenging female stereotypes in terms of physical characteristics, as well as the roles and occupations used to portray women in advertising.

Whereas previous studies on the effects of female portrayals tend to focus on social comparison and self-identity, this paper considers the role of psychological reactance to (more or less) stereotyped portrayals in explaining these effects. The results suggest that marketers have much to gain from adapting a more proactive and mindful approach to the female portrayals they use in their ads.

Article 3

Title: Caring for her: The influence of presumed influence on female consumers' attitudes towards advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals

Single authored. Forthcoming in International Journal of Advertising (2017).

The third article uses theory on the *influence of presumed influence* (IPI) to investigate the impact of gender-based stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals on brand-related effects in terms of *ad* and *brand attitudes*.

This study investigates how presumed influence on others affects women's evaluations of advertising featuring gender stereotypes. More specifically, it hypothesizes that stereotyped portrayals (vs. non-stereotyped portrayals) will increase presumed negative influence on other women, and that this, in turn, will lower ad and brand attitudes among a female target audience. In two experimental studies, I compare the effects of advertising featuring stereotyped female portrayals to advertising featuring non-stereotyped female portrayals. Study 1 (N=119, women aged 17-40) uses a one-way between subjects experimental design to investigate whether stereotyped (vs. non-stereotyped) female portrayals in terms of physical characteristics can generate higher levels of presumed negative influence on others, and whether this affects ad and brand attitudes. In Study 2 (N=316, women ages 18-40), the findings from Study 1 are replicated for stereotypes in terms of role behaviours, using real ads from real brands.

The results show that the proposed logic holds across print and digital media for five different product categories, and for female stereotypes in terms of physical characteristics, as well as the roles and occupations.

While previous research has largely overlooked the social context of the reactions to gender stereotypes, this article considers the role of presumed influence on others in women's reactions to female stereotyped portrayals in advertising. The results indicate that presumed influence indeed plays an important part in the reactions to stereotyped portrayals in advertising. This adds a new theoretical perspective to the literature on gender stereotypes in

advertising—one that helps explain why many women dislike gender stereotypes in advertising, even though those stereotypes often have a limited impact on them personally.

Article 4

Title: It goes both ways: Gender stereotypes in advertising have negative effects on women and men

First author. Co-authored with Micael Dahlen and Sara Rosengren. Under review for possible publication in Journal of Advertising Research.

The fourth article connects theory on the *influence of presumed influence* (IPI) to *reactance theory* to investigate the impact of gender-based stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals on brand-related effects in terms of *ad attitudes*, *brand attitudes*, and *purchase intentions.*

This study investigates how presumed influence on women and men affects women's and men's evaluations of advertising featuring female and male stereotyped portrayals. More specifically, it hypothesizes that stereotyped portrayals (vs. non-stereotyped portrayals) will increase presumed negative influence on women and men, and that this will lead to higher levels of reactance, which in turn leads to less favourable ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions among a female and male target audience. In two experimental studies, we compare the effects of advertising featuring stereotyped portrayals to advertising featuring non-stereotyped portrayals. Study 1 (N=124, 52% women, age 18-79) uses a two (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped portrayals) by two (female vs. male participant gender) between subjects experimental design to investigate whether stereotyped female portrayals can generate higher levels of presumed negative influence on women and men, and whether this leads to higher levels of reactance, which in turn has a negative impact on ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions. In Study 2 (N=130, 48% women, ages 18-76), the findings from Study 1 are replicated for male stereotyped portrayals.

The results show that the proposed logic holds for female stereotyped portrayals. For male stereotyped portrayals, the hypothesized relationships are partially supported.

Whereas previous studies have mainly focused on effects of stereotyped portrayals of females, the current paper suggests that female and male consumers alike can react negatively to both female and male stereotyped portrayals. Further, it suggests that presumed influence on others and ad reactance can explain why this is the case. The results indicate that advertisers, regardless of target audience, can gain advantages from adapting a more mindful approach to the portrayals of gender used in advertising.

Article 5

Title: Diverse effects of ethnic diversity in advertising: Exploring brand-related and social effects

Second author. Co-authored with Micael Dahlen, Sara Rosengren, Rebecka Aflaki, and Oscar Theblin. Under review for possible publication in Journal of Advertising.

The fifth article uses an approach similar to that of Article 1, but for mainstream advertising featuring non-stereotyped portrayals in terms of ethnic diversity. It uses cognitive priming theory to explore the impact of non-stereotyped portrayals featuring majority and minority ethnicities on social effects in terms of consumer-perceived *social connectedness* and *empathy*. It also investigates the impact on brand-related effects in terms of *ad* and *brand attitudes*.

In two experimental studies, we compare the effects of advertising portrayals of ethnic diversity to advertising portrayals of the ethnic majority. Study 1 (N=338, 51% female, ages 16-64, 87% self-identified ethnic majority) uses a two (ethnic diversity vs. ethnic majority) by two (high involvement vs. low involvement product category) by two (self-reported ethnic majority vs. minority) experimental design to explore whether portrayals of ethnic diversity can generate higher levels of social effects in terms of social

connectedness and empathy, and brand-related effects in terms of ad and brand attitudes. Study 1 also includes attitudes toward ethnic diversity as a moderating variable. Study 2 (N=178, 49% female, ages 16-64, 88% self-identified ethnic majority) uses a two (ethnic diversity vs. ethnic majority) by two (self-reported ethnic majority vs. minority) experiment design, while featuring portrayals of diversity in a context (Christmas) strongly associated with the ethnic majority. Study 2 again includes attitudes toward ethnic diversity as a moderating variable.

The results show that, in a neutral context, non-stereotyped portrayals of ethnic diversity in advertising can prime consumers to think about other people, thereby positively impacting social connectedness and empathy, as well as ad and brand attitudes. The effects are, however, moderated by attitudes toward ethnic diversity, so that the positive effects of ethnic diversity advertising increase with participants' attitudes toward diversity. Dividing participants into less versus more favourable attitudes toward diversity, we found a crude pattern where the effects of the diversity advertising go from neutral to significantly positive. In a cultural context strongly associated with the ethnic majority, however, no support was found for the hypotheses. While the positive effect on participants with higher attitudes toward diversity went from positive (in Study 1) to neutral (in Study 2), the effect on participants with less favourable attitudes toward diversity went from neutral to negative. Changing contexts in the advertising from neutral to culturally biased toward the majority ethnicity thus shifts the net effect from positive to negative.

The article reveals that non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising can generate social effects that enhance consumer well-being, but that these effects are subject to limitations in terms of consumer attitudes toward diversity, as well as the cultural context portrayed. By showing how and when portrayals of ethnic diversity can generate social and brand-related effects, the article deepens the understanding of the effects of non-stereotyped advertising portrayals. The finding that portrayals of ethnic diversity in advertising, if mindfully executed, can have a positive impact on consumers and brands should encourage marketers to further explore the possibilities of non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising.

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The structure of the articles is summarized in Table 4. Figure 3 provides a visual presentation of how the articles fit into the proposed theoretical framework, and what aspects of the framework are empirically assessed in the articles.

Table 4. Summary of the articles

Article	Title	No. studies	Stereotype component
1	Think about it	3	Sexual orientation
2	Advertising like a girl	3	Gender
3	Caring for her	2	Gender
4	Stereotypes go both ways	2	Gender
5	TBD	2	Ethnicity

Article	Process	Mediator	Moderator	Response
1	Cognitive priming	Other-related thoughts	Attitude/ homosexuality	Social connectedness, empathy, AAtt, BAtt
2	Reactance	Reactance	N/A	AAtt, BAtt
3	IPI	IPI	N/A	AAtt, BAtt
4	IPI, reactance	IPI, reactance	N/A	AtAtt, Batt
5	Cognitive priming	Thoughts about self and others	Attitude/ethnic diversity	Social connectedness, empathy, AAtt, BAtt

Figure 3. Theoretical framework including articles
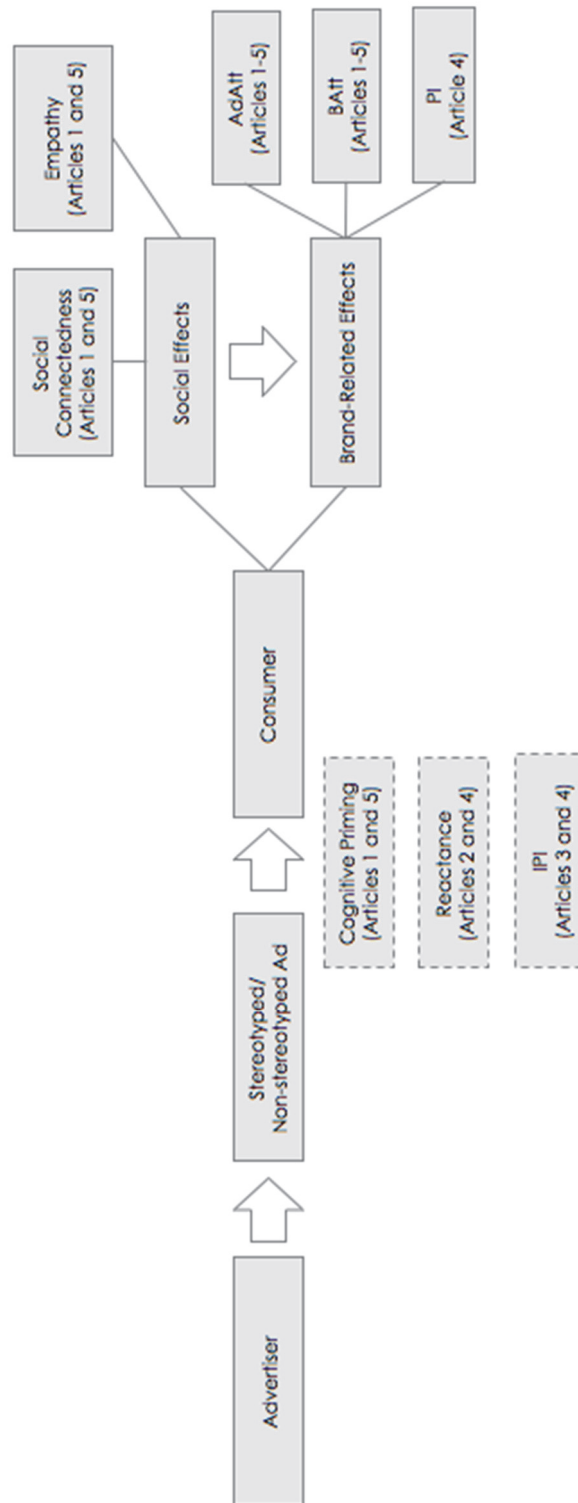
Chapter 6

Contributions to advertising research

The purpose of this thesis is to improve the understanding of social and brand-related effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising. This purpose has been addressed through an examination of the existing literature on advertising stereotypes and their effects, including psychological processes that can help explain these effects. The proposed relationships have been tested in twelve empirical studies, with results indicating that non-stereotyped (vs. stereotyped) advertising portrayals can have a positive (vs. negative) impact on social effects in terms of social connectedness and empathy, as well as a positive (vs. negative) impact on brand-related effects in terms of ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions. Further, five empirical studies find support for the proposition that social effects can have an impact on brand-related effects.

6.1 Theoretical contributions

Theoretically, this thesis contributes to the advertising literature in several ways. First, it connects the literature on social advertising effects to the literature on brand-related advertising effects. To date, these effects have rarely been investigated simultaneously. This is largely the result of different perspectives on advertising, where the advertising literature sees it as a tool to create value for brands, while the psychology/sociology literature investigates effects from a human and/or societal perspective (cf. Rosengren and Sjödin, 2011). Based on the different perspectives on advertising, the previ-

ous literature indicates that advertising almost always generates positive brand-related effects (as discussed in advertising literature) and negative social effects (as discussed in the psychology/sociology literature). This thesis makes a contribution by bridging these perspectives, by investigating social and brand-related effects simultaneously, which opens up further investigations of how and when these effects are connected. Further, through a discussion of the definition of social and brand-related advertising effects (see Chapter 3), this thesis proposes that advertising effects should be defined based on consumer reactions, rather than advertiser intent. Social effects and brand-related effects should thus be considered separate effects. While social effects can have an impact on brand-related effects (as discussed in Chapter 3), they also constitute effects in their own right. This discussion answers several calls from advertising academia to expand the narrow view of advertising to include more types of effects (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Rosengren et al., 2013).

Second, this thesis summarizes research on stereotyped portrayals that has been scattered across different literature streams (such as marketing, sociology, and psychology), stereotype categories (such as gender, ethnicity, and sexuality), stereotype components (such as role and physical characteristics), and theories (such as social comparison theory and cognitive priming theory). This summary of the existing knowledge, including definitions of key concepts (including stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals), should significantly simplify future studies of stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals, and thereby improve the understanding of the effects of such portrayals. Further, this thesis makes a conceptual and methodological contribution by proposing that stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals should be defined by consumers, rather than researchers. This should further simplify any future theoretical discussion on the definition and effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped advertising portrayals.

Third, this thesis focuses on stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals featured in mainstream advertising targeting a mainstream audience. While many previous studies have addressed stereotyped advertising portrayals and their effects, they have usually studied the effects on either consumers belonging to the group that is stereotyped (e.g.., Davies et al., 2002), or consumers belonging to a group that is not stereotyped in that particular

ad (e.g., Oakenfull et al., 2008). This thesis, however, contends that mainstream advertising reaches a mix of consumers, and their reactions should be studied together to assess general audience effects. Further, this thesis suggests that consumers can identify with portrayals that are superficially dissimilar from themselves, as long as they can relate to the general theme of the portrayal. This will allow future research to more adequately discuss potential reactions from different consumers. Adding to this, previous studies have often focused on non-stereotyped portrayals directed at a niche audience and have found that consumers who are not in that audience report lower levels of brand-related effects (Puntoni et al., 2011). However, this thesis proposes that these effects may not be a result of the consumer responding negatively to the non-stereotyped portrayal, but to the feeling of being untargeted, or left out. Through studying non-stereotyped portrayals featured in mainstream advertising, thus allowing for more consumers to feel targeted, this thesis adds a new theoretical perspective to the literature on non-stereotyped and minority portrayals in advertising, upon which future studies can build.

6.2 Empirical contributions

Empirically, this thesis assesses brand-related and social advertising effects of stereotypes and non-stereotypes in advertising, and how these effects are connected. While it has been theoretically argued that social effects would impact brand-related effects (Eisend, 2016), few studies have investigated them simultaneously. The ones that have done so (Antioco et al., 2012; Martin et al., 2007), have typically considered them as separate effects with no internal relationship. The results of this thesis indicate that such a relationship indeed exists, so that social effects have an impact on brand-related effects. These results contribute to the literature on advertising effects and will allow future studies to empirically assess other types of effects in relation to other types of portrayals.

Second, this thesis empirically investigates the effects of a number of different stereotyped and non-stereotyped advertising portrayals. The twelve empirical studies address three different stereotype categories (gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation) and two stereotype components

(physical characteristics and role). In previous research, these categories and components have usually been studied separately, leading to a limited understanding of whether the effects of different stereotyped (and non-stereotyped) portrayals are similar or not. The findings indicate that researchers can assume similar effects across stereotype category and components, which could help simplify future study designs.

Third, this thesis empirically allows consumers to define how stereotyped a portrayal is, and lets this definition guide further empirical assessments. This means that future studies can assume that consumers are indeed capable of defining portrayals as stereotyped or non-stereotyped, and be designed accordingly. It further contributes with proposed measures for consumer definitions of stereotypicality.

Fourth, this thesis empirically assesses reactions of a mainstream audience to portrayals featured in mainstream advertising. Although the concepts of similarity and targetedness have been frequently discussed in the advertising stereotype literature (Aaker et al., 2000; Grier and Brumbaugh, 2006), few studies have empirically assessed when consumers feel similar to, and targeted by, specific advertising portrayals. Rather, superficial assumptions (such as women only feeling targeted by ads featuring women) have guided the empirical studies. The results of this thesis suggest that consumers can indeed feel similar to and targeted by portrayals that are superficially dissimilar to themselves, thereby making an empirical contribution to the literature on similarity and targetedness. Future research can thus assume a wider group of potential targets.

Chapter 7

Practical implications

There are several reasons for advertisers to take note of the findings of this thesis. First, the results indicate that advertisers who use non-stereotyped portrayals in their mainstream advertising can expect a majority of consumers to respond well to such efforts, given that they feel targeted by the advertising. The results from the empirical studies suggest that it is possible for non-stereotyped advertising portrayals to generate social effects in terms of social connectedness and empathy, which in turn have a positive impact on brand-related effects. While advertising can indeed generate negative social effects (Pollay, 1986), the findings from this thesis indicate that this is a result of the portrayals featured in advertising, and not the advertising *per se*. When the portrayals change, the effects, at least in some circumstances, follow suit. The results from this thesis thus suggest that advertisers should explore (while keeping targeting in mind) non-stereotyped portrayals, in an effort to benefit their customers as well as their brand.

Second, the findings of this thesis indicate that the common wisdom that stereotyped portrayals should (or even must, Courtney and Whipple, 1983) be used in advertising because they facilitate processing (Johnson and Grier, 2012), may be outdated. There is in fact little empirical evidence that stereotyped portrayals would generate positive brand-related effects with a mainstream audience (Bower and Landreth, 2001; Holmstrom, 2004). The results from this thesis replicate the findings of previous studies and suggest that stereotyped portrayals, regardless of stereotype category (gender,

ethnicity, and sexual orientation) and stereotype component (such as role and physical characteristics), can indeed have a negative impact on social effects as well as brand-related effects. This finding suggests that advertisers should be mindful of the stereotypes their portrayals may (intentionally or unintentionally) feature.

Third, the results from this thesis suggest that advertisers need to be mindful of changing consumer values. As consumers become more educated on advertising and its effects, their reasoning on the topic, and therefore their attitudes, may change (Eisend, 2017). As discussed in Articles 3 and 4, consumers are aware not only of advertising's persuasive agenda, but also of its potential societal impact, and may take this into account when evaluating ads. What is more, advertising needs to adapt to changing societal values to appeal to consumers (Eisend, 2016). Consumer preferences reflect broader streams and changes in society at large. As society changes, so does its advertising, but the change process usually lags (Eisend, 2010, 2016), potentially leading to advertising that appears out of touch with societal values. As Article 2 shows, advertisers can gain advantages from not only following, but rather from driving social change, if that change resonates with consumer values. An important implication for advertisers would thus be to carry out more extensive consumer research. This research should not focus on products, brands, and advertising only, but should capture the social movements and motivations of the intended target audience, as well as potential exposure audiences. The gender stereotype research conducted by Unilever (Sweney, 2016) is an example of how this may be done. Such research should also take into account indirect effects, such as the influence of presumed influence, in addition to capturing consumers' personal opinions.

Further, the results of this thesis may have implications for advertising legislation. The findings, particularly of Articles 2, 3, and 4, indicate that consumers are not passive victims of advertising (cf. Pollay, 1986). Rather, they are knowledgeable and active participants in the communication process. While many countries have some legislation around advertising addressing vulnerable groups (such as children) and advertising for harmful products (such as tobacco, alcohol, and gambling), few countries legislate against stereotyped advertising portrayals. Such legislation has, however,

been proposed in several countries (Irvine, 2008). In 2017, the British Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) released a report concluding that "stereotypes in ads can contribute to harm for adults and children" and calling for stricter guidelines and the banning of ads that "promote gender stereotypes or denigrate people that do not conform to them" (Magra, 2017, p. 1).

The findings of this thesis indicate that while stereotyped advertising portrayals can generate negative social effects, these effects are mediated by consumers' abilities to defend themselves psychologically through, for example, reactance. It is thus possible that the need for legislation would decrease over time, as consumers become more advertising literate and thereby develop stronger defence mechanisms (Eisend, 2017). However, even though legislation may not be needed to protect consumers, it could have normative effects. Banning stereotyped advertising portrayals would send signals regarding what society at large sees as acceptable portrayals of its citizens. As this thesis shows, developments in advertising and society are often closely connected, which would be of interest to lawmakers.

Chapter 8

Limitations and future research

The findings of this thesis are subject to several limitations. One obvious limitation of the results lies in the approach, in terms of epistemology and method. While experiments with a single exposure to stimuli can establish cause and effect and thus test hypotheses effectively, there are several limitations to the results they produce. Most importantly for the purpose of this thesis, they cannot capture effects of repeated exposure to advertising over time. As stereotypes are by definition frequently repeated, and thereby become widely accepted (Taylor and Stern, 1997), it is plausible that repeated exposure to advertising featuring stereotyped portrayals would render results that are different from those observed after one exposure. Repeated exposure could lead to stronger effects (as the stereotype is reinforced), which would be in line with cultivation theory (Mastro, 2009). Alternatively, the effects of the portrayals could decrease as a result of repeated exposure, as consumers develop stronger coping mechanisms (Gunther and Storey, 2003), and may thus become more resistant to persuasion (Eisend, 2017). The results from this thesis (particularly Articles 2-4) indicate that the latter is more likely, but more research is needed. Future studies could use alternative methodological approaches, such as longitudinal surveys, or participatory observations, that may be better suited than experiments to investigate effects over time.

What is more, experiments can only capture effects that the researcher has measured. Because the results of this thesis indicate that the stereotypi-

cality of advertising portrayals can have an impact on social effects such as social connectedness and empathy, it is likely that there are other effects that the studies have not captured. This opens up possibilities for future studies to use experiments to measure other social effects (such as effects of stereotypicality on social trust or perceived safety in public spaces). What is more, the findings from this thesis should encourage future studies to explore the impact of stereotypicality on more types of brand-related effects (such as advertising equity, Rosengren and Dahlen, 2015, or actual sales).

All studies in this thesis rely on self-reports from consumers to measure the effects. While this is the most frequently used method in the advertising literature (Hunt, 2014), it is possible that other measurements (such as observations of behaviour or the measurement of physiological effects through, for example, MRI scans or face-reading software, Morales et al., 2017) would shed additional light on the findings. This would be particularly interesting as the topic of stereotypes can be considered political, and is thereby sensitive to demand effects (Eisend et al., 2014). It is therefore possible that the results in terms of attitudes observed in this thesis would not carry over to actual consumer behaviour.

In the articles, three main psychological processes explain how stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals may generate effects with consumers. These processes should be seen as potential explanations for the effects, rather than an exhaustive list. The proposed processes are not the only ones that could explain the proposed effects, nor are they mutually exclusive. It is thus possible that two or more processes can work simultaneously (as discussed in Article 4). Future studies should add more potential psychological processes, testing them separately and together. Given that the results from this thesis indicate that stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals in terms of gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation may have similar effects, much insight could be gained from applying the processes studied in the field of gender stereotypes (such as social comparison) to the study of ethnicity stereotypes, and vice versa.

Further, in each study, the portrayals concern one stereotype at a time (for example, sexual orientation *or* gender). This methodological choice was made to better isolate effects. However, it is also a reflection of current ad-

vertising research and practice lacking an intersectional perspective. For example, women of colour are often stereotyped both as women *and* as people of colour, but this has received little attention in the literature (Keh et al., 2016). Although this thesis addresses different stereotype categories, it does not address them in the same study, and thus cannot capture intersectional effects. Here, more research is needed, and it is the author's hope that this thesis will serve as an inspiration for such future studies.

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Article 1: Think about it: Can portrayals of homosexuality in advertising prime consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy?

Think about it – can portrayals of homosexuality in advertising prime consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy?

Nina Åkestam
Center for Consumer Marketing, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden

Sara Rosengren
Center for Retailing, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden, and

Micael Dahlen
Center for Consumer Marketing, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden

Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to investigate whether portrayals of homosexuality in advertising can generate social effects in terms of consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy.

Design/methodology/approach – In three experimental studies, the effects of advertising portrayals of homosexuality were compared to advertising portrayals of heterosexuality. Study 1 uses a thought-listing exercise to explore whether portrayals of homosexuality (vs heterosexuality) can evoke more other-related thoughts and whether such portrayals affect consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy. Study 2 replicates the findings while introducing attitudes toward homosexuality as a boundary condition and measuring traditional advertising effects. Study 3 replicates the findings while controlling for gender, perceived similarity and targetedness.

Findings – The results show that portrayals of homosexuality in advertising can prime consumers to think about other people, thereby affecting them socially. In line with previous studies of portrayals of homosexuality in advertising, these effects are moderated by attitudes toward homosexuality.

Research limitations/implications – This paper adds to a growing body of literature on the potentially positive extended effects of advertising. They also challenge some of the previous findings regarding homosexuality in advertising.

Practical implications – The finding that portrayals of homosexuality in advertising can (at least, temporarily) affect consumers socially in terms of social connectedness and empathy should encourage marketers to explore the possibilities of creating advertising that benefits consumers and brands alike.

Originality/value – The paper challenges the idea that the extended effects of advertising have to be negative. By showing how portrayals of homosexuality can increase social connectedness and empathy, it adds to the discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of advertising on a societal level.

Keywords Advertising, Extended effects of advertising, Homosexuality, Self-categorization theory, Social priming

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

In this paper, we investigate whether portrayals of homosexuality in advertising can have positive social effects in terms of consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy. Using social priming theory and self-categorization theory, we argue that portraying a minority group (in this case, homosexual couples) in advertising may prime consumers to think about other people rather than, typically, the advertised brand and themselves, which, in turn, will affect consumers socially.

The investigation is inspired by several large consumer brands using homosexual portrayals in their advertising. Although efforts to reach a homosexual target audience traditionally have resulted in specially targeted advertisements in niche media (Greenlee, 2004; Oakenfull, 2004), a growing number of companies now feature portrayals of homosexuality in mainstream advertising, reaching both heterosexual and homosexual consumers (Puntoni et al., 2011). Examples include brands from industries as diverse as retail (Ikea, JC Penney), greeting cards (Hallmark), cars (Subaru) and fashion (Banana Republic, Calvin Klein). The homosexual portrayals used by these brands are typically said to reflect an increasingly diverse society (Solomon, 2014), and same-sex parents or romantic partners are used to portray everyday consumption of the product, much as advertising has traditionally portrayed heterosexual parents and couples.

To date, a plethora of academic studies have addressed the effects of portrayals of homosexuality in advertising on both homosexual and heterosexual consumers (Bhat et al., 1998; Oakenfull and Greenlee, 2005; Oakenfull et al., 2008; Puntoni et al., 2011). These studies tend to focus on traditional advertising effects, such as advertisement and brand attitudes. In addition, they have shown attitudes toward homosexuality to moderate the effects of such portrayals (Puntoni et al., 2011). This present investigation adds to this literature by exploring the potential social effects of featuring homosexual portrayals in mainstream advertising, while controlling for any difference arising from attitudes toward homosexuality.

This study is also a response to recent calls for marketers to view advertising in a larger context and consider its effects on consumers beyond traditional advertising effects (Borgeson and Schroeder, 2002; Eisend, 2010; Fitzsimons et al., 2008; Jamal, 2003; Powell, 2011; Rosengren et al., 2013). Although research in this field has focused largely on the negative consequences of traditional advertising portrayals, such as the tendency to reinforce stereotypes and hurt consumers' self-image (Dahlén et al., 2014; Richins, 1991), recent studies have shown that advertising can also have positive societal effects. Positive effects found thus far include increased creativity among consumers (Fitzsimons et al., 2008; Rosengren et al., 2013), improved evaluations of a media vehicle (Rosengren and Dahlén, 2013) and increased consumer benevolence (Defever et al., 2011).

Potentially positive social effects of advertising are also of growing practical interest. American Marketing Association (2013) has reiterated its definition of marketing to include societal effects by stating that "marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large". This view has been adopted by many marketers and can partly explain the growing popularity of portrayals of homosexuality in advertising. Companies may feature portrayals of homosexuality in advertising not only to reach this group of consumers but also to generate social effects. By investigating two potential social effects of advertising featuring portrayals of homosexuality – social connectedness and empathy – this paper provides an initial understanding of such effects. More specifically, we hypothesize that portrayals of homosexuality in advertising have a

positive effect on consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy. The hypotheses are tested in three experimental studies of advertisements portraying romantic couples.

Portrayals of homosexuality in advertising

Homosexual consumers are often referred to as a "dream market" for marketers. The group has a relatively high income, progressive views on consumption, and well-documented loyalty to brands they find supportive of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community (Greenlee, 2004). Further, the intense debate over LGBT rights in the USA in recent years highlights how portrayals of homosexuality in advertising are often used by brands aiming to take the pro-gay side, thereby generating social or sustainability-related effects (Solomon, 2014).

Although mainstream brands have been aiming their advertising at homosexual audiences since the 1970s, not until the 1990s did companies start to include portrayals of homosexuality in their mainstream advertising (Oakenfull, 2004). Consequently, researchers began to take an interest in how heterosexual consumers reacted to such portrayals (Bhat et al., 1998). Although it was found that the LGBT community largely appreciated homosexual content in mainstream advertising, most research on portrayals of homosexuality in advertising thus far has been focused on how to balance the tradeoff between the assumed positive attitudinal effects on a homosexual target audience and the assumed negative effects on a non-target (heterosexual) audience, for example, by including lesbians rather than gay men (Oakenfull and Greenlee, 2004) or symbols rather than explicit portrayals of homosexuality (Oakenfull, 2004; Oakenfull et al., 2008; Puntoni et al., 2011). Overall, these studies indicate that a heterosexual audience would have lower advertisement attitudes when exposed to homosexual (as opposed to heterosexual) advertising portrayals, but the effects need not carry over to brands (Angelini and Bradley, 2010; Oakenfull and Greenlee, 2005; Oakenfull et al., 2008; Puntoni et al., 2011).

In this study, we take a different approach to studying the effects of portrayals of homosexuality in advertising. Specifically, we argue that portrayals of homosexuality might have other effects than those on advertisement and brand attitudes. This assertion is in line with recent advertising research, indicating that traditional measures of advertising effectiveness do not provide a full understanding of the advertising effects (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016; Dahlén et al., 2014; Rosengren et al., 2013) and that research on the unintended effects of advertising is needed (Eisend, 2010; Fitzsimons et al., 2008; Powell, 2011; Rosengren et al., 2013). We believe that this perspective would be especially important when it comes to understanding portrayals of homosexuality in mainstream advertising, as the point of departure of previous studies has largely been that general attitudes toward homosexuality are negative (Bhat et al., 1998; Puntoni et al., 2011), whereas recent studies show that between 65 and 90 per cent of the population in Western countries now hold positive attitudes toward homosexuality (PEW Research Center, 2013).

Portrayals of homosexuality in advertising as a social priming cue

Priming effects have been observed from stimuli featuring themes as diverse as gender (Davies et al., 2005), race (Steele and Aronson, 1995), age (Bargh et al., 1996) and homosexuality (Angelini and Bradley, 2010). In advertising research, priming theory has primarily been used to explain traditional advertising effects, for example, in terms of brand attitudes or product choice (Chartrand et al., 2008; Yi, 1990). Some studies have, however, found extended effects of priming. For example, gender-stereotypical advertisements can prime female participants to underperform on a math test (Davies et al., 2002), and creative advertisements can prime consumers to become more creative (Rosengren et al., 2013). These studies show that advertising can prime cognitive and social processes not related to the

brand or product featured in the advertising, but related to other aspects of its content, such as stereotypes (Davies *et al.*, 2002), creativity (Rosengren *et al.*, 2013) or values (Defever *et al.*, 2011).

Considering these findings, we expect that portrayals of homosexuality in mainstream advertising could constitute priming cues that can affect consumers beyond traditional advertising effects. Specifically, in line with the reasoning of Brumbaugh and Grier (2006) and Grier and Brumbaugh (1999), we argue that portrayals of homosexuality in advertising can prime consumers to start thinking about other people (within the advertisement and in society at large) and their social properties (e.g. being gay, being in love, seeming to be similar to oneself), thereby temporarily affecting consumers socially through a process of changing self-categorization that enhances consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy.

Hypotheses

Previous research shows that consumers are typically aware of advertising having a persuasive intent and an intended target audience (Dahlén *et al.*, 2014; Rosengren *et al.*, 2013). This research suggests that the portrayals used in advertising are seen as self-relevant for consumers in the target audience and as such they may influence consumers socially. We expect that portrayals of homosexuality in advertising will prime consumers to think more about the people featured in the advertisement, thereby shifting their self-categorization, making them more likely to feel a social connection to and empathy with other people.

First, we expect exposure to portrayals of homosexuality in advertising to affect positively consumer-perceived social connectedness. *Social connectedness* is defined as the extent to which a person feels connected to other people (Hutcherson *et al.*, 2008; Lee and Robbins, 1995). It is a social effect that marketers frequently describe as desirable for their advertising because it is thought to lead to a more inclusive, less segregated society (Solomon, 2014). Given that previous research has found consumers to be more likely to think about the people in the advertisement and their relationship to each other, when exposed to homosexual (as opposed to heterosexual) content (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999), we expect that homosexuality in advertising will have a positive effect on consumer-perceived social connectedness.

At first glance, this reasoning may seem counter-intuitive. We argue, however, that featuring homosexual portrayals in mainstream advertising highlights similarities between groups rather than differences. We base this argument on self-categorization theory, which proposes that the salience of social groups is not fixed. Individuals categorize themselves and others through a non-conscious process of accentuation, in which differences between social categories are accentuated along with similarities within social categories (Turner *et al.*, 1994). That is, people can be primed to accentuate differences or similarities between groups, as well as abstraction levels of different categories. For example, a person can identify as a mother, a CEO, a lesbian, a Christian or a human being, depending on the context.

We propose that advertising is more likely to prime social categories when featuring homosexual rather than heterosexual portrayals. This reasoning is based on research showing that majority consumers are unlikely to automatically consider their majority trait when describing themselves (Aaker *et al.*, 2000). For example, a consumer is unlikely to think about the fact that he or she and the models in an advertisement share the same sexual orientation if that orientation is straight. The normality of the portrayal strips it of meaning (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999). Thus, mainstream portrayals (e.g. heterosexual, white, attractive, slim people; cf. Richins, 1991) would not constitute a very strong priming cue to affect consumer self-categorization or, by extension, perceived social connectedness.

Homosexual portrayals in advertising, however, would be more likely to prime social categories. Specifically, previous research has shown that such portrayals induce more self-relevant thinking than advertisements featuring mainstream portrayals (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999). This finding indicates how advertisements featuring homosexual portrayals would temporarily shift the salience of social categories in a way that advertisements featuring heterosexual portrayals would not. That is, consumers exposed to portrayals of homosexuality in advertising will think more about the people in the advertisement (that they are gay and in love as opposed to straight and in love) and thus be more likely to relate these concepts to themselves ("I know that feeling"). This reaction should, in turn, prime higher-level social categories ("romantic couples") and lead to higher levels of social connectedness.

Thus, portrayals of homosexuality in mainstream advertising should lead to more thoughts about other people (rather than about the advertised brand and oneself) than would portrayals of heterosexuality. Given the self-relevant nature of advertising portrayals, those thoughts would be of the kind that foster social connectedness, in that they tend to relate the self with others. Therefore, we hypothesize:

> *H1*. Portrayals of homosexuality (vs heterosexuality) in advertising increase consumer-perceived social connectedness.

Second, we expect a similar effect to occur for consumer-perceived empathy. While social connectedness highlights how close people feel to other people, empathy captures perspective and the ability to feel for others (Archer *et al.*, 1981). Empathy is considered one of the most fundamental personality traits for facilitating social coordination in a society (Galinsky *et al.*, 2005). Several studies have highlighted how even brief exposure to advertising can generate rather powerful emotional responses in terms of empathy (Escalas and Stern, 2003). Furthermore, these responses have been found to vary depending on consumer ability to make self-relevant connections to the advertising content and the people portrayed in it (Stout and Leckenby, 1986). Increasing the salience of more abstract social groups (e.g. seeing oneself as a human being rather than as a specific nationality) has been shown to lead to improved levels of self–other overlap, which also generates higher levels of empathy (Galinsky *et al.*, 2005). As discussed above, portrayals of homosexuality in advertising would generate more thoughts about the people in the advertisement ("they are gay") and their relationships with each other ("in love") as well as with the consumer himself or herself ("that is such a nice feeling") than would portrayals of heterosexuality in advertising. It should therefore increase the salience of abstract social groups (Turner *et al.*, 1994), thereby enhancing consumer-perceived empathy. We thus hypothesize:

> *H2*. Portrayals of homosexuality (vs heterosexuality) in advertising increase consumer-perceived empathy.

The underlying reasoning of *H1* and *H2* is, of course, contingent on the portrayals of homosexuality not evoking negative thoughts. Previous research has shown that consumers react differently to portrayals of homosexuality in advertising depending on their general view of homosexuality (Bhat *et al.*, 1998; Puntoni *et al.*, 2011). That is, more positive participants generally react more positively to such portrayals in terms of advertisement attitude, brand attitude and purchase intentions, whereas more negative participants react negatively. Although these studies focus on traditional advertising effects, we expect that the same pattern can be observed for social effects. Thus, in line with previous research on the effect of homosexual portrayals on traditional advertising effects, we hypothesize:

H3. The social effects of homosexuality (vs heterosexuality) in advertising are moderated by consumers' attitudes toward homosexuality.

The hypotheses are tested in a series of three experimental studies. Study 1 provides an initial test of our reasoning using an open-ended thought-listing exercise to explore.

Study 2 replicates these results while considering the moderating effect of attitudes toward homosexuality (*H1-H3*), whereas Study 3 assesses whether the effects are robust for model and participant gender, as well as for perceived similarity and targetedness.

Study 1
Stimulus development
To test *H1* and *H2*, we developed two print advertisements for potato chips. Both advertisements showed a couple on a couch, enjoying a bowl of snacks in front of the TV, and used the same key message ("perfect for the weekend") and visual elements. In the homosexual condition, the image featured two men, and in the heterosexual condition, it featured a man and a woman. The models in the images were similar in terms of age, race and clothing. To avoid brand-specific effects, we included two brands as senders, but collapsed them in the analysis.

Following Bhat *et al.* (1998), our stimuli were pretested to ensure that the manipulation was satisfactory ($n = 154$ participants, 55 per cent female, mean age $= 43.5$ years). Participants were asked to rate the picture in terms of homosexuality/heterosexuality and friendship/romance on a ten-grade semantic differential scale. According to *t* tests, the homosexual advertisement was perceived as significantly more homosexual ($M_{homosexual} = 8.02$ vs $M_{heterosexual} = 2.08$, $p < .01$), and both advertisements were understood as romantic ($M_{homosexual} = 8.03$ vs $M_{heterosexual} = 8.13$, *ns* and both significantly over the scale's midpoint, $p < 0.01$).

Procedure
In total, 229 undergraduate students at a northern European business school (59 per cent female, mean age $= 21$ years, 96.0 per cent heterosexual) participated in exchange for the chance to win a monetary reward (equal to about €10). The students had roughly one chance in 10 of winning. Each participant was randomly assigned a booklet with one stimulus advertisement, followed by a questionnaire. Participants were instructed to look at the advertisement for as long as they wished and then to answer some questions regarding the advertisement they had just seen. After the questionnaires had been collected, participants were debriefed in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the university where the study was conducted.

Measures
Consumer-perceived social connectedness was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale with three items: "I belong with the people in the ad"; "I'm similar to the people in the ad"; "I feel positive toward the people in the ad" (Hutcherson *et al.*, 2008; Cronbach's alpha = 0.81). To measure *consumer-perceived empathy*, we asked participants about their general feelings at that moment (Archer *et al.*, 1981). More specifically, four target items (moved, compassionate, considerate and warm) were included, together with several filler items, and measured using a seven-point Likert-type scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.77).

To test our theoretical reasoning, we measured to what extent the advertisements primed thoughts about other people, using the procedure suggested by Grier and Brumbaugh (1999) and Dahlén *et al.* (2008). Immediately after looking at the advertisement, participants were asked to write down their spontaneous thoughts (as many or as few as they liked). They then

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moved on to fill out the rest of the questionnaire. At the end of the questionnaire, participants turned to a new page, where a text asked them to go back to their initial list of thoughts and review them. Specifically, participants were asked to mark whether the thoughts they had listed were advertisement-related (by noting an "A" next to the thought), related to the participant himself or herself ("M" for *myself*) or related to other people in the advertisement or at large ("O"). Examples of thoughts coded by participants as related to other people were "homosexuality", "they're gay", "unusual to see gay guys in advertisements", "they [the company] want to show that they're open" (homosexuality condition) and "looks like they're enjoying themselves" (heterosexuality condition). The total count of participant-coded other-related thoughts was used for further analysis.

Results of Study 1
We tested *H1* and *H2* by comparing the mean values between conditions. Supporting *H1*, an independent-samples *t*-test showed that consumer-perceived social connectedness was significantly higher for the homosexuality condition than for the heterosexuality condition ($M_{homosexual} = 3.89$ vs $M_{heterosexual} = 3.06$; $p < .01$; *Cohen's D* = 0.63). The same pattern was found for consumer-perceived empathy ($M_{homosexual} = 3.91$ vs $M_{heterosexual} = 3.13$; $p < 0.01$; *Cohen's D* = 0.69), thus supporting *H2*. When split based on participants' gender, results were significant for both men and women. The results also remained robust for heterosexual participants only.

Providing support for our reasoning, an independent-sample *t*-test showed participants exposed to portrayals of homosexuality reported significantly more other-related thoughts (O) than participants exposed to portrayals of heterosexuality ($M_{homosexual} = 1.26$ vs $M_{heterosexual} = 0.77$; $p < 0.01$). We then performed a mediation analysis using the Preacher–Hayes approach (Hayes 2013; Zhao *et al.*, 2010). The analysis showed a mean indirect effect from the bootstrap analysis of 0.07 (95 per cent CI: 0.01-0.18) for social connectedness. All path coefficients were significant (a. portrayal $\rightarrow$ O = 0.51; b. O $\rightarrow$ SC = 0.14; c. portrayal $\rightarrow$ SC =0.76; $p < 0.01$), indicating complementary mediation. For empathy, the analysis similarly showed a mean indirect effect of 0.06 (95 per cent CI: 0.01-0.15) and significant path coefficients (a. portrayal $\rightarrow$ O = 0.51; b. O $\rightarrow$ E = 0.13; c. portrayal $\rightarrow$ E = 0.71; $p < 0.01$), indicating a priming process in which the homosexual portrayal leads to more thoughts about other people, which in turn, increase levels of social connectedness and empathy.

Discussion of Study 1
The results of Study 1 provided initial support for our theoretical reasoning using open-ended responses. Still, the study had several limitations. First, we did not control for attitudes toward homosexuality. In fact, students are known to exhibit more positive attitudes toward homosexuality than the general population (Oakenfull *et al.*, 2008), which is likely to have influenced the results. Second, the stimuli used were for one (low involvement) product category only. Furthermore, we did not include traditional advertising effects, making us unable to test whether such effects were traded-off for or symbiotic with the positive social effects.

Study 2
Study 2 was designed to replicate the findings of Study 1 with regards to *H1* and *H2* within a new product category using a more representative sample while also assessing the moderating effect of attitude toward homosexuality (*H3*). In addition, traditional advertising effects were included.

Stimulus development
We developed two print advertisements for a travel agency using the same key message ("celebrate the love") and visual elements. Both advertisements showed an image of a couple relaxing in a hammock. In the homosexual condition, the image featured two men, and in the heterosexual condition, it featured a man and a woman. Models in the images were similar in terms of age, race and clothing. To avoid brand-specific effects, we included two brands as senders, but collapsed them in the analysis. The advertisements were pre-tested using the same procedure as in Study 1 ($n = 30$, 57 per cent female, mean age $= 31$ years), but this time using a 1-5 scale. The results confirmed the validity of our manipulations in terms of sexual orientation because the advertisement in the homosexual condition was perceived as significantly more homosexual ($M_{homosexual} = 4.59$ vs $M_{heterosexual} = 1.37$; $p < 0.01$) while both advertisements were perceived as portraying a romantic couple rather than two friends ($M_{homosexual} = 4.83$ vs $M_{heterosexual} = 4.52$; both significantly above the scale's midpoint; $p < .01$).

Procedure
In total, 529 participants (57 per cent female, mean age $= 45$ years, 93.6 per cent heterosexual) were recruited from an online panel managed by a well-regarded professional marketing research firm. The sample reflected the demographics of the general population in the region of study in terms of age, gender, orientation, ethnicity, living area and family situation. Each participant was randomly assigned one of our four stimuli advertisements, along with a questionnaire. Participants were instructed to look at the advertisement for as long as they wished, then to answer some questions regarding the advertisement they had just seen.

Measures
Consumer-perceived social connectedness and *empathy* were measured the same way as in Study 1. *Other-related thoughts* were measured using the most frequently mentioned thoughts from Study 1 (*the people featured in the advertisement, why these people were selected to feature in the advertisement, how often different kinds of people appear in advertising* and *the sexual orientation of the people in the advertisement*). The items were listed together with several filler items, and participants were asked to rate to what extent the advertisement evoked such thoughts on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The answers were averaged into an index (Cronbach's alpha $= 0.86$) used for further analysis.

Attitudes toward homosexuality were measured with an averaged index (Cronbach's alpha $= 0.96$) of the items bad/good, dislike/like, negative opinion/positive opinion, rated on seven-point semantic differential scales in response to the question "What is your opinion on homosexuality?" (adapted from Dahlén *et al.*, 2013). Although this measure can be subject to social desirability bias, this risk was limited because participants answered the question anonymously online. Participants' own sexual orientations were measured separately from their general attitudes, along with other demographic variables.

In addition to the hypothesized effects, we also measured traditional advertising effects in terms of advertisement attitudes, brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Advertisement and brand attitudes were measured using the items bad/good, dislike/like, negative opinion/ positive opinion, rated on a seven-point semantic differential scale in response to the question "What is your opinion on the ad/the brand?" (Dahlén *et al.*, 2009). Purchase intentions were measured on a two-item semantic differential scale ("If you were to go on a vacation, how likely is it that you would buy your trip from brand X?", with responses unlikely/likely, improbable/probable; Dahlén *et al.*, 2009). All three measures showed good reliability (all Cronbach's alphas > 0.90).

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Results of Study 2

To test *H1* and *H2*, we compared mean values of our conditions through independent-samples *t*-tests. Consumer-perceived social connectedness was significantly higher for the homosexuality condition ($M_{\text{homosexual}} = 3.04$ vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}} = 2.62$; $p < 0.01$; *Cohen's D* = 0.28), supporting *H1*. For consumer-perceived empathy, there was no significant difference between conditions ($M_{\text{homosexual}} = 4.69$ vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}} = 4.62$; *ns*). Thus, we did not find support for *H2*. Results remained robust across participant gender and for heterosexual participants.

Supporting our reasoning, an independent-samples *t*-test showed participants exposed to portrayals of homosexuality reported significantly more other-related thoughts ($M_{\text{homosexual}} = 4.33$ vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}} = 3.11$; $p < 0.01$). Mediation analyses (as in Study 1) confirmed an indirect effect of homosexual portrayal through other-related thoughts on consumer-perceived social connectedness (bootstrap effect = 0.21; 95 per cent CI: 0.13-0.32; a. portrayal $\rightarrow$ O = 0.96, $p < 0.01$; b. O $\rightarrow$ SC = 0.22, $p < 0.01$; c. portrayal $\rightarrow$ SC = 0.20, *ns*) and empathy (bootstrap effect = 0.24; 95 per cent CI: 0.15-0.35; a. portrayal $\rightarrow$ O = 0.96, $p < 0.01$; b. O $\rightarrow$ E = 0.25, $p < 0.01$; c. portrayal $\rightarrow$ E = -0.02, *ns*).

To investigate *H3*, we relied on a floodlight analysis (Spiller *et al.*, 2013). This analysis reveals a significant interaction effect between a factor and variable measured on an itemized rating scale with arbitrary cutoff points. A MODPROBE regression analysis (Hayes and Matthes, 2009) showed a significant interaction effect between portrayal and attitudes toward homosexuality for both social connectedness (bootstrap effect = 0.39; 95 per cent CI: 0.26-0.52; $t = 5.91$; $p < 0.01$) and empathy (bootstrap effect = 0.16; 95 per cent CI: 0.04-0.29; $t = 2.52$; $p = 0.01$). Further, the analyses showed two Johnson–Neyman significance points for social connectedness, located at 2.80 and 4.46. For attitudes toward homosexuality below 2.80, portrayals of homosexuality resulted in a lower level of social connectedness. Between the two Johnson–Neyman points, there was a non-significant relationship, while attitudes above 4.46 rendered higher levels of social connectedness. For empathy, the analyses revealed a single Johnson–Neyman significance point located at 5.78, with a significant positive effect on empathy above the Johnson–Neyman point and a non-significant relationship below the Johnson–Neyman point. Considering the distribution of attitudes toward homosexuality in the sample, the positive effects occur for more than half (60 per cent for social connectedness) or close to half (44 per cent for empathy) of the sample. These results support *H3*.

For traditional advertising effects, the homosexual portrayal generated more positive advertisement attitudes ($M_{\text{homosexual}} = 4.39$ vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}} = 3.93$; $p < .01$), but no difference could be observed for brand attitudes ($M_{\text{homosexual}} = 4.39$ vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}} = 4.35$; *ns*) or purchase intentions ($M_{\text{homosexual}} = 3.44$ vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}} = 3.45$; *ns*). Mediation analyses conducted in the same manner as for other-related thoughts revealed social connectedness mediated traditional advertising effects. However, empathy did not mediate the effects.

Discussion of Study 2

Study 2 replicated the results from Study 1 with one exception: a non-significant main effect on consumer-perceived empathy. However, a moderation analysis revealed that for those with a positive attitude toward homosexuality, portrayals of homosexuality in advertising had a positive effect on consumer-perceived social connectedness (60 per cent of the sample) and empathy (44 per cent of the sample). The latter explains the lack of support for *H2*. Further, the results did not indicate a tradeoff in terms of traditional advertising effects. In fact, the effects were symbiotic with social connectedness. This finding is contradictory to

previous studies (Bhat *et al.*, 1998; Oakenfull *et al.*, 2008) and provides additional support for our reasoning that the effects of homosexual portrayals of advertising might change as attitudes toward homosexuality have, indeed, changed over time.

Although the findings generally support our reasoning, both Study 1 and 2 used male homosexual portrayals as stimuli, potentially affecting perceived similarity and targetedness of our manipulations. Further, in Study 2, attitudes toward homosexuality were measured after exposure to the advertisement, meaning that participants may have been affected by the stimulus in reporting their attitudes. Therefore, we conducted two new studies to remedy these limitations.

Studies 3A and 3B
Studies 3A and 3B were designed to replicate the results of Studies 1 and 2, with four additions:

(1) To control for any effect of advertisement exposure on reported attitudes toward homosexuality, half of the participants reported this attitude in the beginning and the other half reported it in the end of the questionnaire.

(2) A more general measure of social connectedness that does not include similarity as an item was adapted from Lee and Robbins (1995): *I feel like I'm part of a community, I feel like I belong with other people, I feel like I'm important to other people* and *other people are important to me*. Answers were given on a seven-point Likert-type scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.91).

(3) Measures of perceived similarity and targetedness were added. Specifically, to measure perceived similarity, participants rated how similar they felt to the people in the advertisement in terms of overall lifestyle, cultural background, dress, appearance and basic values (1 = *not at all similar*; 7 = *very similar*; Cronbach's alpha = 0.89). Perceived targetedness (Aaker *et al.*, 2000) was measured using three items: *I feel the advertisement was intended for people like me; I believe I was in the target market the company created the advertisement for; the advertiser made that advertisement to appeal to people like me* measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale (Cronbach's alpha = 0.88).

(4) In Study 3B, we added portrayals of homosexuality featuring two women.

Stimuli and procedure for Study 3A
Study 3A used the same stimuli as Study 2. In total, 173 participants (55 per cent female, mean age = 42 years, 94.1 per cent heterosexual) were recruited through intercept at a major northern European train station. The sample was selected to closely reflect the demographics of the general population. Each participant was randomly assigned one of our stimuli advertisements, along with a questionnaire. Participants were instructed to look at the advertisement for as long as they wished, then to answer some questions about the advertisement they had just seen. They were then rewarded the equivalent of €2.5 for their participation. They could choose to receive their reward in cash or donate it to a charity. Most of participants (87 per cent) chose to donate their reward. There was no difference in donations across experimental groups.

Results of Study 3A
A *t*-test revealed no significant differences in attitudes toward homosexuality between the two placements of the measure ($M_{\text{before exposure}}$ = 6.06, $M_{\text{after exposure}}$ = 5.46; *ns*). Thus, we concluded that the experimental stimuli did not affect attitudes toward homosexuality, leading us to collapse the conditions in the following analysis.

Consumer-perceived social connectedness was significantly higher for the homosexuality condition ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.98 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.66; $p < 0.01$; *Cohen's D* = 0.85), as was consumer-perceived empathy ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.90 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.85; $p < 0.01$; *Cohen's D* = 0.70), thus supporting *H1* and *H2*. Further, *t*-tests revealed that participants reported feeling significantly more similar to the people in the homosexual condition ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.07 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.27; $p < 0.01$). For perceived targetedness, however, there was no significant difference ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 3.12 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 2.85; *ns*). Results remained robust across participants' gender, sexual orientation and perceived similarity with the models in the advertisement.

Similar to Studies 1 and 2, an independent-samples *t*-test showed participants exposed to the homosexuality condition reported significantly more other-related thoughts than participants exposed to the heterosexuality condition ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.59 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.75; $p < 0.01$). Further, mediation analyses similar to those in Studies 1 and 2 confirmed an indirect effect of the homosexual portrayal through other-related thoughts on consumer-perceived social connectedness (bootstrap effect = 0.14; 95 per cent CI: 0.02-0.35; a. portrayal $\rightarrow$ O = 0.86, $p < 0.01$; b. O $\rightarrow$ SC = 0.17, $p < 0.05$; c. portrayal $\rightarrow$ SC = 1.18, $p < 0.01$) and empathy (bootstrap effect = 0.15; 95 per cent CI: 0.02-0.36; a. portrayal $\rightarrow$ O = 0.86, $p < 0.01$; b. O $\rightarrow$ E = 0.18, $p < 0.01$; c. portrayal $\rightarrow$ E = 0.89, $p < 0.01$). To test *H3*, we used the same approach as in Study 2. The analysis again showed a significant interaction effect between condition and attitudes toward homosexuality for both consumer-perceived social connectedness (bootstrap effect = 0.38; 95 per cent CI: 0.09-0.67; $t = 2.56$; $p = 0.01$; Johnson–Neyman point = 4.02) and empathy (bootstrap effect = 0.56; 95 per cent CI: 0.28-0.83; $t = 3.98$; $p = 0.00$; Johnson–Neyman points = 1.66 and 4.74), supporting *H3*. The distribution of attitudes toward homosexuality in our sample indicates that the positive effects occur for most participants (80 per cent for social connectedness, 75 per cent for empathy).

For traditional advertising effects, the homosexuality condition rendered significantly more positive advertisement attitudes ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 5.28 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 4.09; $p <. 01$), brand attitudes ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.76 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.99; $p < 0.01$) and brand purchase intentions ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 3.70 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 2.99; $p < 0.01$). Mediation analyses conducted in the same manner as for other-related thoughts revealed that social connectedness and empathy mediated traditional advertising effects.

Stimuli and procedure for Study 3B
Studies 1-3A are limited, in that they investigate advertising featuring only male homosexual portrayals. It is possible that a lesbian portrayal would render different results. Thus, we conducted Study 3B. The stimulus in the heterosexuality condition was identical to that in Studies 2 and 3A. For the homosexuality condition, we developed a new advertisement featuring an image of two women. Models in the two conditions were similar in terms of age, race and clothing. The advertisement featuring two women was pre-tested following the same procedure as in Study 2 ($n = 30$, 67 per cent female, mean age = 29 years). The advertisement portraying homosexuality was considered significantly more homosexual ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.30 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 1.37; $p < 0.01$), and both images were thought to show a romantically involved couple ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.43 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 4.52; *ns* significantly above the scale's midpoint; $p <. 01$). In total, 167 participants (57 per cent female, mean age = 44 years, 94.6 per cent heterosexual) were recruited through intercept at a major train station. The procedure was identical to that for Study 3A.

Results of Study 3B
To test *H1* and *H2*, we compared mean values between our conditions through independent-samples *t*-tests. Consumer-perceived social connectedness was significantly higher

for the homosexuality condition ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.96 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 4.06; $p < 0.01$; *Cohen's D* = 0.59), as was consumer-perceived empathy ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 5.00 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 4.36; $p < 0.05$; *Cohen's D* = 0.43), thus supporting *H1* and *H2*. Further, *t*-tests revealed no significant differences in terms of perceived similarity ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 3.40 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.39; *ns*) or perceived targetedness ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 2.70 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.05; *ns*). Again, results remained robust across participants' gender and for analyses of heterosexual participants only.

Similar to Studies 1 and 2, an independent-samples *t*-test showed participants exposed to homosexuality reported significantly more other-related thoughts than participants exposed to heterosexuality ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.67 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 4.05; $p < .05$). However, mediation analyses showed, for this sample, the homosexual portrayal did not have an indirect effect through other-related thoughts on consumer-perceived social connectedness (bootstrap effect = 0.04; 95 per cent CI: −0.04 to 0.18; a. portrayal → O = 0.61, $p < 0.05$; b. O → SC = 0.06, *ns*; c. portrayal → SC = 0.86, $p < 0.01$) or empathy (bootstrap effect = −0.01; 95 per cent CI: −0.11 to 0.09; a. portrayal → O = 0.62, $p < 0.05$; b. O → E = −0.01, *ns*; c. portrayal → E = 0.63, $p < 0.01$).

To test *H3*, we used the same approach as in Study 2. The analysis showed a significant interaction effect between condition and attitudes toward homosexuality for both social connectedness (bootstrap effect = 0.38; 95 per cent CI: 0.07-0.69; t = 2.39; p = 0.02; Johnson–Neyman point = 4.80) and empathy (bootstrap effect = 0.39; 95 per cent CI: 0.09-0.68; t = 2.62; p = 0.01; Johnson–Neyman point = 5.34). The distribution of attitudes toward homosexuality in our sample indicates the positive effects occurred for more than half of the sample (75 per cent for social connectedness and 60 per cent for empathy).

For traditional advertising effects, the homosexuality condition rendered significantly more positive advertisement attitudes ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.92 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.97; $p < .01$) and brand attitudes ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 4.58 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.94; $p < 0.01$). For brand purchase intentions, however, there were no significant differences ($M_{\text{homosexual}}$ = 3.34 vs $M_{\text{heterosexual}}$ = 3.09; *ns*). Mediation analyses conducted in the same manner as for other-related thoughts revealed that social connectedness mediated all traditional advertising effects and that empathy mediated purchase intentions.

Discussion of Studies 3A and 3B
The main effects found in Studies 1 and 2 are robust, even with the new, more general, measurement of social connectedness. Again, the homosexuality condition rendered higher levels of traditional advertising effects. Further, the results indicated our proposed reasoning has merit, and a largely heterosexual sample can, indeed, feel similar to and targeted by advertising with homosexual models. These results indicate there is more to similarity and targetedness than sexual orientation. In addition, results from Study 3 indicate that there is more to similarity than gender. While both men and women reported feeling more similar to the gay couple in the advertisement than the straight couple, there was no difference between the lesbian couple and the straight couple. Further, in terms of targetedness, there were no significant differences between conditions. In line with our reasoning, participants seemed to have been primed to activate a more abstract social category, enhancing similarities with the models, rather than focusing on gender and sexual orientation only.

General discussion
The results of three studies show that portrayals of homosexuality in advertising can prime consumers to think about others, thereby affecting consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy. They also indicate that the effects are contingent on attitudes toward homosexuality. The findings resonate with a compelling body of research showing that

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advertising can prime attitudes and behaviors beyond their relationship with the advertised brands (Davies *et al.*, 2002; Rosengren *et al.*, 2013).

The current study links existing literature on the effects of advertising with homosexual portrayals (Bhat *et al.*, 1998; Oakenfull *et al.*, 2008) with research on priming (Bargh *et al.*, 1996; Chartrand *et al.*, 2008) to show that portrayals of homosexuality in advertising can constitute a cue of social priming, thereby generating effects on mainstream consumers, as well as advertisement evaluations. This is an important contribution considering that previous research has studied portrayals of homosexuality in advertising either from a traditional advertising effectiveness perspective (Maher *et al.*, 2008; Puntoni *et al.*, 2011) or in terms of the social consequences of a lack of diversity (Livingston, 2004) but has not (to our knowledge) reversed the logic and looked at the potential social benefits of featuring such portrayals in advertising.

Our investigation of the effects of portrayals of homosexuality in advertising on consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy responds to recent calls for research to explore the effects of advertising in a larger societal context (Eisend, 2010; Dahlen and Rosengren 2016; Powell, 2011). Thus, we add to the growing body of literature on the potentially positive unintended effects of advertising (Rosengren *et al.*, 2013). The finding that advertising can, at least temporarily, affect consumers socially in terms of social connectedness and empathy should encourage marketers to explore the possibilities of creating advertising that benefits consumers and brands alike.

Marketers may have several different reasons for including portrayals of homosexuality in their advertising. The most obvious reason would be to reach a homosexual target audience, but the purpose could also be to attract a pro-diversity audience (i.e. generally younger and more affluent than the general public), to communicate the values of the company (Greenlee, 2004), to reflect society at large (Pollay, 1986) or to project an image of what the company believes constitutes a desirable society (Greenlee, 2004). This resonates with a broader sustainability perspective (Bhattacharaya and Sen, 2003; Hildebrand *et al.*, 2011; Maignan *et al.*, 2005; Powell, 2011), making the use of the term *unintended* somewhat misleading. In fact, generating social effects may very well be the reason for including homosexual portrayals. Thus, we suggest that *extended*, rather than *unintended*, would be a preferred term to denote the effects of advertising that go beyond such traditional effects as brand attitude and purchase intentions. Introducing the term *extended effects of advertising* to the vocabulary would help scholars interested in this field avoid potential confusion, avoid discussions about advertisers' actual intentions (which are usually not the topic of interest in this type of research) and help propel the understanding of advertising's larger societal effects.

As indicated in our study, it is also possible to link such extended effects to traditional advertising effects (Rosengren *et al.*, 2013). Although not the focus of this study, we found that portrayals of homosexuality in advertising generated more positive advertisement attitudes than the heterosexual advertisement content in a largely heterosexual audience. Further, the results of Studies 2 and 3 indicate the positive effects on advertisement attitude, brand attitude and purchase intentions were mediated by consumer-perceived social connectedness and, to some extent, empathy. This finding indicates the difference in traditional advertising effects could be the result of participants "rewarding" the advertisement for making them feel more socially connected (Rosengren *et al.*, 2013, for a similar idea concerning advertisement creativity).

The positive effect found in terms of advertising attitudes contrasts with previous findings (Bhat *et al.*, 1998; Puntoni *et al.*, 2011). Several potential explanations for this finding exist. Attitudes toward homosexuality are becoming more positive within the general population of most Western countries. Currently, between 65 and 90 per cent of the population in Western countries hold positive attitudes toward homosexuality (PEW

Research Center, 2013). These shares are in line with the proportions in our samples that were positively affected by homosexual portrayals in advertising. Thus, older studies (Bhat *et al.*, 1998) should be expected to show results that are different. However, the mechanisms behind the effects seem robust: the more positive attitudes toward homosexuality, the stronger the priming cue of such content. Another potential explanation is that our stimuli portrayed generally romantic situations that most people can relate to, while previous studies largely used stimuli featuring gay symbolism or models not clearly connected to the product (Oakenfull *et al.*, 2008; Puntoni *et al.*, 2011). Such advertisements may be perceived as more excluding by a mainstream audience, thereby generating lower advertisement attitudes.

Implications for marketers

Marketers should take note of the results of this study for several reasons. First, our results indicate that advertising featuring minorities can indeed generate positive social effects for majority and minority consumers. Many marketers have expressed an ambition, for CSR or other reasons, to affect consumers socially through more diverse portrayals in their advertising (Griner and Ciambriello, 2015; Solomon, 2014). Considering the results of our study, marketers can expect their efforts will have positive social effects, particularly in terms of social connectedness. The effect sizes in our studies indicate a medium effect of homosexual portrayals (except in Study 2, where they were small), but repeated exposure over time could very well be expected to make the effects greater (Pollay, 1986).

Second, our results are of interest because they partially contradict previous findings showing that homosexual content in mainstream advertising can harm advertisement attitudes (Angelini and Bradley, 2010). In fact, our findings indicate that the effects might be beneficial. The findings were robust across product categories, as well as model and participant gender. These results challenge the idea that portrayals of homosexuality in mainstream advertising are always about "targeting without alienating" (as suggested by, Oakenfull and Greenlee, 2005; Oakenfull *et al.*, 2008). In Study 2, advertisement attitudes were more positive toward the homosexual content. In Studies 3A and 3B, the effects were extended to brand attitudes and purchase intentions for the entire sample. These findings indicate less risk in using homosexual portrayals in mainstream advertising than previous research has suggested, at least in terms of using familiar situations that most people can relate to.

Limitations and further research

The findings of the present research are subject to several limitations. First, the empirical support is based on three experimental studies relying on single exposures to three different advertisements in two different product categories. Second, we measured only two aspects of social effects. However, it is likely other social effects could result from this priming. Third, there is a risk for social desirability when asking questions related to attitudes toward homosexuality, which could have influenced the results, especially in Study 3. Thus, future studies need to test the robustness of our findings using complementary study designs and alternative measures of attitudes and social effects.

Furthermore, several related theories could potentially help explain these effects found. For example, the use of homosexual portrayals in advertising is still rather unusual. This could lead to a novelty effect that complements the social effect studied in the paper. It should also be noted that, although our findings concern effects of portrayals of homosexuality, homosexuality is but one aspect of diversity in advertising (Williams *et al.*, 2004). For future research, it would be interesting to investigate whether similar effects would occur for other types of diversity, such as ethnicity and gender roles. A growing body of research is addressing this area, but to date, most of it focuses either on traditional advertising effects of diversity in advertising (Johnson and Grier, 2012; Taylor and Stern, 1997) or on the negative unintended effects of excluding or

misrepresenting certain groups in advertising (Borgeson and Schroeder, 2002; Richins, 1991). Although we used sexual orientation as our point of departure, we hope these present studies will be considered a first step in exploring potential positive social effects of diversity in advertising and will inspire future investigations into this topic.

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Corresponding author

Nina Åkestam can be contacted at: nina.akestam@phdstudent.hhs.se

Article 2: Advertising "Like a girl": Toward a better understanding of "femvertising" and its effects

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Advertising "like a girl": Toward a better understanding of "femvertising" and its effects

Nina Åkestam | Sara Rosengren | Micael Dahlen

Stockholm School of Economics

Correspondence
Nina Åkestam, Center for Consumer Marketing, Stockholm School of Economics, Box 6501, 11383 Stockholm, Sweden.
Email: nina.akestam@phdstudent.hhs.se

Abstract

This paper investigates the impact of femvertising (female empowerment advertising). More specifically, it hypothesizes that femvertising (vs. traditional portrayals of females in advertising) will reduce ad reactance among a female target audience, and that this in turn will enhance ad and brand attitudes. The results of three experimental studies indicate that this is indeed the case, and that the results hold across print and digital media, for five different product categories, and for femvertising focusing on challenging female stereotypes in terms of physical characteristics as well as the roles and occupations used to portray women in advertising. Although previous studies of the effects of female portrayals tend to focus on social comparison and self-identity, the current paper considers the role of psychological reactance to (more or less) stereotypical portrayals in explaining these effects. The results suggest that marketers have much to gain from adapting a more proactive and mindful approach to the female portrayals they use in their ads.

KEYWORDS
ad reactance, female empowerment, female portrayals, femvertising

1 | INTRODUCTION

This paper sets out to understand contemporary advertising campaigns that challenge traditional female advertising stereotypes ("femvertising," short for female empowerment advertising, e.g., Castillo, 2014; Iqbal, 2015) and their impact on a female target audience. More specifically, drawing on research on female stereotypes in advertising (e.g., Eisend, 2010; Eisend, Plagemann, & Sollwedel, 2014) and linking them with reactance theory (e.g., Brehm, 1966; Thorbjørnsen & Dahlén, 2011), it is proposed that femvertising, compared to traditional advertising, reduces ad reactance. This in turn enhances ad and brand attitudes among a female target audience.

Starting with Dove's campaign Evolution in 2006 (Davidson, 2015), advertising that challenges (female) gender stereotypes and empowers women has grown exponentially in popularity over the past decade. In April 2017, "femvertising" generated about 46,000 hits on Google, including major media outlets such as CNN, The Guardian, and Huffington Post. In 2015, it even received its own category in the Cannes Lions awards (The Glass Lion). The growth of femvertising suggests that contemporary brands perceive it as a successful strategy for targeting female audiences. Well-known examples include P&G/Always' "Like a Girl" (for the U.S. market, later launched globally), P&G's "Touch the Pickle" (India), Pantene's "Labels Against Women" (the Philippines), Under Armour's "I will what I want" (the United States), and Sport England's "This Girl Can" (Great Britain). Many of these campaigns

have gone viral (in April 2017, the "Like a Girl" video had over 60 million views on YouTube), and shown impressive campaign effectiveness (Griner & Ciambrello, 2015; Schultz, 2014). This has led industry media to proclaim that "gender sells" (Mahdawi, 2015) and that marketers can now "cash in on feminism" (Davidson, 2015).

In spite of anecdotal evidence and practitioner surveys highlighting the potential benefits of challenging female stereotypes in advertising (e.g., Castillo, 2014), academics have yet to explore the effects of these campaigns. The purpose of the current paper is therefore to add a more theoretically grounded understanding of femvertising and its effects. This is done by (1) providing a definition of femvertising as *advertising that challenges traditional female advertising stereotypes,* (2) theoretically linking the use of femvertising with advertising reactions in terms of ad reactance, and (3) empirically investigating the role of ad reactance in explaining the impact of femvertising on a female target audience. More specifically, this paper hypothesizes that, among a female target audience, the (less stereotypical) female portrayals used in femvertising will put less pressure on a female target audience to behave in a manner that is consistent with these portrayals and therefore be less likely to lead to ad reactance than the (more stereotypical, cf. Eisend, 2010; Knoll, Eisend, & Steinhagen, 2011) traditional female portrayals typically used in advertising. It is also argued that this, in turn, will enhance ad and brand attitudes and thus help explain the positive effects of femvertising found in marketing practice.

The results of three experimental studies comparing print (Studies 1 and 3) and online video (Study 2) femvertising with traditional advertising indicate that this is indeed the case. Femvertising generates lower levels of ad reactance than traditional advertising, which, in turn, has a positive effect on ad (Studies 1 and 2) and brand (Study 3) attitudes among a female target audience. By investigating femvertising, the current study provides a complementary perspective to research documenting the effects of female portrayals in terms of social comparison (e.g., D'Alessandro & Chitty, 2011; Peck & Loken, 2004) and self-identity (e.g., Feiereisen, Broderick, & Douglas, 2009; Ford, LaTour, & Lundstrom, 1991), thereby making several contributions to marketing practice and research. These contributions are discussed at length in the concluding sections of the paper.

2 | "FEMVERTISING" DEFINED

The term "femvertising" initially gained acceptance in 2014 and is typically attributed to the lifestyle site SheKnows, which hosted an Advertising Week panel on the topic in October 2014 (Ciambrello, 2014). In this panel, "femvertising" was used as a label for contemporary advertising campaigns questioning traditional female gender stereotypes used in advertising. Although the seminal Dove Real Beauty campaign had focused on stereotypical portrayals of females in terms of their physical characteristics (i.e., body size), the panel also put other stereotypes related to personality traits, roles, and occupation of female portrayals (e.g., always questioning the meaning of "Like a girl") into the spotlight.

Although female liberation has been part of advertising themes dating back as far as to the 1960s if not longer (Ford et al., 1991; North, 2014), femvertising can be considered novel in that it focuses on questioning female stereotypes acknowledged to be (at least partly) created by advertising. The move to proactively challenge such stereotypes can be considered a major change in the way brands advertise, as previous empirical research has shown that advertising historically has followed societal norms and stereotypes rather than challenged them (Eisend, 2010). What is more, femvertising clearly breaks with the type of female portrayals typically found in advertising (e.g., Eisend, 2010; Knoll et al., 2011).

Of interest in the current study is if, and how, femvertising impacts consumer reactions. Femvertising is thus considered an advertising appeal. This appeal is frequently used in advertising campaigns that set out to generate sales, while simultaneously empowering women and girls by avoiding perpetuating female advertising stereotypes (cf., Ciambrello, 2014), but whether it actually works, and in that case how, is still open for investigation. While previous studies have looked at specific aspects of female portrayals, such as body size (e.g., D'Alessandro & Chitty, 2011; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004) or attractiveness (e.g., Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011; Richins, 1991), femvertising typically employs several features simultaneously (e.g., body size and attractiveness) and is thus concerned with the overall or holistic impression of the female portrayals used in advertising. To this end, femvertising is defined in this paper as *advertising that challenges tradi-*

tional female advertising stereotypes. The effects of femvertising, rather than the movement as such, are in focus. To understand these effects, they are compared to the effects of the female portrayals typically used in advertising (referred to as traditional advertising). The following section discusses previous research on female stereotypes in advertising and the ways in which femvertising can be said to challenge them.

3 | FEMALE STEREOTYPES IN ADVERTISING

Stereotypes are a set of concepts pertaining to a social category. As such, they offer a way to simplify and systemize information and help make sense of the world, which may explain why they are commonly used in advertising (e.g., Johnson & Grier, 2012). Gender stereotypes are beliefs that certain attributes differentiate women and men (e.g., Eisend, 2010; Knoll et al., 2011). There is a vast literature documenting the use of gender stereotypes in advertising (e.g., Eisend et al., 2014; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). Attributes used to convey female stereotypes in advertising have been found to be related to physical characteristics, role behaviors, and occupational status of females included in ads (Knoll et al., 2011).

Gender stereotypes in advertising tend to develop in tandem with societal values and gender roles (Eisend, 2010; Pollay, 1986). Still, empirical research shows that advertising has historically been mirroring, rather than challenging, female stereotypes and roles in society (Eisend, 2010). This means that the female portrayals in advertising have followed changes in society, rather than the other way around. As a consequence, the characteristics of female portrayals in advertising tend to lag behind those of females in society at large (for a meta-analysis please refer to Eisend, 2010). For example, females are more likely to be portrayed in roles that are characterized by dependence and in occupations within the home (e.g., Knoll et al., 2011), even in markets where most women have professional careers outside the home.

As suggested by Eisend (2010), using gender stereotypes in advertising becomes problematic when they lead to expectations and judgments that restrict life opportunities for subjects of the social category portrayed. For example, stereotyping physical characteristics (e.g., beauty ideals) can lead to reduced body satisfaction, stereotyping role behaviors (e.g., women being caring and dependent) may restrict opportunities of self-development, and stereotyping occupational portrayals can lead to disadvantages in women's careers. Thus, avoiding stereotypes and achieving equal life opportunities for all genders in different spheres of life (e.g., income, career) is a central concern of gender policy and a social objective in many societies. This has also been the focus of many academic studies, both in terms of the negative effects of using stereotypes (e.g., Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011; Richins, 1991) and the positive effects of challenging them (e.g., Bissell & Rask, 2010; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004; Peck & Loken, 2004).

This paper, however, sets out to understand the impact challenging stereotypes has on advertising effectiveness, rather than its societal effects. Although previous studies of female portrayals in advertising

tend to focus on effects in terms of social comparison (e.g., Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011; Peck & Loken, 2004) and self-identity (e.g., Feiereisen et al., 2009; Ford et al., 1991), the current paper focuses on perceptions of stereotypical portrayals and the psychological reactance they cause. The role of ad reactance is especially interesting in the context of femvertising, as advertising portrayals have been found to be self-relevant to consumers (Dahlén, Rosengren, & Smit, 2014; Mehta, 1999). Female portrayals that challenge traditional advertising stereotypes are thus likely to reduce the pressure traditional advertising put on women. The current paper also expands the view of female stereotypes from including specific physical characteristics (e.g., Bian & Wang, 2015; D'Alessandro & Chitty, 2011) to better mirror contemporary femvertising, which challenges a broader spectrum of female stereotypes including roles (e.g., from passive and to active, à la "Like a Girl") and occupations (e.g., portrayed as boss, à la "Labels against women").

4 | HYPOTHESES

Previous research shows that consumer reactions to advertising are dependent on their perceptions of its intended audience (e.g., Dahlén et al., 2014; Marshall, Na, & Deuskar, 2008). Advertising appeals are interpreted to not only convey information about the advertised brand, but also about the target audience it sets out to influence. Advertisements, both in terms of what they say and how they say it, suggest to the consumer who she is and who she could be. This information is then used by consumers in forming perceptions of themselves (Dahlén et al., 2014; Mehta, 1999).

In discussing gender stereotypes in advertising, this is particularly interesting. For a female target audience, it suggests that (more or less stereotypical) female portrayals in ads will be seen as self-relevant and processed accordingly. Traditional female portrayals in advertising typically use a narrow set of female advertising stereotypes (e.g., Eisend, 2010; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). Over time, being exposed to advertising using such narrow stereotypical portrayals will put pressure on a female target audience to behave in a manner that is consistent with these stereotypes (e.g., Casper & Rothermund, 2012). This limits the personal freedom of female target audiences, thereby introducing a tension that is likely to lead to reactance (Thorbjørnsen & Dahlen, 2011). The theory of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966) states that people have a predisposition to preserve and restore their personal freedom. When personal freedom is reduced, eliminated, or threatened with elimination, people will experience a state of arousal (reactance) that induces attempts to recover or reestablish the lost or threatened behavior. Reactance has also been conceptualized as a situational construct, where certain stimuli or situations can lead people to experience reactance in that specific moment (e.g., Fitzsimons & Lehmann, 2004; Thorbjørnsen &Dahlen, 2011). The stereotypical female portrayals used in traditional advertising would indeed limit female target audiences' perceived range of alternatives (regarding, e.g., what is means to be successful or attractive), and would thus generate higher levels of defensive reactions (Henderson-King,

Henderson-King, & Hoffmann, 2001; Wan, Ansons, Chattopadhyay, & Leboe, 2013) at the time of exposure to such ads.

Femvertising, however, moves away from using simplistic female stereotypes toward more complex and varied female portrayals (e.g., Ciambrello, 2014; Iqbal, 2015). This puts less strain on a female audience to comply with a specific stereotype and thus leads to more possibilities to relate to the female portrayals used. By being more open to the target audience creatively decoding and deconstructing meanings (Puntoni, Shroeder, & Ritson, 2010), femvertising thus reduces the risk of ad reactance.

Taken together this suggests that, among a female target audience (less stereotypical), female portrayals used in femvertising will be less likely to lead to ad reactance than the (more stereotypical, cf., Eisend, 2010; Knoll et al., 2011) traditional female portrayals typically used in advertising. It is thus hypothesized:

H1: Femvertising (vs. traditional advertising) generates lower (vs. higher) levels of ad reactance.

Psychological reactance theory also proposes that when reactance occurs (that is, when personal freedom is reduced, eliminated, or threatened), people are motivated to recover or reestablish the lost or threatened behavior. Typically, this motivation leads them to reverse their reactions (Brehm, 1966; Thorbjørnsen & Dahlen, 2011). Reactance theory thus posits that an individual experiencing reactance to a stimulus becomes more resistant to persuasion. In an advertising context, this would, in turn, lead to lower levels of ad attitudes, as the consumer defends herself by concluding that "I'm not wrong, they are" (e.g., Ha & McCann, 2008; Obermiller, Spangenberg, & MacLachlan, 2005). As consumers are expected to experience higher levels of ad reactance to traditional advertising (H1), this would in turn lead to such advertising generating lower levels of ad attitudes.

H2: Femvertising (vs. traditional advertising) generates higher (vs. lower) ad attitudes.

5 | PILOT STUDY

Before testing the hypotheses, a pilot study was conducted to assess the validity of the underlying assumption that advertising typically portrays women in a stereotypical manner (cf. Eisend, 2010, Knoll et al., 2011). In the pilot study, graduate students at a European business school ($n = 39$, 80% female, mean age $= 24.4$) were asked to rate ads featuring women in terms of typicality and stereotypes. In total, 10 different fashion and lifestyle magazines were surveyed. After being randomly allocated to one of the magazines, participants were asked to look through the magazine and identify all ads that featured female portrayals. They were then asked to select the ad that they found the most/least typical (by typical, we mean that it seems representative of the category and has a lot in common with similar ads). The two ads were then rated in terms of typicality ("The ad is typical for advertising targeting women," 1 = fully disagree/7 = fully agree) and use of female stereotypes ("The ad shows a stereotypical image of women," 1 = fully disagree/7 = fully agree). Participants were also

asked to report their overall impression of all the ads featuring women in the magazine in terms of typicality ("The ads are typical for advertising targeting women," 1 = fully disagree/7 = fully agree) and stereotypes ("The ads show stereotypical images of women," 1 = fully disagree/7 = fully agree).

In line with the underlying assumption, there was a significant positive relationship between typicality and stereotypes for both the most typical (Pearson correlation = 0.48, $p < 0.01$) and the least typical (Pearson correlation = 0.42, $p < 0.01$) ad. This was also the case for overall impressions of all the ads (Pearson correlation = 0.52, $p < 0.01$). For female participants, the relationships were even stronger (most typical: 0.63, $p < 0.01$; least typical: 0.49, $p < 0.01$, overall: 0.60, $p < 0.01$). Overall, this suggests that traditional advertising typically use stereotypical portrayals of women. This is also in line with the findings of the large-scale meta-study by Eisend (2010).

6 | STUDY 1

Study 1 tests Hypotheses 1 and 2 in a one-way between-subjects experiment focusing on physical characteristics of female portrayals used in advertising. More specifically, it compares ad reactance and ad attitudes for a femvertising versus a traditional print ad.

6.1 | Stimulus development

The stimuli were developed specifically for the study, and consisted of two print ads for underwear. To avoid confounding effects from previous exposure, the ads were created by an art director using international examples of actual femvertising as well as traditional ads as a point of departure. Both ads used the same key message (For Every Body) and visual elements (e.g., font, logo). In the femvertising condition, the image featured women of different body types and sizes, and in the traditional condition, it featured women of a similar, very slim body type. The models in the two conditions were similar in terms of age, ethnicity, and color/style of the underwear, but different in terms of posture and mood. Again, this was done to reflect the definition of femvertising as an overall appeal that challenges several aspects of female portrayals simultaneously. To avoid brand-specific effects, the brand name and logo were blurred, and participants were informed that the brand wanted to remain anonymous for the time being. The ads are available in Appendix A.

A pretest ($n = 35$, 100% female, mean age = 20.2; participants similar to, but not included in the main study) showed that the femvertising ad was perceived as significantly less stereotypical than the traditional ad ($M_{\text{femvertising}} = 2.88$ vs. $M_{\text{traditional}} = 5.24$, $p < 0.01$, items: "The ad is stereotypical" and "The ad shows a stereotypical image of women," measured on 7-point Likert scales, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.749$).

6.2 | Procedure

One hundred forty-nine young women (age 18–41, mean age = 23) participated in the study. Participants were recruited by intercept at major train stations and in shopping malls. Participants were told that

the study was conducted by researchers interested in a novel advertising concept created by a company. This information was the same for all conditions. The gender and age ranges of the participants were selected to reflect the typical target audience of femvertising campaigns. Each participant was randomly assigned a booklet with one stimulus ad, followed by a questionnaire featuring several filler tasks as well as measures of the dependent variables. Participants were instructed to look at the ad for as long as they wanted, and then fill out the questionnaire. After the questionnaires had been collected, participants were debriefed and dismissed.

6.3 | Measures

Ad reactance was measured on 7-point Likert-type scales with three items: "The ad makes me want to be the exact opposite," "I do not approve of how the ad tries to affect me," and "The choice of models in the ad annoys me" (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.804$). This measure was adapted from Hong (1992) to track situational reactance caused by the ad (Fitzsimons & Lehmann, 2004; Thorbjørnsen & Dahlen, 2011). *Ad attitudes* were measured using the items bad/good, dislike/like, negative opinion/positive opinion, rated on 7-point semantic differential scales, in response to the question "What is your opinion on the ad?" (Dahlén, Granlund, & Grenros, 2009, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.964$). Finally, the questionnaire included the two-item measure of perceived ad stereotypicality used in the pretest as a manipulation check.

6.4 | Results

The manipulation check confirmed that participants perceived the femvertising ad as significantly less stereotypical than the traditional ad ($M_{\text{femvertising}} = 3.03$ vs. $M_{\text{traditional}} = 5.50$, $p < 0.01$). Supporting H1, an independent samples t-test showed that ad reactance was significantly lower in the femvertising condition than in the traditional advertising condition ($M_{\text{femvertising}} = 2.65$ vs. $M_{\text{traditional}} = 4.07$, $p < 0.01$). What is more, ad attitudes ($M_{\text{femvertising}} = 5.52$ vs. $M_{\text{traditional}} = 3.26$ $p < 0.01$) were significantly higher in the femvertising condition, thus supporting H2.

To test the underlying premise that the less stereotypical portrayals in femvertising reduce ad reactance (H1), and that this consequently has a favorable impact on ad attitudes (H2), a two-step mediation test was conducted using the Preacher–Hayes approach (Model 6, 5000 bootstrapping samples, 95% confidence interval, cf. Zhao, Lynch, & Qimei, 2010). In the analysis, ad condition (femvertising vs. traditional ad) was used as the independent variable, perceived stereotypicality as the first mediator, ad reactance as the second mediator, and ad attitudes as dependent variable. The test showed a significant effect of condition on perceived stereotypicality (−2.67, 95% CI: −3.10–−2.24) and of perceived stereotypicality on reactance (0.48, 95% CI: 0.21–0.74). Further, reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (−0.49, 95% CI: −0.63–−0.36). Overall, the results thus support the proposed theoretical reasoning.

6.5 | Discussion

Taken together, the findings indicate that femvertising leads to higher ad attitudes than traditional advertising, and that this is due to femvertising leading to less ad reactance. A mediation analysis showed that these effects are explained by femvertising being perceived as less stereotypical than traditional advertising. Overall, the results provide initial support for the hypothesized relationships. Still, the sampling procedure tended to err a little bit on the age of participants meaning that the participants were somewhat younger than intended. Study 2 sets out to replicate these findings using a different medium (online video) and a richer set of femvertising appeals (challenging not only stereotypes in terms of physical attractiveness, but also roles and occupations), a less intrusive assessment of perceived stereotypes, as well as a more appropriate sample in terms of age.

7 | STUDY 2

Study 2 consists of a between-subjects experiment comparing effects of actual femvertising for real brands on YouTube with traditional YouTube ads. This allows a test of the proposed hypotheses in a different medium, with actual brands, and for a different types of femvertising. What is more, participants were asked to freely report their initial reactions to the ad before moving on to the questions in order to reduce chances of demand effects. A professional research agency was used to get a more representative sample of young females.

7.1 | Stimuli development

A total of eight videos (four femvertising and four traditional advertising) in four different product categories were used as stimuli (for detailed information on the videos, see Table 1). All videos were sampled from YouTube. More specifically, examples of femvertising were identified and paired with videos using traditional female portrayals in the same product category. The product categories and brands represented were cars (Chevrolet and Fiat), sportswear (Nike and Reebok), shampoo (Pantene and Garnier Fructis), and telecom (Verizon and Kazam). The videos were between 30 and 60 seconds long. To avoid confounding effects for previous exposure, the videos selected had not run on the market of the study.

The videos were pretested on 211 participants (all women, mean age = 28.1). The videos in the femvertising condition were considered significantly less stereotypical than their traditional counterparts ($M_{\text{femvertising}} = 3.18$ vs. $M_{\text{traditional}} = 6.54$ $p < 0.01$). The difference was significant for all pairs ($p < 0.01$). The majority of participants had not seen the video before (4% yes, 96% no). Further, there were no significant differences in terms of brand familiarity between the two experimental conditions ($M_{\text{femvertising}} = 4.55$ vs. $M_{\text{traditional}} = 4.65$ $p = 0.747$).

7.2 | Procedure

Three hundred forty-six participants (all female, age 18–40, mean age = 28.2) were recruited through an online panel. A well-known

TABLE 1 Results of pretest

Product Category	Condition	Brand—Campaign	Link	Challenged Stereotype	Pretest Score Stereotypicality
Car	Femvertising	Chevrolet–Throw Like a Girl	https://youtu.be/UM0y9V7mr9A	Role	2.25[a]
Car	Traditional	Fiat–500 Topless	https://youtu.be/SwGrUMIagk0		6.46[a]
Sportswear	Femvertising	Nike–American Woman	https://youtu.be/RpmETN9-GPQ	Role, physical appearance	2.41[a]
Sportswear	Traditional	Reebok–Easy Tone	https://youtu.be/eR_UpJKwghc		6.50[a]
Shampoo	Femvertising	Pantene–Labels Against Women	https://youtu.be/-K2kfgW77O8	Occupation, role	3.81[a]
Shampoo	Traditional	Fructis–New Full & Plush	https://youtu.be/IaDbu2ej8OI		6.68[a]
Telecom	Femvertising	Verizon–Inspire Her Mind	https://youtu.be/XP3cyRRAfX0	Occupation	4.18[a]
Telecom	Traditional	Kazam–World's Slimmest Phone	https://youtu.be/sJja5SUdzY4		6.59[a]

[a]Significant difference from video in same product category, $p < 0.01$.

professional marketing research firm recruited participants to ensure good representation in terms of education level, occupation, ethnicity, urban/rural living areas, and other demographic variables. The participants received an e-mail from the marketing research company where a link randomly assigned them to one of the eight videos to be viewed on their laptop or smartphone. After watching the video, they were directed to a questionnaire featuring several filler tasks as well as measures of the dependent variables. Participants were then debriefed and rewarded points for participation by the marketing research company (these could later be redeemed for a gift of their choice).

7.3 | Measures

To allow a more unobtrusive test of the proposed reasoning and explore the process of reactance in relation to the (more or less stereotypical) portrayals used in the different ad conditions without too much probing, participants completed a thought listing exercise immediately after watching the video. In this exercise they were asked to list their spontaneous thoughts after watching the video, as many or as few as they liked (average number of thoughts: 3.00, range: 0–10). After completing the thought listing exercise, participants moved on to rate ad reactance and ad attitudes (measures identical to Study 1). Finally, participants were asked to review their thought list and code the thoughts as being positive, negative, or neutral. They were also asked to code the thoughts as being about the ad, about the participant herself, about stereotypes, or about something else (several categories could be selected).

Two expert coders, blind to conditions and to each other's coding, coded the thoughts related to stereotypes in each thought list. The coders were instructed to include thoughts containing words that directly mentioned stereotypes (such as "this is so stereotypical") as well as words related to stereotypes (such as "sexist"). When in doubt about the meaning of a word or phrase, coders consulted the participant's own coding. The coding showed good intercoder reliability (Pearson correlation = 0.879, $p < 0.01$) and differences were resolved by discussion. The average number of thoughts related to stereotypes in the ads were 0.59, constituting 20% of total thoughts (range: 0–10 thoughts). Examples of spontaneously mentioned thoughts categorized as being about ad stereotypes were "sexist," "very degrading for women," "gender discriminatory," and "stereotypical."

7.4 | Results

Given the focus on situational reactions, only participants who had paid attention to the video were included in the study. To ensure this, the time spent on the video page of the questionnaire was measured and only participants who had spent enough time to see the full video were included. What is more, participants were asked to identify the brand advertised (typically shown in the end of the video) in a drop-down list immediately after watching the video. Only those who could identify the right brand were included in the analysis. In total, 65 participants were excluded as a result of this procedure (equally distributed across experimental conditions). As a result, the sample used to test the hypotheses consisted of 281 participants.

Initial analysis of the thought-listing exercise showed that there was no difference in the number of thoughts generated in the two conditions ($M_{femvertising} = 2.92$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 3.07$, $p = 0.547$). This suggests that both types of advertising are equally likely to provoke thoughts. However, the type of thoughts differed. The stereotype thoughts were, indeed, fewer in the femvertising condition ($M_{femvertising} = 0.12$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 1.04$, $p < 0.01$). In the femvertising condition, 4% of the thoughts listed concerned stereotypicality, while in the traditional condition, stereotype thoughts represented 34% of all reported thoughts. This provides initial support for the proposed theoretical reasoning.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 were assessed using a Multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) analysis (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.735$, $F(2, 277) = 50.30$, $p < 0.01$). More specifically, brand familiarity was included as a covariate to control for the fact that different brands were used between conditions (Wilks' $\lambda = 0.735$, $F(2, 277) = 5.34$, $p < 0.01$). Supporting H1, a test of between subject effects showed that ad reactance was significantly lower in the femvertising condition than in the traditional advertising condition ($M_{femvertising} = 2.90$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 4.14$ $p < 0.01$). Ad attitudes were also significantly higher in the femvertising condition ($M_{femvertising} = 5.32$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 3.22$ $p < 0.01$), thus supporting H2. For a breakdown of the results for the individual ads sampled, please see Table 2.

Similar to Study 1, a mediation analysis was conducted where ad condition (femvertising vs. traditional ads) was used as the independent variable, perceived stereotypicality (using the number of stereotype thoughts) as the first mediator and ad reactance as the second mediator, and ad attitudes as the dependent variable (Model 6). The results again supported the hypothesized relationships. The test showed a significant effect of condition on perceived stereotypicality (-0.92, 95% CI: -1.22 to -0.62) and of perceived stereotypicality on ad reactance (0.49, 95% CI: 0.34–0.63). Further, ad reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (-0.45, 95% CI: -0.56–-0.34). Overall, the results thus support the proposed theoretical reasoning.

7.5 | Discussion

Study 2 replicates the findings of Study 1 using real ads and brands, a more varied set of femvertising (i.e., including role and occupational stereotypes), a different medium (online video), and four different product categories. Further, it reveals that even when not prompted, consumers identify (gender) stereotypes when processing (traditional) advertising. By challenging female gender stereotypes, femvertising is less likely to provoke such thoughts and thereby it reduces ad reactance. Overall, this supports the theoretical reasoning that femvertising leads to higher ad attitudes than traditional advertising and that ad reactance can explain why this is the case. Still, the use of different brands in the different conditions means that the results could be confounded by prior brand attitudes. What is more, an alternative explanation of the effects could be that the more traditional (stereotypical) female portrayals are perceived as offensive (e.g., Dahlén, Sjödin, Thorbjornsen, Hansen, Linander, & Thunell, 2013; Ford et al., 1991) rather than limiting. Study 3 sets out to remedy these limitations.

TABLE 2   Results per ad, Study 2

Condition	Brand—Campaign	Product Category	Stereotypicality	Reactance	Ad Attitude
Femvertising	Chevrolet—Throw Like a Girl	Car	0.00[a]	2.62[a]	5.20[a]
Traditional	Fiat—500 Topless	Car	1.46[a]	4.09[a]	2.76[a]
Femvertising	Nike—American Woman	Sportswear	0.06[a]	3.33[a]	5.85[a]
Traditional	Reebok—Easy Tone	Sportswear	1.89[a]	4.76[a]	2.48[a]
Femvertising	Pantene—Labels Against Women	Shampoo	0.24	2.95[a]	5.17[a]
Traditional	Fructis—New Full & Plush	Shampoo	0.08	3.93[a]	3.90[a]
Femvertising	Verizon—Inspire Her Mind	Telecom	0.00[a]	2.72[a]	5.07[a]
Traditional	Kazam—World's Slimmest Phone	Telecom	0.78[a]	3.77[a]	3.72[a]

[a]Significant difference from video in same product category, $p < 0.01$.

8 | STUDY 3

Study 3 tests Hypotheses 1 and 2 in a one-way between-subjects experiment focusing on physical characteristics of female portrayals used in advertising. More specifically, it tests the robustness of the findings by measuring reactions to femvertising (vs. a traditional ad) for the same brand using a different operationalization of ad reactance, while also controlling for alternative explanations in terms of brand familiarity and ad offense. What is more, given that the same brand is used in both conditions, the study also assesses reactions in terms of brand attitudes.

8.1 | Stimuli

The stimuli used were similar to those in Study 1 in that they were underwear ads including (traditional) or challenging (femvertising) stereotypes focused on physical characteristics. However, to avoid potentially confounding effects of brand (as in Study 2) the same (real) brand was used as stimuli in both conditions. More specifically, the traditional ad was one of the ads identified as typical in the pilot study. This ad featured a slim woman in underwear. For the femvertising condition, the image of the woman in the ad was replaced by another image of a (less slim) woman, used in a different ad campaign. To avoid confounding effects from previous exposure, neither original campaign had run on the market where the experiment was conducted. The stimuli ads can be found in appendix B.

A pretest ($n = 203$, 100% female, mean age = 28.1; participants similar to, but not included in the main study) showed that the femvertising ad was perceived as significantly less stereotypical than the traditional ad ($M_{femvertising} = 3.20$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 6.69$, $p < 0.01$, same items as in previous pretests, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.952$). There was also a significant difference between the ads in terms of typicality ($M_{femvertising} = 3.72$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 6.00$, $p < 0.01$, items: "The ad is typical for advertising targeting women," "The ad is untypical for advertising targeting women" (reverse coded), "The ad is different from traditional ads targeting women," measured on 7-point Likert-type scales, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.834$). The correlation perceived stereotype and typicality was 0.786 ($p < 0.01$).

8.2 | Procedure

Ninety-six women (age 17–45, mean age = 26) participated in the experiment. The procedure was the same as in Study 1. Each partic-

ipant was randomly assigned a booklet. Before being exposed to one stimulus ad, they were asked about their familiarity with the target brand. After exposure to the ad they answered questions with regards to the dependent variables. In addition, perceived ad offense was measured as an alternative explanation for the effects found in Studies 1 and 2.

8.3 | Measures

Brand familiarity was assessed by asking: "What is your current relation to brand X?", followed by three semantic differentials (don't know at all/know very well, not familiar with/very familiar with, have no prior experience with/have extensive prior experience with, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.901$). Given that we used the same brand in both conditions, we also included a measure of brand attitudes: bad/good, dislike/like, negative opinion/positive opinion in response to the question "What is your opinion on the brand?" To increase face validity and better capture all facets of situational reactance (cf. Thorbjørnsen & Dahlén, 2011), *ad reactance* was measured by replacing the item "I do not approve of how the ad tries to affect me" with "The message in this ad limits my freedom of choice" in the measurement items used in Studies 1 and 2 (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.832$). In addition, *ad offense* ("the ad is offensive"/"upsetting"/"degrading," Dahlén et al., 2013) was measured on a Likert-type scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.937$) and ad stereotypicality was included as a manipulation check (same items as in the pretest: Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.850$). All items were measured on 7-point scales.

8.4 | Results

The manipulation check confirmed that participants perceived the femvertising ad as significantly less stereotypical ($M_{femvertising} = 3.52$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 4.57$, $p < 0.01$) than the traditional ad. What is more, there was no difference in brand familiarity between conditions ($M_{femvertising} = 3.98$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 4.29$, *ns*), suggesting that the randomization was successful.

Supporting H1, an independent samples *t*-test showed that ad reactance was significantly lower in the femvertising condition than in the traditional advertising condition ($M_{femvertising} = 1.85$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 4.89$, $p < 0.01$). What is more, ad attitudes ($M_{femvertising} = 5.43$ vs. $M_{traditional} = 2.13$, $p < 0.01$) were significantly higher in the femvertising condition, thus supporting H2. The

latter difference also holds for brand attitudes ($M_{femvertising}$ = 5.27 vs. $M_{traditional}$ = 2.57, p < 0.01).

A two-step mediation test using the Preacher–Hayes approach (Model 6) showed a significant effect of condition on perceived stereotypicality (−1.06, 95% CI: −1.51 to −0.61) and of perceived stereotypicality on ad reactance (0.59, 95% CI: 0.36–0.82). Further, ad reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (−0.31, 95% CI: −0.50 to −0.12) as well as on brand attitudes (−0.38, 95% CI: −0.60 to −0.16). Overall, the results thus support the proposed theoretical reasoning.

Looking at ad offense as an alternative explanation, there was indeed a significant difference between conditions ($M_{femvertising}$ = 1.88 vs. $M_{traditional}$ = 4.11, p < 0.01). Although ad reactance and ad offense were highly correlated (0.68, p < 0.01), the effect of ad offense led to a nonsignificant mediation on ad attitudes (−0.18, 95% CI: −0.35 to 0.01) and brand attitudes (−0.16, 95% CI: −0.35 to 0.03). Overall, this suggests that an explanation based on ad reactance is better than one based on ad offense.

9 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

This paper provides a conceptual discussion of femvertising as well as an empirical assessment of its effects on a female target audience. The results of three experimental studies show that femvertising generates lower levels of ad reactance than traditional advertising and that this, in turn, leads to higher ad and brand attitudes. The effects are also shown to be mediated by consumer perceptions of whether or not the ad uses stereotypical portrayals.

The current paper contributes to the existing literature on female stereotypes in advertising by (1) investigating a more complex set of female stereotypes than those typically studied and (2) focusing explicitly on how more or less stereotypical portrayals might impact advertising response by means of ad reactance. Although previous studies tend to focus on social comparisons and self-identity, this paper links existing literature on female stereotypes and portrayals in advertising (e.g., Richins, 1991; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008) with psychological reactance (e.g., Brehm, 1966; Thorbjørnsen & Dahlen, 2011) to show that consumers perceive femvertising as less stereotypical than traditional advertising and that this lowers ad reactance. In fact, reactance has been largely overlooked in previous research, which focuses mainly on brand- or self-related reactions (e.g., Bissell & Rask, 2010; D'Alessandro & Chitty, 2011) to advertising stereotypes. The results of the thought listing exercise in Study 2 show that advertising can, indeed, generate thoughts that are not related to the brand, nor the self, but to advertising stereotypes in general. As revealed in the mediation analyses, such thoughts are important as they impact ad reactance, thereby affecting ad and brand attitudes. What is more, the results of Study 3 lend support to the notion that it is ad reactance rather than a more general sense of offense that drives the effects.

While the term femvertising is widely used in practice, it has, to date, been overlooked in academia. This paper therefore makes a contribution by proposing a more theoretically grounded conceptualization of femvertising, defined as *advertising that challenges traditional female advertising stereotypes*. By defining femvertising in terms of an advertising appeal, rather than an ideological movement, the hope is that more scholars will take an interest in appeals that challenge traditional advertising stereotypes and their potential effects on brands and consumers alike. In fact, female stereotypes are not the only ones currently being challenged by marketers. Many marketers are expressing ambitions, for sustainability or other reasons, to incorporate more diverse portrayals in their advertising, for example, in terms of cultures and ethnicities or sexual orientation, while also promoting their brands (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017; Griner & Ciambrello, 2015; Monllos, 2015). This twofold approach to what constitutes a successful advertising campaign (one that empowers brands and consumers simultaneously) certainly puts advertising practitioners in a new position, where they need to be aware of the societal role of advertising, as well as its direct effects on consumers (Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016). The results of this paper contribute to this understanding by showing that consumers take advertising stereotypes into account when evaluating advertising messages and that challenging them can, in fact, increase ad and brand attitudes while also promoting positive societal change.

9.1 | Implications for marketers

Marketers have much to gain from adapting a more proactive and mindful approach to the female portrayals they use in their ads. Although empirical research shows that marketers historically have been working reactively with stereotypes (i.e., waiting for societal norms change first, Eisend, 2010), the current paper shows that there are benefits in working proactively to challenge societal norms and stereotypes. The finding that femvertising can lead to positive ad response can be seen as evidence that diverse advertising can and should be explored, and that there are possibilities of creating advertising that generates a win–win situation for target audiences and brands (e.g., Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016; Rosengren, Dahlén, & Modig, 2013).

As found in this study, challenging female stereotypes would not be beneficial only to a narrow set of advertised products (such as female or household products) but to a wide range of product categories, from cars to underwear, sportswear and shampoo, across advertising media (print and online video), and across stereotype attributes (physical characteristics, roles, and occupations).

The present paper also outlines features of stereotypes that can be challenged (i.e., physical appearance, roles, and occupations), which can be a useful guide to assess portrayals in advertising. This framework can help not only marketers who want to challenge stereotypes, but also those who want to avoid the potential pitfalls of including stereotypical portrayals in their ads. The findings suggest that the measure of ad stereotypicality used in this study also can be used in pretests to diagnose target audience reactions to female portrayals used in advertising. Such pretests could help marketers avoid ads that lead to ad reactance among a female target audience and thereby increase the effectiveness of their advertising.

9.2 | Limitations and further research

The present study should be considered a first step in exploring potential mechanisms involved in consumers' processing of femvertising. Although the results of three experimental studies support our reasoning, there are several limitations to keep in mind. First, although we tried hard to create comparable ads between conditions, the changes made to provide a more versus less stereotypical female portrayal required us to use different models (Studies 1 and 3) and/or different brands (Study 2). This means that there are other dimensions that differ than just stereotypes and additional studies are needed to further isolate the proposed effects of femvertising. Second, not all female portrayals used in traditional advertising are stereotypical. Future studies are needed to better understand whether the effects of femvertising are more positive also to female portrayals that are neutral in terms of stereotypes and whether ad reactance will still be important for such ads. Similarly, studies are needed to explore how reactions might differ between advertising stereotypes that are realistic or acceptable to the target audience, and those that are not. Third, in our studies we did not include any questions about who the persons partaking in the study were. Most likely there are several individual differences that could moderate the reactions to femvertising. Future studies are needed to explore such individual differences.

It should also be noted that while ad and brand attitudes are certainly of interest to most marketers, it does not provide a full understanding of the potential effects of femvertising. Future studies should investigate other advertising effects, such as word of mouth and sales. They should also include social or societal effects in parallel to the advertising effects to better understand whether the advertising effects found in the present study are actually accompanied by the female empowerment that the femvertising movement sets out to achieve. This would require a study design that incorporates both traditional advertising effects and assessment of extended effects such as the target audience self-perception and efficacy (for a similar approach related to advertising creativity, see Rosengren et al., 2013). What is more, advertising that challenge stereotypes can be found in several different contexts, from portrayal of groups like "stay-at-home dads," interracial dating, or homosexual couples in mainstream advertising (Åkestam et al., 2017). Future studies are needed to better understand the reactions to such portrayals, and the conceptualization of desired outcomes (e.g., ad reactance) to do so needs to be further refined. Hopefully the present study will open up more such investigations, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the effects of stereotypical portrayals in advertising.

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APPENDIX A

Stimuli ads Study 1 (femvertising vs. traditional ad)

APPENDIX B

Stimuli ads Study 3 (femvertising vs. traditional ad)

Article 3: Caring for her: The influence of presumed influence on female consumers' attitudes towards advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Check for updates

Caring for her: the influence of presumed influence on female consumers' attitudes towards advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals

Nina Åkestam

Center for Consumer Marketing, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how presumed influence on others affects women's evaluations of advertising featuring gender stereotypes. Previous research has largely overlooked the social context of the reactions to gender stereotypes. Addressing that gap, this study draws on the influence of presumed influence model to proposed that female consumers believe that other women are negatively affected by advertising that contains gender-stereotyped portrayals. This perception is hypothesized to influence ad and brand attitudes as consumers 'punish' the brand for hurting others. The results of two experimental studies featuring stereotyped and non-stereotyped advertising portrayals indicate that the hypothesis holds for two types of stereotype components (physical characteristics and role behaviour). This new theoretical perspective to the literature on gender stereotypes in advertising, one that helps to explain why many women dislike gender stereotypes in advertising even though those stereotypes often have limited impact on them personally.

Introduction

This study sets out to investigate the role of social context in the processing of gender stereotypes in advertising. In recent years, the use and consequences of gender stereotypes in advertising have attracted considerable attention in academic journals (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a; Chu, Lee, and Kim 2016; Eisend 2010; Huhmann and Limbu 2016), in the general media (e.g. Griner and Ciambrello 2015), and among marketing practitioners (Sweney 2016) across the world. Although the use of gender stereotypes is prominent in mainstream advertising (Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel 2014), several recent studies from different markets have questioned their effectiveness in brand building (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a; Dickinson and Gill 2009), as well as criticized their potentially negative societal impact (Eisend 2010). It has been argued that female gender stereotypes in particular are harmful to individual consumers, as well as to the broader societal goal of gender equality (Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel 2014). In reaction to this criticism, several major corporations have changed their international

CONTACT Nina Åkestam ✉ nina.akestam@phdstudent.hhs.se

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marketing strategies. For example, in 2016, global brand Unilever pledged to drop sexist stereotypes from its ads and instead to give the women featured 'authentic and three-dimensional' personalities (Sweney 2016, 1). Stereotyping is thus not only an ethical and academic concern, but also increasingly important for marketing strategy and tactics.

Academic evidence that gender stereotypes in advertising has a negative social and psychological impact on women has been somewhat mixed. Some studies (Richins 1991; Davies et al. 2002) have found negative psychological reactions such as reduced self-esteem, increased self-ideal discrepancy, and increased body-focused anxiety. However, several meta-analyses suggest that while some women indeed experience such direct negative reactions, most women do not (Borau and Bonnefon 2017; Groesz, Levine, and Murnen 2002; Holmstrom 2004; Wan et al. 2013). Studies focusing on advertising effectiveness, rather than psychological and social effects, have however found that advertising featuring female stereotypes tends to be evaluated less favourably that advertising not featuring stereotypes (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a; Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel 2014). This combination of results suggests that the dynamic is more complex than women simply disliking gender-stereotyped advertising because they personally experience a negative psychological or social reaction. A better understanding of this dynamic is crucial to research on the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising.

The present research aims to address this issue by investigating the social context of reactions to gender stereotypes. This is a perspective that the existing literature has largely overlooked. Advertising is not consumed in a social vacuum; rather, consumers are well aware that other people see the same advertising as they do (Eisend 2015). The influence of presumed influence model (IPI; Gunther and Storey 2003; Noguti and Russell 2014; Sharma and Roy 2015) proposes that people's interaction with advertising is affected by other people's reactions to it, or even by their assumptions as to how others would react to it. The model suggests the possibility that women do not react to stereotypes in advertising based solely on their own personal experiences, but also out of concern for others. In the present case, then, female consumers may believe that *other* women are negatively affected by advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals. This belief in turn would influence ad and brand attitudes as consumers 'punish' the brand for hurting others.

This study thus applies IPI theory in an effort to understand more fully why many women dislike gender stereotypes in advertising. As (to the authors' knowledge) the first study using this approach, it expands the proposed explanation from a focus on direct effects on a subject (such as lowered self-esteem) so as to encompass assumed effects on others as well, thereby making significant contributions to the research on gender stereotypes in advertising, as well as to advertising practice. These contributions are discussed at length in the concluding section of this paper.

In the next section of this article, theory on gender stereotypes in advertising is linked to theory on IPI, leading to three main hypotheses. These hypotheses are then tested in a 2 × 1 experimental study featuring advertising portrayals of gender stereotypes in terms of physical characteristics. After that, theory on role behaviour stereotypes is introduced and tested in a second 2 × 1 experimental study. Results of both studies are followed by a discussion of implications for advertisers, limitations of the study, and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical development and hypotheses

Gender stereotypes in advertising

Gender stereotypes are beliefs that certain attributes, such as occupations or role behaviours, differentiate women from men (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a). Although such stereotypes of both genders frequently occur in advertising (Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel 2014), content analyses have found that female stereotypes are more common (Eisend 2010; Zimmerman and Dahlberg 2008) and are considered more damaging (Van Hellemont and Van den Bulck 2012). There are four generally accepted kinds of gender stereotypes in advertising: trait descriptors, physical characteristics, role behaviours, and occupational status (Deaux and Lewis 1984). Each of these has masculine and feminine versions. All four components can appear in advertising, separately or together (Eisend 2010).

Although stereotypes are not necessarily negative judgments and can often help to simplify communications, they can also lead to oversimplification (Knoll, Eisend, and Steinhagen 2011). This in turn can affect the expectations and evaluations of individuals belonging to a certain social category, such as a gender. As a result, continuous exposure to stereotypes can restrain the life opportunities of individuals belonging to certain groups in two ways (Taylor and Stern 1997). First, individuals may experience negative emotions as a result of being stereotyped. Second, it may influence other people to treat individuals poorly (for example through workplace discrimination) as a result of the stereotyping. Following this logic, the European Parliament concluded in its resolution 'How Advertising and Marketing Affect Equality between Men and Women' that gender stereotypes in advertising may hurt gender equality in society and should therefore be avoided (Van Hellemont and Van den Bulck 2012).

The effects of gender stereotypes in advertising

The literature on gender stereotypes in advertising thus far has focused on three main areas: the nature and frequency of gender stereotyping in advertising (e.g. Eisend 2010; Knoll, Eisend, and Steinhagen 2011; Hatzithomas, Boutsouki, and Ziamou 2016; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009), the psychological and/or social effects of gender stereotypes on consumers (Davies et al. 2002; Dittmar and Howard 2004; Richins 1991), and the impact of gender stereotypes on advertising effectiveness (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a; Bower 2001; Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel 2014; Kyrousi, Panigyrakis, and Panopoulos 2016).

Studies relying on social comparison theory (e.g. Richins 1991; Bissell and Rask 2010; Keh et al. 2016) have tended to hypothesize that exposure to advertising stereotypes would have a negative impact on women's self-esteem and would lead to behaviour consistent with the stereotype. Many of these studies have found only mixed support for such hypotheses (Antioco, Smeesters, and Le Boedec 2012; D'Alessandro and Chitty 2011; Richins 1991). Some consumers indeed experience lower self-esteem or self-satisfaction as a result of exposure to stereotyped advertising portrayals (individuals internalizing beauty ideals: Halliwell and Dittmar 2004; Bissell and Rask 2010; individuals of initially low self-esteem: Richins 1991), and they may also be primed to act consistent with the

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stereotype (Davies et al. 2002; Davies, Spencer, and Steele 2005). Individuals lacking these traits, however, do not appear to experience such negative effects.

A similar pattern has been observed for non-stereotyped advertising portrayals. Whereas some individuals experience higher self-esteem as a result of exposure to such ads (e.g. those who consume the advertising through a magazine directed at larger-sized women; Loken and Peck 2005), others remain largely unaffected (Borau and Bonnefon 2017; Halliwell and Dittmar 2004; Peck and Loken 2004). Taken together, these results offer mixed evidence for the claim that advertisers' inclusion of gender-stereotyped portrayals will lead to negative psychological reactions by a majority of female consumers. Similarly, Holmstrom's (2004) meta-analysis showed that negative psychological reactions after exposure to gender stereotypes in advertising are largely dependent upon moderating factors such as personality type and age.

Dickinson and Gill (2009) proposed that perhaps women are not as affected by advertising stereotypes as researchers may think. Different moral philosophies, low advertising involvement, and increasing advertising scepticism may cause many women not to process stereotyped messages enough to be affected by them.

Still, studies focusing on business outcomes have repeatedly found that female consumers evaluate advertising featuring gender stereotypes less favourably than advertising without such stereotypes (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a; Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel 2014; Feiereisen, Broderick, and Douglas 2009; Huhmann and Limbu 2016; Martin, Veer, and Pervan 2007). These studies suggest several different explanatory mechanisms, including reactance (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a), congruity theory (Feiereisen, Broderick, and Douglas 2009), and self-referencing (Martin, Veer, and Pervan 2007). Personal, negative psychological reactions thus mediate ad and brand attitudes. This finding does not, however, explain the attitudes of the majority of women who do not experience personal, negative psychological reactions to stereotyped advertising (Holmstrom 2004). This leaves an important question largely unanswered: If most women are not negatively affected by gender stereotypes in advertising, why do so many of them still dislike it? A potential answer, as suggested above, is that existing studies have largely overlooked the social context as a mediator of these attitudes. Adding such a perspective could thus offer a complementary explanation to the previously tested theories.

The influence of presumed influence model

A compelling body of research on the IPI (Gunther and Storey 2003) has shown that the expected impact of media or advertising on other people affects consumers' reactions to a wide range of stimuli (Sun, Pan, and Sheh 2008). This indirect effect can appear even when no direct effect is observed (Gunther and Storey 2003) or simultaneously with direct effects (Sharma and Roy 2015). Gunther and Storey (2003) developed this model as a less restrictive extension of the theory of third-person effects (Davison 1983; Eisend 2015). Both theories are conceptually similar in suggesting that consumers are aware of the persuasive agendas of advertising or media sources (in line with the persuasion knowledge model, Friestad and Wright 1994), and that they believe others to be more affected by these agendas than they themselves are (Dahlén et al. 2013). This belief mediates their reaction to the advertising. However, whereas theory on third-person effects attributes this effect to the *difference* between influence on oneself and influence on others (Eisend
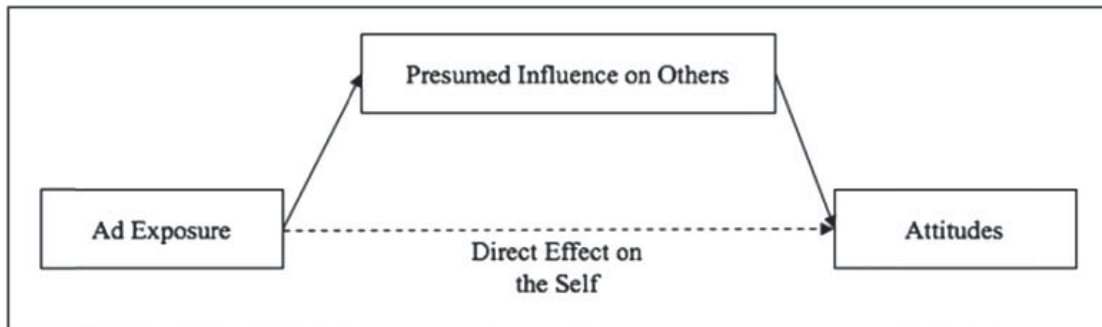
Figure 1. The IPI model (Gunther and Storey 2003).

2008), the IPI model takes a less rigid approach, suggesting that the presumed effect on others in itself has an impact on attitudes (see Figure 1) (Gunther and Storey 2003; Sharma and Roy 2015). This situation would hold whether the individual believes herself to be largely affected or not. The reported impact on oneself is therefore of less importance in the IPI framework.

A popular explanation for this mechanism is motivational: people tend to feel better about themselves when they perceive others to be more susceptible to persuasion attempts (Noguti and Russell 2014). This would be particularly true for persuasion attempts stemming from advertising, as it is generally considered undesirable to be readily swayed by advertising (Eisend 2015). Another possible explanation would be that consumers use 'others' as a projection of their own concerns, since they do not wish to be viewed as personally affected (Eisend 2015). This possibility is closely related to Pollay's (1986) idea of the 'myth of personal immunity.' Pollay suggested that most of us like to think of ourselves as immune to advertising's inducements, in order to preserve our self-respect – especially when the advertising is banal or annoying. Consistent with this idea, several studies have found that advertising that insults consumers' intelligence receives poor evaluations (Dahlén, Rosengren, and Smit 2014; Pollay and Mittal 1993).

The influence of presumed influence of gender stereotypes in advertising

Presumed influence can be either positive or negative (Noguti and Russell 2014). In the case of gender-stereotyped advertising, there are several reasons why consumers might expect it to harm others, regardless of the consumer's gender. However, previous research has focused mostly on female stereotypes, as many content analyses of advertising have found these to be more frequent (Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel 2014; Zimmerman and Dahlberg 2008), and on women's reactions to them, as the impact of stereotypes is considered more powerful if those stereotypes are self-relevant (Van Hellemont and Van den Bulck 2012). Focusing on women is thus a natural starting point for an extension of existing research.

Portrayals of women in advertising have become somewhat less stereotyped over recent decades (although also more sexualized; see Zimmerman and Dahlberg 2008), partly due to an increasingly intense criticism of the effects of stereotyped advertising images (Bian and Wang 2015; Eisend 2010; Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel 2014). The 2008 resolution from the European Parliament, which argues that gender stereotypes are

harmful to consumers and hence explicitly discourages advertisers from relying on gender stereotypes, has been adopted in the form of legislation (for example, in the United Kingdom and Denmark) or industry self-regulation (in Germany and Sweden) (Van Hellemont and Van Den Bulck, 2012), which has also been a topic of frequent public debate (Van Hellemont and Van Den Bulck, 2012). Consumers paying attention to mainstream and social media would thus likely be aware of this debate, and following this, have some awareness of the arguments against gender stereotyping in advertising. This would increase these consumers' likelihood to assume that gender stereotypes in advertising could have a negative impact on others.

Furthermore, consumers' perceptions of their own knowledge on a topic have a positive impact on how vulnerable they assume others to be to persuasion attempts on that topic (Eisend 2015). Thus, exposure to arguments regarding the harm of gender stereotypes in advertising should influence consumers in two ways. First, by improving their *actual* knowledge on the topic (Friestad and Wright 1994; Eisend 2015), it makes them more aware that stereotypes could harm others, even if they personally may not feel any negative reactions to such presentations. Second, by increasing their *perceived* knowledge on the topic, it activates a third-person effect by which they assume more strongly that others are vulnerable to persuasion attempts of this nature (Eisend 2015).

As a result, consumers should believe gender-stereotyped advertising to be potentially harmful to others, in much the same way that previous studies have shown with regard to offensive advertising messages (Dahlén et al. 2013) and gambling advertisements (Youn, Faber, and Shah 2000). The following hypothesis is therefore proposed:

H1: Advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals generates higher levels of presumed negative influence on others than advertising featuring non-stereotyped portrayals.

Attitudinal effects of the influence of presumed influence

In the second stage of the IPI model, consumers adapt their behaviour according to their beliefs about how advertising affects others (Gunther and Storey 2003). Presumed influence on others thus mediates consumer behaviour (Dahlén et al. 2013; Eisend 2015; Sharma and Roy 2015). This adaptation takes place regardless of the accuracy of the belief, so that the belief itself, not any actual impact on others, fosters behaviour. For example, university students have a higher willingness to try alcohol brands placed in a TV series when they believe that their peers will be strongly influenced by this product placement (Noguti and Russell 2014). Similar behaviours have been observed in studies of advertising scarcity appeals (Eisend 2008; Sharma and Roy 2015), voting behaviours (Golan, Banning, and Lundy 2008), and positive direct advertising (Huh, Delorme, and Reid 2004). In this way, presumed influence on others can have a positive impact on advertising effects, such as purchase intentions, in some circumstances.

When consumers perceive advertising to be harmful to others, however, they dislike the advertising (McLeod, Eveland, and Nathanson 1997; Youn, Faber, and Shah 2000). For example, consumers who find advertising offensive to the population of a neighbouring country report lower levels of ad and brand attitudes, even though they are not offended themselves (Dahlén et al. 2013). This behaviour could arise simply out of concern for

others (Eisend 2015). As individuals assume that others are more vulnerable to influence than they themselves are, they would feel the need to protect these others from potential negative influence (Boyle, McLeod, and Rojas 2008). This reaction has also been described as a result of assumed social pressure – 'if others are harmed by it, I don't want to disagree with them' (Dahlén et al. 2013; Glynn and Jeong 2003). Furthermore, consumers can use their attitudes to communicate with brands. As such, positive attitudes can be a way to express gratitude towards a brand doing something the consumer likes (Biel 1990). Mirroring this, a consumer would report negative attitudes towards a brand whose behaviour the consumer dislikes. Taken together, these considerations suggest that advertising assumed to harm others should generate negative ad and brand attitudes, and that this effect is mediated by presumed negative influence on others. It is therefore hypothesized:

H2: Advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals generates less favourable (a) ad attitudes and (b) brand attitudes.

H3: Presumed negative influence on others mediates the relationship between advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals and (a) ad attitudes and (b) brand attitudes, so that higher presumed negative influence on others leads to less favourable ad and brand attitudes.

The theoretical model is summarized in Figure 2. The three hypotheses were tested in two experimental studies comparing advertising with gender-stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals.

Study 1

Of the four generally accepted components of gender stereotypes (Deaux and Lewis 1984), stereotyping of physical characteristics (e.g. beauty ideals) is probably the one most frequently featured in advertising (Keh et al. 2016). This component concerns not only actual features of the body (such as height, weight, and skin colour), but also how the body is presented – for example, use of makeup and styling, poses, and facial expressions (Deaux and Lewis 1984). A vast body of literature suggests that exposure to such
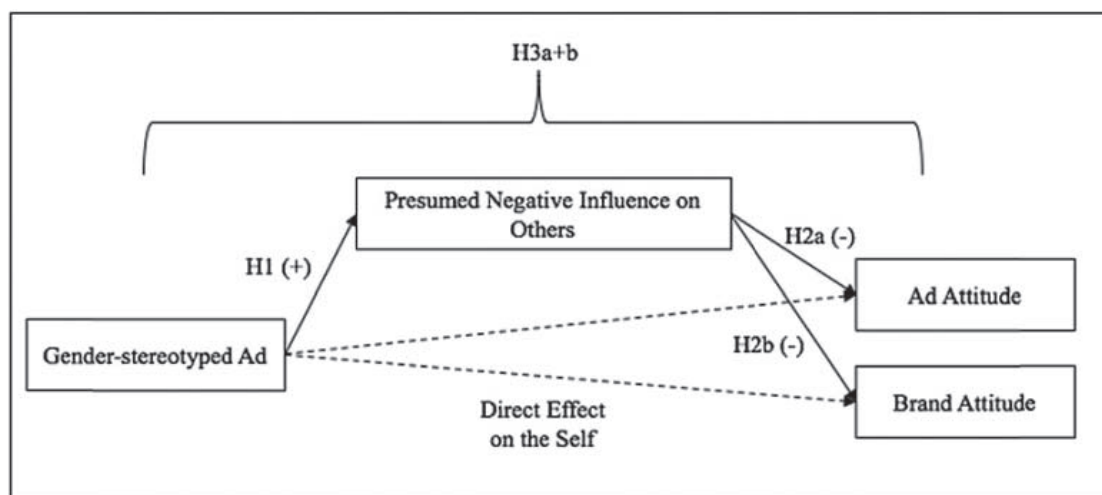

Figure 2. Theoretical model including hypotheses.

stereotypes can impact women's self-esteem and body satisfaction (Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009). As a result, some advertisers, such as Dove and Aerie, have started to challenge this stereotype by featuring models who do not display the physical characteristics traditionally associated with advertising models. In view of this development, exploring the IPI of advertisements featuring models who do and do not conform to stereotyped physical characteristics of female advertising models, was a natural starting point for this study. An experiment with a 2 (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped portrayal) × 1 design was conducted to test the two hypotheses.

Stimulus development

Two simulated print ads for underwear were developed, based on actual print ads. Print ads were selected as the experimental medium due to their ease of manipulation and because they are commonly used for underwear advertising. Underwear was chosen as the product category as it clearly displays different physical characteristics. Moreover, underwear is a sector in which some brands (e.g. Calvin Klein) tend to use models with very stereotyped physical characteristics whereas others (e.g. Aerie) do not. Consumers would thus be likely to see both experimental conditions as valid.

Two ads (shown in the Appendix) were created in collaboration with a professional art director. The main feature was an image of several women posing together in their underwear. Two different ads (one from Victoria's Secret and one from Dove) featuring such images were used as a basis for the creation of the experimental ads. To avoid confounding effects from previous exposure and potential brand associations, the original ads had not run on the market where the experiment was conducted. They were also heavily manipulated to suit the purpose of the study, minimizing the risk that participants would associate the experimental ads with any real ads or brands that they may have seen previously. The two images were displayed on similar white-grey backgrounds. The same key message ('For Every Body') and visual elements were added.

Both ads showed an image of five women posing in black or white underwear. In the stereotyped condition, the image displayed women of a similar, very slim body type, with poses and facial expressions typical of fashion advertising (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a). In the non-stereotyped condition, the image showed women of different body types, posing in a less traditional, more collective manner and with less typical facial expressions. Body type, poses, and facial expressions are all considered aspects of stereotyped physical characteristics, so using them in combination should strengthen the manipulation (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a). Finally, to avoid brand-specific effects, a logo from a fake brand was added and then blurred. In the study, participants were informed that they would see an ad from an underwear brand, but that the sender wanted to remain anonymous for the time being.

Pretest

The stimuli were pretested on participants similar (in terms of age and gender) to, but not part of, the main sample ($n = 35$, all female, mean age 20.2 years). The pretest participants were recruited from an undergraduate class at a Swedish business school, and participants were compensated with course credit. To avoid demand effects, all students regardless of

gender were invited to participate. However, only the female participants' responses were used in the analysis. Participants were asked to rate how stereotyped they perceived the ads to be on a seven-point Likert-type scale (two items: 'The ad is stereotyped' and 'The ad shows a stereotyped image of women'; Cronbach's alpha = .749). The stereotyped ad was rated significantly higher ($M_{stereotype}$ = 5.24 vs. $M_{non-stereotype}$ = 2.88, $p <. 01$), and the manipulation was thus deemed successful.

Participants

The main study was conducted in Sweden in February 2016. One hundred and nineteen young women (age 17–40, mean age 29) were recruited through an online panel. They were almost equally distributed across the two cells of the experiment ($N_{stereotyped}$ = 64, $N_{non-stereotyped}$ = 55). In an effort to add to previous research, the gender and age of participants were selected to reflect the sample of previous studies on similar topics (e.g. Buunk and Dijkstra 2011; Richins 1991). Although there is no theoretical reason to believe that men would not experience IPI effects, gender stereotypes generally influence the two genders in different ways (Eisend, Plagemann, and Sollwedel 2014). Moreover, existing theory on negative effects of gender stereotypes in advertising has, with some exceptions (e.g. Gulas and McKeage 2000), focused on women. To build on this existing research, the experiment was conducted using female participants only.

Procedure

NEPA, a well-known international marketing research firm, recruited participants to ensure representation similar to that of the general population in terms of demographic variables. The sample thus reflected a mix of women of different occupations, ethnicities, income and education levels, living areas (urban or rural), and marital status. Participants received an e-mail from the marketing research company in which a link randomly assigned them to one of the two ads. The link was available to the participants for a week. They could thus participate in the study wherever they had access to their laptop or smartphone. After watching the ad, they were directed to a questionnaire that contained questions addressing the dependent variables, manipulation checks, as well as several filler questions concerning variables not of interest to this study, such as their present mood and their thoughts on advertising in general. The purpose of these questions was to reduce demand effects and thereby generate more valid responses. On average, the participants spent a total of 7 minutes watching the ad and answering questions. After completing the task, participants were debriefed and rewarded for their participation with points that they could later redeem for a gift of their choice.

Measures

Presumed negative influence on others was measured on a seven-point Likert-type scale using the item 'I believe that other women are negatively affected by this ad' (Youn, Faber, and Shah 2000). To allow for analysis of the elasticity of this influence, and to avoid demand effects, measures of presumed positive influence ('I believe that other women are positively affected by this ad') and neutral influence ('I believe that other women are

affected by this ad') were also included. Although the use of multi-item measures is generally recommended in academic research (Churchill 1979), previous studies have used this single-item measure to test for IPI (Eisend 2008, 2015; Gunther and Storey 2003; Sharma and Roy 2015). Across studies, it has shown good reliability.

Ad and brand attitudes were measured using the items 'bad/good', 'dislike/like', and 'negative opinion/positive opinion', rated on seven-point semantic differential scales, in response to the question 'What is your opinion of the ad/the brand?' (Dahlén, Granlund, and Grenros 2009). Previous studies (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a; Eisend 2015) has found that consumers can form an opinion on an unknown brand based on ad exposure. The items showed very high reliability (Cronbach's alpha for ad = .984, Cronbach's alpha for brand = .986) and were indexed for the following analyses.

Results

First, a manipulation check was conducted using the same measure as in the pretest, to confirm the level of consumer-perceived stereotyping of the portrayals (Cronbach's alpha = .906, $M_{stereotype}$ = 5.52 vs. $M_{non-stereotype}$ = 3.33, $p <$. 01). Supporting H1, the ad featuring models of stereotyped physical characteristics generated higher levels of presumed negative influence on others ($M_{stereotype}$ = 5.09 vs. $M_{non-stereotype}$ = 2.27, $p <$. 01). Furthermore, in support of H2, ad attitudes ($M_{stereotype}$ = 3.57 vs. $M_{non-stereotype}$ = 5.21, $p <$. 01), and brand attitudes ($M_{stereotype}$ = 3.51 vs. $M_{non-stereotype}$ = 5.17, $p <$. 01) were significantly less favourable in the stereotyped condition.

To test H3, which proposed that presumed negative influence on others mediates ad and brand attitudes, mediation analyses were run using the Preacher–Hayes approach, Model 4 (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010). This approach, which uses bootstrapping procedures to establish mediation, has been widely applied in the marketing literature since its introduction in 2008 (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a, Eisend 2015; Modig, Dahlén, and Colliander 2014) and is now considered the recommended method for such analyses (Zhao, Lynch, and Chen 2010). The conditions for using this approach are that *X* is thought to have a direct effect on *Y* and an indirect effect on *Y* through *M*, and that the dependent variable is not binary (Preacher and Hayes 2008). Please see Figure 3 for a visual representation of the model. Moreover, the bootstrapping procedure compensates
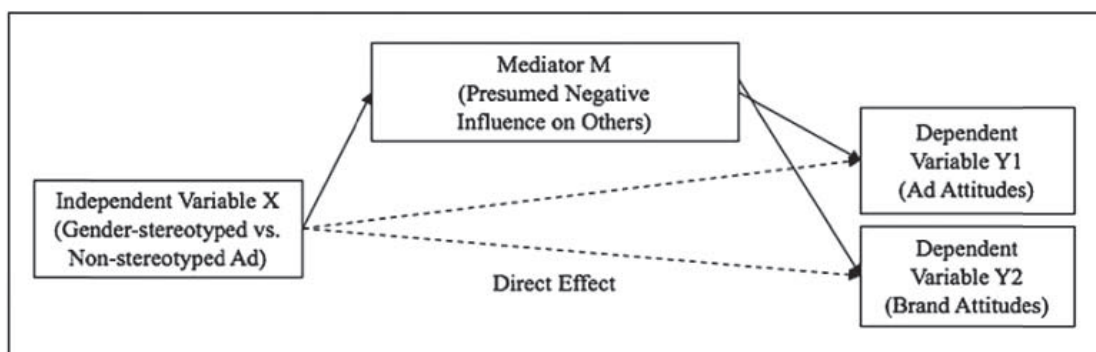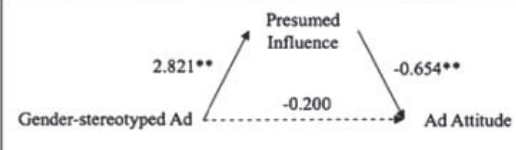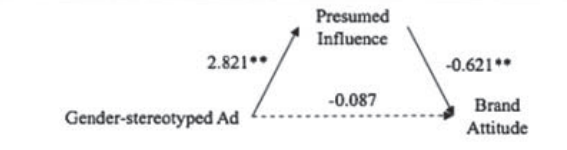

Figure 3. Mediation using Preacher–Hayes Model 4.

Table 1. Test of mediation of presumed influence on others on ad and brand attitudes, Study 1, $N = 119$.

for relatively small sample size, making it more suitable in this case than other alternatives such as a Sobel test (Preacher and Hayes 2008).

The manipulation (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped portrayal) was entered as the independent variable, presumed negative influence on others as the mediating variable, and ad and brand attitudes as the dependent variables. For ad attitude, the analyses showed an indirect effect of -1.85 (95% CI: -2.59 to -1.31). For brand attitude, the indirect effect was -1.75 (95% CI: -2.42 to -1.21). These results support H3. For both ad and brand attitudes, there was an insignificant main effect, suggesting full mediation. Table 1 summarizes all effects found in the bootstrapping analysis. The results of Study 1 thus indicated support for all three hypotheses.

Furthermore, the ad featuring models of stereotyped physical characteristics generated lower levels of presumed positive influence on others ($M_{stereotype} = 2.42$ vs. $M_{non-stereotype} = 4.95$, $p < . 01$). This presumed positive influence mediated ad attitudes (indirect effect: -2.14; 95% CI: -2.77 to -1.61) and brand attitudes (indirect effect: -2.22; 95% CI: -2.83 to -1.67).

Finally, the ad featuring models of stereotyped physical characteristics generated higher levels of presumed general influence on others ($M_{stereotype} = 5.25$ vs. $M_{non-stereotype} = 4.45$, $p < . 01$). However, general influence on others did not mediate ad attitudes (indirect effect: -0.09; 95% CI: -0.34 to -0.05) or brand attitudes (indirect effect: -0.05; 95% CI: -0.27 to -0.10).

Discussion

The results of Study 1 indicate that female consumers indeed believe other women to be negatively affected by advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals of physical characteristics. Moreover, consumers presume that others are positively affected by advertising featuring non-stereotyped portrayals. As a result, consumers report less favourable ad and brand attitudes when exposed to advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals. Based on the IPI model, this result can be interpreted as the consumer's way of punishing advertising thought to harm others (Dahlén et al. 2013). Similarly, the positive ad and brand evaluations ($M_{ad} = 5.21$, $M_{brand} = 5.17$) in the non-stereotyped condition can be interpreted as the consumer rewarding the advertiser for having a presumed positive influence on others. The mean difference between conditions in terms of neutral influence

suggests that consumers presume the negative impact of stereotyped ads to be somewhat stronger than the positive impact of non-stereotyped ads.

Although Study 1 is a natural first step in exploring the IPI of gender stereotypes in advertising, it had several limitations: it used only print ads in a single product category and addressed only one form of stereotyping (women's physical characteristics). Although this aspect of stereotypes is certainly important and has been frequently discussed in academia (Bian and Wang 2015), it is only one aspect of gender stereotypes (Eisend 2010). It is possible that other components of gender stereotypes would generate different results.

Role behaviour stereotypes and the influence of presumed influence

Although gender stereotyping of physical characteristics has received much attention in academia, many brands have recently started to challenge another component of gender stereotypes, namely role behaviours (Griner and Ciambrello 2015). This approach to advertising effectiveness is piggybacking on a broader effort to pursue increased gender equality in society (Mahdawi 2015). Among the best-known campaigns featuring such themes are P&G/Always's 'Like a Girl' (challenging the idea that doing something 'like a girl' is negative), Sport England's 'This Girl Can' (encouraging all types of women to participate in sports at all levels), and Pantene's 'Labels against Women' (which objected to the practice of criticizing women in the workplace for acting in traditionally 'male' ways). Often referred to as 'female empowerment advertising' or 'femvertising' for short (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a), this kind of advertising has attracted major attention from practitioners. In April 2017, the word *femvertising* generated about 46,000 Google hits, including articles by major media outlets such as CNN, *The Guardian*, and Huffington Post. In 2015, it even received its own category in the Cannes Lions awards ('The Glass Lion').

Scholars have studied the frequency of role behaviour stereotypes in advertising (Eisend 2010; Knoll, Eisend, and Steinhagen 2011), as well as its impact on advertising effectiveness (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a; Kyrousi, Panigyrakis, and Panopoulos 2016). However, as with stereotypes based on physical characteristics, little attention has been paid to the IPI on others in this process. Considering the increase of campaigns featuring the theme of role behaviour stereotypes, and the ensuing intense discussion in the mass media, it is likely that consumers would view this aspect of gender stereotypes as impacting others in much the same way as stereotyping by physical characteristics.

Study 2

Accordingly, the main purpose of Study 2 was to expand the scope of the stereotypes studied to include role behaviour. Study 2 again involved a between-subjects experiment with a 2 (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped portrayal) $\times$ 1 design, comparing advertising featuring stereotyped gender role behaviours to advertising without such content.

Stimuli development

For many campaigns challenging role behaviour stereotypes, online video is one of the most important media outlets as the advertiser hopes that the content will go viral (Griner and Ciambrello 2015). Thus, to ensure external validity, online video was selected as a

Table 2. Videos sampled for Study 2.

Product category	Condition	Brand – campaign	Link	Role behaviour	Pretest score stereotype	Cell N for main Study 2
Car	Non-stereotyped	Chevrolet – Throw Like a Girl	https://youtu.be/UM0y9V7mr9A	Leader	2.25[**]	40
Car	Stereotyped	Fiat – 500 Topless	https://youtu.be/SwGrUMlagk0	Decorative	6.46[**]	32
Sportswear	Non-stereotyped	Nike – American Woman	https://youtu.be/RpmETN9-GPQ	Successful athlete	2.41[**]	31
Sportswear	Stereotyped	Reebok – Easy Tone	https://youtu.be/eR_UpJKwghc	Decorative, in home	6.50[**]	36
Telecom	Non-stereotyped	Verizon – Inspire Her Mind	https://youtu.be/XP3cyRRAfX0	Interested in science	4.18[**]	37
Telecom	Stereotyped	Kazam – World's Slimmest Phone	https://youtu.be/sJja5SUdzY4	Decorative, performing chores	6.59[**]	35

[**]Significant difference from video in same product category, $p < .01$.

suitable medium for this study. As video is significantly harder to manipulate than print ads, a method of stimuli sampling of real advertising videos was used, similar to the procedure applied by Modig, Dahlén, and Colliander (2014).

As a first step, the researcher contacted advertising scholars and practitioners interested in gender stereotypes, asking them to suggest videos that were either stereotyped or non-stereotyped in terms of female role behaviour. These inquiries generated 21 suggestions. The researcher then looked for pairs of videos that appeared similar in terms of product category and brand familiarity, but different in stereotyped content. As a result, six videos (three stereotyped, three non-stereotyped) in three different product categories were selected for use in the pretest. All videos contained one or several female main characters. In the three stereotyped videos, women were portrayed in traditional roles – e.g. as a decorative element or performing chores in the home (cf. Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009). In the three non-stereotyped videos, women were shown playing sports or doing scientific work. The product categories and brands represented were cars (Fiat and Chevrolet), sportswear (Reebok and Nike), and telecommunications (Kazam and Verizon). The three product categories thus reflected a range of products and services, to avoid confounding effects from product category attitudes. For each product category, one video contained stereotyped content and one contained non-stereotyped content. This symmetry should limit the impact of product experience and product attributes. As the brands were mentioned verbally as well as visually throughout the videos, the senders could not be easily disguised. Instead, to control for brand-specific effects, brand-familiarity was measured before exposure and used as a co-variate in all analyses. To avoid confounding effects from previous exposure, the videos selected had not been shown in the market where study participants were recruited. See Table 2 for a more thorough description of the role behaviours in these videos.

Pretest

As stimuli sampling does not allow for as much control as does the development of mock stimuli, the videos were carefully pretested by NEPA, the same marketing research company conducting main studies 1 and 2. Two hundred and eleven participants similar to

but not belonging to the sample for Study 2 (all women, mean age 28.1 years) participated in the pretest. They were randomly assigned to watch one video each. The vast majority (96%) indicated that they had not seen the video previously. The participants that had seen the video were excluded from further analysis. There were also no significant differences in terms of brand familiarity ($M_{stereotype}$ = 4.65 vs. $M_{non\text{-}stereotype}$ = 4.55, p = .747) between conditions. The identification of stereotyping and non-stereotyping videos was confirmed, as the three videos selected for the stereotyped condition were all considered significantly more stereotyped than the others ($M_{stereotype}$ = 6.54 vs. $M_{non\text{-}stereotype}$ = 3.18, p < .01). See Table 2 for links to the videos used.

Procedure

Three hundred and sixteen Swedish participants (all female, mean age 29) were recruited by marketing research company NEPA, the same company that conducted Study 1 and the pretest for Study 2, through an online panel to participate in the study. The participants were randomly assigned to watch one of the six videos. The procedure for recruitment and for the experiment itself was identical to that in Study 1. In this study, participants spent an average of 9 minutes completing the experiment.

Measures

The measures of presumed impact on others, ad attitudes, and brand attitudes were identical to those in Study 1.

Manipulation checks

To ensure that participants had viewed the video, their time spent on the video page of the questionnaire was measured by using a timer linked to the online questionnaire and invisible to participants. The reported time was then manually compared to the duration of the video. Participants who spent less time than the duration of the video on that page were excluded from further analysis. Immediately after watching the video, participants were asked if they had seen it previously; 90% responded that they had not. Those who reported having seen it previously were also excluded from further analysis. In all, 105 participants were excluded as a result of these checks, leaving data from 211 participants (31–40 for each video) that could be used for further analysis. At the very end of the questionnaire, participants were asked to rate how stereotyped they perceived the video to be (using measures identical to those in Study 1). Once more, the results confirmed a satisfactory manipulation ($M_{stereotype}$ = 5.27 vs. $M_{non\text{-}stereotype}$ = 3.23, p <.01).

Results

As the pretest and manipulation check results were satisfactory, the six original cells were collapsed into two cells (stereotyped portrayal vs. non-stereotyped portrayal; N = 103 and 107, respectively) for the main analysis. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were assessed using a MANCOVA analysis (Wilk's lambda = .549, F (2, 211) = 56.32, p < .01). More specifically, brand familiarity was included as a covariate to control for the fact that different brands were

Table 3. Test of mediation of presumed influence on others on ad and brand attitudes, Study 2, $N = 211$.
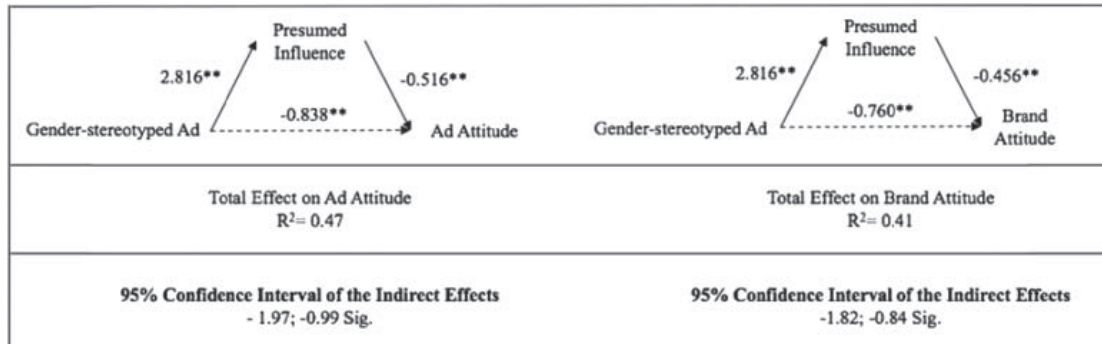
used between conditions (Wilk's lambda $= .992$, $F (2, 211) = 0.544$, $p = .653$). The results showed that brand familiarity did not affect the outcomes in this study.

The ads featuring gender-stereotyped role behaviours generated higher levels of presumed negative influence on others, thus supporting H1 ($M_{stereotype} = 5.22$ vs. $M_{non-stereotype} = 2.41$, $p < .01$). Supporting H2, ad attitudes ($M_{stereotype} = 2.96$ vs. $M_{non-stereotype} = 5.25$, $p < .01$) and brand attitudes ($M_{stereotype} = 3.04$ vs. $M_{non-stereotype} = 5.08$, $p < .01$) were significantly less favourable in the stereotyped condition. In these two cases, the results replicated the findings from Study 1.

To test H3, regarding IPI as a mediator of the effects, mediation analyses were run using the Preacher–Hayes approach, Model 4, as in Study 1. The results showed that the presumed negative influence on others did indeed mediate the proposed effects. The indirect effect was -1.46 (95% CI: -1.97 to -0.99) for ad attitude and -1.29 (95% CI: -1.82 to -0.84) for brand attitude. Results also showed significant direct effects, suggesting partial mediation. Table 3 summarizes all effects found through the bootstrapping analysis.

Ads featuring gender-stereotypes generated lower levels of presumed positive influence on others ($M_{stereotype} = 2.26$ vs. $M_{non-stereotype} = 4.71$, $p < .01$). Presumed positive influence also mediated ad attitudes (indirect effect: -1.83; 95% CI: -2.35 to -1.36) and brand attitudes (indirect effect: -1.65; 95% CI: -2.16 to -1.21).

In this study, there was no significant difference between conditions in terms of presumed general influence on others ($M_{stereotype} = 4.58$ vs. $M_{non-stereotype} = 4.40$, $p = .648$). Furthermore, general influence on others did not mediate ad attitudes (indirect effect: 0.03; 95% CI: -0.09 to -0.18) or brand attitudes (indirect effect: 0.03; 95% CI: -0.08 to -0.16).

Discussion

The results from Study 2 replicated the findings of Study 1 and extended them to include gender stereotyping by role behaviour. These results further indicate that consumers do take presumed influence on others into account when evaluating advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals.

The main difference in the results of the two studies concerns the presumed neutral influence on others. Whereas Study 1 found that consumers believed others to be more influenced by stereotyped than by non-stereotyped advertising, no such difference could be observed in Study 2. In Study 2, the mean values for neutral influence on others

($M_{stereotype}$ = 4.58 vs. $M_{non-stereotype}$ = 4.40) were similar to those for non-stereotyped ads in Study 1 ($M_{non-stereotype}$ = 4.45); for the stereotyped ad in Study 1, the mean value was somewhat higher ($M_{stereotype}$ = 5.25). Perhaps, although role behaviour stereotypes are increasingly addressed in advertising and discussed in the mass media, consumers believe that stereotyped physical characteristics have a larger impact. However, since the two studies were conducted separately, this interpretation cannot be statistically confirmed.

General discussion

The two studies reported here indicate that female consumers presume that advertising featuring gender stereotypes has a negative influence on other women. This presumption mediates ad and brand attitudes, with the result that consumers expecting higher levels of negative influence on others report less favourable ad and brand attitudes.

The topic of gender stereotypes in advertising has been extensively researched. It is clear that many women experience negative psychological reactions when exposed to stereotyped advertising and therefore report low advertising evaluations (Richins 1991). However, other women evaluate such advertising negatively, even though they themselves do not experience any negative psychological reactions. The present research takes a first step toward explaining those findings by drawing on IPI theory. It should thus be seen as a complement to previous research, offering additional explanations to further our understanding of how gender stereotypes in advertising work.

The application of IPI theory suggests the existence of a 'sisterhood effect' whereby women evaluate advertising based on their concern for other women. This negative evaluation can be seen a form of punishment of the brand for presumably hurting others through the use of stereotyped portrayals. This finding mirrors the reasoning that consumers can report favourable brand attitudes as a gratitude response (Biel 1990). Furthermore, the findings resonate with a compelling body of research showing that how consumers believe others are affected by media outlets or advertising influences how the consumer herself reacts to that advertising (Eisend 2008; Noguti and Russell 2014; Sharma and Roy 2015). This interpretive perspective, though frequently discussed with regard to other kinds of controversial advertising such as the promotion of gambling and alcohol, has been largely overlooked in the literature on gender stereotypes. According to the present research, the objects of this empathetic concern for others can be extended beyond those demonstrated in prior studies – such as children (Henriksen and Flora 1999) and inhabitants of neighbouring countries (Dahlén et al. 2013) – to include other women as well.

The results of this study could further resonate with Pollay's (1986) proposed 'myth of personal immunity', suggesting that consumers assume themselves to be immune to the persuasion attempts of advertising, in an effort to sustain self-respect. Acting or speaking out of concern for 'others' would thus be a way to criticize stereotyped advertising's presumed consequences, without admitting to being affected by such advertising personally.

Beyond the social context of advertising, this study also contributes to the literature by exploring the effects of two different aspects of gender stereotypes: physical characteristics and role behaviour. Although these two components have been addressed previously (Richins 1991; Eisend 2010), few studies have addressed them using the same theoretical

framework. This study shows that from an IPI perspective, at least, the two components have similar effects on consumers.

Finally, this investigation responds not only to an increased practical and academic interest in the topic of gender stereotypes in advertising, but also to recent calls for research to explore the effects of advertising in a larger societal context (Eisend, 2010; Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017b). The results indicate that women are aware of the potentially negative social effects of gender stereotypes in advertising, and take this into account when evaluating advertising. Furthermore, the results indicate that this effect can be reversed through the use of non-stereotyped portrayals. These findings suggest that there is much to gain from studying the social and brand-related effects of advertising simultaneously, as they are, at least under some circumstances, closely connected.

Implications for advertisers

Advertisers should take note of the study findings for several reasons. The results confirm the findings of previous academic studies (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017a; Buunk and Dijkstra 2011) that gender-stereotyped portrayals, although they can help simplify communications, can also harm ad and brand attitudes. On the other hand, non-stereo-typed portrayals improve brand-related effects. This is particularly interesting as many advertisers have expressed an ambition, as a form of corporate social responsibility, to affect consumers socially through more diverse portrayals in their advertising (Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlén 2017b; Sweney 2016). The findings of this study indicate that advertisers can accommodate consumer and governmental demand for less stereotyped and more diverse advertising (Eisend 2010; Plakoyiannaki and Zotos 2009) while also effectively promoting their brands. This finding should encourage advertisers to explore the possibilities of creating advertising that generates such a win–win situation.

In addition, the results suggest that it could be useful for advertisers to include measures of perceived influence on others when conducting consumer research. Such measures could not only help reduce demand effects, but also capture attitudes shaped by the social context that may otherwise go unnoticed.

Limitations and further research

This study is a first step toward exploring the role of IPI in consumers' processing of advertising featuring gender-stereotyped portrayals. As such, the findings are subject to several limitations.

One obvious limitation is the study's focus on female stereotypes and a particular group of female consumers. Presumably, consumers of different genders, ages, and cultural backgrounds would react in different ways to advertising featuring gender stereotypes. For example, there is little theoretical reason to believe that men would not experience an IPI effect (although it may be moderated by their knowledge of gender stereotypes and their sense of whom the ad is targeting). Exploring the effects on people of all genders would thus be a natural next step for future research. Subsequent studies should also consider other potential moderators of the effects observed in this study. Beyond consumer demographics, it is possible that psychological traits such as one's level of empathy or social connectedness could affect the results.

As for methodological limitations, the study had a relatively modest sample size and was conducted in a single country. Swedish culture is largely individualistic and has a low masculinity index rating (Hofstede 1984), meaning that gender roles are less rigid than in many other countries. Future studies should investigate, ideally through cross-cultural analysis, if similar effects occur in more collectivistic or masculine cultures. Furthermore, Study 2 used actual advertising videos from different brands and product categories. Although this approach improves the ecological validity of the results, it is sensitive to confounding effects in terms of for example brand experience and product attributes. This should be considered when interpreting the results, and further studies should be conducted to isolate the effects of stereotyped gender role portrayals.

Future studies could also incorporate measurements of female empowerment or self-esteem after repeated exposure to stereotyped or non-stereotyped advertising portrayals. Although previous studies have found limited such effects after one such exposure (Bissell and Rask 2010; Peck and Loken 2004; Richins 1991), it is possible that systematic and repeated exposure would have greater impact on psychological traits such as self-esteem and empowerment (Pollay 1986). Using other research methods, such as surveys or qualitative interviews, could shed additional light on this issue.

Finally, future studies should further investigate the elasticity of the effects observed in this study. Although the main focus of this study was on potentially negative effects of gender-stereotyped advertising portrayals, the results also showed that non-stereotyped advertising can generate positive effects. However, in both instances, portrayals rated as highly stereotyped were compared directly with non-stereotyped ads. Future studies should include neutral stimuli to determine whether the difference occurs mainly because of consumers' belief that others are negatively affected by gender-stereotyped advertising portrayals or if people are also positively affected by non-stereotyped portrayals.

This study should be considered a first step in exploring the role of 'sisterhood' in advertising processing, one that will hopefully inspire future investigations of this topic.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Nina Åkestam is a researcher at the Center for Consumer Marketing at Stockholm School of Economics. Her research focuses on consumer reactions to stereotyped and non-stereotyped advertising portrayals.

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Appendix. Stimuli ads for Study 1 (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped ad)

Article 4: It goes both ways: Gender stereotypes in advertising have negative effects on women and men

Abstract

This paper investigates effects of gender stereotypes in advertising. It hypothesizes that stereotyped portrayals (vs. non-stereotyped portrayals) of women and men have a presumed negative influence on others, leading to higher levels of ad reactance, which has a negative impact on brand-related effects. The results of two experimental studies support this reasoning across participant gender. Whereas previous studies have focused on females, the current paper suggests that women and men alike react negatively to female and male stereotyped portrayals. The results indicate that advertisers can benefit from adapting a more mindful approach to the portrayals of gender used in advertising.

Introduction

This study brings a novel perspective to the literature on gender stereotypes in advertising. More specifically, it investigates female and male reactions to female and male stereotyped advertising portrayals. By studying two-way gender effects of stereotyped gender portrayals in advertising, it highlights the need to consider reactions across gender, and that advertisers, regardless of target audience, have much to gain from adapting a more mindful approach to gender portrayals in advertising.

Stereotyped gender portrayals (i.e., portrayals relying on generalized and widely accepted beliefs about the personal attributes of women and men, Taylor and Stern, 1997) have a long history in advertising (Åkestam et al., 2017a; Eisend, 2010). In recent years, however, this practice and its potentially negative effects have received a much attention in both advertising academia and practice. This is evidenced, for example, by the growth of so-called femvertising (Åkestam et al., 2017a), dadvertising (Bukszpan, 2016), and other non-stereotyped portrayals in mainstream advertising (Åkestam et al., 2017b), but also in a 2017 report by the British Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) concluding that "stereotypes in ads can contribute to harm for adults and children", calling for stricter guidelines and the banning of ads that "promote gender stereotypes or denigrate people that do not conform to them" (Magra, 2017, p.1).

Still, advertisers wanting to adhere to these guidelines by exploring non-stereotyped gender portrayals (i.e., portrayals showing a person in a way that contradicts the stereotype for the social category they belong to Taylor and Stern, 1997) have little guidance in terms of what to expect from such efforts. Although there is a vast literature showing that women react negatively to stereotyped female portrayals in advertising (Åkestam et al., 2017a; Antioco et al., 2012; Bower, 2001; Halliwell and Dittmar; 2004; Jensen and Pass, 2014), less is known about a) male reactions to such portrayals and b) female and male reactions to stereotyped male portrayals (see Gulas and McKeage, 2000, for an exception). This is surprising, as women are men are exposed to advertising featuring stereotyped portrayals of both genders, either as target audiences (e.g., buying for themselves or as a gift) or as exposure audiences (e.g., giving advice or forming ideals).

Building on research showing that female reactions to female stereotyped portrayals are driven by the influence of presumed influence (Choi et al., 2008; Harper and Tiggerman, 2008; Wan et al., 2003) and psychological reactance (Åkestam et al., 2017a), this paper hypothesizes that the negative effects found in studies of females should hold across gender portrayals and target audiences. The hypotheses are tested in two experimental studies. More specifically, male and female reactions to stereotyped portrayals of women (Study 1) and men (Study 2) are investigated. By adapting a two-way gender perspective, the current paper thus provides a more complete understanding of consumer reactions to stereotyped gender portrayals in advertising.
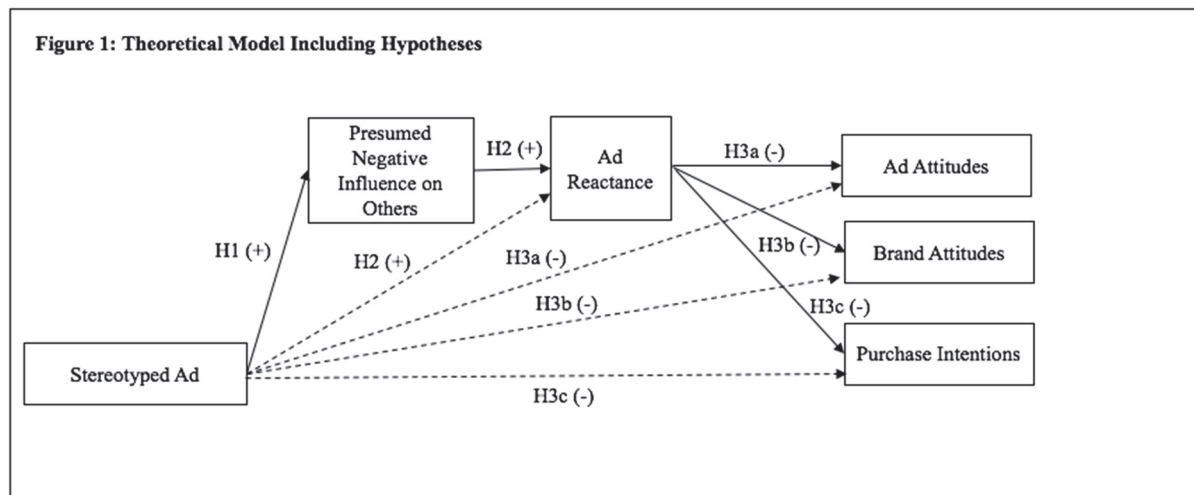
Gender stereotypes in advertising

It is well established that the world depicted in advertising is different from the real world (Bakir et al., 2008; Eisend, 2010; Knoll et al., 2011; Van Hellemont and Van Den Bulck, 2012). In advertising, women and men with certain features (e.g., attractive, white, skinny, successful, cf. Elliott and Elliott, 2005; Eisend, 2010; Gentry and Harrison, 2010; Gulas and McKeage, 2000) are over-represented, while other groups remain largely invisible. Much advertising thus use portrayals of women and men that are stereotyped in terms of physical characteristics.

Stereotypes are not necessarily negative and can simplify communications. They can thus be helpful tools for advertisers, as advertising needs to be processed quickly and with minimal effort (Johnson and Grier, 2012). However, stereotypes can also lead to oversimplification, which could, in turn, limit the possibilities of individuals belonging to a group that is frequently stereotyped (Knoll et al., 2011). For example, exposure to advertising featuring stereotyped physical characteristics (e.g., beauty ideals) can lead to reduced body satisfaction, and restrict opportunities of self-development in a female target audience (Buunk and Dijkstra, 2011; Richins, 1991). What is more, numerous studies have found stereotyped female portrayals to have negative effects on ad and brand attitudes (Åkestam et al., 2017a; Antioco et al., 2012; Bower, 2001; Halliwell and Dittmar; 2004; Jensen and Pass, 2014). Similarly, Gulas and McKeage

(2000) found that stereotyped images of men and women have a negative impact on the self-esteem of adolescent boys. The reactions of adult men have, however, received limited attention in the literature, despite several studies establishing that men are frequently stereotyped in advertising (Eisend, 2010; Gentry and Harrison, 2010).

To deal with these negative effects, advertisers increasingly work proactively to replace traditional stereotyped gender portrayals with non-stereotyped portrayals (Åkestam et al., 2017a, b). A non-stereotyped advertising portrayal shows a person in a way that contradicts the stereotype for the social category they belong to (Taylor and Stern, 1997). For physical characteristics, this would entail contradicting the advertising stereotype of people as attractive, white and of a skinny (for women) or athletic body type (for men) (Elliott and Elliott, 2005; Eisend, 2010; Gulas and McKeage, 2000; Martin and Kennedy, 1993; Richins, 1991). Previous research has indicated that, at least for women, non-stereotyped portrayals lead to higher levels of ad and brand attitudes (Åkestam et al., 2017a; Antioco et al., 2012; Bian and Wang, 2015). This paper argues that these effects would occur across gender. The proposed theoretical model is summarized in Figure 1 and is further discussed in the following sections.

Figure 1: Theoretical Model Including Hypotheses

The two-way effects of gender stereotypes

One reason that women react negatively to female stereotyped advertising portrayals is that they believe that other women and men are negatively affected by such portrayals (Choi et al., 2008; Milkie, 1999; Wan et al., 2003). This finding adds to a compelling body of research on the influence of presumed influence (IPI; Gunther and Storey, 2003), showing that the expected impact of media or advertising on other people mediates consumer reactions to a wide range of stimuli (Eisend, 2017; Sun et al., 2008). A popular explanation for this mechanism is motivational: people tend to feel better about themselves when they perceive others to be more susceptible to potentially harmful persuasion attempts, such as advertising for alcohol (Noguti and Russell, 2014) and gambling (Youn et al., 2000).

Gender stereotyped portrayals could be considered such harmful persuasion attempts (Choi et al., 2008). Indeed, previous studies have found that consumers expect "others" to be more influenced by exposure to stereotyped female portrayals than they themselves are (Choi et al., 2008; Milkie, 1999; Want et al., 2003). Further, stereotyped portrayals could be assumed to have a negative influence on consumers of the opposite gender, as these are exposed to the ad, even though they may not be its primary target audience. It is well established that consumers can take presumed reactions from exposure audiences into account when evaluating advertising (Dahlen et al., 2013). Women may thus assume that exposure to female stereotypes would have a negative impact on men, in that they would treat women poorly (for example through workplace discrimination) as a result of the stereotyping (and vice versa for male stereotypes). Non-stereotyped portrayals of all genders would reduce these effects.

Taken together, consumers should believe gender-stereotyped advertising portrayals to be potentially harmful to women and men, in much the same way that previous studies have shown with regard to offensive advertising messages (Dahlen et al., 2013) and gambling advertisements (Youn et al., 2000). It is therefore hypothesized:

H1: Stereotyped (vs. non-stereotyped) portrayals of gender in advertising generate higher (vs. lower) levels of presumed negative influence on both women and men.

Another reason that women react negatively to stereotyped female portrayals, is that the narrow set of gender stereotypes frequently used in advertising (Eisend, 2010; Zimmerman and Dahlberg, 2008) puts pressure on them to behave in a manner that is consistent with these stereotypes, which in turn leads to psychological reactance (Åkestam et al., 2017a). The same effect could be expected for male target audiences and portrayals.

The theory of psychological reactance (Brehm, 1966; Thorbjørnsen and Dahlen, 2011) proposes that people have a pre-disposition to preserve and restore their personal freedom. When personal freedom is reduced, eliminated, or threatened with elimination, people will experience a state of arousal (reactance) that induces attempts to recover or re-establish the lost or threatened behavior. These attempts can include opposing or protesting the threat, or turning against the source of the threat. This pressure is partly due to the stereotype limiting the possibilities of the stereotyped gender (as the advertising suggests that this is what women/men should be like, cf. Åkestam et al., 2017) and partly due to the influence that the stereotyped portrayal is expected to have on others (cf. H1). These two perceived threats would lead to psychological reactance with both women and men.

First, the stereotyped portrayals used in advertising would limit consumers' perceived range of alternatives (regarding, for example, what is means to be "male" or "female"), and would thus generate higher levels of defensive reactions (Henderson-King et al., 2001; Thorbjørnsen and Dahlen, 2011) at the time of exposure to such ads. Indeed, Åkestam et al. (2017) found such a process to occur when young female consumers are exposed to advertising featuring stereotyped portrayals of women. Similar reactions have also been found for advertising portrayals of extremely thin advertising models (Wan et al., 2013), idealized advertising images (Henderson-King et al., 2001), product recommendations (Fitzsimons and Lehmann, 2004), and corporate mergers (Thorbjørnsen and Dahlen, 2011). Reactance would thus be a likely response to the threat experienced by

women after exposure to female stereotyped advertising portrayals, and by men after exposure to male stereotyped advertising portrayals.

Second, presumed influence on others should have an impact on ad reactance. If consumers assume that gender stereotyped portrayals have a negative influence on others (as argued in hypothesis 1), so that 'others' are more likely to a) conform to the stereotype, and b) treat others in line with the stereotype, this would affect the consumer her/himself as well, regardless of gender.

Non-stereotyped portrayals, however, move away from simplistic gender stereotypes towards more complex and varied portrayals of women and men (Åkestam et al., 2017a). This puts less strain on consumers of all genders to comply with a specific stereotype, and thus leads to more possibilities to relate to the portrayals used. By being more open to the target audience creatively decoding and deconstructing meanings (Puntoni et al., 2010; Åkestam et al. 2017a), non-stereotyped portrayals thus reduce the risk of ad reactance. Overall, this suggests that stereotyped portrayals of women and men will be more likely to lead to ad reactance than non-stereotyped portrayals. It is thus hypothesized:

H2: Stereotyped (vs. non-stereotyped) portrayals of gender in advertising generate higher (vs. lower) levels of ad reactance for both women and men.

When reactance occurs, people are motivated to recover the lost or threatened behavior (Brehm, 1966; Thorbjørnsen and Dahlen, 2011). A person experiencing reactance thus becomes more likely to resist persuasion. In an advertising context, this would, in turn, lead to lower levels of brand-related effects, as consumers defend themselves by concluding that "I'm not wrong, they are" (Åkestam et al., 2017a; Obermiller et al., 2005). As argued above, both women and men are expected to experience reactance after exposure to gender stereotyped advertising portrayals. This would, in turn, lead to lower brand-related effects for both female and male consumers. It is thus hypothesized:

H3: Stereotyped (vs. non-stereotyped) portrayals of gender in advertising generate lower (vs. higher) levels of brand-related effects in terms of a) ad attitudes, b) brand attitudes, and c) purchase intentions for both women and men.

Study 1

Study 1 tests the hypotheses using portrayals of female stereotypes in terms of physical characteristics in a 2 (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped portrayal) x 2 (participant gender) between-subjects, full factorial experiment. The stereotype component of physical characteristics (Lewis and Deaux, 1984) was selected as it is frequently used in advertising featuring both stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals of gender (Åkestam et al., 2017a), and should therefore ensure ecological validity in both experimental conditions.

Stimuli Development

Two print ads for a real underwear brand were used as stimuli. Underwear was chosen as the product category as underwear ads naturally show models' bodies, and is therefore suitable for conveying stereotypes in terms of physical characteristics, without the potentially confounding elements of sexualization that can appear if bodies are exposed in other contexts (Mayer and Peev, 2017). For the stereotyped condition, a real ad was used. The ad featured a slim woman in underwear posing on a bed, with the message "Reclaim Your Shape". For the non-stereotyped ad, the woman in the ad was replaced by another (less slim) woman. This rendered two ads that were similar in terms of message and layout, but different in terms of model stereotypicality (see Appendix 1). A pre-test (n= 203, 58% female, mean age= 28.1; participants similar to, but not included in the main study) showed that the stereotyped ad was perceived as significantly more stereotyped than the non-stereotyped ad ($M_{stereotyped}$= 6.69; $M_{non\text{-}stereotyped}$= 3.20 vs., $p <$. 01, items: "The ad is stereotyped" and "The ad shows a stereotyped image of women", measured on seven-point Likert scales, Cronbach's alpha = .952).

Procedure

One hundred and twenty-four people (52% women, age 18-79, mean age= 42.3, equal distribution across conditions) participated in the study. Participants were recruited by intercept at major train stations and in shopping malls, and reflected a general consumer audience in terms of demographic variables, such as age, gender, and ethnicity. Participants were told that researchers interested in a novel advertising concept created by a company conducted the study. This information was the same for all conditions. Each participant was randomly assigned a booklet with one stimulus ad, followed by a questionnaire featuring several filler tasks, as well as measures of the dependent variables. Participants were instructed to look at the ad for as long as they wanted, and then fill out the questionnaire. After the questionnaires had been collected, participants were debriefed and dismissed. Participants were not compensated for their participation.

Measures

As the stimuli featured a real brand, *brand familiarity* was assessed before exposure to the ad by asking: "What is your current relation to brand X?", followed by three semantic differential scales (don't know at all / know very well, not familiar with / very familiar with, have no prior experience with / have extensive prior experience with, Cronbach's alpha = .929).

Presumed negative influence on others was measured on seven-point Likert scales with the items 'I believe that other women/men are negatively affected by this ad' (Eisend, 2008; 2015; Gunther and Storey, 2003).

Ad reactance was measured on seven-point Likert scales with four items: "The ad makes me want to be the exact opposite", "I do not approve of how the ad tries to affect me", "The ad portrays an ideal that annoys me" and "The message in this ad limits my freedom of choice" (Cronbach's alpha = .869). This measure was adapted from Hong (1992) to track situational reactance caused by the ad (Fitzsimons and Lehmann, 2004; Thorbjørnsen and Dahlen, 2011).

For the dependent variables, *ad attitudes* were measured using the items bad/good, dislike/like, negative opinion/positive opinion, rated on seven-point semantic differential scales, in response to the question "What is your opinion on the ad?" (Dahlen et al., 2009, Cronbach's alpha = .985). *Brand attitudes* were measured on identical scales in response to the question "What is your opinion on the brand?" (Cronbach's alpha = .988).

For female participants, *purchase intentions* were measured using the items not at all probable/very probable and not at all likely/very likely, rated on seven-point semantic differential scales, in response to the question "If you were to buy underwear, how likely is it that you would choose something from Brand X?" (Dahlen et al., 2009; Cronbach's alpha = .991). For male participants, purchase intentions were measured using the question "If you were to buy underwear as a gift for someone else, how likely is it that you would choose something from Brand X?" (Dahlen et al., Cronbach's alpha = .988). Finally, the questionnaire included the two-item measure of perceived stereotypicality used in the pre-test as a manipulation check (Cronbach's alpha = .958).

Results

The manipulation check confirmed that participants perceived the stereotyped ad as significantly more stereotyped than the non-stereotyped ad ($M_{non-stereotyped}$= 2.82 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 5.77, p <. 01). As a real brand was used in the stimulus ads, all analyses were performed while controlling for brand familiarity.

In support of H1, a MANCOVA analysis showed a direct effect of stereotypicality on presumed negative influence on others (Wilks Lambda= .669; F= 29.18, p <. 01). There was no significant direct effect of participant gender, neither was there a significant interaction effect between stereotypicality and participant gender. Planned comparisons revealed that the stereotyped portrayal had a higher presumed negative impact on both women ($M_{non-stereotyped}$= 2.77 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 5.11, p <. 01) and men ($M_{non-stereotyped}$= 2.32 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 3.81, p <. 01).

In support of H2, an ANCOVA analysis showed a direct impact of stereotypicality on ad reactance (F= 51.94, p< .01). There was no significant

direct effect of participant gender, neither was there a significant interaction effect between stereotypicality and participant gender. Planned comparisons revealed that, the stereotyped portrayal led to higher levels of ad reactance for both women ($M_{non\text{-}stereotyped}$= 1.90 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 4.01, p <. 01) and men ($M_{non\text{-}stereotyped}$= 2.04 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 3.60, p <. 01).

Supporting H3, a MANCOVA analysis showed a direct effect of stereotypicality on brand-related effects in terms of ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions (Wilks Lambda= .620, F= 23.91, p< .01). It further showed a direct effect of participant gender on brand-related effects (Wilks Lambda= .838, F= 7.56, p< .01). However, there was no significant interaction effect. Planned comparisons revealed that the stereotyped ad generated lower levels of ad attitudes ($M_{non\text{-}stereotyped}$= 5.36 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 2.23, p <. 01), brand attitudes ($M_{non\text{-}stereotyped}$= 5.48 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 2.97, p <. 01), and purchase intentions ($M_{non\text{-}stereotyped}$= 4.67 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 3.55, p <. 05) for women, as well as for men (AdAtt $M_{non\text{-}stereotyped}$= 4.90 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 2.88, p <. 01; BAtt $M_{non\text{-}stereotyped}$= 4.61 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 2.99, p <. 01; PI $M_{non\text{-}stereotyped}$= 4.38 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 2.95, p <. 01).
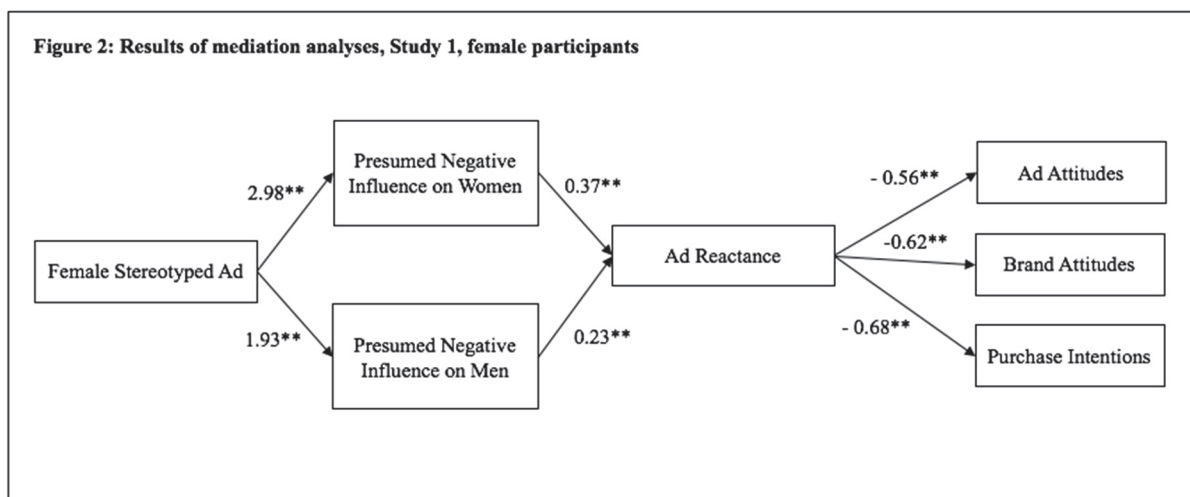
To test the underlying premise that the stereotyped portrayals increase presumed negative impact on others (H1), which in turn increases ad reactance (H2), which consequently has a negative impact on ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions (H3), mediation tests were conducted using the Preacher-Hayes approach (Model 6, 5000 bootstrapping samples, 95% confidence interval, cf. Zhao et al., 2010). In the first analysis, ad condition (non-stereotyped vs. stereotyped ad) was used as the independent variable, presumed negative influence on women as the first mediator, ad reactance as the second mediator, and ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions as the dependent variables.
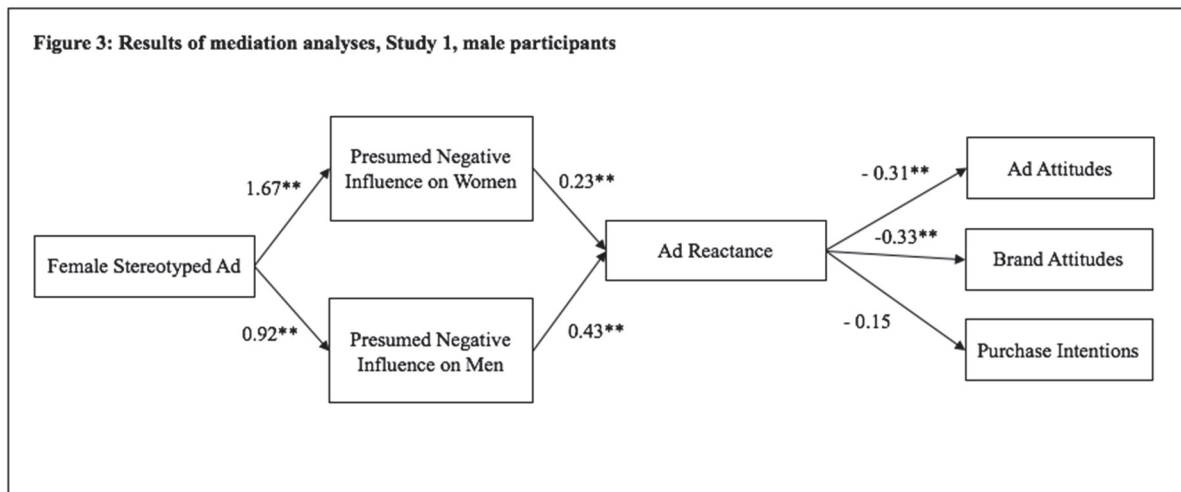
For female participants, the tests showed a significant effect of stereotypicality on presumed negative influence on women (2.98, 95% CI: 2.10 – 3.86), and of presumed influence on reactance (0.37, 95% CI: 0.19 – 0.55). Further, reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (-0.56, 95% CI: -0.84 – -0.27), brand attitudes (-0.36, 95% CI: -0.62 – -0.10), and purchase intentions (-0.35, 95% CI: -0.68 – -0.02). In the second analysis, presumed negative influence on women was replaced with presumed negative influence on men. The tests again showed a significant effect of stereo-

typicality on presumed negative influence on men (1.93, 95% CI: 1.00 – 2.85), and of presumed influence on ad reactance (0.23, 95% CI: 0.05 – 0.42). Further, ad reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (-0.61, 95% CI: -0.87 – -0.35), brand attitudes (-0.48, 95% CI: -0.73 – -0.23), and purchase intentions (-0.36, 95% CI: -0.67 – -0.05).

For male participants, the tests showed a significant effect of stereotypicality on presumed negative influence on women (1.67, 95% CI: 0.77 – 2.56), and of presumed influence on ad reactance (0.43, 95% CI: 0.19 – 0.67). Further, ad reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (-0.31, 95% CI: -0.51 – -0.11) and brand attitudes (-0.33, 95% CI: -0.54 – -0.13), but not on purchase intentions (-0.15, 95% CI: -0.39 – 0.10). In the second analysis, presumed negative influence on women was replaced with presumed negative influence on men. The tests again showed a significant effect of stereotypicality on presumed negative influence on men (0.92, 95% CI: 0.05 – 1.78), and of presumed influence on ad reactance (0.43, 95% CI: 0.18 – 0.68). Further, ad reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (-0.33, 95% CI: -0.52 – -0.13) and brand attitudes (-0.33, 95% CI: -0.54 – -0.13), but not on purchase intentions (-0.12, 95% CI: -0.36 – 0.12).

Overall, the results of the mediation analyses (summarized in Figures 2 and 3) thus support the proposed theoretical reasoning.

Figure 2: Results of mediation analyses, Study 1, female participants

Figure 3: Results of mediation analyses, Study 1, male participants

Discussion

Study 1 shows that stereotyped portrayals of women lead to lower ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions among female and male consumers, compared to non-stereotyped portrayals. Mediation analyses show that this is due to stereotyped portrayals leading to higher levels of presumed negative influence on women and men, which in turn leads to ad reactance. While the proposed relationships are significant for presumed impact on women and men, both female and male participants presume that the stereotyped portrayal has a stronger negative impact on women. This could be the result of consumers being aware that women are most often the target audience of underwear ads for women, and that the portrayal would thus be seen as more self-relevant for women (cf. Dahlen et al., 2014; Åkestam et al., 2017a).

Study 2

Study 2 sets out to replicate Study 1 using ads featuring stereotyped portrayals of men instead of women. The experimental design and stimulus were thus identical to Study 1 with the exception that the models were male.

Stimulus Development

As in Study 1, a real underwear brand was used. For the stereotyped condition, the image used in Study 1 was replaced by an image (from a different campaign) of a slim, athletic man posing in underwear. For the non-stereotyped condition, an image of a heavier man (from yet another campaign) was used (see Appendix 2 for stimuli ads). A pre-test (n= 74, 62% female, mean age= 35.67; participants similar to, but not included in the main study) showed that the male stereotyped ad was perceived as significantly more stereotyped than the non-stereotyped ad ($M_{stereotyped}$= 5.95; $M_{non-stereotyped}$= 2.23 vs., p <. 01, items: "The ad is stereotyped" and "The ad shows a stereotyped image of men", measured on seven-point Likert scales, Cronbach's alpha = .867).

Procedure and Measures

One hundred and thirty people (48% women, age 18-76, mean age= 44.9) participated in the study. The procedure and measures were identical to those of Study 1.

Results

The manipulation check confirmed that participants perceived the stereotyped ad as significantly more stereotyped than the non-stereotyped ad ($M_{non-stereotyped}$= 2.57 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 5.06, p <. 01). As a real brand was used in the stimulus ads, all analyses were performed while controlling for brand familiarity.

A MANCOVA analysis showed no direct effects of stereotypicality on presumed negative influence on others (Wilks Lambda= .966; F= 2.16, p =. 119). Neither was there a significant direct effect of participant gender, nor a significant interaction effect between stereotypicality and participant gender. Planned comparisons revealed that the stereotyped ad had a marginally significant presumed negative impact on men ($M_{non-stereotyped}$= 3.55 vs. $M_{stereotyped}$= 4.07, p =. 084), but no presumed negative impact on women (M_{non-}

$_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 3.73 vs. $M_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 3.79, p =. 872). Thus, the results do not support H1.

In support of H2, an ANCOVA analysis showed a direct impact of stereotypicality on ad reactance (F= 6.94, p< .01). However, there was also a significant direct effect of participant gender (F= 6.66, p< .05), and a significant interaction effect between stereotypicality and participant gender (F= 3.12 p< .05). Planned comparisons revealed that, the stereotyped portrayal led to higher levels of ad reactance for women ($M_{\text{non-stereotyped}}$= 2.89 vs. $M_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 4.11, p <. 01), but not for men ($M_{\text{non-stereotyped}}$= 2.98 vs. $M_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 2.71, p =. 413). Thus, H2 is supported for women, but not for men.
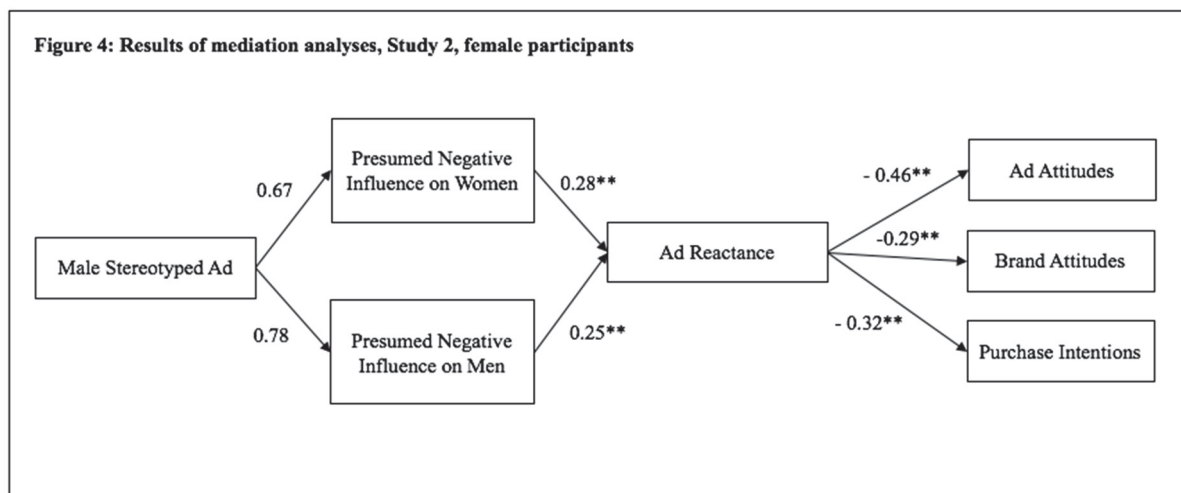
Supporting H3, a MANCOVA analysis showed a direct impact of stereotypicality on brand-related effects in terms of ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions (Wilks Lambda= .881, F= 5.55, p< .01). It further showed a direct impact of participant gender on brand-related effects (Wilks Lambda= .917, F= 3.73, p< .05). There was no significant interaction effect between stereotypicality and participant gender. Planned comparisons revealed that for women, the stereotyped ad generated lower levels of ad attitudes ($M_{\text{non-stereotyped}}$= 3.82 vs. $M_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 2.52, p <. 01), brand attitudes ($M_{\text{non-stereotyped}}$= 4.00 vs. $M_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 2.83, p <. 01), but did not impact purchase intentions ($M_{\text{non-stereotyped}}$= 3.34 vs. $M_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 3.00, p =.476). For men, all differences were significant (AdAtt $M_{\text{non-stereotyped}}$= 4.29 vs. $M_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 3.25, p <. 01; BAtt $M_{\text{non-stereotyped}}$= 4.33 vs. $M_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 3.65, p <. 05; PI $M_{\text{non-stereotyped}}$= 3.52 vs. $M_{\text{stereotyped}}$= 2.43, p <. 01. The results thus offer partial support for H3.
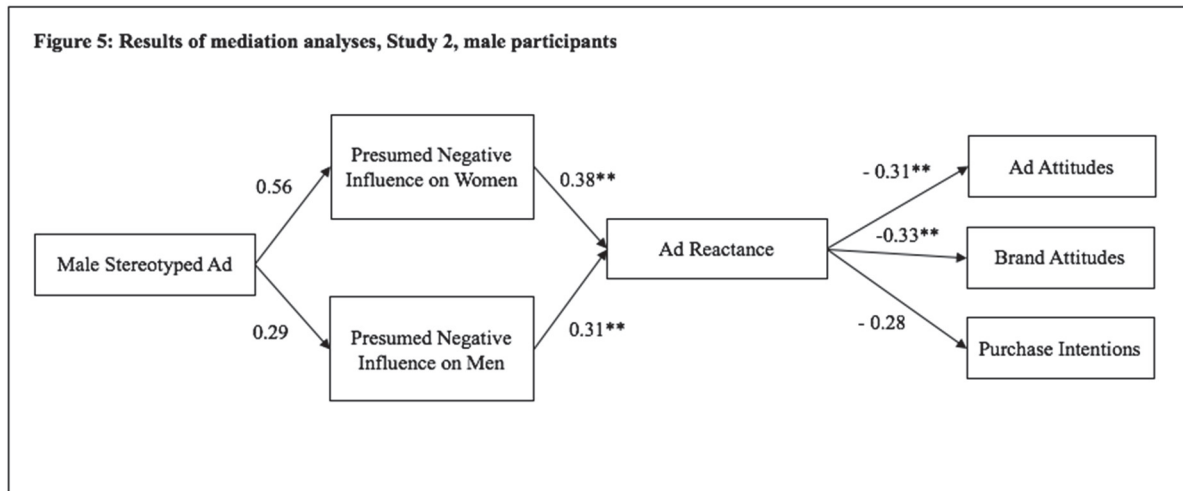
To test the underlying theoretical reasoning, mediation tests were conducted using the same procedure as in Study 1. For female participants, there was no significant effect of stereotypicality on presumed negative influence on women (0.67, 95% CI: -.26 − 1.61), but a significant effect of presumed influence on ad reactance (0.28, 95% CI: 0.06 − 0.51). Further, ad reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (-0.41, 95% CI: -0.64 − -0.18), brand attitudes (-0.28, 95% CI: -0.50 − -0.05), and purchase intentions (-0.30, 95% CI: -0.59 − -0.01). In the second analysis, the tests showed no significant effect of stereotypicality on presumed negative influence on men (0.78, 95% CI: -0.09 − 1.76), but a significant effect of presumed influence on ad reactance (0.25, 95% CI: 0.01 − 0.49). Further, ad

reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (-0.46, 95% CI: -0.70 − -0.23), brand attitudes (-0.29, 95% CI: -0.50 − -0.07), and purchase intentions (-0.32, 95% CI: -0.61 − -0.03).

For male participants, the tests showed no significant effect of stereotypicality on presumed negative influence on women (0.56, 95% CI: -1.40 − 0.28), but a significant effect of presumed influence on ad reactance (0.38, 95% CI: 0.20 − 0.55). Further, ad reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (-0.38, 95% CI: -0.67 − -0.10) and brand attitudes (-0.36, 95% CI: -0.61 − -0.10), but not purchase intentions (-0.27, 95% CI: -0.57 − 0.03). In the second analysis, the tests showed no significant effect of ad stereotypicality on presumed negative influence on men (0.29, 95% CI: -0.48 − 1.06), but a significant effect of presumed influence on ad reactance (0.31, 95% CI: 0.11 − 0.52). Further, ad reactance had a significant negative effect on ad attitudes (-0.31, 95% CI: -0.55 − -0.07) and brand attitudes (-0.33, 95% CI: -0.56 − -0.10), but not on purchase intentions (-0.28, 95% CI: -0.56 − 0.01).

Overall, the results of the mediation analyses (summarized in Figures 4 and 5) show no indication of a presumed influence effect, but support the effect of ad reactance.

Figure 4: Results of mediation analyses, Study 2, female participants

Figure 5: Results of mediation analyses, Study 2, male participants

Discussion

Study 2 set out to replicate the findings of Study 1 using male portrayals. For male stereotyped portrayals, however, only limited support was found for the proposed hypotheses. Although there is directional support, the results do not find any significant effects for presumed negative influence on others, and thus does not support H1. In support of H2, there was a main effect on ad reactance; however, this effect was qualified by an interaction effect with participant gender suggesting that the effect was mainly due to female participants experiencing more ad reactance in response to the stereotyped male portrayal. H3 was supported for ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions for male participants, but only for ad attitudes and brand attitudes for female participants. A potential explanation for this is that men's underwear (from the brand used in the study) is not a common gift (which was the measure used to assess purchase intentions for women). For presumed impact on women, as well as for presumed impact on men, the mediation analyses showed partial support for the proposed theoretical reasoning. While the stereotyped portrayals were not presumed to have more negative impact on women and men, presumed negative impact did lead to higher levels of reactance, which in turn mediated brand-related effects. These relationships were similar for male and female participants.

General discussion

The results in this paper suggest that stereotypes indeed go two ways. Both men and women react negatively to stereotyped advertising portrayals (vs. non-stereotyped portrayals) of both genders. Although the negative effects on ad and brand attitudes are consistent through both studies, the proposed theoretical framework better explains reactions to stereotyped portrayals of females. For female portrayals, both women and men presumed stereotyped portrayals to have a negative influence on others. These portrayals are thus perceived to pose a direct threat, in that they limit the consumer personally, but also an indirect threat, in that consumers believe them to have a negative impact on others. For male portrayals, however, there is no difference in the presumed influence on others between the two portrayals, and only female participants experience higher ad reactance after exposure to the more stereotyped male portrayal. This is in line with research by Lysonski and Pollay (1990), highlighting that because the negative consequences of stereotyping primarily affect women, they develop less favorable a priori attitudes toward stereotyping in general, and evaluate stereotyping in advertising more negatively than men do. Still, ad reactance is found to impact ad and brand attitudes for both male and females, which suggests that it does play a role in explaining consumer reactions also to male portrayals.

To date, literature on stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals of gender in in advertising have mostly been limited to reactions from a female target audience to ads featuring female stereotypes (Åkestam et al., 2017a; Antioco et al., 2012). This paper adds to this research by investigating reactions to stereotyped and non-stereotyped portrayals of men, and by including reactions of both target and exposure audiences. Further, it makes a contribution by proposing a two-way explanation for these reactions. While all the hypothesized effects and relationships were significant for exposure to female stereotypes, they were only partially significant for male stereotypes. The stereotyped male portrayal did generate higher levels of ad reactance overall, which in turn lead to lower brand-related effects.

Again, it should be noted that female respondents primarily drove the effect on ad reactance.

The results from the studies thus indicate that consumers believe female stereotypes in advertising to be more damaging to both women and men. This is not surprising, considering that female stereotyping has been more frequent in advertising (Eisend, 2010) and that these effects are more intensely discussed in society (Åkestam et al., 2017a). Consumers adjust their perception of influence on others over time (Eisend, 2017) and as male stereotypes in advertising are increasingly discussed and challenged (by brand such as Axe and Cheerios), this might increase consumer awareness, and thereby possibly come to enhance the presumed influence on others.

Further, this paper adds to the literature on the influence of presumed influence (Eisend, 2017; Gunther and Storey, 2003) by proposing that the model can help explain consumer reactions to gender stereotyped portrayals in advertising. To date, the literature on gender stereotypes has mainly been concerned with self-relevant reactions (Åkestam et al., 2017a; Antioco et al., 2012), thus overlooking the social context of these effects. Again, these social effects seem more vital in explaining reactions to female portrayals, which could be due to the overall perceptions that these portrayals are more damaging than male portrayals.

Finally, the paper adds to the growing body of literature on ad reactance (Thorbjørnsen and Dahlen, 2011) by proposing a theoretical connection between the IPI model and reactance theory. Adding to previous studies, this paper suggests that an indirect threat (such as presumed influence on others) can lead to reactance, as the presumed negative influence of gender stereotypes on others can be perceived as limiting consumers' freedom. Thereby it complements the perspective on ad reactance presented by Åkestam et al. (2017a).

Implications for advertisers

The finding that non-stereotyped portrayals of both genders can lead to positive ad and brand attitudes from both target and exposure audiences indicates that advertisers should explore non-stereotyped gender portrayals

in their advertising. Further, the findings indicate that non-stereotyped advertising portrayals can generate a win-win situation for target audiences, brands, and regulators. This suggests that advertisers have much to gain, both in terms of sales and goodwill, from pro-actively challenging gender stereotypes, rather than waiting for regulatory efforts (such as those of the ASA) to kick in. Furthermore, the results suggest that this line of thinking is especially important when working with female portrayals, as both male and female target audiences will perceive them to have an impact on others and thereby be more likely to experience reactance in response.

Limitations and further research

Although the results of two experimental studies mostly support our reasoning, the lack of significant differences in terms of presumed influence and ad reactions to stereotyped male portrayals warrant further investigation. The fact that female consumers are more likely to experience reactions in response to stereotyped male portrayals suggest that there is an asymmetry in terms of how self-relevant advertising is to men and women (cf. Dahlen et al., 2014; Lysonski and Pollay, 1990) and that there is a further need to explore and explain reactions to male stereotypes in advertising.

What is more, there are several limitations of the current studies that should be considered in developing the line of research further. First, this paper investigates gender stereotypes in terms of physical characteristics only. While it can be expected that similar results would occur for gender roles stereotypes, future studies should investigate whether this is indeed the case. Second, both empirical studies featured a single product category (underwear) with single-gender target audiences. Additional studies should assess whether product categories with multi-gender target audiences, such as grocery stores or soft drinks, would also render results of a two-way threat.

While ad attitudes, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions are certainly of interest to most marketers, it does not provide a full understanding of the potential effects of stereotyped and non-stereotyped advertising portrayals. Previous research has suggested that non-stereotyped advertising portrayals can work as a priming cue to generate social effects, such as so-

cial connectedness and empathy (Åkestam et al., 2017b). Future studies should include social effects in parallel to brand-related effects when studying non-stereotyped portrayals of gender, to investigate whether the brand-related effects found in the present study are actually accompanied by the empowerment that many advertisers using non-stereotyped appeals set out to achieve (Åkestam et al., 2017a). Hopefully the present study will open up for more such investigations, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the effects of stereotyped portrayals of gender in advertising.

Appendix 1. Stimuli images (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped portrayal) used in Study 1.

Appendix 2. Stimuli images (stereotyped vs. non-stereotyped portrayal) used in Study 2.

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Article 5: Diverse effects of ethnic diversity in advertising: Exploring brand-related and social effects

Abstract

This article explores if ethnic diversity in mainstream advertising can be good for both brands and consumers. Drawing on cultivation theory and cognitive priming theory, we propose that ethnic diversity advertising (featuring majority and minority ethnicities simultaneously) can produce more thoughts about the self and others, compared to advertising featuring the ethnic majority only. This in turn would have a positive impact on social effects in terms of consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy, as well as on ad and brand ratings. The findings from two experimental studies indicate that for advertising portraying neutral cultural contexts, this is indeed the case. For advertising portraying a cultural context that is strongly associated with the ethnic majority, however, ethnic diversity has a neutral to negative impact on the proposed effects. Further, all effects are moderated by consumers' attitudes toward diversity. The findings suggest that when mindfully portrayed, ethnic diversity advertising can generate effects that are positive for brands, while also reducing consumers' perceived distance to others. This should encourage advertisers to further explore such themes.

This paper poses the question: can ethnic diversity in advertising be good for both brands and consumers? More specifically, it investigates whether featuring majority and minority ethnicities simultaneously in ads can both produce positive ad and brand ratings, and yield positive social effects, such as increasing consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy.

The first starting point for this investigation is the observation that several major brands have released ethnic diversity-themed advertising in recent years, co-featuring majority and minority ethnicities, and targeting a mainstream audience. Examples include Dove's highly acclaimed "Campaign for real beauty", featuring ethnically diverse groups of women; Chevrolet's "The new us", portraying interracial families; and Coca-Cola's "America is Beautiful", showcasing the nation's wide array of ethnicities. Several industry press reports suggest that ethnic diversity is an important trend in advertising. For example, AdAge reports that, "ad campaigns are finally reflecting (the) diversity (of the U.S.)" (Zmuda, 2014), Marketing Week argues that "ads that appeal to different ethnic groups (aren't just altruistic, they) make commercial sense" (Joseph, 2014, p. 1), and Forbes suggests that "diversity in advertising is good marketing" (Vinjamuri, 2015, p. 1). However, there is still a paucity of research on the effects of such ethnic diversity advertising.

The second starting point for this investigation is the repeated calls for research on more diverse effects of advertising that go beyond the advertised brand, including consumers' perceptions and relations to self and others (e.g., Åkestam et al., 2017; Eisend, 2010; Rosengren et al., 2013). In line with this, the Journal of Advertising recently published a new working definition of advertising, which included the responsibility and opportunity for brands to produce positive social effects while simultaneously promoting their products (Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016).

The third starting point for the investigation is recent research finding that advertising can indeed produce such positive social effects. For example, Rosengren et al. (2013) found that creative advertising can increase consumers' perceived self-efficacy, and Åkestam et al. (2017) showed that non-stereotyped portrayals of homosexual people in advertising primed consumers to feel greater empathy and social connectedness. The present investigation builds on this latter finding to hypothesize that advertising

featuring ethnic diversity, targeted toward a mainstream audience, can produce positive ad and brand ratings while simultaneously increasing consumer-perceived empathy and social connectedness.

The hypotheses are tested in an experimental study, which contrasts ethnic diversity ads featuring majority and minority ethnicities simultaneously, with otherwise identical ads featuring only (Caucasian) majority models. A second study tests the potentially inhibiting impact of portraying a cultural context strongly associated with the ethnic majority.

Ethnic diversity in advertising research

Research on ethnic diversity in advertising dates back as early as the beginning of the 1960's. At that time, advertisers in the U.S. were increasingly targeting both Caucasian majority consumers and African-American minority consumers, by integrating models of the two ethnicities simultaneously in advertising. This so-called "integrated advertising" was subject to a number of research publications, starting with Barban and Cundiff's (1964) very awkwardly titled Journal of Marketing Research paper "Negro and white response to advertising stimuli", which studied the two target groups' brand-related responses to being featured in the same ads. Ranging from ad processing (Tolley and Goett, 1971) and evaluations (Barban and Cundiff, 1964), to brand attitudes (Stafford et al., 1970), corporate image (Guest, 1970) and purchase behaviors (Bush et al., 1974), the studies on "integrated advertising" usually found that the minority African-American target group reacted more favorably than the majority Caucasian target group, which, however, was still more positive than negative to the integrated ads.

Since the late 1970's, however, ethnically integrated advertising has not been subject to much research. With two notable exceptions published in the Journal of Advertising, which studied heuristic versus systematic processing effects (Whittler, 1991), and advertising featuring multiple ethnic minorities simultaneously (Brumbaugh and Grier, 2006), advertising researchers have shifted their attention toward ethnic minority portrayals.

This shift has been suggested to be the result of the development of ethnically segmented media from the 1980's and onward, which gave advertisers the opportunity to increasingly target ethnicities individually and sep-

arately (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999; Holland and Gentry, 1999). Researchers have accordingly studied advertising targeted mainly at African-Americans (Green, 1999), Asian-Americans (Morimoto and La Ferle, 2008), and Hispanics (Dimofte et al., 2003).

Alongside the research on the effectiveness of ethnically targeted advertising, a growing body of research has also focused on how ethnicities are portrayed in advertising (e.g., Bailey, 2006; Taylor and Stern, 1997; Wilkes and Valencia, 1989). We find two recurring themes in this research of particular interest. First, ethnic minority portrayals are found to be frequently stereotyped, for example, with regard to occupations and interests (Bailey, 2006; Wilkes and Valencia, 1989). Second, whether featured in ethnically targeted media or "mass media", these portrayals are generally diffused to a mainstream audience (Bailey, 2006) with the risk of creating misconceptions, and harming assimilation between (major and minor) ethnicities (Taylor and Stern, 1997).

The latter conclusion resonates with cultivation theory. Originally conceived by George Gerbner and Larry Gross to explain how television cultivates consumers' views of reality and creates standardized roles and behaviors (Gerbner and Gross, 1976), the theory has since been used to study how people's consumption of news and entertainment media biases their perceptions of ethnic minorities (Schemer, 2013; Vergeer et al., 2000). While ethnic portrayals have not been tested in an advertising setting, advertising consumption patterns have been found to bias people's perceptions of materialism and society (Kwak et al., 2002). Advertising researchers warn that ethnically stereotyped portrayals are likely to have similar negative effects.

We expect that advertising featuring majority and minority ethnicities could also have a cultivating effect, which would impact consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy. We will develop this argument further in the next section.

Ethnic diversity in advertising impacts social connectedness and empathy

A fundamental premise of cultivation theory applied to media and advertising is that consumers engage vicariously with others through the mediated portrayals (Schemer, 2013; Taylor and Stern, 1997). The cultivating effect would thus be particularly pronounced when consumers do not frequently engage with those others in real life, which researchers argue may be the case with different ethnicities (Bailey, 2006; Taylor and Stern, 1997). Applying this to ethnicity in advertising, we believe that not only the use of stereotypes, but the singular portrayals of ethnicity, may cultivate consumers to perceive ethnicities as such, that is, singular and apart, rather than sharing the same reality.

Conversely, then, we expect that simultaneously featuring two or more ethnicities in advertising would cultivate consumers to perceive them as sharing reality rather than being singular. A premise for such effects to occur is that the featured ethnicities are not portrayed in stereotyped manners, or differ in prominence (Green, 1999), which is indeed a defining quality of ethnic diversity advertising, which co-features majority and minority ethnicities in mainstream-targeted ads.

We believe that portraying majority and minority ethnicities as sharing the same reality in advertising would prime consumers to feel more socially connected to others. Social connectedness, that is, a person's feeling of belonging with and closeness to others in general (Lee and Robbins, 1995), has been subject to an extensive body of research, as it relates closely to wellbeing, health and prosocial behaviors (e.g., Capaldi et al., 2014; Mauss et al., 2012; Pavey et al., 2011).

We take particular interest in social connectedness for two reasons. First, it has the potential to counteract negative effects that advertising has been accused of, such as materialism and egocentrism (Pollay, 1986; Zinkhan, 1994) and to promote positive social effects on consumer wellbeing and behaviors, as called for by Dahlen and Rosengren (2016). Second, Åkestam et al. (2017) found that the inclusion of both "self" and "others" in consumer-processing of advertising portraying gay couples

could indeed prime social connectedness in a general sense, which extended beyond the particular social categories of sexual orientation.

Similar to Åkestam et al. (2017), we expect that ethnic diversity in advertising could cultivate a feeling of shared reality, which would prime consumers to relate "self" and "others", so that they experience greater general social connectedness. We therefore hypothesize:

H1: Ethnic diversity (versus ethnic majority) portrayals increase consumer-perceived social connectedness.

We believe that a second potential social effect of featuring ethnic diversity in advertising is that it would prime consumers to feel more empathetic. Empathy, which can be defined as recognizing and experiencing others' perspectives and feelings (Mehrabian and Epstein, 1972), has also been subject to extensive research, which relates it to, for example, cooperation, social coordination and compassion (e.g., Eisenberg and Miller, 1987; Galinsky et al., 2005; Rumble et al., 2009).

We take a particular interest in empathy for the same two aforementioned reasons. First, it can potentially counteract negative effects that have been associated with advertising, such as egoism and, of course, stereotypes (Pollay 1986; Taylor and Stern, 1997), and promote positive social effects, such as acceptance and non-discrimination (cf. Dahlen and Rosengren, 2016, Eisend, 2010). Second, the inclusion of both "self" and "others" in advertising processing has also been found to prime consumers to experience empathy on a general level, beyond the advertised scenario (Åkestam et al., 2017).

We expect that featuring ethnic diversity in advertising will cultivate consumers to relate to other ethnicities based on the shared ad scenario, and prime them to feel greater empathy overall. We therefore hypothesize:

H2: Ethnic diversity (versus ethnic majority) portrayals increase consumer-perceived empathy.

Ethnic diversity in advertising impacts ad and brand attitudes

Based on the articles in the business press that were cited in the introduction, one could argue that ethnic diversity in advertising is good business in and of itself. The mere act of advertising ethnic diversity sends signals about the brand, for example, as being including and progressive (Joseph, 2014; Vinjamuri, 2015). The literature on marketing signals has shown that, for example, greater expense and creativity in advertising are interpreted by consumers as signs of the brand's innovativeness, quality and consumer care (e.g., Ambler and Hollier, 2000; Kirmani, 1997; Rosengren et al., 2015). These signals have been found to impact favorably on ad and brand attitudes, and ethnic diversity could be expected to have similar signal effects.

We also expect that ethnic diversity in advertising will impact favorably on ad and brand attitudes as a consequence of how it makes consumers think and feel about themselves. That is, we propose that, as consumers are primed by the advertising to experience greater social connectedness and empathy, they will "reward" the ad and the brand with higher ratings.

This "reward" can come both in the form of classic affective transfer (Batra and Ray, 1986), and as a cognitive response to how the advertising makes consumers feel about themselves. This latter cognitive reward mechanism was found, for example, in a study where consumers who were primed by creative advertising to feel more creative themselves rated the ad and the brand more favorably (Rosengren et al., 2013), and in a study where consumers' perceived own smartness, primed by the advertising, mediated their ad and brand evaluations (Dahlen et al., 2014).

We expect that, similar to these studies, consumers will feel better about themselves as a consequence of being primed by the advertising to experience greater social connectedness and empathy, and that they will consequently evaluate the ad and the brand more favorably. We therefore hypothesize:

H3: Ethnic diversity (versus ethnic majority) portrayals increase ad and brand attitudes.

Attitude toward diversity moderates the effects

Previous research on ethnic portrayals in advertising suggests that consumer response is moderated by pre-existing perspectives and attitudes, such as the consumer's strength of ethnic identification with (Green, 1999) or attitude toward (Holland and Gentry, 1999) the portrayed culture. We expect attitude toward diversity to similarly moderate consumer response, so that those with higher (lower) attitudes respond more (less) favorably to ethnic diversity in advertising.

While not applied to advertising, attitude toward diversity has been found to moderate, for example, employee response to employer diversity efforts (Nakui et al., 2011) college students' responses to multicultural learning (Longerbeam and Sedlacek, 2006) and consumer willingness or reluctance to purchase foreign products (Bartikowski and Walsh, 2015).

We hypothesize that attitude toward diversity can be applied as a moderator to ethnic diversity in advertising, which boosts its positive effects on consumers with higher preexisting attitudes, and mitigates these effects on consumers with lower preexisting attitudes. We therefore hypothesize:

H4: The positive social and brand-related effects of ethnic diversity (versus ethnic majority) portrayals increase with consumers' attitudes toward diversity

Study 1

Study 1 tested the hypotheses in an experiment in which participants were exposed to ads that either featured ethnic majority and minority models simultaneously (ethnic diversity condition), or featured ethnic majority (Caucasian) models only (control condition).

Stimuli

Two sets (ethnic diversity vs. control) of print ads for were used as stimuli. One set advertised canned vegetables (typically lower involvement) and one set advertised banking services (typically higher involvement). Mock brands were used to avoid potentially confounding effects. The ads that advertised canned vegetables portrayed a three-generation family (two grandparents, two parents and two children) seated at the dinner table, with a pack-shot, brand logo and the tagline "Share the love for food" in the bottom right corner. The ethnic diversity condition featured a Caucasian and a Hispanic grandparent, a mixed-ethnicity parent and an Asian parent, and two mixed-ethnicity children, whereas the control condition featured only Caucasian family members. The ads were otherwise identical. The ads that advertised banking services featured a close-up of two heterosexual couples in their twenties smiling to the camera, with a pack-shot of a credit card, brand logo and the tagline "Free pass" in the bottom right corner. The ethnic diversity condition featured an African-American couple and a Caucasian/Hispanic couple, whereas the control condition featured two Caucasian couples. The ads were otherwise identical.

A pre-test (n= 60, 48% female, mean age = 27.6; participants similar to, but not included in the main study) showed that the ads in the ethnic diversity condition were perceived as significantly more diverse than the control ads ($M_{diverse}$= 5.25 vs. $M_{control}$= 2.71, $p <. 01$, items: "The ad is ethnically diverse" and "The ad features multiple ethnicities", scale 1-7, $r = .84$), whereas the models did not differ in overall attractiveness ($M_{diverse}$= 5.11 vs. $M_{control}$= 5.37, n.s., items: "The models are attractive" and "The models are good-looking", scale 1-7, $r = .88$).

Procedure

Three-hundred and thirty-eight people (51% female, ages 16-64, mean age= 39.0, 87% self-identified ethnic majority) were recruited from a proprietary online nationally representative (Swedish) consumer panel. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four cells (equal distribution). They were first exposed to one of the ads (at their own pace), and then asked to

move on to the next page when ready, to record their answers to a number of questions (target variables and filler tasks).

Measures

Social connectedness was measured on seven-point Likert scales based on Mauss et al. (2011), with the items "Right now, I feel that I belong with other people/am part of a community/am important to other people/find other people important", α = .90.

   Empathy was measured on seven-point Likert scales taken from Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlen (2017) with the items "Right now, I feel considerate/compassionate/warm", α = .76.

   Ad attitudes were measured on seven-point semantic differential scales taken from Dahlen et al. (2009), with the items bad/good, dislike/like, negative opinion/positive opinion, in response to the question "What is your opinion on the ad?", α = .95. *Brand attitudes* were measured on identical scales in response to the question "What is your opinion on the brand?", α = .94.

   Attitudes toward diversity were measured on seven-point Likert scales adapted from Bartikowski and Walsh (2015) with the items "Knowing someone from a different ethnic group broadens my understanding", "I am only at ease with people of my race and culture (reverse-coded)", "It is good to know people from different countries or cultures", α = .79.

   We also included a cognitive check-list to gauge participants' ad-provoked thoughts. Directly after viewing the ad, they were asked to first write down their spontaneous thoughts (as many or few as they wanted), and then to go back and mark each thought as either relating to the ad or the brand, relating to *self and others* (our target variable), or something else.

Results

A manipulation check (same measure as in the pretest, included at the end of the questionnaire) confirmed that the ads were indeed perceived as more ethnically diverse in the manipulated (M = 5.02) versus control condition (M = 3.16), p < .01.

A MANOVA testing the effects on social connectedness, empathy, ad and brand attitudes, and thoughts about self and others, supported all four hypotheses. Ethnic diversity had a significant effect on all variables in line with H1-H3, $F (5, 338) = 2.89$, $p < .05$ Wilks' lambda = .96. Attitude toward diversity (median split 4.00) had a significant effect on all variables in interaction with ethnic diversity, in line with H4, $F (5, 338) = 6.83$, $p < .05$ Wilks' lambda = .92. We also included ad set (lower vs. higher involvement) and participants' self-identified majority/minority ethnicity as factors, but they had neither main nor interaction effects on the dependent variables.

Table 1. Mean Values Study 1

	Lower attitudes toward diversity		Higher attitudes toward diversity	
	Single majority ethnicity	Ethnic diversity	Single majority ethnicity	Ethnic diversity
Social connectedness	4.00	3.93	4.71	5.50***
Empathy	4.05	3.97	4.41	4.97***
Ad attitude	3.96	4.04	3.99	4.53**
Brand attitude	3.82	4.05	4.19	4.45*
Self + others thoughts	3.93	4.09	3.99	4.54***

*** = $p < .01$
** = $p < .05$
* = $p < .10$

For illustrative purposes, we conducted planned comparisons on each dependent variable for participants with both lower and higher attitudes toward diversity. As Table 1 shows, ethnic diversity had a main effect which

produced higher social connected connectedness (H1), empathy (H2) and ad and brand attitudes (H3) overall, but the differences are only significant for participants with higher attitudes toward diversity (H4).

We also ran linear regression on all the dependent variables, with the ethnic diversity factor, the attitude toward diversity index, and their multiplied product interaction term as independents, for a test of the moderating effect of attitude toward diversity across the scale (rather than a median split). The results showed significant positive effects ($p < .05$) of both the interaction term ($\beta_{SC} = .78$; $\beta_{empathy} = .63$; $\beta_{Aad} = .28$; $\beta_{Abrand} = .17$) and the ethnic diversity factor ($\beta_{SC} = .61$; $\beta_{empathy} = .49$; $\beta_{Aad} = .16$; $\beta_{Abrand} = .11$)

To test the underlying premise that ethnic diversity ads increase social connectedness by way of priming participants to think more about self and others, we conducted moderated mediation tests using the Preacher-Hayes approach (Model 3, 5000 bootstrapping samples, 95% confidence interval, cf. Zhao et al., 2010). Ethnic diversity condition was used as the independent variable, the number of thoughts about self and others as the mediator, and attitude toward diversity as the moderator.

Ethnic diversity had a significant positive effect on the thoughts about self and others (2.57, 95% CI: 0.85– 1.43), which in turn had a significant effect on social connectedness (4.13, 95% CI: 0.23 – 1.62) with higher attitudes toward diversity (5.68, 95% CI: 0.03– 1.26). Effects were not significant with lower attitudes toward diversity. Similarly, ethnic diversity had a significant positive effect on the thoughts about self and others (2.57, 95% CI: 0.53– 0.92), which in turn had a significant effect on empathy (4.13, 95% CI: 0.15 – 1.17) with higher attitudes toward diversity (5.68, 95% CI: 0.05– 0.50). Effects were not significant with lower attitudes toward diversity.

Discussion

In support of the first two hypotheses, Study 1 finds that ads featuring ethnic diversity produce higher ratings of social connectedness and empathy. However, in line with our fourth hypothesis, these effects are moderated by participants' attitudes toward diversity. Linear regressions showed that the moderation holds across the scale, so that the positive effects of ethnic di-

versity advertising increase with participants' attitudes toward diversity. Dividing participants into lower versus higher attitudes toward diversity, we found a crude pattern where the effects of the diversity advertising go from neutral to significantly positive. In line with the reasoning leading up to the hypotheses, we also found that the positive effects of the ethnically diverse advertising were mediated by participants' increased thinking about self and others.

The findings also support our third hypothesis, that ethnically diverse advertising produces higher ad and brand attitudes. The effects are moderated by participants' attitudes towards diversity across the scale, and form a crude pattern from neutral among participants with lower attitudes towards diversity, to significantly positive among participants with higher attitudes toward diversity.

While the effects did not differ between the two sets of ads with respect to the advertised products, we did not allow for the possibility that the portrayed context could have an effect on participants' responses to the diversity theme. The two sets of ads portrayed contexts – a dinner table and a close-up photo - that can be considered neutral and not particularly associated with any of the featured ethnicities. However, the literature on ethnicity in advertising suggests that ethnic identification (Green, 1999), cultural cues (Grier and Brumbaugh, 1999) and attitudes toward cultural accommodation (Holland and Gentry, 1999) moderate the effects on consumer response. That is, as the cultural context becomes more salient, it triggers consumers to react to the advertising based more on their own ethnical perspectives on that context.

Applied to ethnic diversity advertising, we believe that portraying ethnic diversity in a culturally particular, rather than neutral, context could potentially trigger participants to process the advertising in a more ethnically biased manner. As ethnic diversity advertising targets a mainstream audience, portraying a cultural context that is strongly associated with the majority ethnicity would be a likely scenario, whether intended or unintended. This scenario would potentially prime the ethnic majority (which research has found is otherwise less prone to think in terms of its own ethnicity because of its less distinctive majority status, Brumbaugh and Grier, 1999; Grier and

Brumbaugh, 2006) more as theirs, and less as shared. This is the focus of the second study.

Study 2

Similar to Study 1, this study tested the hypotheses in an experiment in which participants were exposed to ads either featuring ethnic majority and minority models simultaneously (ethnic diversity condition), or featuring ethnic majority models only (control condition). However, this time, the advertising portrayed a cultural context that is strongly associated with the ethnic majority.

Stimuli and procedure

Defining Caucasians as the ethnic majority, we pretested a number of contexts with regard to their congruence (typical/traditional/strongly associated, 1-7 scale, $\alpha = .74$) with Caucasians versus other ethnicities, and identified Christmas as a suitable scenario ($M_{caucasians} = 7.94$ vs. $M_{otherethnicites} = 4.06$, $p < .01$).

The print ad stimuli portrayed four children peering over the shoulder of Santa Claus reading from a big book, with a Christmas tree in the background. A shopping mall was used as the sender (mock brand). Its logo and the tagline "We have everything you wish for" were placed in the bottom right corner. In the ethnic diversity condition, Santa Claus was African-American and one child was Hispanic, while the other three children were Caucasian. In the control condition, Santa Claus and all four children were Caucasian. The ads were otherwise identical.

Measures were identical to Study 1. One-hundred and seventy-eight participants (49% female, ages 16-64, mean age= 39.1, 88% self-identified ethnic majority) were recruited from the same online consumer panel.

Results

First, we ran a MANOVA testing the effects on social connectedness, empathy, ad and brand attitudes, and thoughts about self and others. Ethnic diversity had a significant effect on all variables, $F (5, 179) = 3.59$, $p < .01$ Wilks' lambda = .92. Attitude toward diversity (median split 4.33) had a significant effect on all variables in interaction with ethnic diversity, $F (5, 179) = 2.29$, $p < .05$ Wilks' lambda = .95. Self-identified majority/minority ethnicity had neither main nor interaction effects on the dependent variables.

Table 2. Mean Values Study 2

	Lower attitudes toward diversity		Higher attitudes toward diversity	
	Single majority ethnicity	Ethnic diversity	Single majority ethnicity	Ethnic diversity
Social connectedness	4.27	3.76*	4.65	4.89
Empathy	4.07	3.67*	4.45	4.50
Ad attitude	4.54	3.05***	4.12	4.45
Brand attitude	4.26	3.44***	3.86	4.41***
Self + others thoughts	3.65	4.99***	3.59	4.86***

*** = p < .01
** = p < .05
*   = p < .10

For illustrative purposes, we conducted planned comparisons on each dependent variable for participants with both lower and higher attitudes toward diversity. As Table 2 shows, the pattern from Study 1 has been

reversed. While effects on all dependent variables are in the expected, positive, direction among the participants with higher attitudes toward advertising, the difference is statistically significant only for brand attitude. Thus, none of the first three hypotheses are supported. Conversely, the effects are significant in the opposite, negative, direction among participants with lower attitudes toward diversity.

Discussion

Study 2 finds that the positive effects in Study 1 are mitigated when the ethnic diversity advertising portrays a cultural context which is strongly associated with the majority ethnicity, versus other ethnicities. While the positive effect on participants with higher attitudes toward diversity has gone from positive to neutral, the effect on participants with lower attitudes toward diversity has gone from neutral to negative. Changing contexts from neutral to culturally biased toward the majority ethnicity thus shifts the net effect from positive to negative.

General discussion

Taken together, the two studies find that ethnic diversity in advertising can indeed impact both the brand and consumers. The effects can be positive for both parties, as suggested in the opening question of this paper's introduction. Targeting a mainstream audience, ethnic diversity portrayed in a neutral context seemingly cultivates a perception of shared reality, and fosters thoughts about self and others that translate into greater consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy. Consequently, consumers rate the ad and the brand more favorably. On the other hand, portraying ethnic diversity in a context that is strongly associated with the ethnic majority mitigates these effects. In fact, it could even produce a backfire effect, by which the contrast between the featured minority ethnicities and the cultural context foster thoughts about differences between self and others, that translate into lower consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy. Consequently, consumers rate the ad and the brand less favorably.

The findings contribute to the recent body of literature that calls for research on advertising's effects beyond the brand. Featuring multiple ethnicities simultaneously primes consumers to think about self and others, which can both shorten and increase their perceived distance. This presents opportunity as well as responsibility for advertisers to think beyond the brand in terms of impact. In line with cultivation theory, the present investigation finds that advertising can indeed have the power to prime consumers' perceptions of reality and their relationships to one another.

As cautioned by scholars on ethnicity in advertising (Taylor and Stern, 1997; Wilkes and Valencia, 1989), unfortunate portrayals can increase consumers' perceived distance to others. While these scholars have commonly focused on stereotypes, we find that the context in which ethnicities are portrayed can have similar negative effects, per Study 2. This would be in line with Holland and Gentry's (1999) notion of consumer perceptions of cultural accommodation, by which placing ethnicities in a context that is strongly associated with another ethnicity (in our case, placing other ethnic minorities in the Caucasian majority's traditional Christmas context, and the Santa Claus role) could produce a contrast effect that primes consumers to think about differences, rather than sharing, of realities.

On the other hand, the present paper is also a first attempt to contribute to the literature on ethnicity in advertising with an investigation of how portrayals can actually reduce consumers' perceived distance to others, per Study 1. While cultivation through advertising can distort reality perceptions in negative ways, advertising portrayals can also impact people's perceptions in positive ways. While calls for being mindful about the potentially negative extended effects of ethnicity in advertising have been made for a long time, we believe that the potentially positive extended effects deserve the same attention. A first step is to introduce measures in advertising research that allow for such observations, an example of which is the present investigation's gauging of consumer-perceived social connectedness and empathy. If such measures had been used in the studies of "integrated advertising" in the 1960's, maybe it wouldn't have taken another fifty years for ethnic diversity advertising to become a trend?

The application of such measures could also inform speculations like those cited in this paper's introduction, whether ethnic diversity is good

marketing and makes commercial sense. The answer is yes – if mindfully portrayed. Our findings show that effects on consumers go hand-in-hand with effects on the brand, so that consumers "reward" the ad and the brand when it makes them feel good about themselves and others (as in Study 1), and "punish" the ad and the brand when the advertising makes them feel bad about themselves and others (as in Study 2). This can explain why two ads that may seem similar to advertisers (featuring ethnic diversity in advertising targeted at a mainstream audience) may produce completely opposing ratings. In fact, happened in the authors' native country, where a major brand was caught completely by surprise when, after having launched two earlier diversity-themed advertising campaigns (in neutral contexts) to nationwide praise and consumer goodwill, it released its new campaign on the same theme (featuring a person of ethnic minority in a role strongly associated with the ethnic majority) and received major criticism and badwill.

Future research

In contrast to most research on ethnicity in advertising, the present investigation studied the effects mainly on a mainstream audience featuring both the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities, rather than on a (targeted) ethnic minority only. While self-identified ethnic majority/minority was included as a factor and found to have no differential impact, it cannot be ruled out that this null effect could be due to the small numbers of ethnic minority participants in the two studies. Future research would be informed by sufficient tests of the ethnic minority responses to form a link between the present paper and previous research. In addition, these studies would benefit from also including non-represented ethnicities, to learn whether thoughts about the self and others (or, for that matter, thoughts about others and others) would function vicariously as well. That is, could, for example, an advertisement featuring African-Americans and Caucasians make Asian-Americans feel greater social connectedness and empathy, too?

The neutral context in Study 1 versus the ethnic majority-associated context in Study 2 formed a stark contrast, which could likely be conceived as endpoints on the spectrum. Future research would be informed by reconciling this contrast in terms of more or less strongly culturally/ethnically

associated contexts, as well as how ethnicities are portrayed in these contexts (e.g., being Santa Claus versus being a passive participant) to find how and when effects go from net positive to net negative.

The introduction of new measures, such as social connectedness and empathy, and the notion of positive extended effects, could also be applied to future studies on ethnic stereotypes to extend the existing body of research on stereotyped portrayals. This would add a perspective of potential positive, rather than negative, effects, answering the question of whether non-stereotyped portrayals of ethnic minorities would not just mitigate negative cultivation effects, but also produce positive effects.

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