

Sex in Advertising

How it influences young men and women

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ABSTRACT

Companies make use of sexual appeal in advertising more now than ever. Very little research has been conducted of how the youth react to this and therefore, the purpose of this study is to gain a better understanding of how the youth perceive sex in advertising. More specifically, it deals with how the youth define and perceive sexual appeal in advertising. The study has a qualitative approach and the empirical data was gathered through two focus group interviews with students from Örnén high school in Luleå.

The findings and conclusions of this study indicated that there are gender differences of how the youth define and react to sex in advertising. Young men tend to be more focused on physical attractiveness while young women focus more on other factors such as movement. Furthermore, our conclusions suggest that there are differences of how young women and men perceive sex in advertisement. Our findings suggest that young men are not as affected as young women concerning buying behavior and self-confidence by the sexual appeals in advertisements.

SAMMANFATTNING

Nuförtiden använder företag sexuella anspelningar i reklam mer än någonsin. Väldigt lite forskning har utförts om hur ungdomar reagerar på detta, därför är vårt syfte att få en bättre förståelse om hur ungdomar uppfattar sexuella anspelningar i reklam. Mer specifikt vill vi utreda hur ungdomarna definierar sexuella anspelningar i reklam och hur det påverkar dem. Uppsatsen har en kvalitativ ansats och vi samlade in den data vi använde oss av fokus grupp intervjuer vid en gymnasieskola i Luleå.

Slutsatserna från denna uppsats indikerar att det råder skillnader huruvida unga kvinnor och män definierar och reagerar på sex i reklam. Våra iakttagelser föreslår att där är skillnader över könen när de definierar sex i reklam. Unga män tenderar att fokusera på utseendet, emedan kvinnorna mera fokuserar på andra faktorer såsom rörelser. Vidare så föreslår våra slutsatser att det är skillnader på hur unga kvinnor och män tolkar sex i reklam. Av vår uppsats att döma så blir unga män inte lika påverkade vad gäller köpbeteende och självuppfattning, såsom unga kvinnor blir av sexuella anspelningar i reklam.

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter starts by providing a background to the topic of our thesis. A problem discussion about sexual appeals in advertising will be presented, after that the purpose as well as the research questions will be formulated. Finally demarcations will be stated.

1.1 Background

People all over the world are bombarded daily with an ever increasing number of advertising messages, whether on television, radio, print or posters (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000). Advertising can be defined as any paid form of non-personal promotion transmitted through a mass medium. The key difference between advertising and other forms of promotion, such as personal selling, sales promotion and publicity is that advertising is impersonal and communicates with large numbers of people (ibid).

Communication process

The most significant factor to be considered in planning advertising is an understanding of the communication process (Aaker, Batra & Myers, 1992). No organization can afford either the financial or reputation damage caused by inadequately designed or implemented communication campaigns (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000). Therefore it is of great importance that the communication process function as an establishment of commonness, or oneness, of thought between a message sender (advertiser) and a receiver (consumer) if communication is to occur (Shimp, 2003). An outline of the communication process can be seen in figure 1.1.

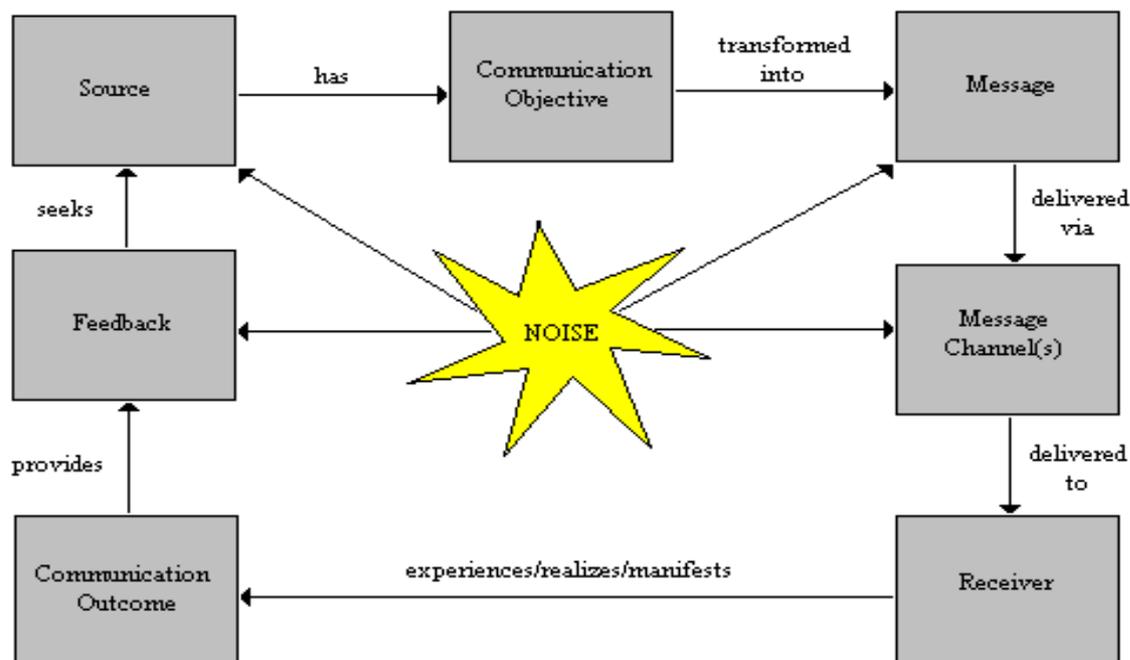


Figure 1.1: The Communication Process
Source: Adapted from Shimp (2003)

The source in the communication process is a communicator; it could be an advertiser, salesperson or sales promoter who has thoughts to share with a single customer or an entire target audience (Shimp, 2003). The sender must have a clear idea or view of what message he wants to present, in order to create brand awareness and positive brand image towards the receiver. In order to bring the message forward to the receiver a channel must be chosen from the sender (ibid). Depending on what message the sender wants to deliver the choice of channel will take place (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000). It is hoped that the outcome to the receiver matches the communicator's general objective and results in more positive attitudes towards the brand image, increased brand awareness or greater purchasing of the brand. Whatever the response, it is important that the sender is provided with feedback on whether the message has been received, understood and interpreted as desired. A message moving through the process can always be distracted by noise (ibid).

Advertising media are called on to execute the task of delivering the message to the consumer and therefore the advertiser needs to choose a medium or media, the channel, most suitable to the task in hand (Brassington & Pettitt, 2000). Examples of ways to deliver the message according to Brassington and Pettitt complemented by Eastman, Ferguson and Klein (1999) are:

- Television, it enables a seller to communicate to a broad range of potentially large audiences.
- Radio, it is an important mean of broadcast communication for smaller companies operating within a restricted geographic area.
- Magazines, it can be presented and then examined selectively at the reader's leisure and also narrowly targeted to a niche audience.
- Newspapers, it is preferably used for communicating swiftly and flexibly to a large audience.
- Outdoor advertising, it is used to provide rapidly digestible messages to passers-by or to offer something for a person to look at.
- Movie theaters, it is not a major medium, however it can be used to reach selected audiences, especially younger people.
- The Internet, According to Eastman et. al, (1999) it is a tool for accessing information and to widen the distribution of a companies image.

When delivering the message through these channels there are different ways of presenting it. The roles that can be used when creating advertising are humor, fear, guilt and sex (Shimp, 2003). When humor is used correct and in the right circumstances, it can be an extremely effective advertise technique. A complication of using humor in advertising might be that humorous appeals differ in effectiveness across demographic groups. The use of fear is especially effective as a tool of enhancing motivation. Since consumers in the 21st century live in a world where the threat of terrorism is present, advertisers have to pay attention and be careful when choosing this tool. The use of guilt is powerful since it motivates emotionally mature individuals to undertake responsible action leading to a reduction in the level of guilt. The use of sex in advertising appeals to something that people generally approach rather than avoid and sexual appeals in advertising are frequently used and with increasing explicitness (ibid).

Sex in advertising

Sexuality has for a long time, at least since the arrival of the Lutheran faith in the 17th century been associated with disgrace and guilt (Konsumtverket, 1994). However, during the last century the view towards sexuality has altered due to information and politics (ibid). According to Heller (2000) sex was not as common in mass media during the early twentieth century as it is today. But over the past one hundred years the human body has been exploited

in advertising and it has been provocatively used to sell products (ibid). Advertising research reveals that, sexual appeals are often attention getting, arousing, inducing and memorable (Heckler, Jackson & Reichert, 2001). The use of nudity and partially nude models has increased during the recent years and this sort of advertising is more common now than ever (Smith, Anton, Haugtvedt & Jadrich, 1995).

Sex in advertising is the use of sexual interest as a tool of persuasion to draw attention to a particular item for consumption and it is considered one of the most influential tools of marketers and especially advertisers (en.wikipedia.org). Post-advertising sales response studies have shown it can be very efficient for attracting instantaneous interest, holding that interest; and, in the context of that interest, introducing a product that in some way correlates with that interest (ibid).

Advertisement often touches the borderline of the forbidden, with the purpose of attracting attention (Konsumentverket, 1994). The edge for the standards is pushed all the time. In the beginning of the 20th century it could be enough to focus on a woman's calf under her skirt to pass the limit for what was tolerated, and at that time the advertising of today would surely have been considered pornography (ibid).

1.2 Problem Discussion

Sexual information, whether in the form of pictures, sounds or stories, has been shown to stir up predictable range of emotional responses within viewers (Heckler et. al, 2001). The authors' further state that sexual appeals can roughly be defined as messages, whether as brand information in advertising contexts or as persuasive appeals in social marketing contexts, which are linked with sexual information. There are different types of sexual information in advertising (Lambiase & Reichert, 2003). Lambiase and Reichert states five different types of sexual content identified in advertising, these five are; nudity, sexual behavior, physical attractiveness, sexual referents and sexual embeds¹.

According to Ramirez and Reichert (2000) another definition if an advertisement is considered to be sexual, are if these four characteristics are included; physical features of models such as clothing, physique, and general attractiveness, behavior/movement, contextual features such as camera effects, and intimacy between models.

The usage of sex appeal in advertisement

During the past two decades, the use of sexual appeals in print advertising has become more or less commonplace (Henthorne & LaTour, 1994). The existence of sexual appeals in advertising is prevalent in many parts of the world and it is often promoted in terms of fulfilling erotic fantasies (Gould, 1994). The author further claims that the ethics and morality of such appeals continues to be challenged, much as sexual norms and traditions in general have been contested all through world history. How the advertisements influence consumer judgments and reactions is unclear (Smith et. al, 1995). A review of existing research suggests complex relationships between the use of nudity in an advertisement and several measurements of advertising effectiveness (ibid). Research on the use of nudity in an

¹ Defined as referents or forms of sexual representation designed to be perceived subconsciously

advertisement, as an advertising appeal indicates that although nudity may increase attention it may decrease the attention toward the brand name (Belch, Severn, 1990).

Sexual appeals used in advertisements are of several types and consist of a variety of elements and they are frequently grounded in visual elements, such as eye-catching models, and may show varying degrees of nudity and suggestiveness (Gould, 1994). According to Gould (1994) such appeals may also include suggestive music. The author believes that reflection of these elements is vital because they may determine whether people think a sexual appeal is ethical or unethical.

Sex plays three major roles in advertising (Shimp, 2003). Firstly, sexual material acts as an initial attention lure and retain awareness for a longer period, often by featuring attractive models in challenging poses. Secondly, potential role is to improve recall of message points. The author continues to claim that sexual appeals create drastically better recall when advertising execution has a suitable relationship with the advertised product. Furthermore, a third role performed by sexual content in advertising is to evoke emotional responses, such as feelings of arousal and even lust. These reactions can boost an advertisement's persuasive impact, with the opposite effect the advertisement elicits negative feelings such as embarrassment, disgust, or uneasiness (ibid).

According to a study by Richins (1991) more than 50 per cent of respondents said that when they see clothing advertisements and cosmetic advertisements, they compare themselves with models in the advertisements about half the time or more frequently. After viewing beautiful models or highly attractive individuals, in for example television advertisements, viewers rate the attractiveness of more ordinary looking people lower than they would otherwise (ibid).

Cultural aspects in sexual appeal

The understanding of different religions and value systems are crucial when defining and sanctioning the different variables concerning sex and decency in advertising (Boddewyn, 1991). The author claims that in Moslem countries all kinds of body displays as well as direct and even indirect sexual references are considered to be indecent. Similar patterns can be found in conservative countries such as Ireland, Mexico and the Philippines (ibid).

When it comes to sex and advertising in different countries there are differences not only in appropriate roles for women and men, but also in consumer attitudes towards sex roles in advertising and in advertisers' use of sex role portrayals (Holancova & Orth, 2003).

Decency in sexual appeal

The entire issue of sex and what is considered decent and acceptable in a society is frequently changing (Henthorne & LaTour, 1994). On a global scale, the use of nudity in advertising has potentially harmful social consequences, characterizing people, especially women, as sexual objects (Smith et. al, 1995). Advertisements that are indecent and sexual, and treat women only as objects are a problem in many countries (Boddewyn, 1991). Women are sometimes described and portrayed as sexual objects in advertisements (Treise & Weigold, 1994). However advertisers are changing the way they target and promote women in advertisements (Choong, Tambyah & Wee, 1995). Most acknowledge that the advertising industry's growing sensitivity towards women can be traced to women's more influential positions in the business (ibid).

Sometimes people fail to encode many of the messages presented to them in advertisements (Bushman & Bonacci, 2002). The authors' further claim that the more attention individuals pay to a television program, the less attention they have for other stimuli.

Sexual appeal directed to youth

Sex and sexism in advertising justify further discussion, as marketers target young audiences with sexual appeals and marketers use sexual imagery to sell products to teenagers and young adults (Reichert, 2003). The effect of sexual content in advertising may be heightened for young adults, for whom sexual expression and experiences are still relatively new and therefore sexual content is often targeted to young adults (ibid). The author states that advertising creators are producing sexual appeals for products targeted to young adults, and media planners are placing these advertisements in media consumed by younger audiences.

Much of today's sexual advertising targets youth, yet little empirical work appear in existing research to show how the youth meet to such advertisement. Therefore, we deem it valuable to contribute to research through our present study.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of our thesis is to gain a better understanding of how young men and women are influenced by sexual appeal in advertising.

1.3.1 Research questions

With the help of three research questions outlined below we will try to reach the stated purpose of our thesis.

- How do young men and women define sexual appeal in advertising?
- How do young men react to sexual appeal in advertising?
- How do young women react to sexual appeal in advertising?

1.4 Demarcations

Since our time frame for this thesis is limited we are forced to do some demarcations. We will limit our study to investigating Swedish youth consumers in Norbottens län and how they define and react to sexual appeals in advertising.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present theories that are relevant to the research questions in chapter one. Firstly, previous studies concerning definitions of sexual appeals in advertising are described. Secondly, studies concerning perception of sex in advertising will be explored and finally the chapter will end with the conceptualization.

2.1 Definitions of sexual appeal in advertising

Lambiase and Reichert (2003) state that there are five different types of sexual information in advertising; Nudity, Sexual behavior, Psychological attractiveness, Sexual referents and Sexual embeds.

Nudity

Lambiase and Reichert (2003) state that displays of bodies constitute a crucial source of sexual information. When people were asked to identify the characteristics in advertising that contained nudity they referred to short skirts, tight tops, muscular arms, bikinis and lingerie. The term nudity does not imply that models are completely unclothed, a suggestive dress is often represented by open blouses with partially exposed cleavage, tight fitting clothing that highlight the body. Nudity is extremely rare in mainstream advertising and therefore it is often represented by side and back shots of the model, tub and shower scenes, and in some cases frontal nudity from the waist up (ibid).

Sexual Behavior

Lambiase and Reichert (2003) continue to state that although sexual content in mainstream advertising leaves out the sex act, it does include sexually provocative behavioral displays. Sexual behavior can be diversified into advertisements in two ways, as individual behavior or interpersonal interaction. In the first form models can behave sexually in advertisements by making eye contact, using different facial expression and inviting smiles with the viewer, flirting, and moving provocatively. In these ways the author further claims that models can communicate sexual interest with the viewer or simply try to bring out sexual arousal. Audiovisual characteristics of television commercials can emphasize sexual behavior by showing models moving and talking seductively to the viewers. The second form of sexual behavior involves two models or more engaging each other in sexual contact. The degree of explicitness of the encounter can vary from simple displays of affection, to inferred intercourse (ibid).

Physical Attractiveness

Lambiase and Reichert (2003) state that physical attractiveness among humans is a trait that is central for foreseeing interpersonal attraction and mate selection. Features of physical appearance, including facial beauty and complexion, play a great role in sexual interest and desire. For this reason, physically attractive models in advertising can be, and most often are, considered examples of sex in advertising. Determination of attractiveness levels is made by a comparison by mean ratings and this rating is considered from the model's hair, face, complexion, eye contact, physique and behavior (ibid).

Sexual Referents

Lambiase and Reichert (2003) state that images and words that refer to sex or activate sexual thoughts, can be considered examples of sex in advertising. According to the authors sexual referents in advertising can be defined as message elements, visual or verbal, that serve to bring forth or develop sexual thoughts. Sexual content takes form in the viewer's mind, not in the advertisement (ibid).

Sexual Embeds

According to Lambiase and Reichert (2003) sexual embeds are defined as referents or forms of sexual representation designed to be perceived subconsciously. Common types of embeds include objects that are shaped or positioned like genitalia and small hidden messages of naked people and body parts. Sexual embeds are integrated into images by advertisements creators and are planned to go undetected by those people who are viewing the advertisement (ibid).

In a study by Ramirez and Reichert (2000) the most important definition of what was perceived as sexual in an advertisement were physical characteristics. Physical characteristics can be divided into three subcategories; clothing such as half-naked and tight dresses, attractiveness, and body such as cleavage and chest. There were no differences between what men and women perceived as sexual concerning clothing, but men mentioned physical attractiveness as an important factor twice as often as women did. Overall men were a little bit more likely to define sexiness in this way (ibid).

The second most frequently definition of what was considered as sexual, involved movement (Ramirez & Reichert, 2000). According to the authors this category included behavior such as flirting, dancing and shaving, demeanor such as provocative, sassiness and fun loving, and voices such as singing, moans and groans. In this category there were no significant differences between the genders opinions both concerning the definition and the subcategories (ibid).

The third most frequent definition that characterizes sexiness was contextual features (Ramirez & Reichert, 2000). This category included photographic such as its fast-paced, camera roams over model, setting, music, lighting such as hazy and shadows, and shots in black and white. The authors state that there were no difference concerning the first four subcategories between the genders, but women were more likely to make reference to black and white as a contributing factor to sexual appeal.

When a couple is in deep embrace, which is the fourth most frequent definition of sexual appeal, a gender difference emerged (Ramirez & Reichert, 2000). Women were four times more likely to define sexiness in this way (ibid).

The definition that was least associated with sexiness was voyeurism/fantasy (Ramirez & Reichert, 2000). This category can be divided into four subcategories, voyeurism, projection, models wanting sex with viewer and fantasy-like. According to the authors there were no significant gender difference in this category and there were also few that identified this category as sexiness and therefore the author's state this category as not meaningful.

2.2 Sexual appeal in advertising: Young men and women's reactions

Sex and decency in advertising

Gould (1994) points out that an important distinction among sexual appeals is obscenity versus indecency. Obscene material is illegal and involves three conditions; it appeals to the prurient interest, it is patently offensive, and it lacks redeeming value. The author further claims that in general most advertisements with sexual appeals are not obscene because they fail these tests, however some advertisements may fit the category of indecency, which unlike obscenity is not illegal. In cultural rather than legal terms, advertising may be deemed indecent by various parties, including media managers, and excluded from being shown. The ultimate test of indecency for sexual appeal in advertising, as for sexually oriented materials of all sorts, is in the eye of the beholder.

Boddewyn (1991) states that among the main constants and variables bearing on the issue, religion and other value systems are crucial in defining and sanctioning sex and decency in advertising. Standards and definitions vary among countries, but the standards may also be different within the same country. For example, Canadian commercials about feminine-hygiene items generated much opposition in the English part of the country, while French Canadians in the country were less concerned about this issue (ibid).

Governmental intervention is advocated by those who mistrust other forms of social control and/or want to translate social causes into laws (Boddewyn, 1991). Regulation from governmental authorities is also important when self-regulation is absent or underdeveloped and when the local culture feels threatened by foreign messages, for example in Malaysia an advertising code states that "women should not be made the principal object of an advertisement, and they should not be used to attract sales of a product unless it has relevance to women" (ibid). In Sweden there is an organ against sexual discrimination in advertising, ERK Näringslivets Etiska råd mot könsdiskriminerande reklam (Etiska rådet, 2004).

The organization uses three criteria's if advertising is considered to be sexual discriminated:

- Advertising that describes women or men as pure sex objects.
- Advertising that describes women or men in a derogatory manner.
- Advertising that in some matter is derogatory and obvious is sexual discriminated for men or women.

Boddewyn (1991) states that sex and decency in advertising offers a difficult challenge to advertising practitioners and to those who control advertising. On the one hand, the author states that sexual advertisements help sell some products and do not necessarily offend target audiences. Conversely, sexual advertisements can turn people against particular products and against advertising in general, thereby threaten the intended impact or message the advertisement intentionally had. Problems and solutions related to sex and decency in advertising vary considerably around the world. Boddewyn (1991) claims that there are five different practices that should be taken into consideration before launching an advertisements campaign both domestic and internationally, to make sure it is decent and not to sexual:

1. Identify target audiences and appropriate media more carefully in order to minimize antagonizing non-users of the products.

2. Educate employees about the relevant rules, and observe that agencies and media know and apply them too.
3. Test the advertising in terms of sex and decency reactions, and check them in advance with the media, self-regulatory bodies and other relevant advisors.
4. Defend the freedom to advertise legal products, lobby against legal restrictions, and participate in self-regulation in order to reduce the dangers associated with mandatory controls.
5. Consider marketing particular products and services as well as abandoning advertising approaches based on sex and other objectionable appeals. This course of action, however, should be a matter of choice rather than an obligation (Adapted from Boddewyn, 1991)

Arousal and response in the context of sexual advertisement stimuli

Lambiase and Reichert (2003) claim that men and women perceive sexual appeals in advertisement differently. Women reacted tenser than men did when being showed a print advertisement showing explicit female nudity. When men viewed the print advertisement, they reacted with energy arousal instead of tension arousal (ibid).

In a study that was conducted, one group of participants was exposed to an advertisement with nude erotic appeal while a second group was shown an advertisement with semi erotic appeal (Lambiase & Reichert, 2003). The advertisement the participants in the two groups were shown was basically the same, showing a female model sitting on the beach, but in the semi nude advertisement the woman was partially obscured by a perfume bottle. The attitudes of the two groups towards the brand were then evaluated. The outcome of the experiment was that the influences of the advertisement with nude erotic appeal were negatively influencing the attitude toward the brand. In contrast the group that was showed the semi nude advertisement displayed a positive association toward the brand (ibid). Another conclusion made by the authors is that these results clearly undermine the notion that sex sells, and this is especially true when it comes to female respondents.

Comparison and the idealized images of advertising

In a study Richins (1991) stated four hypotheses to answer the question of comparison with advertisements and the idealized images of advertising:

- Young adult females compare their level of attractiveness with that of models in advertisements targeted toward them.
- Exposure to advertising containing idealized images of physical attractiveness will, at least temporarily, lower female viewer's satisfaction with their own physical attractiveness.
- Exposure to advertising with idealized images of physical attractiveness will at least temporarily raise female viewers' comparison standard for physical attractiveness.
- Exposure to advertising with idealized images of physical attractiveness will at least temporarily lower female viewers' self perceptions of physical attractiveness.

To answer hypothesis one Richins (1991) conducted two focus group interviews. In the study the respondents were shown some advertisements, half the advertisements involved facial close-ups of attractive models, and the other half included full-body images of models in revealing sportswear. The respondents looked at one advertisement at a time, and after each

advertisement they wrote down their thoughts about the advertisement. The result of the study was that young adult females do compare themselves with models in advertising. The author states that the comparisons described by the participants were both general and specific. The initial reaction among all participants was that they envied the models because of their beauty. Concerning the specific comparison, it involved females who were particularly dissatisfied with one of their body parts. According to the author they focus on that part of the model's body, looking for reassurance that their own body part is not that bad. Some participants also expressed optimism and motivation, particularly if some characteristics of the model were consistent with the viewer's self-perception (ibid).

The method used to examine hypothesis two was that students were exposed to magazine advertisement with highly attractive models or to advertisements that contained no models (Richins, 1991). The result of the study showed that females exposed to advertisements with attractive models were less satisfied with their appearance than females exposed to advertisements without models (ibid).

According to Richins (1991) the same method was used for testing hypotheses three and four. But in hypothesis three the respondents were also supposed to rate photographs of female college students previously judged to be average in physical attractiveness. The result of the study was that females exposed to advertisements with attractive models rated the photographs lower than females exposed to advertisements without models (ibid).

To test hypothesis four female students were supposed to rate their own attractiveness after viewing the advertisements (Richins, 1991). According to the author there were no difference afterwards between the group that had looked on advertisements with attractive models and the group that had looked on the advertisements without models concerning self-rated attractiveness.

Sexual appeals perceived by men and women in advertising

Treise and Weigold (1994) argue that although it is often believed that sex sells, it sells at the consequence of controversy. That statement was supported by the study made by the authors. The sample responses showed that a large number of consumers' are troubled by the use of sexual appeals in advertising. Around half of the respondents in the study felt that tastefully done there is nothing wrong with using sexual advertisements to sell some kinds of products. A clear majority of the respondents believed that there was too much sex in advertising. More than half of the respondents in Treise and Weigold's (1994) study felt that nudity in advertising is not appropriate for general interest in magazines, almost as high figure of the respondents thought that sexual advertisements play a role in a teenager's decision to become sexually active. This last finding is interesting, given the importance of current problems; teenage sexuality, pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases including AIDS (ibid).

Henthorne and La Tour (1994) formulate two hypotheses concerning sexual appeals in advertisements, and how people react towards that advertising. The two hypotheses are:

- An advertisement that contains a strong sexual appeal will result in a significantly less favorable response on moral philosophical ethical dimensions than an advertisement that contains a mild sexual appeal.
- An advertisement that contains a strong sexual appeal will result in significantly less favorable attitude toward the advertisement, attitude toward the brand and purchase intention than an advertisement that contains a mild sexual appeal.

The first hypothesis generated support from the test the authors did. The use of a highly sexual theme in a print advertisement was not as well received and was viewed as less ethically “correct” than use of a mild sexual version of the advertisement. The authors also state from the test result that both men and women expressed serious ethical concerns about the use of the strong sexual advertisement. As same as hypothesis one, hypothesis two was also supported in the test made by the authors. The test results showed that people in the test group were significantly more negative towards the advertisement, the brand, and the purchase intention if the advertisement contained a strong sexual appeal (ibid).

Heckler et. al, (2001) formulate four hypotheses concerning sexual appeals in advertisements. These four hypotheses are:

- If employed appropriately, sexual appeals will stimulate more positive advertisement execution-related thoughts than will nonsexual appeals.
- There will be no difference in simple message thoughts for advertisements with sexual appeals compared with nonsexual appeals.
- Sexual appeals will stimulate less argument elaboration than will nonsexual appeals.
- Sexual appeals incorporated within social marketing messages will result in a greater level of agreement with the advocated position than will nonsexual appeals.

The first hypothesis was supported by the findings from the test results (Heckler et. al, 2001). Advertisements with sexual appeals produced more positive thoughts about the implementation of the advertisement than did nonsexual appeals. The authors also concluded that the second hypothesis was supported from the test results. It did not make any difference, regarding the response from the advertisement if it only was a simple message that was illustrated, if this advertisement contained sexual appeals or nonsexual appeals. As the two first hypotheses, the third hypothesis the authors stated was supported from the test results as well. Advertisements with sexual appeals would stimulate fewer emotional responses toward the message than would nonsexual appeals. The final hypothesis the authors formulated was supported from the test results and the level of agreement with the advocated position was higher for advertisements with sexual appeals than for those with nonsexual appeals.

Effects of sexual appeal and information on processing and communication effectiveness

In a study by Belch and Severn (1990) the communication effectiveness of visually explicit sexual stimuli, in general, and in combination with different levels of verbal information was examined. In addition to examining the impact of these factors on traditional effectiveness measures such as recall, brand attitudes, attitude toward the message, and purchase intention, the authors also include cognitive response measures as a way of better understanding the processing of sexual and non-sexual advertising appeals. To answer these questions the authors stated four hypotheses, which were:

- Use of sexually explicit visual appeal will result in lower brand recall and lower copy point recall than will use of a non-sexual appeal. This effect will be moderated by the amount of information provide by the advertisement.
- Use of a sexually explicit visual appeal will result in fewer evaluative thoughts regarding the product and/or message than will use of a non-sexual appeal. However, this effect will be moderated by information level, as high information advertisements make available more material for product message-related processing.

- Use of a sexually explicit visual appeal will result in more advertising execution-related thoughts than will use of a nonsexual appeal
- Use of a sexually explicit visual appeal will result in a more favorable attitude toward the advertisement, brand attitudes and purchase intentions. In addition, brand attitudes and purchase intention will vary as a function of attitude toward the advertisement.

To test the hypotheses Belch and Severn (1990) used a test group of 180 people. Concerning hypothesis one, brand name recall was the highest (82 per cent) in the case where the advertisement showed to the respondents included high-sex and high information conditions (ibid). The lowest score (64 per cent) for brand recall is when the advertisement contained high-sex and low-information (Belch & Severn, 1990). The authors claim that overall, the ability to recall a brand name appears to be more a function of the information level of the advertisement than of its sexual explicitness. In this case the results did not support the hypothesis.

Belch and Severn (1990) tested if the use of sexually explicit visual appeal would result in fewer evaluative thoughts regarding the product and/or message. The authors found out that the use of sexually explicit appeals decrease the amount of product-message-related thinking engaged in by message recipients.

When testing if the use of sexually explicit visual appeal would result in more advertising execution-related thoughts the findings were that the total number of advertisement execution-related thoughts was significantly higher in the sexual appeal than in non sex conditions (Belch & Severn, 1990).

When the authors tested hypothesis four they found out that the use of visual sexual appeal resulted in a more favorable attitude toward the advertisement and greater purchase intentions, however it did not result in more favorable brand attitude.

The response to nudity in advertising by men and women

Smith et. al, (1995) have studied how partially nude models in advertising influence consumers. The authors refer to previous studies, were a common finding is that sexual stimuli in advertising draw attention away from brand information and people that viewed the advertisement will have it more difficult to remember the brand due to sexual content in the advertisement. However the authors continue to state that nudity or sexual content in an advertisement increases consumers arousal. Increased arousal may be partially responsible for consumers increased recognition of advertisements containing sexual content. In other words Smith et. al, (1995) state that sexual content or nudity in advertising increases recognition of the specific advertisement, but at the same time it decreases the memory of the brand. The authors further states that men were more receptive than women to advertisements containing female nudity, but women were more favorable than men were towards an advertisement containing a nude male.

Smith et. al, (1995) state that previous research has identified important variables that support when nudity will be effective and when it will be ineffective in advertising. In particular it shows that nudity should be avoided in situation where it is likely to elicit negative arousal, such as when it is used for an inappropriate product. However the authors claims that nudity works better for products like, alcoholic beverages and fragrances, the main reason for this is that sexual appeals appeal some products better than others.

Although perhaps all consumers will be aroused by advertisements containing sexual stimuli, it is important to remember that not all arousal is beneficial to the advertiser (Smith et. al, 1995). The authors conclude that there were no direct link between arousal and actual consumer behavior in this study, and it is conceivable that the negative reactions some consumers have to nudity in advertisements will not translate into changes in their consumption patterns.

2.3 Conceptualization

In order to be able to answer our three research questions that were stated at the end of chapter one, we have to explain what we will collect our data on. After we reviewed previous studies within our area, we have obtained two things; a broader knowledge of the area we investigated and what types of concepts that we investigated. Among the theories that we presented, we will choose the most relevant for our research. This process is known as conceptualization or “building a conceptual framework”. Miles and Huberman (1994) define the conceptual framework as something that explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied. This section will start by outlining concepts regarding our research question one, which is how sexual appeals in advertising can be defined by the youth. The second and third research question deals with how young men and women perceive sex in advertising.

2.3.1 Definitions of sexual appeals in advertising

On the question of definition of sexual appeals in advertising, the following concepts will be looked at and compared to the collected data:

- *There are five different types of sexual information in advertising; nudity, sexual behavior, psychical attractiveness, sexual referents and sexual embeds (Lambiase & Reichert, 2003). All will be used later on except for sexual embeds.*
- *Psychical characteristics are the definition that is perceived most as sexual in an advertisement, these characteristics can be divided into three sub-categories; clothing, attractiveness and body. Other definitions on sexual appeals in advertising can be, sexual movement, contextual features (such as music, lighting and setting), couple in deep embrace and voyeur/fantasy (Ramirez & Reichert, 2000).*

2.3.2 Young men and women's reactions to sexual appeal in advertising

On the question of how young men and women react to sexual appeal in advertising, the following concepts will be looked at and compared to the collected data. First the concepts of decency, arousal and response in the context of sexual advertisement stimuli are presented:

- *The ethical council in Sweden (2004) defines an advertisement being to sexual by three different criteria's:*
 - *advertising that describe women or men as pure sex objects.*
 - *advertising that describes women or men in a derogatory manner.*
 - *advertising that in some matter is derogatory, and obvious is sexual discriminated for men or women.*
- *An important distinction among sexual appeals is obscenity versus indecency. Obscenity material is illegal, indecency for sexual appeal in advertising is in the eye of the beholder (Gould, 1994).*
- *Men and women perceive sexual appeals in advertisement differently. Women react tenser then men when being showed a print advertisement showing explicit female nudity. Men react with energy arousal instead of tension arousal (Lambiase & Reichert, 2003).*
- *Women are more favorable than men towards an advertisement containing a nude male (Smith et. al, 1995).*
- *Advertisements with nude erotic appeal are negatively influencing the attitude toward the brand (Lambiase & Reichert, 2003).*
- *A large number of consumers are troubled by the use of sexual appeals in advertising, but if tastefully done it is nothing wrong (Treise & Weigold, 1994).*

Another issue of how young women perceive advertising is the social comparison and the idealized images of advertising. This topic is discussed by Richins (1991) and an overview of her concepts is presented below:

- *Young adult females compare their level of attractiveness with that of models in advertisements targeted toward them, they tend to envy the models because of their beauty*
- *Exposure to advertising with idealized images of physical attractiveness lower, at least temporarily, young adult women's satisfaction and self perception of their own physical attractiveness*
- *Exposure to advertising with idealized images of physical attractiveness will raise young female's comparison standard for physical attractiveness*

These theories will also be compared with young men even though Richins study was conducted on young women. The reason for this is that there is no previous research on this topic involving men.

Based on the above, we summarized our conceptual framework in figure 2.1 on the following page.

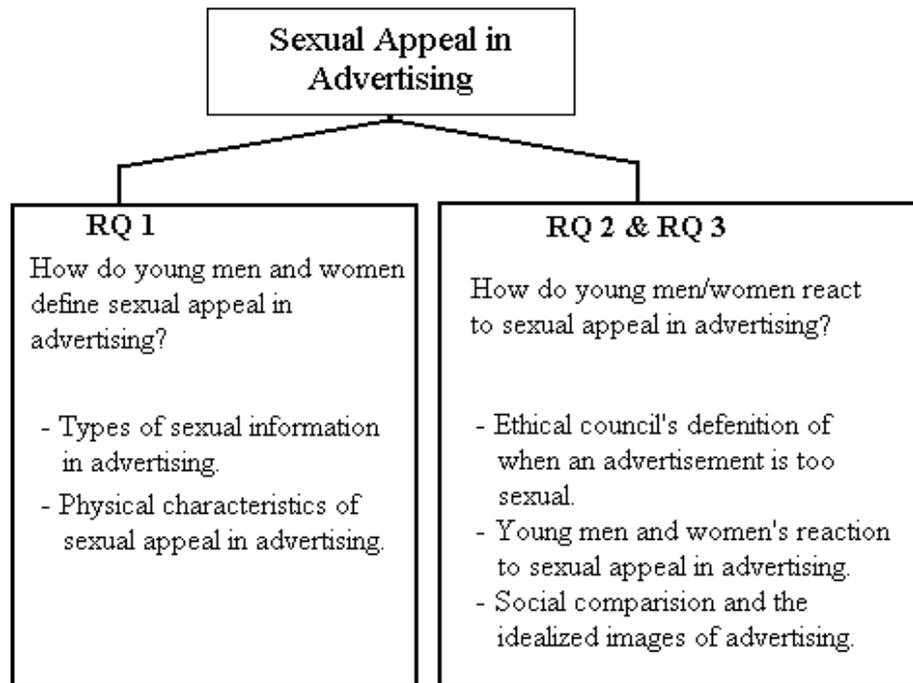


Figure 2.1: Conceptual frame of reference

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodology chapter will present how the data was collected in order to find the answers to the research questions and in that way fulfill the purpose of our thesis. The chapter starts by stating the research purpose. It continues by presenting the research approach and the research strategy used. After that, a presentation of how the data collection was carried out and how the sampling was conducted follows. Finally the choice of general analytical strategy is explained and the quality standards are evaluated.

3.1 Research Purpose

The purpose with the research is to state what is to be accomplished by conducting research and how the results of the research can be used (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2001). According to Yin (2003), research can be classified as exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. It is also possible according to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2000) to have more than one purpose.

Exploratory studies are valuable means of finding out, what is happening, to look for new insights, to ask questions and to evaluate phenomena in a new light (Saunders et. al, 2000). According to the authors' exploratory research is a particularly useful approach if you expect to clarify the understanding of a problem. There are three principal ways of conducting exploratory research (ibid):

- A search of the literature
- Talking to experts in the subject
- Conducting focus group interviews

The objective of descriptive research is to accurately portray a profile of persons, situations or events (Saunders et. al, 2000). According to Eriksson and Wiedersheim-Paul (2001) descriptive research involves the choice of perspective, aspects, level, terms, and concepts. It is also necessary to observe, register, systematize, classify, and interpret (ibid). The authors further state that a good description is often a necessary foundation when the researcher wants to explain, understand, predict, and/or decide.

Studies which establish casual relationships among variables may be termed explanatory studies (Saunders et. al, 2000). To explain means to analyze cause-effect relationships (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2001). It has to be explained what causes produce what effects (ibid). The emphasis is on studying a situation or a problem in order to explain the relationship between different variables (Saunders et. al, 2000).

The research purpose and questions of our thesis indicate that initially our thesis is exploratory. In the beginning it is aiming to formulate and precise problems, to give us as researchers an orientation in the question to be investigated. When the data is analyzed it becomes descriptive, as we document, register, and identify the findings of our research. The reason for doing this is to gain a better understanding of the Swedish youth perception of sex in advertising, which is the purpose of our study. Finally, when answering the research

questions in the final chapter it will become slightly explanatory, though a quantitative approach and a larger sample would have ascertained this to a greater degree.

3.2 Research Approach

Studies can be divided into qualitative and quantitative research, based on the researcher's type of data. Quantitative research involves numerical data or contained data that usefully can be quantified (Saunders et. al, 2000). It could range from simple counts such as the frequency of occurrences, to more complex data such as test scores or prices (ibid).

The conclusions of qualitative research are based on non-quantifiable data, such as attitudes, values or perceptions (Lundahl & Skärvad, 1992). Qualitative research is characterized by the opportunity to explore a subject in as real as possible (Saunders et. al, 2000). The authors further state that the nature of qualitative data has implications for both its collection and its analysis. To be able to capture the richness and fullness associated with qualitative data it cannot be collected in a standardized way, like quantitative data (ibid). Instead the purpose with the qualitative approach is to gain a deeper understanding of the studied area (Holme & Solvang, 1991).

The choice of approach in our thesis will be based on the purpose of our research. We find that it is of great importance to reach a closer contact with our studied objects in order to gain a better understanding of our stated purpose in chapter one. Since we are studying people's attitudes and perceptions towards different advertisements that we will show, the choice fell on a qualitative approach for our thesis.

3.3 Research strategy

The selection of research strategy depends on three conditions (Yin, 2003). These three conditions are; the type of research questions posed, the control an investigator has over actual behavioral events, and the focus on contemporary in contrast to historical phenomenon. Yin (2003) states that there are five primary strategies in the field of social sciences: experiment, survey, archival analysis, history and case study. The relation between the three conditions and the five different research strategies can be found in the Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Relevant situations for different research strategies

Strategy	Form of Research Question	Requires Control of Behavioral Events?	Focus on Contemporary Events?
Experiment	how, why?	Yes	Yes
Survey	who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes
Archival Analysis	who, what, where, how many, how much?	No	Yes/No
History	how, why?	No	No
Case Study	how, why?	No	Yes

Source: Yin (2003, p. 5)

The most important condition for differentiating between the various research strategies is to identify the type of research question being asked (Yin, 2003). The most common types of questions are formulated as “who,” “what,” “where,” “how,” “why,” (ibid). Yin (2003) claims that, in general “what”-questions may either be exploratory, where all strategies can be used or about prevalence, in which surveys or the analysis of archival records are favored. “How” and “why”-questions are likely to be more suitable in case studies, experiments or histories (ibid).

As the research questions in this study is based on “how” questions, we will have no control over the actual behavioral events and our focus on the study will be on a contemporary event. The choice we have is either to conduct a survey or a case study (or studies). As previous stated in our research we will have a qualitative approach, a survey is not appropriate. Therefore, our choice of research strategy is to work with case studies. In addition, the qualitative approach requires a more in-depth understanding of our purpose, which can be best attained by adopting this strategy. The characteristic for a case study is that it involves a large amount of details, which a survey usually not are capable of (Denscombe, 2000).

3.4 Data Collection

When collecting data for the research it can be either primary (collected for the first time) and/or secondary (information that already exists) data. It is often more convenient to use secondary data in the beginning of the study (Eriksson & Wiedersheim-Paul, 2001).

According to Yin (2003) evidence for case studies can be collected in six different ways; documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. No single source has complete advantage over the others (ibid).

A good case study wants to use as many sources as possible (Yin, 2003). According to Yin (2003) a major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use several different sources of evidence. This method of using different data collection methods within one study is called triangulation (Saunders et. al, 2000). The reason why using triangulation is to ensure that the data is telling you what you think it is telling you (ibid).

Of the six data collection methods available we will use four of them. The ones we will not use are *archival records* and *physical artifacts*. Archival records is characterized as precise and quantitative (Yin, 2003). Since this study is qualitative this method is not suitable for this study. Concerning physical artifacts is described as insightful when it comes to cultural features and technological operations (ibid). Our study is focused on attitudinal questions and therefore the use of physical artifacts is not appropriate for our thesis.

The data collection methods that will be used for this study are *interviews*, *documentation*, and *observations*. The documentation will be our secondary data and observations will function as our primary data. The major source for our primary data collection will however be interviews. The reason why we chose interviews is because of its strength to focus directly on the topic of the case study (Yin, 2003). The potential disadvantages with an interview are that it can be biased due to poorly constructed questionnaires and also there is a risk for reflexivity, where the interviewed person tells the interviewer what she/he wants to hear (ibid).

When conducting the interview there are three different methods to choose from according to Yin (2003). These are *open-ended*, *focused*, or *structural interview* (ibid). Concerning open-ended interviews Yin (2003) states that there is the possibility to ask key respondents about the facts of a specific matter as well as their opinions about certain events. In focused interviews the respondent is interviewed for a short period of time (Yin, 2003). The interviews may still be open-ended and assume a conversational manner, but it is more likely to follow a certain set of questions (ibid). The third method of interview, survey, is built on structural questions, along the lines of a formal survey (Yin, 2003). The structural interview mainly produces quantitative data (ibid).

The type of interview that is used for this thesis is the focused interview. We will use an interview guide (Appendix 1) which enables discussion to questions related to the conceptual framework presented in chapter two. The focused interview will be used to verify or dismiss the theories of this study. There are different ways of how a focused interview can be done. According to Lundahl and Skärvad (1992) a focused interview can generally be conducted in person or by telephone. Telephone interviews are less costly and also less time consuming which makes them useful when the interviewed is far away, however personal interviews can be longer and involve much more complex questions (ibid). The personal contact during a personal interview also enables the interviewer to receive more feedback from the respondent(s) (ibid). The type of focused interview used for this thesis will be focus group and it will be conducted through the use of two focus group interview sessions.

Focus group consists of an interviewer or moderator and six to ten participants who discuss a single topic (Zikmund, 2000 and Cooper & Schindler, 2001). The reason for using six to ten people in the focus group is if the group is too small, one or two members may intimidate the others while groups that are too large may not permit participation from each group member (Zikmund, 2000). The moderator starts the interview by introducing the topic and encourages the group to participate in the discussion (Zikmund, 2000). Ideally, the discussion continues on the group's initiative (ibid). Our aim is to have at least six people in each group.

The goal of the focus group is to give the researchers as much information as possible about how people regard the topic of interest (Hair, Bush & Ortinaw, 2000). Focus group research is not restricted to just asking and answering questions posed by an interviewer (ibid). The success of a focus group relies heavily on the group dynamics, the willingness of group members to interact in the discussion, and the moderator's ability to keep the discussion on the right track (Hair et. al, 2000). The job of the moderator is to make sure that everybody gets the chance to speak (Zikmund, 2000). A focus group can also be run by a moderator team (Mitchell & Branigan, 2000). In that case the principal moderator is concerned with facilitating the discussion, keeping conversation flowing and taking a few notes (ibid). The assistant moderator takes more comprehensive notes, operates the recording equipment, and deals with other factors such as noise distraction and latecomers (ibid).

In order to map out possible strengths and weaknesses with focus group interviews we have put them together in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Focus group interviews: Strengths and weaknesses

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - it stimulates ideas, thoughts and feelings that may not be raised in one to one interviews. - ability to quickly and inexpensively grasp the core issues of a topic. - observe reactions to the research questions in an open ended group setting. - participants respond in their own words, rather than being forced into a formalized method, and they can freely react to each other's responses. - spontaneous and unrestricted. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hard to generalize the result, because it lacks representativeness with regard to the target population. - possibility of moderator interpretation bias which can reduce the credibility and trustworthiness of the data. - the data's are more difficult and subjective to analyze. - less likely than interviews to produce quantitative data.

source: Adapted from Hair et. al, (2000), Cooper, & Schindler (2001) and Sullivan (2001)

The reason why we have chosen to work with focus group interviews is because it allows people to discuss their true feelings, anxieties and frustrations about a specific topic. Also participants can respond in their own words and can freely react to each other's responses. This will help us to fulfill the stated purpose of our thesis.

The secondary data for this study is based on documentation in the form of print advertisements and television advertisements that will be shown to the participants in the focus groups in order to stimulate discussion. As these advertisements are produced by someone else and for a different purpose, the documentation is regarded as secondary data.

According to Yin (2003) an opportunity for direct observations is created when making a field visit to a case study. When conducting participant-observations the observer is not only passive, instead he may participate in the discussion (ibid). Both direct observations and participant-observations will be used when collecting primary data. The assistant moderator will observe the focus group and take notes, which can be referred to as direct observations. The principal moderator will guide the discussion and can therefore be seen as a participant-observer. After the focus group interviews the two moderators will view the videotapes of the session, which can be seen as a second form of direct observation.

3.5 Sample selection

In this section we explain how we went along when sampling respondents for the focus group interviews, as well as the advertisements, both television and magazines, shown during the focus group session.

3.5.1 Choice of respondents

We have chosen Swedish students at a high school in central Luleå as respondents. The choice of respondents is based on our own preferences. We believe that this target group is interesting, because not much research in the area of our topic has been conducted on that group of people. Furthermore, that group of people is not fully mature yet when it comes to sex, and they are also in an age where advertising easily influences them.

Hair et. al, (2000) state that a homogenous focus group in which participants are aware of their common factors and feel comfortable with each other is likely to create more natural and relaxed group environment than having a heterogeneous group. This type of homogeneous group tends to promote more intense discussion and freer interaction (Cooper & Schindler, 2001). Many people can feel intimidated or uncertain to voice their opinions, feelings, or suggestions to strangers (Hair et. al, 2000). Zikmund (2000) states that if a different type of people is used, for example men and women, they can be divided into two focus groups and in that way, a diverse sample can be obtained even though each group is homogenous. Based on these facts we will bring people together that are comfortable to discuss with each other. Another aspect for that, is that the topic somewhat tend to be sensitive and therefore it is of importance that the students know each other and can speak freely in the focus group.

3.5.2 Choice of documentation

We have chosen to show five print advertisements from different magazines and three television advertisements. All these advertisements we perceive as sexual. The purpose of showing these advertisements is to stimulate the focus groups' discussion.

3.6 Data Analysis

Yin (2003) states that each case study should start with a general analytical strategy. A strategy will help to treat the evidence fairly, produce compelling analytic conclusions, and also rule out possible alternative interpretations (ibid). According to Yin (2003) there are three different preferable analytical strategies;

- *Relying on theoretical propositions*, Yin (2003) states that this is the most preferred strategy. The researcher collects data with the research questions and previous studies as basis (ibid).
- *Thinking about rival explanations*, especially useful when doing case study evaluations (Yin, 2003). This strategy tries to define and test rival explanations (ibid).
- *Developing a case description*, according to Yin (2003) this means that the researcher uses a descriptive way to present the data, but it is not seen as favorable and should be used only when there is little or no previous research.

After choosing one of the three strategies, and the data has been collected, the researcher can start to work through the data in an analytical manner (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Miles and Huberman (1994) the qualitative analysis consists of three simultaneously occurring flows of activities:

- *Data reduction*, the reason for making this is to make the data sharp, sorted, focused, discarded, and organized so that the researcher can draw and verify conclusions (ibid). At this phase a within-case analysis is also often conducted in order to compare the collected data with the theories used (ibid).
- *Data display*, in this phase the researcher, according to Miles and Huberman (1994), takes the reduced data and displays it in an organized and compressed way in order to make it easier to draw conclusions.
- *Conclusion drawing and verification*, at this phase the researcher begins to decide what things mean by noting regularities, patterns, explanations, possible configurations, causal flows, and propositions (ibid). However these findings should be held lightly and some skepticism should be maintained (ibid).

This thesis will rely on the theoretical propositions that provided the material for the first two chapters. The analysis of this thesis will follow the three steps suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994).

3.7 Validity and Reliability

When conducting empirical studies it is important that questions and data collections are well prepared in order to avoid errors and to increase the quality of the research. Two important concepts when it comes to this are validity and reliability. Validity is a measure instrument's ability to measure what it is supposed to measure (Wiedersheim-Paul & Eriksson, 2001). Validity is the most important requirement on a measuring instrument (ibid). Reliability refers to that if a later researcher should follow the same procedures as described by an earlier researcher the conclusions and findings should be the same (Yin, 2003). To judge the quality of an empirical research four tests can be used (ibid). These will be presented in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Case study tactics for four design tests

Tests	Case Study Tactic	Phase of Research in Which Tactic Occurs
Construct Validity	- Use multiple sources of evidence - Establish chain of evidence - Have key informants review draft case study report	- data collection - data collection - composition
Internal Validity	- Do pattern-matching - Do explanation-building - Address rival explanations - Use logic models	- data analysis - data analysis - data analysis - data analysis
External Validity	- Use theory in single case studies - Use replication logic in multiple-case studies	- research design - research design
Reliability	- Use case study protocol - Develop case study database	- data collection - data collection

Source: Yin, 2003, p. 34.

Construct validity means to establish correct operational measures for the concepts being studied (Yin, 2003). As seen in table 3.4 there are three ways to increase construct validity; the use of multiple sources, establish chain of evidence, and having key informants review a draft of the case study report. To gain multiple sources of evidence we will use triangulation.

These sources will be; focus groups, documentation, and observations. Furthermore we let other people read the interview guide before the focus group interview was conducted, which increases the construct validity. In addition to this we also videotaped the focus group sessions while taking notes in order to increase construct validity even more. However the focus group interviews were conducted in Swedish and later were translated into English which slightly decreases the validity.

Internal validity is only a concern in casual or explanatory case studies (Yin, 2003). Due to this, it is mostly applicable at the end of our study where conclusion is drawn. The internal validity in our thesis is strengthened by the use of pattern-matching where the empirical based pattern is compared with the conceptual theories.

External validity deals with the problem of knowing if the case study results are generalizable beyond the case study results (Yin, 2003). Since we conduct focus group interviews, which has the weakness that the results are not generalizable as stated in Table 3.3, the risk is that the external validity is low. This due to that it would be very difficult to replicate the case study by collecting data through two focus groups in the exact same way as we have.

Concerning the problem of *reliability* we tried to increase it by avoiding leading and subjective questions in our focus group interviews. The same question guide will also be used for both focus groups. In addition to this we also kept all notes and videotapes from the interview in order to develop a case study database. However, it is hard to achieve the same results for another researcher because people's perceptions and views may change over the time.

4 EMPIRICAL DATA

This chapter will present the data collected, in order to answer the research questions. The data collection was conducted through two focus group sessions. The two focus group sessions will be presented separately, starting with male students, followed by female students. The interviews will follow the order of the conceptual framework. The topics in the interview guide will be used as sub-headings in this chapter in order to help the reader understand the way in which respondents answered the questions.

4.1 Interview one: Young men

Our case study was conducted through two focus group interviews, one group including women and one group including men. In the first interview eight students from the high school Örnén were selected. All the participants were students at the Leadership program. The male students participating in the focus group interview were born in 1985. The interview was conducted in a classroom at Örnén high school. Before the interview took place refreshments were served in the form of soda and ballerina biscuits. The reason for this was to make the participants relax and while they were eating we presented the purpose of our study, and how the focus group session would be carried out. The individuals participating were told that the aim of this session was not to make them agree upon one solution, but to bring forward their individual perceptions and attitudes. The focus group interview started with us showing them three television advertisements and five magazine advertisements (appendix 2 – 6). The reason for doing this was to awaken their minds in order to improve the forthcoming discussion.

4.1.1 Young men define sexual appeal in advertising

Initially the male students claimed that sex sells. The major part of the group stated that if an advertisement is to be considered of sexual content the women had to have a physical attraction that was way over the average looking woman. The appearance of the people in the advertisement was also of great importance if it was considered to be sexual. One respondent said:

“Sex is common nowadays, companies should think of parodying sex in advertisements.”

Models in advertisements based on sexual appeal are often displayed nude or partially nude

The general thoughts from the group were that it is common with nudity in advertisements. Some of the comments to this topic were:

“Over the past years it has been more common with nudity in advertisements.”

“People do not feel good about all the nudity.”

One respondent stated “I do not react to it, because it is very common these days with all the nudity in the advertisements.”

With that statement almost all the people in the group agreed.

Models in advertisements are exceptionally good looking

This statement divided the group. Some of them commented directly with yes, while others said no, and some said something in between. Some of the comments were:

“If it is average looking people, the advertisement will not be granted that much attention.”

“When over-weighted people are half-naked you do not associate the advertisement with sex.”

“I have not seen a single man or woman in an advertisement that is unattractive.”

“Companies only want one thing and that is to sell their products. Therefore they use attractive models.”

Images and words in advertisement can have sexual appeal

The respondents all agreed on that images and words can make an advertisement sexual. Furthermore one respondent claimed:

“If the atmosphere is sensual, the people do not have to be naked or half-naked in the advertisement for it to be considered sexual.” The majority of the group agreed with yes or with a nod on that statement.

Movement in advertisements can have sexual appeal

Approximately half the group replied this statement with yes and the other half did not agree. Some comments were:

“It is of great importance that the movement is sexual, if the advertisement is considered to be sexual.”

“It means a lot how they move.”

“Stick out your breasts and sway your backside, then it is sexual.”

“If you eat an ice-cream sloppy instead of sensual it is not sexual.”

The advertisements are sexual due to light, music and setting

The respondents did not comment much about this, however some statements were made:

“Music arouses a lot of feelings.”

“If the lighting is softened, I think it can be sexual.”

“If a room is decorated nice and neatly...”

4.1.2 Young men’s reactions to sexual appeal in advertising

There is too much sex in advertising and is there a limit where it becomes indecent

This was a statement that caused a lot of discussion. In general the group stated that there was too much sex in advertising. Here are some comments from the discussion:

“Women and men get complex when watching advertisement with sex.”

“11-12 years old children obtain a wrong picture.”

“It is okay if the people are half-naked, but not if they are totally naked.”

“People have to understand that it is not for real, you must have perspective.”

“If the advertisement does not suit to the product, then there is too much sex.”

Advertisements are discriminating to both men and women

The respondents pointed out really clearly that advertisement could be discriminated to both men and women. One respondent claimed:

“It is all about give and take.” and other respondents agreed on that. Other comments were:

“Guys are supposed to have well-trained stomachs, and women are supposed to have a thin body and big breasts.”

“Girls shall be fit.”

“I do not care anymore, it is just a minority of people that looks like the ones in the advertisement.”

“Some kind of censor law should exist, which decides what can be shown.”

You react tense when you see a nude man/woman in an advertisement

A clear majority did not react tense when watching a nude woman or male in an advertisement. Even the picture with the two naked men (see appendix 2) did not create that much of tension within the group. It was only one respondent that reacted tense to that picture, but that was due to his homophobia. Other comments from the group were:

“Today I do not react tense to this kind of advertisement, however I will in the future when I sit down with my future children.”

“I react tense if my parents are around.”

“Nowadays it is so common that I do not react if there is any nudity in the advertisements.”

“You do not care if there is a naked woman in the advertisement.”

The last statement almost all the respondents agreed on.

You react with energy arousal when you see a nude man/woman in an advertisement

In the beginning of the discussion about this statement all the respondents agreed on that they do not react with energy arousal. But after rethinking, the group realized that energy arousal could appear. The comments started like this:

“I do not feel any arousal at all.”

“It is too common nowadays, that is why I probably do not react.”

Many people in the group agreed on these two comments, but a turning point appeared in the discussion when one student stated:

“If it is an extremely attractive girl, then I might think; I want her.”

“It does not need to be naked to make me filled with arousal.”

“Sometimes I just want to undress the girls in my mind.”

It is okay to use sexual appeal in advertisement at all times

The respondents all agreed on that it is okay if it is used properly. Otherwise it is not okay, according to the respondents. One student claimed:

“Sexual appeal is okay when using it for fragrances but not okay when it is used with ice-cream.”

Another respondent stated, and got support for the statement from the group:

“Sometimes it is just too much.”

An advertisement with erotic appeal changes your attitude toward a brand

This statement caused shared opinions among the respondents. Some of them pointed out clearly that they do not change their attitude towards the brand because the advertisement is sexual, however two boys stated that sometimes they do. One respondent commented:

“If the advertisement is too sexual or tasteless, I will not buy that product.”

Comments from the other respondents were:

“I change my attitude if the advertisement is sexual and not relevant to the product.”

“You do not have the energy to care if the advertisement is sexual, you might change attitude but you do not have the energy to change buying behavior.”

“Sexual appeal in advertisement is not enjoyable anymore.”

You feel envy and you compare your beauty with models in advertisements

No one really believed that they felt any envy to the models in the advertisement, however one respondent claimed that if he did not have high self-confidence he might have been affected by the models. Other comments about this statement were:

“Of course I am thin and attractive rather than fat and unattractive.”

“It is better that the people in the advertisements are attractive, since it will generate better health to people.”

“You realize that the people in the advertisements are perfect, because they are retouched, because of that I do not feel envy.”

“It is computer-made.”

An advertisement with a beautiful model changes the perception of your own beauty

The respondents answered in general that they do not change their perception of their own beauty, but one respondent pointed out that if you have low self-confidence the perception would change. This statement was supported by a couple of other respondents.

Another statement from a student that got support as well was:

“Guys work out more in gym these days because you get affected by the ideal in the advertisements. People want to look like them.”

Advertisements with beautiful models change your comparison standards for physical attractiveness

All the people in the focus group except one guy claimed that the standards change after viewing a beautiful model in an advertisement. The respondents also claimed they had higher standards for how the girls should look after viewing advertisements with beautiful girls.

4.2 Interview two: Young women

The second interview at the high school Örnén in Luleå included seven female students born 1986. They were studying at the media program. The focus group session was conducted in the same manner as the first one.

4.2.1 Young women define sexual appeal in advertising

Initially the respondents discussed in general how they define sexual appeal in advertising. Some of the female respondents defined sexual appeal in the following way:

“How the actors move in the advertisement.”

“It has a sexual appeal if they move slowly in combination with soft lightning.”

“It does not have to include nudity to have sexual appeal.”

“Strong attraction in the eyes so that it really looks like he or she wants sex.”

Overall the female students talked a lot about the importance that the actors move in a special way to make the advertisement sexual. They did not mention physical attractiveness at all.

Models in advertisements based on sexual appeal are often displayed nude or partially nude

The female respondents believed that this was true. Concerning nudity in advertisements all respondents stated that if the advertisement is tastefully done it is okay with nudity. They also stated that products that have nothing to do with nudity, but are marketed with such behavior are not good. Another opinion by one participant was the following:

“Underwear must be hard to include without some nudity in the advertisement.”

The rest of the group then supported this opinion, although some people in the group argued it did not have to show much nudity.

Models in advertisements are exceptionally good looking

In the following discussion the female students stated that the actors in the advertisements based on sexual appeal were almost always good looking and thin. The female students had the opinion that it is not okay to be ugly. One of the students stated it as follows.

“The people in advertisements are always within the standards of what is considered as good looking when the advertisements are based upon sexual appeal.”

Images and words in advertisements can have sexual appeal

Concerning this topic the students said that they discussed and agreed on that this is more important concerning sexual appeal than nudity and physical attractiveness. The statements concerning this topic were the following:

“Only words can make an advertisement sexy.”

“Sometimes it is puns that allude to sexual.”

“Even if there is nudity it does not necessarily have sexual appeal.”

Movement in advertisements can have sexual appeal

Some of their comments when discussing this area were:

“If the movements are natural it does not have to have sexual appeal, even if it includes nudity.”

“You see it most clearly in the eyes.”

“You get captured by the look in the eyes.”

The advertisements are sexual due to light, music and setting

When this topic was brought up all female students directly started to talk about the light. They believed a soft lightning could have an effect on the sexual appeal.

4.2.2 Young women’s reactions to sexual appeal in advertising

When moving on to this subject we asked the respondents if they needed a short break but they declined and the discussion continued with the moderator saying the next statement on our interview guide.

There is too much sex in advertising and is there a limit where it becomes indecent

All the female students seemed to agree on this statement. The female students agreed on the following:

“The companies do not gain anything with sexual appeal in advertising since everybody has it.”

“The advertisements based on sexual appeal do not stand out.”

Concerning the indecency the female students believed that an advertisement becomes indecent when there is nudity in the advertisement, but the product has no connection to it.

Advertisements are discriminating to both men and women

Concerning this statement the opinions were clearly divided. The discussion started by one female mentioning the following:

“Advertisements can absolutely be discriminating.”

After this, one student claimed that fat people were most discriminated since there are always thin people making advertisements based on sexual appeal. The female students agreed on this. The topic that caused disagreement was whether men or women were most discriminated. The discussion was as follows:

“There are more nude women than men in advertisements.”

“Right now there are more men, it used to be more women.”

“In advertisements for shampoo there are always semi-nude or nude women.”

“Depends on if the product in the advertisement is directed towards women.”

“Regular shampoo is just not for women, still there is a woman in the advertisement.”

“Men and women get equally much space in advertisements based on sexual appeal.”

The general feeling, after listening to the discussion, was that most of the respondents believed women were portrayed more often as sexual objects than men.

You react tense when you see a nude man/woman in an advertisement

All female students stated that sex in advertisement is very common today that they do not react anymore. They claimed that it was more like that when they were younger. This was true both to female nudity and male nudity in advertisements. Furthermore they stated that they did not react tense towards explicit female nudity. Although one student claimed

“If it is not done with style, you could react tense.”

But the person claimed that this was true both to female and male nudity.

You react with energy arousal when you see a nude man/woman in an advertisement

The discussion concerning this topic started with all the female students laughing and saying no. The arguments for this were the following:

“The same effect as in the movies, everything is fixed and affected.”

“The advertisements are shown a too short period of time to get excited.”

“You are used to that all the models are good looking.”

However one girl argued the following:

“If you know who the person in the advertisement is you can react with some arousal, for example Fredrik Ljungberg in the Calvin Klein advertisement.”

Some of the girls seemed to agree with this since some nods could be observed.

It is okay to use sexual appeal in advertisement at all times

The female students did not agree with this statement, they only believed that sexual appeal could be used if it had a relevant purpose in the advertisement. One of the respondents pointed at the advertisement with the two nude boys hugging and stated the following:

“This advertisement is okay, because it promotes condoms.”

An advertisement with erotic appeal changes your attitude toward a brand

Concerning this topic the opinions among the respondents were divided. Even though the actions toward the product marketed in the advertisement differed among the students. Some of them claimed that they did not think of the advertisement when buying a product while some of them said that they changed their opinion about the product and chose a similar product instead. One student claimed:

“You do not think about the advertisement when you buy a product.”

Another girl claimed:

“If the advertisement is bad and corny, you change attitude towards the brand, and may chose another brand.”

This statement was supported by most of the other girls and one girl also stated:

“You get a negative attitude if the advertisement is too sexual.”

You feel envy and you compare your beauty with models in advertisements

Initially in the discussion some of the female students claimed that this was not the case. However one respondent stated the following:

“If we had not compared ourselves with movie stars and advertisement actors, why do many young females have bad self-confidence?”

All group members did not support this statement. One of the respondents stated:

“I do not care about how they look in advertisements, I want to be thin anyway.”

After this a discussion followed and some of the statements done by the respondents were:

“You see different appearances in advertisements concerning sexual appeal but all actors are thin.”

“You are constantly fed with how your different body parts should look.”

An advertisement with a beautiful model changes the perception of your own beauty

The discussion concerning this topic had some similarities with the previous topic. One of the female respondents still claimed:

“I do not change the opinion of how I look when I see a beautiful model.”

Other respondents in the group claimed:

“You build up a bad confidence because you are fed up with images of good looking models.”

“Subconsciously you change the perception of yourself.”

“This has been a continuous process since you were really young.”

Advertisements with beautiful models change your comparison standards for physical attractiveness

The female students agreed on this topic that it did not change your perception of how your friends look, because they have a personality which is worth much more. However they agreed on that it changed the perception of people they do not know. One of the respondents stated it like this:

“If you meet a guy on the street it can happen that you compare him with good looking models in advertisements.”

One of the girls also claimed:

“It happens that I compare men in advertisements with my boyfriend”.

5 DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter the data from the empirical data and theory will be presented and analyzed in the order of the research questions. A within-case analysis will be conducted for our two focus group sessions, by comparing the empirical data with the conceptual framework, which was presented in chapter two.

5.1 Definition of sexual appeal in advertising

The respondents believed that sexual appeal is not the same as nudity. The students all agreed on that the models in the advertisements are above average of what is considered good-looking, and it plays a great role how the models look if the advertisement is believed to be characterized as sexual. According to Lambiase and Reichert (2003) there are different types of sexual information in advertising; nudity, sexual behavior, psychical attractiveness and sexual referents. As stated above, the respondents agreed on that these different types have to in one way, or another be fulfilled if the advertisement is considered to be sexual. We found out from our empirical data that men believe that physical attractiveness is a more important factor than women thinks. Men claimed that if an advertisement is to be of sexual content the women had to be way over average in looks. This is in accordance with what Ramirez and Reichert stated in their theory. According to the authors men believe that physical attractiveness is an important factor twice more often than women did. The groups went on in their discussion and claimed that an advertisement does not have to include naked people to be sexual, only words and images can make it sexual. That is in order with the theory from Lambiase and Reichert (2003). According to the two focus groups sexual behavior such as making eye contact and using different facial expression can be of sexual characteristics as long as it is in accordance with the product that is promoted. Lambiase and Reichert (2003) did not mention anything about that the behavior has to be in accordance with the product, however they mentioned that sexual behaviors, like eye-contact, can make an advertisement sexual.

According to Ramirez and Reichert (2000) there are five different characteristics an advertisement may have to be defined as sexual. The most common are psychical attractiveness, movement and light and music. Psychical attractiveness we discussed earlier, furthermore movement includes flirting, dancing, moaning and groaning. In accordance with the theory the respondents agreed that it means a lot how they move, especially the women mentioned this, and the way the models' eyes are working with the camera. The respondents felt that if the light is softened and if there is music in the advertisement, then they perceive it as sexual and this is all in accordance with what Ramirez and Reichert (2000) stated in their theory.

5.2 Young men's reactions to sexual appeal in advertising

This section will be divided into two areas. These areas are concepts of decency, arousal and response in the context of sexual advertisement stimuli, and the social comparison and the idealized images of advertising. These two areas are named in the conceptual framework and will be compared with the empirical data chapter.

Concepts of decency, arousal and response in the context of sexual advertisement stimuli

The respondents believed that it can sometimes be too much sex, especially if the sexual appeals are not relevant to the product. The male respondents do not think it is okay with total nudity, if that occurs, the respondents in the focus groups believed that it could be indecent. However, the respondents stated that people have to understand that the sex in advertisements is not for real. This is confirmed by the theories of Gould (1994), which states that the ultimate test for what is considered decent or indecent is in the eye of beholder.

The respondents believed that the advertisement can be discriminating to both men and women, especially since all the men are well trained and the women have thin bodies and big breasts. In accordance with the Swedish council ERK (2004) advertisements can be of discriminating nature for both men and women.

The majority of the respondents agreed on that they did not feel tense when being showed female nudity. However the presence of parents could make the situation tenser. Concerning if men reacted with energy arousal the respondents partially agreed. However it was brought up to discussion that it is so common with female nudity in advertising that it needs to be an extremely attractive girl and a large amount of nudity in the advertisement to have the arousing effect. The reaction towards male nudity in advertising was among most respondents neutral. However one participant reacted tense and made it clear that he felt disgusted by it. The theory by Lambiase and Reichert (2003) state that men do not react tense when seeing explicit female nudity instead they react with energy arousal is supported by the collected data.

Concerning if young men change their attitude toward a brand due to nude erotic appeal in advertisements, the respondents claimed that it is so common with nudity in advertising today that they do not have the energy to change their buying behavior even though their attitude towards the brand might change. The criteria's for attitude to change was however that the advertisement had to be tasteless or if the nude erotic appeal had nothing to do with the product. The theory from Lambiase and Reichert (2003) claims that nude erotic appeal in advertising is negatively influencing the attitude toward the brand advertised. According to Treise and Weigold (1994) a large number of consumers are troubled by the use of sexual appeals in advertising, but if tastefully done it is nothing wrong. The respondents agreed on this statement and claimed that for example fragrances are okay to advertise with sexual appeal if tastefully done, ice cream however is not okay to advertise with sexual appeal.

The social comparison and the idealized images of advertising

The male respondents disagreed with that they felt envy towards attractive models in advertisements. They claim that they realize that people in advertising are perfect because they are retouched. Richins (1991) states that young adult females compare their level of attractiveness with that of models in advertisements, and they also tend to envy their beauty. This shows that Richins theories concerning young women feeling envy towards attractive

models are not applicable to young men. Richins (1991) also states that attractive models will affect the self-perception of the own physical attractiveness. It showed that this statement was partially true when it come to young men even tough they claimed that they did not change the perception of themselves. However they stated that they think other people do. Furthermore, beautiful models in advertisements are supposed to change the comparison standards for physical attractiveness (ibid). The majority of the respondents agreed to this and stated that they have higher demands on how a girl is supposed to look like due to the models in advertisements.

5.3 Young women's reactions to sexual appeal in advertising

This section will be divided into two areas with the same structure as in the previous part where the topic of how young men react to sexual appeals in advertising was analyzed.

Concepts of decency, arousal and response in the context of sexual advertisement stimuli

The female respondents believed that there is too much sexual appeal in advertising but the reason for an advertisement to be indecent is when the product has nothing to with sex and still is advertised with sexual appeal. According to Gould (1994) the ultimate test for what is considered decent or indecent, is in the eye of beholder.

The female respondents believed that advertisements can be discriminating. The majority also thought it is more discriminating to women then men. Few of the students claimed that right now there are more nude men in advertisements while the others stated that in shampoo advertisements females are always portrayed nude or semi nude, even if the shampoo can be used by both men and women. According to the Swedish council ERK (2004) advertisements can be of discriminating nature for both men and women.

Concerning nudity in advertisement the respondents claimed that it so common today that they do not react anymore. Instead one person brought up that the reason for reacting tense is when an advertisement is not tastefully done and not the nudity of a specific gender. According to Lambiase and Reichert (2003) women react tense when being showed a print advertisement showing explicit female nudity. According to the respondents this statement is false.

Another theory is that women should react favorable to an advertisement containing male nudity (Smith et. al, 1995). The female respondents did not agree with this statement. They claimed that it is obvious that it is fixed and affected like in the movies. It is also so common that models are good looking. The only chance to react positively and with energy arousal is if the model in question already is a known person, for example Fredrik Ljungberg in the Calvin Klein advertisement.

When buying a product some of the young women claimed that they did not think of advertisements while some stated if the advertisement is bad and corny attitude toward the brand might change. The respondents also claimed that buying behavior might change. Some of the girls also claimed that if the advertisement is too sexual they get a negative attitude toward the brand. This is all in accordance with the theory by Lambiase and Reichert (2003) that an advertisement containing nude erotic appeal is negatively influencing the attitude towards a brand.

According to Treise and Weigold (1994) a large number of consumers are troubled by the use of sexual appeals in advertising, however if tastefully done it is okay. The female students agreed with this statement and also added that it is not just enough that the advertising is tasteful done the sexual appeal also have to have a relevant purpose in the advertisement.

The social comparison and the idealized images of advertising

Some of the respondents thought that the reason why many young females have a bad self-confidence is because they are constantly fed with advertisements showing how they are supposed to look like. However some of the respondents claimed that advertisement had nothing to do with how they want to look. According to Richins (1991) young adult females feel envy and compare their beauty with models in advertisements targeted toward them. The respondents supported this theory.

The respondents claimed, except for one who stated that she was not affected by models in advertisements, that the self-perception of physical attractiveness was lowered by advertisements including physical attractive models. Some of the respondents pointed out the fact that they subconsciously changed their perception after they have been exposed to beautiful models, since they were really young and this continuous process has affected them. Richins (1991) states that exposure to advertising with idealized images of physical attractiveness lowers, at least temporarily young adult female's satisfaction and self perception of their own physical attractiveness. The discussion among the focus group members confirms this.

The respondents claimed that in a spontaneous meeting for example when they are walking down the street it is likely that they have higher comparison standards for physical attractiveness after viewing advertisements based on sexual appeal that includes attractive models. However they were eager to point out that it did not change the perception of their friends since personality according to them is more important. According to Richins (1991) exposure to advertising with idealized images of physical attractiveness will raise young females' comparison standards for physical attractiveness.

6 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

In the final chapter main conclusions and findings will be drawn based on the research conducted in the thesis. The purpose of these conclusions is to answer the three research questions that were stated in chapter one. Each of the three research questions will be answered separately. Finally implications for management, theory and future research will be suggested.

6.1 How do young men and women define sexual appeal in advertising?

The findings of this question suggest that there are many different opinions on how sexual appeal in advertising is defined. There was a slight difference between young men and young women. Young women did not define sexual appeal by how people looked in the advertisement. They explained it, and clearly pointed out, that it depends on how the people in the advertisements move. It does not have to include nudity, and the models do not have to be exceptionally good looking, if the advertisement is to be considered sexual.

According to the young men in our case study an advertisement must contain women that are highly attractive, way above the average looking woman if it is considered to be of sexual character. They have never seen advertisement with unattractive models, and if there were unattractive naked or half-naked people in it, they would never refer to the advertisement as sexual. However, in accordance with the young women we discovered that the young men also believe that the movement and the appearance of the models in the advertisement are of great importance if it is deemed to be sexual.

Another aspect which our thesis shows is that an advertisement can be characterized as sexual due to words and images. The people in the advertisements do not need to be naked, instead they can be puns that make it of sexual character.

Another observation we made was that the young men, in difference from the young women, a couple of times mentioned pornography when discussing sexual appeals in advertisements.

Based on these findings the following conclusions can be made:

- Advertisements do not have to contain nudity to be of sexual character.
- Only the movement and the appearance of the models in the advertisement can make the advertisement sexual.
- In difference from the young women, young men believed that in most cases there has to be exceptionally good looking models in the advertisements to make them sexual.

6.2 How do young men react to sexual appeal in advertising?

The findings of our thesis imply that there are some similarities between the data gathered and the theories collected of how young men react to sexual appeal in advertising. However there are also some differences.

Findings of our thesis suggest that young men believe there is too much sex in advertising, especially in cases where the product has no connection with sexual appeal. Furthermore, young men believe that advertisements can be discriminating both to men and women, since the models that appear in advertisements based on sexual appeal are often well trained and good-looking.

Our thesis found that when young men are exposed to female nudity in advertisement they neither react tense nor do they react with energy arousal unless the models are extremely attractive and there is a large amount of nudity in the advertisement. Previous research brings up the fact that men react with energy arousal but our research states that since young men constantly are fed with advertisements based on sexual appeal the boundary for arousal has increased significantly. According to our thesis the exposure of male nudity in advertisements does not awake any tense feelings for most young men. However there are exceptions where feelings of uneasiness occur due to homophobia.

Our findings also suggest that nudity in advertisement is so common today that even though advertisements include tasteless- or unnecessary nudity young men do not change their buying behavior, even though the attitude towards the brand may change. Previous research confirms the change in attitude, but the fact that buying behavior does not change has not been brought up in earlier research. The focus group respondents suggested different products where it is okay with sexual appeal in advertising and one example is in advertisements for fragrances. A product the focus group mentioned as non-suitable for advertisement based on sexual appeal was ice cream.

Furthermore our findings suggest that young men do not feel any envy towards models in advertisements because they are aware that people in advertisements are retouched to look better. However the respondents in our focus group brought up the fact that they believe people in general change their self-perception of physical attractiveness due to attractive models in advertisements. They also claimed that the comparison standard for physical attractiveness increased after viewing an advertisement, with a beautiful woman, that is based on sexual appeal.

Based on these findings the following conclusions can be made:

- Young men believe there is too much sex in advertising.
- Young men of today are exposed to so much female nudity in advertising that it takes extreme beauty or a large quantity of nudity for them to be exited.
- Nudity in advertisement is so common that even though the attitude towards a brand might change, buying behavior will not.
- Sexual appeal in advertisement is only okay if the brand is related to sex.

- Young men do not envy models because of their look.
- Comparison standards increase after viewing good-looking models in advertisements.

6.3 How do young women react to sexual appeal in advertising?

Findings of our thesis suggest that female respondents believe there is too much sex in advertising. This is especially true when it comes to products that have no association with sexual appeal. Furthermore, young women believe an advertisement can be discriminating. Findings suggest that young women believe that women are more often portrayed as sexual objects in advertisements.

Our thesis found that when young women are being showed print advertisement containing explicit female nudity they do not react tense. According to the focus group respondents' nudity in advertising is so common that they do not react to nudity anymore. Instead the reason for reacting tense is if the advertisement is tasteless. We believe that this is a significant factor that previous research has left out. Concerning male nudity our thesis shows that young females do not get feelings of arousal when viewing an unidentified model in an advertisement. However if the object is an already known person such feelings may arise. Previous research do not bring up this fact, instead it claims that any male nudity make women react favorably.

Additionally our thesis suggests that some young women change their attitude towards a brand and in some cases buying behavior if the advertisement is bad, corny and too sexual. These findings agree with previous studies made in the United States. Still previous studies do not bring up the change in buying behavior.

Our thesis also implies that young women are troubled by the use of sexual appeals in advertising. The respondents in our focus group claimed that for an advertisement based on sexual appeal to be okay it has to be tastefully done and have a relevant purpose. This is confirmed by previous studies. However previous studies do not bring up the fact that it is not enough for the advertisement to be tastefully done, the sexual appeal in the advertisement also must have a relevant purpose.

Furthermore, our thesis suggests that young women are affected by sexual appeal in advertisement. This due to the fact that the models in the advertisement often are extremely attractive. This affects the self-confidence of young women according to the focus group members. These findings are supported by previous research where the attitude of young women in the US was investigated. According to our thesis the reason for this is because young women are constantly targeted with advertisements based on sexual appeal which includes attractive models.

Further findings suggest that young women's comparison standard for physical attractiveness increased concerning casual meetings. However the focus group respondents claimed that comparison standards for friends were not increased since they had a personality which according to the focus group member is much more important. Previous research confirms these findings concerning casual meetings.

Based on these findings the following conclusions can be made:

- Nudity in advertising is so common that young women do not react tense when being showed explicit female nudity.
- Young women do not get the feeling of arousal when looking at an attractive model in an advertisement, unless the model is a previously known person.
- The reason for young women to react tense when viewing an advertisement is if it is tasteless.
- Attitude and buying behavior among young women might change if an advertisement based on sexual appeal is bad, corny or too sexual.
- An advertisement based on sexual appeal must be tastefully done and the sexual appeal must have a connection towards the brand.
- The self-confidence of young women is affected by sexual appeal in advertisement that involves extremely attractive models.
- Comparison standards for physical attractiveness at casual meetings increase after viewing an advertisement based on sexual appeal that involves attractive models, among young women.

6.4 Implications

In this final section we will give our recommendations for management, theory and for future research within the area of how young men and women define and react to sexual appeals in advertising.

6.4.1 Implications for management

Sexual appeals in advertising are a questionable tool to use. The implications listed below may be useful to consider for corporations aiming advertising towards youth before deciding if they want to use such appeals in their advertisement campaigns.

- The youth of today are used to the sexual content showed in advertisement. Therefore we consider that the corporations rethink before choosing sexual appeals as a topic in their campaigns. Since sexual appeals are so common today that people do not react to it anymore.

- If the advertisement contains sexual behavior that is not in accordance with the product, people might change their attitude towards that product. If corporations use sexual appeal the wrong way in advertisements, people, or in this case, the youth will be against them and maybe go as far as not buying the product.
- Corporations might consider using other tools than sex in advertising, since sex is that common today. Sometimes a product works better with other appeals, such as humor, fear or guilt.

6.4.2 Implications for theory

The purpose of this study has been to explore and describe a phenomenon within a specific area of research. We wanted to gain a better understanding on how Swedish youth are influenced of sexual appeals in advertisement by answering our three research questions. By increasing the understanding of our topic, we have made a contribution to previous studies. However, when comparing with previous research on how people are influenced of sexual information, we have in our thesis discovered that Swedish youth are hardened by all the sexual information.

6.4.3 Implications for future research

The research in this thesis has provided an insight on how Swedish youth define and react to sexual appeals in advertising. However, there are some interesting objects that future researcher might think of when conducting research within this area.

- We find it very interesting to divide men and women in their late teens. However, it could be fascinating to make a comparison between the group of this age and a group of people that are around 40-50 years old. It will probably provide future researchers with other data.
- Sex and sexual appeals in advertising is a topic that for ages ahead probably will cause a lot of discussion. It would be interesting for future researcher to investigate on how corporations think when they use sexual appeal in advertising. It would be of great interest if a case study where conducted towards an corporation that uses sexual appeals in advertising, to find out why and what the gain is for corporations to use such kinds of appeals.
- Sexual appeals are viewed differently in various parts of the world. Therefore, we believe it would be of great interest if research on people's reactions to sexual appeals in advertisement were conducted in other parts of the world.

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Interviews

Focus group interview 1, 2004-04-26, 8.30 – 9.30

Focus group interview 2, 2004-04-26, 13.30 – 14.30

Interview Guide

We will start off by showing the material to group and then the people will discuss what they saw and what they feel about the material. When we realize that the group feels that they are finished with the discussion, we will bring up our statements to the group and they can freely speak up about those statements.

RQ1 How do young men and women define sexual appeal in advertising?

What is your opinion about the following statements?

- Models in advertisements based on sexual appeal are often displayed nude or partially nude
- Models in advertisement are exceptionally good looking
- Images and words in advertisement can have sexual appeal
- Movement in the advertisement can have sexual appeal
- The advertisement can be to sexual due to the light, music and setting

After these statements we asked if the people wanted to add anything to the discussion

RQ 2 and 3 – How do young men and young women react to sexual appeal in advertising?

- There is too much sex in advertising and is there a limit where it becomes indecent
- Advertisements are discriminated to both men and women
- You react tense when you see a nude woman/male in an advertisement
- You react with energy arousal when you see a nude man/woman in an advertisement
- It is okay to use sexual appeal in advertising at all times
- An advertisement with erotic appeal change your attitude toward the specific brand

- You feel envy and you compare your beauty when you see a beautiful woman/male model in an advertisement
- An advertisement with a beautiful model change the perception of your own beauty
- Advertisements with beautiful models make you change your comparison standard for physical attractiveness

After these statements we asked if the people wanted to add anything more to the discussion

In connection to the focus group interviews five magazine advertisements, and three television advertisements. The three television advertisements were one beer advertisement, one ice-cream advertisement and one perfume advertisement. The magazine advertisements are provided as appendices 2-6.

Intervju Guide (svensk version)

Vi började intervjun med att visa det reklammaterial vi hade. Efter det lät vi gruppen prata fritt utifrån de bilderna. När vi märkte att den inledande diskussionen var över tog vi upp de påståenden som vi ville att grupperna skulle ventilera.

Forskningsfråga 1

Hur definierar unga män och kvinnor sexuella anspelningar i reklam?

- Modeller i reklam baserad på sexuella anspelningar är nakna är delvis nakna
- Modellerna i reklamerna är exceptionellt vackra
- Endast bilderna och orden kan göra en reklam sexuell
- Rörelserna på modellerna i reklamen kan vara av sexuell karaktär
- Reklamen kan vara sexuell på grund av belysningen, musiken och uppsättningen

Vi avslutade frågestunden på fråga 1 med att undra om ungdomarna hade något mer att tillägga

Forskningsfråga 2 och 3

Hur reagerar unga män och kvinnor på sexuella anspelningar i reklam?

- Många människor tycker att det finns för mycket sex i reklam. Finns där någon gräns för vad som är acceptabelt
- Reklamen kan vara diskriminerande för både män och kvinnor
- Man reagerar spánt när man ser en naken kvinna eller man i reklamen
- Man reagerar med upphetsning när man ser en naken kvinna eller man i reklamen
- Det är okay att använda sexuella anspelningar i reklam alltid
- En reklam med erotisk anspelning får dig att ändra uppfattning om den speciella produkten
- Du blir avundsjuk och jämför ditt eget utseende med modellen i reklamen
- En reklam med en vacker modell får dig att ändra uppfattning om din egen skönhet
- Reklam med vackra modeller får dig att ändra din jämförelsestandard om vad som uppfattas som vackert

Vi avslutade frågestunden på fråga 2 och 3 med att undra om ungdomarna hade något mer att tillägga

I samband med fokus grupp intervjuerna visades fem reklamer från olika magasin och tre TV-reklamer. TV-reklamerna vi visade var en öl-reklam, en glass-reklam och en parfym-reklam. Reklamerna ifrån magasinen kan ses i bilaga 2-6.





Självförtroende, omkr 590 kr.

Ibland äger rummet dig. Ibland äger du rummet.
Men bara när du mår tillräckligt bra.
Gå och klipp dig.

Bilden är fotograf Jens Gustafssons tolkning av Självförtroende.

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En bodylotion som gör din hud silkeslen och fast.

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FÖRHINDRAR HUDENS UTTORKNING MED 94%*
Innehåller Xeralipider som ger huden intensiv näring och tillför fukt i 24 timmar.

FASTARE HUD MED 71%*
Innehåller Par-Elastyl som ökar hudens elasticitet och gör den fastare.

BODY EXPERTISE.
DITT PROFESSIONELLA HEMMA-SPA SYSTEM.
FÖR DET ÄR DU VÄRD.

NORMAL HUD

TORR HUD

L'ORÉAL PARIS

The advertisement features a woman's back and shoulder with a red arrow pointing to the skin. Two bottles of Nutrilift body lotion are shown: one for 'NORMAL HUD' (light blue) and one for 'TORR HUD' (white). A small dish of white cream is also visible.

