

THE MINORITY MYTH

A quantitative study on the effects of ethnic minority models in advertising

Abstract: The diversification of the global market place is a growing trend. It is important that corporations design advertisements that feature ethnic minorities in order to reflect the diverse population. Previous theory argues that failure to fairly represent the diverse population is potentially hazardous to the social climate for the population's ethnic minorities. In Sweden, the effects of this inclusion of ethnic minorities are rather unexplored. The general consensus has been that this will generate negative reactions from the ethnic majority consumers and thus lower the overall effectiveness of the advertisement. The aim of this thesis is to investigate if including ethnic minorities in advertising can positively affect the social climate and if there are any negative effects on ad and brand attitude as well as purchase and contact intention. This was tested in an experimental study. The results show that through just a one time exposure to an ethnic minority model in an ad, it is possible to gain positive effects on social climate without any negative effects on the traditionally intended effects of advertising.

Keywords: advertising, ethnic minorities, unintended effects, traditionally intended effects of advertising

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The general aim of this paper is to explore the potential effect marketers can have on the social climate by including ethnic minorities in advertisements and also assess if there are any negative economic effects associated with this. More specifically, we want to examine if the presence of ethnic minorities in advertising can positively affect the consumers' attitude towards immigrants and their role in society. Also, the study aims to investigate if including ethnic minorities will be harmful or beneficial to the advertisements' effect on a company's brand image, what effect it will have on consumers' perception of the advertisement, as well as its effect on the purchase intention and contact intention of the consumer (henceforth referred to as the *traditionally intended effects*).

The moderns market's increased internationalization and diversification calls for an investigation of these effects. In 2013, close to 30 percent of the Swedish population had at least one parent of foreign descent, which in many cases mean that their appearances differ from what may be considered as traditionally Swedish (SCB, 2013). This diverse population is currently not adequately represented in advertisements in Sweden, which portrays a rather homogeneous population. According to a study performed by Konsumentverket just seven percent of the models in ads in a number of weekly magazines were of ethnic minority heritage (Andén-Papadopoulos, 1996). Similar figures can be found in a more recent quantitative study performed in a bachelor's thesis from Malmö Högskola (Petersson, 2008), where only six percent of the people portrayed in TV commercials were of an ethnic minority. This kind of under-representation could potentially be hazardous to the social climate.

Every day we encounter countless impressions from advertisements. These encounters will not only affect our purchase behavior but will inevitably also influence our attitudes, ideas and values. This influence is also referred to as the *unintended effects of marketing* (Pollay, 1986). Since this impact is of great magnitude it has led to a lot of debate and analysis regarding how to manage the difficulties that might arise.

1.2 Social annihilation

In Sweden relatively little research has been done on what implications this diversified market has for marketers. In the United States, where the ethnic minorities have had a larger presence for an extended period of time, more extensive research has been done on the subject. Gerbner and Gross (1976) introduced the idea that what is portrayed in media is what will be given social legitimacy, meaning that if something is not present in media we will not recognize its presence in society. This phenomenon is referred to as *social annihilation*. Much of what the average citizen deems important or unimportant is based on the images they see in television, film, music, news and other media (Brooks & Hébert, 2006). If ethnic minorities are currently being underrepresented in advertising it could mean that the part they play in our society is being marginalized. If Sweden's minorities are currently being marginalized, why is no concrete effort being made to correct this? Many would argue that the responsibility lies with the marketers while marketers seem to fear that using ethnic minority models will alienate the ethnic majority consumers and this is why ethnic minority models are currently being underrepresented. This type of trade-off between societal effects and the traditionally intended effects of advertising is the core of what this thesis aims to investigate.

1.3 White backlash

It is well documented that a country's ethnic minority population will respond favorably to advertisements containing a person of that same ethnicity (e.g. Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994). Since the collective buying power of Sweden's first generation immigrants alone is estimated to reach 168 billion Swedish kronor by 2020 (Fahimi & Fridholm, 2004), it is clear that it is potentially very lucrative to include minorities in marketing efforts. What is not clear and needs to be further investigated on the Swedish market is what effects the inclusion of ethnic minority models in advertising will have on the consumer group *as a whole*.

There is some fear concerning what the effects of using ethnic minorities in advertising will be on the ethnic majority. This fear of potential negative effects for the ethnic majority consumers when using ads featuring ethnic minority models has its roots in studies conducted several decades ago and might not apply today. Cagley and Cardozo (1970), argued for the potential risk of a *white backlash* when including ethnic minorities in advertisements, which means that using ethnic minorities in advertisements will negatively affect the ethnic majority consumers. This effect has also been found in more recent studies (e.g. Aaker, Brumbaugh & Grier, 2000). However, other researchers state that it will not have a negative effect (e.g. Bush, Hair &

Solomon, 1979) which shows that there is no real consensus on the economic effects on the ethnic majority consumers. For managers to confidently make the decision to include ethnic minorities in advertisements, these potential negative effects have to be rather well documented and weighed against the potential increased income from the minority population.

As it stands, this area of research is rather unexplored in Sweden and all conclusions regarding the Swedish market today have to be considered in the light of old theories that have been formed in the United States. However, these theories are not perfectly transferable when taking into account the differences in the cultures, as well as the demographic makeup of Sweden compared to the United States.

1.4 Purpose

The intention of this study is to investigate the possible societal effects of including ethnic minorities in advertising and also to determine if there is a trade-off between these societal effects and the traditionally intended effects of the advertisement. We want to investigate if:

Consumers' attitudes towards immigrants can be positively affected by the exposure of ethnic minorities in advertising and if this exposure in any way affects the consumers' willingness to buy the advertised product or affect their attitude towards the brand and/or advertisement.

1.5 Delimitations

Since we want to know if there is a trade-off associated with including ethnic minorities in advertisements, we do not dive into the comparison between the affect it might have on the ethnic minority participants compared to the ethnic majority participants. Since the positive effects it has with the ethnic minority consumers might negate the negative effect it might have with the ethnic majority consumers, we will rather look at the consumers *as a group*. Also, to avoid preconceived attitudes towards a known brand affecting the results, we chose to use a *mock brand* in this study

With the Swedish minority population being diverse, and because there is an absence of a numerically dominant (to other minorities) ethnic minority in Sweden, it seemed most important to choose the *models in the advertisement* so that the difference in their ethnic heritage would be evident. With that in mind we chose a model of an African heritage as the experiment stimulus. This implies that the ethnic minority model is not perfectly representative for all ethnic minority

groups. However, this would be an issue regardless of which ethnic minority we would have chosen.

1.6 Expected contribution

With the conclusions that we will be able to draw from this study we hope to contribute to the understanding of the effects that the presence of minorities in advertising can have on our social climate and what business implications it might have for firms. More specifically we want our findings to shed light on the social responsibility that marketers have when it comes to giving a fair portrayal of our diverse population. Our hope is that our study can help show that ethnicity should not be considered an obstacle or hindrance when choosing which person should represent a product or firm in an advertisement. We also hope to provide insights that will open up for further research on the subject of advertising's effect on diversity and integration.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Many studies can be found in the United States about using models with a minority ethnicity in advertising. Studies on how white consumers react to the use of models with a minority heritage in advertisements started as early as in the 1960's when Barban and Cundiff (1964) compared responses to advertising stimuli for Caucasians and African Americans. Their purpose was to examine the economic consequences of using minorities in advertising and their biggest concern was that campaigns designed to increase satisfaction for minority groups might alienate the much larger white market. This focus has been found in many studies later on, which also separate majority and minority groups and look at the positive and negative effects of using advertisements with models from the different ethnic groups.

In the 1960's, the phenomenon of using ethnic minorities in advertising was fairly new, which led to that most of the earlier research was rather explorative and not based on previous theory. This seems to have led to a spectrum of conflicting views. Some studies indicate that using ethnic minority models will negatively affect the majority viewers (Cagley & Cardozo, 1970; Aaker et al., 2000), while some indicate that it does not have a significant effect (Bush et al., 1979; Schlenger & Plummer, 1972).

Whittler (1991) made an effort to summarize previous research in the field. He concluded that previous research indicates that white viewer's reactions to black actors is not as favorable as to white actors, even though not extremely negative. However, Whittler pointed to the limitations in previous research, questioning the methodological accuracy and claiming that too much focus has been put on measures of outcome (e.g. purchase intention and ad likeability), neglecting the psychological processes that lie behind these evaluations.

Out of this ensuing debate, two major theories arose: *identification theory* and *distinctiveness theory*.

2.1 Identification Theory

Identification theory (Kelman, 1961) states that: when interacting with a source, viewers will, in an automatic manner, evaluate their similarity with the source. This process indicates that individuals' perceived similarities with the model will influence their evaluation of an ad in a positive way. This implies that ethnic majority consumers would respond less favorably when

exposed to an ad featuring an ethnic minority model since they will feel less similar to the source, and vice versa.

However, the majority (white) viewers were found to be not as conscious of their ethnicity as the minority groups, and the ethnicity of a model does not seem to be as important for the majority group as for minorities (Whittler, 1989). Schlinger and Plummer (1972) argue that TV-ads using all black actors were more meaningful to black viewers, and that the race of the actors did not have much influence on the reaction of white respondents. Smedley and Bayton (1978) would instead argue that other characteristics such as socioeconomic status have a greater impact on how the majority will evaluate an ad using a minority model. This phenomenon can be better understood with the fundamentals of distinctiveness theory.

2.2 Distinctiveness Theory

This theory was first introduced in psychology research in the 1970's (McGuire, McGuire, Child & Fujioka, 1978). The basic concept of distinctiveness theory describes that how likely someone is to think about and describe themselves in terms of their personal traits can be predicted by their distinctive characteristics. The more distinctive a personal trait is, when compared to other people in the environment, the more salient this trait will be to that person compared to the person's more common traits. For example, if a person's ethnicity is numerically inferior, that person is more likely to describe him or herself in terms of ethnicity. Evidence shows that majority consumers (whites) are less prone than Hispanics or African Americans to mention their ethnicity when asked to describe themselves (McGuire et al., 1978). According to distinctiveness theory, the lower the proportion of a minority in the overall population, the more likely it is that a spokesperson with the same ethnicity will be more effective for that specific group.

Deshpandé and Stayman (1994) were the first to study distinctiveness theory in an advertising context, finding connections between ethnic identity and responsiveness to ethnic elements in advertisements. Evidence show that the basic concepts of distinctiveness theory, that one's distinctive traits are more salient, also hold in marketing contexts (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994; Grier & Brumbaugh, 1999). Deshpandé and Stayman (1994) showed that if an ethnic group is a minority in the society in which they live, they will view an advertisement targeted toward them as more trustworthy. More so than if they belonged to the ethnic majority.

Aaker et al. (2000) showed that the minority group (blacks) had a more favorable attitude towards an ad portraying a minority model than the majority group (whites) had towards an ad portraying

a majority model. Their purpose was to examine how marketers better can manage multiple segments in increasingly diverse and complex markets. They found that distinctiveness theory holds, but also that there are different forces driving the viewers' reactions. For minority viewers, it is the felt similarity with sources in an advertisement (identification) that drives the target market effects, whereas for the majority viewers, it is the how much they feel targeted that drives the target market effects.

Grier and Brumbaugh (1999) also argue that target and non-target market consumers differ in the way they interpret targeted advertisements. They found that non-target market consumers are prone to interpret ads negatively if they are targeted to another group. This implies that merely using a model of an ethnic majority in an advertisement is not enough to reach the ethnic majority. It is suggested that a way to reach both distinctive (minority) and non-distinctive (majority) viewers is to use a minority model in order to make the distinctive viewers identify with the advertisement and also incorporate cues that do not pertain to ethnicity in order to make the non-distinctive viewers feel targeted. Though, Aaker et al. (2000) emphasize that this should be done carefully, to limit the negative effects from the majority feeling excluded from the target market.

As noted, there is no absolute consensus in this field, not when we look at the *overall effects* of using minorities in advertising. However, the theories described above all show that for the minority group, there will be positive brand effects when using a model of a minority heritage in an ad (Deshpandé & Stayman, 1994; Aaker et al., 2000). Identification theory implies that the majority group will respond negatively if they cannot identify with the spokesperson in the ad. However, the later distinctiveness theory pointed out that since ethnicity is not as salient for majority groups, as it is for minority groups, advertisement evaluations for the majority will not be as strongly affected by the ethnicity of the model as minority viewers will be.

Previous studies have split up the participants into a majority and a minority group. It is clear that there is a consensus in this field regarding the positive effects of using a minority model for the minority consumers. It is also clear that there is a lot of disagreement regarding the effect this will have on the majority consumers. This coupled with the fact that this study aims to outline the *total* managerial implications of using minorities in advertising led to the conclusion that we will only examine the effect the usage of minority models will have on the total consumer market. Consequently, we will not compare the majority and the minority participants but rather look at the participant group as a whole.

2.3 Prejudice affects perception

To analyze the affect that ethnic minorities in advertising will have on the entire consumer group we must first understand the underlying factors that determine the reactions of the ethnic majority consumers. Cagley and Cardozo (1970) studied how white people responded to integrated advertising, focusing on differences in white viewers that are highly prejudiced versus lowly prejudiced. Their findings show that the less prejudiced viewers rated integrated and black ads as highly as white ads, while highly prejudiced viewers evaluated ads featuring blacks significantly lower than those featuring whites. These findings suggest that the ethnic majority's level of inherent prejudice will go a long way when it comes to explaining the reception an advertisement featuring an ethnic minority model will get. One of Cagley and Cardozo's (1970) largest contributions was that they stated that: when using black models in ads, there is a possibility for a *white backlash* which will result in adverse effects when using ads with black models in a more prejudice market. Their findings have been questioned by for example Bush et al. (1979) who criticized their experimental design and tried to replicate the study. Bush et al. argue that Cagley and Cardozo's findings do not hold, and that consumers' level of prejudice does not affect reactions to ads containing all white, all black or integrated (both black and white) models. However, the contemporary marketplace indicates that there is still a concern regarding white backlash which dictates how marketers act.

Most of previous studies in this field have been conducted in the United States and many of them in the later part of the 20th century. Since the Swedish and American societies differ, and are constantly changing, the theories described above may not necessarily hold in the Swedish market today. Before we will formulate the hypotheses we are going to examine further in this study, we need to further investigate some of the factors unique to the Swedish market that may alter the effects.

2.4 Transferring American theories to the Swedish market today

To be able to formulate our hypotheses based on earlier American research, we will examine the origins of prejudices and highlight some characteristics of the social climate for ethnic minorities in Sweden today.

Wolfe and Spencer (1996) explain how prejudice can be explained through *social identity theory*, which says that we categorize people in to social groups and then place ourselves in one of these

groups. We then define ourselves by comparing our group to other groups and in order to maintain a positive distinction between our group and the others we might create attitudes and behavior that are biased in favor of our own group and against other groups. This is where the Swedish social conditions can become important. While ethnicity might be a valid basis for categorization of people in some countries, certain factors point toward that this is not the case in Sweden. This is made evident most notably by the Swedish law against registration of ethnicity (SFS 1998:204). This law states that a person's ethnicity is regarded as sensitive information and thus is an important implication for how Swedes handle the subject of ethnicity. A perfect example of the sensitivity of the subject of ethnicity occurred in 2013 when headlines were made all across Sweden when it was discovered that this law had been broken as the Swedish police had been trying to keep a record of all Romani people (Orrenius, 2013). That the subject of ethnicity is being shied away from in Sweden indicates that when Swedish people categorize themselves into a certain group, it might be less likely that they do so according to ethnicity. According to Wolfe and Spencer (1996) this will make it less probable that negative attitudes and behavior towards certain ethnic groups are developed.

Another indication of the Swedish conditions were found in a study performed in 2008, *Global Diversity and Inclusion*, where the Society for Human Resource Management created an index for diversity readiness, Sweden was found to be the most ready out of the 47 countries in the study (SHRM, 2008). To create this index, five areas of diversity and inclusion were assessed: levels of diversity and attitudes in the workplace; diversity and inclusion among publicly elected officials; the heterogeneity of the general population; social attitudes towards minorities; and the existence and enforcement of equal-rights laws. In contrast, the United States finished fourteenth on the same ranking.

Thus, when applying previous American research to the Swedish market we need to be aware of the probability that Sweden's level of inclusiveness and diversity-readiness could potentially negate the negative effects of using a minority model. Even more so, when considering that in this study we are looking at the effects on the total consumer market. This line of reasoning leads to the formulation of the following hypotheses, which relate to the traditionally intended effects of advertising:

HYPOTHESIS 1.A

Ad-attitude will not be negatively affected by the use of an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) in an advertisement.

HYPOTHESIS 1.B

Brand attitude will not be negatively affected by the use of an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) in an advertisement.

HYPOTHESIS 2.A

Purchase intention will not be negatively affected by the use of an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) in an advertisement.

HYPOTHESIS 2.B

Contact intention will not be negatively affected by the use of an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) in an advertisement.

2.5 Positive unintended effects of marketing

It is commonly known that marketing efforts do affect consumers in many ways, beyond just promoting products. Many times, criticism of advertising is centralized around the social role of advertisements, while the economic benefits of advertising can easily be defended (Pollay, 1986). Pollay also reviews earlier works on advertising's social role and comes to the conclusion that its effects are "inescapable and profound". With all the marketing activities one is exposed to today, it is hard not to be affected by it. The large majority of research has focused on the negative effects of marketing (e.g. Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Pollay, 1986). However, the unintended effects of marketing can go in both directions. In this case, we want to examine if companies can take a greater social responsibility, without any major economic losses. That is, we want to look closer into the *positive* unintended effects of marketing.

This is a body of research that has been growing in recent years. For example, it has been shown that advertising creativity has a positive effects on consumers' own creativity (Rosengren, Dahlén & Modig, 2013) and that value-laden advertisements can influence the behavior of those exposed to an ad, making the viewers' assimilate with the "advertised values" (Defever, Pandelaere & Roe, 2011). Also, studies have shown that advertising is an interactive social experience, which influences the social impact an ad will have on consumers (Puntoni & Tavassoli, 2007).

A term related to the subject of discussion is *symbolic annihilation*, introduced by Gerbner and Gross (1976). This concept is used to describe how some groups are not being represented in media, for example due to sex, social status or ethnicity, and how this results in sustained social inequalities (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). Tuchman (1978) looked closer at women in media, and divided this concept into three parts: trivialization, condemnation and omission. The last part, omission, is particularly relevant for this study, since we are exploring the effects of the mere

exposure to an ethnic minority model in an advertisement. When a group, for example an ethnic minority group, is being repressed in its media coverage, they are subjected to symbolic annihilation. This means that people will eventually internalize this omission, which contributes to the ethnic minority being perceived as less important and will have a subordinate position in people's conception of the world (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). These concepts have been central for many years, and still are. Brooks and Hébert (2006) looked closer into gender and race in media, stating that both these identities are social constructs. They summarize these concepts well by saying that: "Media, in short, are central to what ultimately comes to represent our social realities" (Brooks & Hébert 2006, 297).

It has also been shown that repeated exposure to an ad with certain content can be enough to change the attitude towards that content (Bornstein & D'Agostino, 1992). This phenomenon, known as *the mere exposure effect*, implicates that advertisements can change the viewer's attitude toward the stimuli on an unconscious level. This connects to this study, since what we are investigating is how *subtle* changes in an ad stimulus can possibly create effects beyond mere brand effects.

Based on this reasoning, we hypothesize the following relating to the unintended effects of advertising:

HYPOTHESIS 3

Exposure to an advertisement using an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) will positively affect the attitude toward immigrants.

2.6 Summary

According to the reasoning above we expect to find evidence that will indicate that the use of a model with a minority heritage will not negatively affect the perception of the ad and brand or the contact and purchase intention. We also expect that we will find a positive correlation between the exposure to a minority model and the participant's attitude toward immigrants.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Chosen Approach

To be able to use earlier research and apply it to the Swedish market we chose a deductive approach (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). In accordance with a deductive approach the hypotheses were derived from theory, which we then want to test empirically.

3.2 Design of Study

In order to get a higher possibility of reaching credible conclusions and because we want to find results that are projectable to a larger population (Bryman & Bell, 2011) a quantitative research method was applied. A deductive approach was chosen since we need to test old theories developed in another country in a new setting (Bryman & Bell, 2011). We are interested in looking at evidence for causal relationships. Therefore, we are using an experimental research design, where we can manipulate the independent variable in a controlled environment (Malhotra & Birks, 2006).

3.3 Design of Experiment

In the experiment we used a control group that was exposed to an advertisement with a model that belongs to the ethnic majority and a test group that was exposed to an advertisement with a model that belongs to an ethnic minority. Following this, we let the two groups answer two sets of questions. The first set of questions related to the participants' perception of the advertisement, brand and their own purchase intentions. This is also referred to as the traditionally intended effects of advertising. The second set was comprised of a set of questions which purpose was to capture the unintended effects that we chose to examine in this study. That is, the effect of the advertisement on the participants' views and attitudes regarding immigrants.

The questions about the respondents' attitude toward immigration can be considered as sensitive information, thus, we used a couple of well-established techniques in order to get the participants to answer these questions and to avoid biased answers (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). To avoid skepticism, we asked these questions at the end of the questionnaire. To get further legitimacy, we stated that the second part of the survey would cover some political questions, which are

relevant since there will be an election in Sweden this coming fall, this in order to sever the connection between the first set of questions and the second set of questions. To establish involvement we asked some general questions about politics, covering areas such as school, health care and public transport. By doing this, the participants will hopefully be more willing to answer the more controversial questions at the end. This format was also a technique that helped us to somewhat disguise the purpose of the questions in the second part, which is another way to increase the willingness to answer sensitive questions (Malhotra & Birks, 2006).

3.4 Design of experiment questions

The first part of the study uses seven-point semantic differential scales with bipolar labels (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). In order to enhance the internal reliability and to ensure that the underlying concept is captured, we used multiple-item measures to investigate the dependent variables (Bryman & Bell, 2011). All measurements used are well established and have been tested for reliability and validity in previous studies.

The questions regarding attitude towards immigrants were instead measured by a Likert scale, where the respondents were asked to fill in their state of agreement with different statements (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). Since we wanted this part to be in the same format as the first part, we used a seven-point scale here as well.

3.5 Variables of investigation

3.5.1 Independent variable, *stimulus*

The experiment consists of an advertisement for a sports jacket. To avoid having the participants' preconceived attitudes towards a certain brand influence the results on brand attitude, and to better isolate the effects, we chose to use a mock brand (Dahlén, Rosengren, Törn & Öhman, 2008).

The ads featured two models of different ethnicities: one belonging to the ethnic majority (Scandinavian) and one belonging to an ethnic minority (African descent). The pictures used in the ads, which can be found in the appendix, were taken from H&M's webpage. The fact that these are real commercial pictures should positively influence the perceived legitimacy of the advertisement in the experiment. After considering a large number of pictures, these were chosen because the models are wearing almost identical jackets, have similar facial expressions, are

similar in their physical appearance and posture, and also because the difference in their ethnical heritage is evident. This limits the risk of other factors influencing the results.

Then, we added price information and the logo of the mock brand, Active, in order to make the pictures look like an actual ad. The pictures were a bit modified in order to look as similar as possible, making them nearly identical, except for the ethnicity of the models.

3.5.2 Dependent variables of investigation

Ad Attitude

To test for changes in ad attitude we asked the subjects to rate their opinion of the ad, on three seven point semantic differential scales: *Bad/Good*, *Negative/Positive*, *Unfavourable/Favourable* (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). From these questions we then created an index, measuring ad attitude using the mean of the three variables (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.950).

Brand Attitude

To measure brand attitude, we used three different statements, answered using seven-point semantic scales. The statements posed were: *My opinion of the brand Active is: Bad/Good, Pleasant/Unpleasant, Favorable/Unfavorable* (MacKenzie & Lutz, 1989). The means of these variables were then computed in a brand attitude index (Cronbach's Alpha=0.980).

Purchase Intention and Contact Intention

Intention is usually measured in *purchase intention* and *contact intention* (Machleit, Madden & Allen, 1990). Both types of intention were measured by a seven point scale where the following statements were rated: *If you were looking for a track jacket how likely is it that you would buy it from Active? How likely is it that you would visit Active's website for more information regarding their assortment?* (*Probable/Improbable, Likely/Unlikely, Possible/Impossible*) (Machleit et al., 1990). The means for these variables were then computed into two indexes: contact intention index (Cronbach's Alpha 0.756) and purchase intention index (Cronbach's Alpha 0.829).

Unintended Effects – Immigrant Attitude

To measure the possible unintended effects the advertisement might have on participants, we are using a set of questions used when conducting the yearly study *Mångfaldsbarometern*, which is a study that aims to measure the attitudes toward ethnic diversity among the Swedish population (Mella, Ahmadi, & Palm, 2013). We have changed some of these statements to better fit the purpose of this experiment. The statements consist of three positive statements (*Society should*

create opportunities for immigrants to preserve their cultural traditions, Immigrants who arrive here should be given the same social rights as the rest of the population, It is good if immigrants who arrive in Sweden keep their native language and teach their children that language) and three negative statements (*Many immigrants arrive in Sweden just to exploit our social benefits, Swedes feel a greater responsibility for their work than the foreigners that have arrived in Sweden, Foreigners that have committed a crime in Sweden should be forced to leave the country*).

In order to test these statements, we used a seven-degree Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). The negative statements were then recoded by reversing the scale. To make an index, we used the means of the variables (Cronbach’s Alpha=0.755).

3.6 Collection of Data

Since we want to be able to make generalizations about, and draw practical implications from, our findings, we wanted the population in the sample to be as close to representative of the Swedish population as possible. The use of students in experiments in social sciences has been questioned (Sears, 1986), and if we would have used a student sample in this case it might have biased the results.

We did not want to have a convenience sample since it would not be representative of the whole population. To find people who are as representative as possible, we wanted the sample to consist of people from different age groups and from different places in Sweden. To find participants, we asked a random sample of people in Stockholm. In order to get as random a sample as possible and to minimize potential disturbances, we distributed the surveys at several different occasions. We distributed the surveys in three different days, at different times of the day, between April 4th and April 8th. We asked people at T-centralen and also in Kungsträdgården, since at both these places one can find people from a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Also, in these places a lot of people are sitting down and will be more willing to participate in our experiment as opposed to people that are out running errands or shopping which would mean that they would be less interested in participating.

Before going out on the streets asking people to participate in our study, we looked at some Swedish census data (e.g. age distributions, gender and ethnicity) to roughly identify the number of people that should be in each subgroup in our sample. We did this in order to make the sample reflect the total population as much as possible. This type of sampling is referred to as quota sampling, and this sampling procedure is claimed to be almost as good as probability

sampling, where each unit in the population has a known chance of being selected (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Even though we did not use strict quotas, our sample is a somewhat adequate reflection of the total population. This method lowers the sampling error more than when using a convenience sample. However, a probability sample was not conducted because of its complexity.

One important factor to have in mind when conducting surveys on the street is the *interviewer effect* (Dijkstra, 1983). That is, the variance of responses that can be attributed to the characteristics of the interviewer, for example the possibility that the interviewer's gender or ethnicity will affect the responses. There were two of us distributing the surveys, one man and one woman, one of an ethnic majority and one of an ethnic minority. We divided the surveys according to the stimulus, and split the surveys evenly between us and because of this we believe that the interviewer effects are being limited sufficiently.

A total of 199 individuals were part of the study. Three respondents were excluded since they do not live in Sweden at the moment. Another four respondents were excluded due to missing answers in the whole second part of the survey. This leaves us with a total of 192 subjects, 56% women and 44% men. The age distribution ranged from 15 to 79 years (with a mean of 37.8 years). The respondents live in many different parts of Sweden, with a vast majority (124) of the respondents living in Stockholm. Since we are interested in investigating how people in Sweden in general respond to advertisements using models from different ethnicities, we wanted to include people from different ethnicities in our sample population. In the sample, 76% of the respondents identified themselves as of Northern European heritage and the rest identified themselves with other ethnicities, which reflects the demographics in Sweden rather well (SCB, 2013). The respondents are nearly equally distributed ($92 < n < 99$) between the different independent variables.

Table 1 – Participant Groups

CONTROL GROUP	EXPERIMENT GROUP
Majority model	Minority model
99 participants	92 participants
Mean age: 37.0 (range 15-70)	Mean age: 38.6 (range 18-79)
Women: 54.5% Men: 44.4% Other 1%	Women: 56.5% Men: 43.5%
Northern European heritage: 82.7%	Northern European heritage: 68.1%

The figures above show that between the two groups, there are no large differences that could possibly affect the results. However, there is a small difference in the percentage of participants with a northern European heritage between the two groups. Since this difference might be of significance to the results, we are taking this into consideration, as described below in section 4.1.

3.7 Credibility of the study

3.7.1 Reliability

The reliability of the study depends on to what extent the measured variables are free from measurement errors and to what extent a measurement will generate consistent results if the process would be repeated (Malhotra & Birks, 2006; Söderlund, 2005). In order to be reliable, the survey should be free from random measuring errors (Söderlund, 2005). Throughout the study, measurements that have been used in previous research were used and as such they have been tested before which raises the reliability.

In order to increase the reliability in terms of stability, it is common to use a “test-retest” method, i.e. doing the same test with the same sample at two different occasions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Due to practicalities, and the problems associated with the procedure, this method was not used in this study. However, we distributed the survey on several different occasions, which controls for external factors influencing the results.

We have used questions based on multi-item scales measuring the same dependent variable to reach a high internal consistency (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). To investigate to what extent the questions were measuring the same thing, they have been checked for reliability using the measurement Cronbach’s alpha. There is no real consensus in what level of the measurement is

considered to be sufficient, according to Malhotra and Birks, (2006), a value above 0.6 is considered to be satisfying, while Bryman and Bell (2011) suggest that a value of 0.8 is commonly used as a rule of thumb. In our indexes, we had Cronbach's alpha over 0.755, which should be considered sufficient.

With regard to this, we strongly believe that the experiment can be carried out again and still show the same results, which argues for reliability (Söderlund, 2005).

3.7.2 Validity

The concept of validity tells to what extent a study is really measuring what it is supposed to measure (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). A high validity is needed in order to be able to draw valid conclusions that can be generalized to a broader population. The validity can be divided into four categories:

Internal Validity

The internal validity refers to whether the independent variables really are the only variables that are causing the observed effects (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). Since the independent variables in this study (the pictures used in the advertisements) are very much alike, with the ethnicity being the only relevant difference between the two pictures, we argue that the possibility that other extraneous variables are influencing the dependent variables is low. Thus, the internal validity can be considered high. Since the respondents were randomly assigned to one of the advertisements, the potential occurrence of extraneous variables was further controlled for.

External Validity

A high external validity means that the results from the experiment apply to, and can be used to draw generalizations about, a larger population (Malhotra & Birks, 2006). This connects to the selection of respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2011). As we have argued for earlier, the external validity in our study is relatively high. We randomly asked regular people on the street in an attempt to try to reflect as broad a range of people living in Sweden as possible.

Measurement Validity

The measurement validity refers to whether a measure actually measures what it is intended to measure (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To be valid, a measurement needs to be free from both random *and* systematic measurement errors (Söderlund, 2005). Throughout the survey, we have used reliable multi-item measures previously used in other research, to minimize measurement errors.

Ecological Validity

The ecological validity refers to whether the results are applicable to real life situations (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The experiment is tested in an artificial environment and thus we need to be careful not to make too broad generalizations about the results. There might be some differences in how the respondents reacted to the advertisement in a printed survey, and how they would have reacted if they would have seen the advertisement on a billboard or in a magazine. When conducting studies confronting people with questionnaires, there will always be some form of abnormality in the findings, resulting in a limited ecological validity (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The fact that we also used a mock-brand in this study also lowers the ecological validity, since most of the times when we see an ad in real life we are already familiar with the brand featured in the ad. But we argue that the negative effect is smaller than the benefits of using a mock-brand, as discussed earlier in section 3.5.1.

4 RESULTS

4.1 Processing of data

The hypotheses were tested by analyzing the reported means using independent t-tests. The means for the (indexed) dependent variables were compared between the control group and the experiment group. We are also separately reporting the results for the ethnic majority participants, i.e. those of northern European heritage. This, in order to actively control if the reason for the lower means in the control group is that there is a higher frequency of majority participants there, which might have manifested through white backlash.

4.2 Summary of data

The reported results range from 1-7, where 7 is always the most *positive* end of the scale. Throughout the analysis, if nothing else is mentioned and if results have p-value below 0.1, the results are accepted as significant. The results are being presented below:

Table 2 - Individual t-test results

DEPENDENT VARIABLE	MAJORITY MODEL (MEAN)	MINORITY MODEL (MEAN)	P-VALUE
Ad attitude			
All respondents	4.11	4.88	0.00
<i>Ethnic majority participants</i>	<i>4.17</i>	<i>4.95</i>	<i>0.00</i>
Brand Attitude			
All respondents	4.06	4.59	0.00
<i>Ethnic majority participants</i>	<i>4.13</i>	<i>4.44</i>	<i>0.05</i>
Purchase Intention			
All respondents	2.50	2.88	0.07
<i>Ethnic majority participants</i>	<i>2.51</i>	<i>2.81</i>	<i>0.15</i>
Contact Intention			
All respondents	2.65	3.38	0.00
<i>Ethnic majority participants</i>	<i>2.73</i>	<i>3.21</i>	<i>0.06</i>
Immigrant Attitude			
All respondents	4.94	5.30	0.02
<i>Ethnic majority participants</i>	<i>4.82</i>	<i>5.21</i>	<i>0.03</i>

4.3 Individually reported results

4.3.1 Ad attitude and brand attitude

The results show a positive significant difference in ad attitude. Those exposed to the ad using a minority model were more positive to the ad than those exposed to the majority model (diff=0.77). The same holds for brand attitude where there is also a significant positive difference, in favor of those who were exposed to the ad with the ethnic minority model (diff=0.53).

Since there is a larger extent of ethnic majority respondents in the control group, we also wanted to control if this may have affected the results. We did this because there is a possibility that the minority participants will skew the results in favor of the minority model. However, there is still a significant difference in both ad attitude (diff=0.78) and brand attitude (diff=0.31) when looking at the majority group separately, indicating that the difference in the frequency of ethnic majorities in the control group versus the experiment group is negligible.

Thus, empirical evidence support both **Hypothesis 1.a:** *Ad-attitude will not be negatively affected by the use of an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) in an advertisement*, as well as **Hypothesis 1.b:** *Brand attitude will not be negatively affected by the use of an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) in an advertisement*.

4.3.2 Purchase intention and contact intention

Purchase intention was positively affected when the participants were exposed to the ad using the ethnic minority model (diff=0.38). However, when looking only at the majority viewers there is no significant support for a difference in purchase intention ($p=0.15$). Since there is no significant difference when observing the majority participants on their own one can conclude that there is no negative effect of using a minority model even for the majority participants.

The conclusion is that evidence does support **Hypothesis 2.a:** *Purchase intention will not be negatively affected by the use of an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) in an advertisement*.

A positive significant difference was found in contact intention between the participants exposed to the advertisement featuring the minority model versus the ad featuring the majority model (diff=0.73). There is also a significant difference (diff=0.48) when looking at the ethnic majority

viewers separately, indicating that evidence supports **Hypothesis 2.b:** *Contact intention will not be negatively affected by the use of an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) in an advertisement.*

4.3.3 Attitude towards immigrants

The results show that there is a small, but significant, difference (diff=0.36) in favor of those exposed to the ad using the ethnic minority model. There is also a significant difference (diff=0.39) for the ethnic majority participants alone. That is, evidence supports **Hypothesis.3:** *Exposure to an advertisement using an ethnic minority model (vs. an ethnic majority model) will positively affect the attitude toward immigrants.*

In summary, there is empirical support for all of the hypotheses.

5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The aim of this study has been to shed light on the possible positive unintended effects of using ethnic minority models in advertising. Also, the intention was to take some of the existing base of knowledge that American research has provided on the traditionally intended effects of using ethnic minority models in advertising and use it to open up for new ideas that might arise when testing whether or not these theories are applicable to the Swedish market. In essence, what has been tested is if firms can positively affect the social climate for ethnic minorities in Sweden by including ethnic minorities in their advertising and if this will decimate the economic outcome of said advertisements.

The results from our experiment show no negative effects of using ethnic minorities in advertising. On the contrary, we found positive effects on all the traditionally intended effects of advertising. This study implicates that it is possible to say that including ethnic minorities in advertisements is beneficial to the firm's brand and for the specific advertisement. The results imply that one will also be more likely to purchase the specific product *and* more likely to search for additional products from the brand's assortment after being exposed to an advertisement featuring a minority model. Perhaps the most intriguing part of the study is the fact that through just a one-time exposure to an ethnic minority in a single advertisement, we were able to see positive significant differences in the participants' attitude towards immigrants.

5.1 Unintended effects

The fact that it was possible to positively influence the participants' attitudes towards immigrants through exposure to an advertisement with an ethnic minority model is supported by the theory of social annihilation (Gerbner & Gross, 1976). However, it is rather surprising that the attitudes were affected through just a single exposure. A possible explanation for the swift shift in attitudes might be the fact that the model in the advertisement was portrayed in a positive light. This relates to the first out of the three parts that make up the theory of social annihilation: trivialization (Tuchman, 1978). This concept explains that if a certain group of people is portrayed in media in a negative manner and as less important, then this will lead to people perceiving them as less important in society. Since in this case, the model is portrayed in a positive manner, the ensuing attitudes of the participants were positive as well.

Another possible explanation for the quick effect on immigrant attitude might be that the participants that were exposed to the minority model realized the underlying theme of minorities in advertising more than the ones who were exposed to the majority model. This could lead to a desire to answer the questions in a manner that would portray the participants in a positive way. This is referred to as *social desirability bias* (Söderlund, 2005). Nevertheless, the way the questions regarding immigrant attitude were managed, by putting them at the end of the survey preceded by other political questions, should have limited the social desirability bias as much as possible. The fact that the effect was instantaneous gives rise to the question of what effect a prolonged presence of minorities in advertising would have on peoples' attitudes towards immigrants. What is very evident is the responsibility that marketers have in portraying an accurate representation of the population.

5.2 Traditionally intended effects

That there was a significant positive difference in the traditional intended effects in favor of the advertisement featuring a minority model is surprising, since according to Bush et al. (1979) there should have been no such difference. According to Deshpandé and Stayman (1994), there should have been a difference in favor of the advertisement featuring an ethnic majority model. These results are more in line with the implications of Aaker et al. (2000) who stated that the majority consumers will not be alienated as long as they still feel targeted by other cues in the advertisement. Still, the reason for positive difference remains unanswered by previous research on the subject and more speculative explanations might be needed.

Sweden's rating as the most diversity ready country in the world (SHRM, 2008) might have more to do with the results than previously expected. It is evident that prejudice against the minority population does not hinder the participants from forming positive attitudes toward the advertisement featuring the minority model. Something that also could have influenced the results is that in recent years, a small part of the population has started expressing hostility towards immigrants. This has occurred parallel to the rise of an immigrant hostile political party, which has in some capacity altered the contemporary political climate. Currently this small part of the population is making a lot of noise and as a result the remaining part of the population, which does not agree with their opinions, is taking a clear stand against immigrant hostility (Mella, Ahmadi & Palm, 2013). When a company includes minorities in their advertising people might see this as the company taking the same clear stand against immigrant hostility and this leads to a positive response to the advertisement.

Since ethnic minorities are currently being underrepresented in advertising (Petersson, 2008) their presence might be considered incongruent. Incongruence, in the form of unexpected but relevant information, in an advertisement generally gets a positive response from consumers (Lee & Mason, 1999). This is yet another possible explanation for the positive effects that the minority model had on the traditionally intended effects of marketing.

The only dependent variable, for which we did not find significant support for a *positive* difference in favor of the ad exposing the ethnic minority model, was the purchase intention when looking solely at the ethnic majority participants. Machleit et al. (1990) argue that it is easier to affect the interest for a brand than the actual attitude towards that brand. This means that it is easier to affect the contact intention, since this is related to the interest for a brand, than the purchase intention, which has to do with the attitude towards the brand. Since the minority participants' purchase and contact intention were higher when exposed to the minority model an assumption could be made that the minority participants feel a sense of inclusion when any minority is present in an advertisement. Meaning, that in this case what is most salient for the minority participants is not actually their own ethnicity but their standing as a minority in our society. In accordance with distinctiveness theory this leads to a stronger positive reaction for the minority participants when exposed to the ethnic minority advertisement, which lead to stronger positive reactions in both purchase and contact intention.

5.3 Limitations

Certain constraints were present during the study, such as the time constraint and the difficulty of trying to present the ad in a natural setting. Time and the nature of the study limited us to exposing the participants to the advertisement only once. If we would have been able to do this over a period of time where the respondents were systematically exposed to advertisements of this sort, we could possibly have recorded a stronger impact on their attitudes. Having to answer the questions with one of the interviewers nearby might also have altered the answers, although as previously stated we believe that the interviewer effect was limited as much as possible.

In the study, we chose to use a model of an ethnic minority that would be as differentiated from the ethnic majority as possible. Taking into account that there has been very little research done on the area in Sweden and that there is no precedence when it comes to this type of study; there was no clear choice when deciding the ethnicity of the minority model to use in the experiment. We can however not determine if the results might have been different if we had chosen a model

of a different ethnic minority. Also the model's gender is another factor that could be manipulated in this type of study to possibly alter the results.

Another limitation in this study is that we only examined the effects of an advertisement with one type of product. There might be different reactions for consumers depending on which type of product is being displayed in an advertisement using an ethnic minority model depending on what type of associations the participants have to the product (Cohen, 1992). The fact that we used a fashion product might limit the generalization that can be made across industries.

Also, due to the nature of the study, the best choice was to use a printed media advertisement. If it had been possible to include television commercials or other media we might have gotten different results seeing as how printed media does not provide sound or movement to help reach out to the consumers.

One possible downside in our sample is that in the group having seen the minority model, there were fewer people of a northern European heritage than in the group that had seen the majority model. This is something that could possibly have altered the results and skew it in favor of the advertisement using the minority model. However, when separating the participants that were of the ethnic majority from the rest of the group, we still found support for all of our hypotheses. In the total sample, there is an overrepresentation of participants from Stockholm, which limits the generalizations that can be made across geographical areas.

5.4 Academic and managerial implications

5.4.1 Further research

That we got positive differences in favor of the advertisement with an ethnic minority model through just one exposure should open up for more research in the area. There is still need to explore what effects there will be from exposure to ethnic minority models over time. Also, in this study we only investigated the unintended effects in term of attitude towards immigrants, by applying an established measurement. A person's attitude toward minority groups is complex, and further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding.

We can only speculate as to what the actual *key drivers* of the recorded effects on the traditionally intended effects of marketing are. Was the advertisement featuring the minority model received better because the content of the advertisement is incongruent and the consumers respond

positively to this or was it because of what the inclusion of ethnic minority models signifies in terms of inclusiveness and integration? This type of identification with the values that the advertisement is conveying might be the driver that calls for most attention. As the modern day consumer is exposed to countless advertising messages every day there might be a need for a more value laden type of targeting where the consumer can feel that he or she can relate to the advertisement on a more complex intellectual level.

Previous research has for example focused on differences between more or less prejudice ethnic majority viewers (Cagley & Cardozo, 1970; Bush et al., 1979). Is the ethnic majority's level of prejudice the main reason for the negative reactions that previous research has experienced to ethnic minorities in advertising? Studies of this kind could be important for further investigation. However, these differences are interesting in understanding *why* we got the results we did, but they are of less practical value, since marketers rarely, if ever, segment the market on grounds of consumer's levels of prejudice.

5.4.2 Practical implications

Since our study shows that it is possible to gain *both* economic *and* social positive effects from a single advertisement, we believe this study is of real interest to both academics as well as business practitioners. The most important contribution of this study is that, on the Swedish market, there appears to be no *negative* effects of using ethnic minority models in advertising. On the contrary, we have shown that the use of minority models has *positive* effects on both the traditionally intended effects and also has *positive* unintended effects, that is, consumers' attitude towards immigrants appears to become more positive when exposed to an ad that features a minority model. Therefore, Swedish marketers should not fear white backlash as much, since according to our study, this phenomenon does not seem to influence the Swedish market that much.

This raises questions regarding what level of corporate social responsibility to demand from firms. Since we show that positive unintended effects can be found without any loss of economic benefits, the use of ethnic minority models in printed advertisements should be encouraged. This implies that companies should be able to take more social responsibility, when it comes to not excluding models of ethnic minority heritage in advertisements. If including ethnic minorities in advertising can conjure economic and social benefits, why should any marketers hesitate in doing so? We hope that this study will help raise awareness on the field of using ethnic minorities in advertising, since many marketers might not currently even consider this matter. Because of the, up until now, lack of Swedish research on the field, those who already consider this subject might

be too careful when it comes to using an ethnically mixed composition in their casting of models. Hopefully, this study can raise some doubt regarding the notion of ethnicity as an obstacle when it comes to choosing which person that should represent a product or firm in an advertisement.

6 LITERATURE AND SOURCES

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7 APPENDIX

7.1 Ethnic minority ad, experiment group



7.2 Ethnic majority ad, control group

