

The effect of images in C2C advertisements

A quantitative study of how different types of images affect consumer behaviour - when purchasing a used car at blocket.se

Today business communication is not just about businesses talking to consumers or other businesses; it's about consumers talking to consumers (C2C). Websites such as Blocket.se and eBay.com provide innovative platforms where ordinary people can trade freely. Since the Internet is a relatively new platform for C2C-commerce, our understanding of a buyer's behaviour in this context is incomplete. Consequently, it seems that the fast emergence of C2C e-commerce has left scholars behind.

The purpose of this thesis is to conduct an experiment providing more in-depth research, mapping the importance images play when selling in C2C, and more importantly investigating how sellers can best use images to advertise their used car online. The focus of this study is to investigate how the use of different images, of the same car, affects a consumer's interest toward an advertisement. The study also aims to understand whether or not a smiling person in the image, considered as emotion-loaded marketing, further influences the consumers' interest in visiting the ad and contacting the seller by e-mail. In total, five almost identical "test ads" (the only difference between them was the image used) were uploaded to Blocket.se. The number of clicks and e-mails for each advertisement were then measured and compared.

The results indicate that the use of images, no matter the quality, has a significant positive impact on the number of clicks and e-mails. The results further show that the highest number of e-mails sent to the seller was seen among advertisements with images that are qualified as good (with or without a smiling person) as well as the image qualified as inferior, but *including* the emotionally loaded marketing element of a smiling person. Our findings suggest that a smiling person has no significant positive impact on either the number of clicks or the number of e-mails for an image that is perceived as good. However, they do indicate that a smiling person in an inferior image would increase the number of clicks as well as e-mails, compared to an inferior image without the smiling person.

Keywords: C2C, Visual Presentation, Image, Emotion-loaded marketing, E-commerce

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1. Introduction

Throughout much of the recorded history of human life, trading of goods and services is believed to have taken place. In the earliest of times these were exchanged for one another, whilst traders of modern times generally negotiate through a well-defined medium of exchange - such as fiat money. Though much can be said about how we as humans do business with each other, one thing is for sure. The ways of trading have undoubtedly developed over the years.

Today business communication is not just about businesses talking to consumers or other businesses; it's about consumers talking to consumers (C2C), or as some refer to as people talking to people. More consumers are nowadays taking the role of the reseller by taking advantage of online consumer-to-consumer (C2C) sites (Chu, 2013). If you are in need of quickly earning some money, Blocket.se and eBay.com are two of many giant websites that can help you earn hundreds or even thousands of dollars selling your second-hand goods.

Online, there are two executions credited within the origin of C2C. These are classifieds and auctions. Both of which have been widely used in the past but have in recent years evolved online with many twists. The C2C advertisement (the ad) is in contrast to advertisement in medias like newspapers and magazines, being promoted and publicized once sellers decide to officially put the ad online. Potential buyers instantly become aware of the products or services offered by conducting searches for ads on these websites. Aside from possible fees and/or commissions that are imposed by the auction or listing site, advertising through ads in C2C does not require a significant amount of money. Moreover, anyone can now buy, sell or advertise a product in the convenience of one's own living room.

Websites such as Blocket.se and eBay.com provide sellers with a simple and standardized toolkit for constructing their ads. The benefit of this is its simplicity, enabling almost any person to construct a C2C ad. The downside is however the similarity of ads this simplicity creates, resulting in a high number of almost identical ads. Which of course for some hampers the selling process.

For interactions, and ultimately, transactions; C2C e-commerce is a growing area. However, very little is known about the buyers and sellers, in these transactions (Lori,

2012). In both B2B and B2C contexts, numerous studies have been conducted, determining how a seller best uses simple means to enhance ad performance. The use of images represents such a tool. Much academic research can be found on how images can be used to give a seller an advantage (see chapter 2.0 Literature review and hypotheses generation). Unfortunately, very little can be found on how a seller, in a C2C context best uses images to give his/her ad an advantage.

Since the Internet is a relatively new tool for the C2C trading of goods, our understanding of its impact on a buyer's behaviour is incomplete. Consequently it seems that the fast emergence of C2C commerce has left scholars behind. The purpose of this thesis is therefore to conduct an experiment that provides more in-depth research, mapping the importance of images when selling in C2C, and more importantly investigating how sellers can best use images when selling to other consumers.

1.1 Definitions

- o **A Buyer** is any person who, in return for some form of consideration, agrees to acquire an asset.
- o **A potential buyer** is someone who is interested in buying, but may not, whereas a buyer is committed to buying.
- o **A seller** is someone that offers to make a sale to an actual or potential buyer.
- o **Classified advertisement** is a brief form of advertisement found under headings with others of the same category. It is particularly common in papers as well as online. Further, advertisement and ads will be used interchangeably.
- o **Listing site** is a website where sellers can put items for sale through classified ads.
- o **Blocket.se** is Sweden's largest listing site.
- o **An auction** is a process of buying and selling by offering items up for bidding. The item is bought by the highest bidder.
- o **An auction site** administers different forms of auctions over the Internet.
- o **EBay.com** is the world's largest website for online auctions.
- o **Title/Overview** is where the seller usually provides basic information such as ad title and price on a listing site or auction site. The main purpose of the

title/overview is to make people click your ad over others, enter it to read more about the item.

- o **The Title image** – is an optional feature a seller can use to compliment his/her title overview in order to attract more consumers into (1) visit in the ad and (2) contact the seller.
- o **The Item description** – can be seen by the buyer after clicking on to the ad of choice. The item description is usually used to provide a more detailed description about the item condition, shipping, payment and return policy.

1.2 Background

Long before the Internet became casual, there were businesses selling to other businesses as well as to consumers. Many say that the Internet has helped companies create new ways of making business. For that matter, the Internet is also said to have developed and helped build the current C2C landscape. The concept of C2C simply builds upon the fact that some people wish to purchase items/products others seek to liquidate. To leverage on this, classified and auction based sites such as Blocket.se and eBay.com are both facilitating and developing the standard for how to conduct business online, using innovative ways that allow consumers to interact and trade with each other (Chu, 2013). These sites are well known and trustworthy which is important, as we know that the credibility (Strader and Ramaswami, 2002) and quality of a C2C website is an important factor in the C2C business (Fan et al. 2013). One of the benefits that the Internet offers a consumer is the way that they can more effectively search and evaluate alternatives (Ratchford et al. 2003). Compared to only reading a text, browsing the web activates more of our senses. This since it is a medium where sound and visuals can be activated more easily to influence us. Many people seem to have understood this and images are therefore very common in classified and auction-based sites such as Blocket.se and eBay.com.

A common figure of speech reads, - “A pictures is worth a thousand words” (Martin, G. 1996). This refers to the notion that just watching a single image can convey something very complex. Of course, it is not to be taken literally, yet it indicates that visuals can have a very powerful impact on one’s perception of something, be it negative or positive. Images have the ability to communicate and influence us, and

can, if dealt with in the right way, be used as an effective tool of marketing (Messaris, 1997).

1.3 Purpose

When trying to sell a product at an auction or listing site online, it is essential for you as a seller to get the consumers to pay attention to your ad. In other words, directing buyers to your C2C ad is a prerequisite for selling. The likelihood that a buyer will purchase your item increases with the number of buyers that click on your ad. It is however also essential to get the consumer interested in contacting you as a seller, or raising a bid, after having clicked on your ad.

There is today no research mapping out the impact images have on ad traffic and on interest in buying the product in a C2C context. According to previous research, good visuals are important, but it is still unknown how big of an impact they have in a C2C setting. More importantly, there is no academic evidence showing how the use of images affects the odds of selling in a C2C market. Can a seller expect the same results if using a good, bad or even no image at all in his ad - or are there differences?

The aim of this thesis is preliminary to answer the above-mentioned complexities by conducting a practical experiment, consisting of several test ads, investigating the factual impact images have in a C2C context. The thesis is further meant to provide additional insights in how a more unconventional type of image, an emotion-loaded image, could affect people visiting the ad and contacting the seller by email.

The thesis purpose was finally decomposed into – *Investigating how different types of images, used in an online C2C ad, affect the number of clicks on the ad as well as e-mails sent to the seller.*

The five types of images that were to be investigated were:

- *An image that is perceived as good*
- *An image that is perceived as bad*
- *An image that is perceived as good including a smiling person*
- *An image that is perceived as bad including a smiling person*

- *No image at all*

By finding this out, we wished to help consumers optimizing their own ads so that they can sell their used products more easily online.

1.4 Delimitations

It should first of all be noted that there were several ways for us to address and solve the research question of this thesis. Yet, given the time limit facing us, we decided to make a number of delimitations. Narrowing our scope made the purpose more concrete so that we could strengthen the experimental design and ensure higher quality in our findings.

Firstly, it should be mentioned that our experiment was limited to the investigation of a single C2C website site, focusing on a single item category. This means that our findings are only truly reliable in the exact same setting. However, since the similarities are big between C2C categories as well as websites, we expect our findings to be generalizable in a much wider context (i.e. to more C2C websites and categories), even though this cannot be scientifically proven by this study. The reason for choosing to use a car advertisement on the website blocket.se is described in section 3.5.1 and 3.5.2.

Further, as is described in 3.7.1, several choices of how to design the ad in the experiment had to be done. The choices of a worded title and item description are elements that surely affects the sales process of an item, so does their combination with an image. This thesis does not investigate these additional two factors. These equations would have been too complex to execute.

The experiment focuses to some extent on emotion-loaded marketing in general and joy in particular. It should be noted that emotion-loaded marketing is a complex concept including lots of factors, not only joy. For example a respondent might react differently to an image including a man compared to an image including a woman, and the level of attractiveness of these “models” can affect the reactions as well (Söderlund, 2003). Even though this study focuses on studying the images effect on joy, one should be aware of that there are other factors that are not studied in this thesis, which could affect the results as well.

1.5 Expected contribution

By providing much needed research on the relationship between images and the success of C2C advertising, our study not only contributes to existing knowledge about visual persuasion, but to the relatively unexplored field of C2C e-commerce as well. We foremost hope to confirm whether current B2C theory is consistent with the behaviour of C2C consumers. In addition to this, our objective was to bring two more main contributions:

Firstly, our wish was to provide accurate information that can help people trying to navigate on how to best construct a C2C ad in an online setting.

Secondly, we wanted to lay a foundation that scholars can expand on and use for future research.

1.6 Thesis Outline

1. **Chapter one is the introductory part** that you have just read. It meant to provide the scope and direction of our thesis. Hopefully you now know the focus of the paper.
2. **The second chapter consists of a literature review** that describes the particular field of study. Useful theories and previous research are described and used to generate a range of hypotheses relevant for this thesis to fulfil its purpose.
3. **The third chapter provides an explanation of the methods used** in the completion of this thesis. It starts by describing how C2C and blocket.se works in more detail, in order for the reader to understand the other parts of the thesis better. The methodology further includes a short description of how we set the thesis purpose, to later explain the scientific approach as well our research and experimental design.
4. **The results of our pre-study as well as the main study are presented in Part 4.** A presentation of whether the hypotheses are supported, or not, is included.
5. **Part 5, is a discussion of our findings.** The discussion involves a conclusion in relation to the thesis purpose, criticism towards the study, to finally be ended with suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review and Hypothesis generation

This chapter includes a literature review focusing on visual presentation. The power of images, emotion-loaded images, and characteristics of a "good" and of a "bad" image will be discussed. The presented research will be used to generate a range of hypotheses relevant for this thesis to fulfil its purpose.

2.1 Visual presentation

E-commerce is growing bigger and bigger (Baldwin, 2013) and is therefore becoming more and more important. As some of the limitations of having a physical store do not occur in an online environment, the e-commerce opens up for new opportunities. One such opportunity is that a larger number of options can be offered (Townsend and Kahn, 2014). Visiting e-commerce websites today, it is not uncommon that you can scroll through pages of pages of offered products, presented through images. As is well known within the marketing theory, a large number of alternatives is however not always positive. The complexity can cause information overload that can lead to the consumer opting out of choice. (Jacoby et al., 1974) An interesting question therefore is, what is the optimal way of presenting a product online, on a site where lots of other products are presented? In this thesis, we will investigate how we can affect the interest towards your product ad and the product shown by differing the kind of image that is shown in the product ad, or simply by not showing any image at all.

2.1.1 What is a good image?

In order to understand what is generally known as "a good image", ten websites with photograph tips were researched. We found four factors that were repeatedly mentioned as important when taking a "good" photograph. Regarding the composition of the photograph, you should think about two things, "filling the frame" and the "rule of thirds". By "filling the frame" one means that you should get close to the object when taking the photo. The "rule of thirds" means cutting your frame into thirds, by using two horizontal lines and two vertical lines. The most important parts of the object should be placed where these lines intersect. From now on these two factors will be called "placement of object". From the websites it is also clear that light is an essential factor. Basically you should use the light to your advantage, which is often

done by not letting it in from one side. Finally, the background and the sharpness seemed to be two of the most important factors as well. (Photographytips.com, 2002; Kodak, 2003; Digital Photography School, 2007; Photographymad, 2007; WikiHow, 2008; Digital Photography School, 2008; Learn Basic Photography, 2009; IFB, 2013; PetaPiel, 2014)

To confirm our findings, two interviews with professional photographers were done. When interviewed on 29 April 2014, Dahlström stated that composition, light and background are hygiene factors when taking a photograph. As a professional photographer you can play around with these things to challenge the viewer, but if you are trying to take a basic and good photograph, you should be close to the object, have a nice background, not place the object in the middle of the image and not have the light directly in the back of the photographer but rather from the side. When being asked about which the most important factors to think about when taking a photograph in an interview on 29 April 2014, Hagman as well mentions all the four factors discussed.

2.1.2 Good, bad or no image at all?

Reviewing literature in the topic, Townsend and Kahn (2014), starts at a general level, comparing images to text depictions. It is found that in general, consumers prefer visual over verbal presentations of available choices in an online setting. According to the authors, the visual presentations (versus verbal) increase the perception of a wide variety in the assortment, which is in general positive because it gives the impression of higher likeliness of preference matching. Also, a visual presentation compared to a verbal presentation is perceived as easier, faster and more enjoyable for the consumer. However, this preference is suggested to be over applied in practice. In large choice sets, visual presentations (compared to verbal presentations) often also lead to increased perceived complexity which in turn can lead to choice overload and a higher probability of the consumer opting out of choice. (Townsend and Kahn, 2014)

The experiment of this thesis will take place at Blocket.se. According to Townsend and Kahn's (2014) suggestions, one could guess that the visitor of the site will perceive high variety but also a high information load. According to the authors, in a large set of visually presented alternatives, consumers tend to use a "facile" approach, scanning through the options in an unstructured and fast way. It is reasonable to

suggest that the consumer's first impression of the image will decide how interested the consumer gets in the ad, and an image perceived as good would logically be more popular than an image that is perceived as bad. Also, it is said that 67% of consumers in e-commerce consider the quality of visuals to be "very important", even more important than product-specific information, ratings and reviews, even though this is not proved by academic research (Bullas, 2012).

H1a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad.

Townsend and Kahn (2014), states in their study that no test has been done where visual and verbal presentation of options are mixed. They suggest this for further research, and the following hypothesis will partly cover that hole. We ask ourselves: In a setting containing ads including images, will an ad with an image that is perceived as good get more attention than an ad with no image at all (and only a text title)? We believe so since the use of visuals helps us decode text and more importantly attract our attention so that information is more likely to be remembered (Levie and Lentz, 1982).

H1b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any image.

More interesting maybe, is to investigate whether an ad with an image that is perceived as bad will be more or less popular than an ad showing no image at all. As Staats and Lohr (1979) has shown that images that create negative emotions illicit avoidance responses, the following hypothesis is created:

H1c: In a C2C online setting, an ad not including any image will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad.

After shortly having discussed a more general literature review regarding visual presentation, how it is processed and perceived, we will now dig deeper into how

images actually can affect human beings and what consequences these reactions might lead to.

2.1.3 The power of images

At first thought, images might not seem as a complex concept. They can be realistic or unrealistic depictions of reality or just diffuse without a clear motif, free to be interpreted by the viewer. However, images can be much more than that. An image can be a powerful tool, and if used in the right way, it can affect people in ways that can be to a marketer's advantage (Messaris, 1997).

According to Messaris (1997), Damasio (1994), Grodal (1994) and Shepard (1990) explain that we as human beings are predisposed to react in certain ways when seeing certain things. For example we react in certain ways when seeing a smiling person, as well as when seeing an attractive person (Söderlund, 2003). These reactions are not only due to influence of culture, but also by biological evolution according to the three authors (Messaris, 1997). What is interesting is that not only reality, but also images that portray reality, can create these types of reactions.

According to Messaris, you can in principle use the built-in responses from real-world visuals in images in advertising in two ways. The first is that you can draw attention to the ad. The second is that you can create a certain emotion among the person that sees the ad.

2.1.4 Attracting attention

Starting off by discussing the attention-drawing aspect, this can be done in several ways. One-way is to challenge what we are used to see by manipulating photos in an un-natural way that violates reality. Zooming in and getting a close-up has also been proven to be an efficient way of attracting attention. Another example is the concept of direct eye gaze. This phenomenon is built on our real-world interpersonal interaction. We can probably all relate to the fact that we want to look back if someone is looking at us. It is therefore quite unsurprising that this is something that marketers have learnt to take advantage of. As we all know, models that looks

straight into the camera (= at you) is commonly used in for example TV commercials as well as in magazine ads. (Messaris, 1997)'

2.1.5 Emotion-loaded marketing

The other interesting aspect mentioned, is image's ability to evoke certain emotions. Söderlund (2003) has written a book on the topic and in order to gain a greater understanding of how images can influence consumers, an overview of this research that he calls "emotion-loaded marketing" will now be presented. Shortly, emotion-loaded marketing is all about trying to create certain emotions among the consumers, which in turn hopefully will lead to increased likeliness of desired action, for example purchase. Söderlund claims that two things characterize emotions: firstly, they have a valence (or hedonic tone). This means they can be perceived as either positive or negative. For example joy is perceived as positive, while sadness is perceived as negative. Secondly, emotions affect our arousal. While anger creates high arousal, calmness creates low arousal. Several studies have tried to understand the effects of a higher arousal in a marketing context, and a higher and more selective attention has been found to arise among those who experience a higher arousal (Wilson & More, 1979; Sanbonmats & Kardes, 1988). Often, emotions are also described as interrupting. This is because we have a tendency to stop doing what we are doing and push out our cognitive activities from our consciousness, when we are being interrupted by emotions (Mundorf et al., 1991).

In figure 1, an overview of some emotions that people can have is shown (Söderlund, 2003). The emotions are shown in relation to the valence and the arousal.

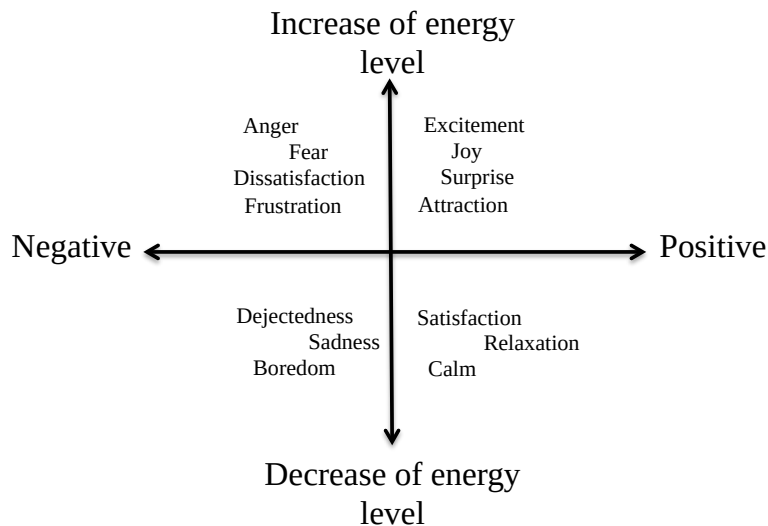


Figure 1. An overview of emotions and how they are related to level of energy and positive/negative value (Söderlund, 2003).¹

It is shown that, if the consumer experiences any of the emotions shown in the upper right corner, a marketer can benefit from this. Given the right circumstances in a marketing situation, the mentioned emotions can have a positive effect on attitude towards unrelated objects, such as a product (Söderlund 2003). Many marketers have understood this and have tried to seize the opportunity to actually steer the potential consumer's emotions in order to increase the interest of their products and thereby increase sales. Since other humans easily evoke emotions, it is not surprising that the marketers use people in the ads in order to do this. For example, many companies use a "decorative model" that has nothing to do with the product or service in the ad, but who's only role is to evoke a certain emotion in the consumer in order to create a more positive feeling about for example the ad or the product. Several studies have shown that this works. As an example, Loken and Howard-Pitney (1988) showed that female respondents perceived a cigarette-ad as better (in terms of good, smart and good design) if a female attractive model was included in the ad. Söderlund (2003) proved that respondents that were apposed to a Nokia 8310 ad including an attractive model, had a more positive attitude towards the product (in terms of good, like it, pleasant and interesting) than respondents that were exposed to the same ad but without the model.

¹ The figure is a reproduction of Söderlund (2003)' s figure and is translated from Swedish to English by the thesis authors.

According to Söderlund (2003), emotion-variables should be investigated separately in order to gain the greatest understanding of what is going on in the consumer's mind. This study will therefore only focus on one of the positive emotions mentioned above. Our chosen emotion is joy; the other variables will not be discussed further.

2.1.6 Joy as a marketing strategy

According to Söderlund (2003), a confusion of concepts regarding happiness and joy is common within the academic research, and it is therefore important to clarify the concepts: while happiness is more of a permanent state, joy is an emotion of short duration. This thesis will focus on joy and that is also the focus in part of Söderlund's research. One interesting thing about joy is that it has proven to be especially easily recognized by others (Thompson & Meltzer 1964). A well-researched area within joy, is smiling people. A smiling person is more likeable and also perceived to be more intelligent than a non-smiling person (Lau, 1982). A smiling face is also perceived as more attractive and kind than a non-smiling face (Otta et al. 1996).

We can conclude that a smiling face affects what we think about that person, and using a smiling person in advertising can consequently be beneficial. However, the previous presented benefits are not the only ones. More importantly, it has been shown that when a person sees a smiling face, this will create unconscious joy-related reactions among this person (Dimberg 2000). Further, if the consumer feels more joy, this can lead to several positive things. For example Isen (1984) has shown that joy leads to faster and more creative decision-making. Masters and Furman (1976) has proved that joy leads to more positive expectations of future events by showing that children who had thought happy thoughts for 30 seconds predicted that they would perform better in an upcoming task than those who had thought neutral or sad thoughts in the same amount of time. More important for marketers, is however Forgas and Moylans's (1987) study, which showed that a happy mood can significantly influence the evaluation of objects that are unrelated to the object that created to mood (in this case a movie), in a positive way. Chaudhuri's study (1988) that showed that positive emotions (such as joy, pleasure and delight) could lower the perceived risk of buying products that are associated with high risk is highly important as well, as it has been shown that in a C2C setting, the buyer's level of perceived risk or trust in the seller affects the attitude towards purchasing (Lori, 2012).

Compared to the 1960s and 1970s, where ads most frequently focused on rational information, today's marketing strategies focus much more on emotion-loaded marketing in general, and on joy creation in particular. No one can possibly have missed the heavy use of smiling people in ads and commercials. Yet, this is very rarely seen in a C2C context. Is it because it does not work? Or is this a missed opportunity for private sellers? The following hypotheses are formulated in order to investigate this:

H2a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as good without a smiling person.

H2b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad without a smiling person.

If adding a smiling decorative model works in a C2C context, it is also reasonable to expect that an ad including this will be more popular than showing no image at all.

H2c: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any image.

H2d: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any image.

Until now the hypotheses are formulated in a way that only compares images where one variable differs (H1: If the image is perceived as good or bad and H2: If a smiling person is added to the photo). It is also interesting to see what happens if you mix these variables. In line with previous mentioned theory we guess that a good image including a smiling person should get more interest than a bad image including a smiling person, and this we would like to confirm:

H3a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad including a smiling person.

Also, according to previous mentioned theory a good image including a smiling person should develop more interest than a bad image with no smiling person, and this we would like to confirm:

H3b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad without a smiling person.

More interesting might be to ask oneself if a smiling person can “weigh up” for a bad image? As we will find out in the pre-study, the best image with no smiling person and the worst image with the smiling person included, created the same level of joy and the following hypothesis is therefore formulated:

H3c: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, without a smiling person, will generate the same amount of clicks and e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person.

2.1.7 The dependent variables

The dependent variables in the hypotheses are clicks on the ad as well as e-mails sent to the seller. A click is further seen as an indicator of interest as it occurs when a consumer is interested in seeing the whole ad (apposed to only the headline) containing a detailed description of the product and contact information to the seller. An e-mail sent to the seller, is also seen as an indicator of interest as it brings the buyer one step closer to making a purchase. It is important to note that we will not elaborate further on how closely related clicks and sent e-mails are to interest and perhaps purchase intention. This, since these variables are behaviours measuring actions that speak for themselves. Which are more accurate than talking about abstract words such as interest and purchase intention.

2.1.8 Hypotheses overview

In table 1 below, an overview of all hypotheses is presented. As described before, H1a/b/c compare ads with a good image, a bad image and no image against each other. H2a/b/c/d investigate what will happen if a smiling person is added into these images. H3 is the most complicated, where the quality of the image (good/bad) is tested together with the presence or no presence of a smiling person.

As the ten hypotheses cover a comparison of each image to each of the other images, a complete mapping and understanding of how effective all types of images are in relation to each other will be possible.

<u>Test Variable(s)</u>	<u>Hypotheses</u>
- Picture quality (good/bad/no picture)	H1a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad.
	H1b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any picture.
	H1c: In a C2C online setting, an ad not including any picture will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad.
- Presence of smiling person (smiling person/no smiling person)	H2a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as good without a smiling person.
	H2b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad without a smiling person.
	H2c: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any picture.
	H2d: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any picture.
- Picture quality (good/bad) - Presence of smiling person (smiling person/no smiling person)	H3a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad including a smiling person.
	H3b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad without a smiling person.
	H3c: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, without a smiling person, will generate the same amount of clicks and e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person.

Table 1. An overview of the ten hypotheses.

3. Method

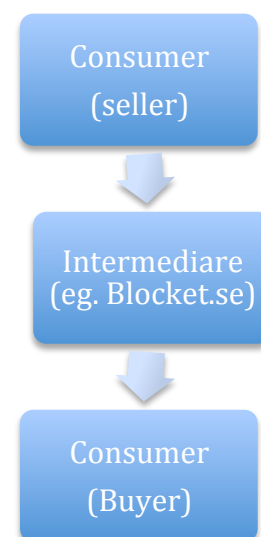
The beginning of this chapter provides a description of the C2C business model as well as how blocket.se works today. Including this is somewhat unusual to a methodological section. However, we explain this in order to provide a necessary as well as greater understanding of the research topic. This is later followed by an explanation of the methods used in the completion of this thesis. Which describes how we set the thesis purpose, to later explain the scientific approach. The chapter further discusses the validity and reliability to lastly portray the data collection processes. These consist of a pre-study that involves several surveys and a main study, which consists of an experiment at blocket.se.

3.1 The C2C business model

In order to provide a better understanding of the thesis topic and the experiment, the method chapter will start by a short description of the C2C model. The difference between listing sites and auction sites will be explained as well as how the website blocket.se, where the main study will be executed, works.

The C2C business model simply relies on two individuals directly transacting or conducting business with each other, while a more traditional business model require the consumer to visit the actual company. Most C2C companies only work as an intermediary (such as blocket.se or eBay), to facilitate an environment that allows people to meet and make similar transactions without companies interfering. This eliminates the need of a physical store, which reduces costs for both sellers and buyers.

Since a C2C intermediary only facilitate, most companies charges a fee or commission for their services provided (blocket.se; ebay.com). Free of charge or not, either way, no intermediaries are responsible for the products or services being exchanged on their platforms. As a matter a fact, most of all listing and auction sites are constructed in a similar fashion. You browse through different categories and when you spot something of interest, you just click on the title/headline-image to view



a more detailed description of the object. Once in the detailed description of the ad, you also find contacts to the seller, shipping information along with payment options. With this information you can then either raise the current bid, or contact the seller if the object seems appealing. (blocket.se; ebay.com)

3.1.1 The difference between Auctions and Listings

At an auction site you can either set-up or participate in auctions made by others. After you have set a starting price, auction time, shipping and payment method, you await the bidders to start bidding. If someone places a bid on an item, they enter a contractual agreement to buy it, unless a higher counterbid is placed. In other words, online auctions are very simple, yet effective for both buyers as well as sellers. (ebay.com, 2014)

In addition to online auctions, you can on sites such as eBay also find fixed-price items. (ebay.com, 2014) These are called classifieds. On fixed price items there is no auction, you just pay and wait for the item to arrive at your home. Blocket.se is a listing site, a site that contains only classifieds (blocket.se, 2014). You can just like on eBay, put stuff out for sale. However, there is one fundamental difference. Unlike eBay, Blocket.se have no auctions going on (at all). At Blocket.se you put out a desired price on your item, to advertise it through a simple classified ad. The classified ad is constructed much like an auction at eBay. However, instead of raising bids with counterbids, buyers contact the seller, either by phone or email, to negotiate on the terms of purchase. I.e. you can't buy an item without having personal contact with the seller. (This thesis focuses solely on classifieds and will therefore not discuss auctions further).

3.1.2 Browsing for items at Blocket.se

This section will describe how blocket.se works, in order to provide a full understanding of the thesis topic and the other sections of this thesis. One could describe the searching process for items at Blocket.se in three main steps:

- (1) **Search:** If you know exactly what you're looking for, you can, if you are lucky, find the right object using keywords such as "MacBook Air" or "Volvo

XC 60" when browsing. However, only searching keywords can bring a lot more options you initially wished for. Using a more advanced search criteria helps you narrow the search results to exclude irrelevant objects, which thus make it easier to find what you are looking for, see image 2. Therefore, limiting your search by entering subcategories such as item location and price range, can narrow the search, and provide you with more relevant objects.



Figure 2: Illustration search tools and subcategories

Nonetheless, once you have done all of this, odds are still high that you are left with a lot of alternatives (more than you are able to review). It is therefore essential for the seller to get your attention by providing a good title/overview, so that his/her ad doesn't slide through your filter unnoticed.

- (2) **Title/Overview:** here the seller usually provides basic information such as title, price, and an optional title image. The main purpose of the Title/Overview is to make people click your ad over others, enter it to read more about the item. As you can see in the illustration below, some use images in their title/overview while other don't, either way, this is where images can be used to bring attention and encourage you to click a specific ad, see figure 3.

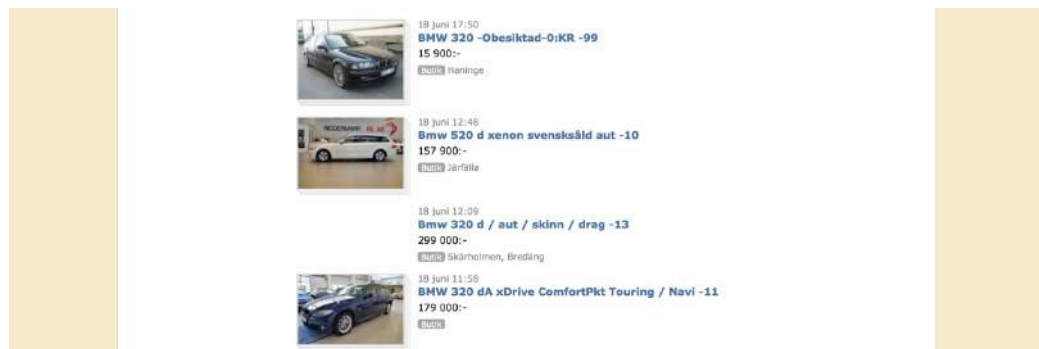


Figure 3: Illustration on different title/overviews

(3) The item Description appears when entering the ad. I can be used to provide a more detailed description about the item condition, shipping, and payment and return policy. Many websites, including Blocket.se, also give the option to include more images (apart from the title image).

BMW 320 dA xDrive Automat - Xenon, Drag, Blu -11
 Säljes av Auto24. 23 juni 17:47.

194 900:-

BMW 320 dA xDrive Automat - Xenon, Drag, Blu
 Mätarställning: 9080 mil
 Färg: Svart metallic
 Karosseri: Kombi
 Info: Automatisk växellåda, Diesel, F.d. tjänstebil - ALD Automotive, 184hk, 17" BMW original aluminium, 4WD - xDrive, ABS bromsar, ACC - Klimatautomatik, Airbag förare, Passagerarsärlägg urkopplingsbär, Antisaddsystem, Brake Energy Regeneration, Bluetooth, CD-stereo - BMW Professional, Dragkrok - Infatillbar, Dimljus, Elhissar fram och bak, Elspeglar, Färthållare, Fjärrstyrt c-lås, Färdator, Handsfree, Halvkinnsläddar, Isofix, Interiörster Satin-Silber, Komplet fyllid servicebok, Multifunktionsrätt, PDC - Parking Distance Control, Rails - Black, Regnsensor, Servotronic, Sidelägg, M-sporträtt läder, Sportstolar, Stolvärme fram, Svensksläd, Stråkastare, Xenonstrålkastare, OBS! Utrustad med Advantagepaket - Comfortpaket - Belysningspaket & Förvaringspaket! Fordonskost 2.766kr/år 6-årigt automatiskt Deklarerad bränsleförbrukning = 0.58 l/mil blandad körning! Senit uttagen 2011-06-09! Max släpvagnsvikt 1.600kg! Kan levereras med verkstadsmonterade tillbehör! Kontakta oss för att boka visning & provkörning - går även bra helger och kvällen! Besök oss på www.auto24.nu! NYHET: FROM: MÅNDAG 1.2.2 FLYTTAR VI FRÅN FALUN TILL NYA LOKALER I ÅRSTA - STOCKHOLM. GAMLA SOM NYA KUNDER HÄLSAS VÄLKOMNA!

Modelår: 2011
 Växellåda: Automat
 Miltal: 9 000 - 9 499
 Tillverkningsår: 2011
 Bränsle: Diesel

Auto24
 8 fordon i butiken

144 900:- 194 900:- 168 900:-

Mjälja annonsören
 073 - vis nummer

Trygg bilaffär
 Se upp om annonsören plöjig och utomlands, i strid med annonsens beskrivning! Fler tips

Kurkian82, 31
 4005 singlar inom
 MÖTESPLATSEN.se

Lån upp till 350 000 kr
 Svar inom 7 minuter Lendo
 Lånelopp 134 900 kr
 2 104 kr / månad
 Ansök nu!
 Annuitetslån exempel 12 år: Kostnad 130128 - Startvärd 6 - Effektivlång ränta 8,20% (effektivlång ränta). Svar från Bank Swednet

Vad kostar försäkringen?
 Denna bil
 Annan bil
 Ditt personnummer
 Visa pris
 TRYGG HANSA

BMW Value Service
 BEHÅLL DIN BMW 100%
 BMW.
 INTE DYRLARE. BARA
 BÄTTRE.
 Oljeservice från 1495 kr

Lån upp till 350 000 kr
 Svar inom 7 minuter!
 Du kan spara pengar

Figure 4: Illustration of the item description

(Blocket.se, 2014)

3.2 Purpose Formulation

It is said to be a migration that moves away from text towards the more persuasive medium of images. The use of images causes people to react, and obviously depending on the image in question, both good and bad reactions can be the result of it.

Since we as authors share a common passion for this, namely marketing through images, our thesis topic was in rough terms already pre-set. The difficult part was for us to find an area where previous scholars have not already tested the use of images as marketing. By chance we saw a commercial for blocket.se and instantly recognized our previous difficulties in trying to sell used items online. After some consideration

we realized that the C2C transactions is in much need of more fine-grained research. This, since very little information could be found on the topic. Also, neither of us could find any guidance in how to best use images when selling to another consumer. Therefore, given our personal interests and the academic gap in C2C marketing, we decided to study the area of images in a C2C context more closely. We thus saw a chance to contribute to academic knowledge by providing deeper insights in the effects of images and how they can be used to enhance/weaken the strength of a classified ad. To make our experiment a more a bit more daring and interesting we decided to, instead of only analysing the effect of good/bad images (of the object in question), add the appearance of a smiling person, in the ad images, to see how it would affect the interest shown for our ads.

As mentioned in the first part of this thesis, C2C is a business phenomenon that has rather lately experienced a rapid upswing, but has not yet been subject to much academic research. Our research area had no documented research, which was a thrill by itself. To conclude, conducting research in this area did not only come our high interest in the topic, but also from the fact that we saw a great opportunity to contribute to the development of the C2C commerce, both in terms of advices that can be used in reality, and in terms of academic research.

3.3 Scientific Approach

We have been using a deductive research approach in the completion of this thesis. We started off with theory that was narrowed down to a range of hypotheses, which later were tested and explored (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The research design relied on both secondary data as well as primary research that were meant to provide information that could be useful for decision-making. The main study was conclusive in its nature (Malhotra, 2010). Conclusive research could further be sub-divided into two major categories: (1) Descriptive and (2) Causal research. We focused on the latter (2), i.e. casual research, since the main point of our study was to conduct an experiment. This enabled us to establish causality between our chosen variables; through a manipulation of the specific independent variable (the images) to determine what effect it would have on the dependent variables (number of clicks and emails).

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), an experiment is the deliberate manipulation of independent variables made to conclude whether manipulation has an effect/influence on the dependent variables - to see if a casual relationship can be found. The experiment of this study took place in the field, i.e. in its "natural" setting, as opposed to an artificial one. This was to provide us with “real” data that measured the actual behaviour of consumers. We considered this to be of higher value for future research, plus that such research design enabled us to provide a systematic description that were as factual and accurate as possible.

3.3.1 Quantitative field study

According to Bryman and Bell (2011) quantitative research is a research strategy emphasizing quantification in the collection and analysis of data. A quantitative approach was the most suitable for this study since the thesis purpose was to provide more general conclusions, than to gain a full understanding of underlying motivations and reasons. Further, Malhotra (2010) says that experiments are usually associated with quantitative research. Due to this we considered the quantitative approach to be the most appropriate for this thesis as well.

3.4 Data Quality

Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007) say that the analysis of data is the most important factor in a research process. Further, for a quantitative study like ours, Bryman and Bell (2011) highlight the importance of evaluating research in terms of reliability and validity. After taking this for consideration, ensuring our data quality has been the most time-consuming part in the completion of this study. To thus maximize the credibility (validity and reliability) of our research, the assumptions that undergird this study, along with a detailed description of the techniques and methods will shortly be described.

3.4.1 Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which a scale produces consistent results if repeated measurements are made (Malhotra, 2010) and is reviewed in terms of both primary and secondary sources. A primary source is the raw material of first hand information.

It is information taken directly from the original source and often regarded as the most reliable as of this reason. Our primary sources are in full linked to the results of our experiment. Information taken from secondary sources has however always appeared elsewhere first. It is something related to the primary source but in form of second hand information not taken directly from the source of study - Which in our case consists of websites, books, newspapers and articles found in scholarly journals. The secondary sources used for this thesis are mostly up-to-date and taken from trusted authors/websites. Nevertheless, as our thesis covers an unexplored field of study, information from less renowned sources have been exploited as well.

Further we carefully evaluated our primary sources with regards to what Bryman & Bell (2011) call internal reliability and stability. Internal reliability refers to whether the answers of our participating respondents' compare across various questions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To reassure that this was fulfilled we made an extensive review of books and articles to find a way previous scholars have conducted similar experiments, to find the most applicable once to our study. The Stability of our study does on the other hand refer to whether the measure is stable over time (Bryman & Bell, 2011) and was in this study established by replicating tried and tested methods, which was to us the most accurate way given the limited scope of this thesis.

3.4.2 Validity

Validity refers to the concept of whether or not an indicator really measures the intended (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In other words, the gathered data of the study must not only be repeatable, but also measuring the intended variables. Malhotra and Birks (2007) stress the importance of achieving high external as well as internal validity when conducting an experiment. *External validity* is the casual inferences in scientific research (Mitchell & Jolley, 2001) and refers to whether the effects found in the experiment can be reliable in other contexts apart from the environment of the experiment (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). *Internal validity* refers to the approximate truth regarding disturbances in casual or cause-effect relationships. Internal validity occurs when the researcher control all extraneous variables. It assures whether manipulations of independent variables affect dependent variables (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). This means that the variable we as researchers intended to study, i.e. the title images, is indeed affecting the results. Not unwanted variables.

Since our study carried out an experiment in a real life setting (not a set-up environment), we expect the external validity to be high. Bryman and Bell (2011) say that experiments carried out in an authentic environment also tend have a high internal validity, which in our case strengthens the internal validity of the study as a whole (even though it is impossible to control all external factors). The internal validity of this thesis is further strengthened by the competition of a well thought through pre-study, in which we have been using multi-item measurements, which according to Bryman and Bell (2011) increases the internal validity more.

Our research design enabled us to measure real behaviours in the form of clicks and e-mails. To gather this data we used an analytical tool provided by Blocket.se. This instrument showed us, with high accuracy, the number of both clicks and e-mails. See appendix 4 for a visual illustration of how we used the tool for analysis. Due to the accuracy of this analytical tool and a research design measuring real behaviours, we consider the validity for the dependent variables as high.

3.5 Research Design

This section starts by explaining the experiment and critical decisions that were made regarding the research design, namely selection of product and website for the experiment. After this the data-collection process is described. This is split into two phases, firstly the pre-study, followed by the main study. The objective with the pre-study was to strengthen the reliability of our field experiment. More specifically, we aimed to investigate if the material that we were about to use in the main study showed the intended, and more importantly, was perceived, as we wanted it to be. It also allowed us to gain a better understanding of the material, which helped the understanding of the main study.

3.5.1 The experiment

Our experiment consisted of a number of classified car ads, uploaded to the listing site blocket.se. The ads were to be tested in a real life setting collecting genuine data. All ads were high identical; the only thing that separated them from each other was the type of image used to display the object that was to be sold. Therefore, any differences in between the ads could be connected directly to which image had been used. The experiment was mainly meant to gather one category of data that later could

be analysed to measure the effect of each image. However, to give more accuracy to this data, a second category of data was gathered as well.

(1) The first category of data gathered was “the number of clicks” each ad got.

When a person was browsing among ads, found interest in one of our ads and clicked the title/overview to find out more about the item, our analytical tool registered action. People clicking the title/overview could thus be considered as interested and thereby as potential buyers of the item.

(2) The second category of data consisted of people who were influenced enough to reach out to the seller by email, making an effort to purchase the item (contact the seller) after having read through the item description. These individuals could thus be considered as serious and highly potential buyers.

Relatively speaking, the ad receiving the most/least clicks (the first category of data) influenced the consumer best/worst in terms of spontaneous reactions. It is important to note that a higher number of clicks don't sell the item for you; it does however expose more people to your item description that is meant to encourage people in contacting the seller. The image that attracts most/least highly potential buyers (the second category of data) has thereby the best/worst chance of selling the item.

3.5.2 Why conduct our experiment on car ads?

After deciding to write our thesis within the subject of C2C purchases, a C2C category had to be selected for more in depth research. Finally we choose to look more closely into the category of used cars. This was based on two criteria; *firstly*, the most obvious one: we have an interest for cars. *Secondly*, we wished to choose a category that most people could relate to, and since many have either bought or sold a used car, this category was perfect for this thesis.

Regarding the choice of product category, only one more criteria had to be fulfilled. It was essential that the consumer could relate to the item in question and feel that our "test-ads" was for real. Finding a car model popular among the consumers using blocket.se would increase our sample size and thus enhance our data reliability.

With this in mind we choose a Volvo XC60 as test subject for our main study. The

XC60 was the most sold car in its class in 2013 according to ViBilägare (Carlsson, 2013), and therefore worth to consider as a relevant test subject. Also, this model targets families, which increased our odds of getting as big of a sample further since 9 out of 10 families use blocket.se, i.e. most are looking for family cars.

3.5.3 Selection of classified website

In Sweden there are dozens of websites dealing with C2C purchases. Each and every one has their own individual twist that diversifies them. Some specialize on car ads, others on used electronics. However, in the cross category assortment the three most common sites are Blocket.se, Tradera.se (the Swedish eBay.com) and Allaannonser.se. When only looking at car ads Blocket.se and Allaannonser.se are still among the biggest and (more or less) make up for the whole market for used car ads.

To get as factual and accurate data as possible, we needed to find the biggest site on car ads. The reason for this is simple. The bigger the site is the more traffic it drives, which thus leads to a bigger sample. The choice of website was therefore based on one main criteria; that that the website drives a lot of traffic, this is in order for us to get a large sample.

After doing a constitutive comparison among the most relevant car sites, it became obvious that blocket.se was the most appropriate (and biggest) site to host our filed experiment. This decision was based on the fact that 7 out of 10 Swedes have bought or sold anything on the blocket.se (blocket.se, 2014). Among families with children, this number is even higher reaching 9 out of 10 families (blocket.se, 2014). Nonetheless, blocket.se is said to be Sweden's third largest site (among all websites) with over 4.5 million unique visitors a week (Alexa, 2013).

3.5.4 Overview of Pre-studies and Main-study

Below you can find an overview (figure 5) of all steps in the experiment. Each part will be described in detail in the rest of this methodology chapter. Feel free to go back to this overview when reading the following text in order to understand the whole process better.

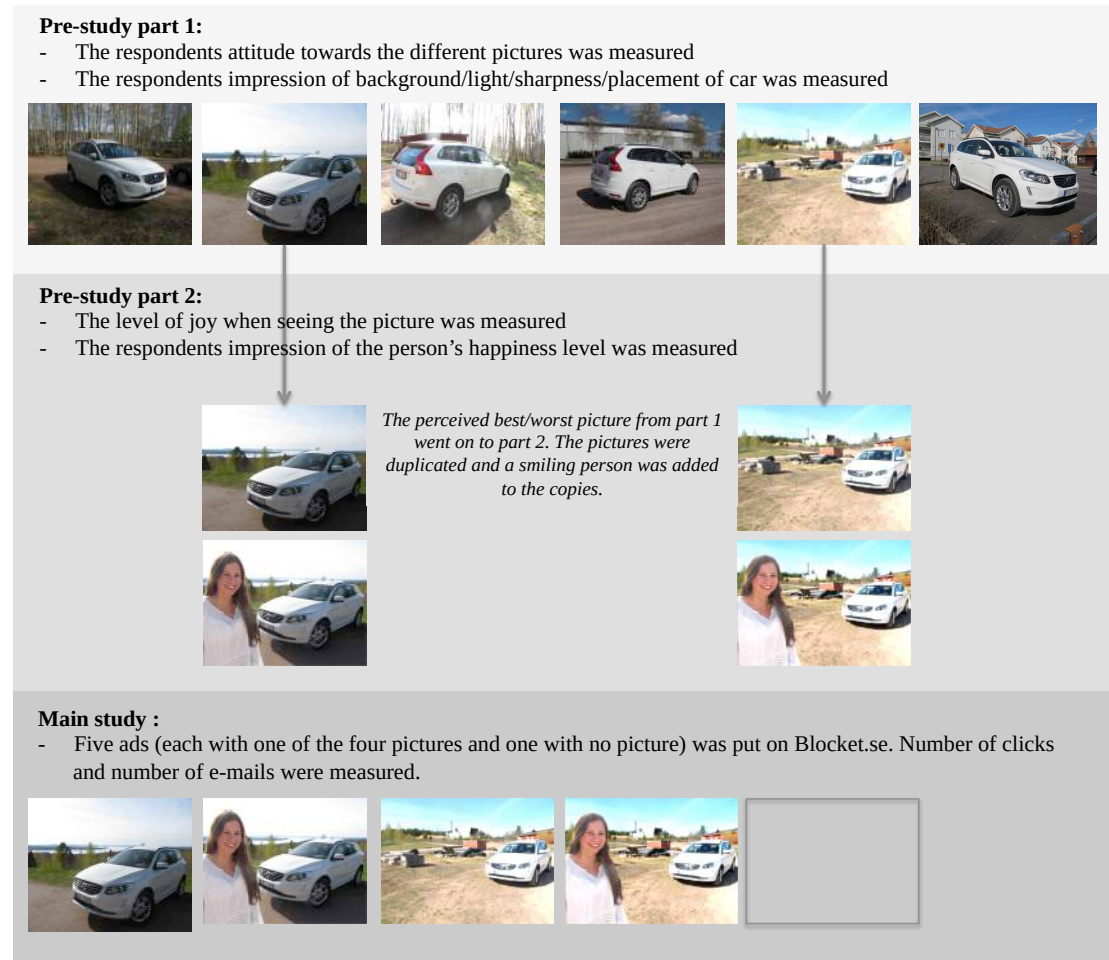


Figure 5. An overview of the research design, measured variables and used images.

3.6 Pre-Study

After the selection of category, test object and website, we started planning for the pre-study. Our pre-study involved a deeper investigation of how we best could strengthen our main study. Pre-study part 1 consisted of a survey and aimed to find two images that were perceived differently in terms of good/bad in relation to each other, which could be used in pre-study part 2 and finally in the main study. It also aimed to investigate what is perceived as a good image and what is perceived as a bad image. Pre-study part 2 consisted of a survey as well. Now, the two images that were found in pre-study part 1 (the best and the worst) were used. These were duplicated and a smiling person was added to the duplicates. Pre-study part 2 aimed to measure the emotional effect these four images, which should later be used in the main study, created.

3.6.1 Pre-Study Part 1 – Selecting Images for Main Study and Understanding Attitude

As previously described, a part of the main study aimed to understand how the quality and type of title image affects the consumer's interest to (1) visit in the ad and (2) contact the seller. To conduct this test, we needed one image that was perceived as good and one image that was perceived as bad by the actual target group. The first part of our pre-study hence focused on finding images that fulfilled these purposes.

After researching ten photographic sites and conducting several interviews with professional photographers, we found four factors that were especially important when taking a “good” photograph. These factors were “sharpness”, “placement of object” (get close to the object/rule of thirds), “light” and “background”. With these four factors in mind, we took a range of images that according to us authors stretched from good to bad according to theory. In total we ended up taking 6 images. One of which, could be considered good (fulfilling all factors), another that could be considered bad (fulfilling none of the factors) and four images in-between (includes a mix of factors).

One could ask why we did not only take one “good” and “bad” image, to then confirm through a survey. There were two reasons for investigating several images. (1) Firstly, we wanted to have broad variety in perceived quality between the two images to have the best conditions as possible for the main study. To avoid our subjectivity, we wanted to investigate people's perception of all photographs; by either confirming or dismissing what the theory perceive the best and worst image to be like. Meaning, even though we as authors thought the background was beautiful, the target group might not. (2) Secondly, we wanted to gain a better understanding of the population's perception of photographs to gain knowledge in their behaviour. We did not want to blindly rely on the research, since we had found no accurate reports where tests had shown that the four factors mentioned are the most important factors. There was a big risk that we had missed one important factor, or perhaps that one factor that we thought was important was not. Using more than two images in this part of the pre-study therefore helped us to get a better understanding of how the population perceives different types of images and which factors affect the perceived quality of an image.

A scaled down version of all 6 images have been attached to display how we considered them to fulfil/not fulfil the four factors (see figure 6). This means that the best/worst image from our photo-shoot also should be the best/worst-categorized image in the pre-study. In total we constructed six different questionnaires, each of which presented one of the six images, and was followed by a number of questions that were to be answered spontaneously by the respondent.

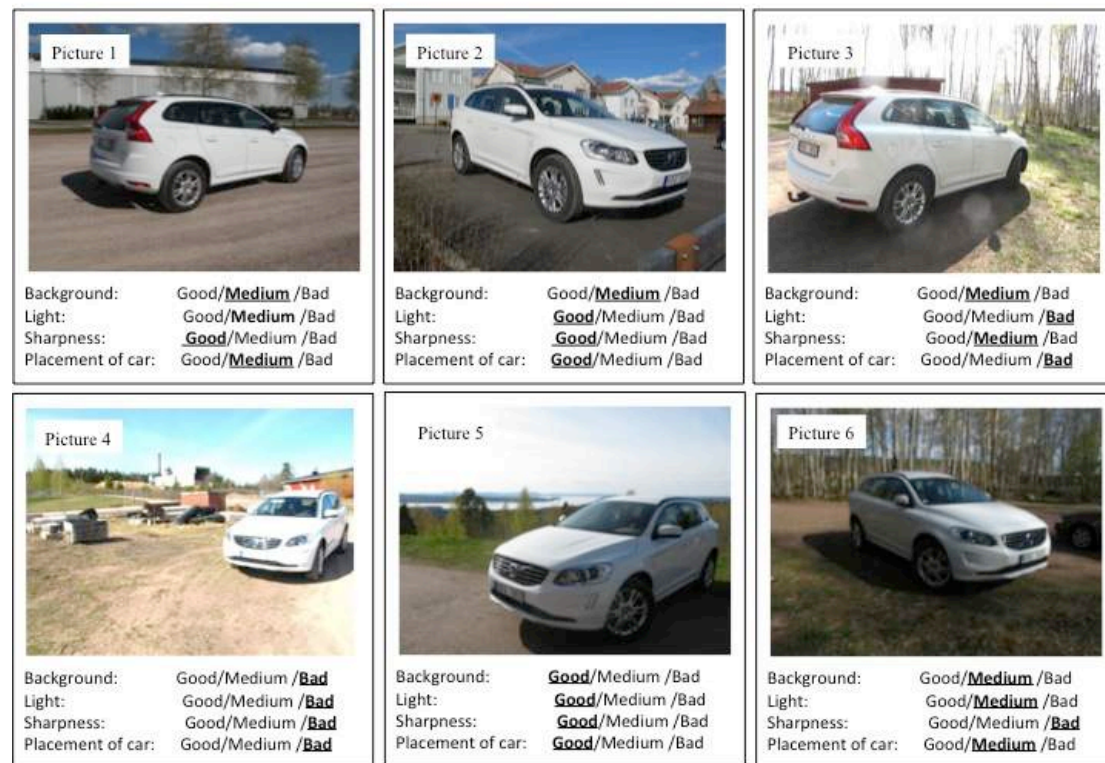


Figure 6. An overview of the six images used in pre-study part (1).

Question 1 - Attitude

The first question in the survey in pre-study part 1 measured the respondent's attitude towards our chosen six images. It was not mend to find the "best or optimal" image possible; it was to categorize the images from best to worst in relation to each other. We found several ways of measuring the attitudes needed to enhance the reliability of our experiment. Some commonly used ways are the self-report versions such as *Likert Scales* and *Semantic Differential Scales*. The semantic differential technique, used by Osgood et al. (1957) asks a person to rate an issue/topic, on a standard set of bipolar adjectives to measure a single attitude, each representing a seven-point scale. Likert

Scales on the other hand present a statement of some sort that is followed by a series of numbers, which people can choose to show how much they agree/disagree with presented statement (Burns & Ronald, 2008).

Since a single attitude was to be measured, the Semantic Differential Scale was more suited for our study. Mitchell & Olsson (1981) sat a good example of how to construct our scale. They used two questions for measuring brand attitude; (1) What are your feelings towards X? (Positive – Negative), (2) What is your perception of X? (Positive – Negative). Therefore, to prepare our semantic differential scale, we had found a number of words with opposite meanings, which were applicable in describing the images.

The first question focused on understanding the respondent's general attitude towards the image; asking, as Mitchell & Olsson (1981) suggests (1) "*What is your perception of image X?*" Then the respondents were to answer in a seven-grade scale measuring the attitude to the image with the same three bipolar adjectives that Baker et al. (2007) used for measuring attitude in their study: "*Bad – Good, Negative – Positive* and *Do not like – Like*". We considered three sets of bipolar adjectives as enough for a high reliability in our analysis. The mean these adjectives would show if there was an internal consistency and provide us with a more accurate result than if only the attitudes had been measured with one set of adjectives.

Question 2,3,4 - Light / Background / Sharpness / Object Placement

We also wanted to confirm that reality was consistent with what theory stated regarding what is considered as a "good image", since no accurate studies had been done on the subject before. Four more questions supplemented the first question (recently presented). Whilst the first question asked the respondent to rate the image as a whole, the four following questions asked for a more detailed description of the different compositions that our images were taken upon. Each question therefore related to the before mentioned four factors, needed for an image to be good.

The four factors were translated and simplified so that they could be fully understood by non-inserted respondents. Therefore, "Filling the frame" (get close to the object)

and “rule of thirds” (add two lines vertically and two lines horizontally and place the most important parts of the object where the lines intersect) merged and translated to the placing of the car in the image. The “light” and “background” remained the same since their meaning was easy to understand. We further asked the respondent to judge the “sharpness” (the blurriness of the image) since this is an important part of both the light and background (Hagman, 2014). Therefore, the third (3) fourth (4) fifth (5) and sixth (6) question asked the respondent to rate the light, sharpness, background and place of focus. The semantic differential technique, by Osgood et al. (1957), was used once more, asking the respondent to rate his/her “perception of X?”, on a seven grade scale where one equals “Very Bad” and seven equals “Very Good”. In theory, the image with the highest score should also have been the highest ranked image in the first more general question.

This was to see how well these measurements match their general attitude towards the image (the first question). The reason for investigating this was that we wanted to get a better understanding of what factors affect if an image is perceived as good or bad.

To conclude, the questionnaire in Pre-study part (1) was meant to examine two things; (1) Which of the six images that were perceived as best and which one that were perceived as bad (2) How the four factors light, background, sharpness and placement of object correlated with the attitude towards the image.

See appendix I, for one of the six questionnaires used.

3.6.2 Pre-Study Part 2 – Understanding the image’s effect on joy

As mentioned before, the main study was to test the effectiveness of both the best/worst image from the pre-study part (1), plus two identical images with a smiling person appearing. The reason for adding a smiling person in the image was because this has been proven to affect the consumer’s emotions and thereby his/her purchase intention in a B2C setting (see chapter 2). To be able to understand the results of the main study we therefore first wanted to examine how the images affected the consumer’s emotions.

The image that was perceived as best and the image that was perceived as worst from pre-study part 1 went on to pre-study part 2. The two images were duplicated. The

copy was modified to include a smiling person, see figure 7. These four images were used in the pre-study part 2.

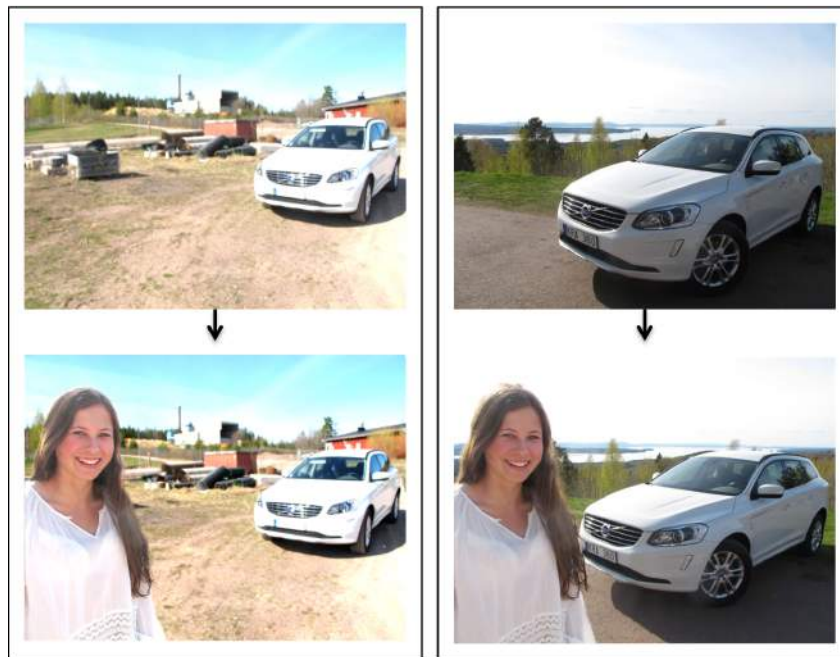


Figure 7. An overview of the four images used in pre-study part (2).

Question 1 – The respondent's perceived joy

To investigate if the emotionally loaded images created a higher level of joy, we created four more questionnaires, each presenting one of the images followed by a number questions. The semantic differential technique, by Osgood et al. (1957), was used for a third time. *The first* two questionnaires displayed the good and bad image from Pre-study part (1), and asked the respondent, “*How do you feel when you see the image?*”. The respondent then rated this topic using four synonyms to happy, on a standard set of bipolar adjectives (Sad – Happy) to measure the attitude of happiness, on a seven-point scale. Four synonyms were used instead of only one to ensure that the respondents truly reacted in a positive and happy way when seeing the image. As before, the internal consistency was tested in order to confirm reliability. *The second two questionnaires* were constructed in the same way as the other two, apart from the fact that the images now had a smiling girl appearing.

Question 2 – The model's level of joy

For the second two questionnaires, including a smiling person, we chose to add one more question, asking the respondent to rate the happiness of the person (unhappy-happy) in the image on a similar scale since we wanted to confirm that the person appearing was perceived as happy.

To conclude, the questionnaire in Pre-study part (2) was meant to examine two things; (1) How the different images affected the respondent's level of happiness (2) If the smiling person was perceived as happy.

See appendix II, for one of the four questionnaires used.

3.6.3 Data Collection

To ensure reliable answers for our questionnaires, we needed respondents from which a representative sample could be made. The data collection (for the both sets of questionnaires) therefore took place at Olofsson Bil, which is one of Sweden's largest privately owned car dealerships, and has a high focus on selling used cars via blocket.se. It was in our belief that Olofsson Bil could provide us with the most accurate target group (given our limited timeframe). The data was collected in help with one of the employees who kindly asked consumers to answer the questionnaires. To not affect the respondents' answers, our representative at Olofsson Bil were told to only gave one questionnaire to each person, not ten, which were the total amount (one for each image in the two sets of questionnaires). This was to not let the questionnaires order affect the answers.

We received 168 answers in total from Olofsson Bil, 120 of which were answers to the first questionnaire set (Pre-study part 1) and 48 to the second (Pre-study part 2). The answers were evenly spread across the different questionnaires and could all be used for analysis. This means that we got 20 answers rating each image in the first questionnaire and 12 for the second. All data was collected using a random assignment approach, meaning each participant had an equal chance of answering one of the ten different questionnaires, which according to Söderlund (2010) removes individual differences due to the large group of participants.

3.6.4 Analytic Tools

For analysis, all survey data was compiled into SPSS, a statistical program. The analysis of data took place at two separate occasions since the first set of questionnaires were a prerequisite for the completion of the second set of questionnaires. However, similar methods were used in analysing both sets of questionnaires.

(For a full numerical analysis of the questionnaires, visit 4.0 Results)

Analysis of Pre-study part 1

To prove reliability and internal consistency in the data provided by the questions asked in the first questionnaire (*What is your perception of image X?*), we firstly had to calculate Cronbach's alpha, which is one of the most common reliability measurements in use today (Reynaldo, 1999). Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient that varies from 0 to 1, and measures the internal consistency reliability (Malhotra 2010). If the coefficient equals 0.6 or less, the internal consistency reliability is not satisfying (Malhotra 2010). Cronbach's alpha was calculated on the three sets of bipolar adjectives to show that the answers were reliable. Our alpha had a high internal consistency, which left no room for improvement to this question (Iacobucci & Duhachek, 2003).

Since the three bipolar adjectives (*Bad – Good*, *Negative – Positive* and *Do not like – Like*), had high internal consistency, we used the mean of these scales and calculated the attitudes toward the image. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) can be used as a test of means for two or more populations, where only one categorical variable is of interest (Malhotra 2010). We therefore chose to conduct a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine if the means of the first question (*What is your perception of the image?*) were statistically different for the different images.

The Sig. value told us that there was a significant difference between some of the conditions, just not which ones. One possible outcome was that all conditions were significantly different from each other. According to Malhotra (2010), a Tukey test “can make pairwise comparisons of all treatment means”, and hence solve this problem. To compare each of the following conditions, we therefore chose to do a

Tukey test.

The second part of Pre-study (1) aimed to investigate whether the four factors, light, background, sharpness and placement of object, correlated with the general attitude of the image. According to Malhotra (2010), the Pearson correlation coefficient is the most common used statistic when wishing to analyse how strongly two variables are associated. A Pearson Correlation test was therefore found suitable for understanding how the four factors correlated with the attitude towards the image and was hence conducted in SPSS.

Results Pre-study Part 1

The first question in pre-study part 1 was “*What is your perception of image X?*”, where the respondents answered in a seven-grade scale measuring the attitude to the image with three bipolar adjectives (“*Bad – Good, Negative – Positive* and “*Do not like – Like*”). To assure an internal constancy in these answers, that is, how closely related the answers of the questions were, Cronbach’s alpha was calculated. Cronbach’s Alpha between the three bipolar adjectives in the first question was calculated to 0,969, which simply implies a high internal consistency. We therefore used the mean of the three answers and calculated the attitudes toward the image. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated to see if there was a statistically significant difference in the attitude towards the six images. This analysis showed that there was a significant difference in attitude between different images [$F(5,114)=297$ $p<0,01$] on a $p<0,05$ level. After we assured that our questionnaire results were statistically reliable we simple used the mean to decide which images that were perceived as worst and best. Image number 4 had the lowest mean of 1,48 whilst image 5 had the highest mean of 6,90 (see table 2). However, to understand which images were significantly different from each other, a tukey post hoc test was used. The test compared all images to each other. The result of the test showed that the attitude towards each image was significantly different to the attitude towards each of the other images. The Tukey test therefore clearly showed that image 5 ($M=6,90$ $SD=0,31$) was perceived as better than image 4 ($M=1,48$ $SD=0,57$).

Perception of picture			
Picture	N	Mean	SD
1	20	2.25	0.64
2	20	5.10	0.55
3	20	3.50	0.51
4	20	1.48	0.57
5	20	6.90	0.31
6	20	4.50	0.39

Table 2. The table shows the result from the question “What is your perception of image X?” where the respondents answered in a seven-grade scale: (“Bad – Good, Negative – Positive and Do not like – Like”). An overview of the images can be viewed in figure 6.

The second part of the survey in pre-study part 1 mend to understand if the four factors light, sharpness, background and placement of object affected the respondents perceived attitude that was measured in the first question. The respondents rated the images with the four factors in mind on a seven-grade scale where one equalled “Very Bad” and seven equalled “Very Good”. To investigate this we looked at the correlation to see if the four factors and the attitude co-varied. To find causality between the factors and the attitude a regression analysis was used. The Pearsson Correlation test gave a value of 0,855(>0,8) for the light, 0,908(>0,8) for the sharpness, 0,824(>0,8) for the background and finally the test resulted in 0,885(>0,8) for the placement of object. To summarize, this indicates a high correlation between each factor and the attitude measured in the first question. Further, the regression provided a B=0,822 for the light, B=0,727 for the sharpness, B=0,850 the background and lastly B=0,847 for the placement of object. This also indicates a high correlation between the four factors and attitude toward each image. To conclude; all four factors affect the attitude towards the image. However, the background showed to have the highest impact (B=0,850), and the sharpness the lowest (B=0,727).

Analysis of Pre-study Part 2

The second set of questionnaires were analysed in the same fashion as the first question in Pre-Study (1). For the question (“*how do you feel when you see the image?*”), Cronbach’s alpha proved high once more, which allowed us to continue with the one-way ANOVA analysis. As before, a Tukey test had to be made since the Sig. value did not tell us which condition of means that were different.

Results Pre-study Part 2

The second part of our pre-study aimed to understand how a certain image affected the respondent's emotions in terms of joy. The image that was perceived as best and the image that was perceived as worst in pre-study part 1 were to be tested along with identical duplicates including a smiling person.

We measured the respondent's joy on four scales (Happy, In a good mood, Positive, Joyful). Cronbach's Alpha between these synonyms to joy was calculated to 0,894, which imply a high internal consistency. The means could therefore be used even in this case, and the ANOVA analysis showed us that there was a significant difference in joy between the different images [$F(3,56)=82,493$ $p<0,01$] on a $p<0,05$ level. Further the Tukey post hoc test showed a significant difference between the perceived joy between all images except image that was perceived as bad and included a smiling person and the image that was perceived as good, not including a smiling person. The means and standard deviation for the joy are shown in table 3 below.

Perceived level of joy			
Picture	N	Mean	SD
"Bad" picture + smile	15	4.87	0.38
"Bad" picture	15	2.98	0.68
"Good" picture + smile	15	5.63	0.45
"Good" picture	15	4.88	0.34

Table 3. The table shows the result from the question "How do you feel when you see this image?" where the respondents answered in a seven-grade scale from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very strong). An overview of the images can be viewed in figure 7.

By analysing the means we can determine that you feel the most joyful if you see image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, and the least joyful if you see the image that is perceived as bad and does not include a smiling person.

In order to make sure that the respondent perceived the smiling person joyful, we asked how the respondent perceived the person in the image, for the two images including a person. The respondent could answer on a scale from 1 (very sad) to 7 (very joyful). The "bad image" including a smiling person got a mean of 5,47 while

the “good” image got a mean of 5,80, which supports that, the smiling person appearing in the images is perceived as joyful.

3.7 Main Study

The purpose of this thesis is as mentioned in the introduction chapter - to investigate how different types of images, used in an ad in a C2C setting online, affect the number of clicks and emails. This is to show which type of title image that can be used to maximize the odds of selling a car in a C2C context. Therefore, the main study put pen to paper, by investigating this through an experiment, consisting of five ads uploaded to blocket.se.

The four images examined in Pre-study part (2) were used in the ads in the main study. The fifth ad did not have any image at all. All but the images themselves had to stay constant (unchanged) in order to not bring more factors to the equation. Further, the ads were uploaded in a random order, one at the time, and stayed online for one week. In order to reduce interferences between the five ads we used a timespan of 10 weeks, which means we waited one week before uploading the next ad. We choose to have the ads online for one week each since 25% of the products posted on blocket.se are sold within one day, 60% are sold within a week (blocket.se, 2014). In other words, the odds of selling exponentially decrease after the ad has been online for a week.

3.7.1 Ad Structure

We decided that our C2C ad should be made as simple, yet accurate as possible, since this method ensured us that we optimized our ads, and thus minimized the number of error factors that might have affected the ad-traffic. The ads in total consisted of four parts. Firstly, we as sellers had to choose **(1) A title, (2) an ad text (3) the sell price of the object**, followed by **(4) contact information** to the seller. Getting any of these factors wrong would have lowered the reliability of our study. For instance, if we would have picked a misleading ad title, people might actually visit the ad just because of the title, not the image. It was therefore in our belief that our used structure minimized issues like this, making the difference in ad-traffic and number of contacts a result of the title image of choice.

(1) Title

The only information a buyer sees before entering the ad is the title and the image. Both of these are meant to attract consumers in clicking on your ad so that more information will be provided. It is essential to state what car it is, specifically what model and year. If it is unclear from the name what type of car that is, people will have a hard time segmenting and find your ad when searching the site. Our titles only contained basic information such as car brand, engine, model and additional packages. To us, it was thus important not to include additional action-getting phrases like “Act now”, “it’s a barging”, “special occasion” etc. since this could affect the consumer in clicking the ad. Meaning the use of such phrases shifts focus from the image to the title.

(2) Ad text

Once a person enters the ad; we provided basic information in bullet points, standard features as well as optional features. He further suggest to mostly using bullet points for the ad text since it makes the ad easier to read. Therefore we used three sets of bullet points, followed by a few sentences in regard to the condition of the car.

- *Our first set of bullet points* described the most obvious features of the car (the basic information). Basic information includes make, colour, mileage, transmission, and engine etc.

- *Our second set of bullet points* described the major features of our particular Volvo XC60. However, we skipped the most obvious features such as door locks, power steering etc. This since they are minor points of interest to the buyer. A good example of this was the side door airbag and parking assistant of our Volvo XC60.

- *Our third set of bullet points* listed all our major optional packages. Again, we skipped the obvious features to focus on the options that made our car stand out from others; this was our 18” aluminium wheels a Bang and Olufsen sound system.

- *The condition of the car*

We wrote a few sentences about the condition of the car, in a positive yet honest way. It is also thought it would important to mention why we are selling the car, and how the consumer best can contact you. This was to reassure the buyer that we’re not just

selling a wreck. Our made-up reason for selling the car was due to changed living conditions, which meant a bigger one was needed. We thought this to be a trust giving reason that would not affect the buyers in contacting us as sellers.

(3) Price

It was essential for us to price the vehicle accordingly. An overcharge would have made people prioritize other ads making our sample group too small. An undercharge would also have given us somewhat misleading data since people use the price as reference point, forgetting about the other factors such as title and image if the price is too low. This would therefore in full have broadened the target group too much, filling it with people that were not initially interested. Therefore, to avoid under/overcharging our vehicle, we made two actions. - *Firstly* we did an online valuation at Bilpriser.se, which delivers more than 17 million daily fresh vehicle ratings annually. They biased our price on forecasts, market prices and actual sales prices from multiple sources. Bilpriser.se valued our Volvo XC60 in the range between 308 800:- to 335 900:- sek.

- *Secondly* we calculated the median ask price of the XC60's that currently were perched on blocket.se. At blocket.se 20 ads were similar to ours in terms of make, mileage and optional packages with a mean and median price of 341 000:- respectively 330 000:- sek.

With the two actions in mind, we set the ad price to 330 000:- sek since we considered the median to be the most reliable estimation. The mean doesn't compensate for high extremes, which can be misleading in contexts like ours. Also, the median was within the expected price range provided by Bilpriser.se.

(4) Contact information

People that choose to contact the seller (either by phone or mail) were considered as highly interested in your object. Since a part of our study was to investigate the number of more serious buyers, contact details had to be provided. For practical reasons we only let interested buyers contact us by email since they can thus more easily be counted and compared.

(For a full view of all ads, see appendix III)

3.7.2 Data Collection

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, our experiment was to gather two categories of data that later could be analysed to measure the effect of each image.

(1) The first category of data gathered was “the number of clicks” each ad got.

When a person was browsing among ads, found interest in one of our ads and clicks the title/overview to find out more about the item, our analytical tool registered action. People clicking the title/overview could thus be considered as interested and thereby as potential buyers of the item.

(2) The second category of data consisted of people who were influenced enough to reach out and make an effort to purchase the item (contact the seller) after having read through the item description. These individuals could thus be considered as serious and highly potential buyers.

(Se appendix IV for an illustration of how the data was collected)

3.7.3 Analytic Tools

Just like for the Pre-study, we used SPSS in order to analyse our data. According to Malhotra (2010), a chi-square goodness of fit test can be used to understand if the deviation from an expected distribution is significant. As an equally distribution of clicks on all ads could be assumed, this test was suitable for determining whether the different images had an effect on number of clicks. A chi-square goodness of test was hence used.

The images’ effect on the number of people contacting the seller via e-mails was analysed with the same method and same assumption (an equally distribution of e-mails).

4. Results Main Study

The number of clicks and e-mails each of the five ads generated at Blocket.se are in this section described, reported and compared. These results will show whether the hypotheses are supported or not supported.

The two categories of data that were gathered through the experiment was both the number of clicks and the number of emails each ad generated. Table 4 below shows an overview of the result.

Number of clicks/e-mails at Blocket.se		
<u>Picture</u>	<u>Clicks in one week</u>	<u>E-mails in one week</u>
"Bad" picture + smile	3425	53
"Bad" picture	1823	12
"Good" picture + smile	3378	46
"Good" picture	3587	62
No picture	1234	7

Table 4. The table shows how many clicks and how many e-mails each ad generated in one week at Blocket.se.

The results from the ten hypotheses will be described below.

4.1 The power of a good image, a bad image and no image

The first hypotheses focused on comparing how the number of clicks/e-mails varied between the images with no smiling person included. Hypothesis 1a suggests that the “good” image is more popular than the “bad” image. The number of clicks for the “good” image was 3587 while the number of clicks for the “bad image” was 1823, which means the percentage of clicks for the “good” image was 66% and 44% for the “bad” image. It is assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. Using the Chi-square goodness of fit test for clicks we can conclude that the relationship between the variables was significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 5410) = 575.2, p < 0.01$.

The number of e-mails the “good” image generated was 62 while the number of e-mails the “bad” image generated was 12, which means the percentage of e-mails the

“good” picture generated was 84% and the percentage the “bad” image generated was 16%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different. For e-mails the difference was significant as well, $\chi^2 (1, N = 74) = 33,784, p < 0.01$. The hypothesis is therefore supported.

H1a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad. SUPPORTED

Hypothesis 1b suggests that the “good” image is more popular than showing no image at all. The number of clicks for the “good” image was 3587 while the number of clicks for no image was 1234, which means the percentage of clicks for the “good” image was 74% and 26% for the ad with no image. It is assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. Using the Chi-square goodness of fit test we can conclude that the number of people clicking on the ad with the “good” image and the number of people clicking on the ad with no image were significantly different, $\chi^2 (1, N = 4821) = 1148.4, p < 0.01$.

The number of e-mails the “good” image generated was 62 while the number of e-mails an ad with no image generated was 7, which means the percentage of e-mails the “good” picture generated was 90% and the percentage the ad with no image generated was 10%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different. The difference between number of e-mails was significant as well, $\chi^2 (1, N = 69) = 43.841, p < 0.01$. The hypothesis is therefore supported.

H1b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any image. SUPPORTED

Hypothesis 1c suggests that the “bad” image is less popular than showing no image at all. Looking at table 4 above, we can conclude that this is not the case. Actually, it seems to be the other way around. The number of clicks for the “bad” image was 1823 while the number of clicks for no image was 1234, which means the percentage of clicks for the “bad” image was 60% and 40% for the ad with no image. It is

assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. The Chi-square goodness of fit test was used to see if there was a significant difference between the number of people who clicked on the ad with the “bad” image and the number of people who clicked on the ad including no image at all. We can conclude that there was a significant difference showing *the opposite* of what the hypothesis suggested, $\chi^2 (1, N = 3057) = 113.5, p < 0.01$.

The number of e-mails the “bad” image generated was 12 while the number of e-mails an ad with no image generated was 7, which means the percentage of e-mails the “bad” picture generated was 63% and the percentage the ad with no image generated was 37%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different. For e-mails, the difference was not significant, $\chi^2 (1, N = 19) = 1.316, p = 0.25$, and the opposite of what the hypothesis suggested is therefore not supported.

We can conclude that the “bad” image was more popular than showing no image at all for clicks, and equally popular regarding number of e-mails.

H1c: In a C2C online setting, an ad not including any image will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad.

NOT SUPPORTED

4.2 The effect of the smiling person

The second set of hypotheses aimed to investigate what happens if a smiling person is added to the image. Hypothesis 2a suggests that the “good” image, including a smiling person will be more popular than the same image without a smiling person. Looking at table 4, we can conclude that the ad with the image with no person included generated more clicks and e-mails than the other image and the hypothesis is obviously not supported.

The number of clicks for the “good” image including a smiling person was 3378 while the number of clicks for the “good” image was 3587, which means the percentage of clicks for the “good” image including a smiling person was 48% and 52% for the ad with a “good” image. It is assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. The Chi-square goodness of fit test was used to see if there was a significant difference between the two groups, showing the

opposite of the suggested hypothesis. The analysis showed that this was the case for clicks, $\chi^2(1, N = 6965) = 6.27, p = .01$.

The number of e-mails the “good” image including a smiling person generated was 46 while the number of e-mails an ad with a “good” image generated was 62, which means the percentage of e-mails the “good” image including a smiling person generated was 43% and the percentage the ad with a “good” image generated was 57%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different. The analysis showed that there was not a significant difference between the two groups, showing the opposite of the suggested hypothesis, $\chi^2(1, N = 108) = 2.370, p = .12$. It can therefore be concluded that the “good” image without the smiling person was more popular than the identical image including the smiling person in terms of clicks, and equally popular in terms of e-mails.

H2a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as good without a smiling person.

NOT SUPPORTED

Hypothesis 2b is similar to the previous, but is instead of the “good” image, testing the “bad” image with and without the smiling person. The number of clicks for the “bad” image including a smiling person was 3425 while the number of clicks for the “bad” image was 1823, which means the percentage of clicks for the “bad” image including a smiling person was 65% and 35% for the ad with a “bad” image. It is assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. Using the Chi-square goodness of fit test we can conclude that there is significantly more people that clicked on the “bad” image including a smiling person than people that clicked on the “bad” image with no person, $\chi^2(1, N = 5248) = 489.0, p < 0.01$.

The number of e-mails the “bad” image including a smiling person generated was 53 while the number of e-mails an ad with a “bad” image generated was 12, which means the percentage of e-mails the “bad” image including a smiling person generated was 82% and the percentage the ad with a “bad” image generated was 18%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different.

For e-mails, the difference was significant as well, $\chi^2 (1, N = 65) = 25.862, p < 0.01$. The hypothesis is therefore supported.

H2b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad without a smiling person.

SUPPORTED

Hypothesis 2c states that the “good” image including a smiling person is more popular than showing no image at all. The number of clicks for the “good” image including a smiling person was 3378 while the number of clicks for the ad with no image was 1234, which means the percentage of clicks for the “good” image including a smiling person was 73% and 27% for the ad with no image. It is assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. Using the Chi-square goodness of fit test we can conclude that the number of people clicking on the ad with the “good” image including a smiling person and the number of people clicking on the ad with no image were significantly different, $\chi^2 (1, N = 4612) = 996.7, p < 0.01$.

The number of e-mails the “good” image including a smiling person generated was 46 while the number of e-mails an ad with no image generated was 7, which means the percentage of e-mails the “good” image including a smiling person generated was 87% and the percentage the ad with a no image generated was 13%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different. The difference was significant regarding e-mails as well, $\chi^2 (1, N = 53) = 28.698, p < 0.01$. The hypothesis is therefore supported.

H2c: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any image. **SUPPORTED**

Hypothesis 2d states that an ad with the “bad” image including a smiling person is more popular than an ad with no image at all. The number of clicks for the “bad” image including a smiling person was 3425 while the number of clicks for the ad with

no image was 1234, which means the percentage of clicks for the “bad” image including a smiling person was 74% and 26% for the ad with no image. It is assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. Using the Chi-square goodness of fit test we can conclude that the relationship between these variables was significant regarding clicks, $\chi^2 (1, N = 4659) = 1030.4, p < 0.01$. The number of e-mails the “bad” image including a smiling person generated was 53 while the number of e-mails an ad with no image generated was 7, which means the percentage of e-mails the “bad” image including a smiling person generated was 88% and the percentage the ad with a no image generated was 12%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different. The relationship between the variables was significant regarding clicks as well, $\chi^2 (1, N = 60) = 35.267, p < 0.01$. The hypothesis is therefore supported.

*H2d: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any image. **SUPPORTED***

4.3 Smiling person versus Image quality

The third set of hypotheses focused on mixing the two variables good/bad image and smiling person/no smiling person. Hypothesis 3a suggests that a “good” image will be more popular than a “bad” image, when both images include a smiling person. It is obvious that this is not the case while looking at table 4. The Chi-square goodness of fit test is used to see if the opposite of the hypothesis is supported.

The number of clicks for the “good” image including a smiling person was 3378 while the number of clicks for the “bad” image including a smiling person was 3425, which means the percentage of clicks for the “good” image including a smiling person was 50% and 50% for the ad with a “bad” image including a smiling person. It is assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. The Chi-square goodness of fit test shows that there is no significant difference for clicks, $\chi^2 (1, N = 6803) = 0.32, p = .057$.

The number of e-mails the “good” image including a smiling person generated was 46 while the number of e-mails an ad a “bad” image including a smiling person generated was 53, which means the percentage of e-mails the “good” image including

a smiling person generated was 46% and the percentage the “bad” image including a smiling person was 54%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different. The Chi-square goodness of fit test shows that there is no significant difference for e-mails either, $\chi^2 (1, N = 99) = 0.495$, $p = .48$. The hypothesis is not supported.

H3a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad including a smiling person.

NOT SUPPORTED

Hypothesis 3b states that an ad with the “good” image including a smiling person is more popular than an ad with the “bad” image. The number of clicks for the “good” image including a smiling person was 3378 while the number of clicks for the “bad” image person was 1823, which means the percentage of clicks for the “good” image including a smiling person was 65% and 35% for the ad with a “bad” image. It is assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. Using the Chi-square goodness of fit test we can conclude that consumers showed a significant preference on the “good” image with the smiling person, $\chi^2 (1, N = 5201) = 464.9$, $p < 0.01$, regarding clicks.

The number of e-mails the “good” image including a smiling person generated was 46 while the number of e-mails an ad with a “bad” image generated was 12, which means the percentage of e-mails the “good” image including a smiling person generated was 79% and the percentage the “bad” image generated was 21%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different. There is a significant difference regarding e-mails as well, $\chi^2 (1, N = 58) = 19.931$, $p < 0.01$. The hypothesis is therefore supported.

H3b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad without a smiling person. **SUPPORTED**

Hypothesis 3c states that an ad with the “good” image is equally popular to an ad with the “bad” image including a smiling person. The number of clicks for the “good” image was 3587 while the number of clicks for the “bad” image including a smiling person was 3425, which means the percentage of clicks for the “good” image was 51% and 49% for the ad with a “bad” image including a smiling person. It is assumed that each ad would get 50% of the clicks if the images would not be different. Using the Chi-square goodness of fit test we can conclude that the relationship between these variables was *not* significant for clicks, $\chi^2 (1, N = 7012) = 3.7, p = .053$.

The number of e-mails the “good” image generated was 62 while the number of e-mails an ad with a “bad” image including a smiling person generated was 53, which means the percentage of e-mails the “good” image generated was 54% and the percentage the “bad” image including a smiling person generated was 46%. It is assumed that each ad would generate 50% of the e-mails if the images would not be different. The Chi-square goodness of fit test showed that there was *no* significant difference regarding e-mails either, $\chi^2 (1, N = 115) = 0.704, p = .40$. The hypothesis is therefore supported.

H3c: In a C2C online setting, an ad including an image that is perceived as good, without a smiling person, will generate the same amount of clicks and e-mails than an ad including an image that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person.

SUPPORTED

4.4 Overview of result hypotheses

Below is an overview of all the hypotheses and whether they are supported or not.

<u>Test Variable(s)</u>	<u>Hypotheses</u>	<u>Supported / Not supported</u>	<u>Comments</u>
- Picture quality (good/bad/no picture)	H1a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad.	Supported	
	H1b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any picture.	Supported	
	H1c: In a C2C online setting, an ad not including any picture will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad.	Not supported	The opposite is supported for clicks
- Presence of smiling person (smiling person/no smiling person)	H2a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as good without a smiling person.	Not supported	The opposite is supported for clicks
	H2b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad without a smiling person.	Supported	
	H2c: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any picture.	Supported	
	H2d: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad not including any picture.	Supported	
- Picture quality (good/bad) - Presence of smiling person (smiling person/no smiling person)	H3a: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad including a smiling person.	Not supported	
	H3b: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, including a smiling person, will generate more clicks and more e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad without a smiling person.	Supported	
	H3c: In a C2C online setting, an ad including a picture that is perceived as good, without a smiling person, will generate the same amount of clicks and e-mails than an ad including a picture that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person.	Supported	

Table 5. The table shows an overview of the hypotheses and whether they are supported or not.

5. Discussion

This chapter will start by interpreting the results from the pre-study. After this, a discussion of the main study results will follow, and six sub-conclusions will be drawn. These will then be summarized into a main conclusion. Managerial implications as well as potential criticism towards the study will then follow. Finally, suggestions for future research will be presented.

5.1 Pre-study Results

In order to fully understand the results of the Main study, a quick review and discussion of the Pre-study is needed. As described before, Pre-study part (1) aimed to understand what is actually perceived as a good image, while Pre-study part (2) aimed to investigate how the different images in our study affected the respondent's level of joy.

5.1.1 What is a good image?

The aim of this thesis was not only to contribute to academic research, but also to map out for real consumers how they can optimize their images in C2C ads on a listing site online. One part of the main study aimed to examine if the perception of the image in terms of good/bad affects the number of clicks and emails. Since we could find no accurate academic research on what characterizes a good image, the first step was to investigate this. From pre-study part (1), it can be concluded that all four factors that we investigated in the study; light, background, placement of object and sharpness were highly correlated with the attitude (in terms of good, like, positive) towards the image. It should be noted that this study does not say anything about how important these factors are compared to other factors (that are not tested), we can only conclude that if you fulfil these factors when taking an image, chances are higher that the image will be perceived as good.

5.1.2 Emotion-loaded images

Pre-study part 2 included four images – one that was perceived as good, one that was perceived as bad and two copies of these, where a smiling person was added. In this

study we wanted to confirm that the images affected the respondents, in line with what theory states. In other words, we wanted to confirm that the image where the smiling person was included created a higher level of joy than the identical image without the smiling person did. This was confirmed, both for the images that were perceived as good and for the images that were perceived as bad.

However, another interesting observation was made as well. It was found that the image that was perceived as good and did not include the smiling person, created the same level of joy as the image that was perceived as bad but which did include the smiling person (see table 6 below). It seems like the smiling person was not the only factor that increased the perceived level of joy, the quality of the image did as well. In the table below, the images are ranked according to how much joy the respondent perceived when seeing the image. The perceived joy was significantly different between all images except the “good” image without a smiling person and the “bad” image including a smiling person.

Overview perceived joy		
	<u>Picture</u>	<u>Mean</u>
1	"Good" + smile	5,63
2	"Good"	4.88
3	"Bad" + smile	4.87
4	"Bad"	2.98

No sign. difference

Table 6. An overview of the perceived level of joy (on a scale 1-7) each image created. The perceived levels of joy are significantly different from each other for all images except for those that are marked with “No sign. difference”.

Before starting the main discussion, which regards the result of the main study we can conclude the following from the pre-study discussion:

- Fulfilling the four factors “light”, “background”, “placement of object” and “sharpness” will increase likeliness of an image being perceived as good. (Pre-study part 1)
- The manipulation control verified that adding a smiling person in the image increased the perceived level of joy among the person who watched the image. (Pre-study part 2)

- It was also found that a better quality of the image increased the perceived level of joy as well. (Pre-study part 2)

5.2 Discussion of Main-study Results

Many studies can be found regarding the role of images in advertising in a B2C setting. This study breaks new ground by testing previous theory, in a new setting – the C2C setting. As e-commerce is becoming more important, this study has focused on C2C marketing online. The main study was performed in a real-life setting, at the website blocket.se, where we as the authors acted as sellers of a car. Five ads that were identical in everything except the shown image, were uploaded at the website and the behaviour of blocket.se’s visitors was observed. Two types of data were gathered: the number of people who clicked on the ad and the number of people who actually contacted the seller after clicking on the ad.

The purpose of the thesis was to investigate how different types of images, used in an online C2C ad, affect the number of clicks on the ad and emails sent to the seller. Five types of images were to be investigated; a good image, a bad image, a good image including a smiling person, a bad image including a smiling person and no image. Below discussion aims to map out how the different types of images used in the ad, affect the clicks and emails. The discussion will lead to a conclusion that can hopefully help consumers to optimize their C2C ads online.

5.2.1 Overview of result main study

Before diving down into details, an overview of what the result of the ten hypotheses showed, is presented in below tables. In the tables, the ads are ranked according to how many clicks (table 7) each ad generated and how many e-mails (table 8) each ad generated. The numbers of clicks/e-mails each ad generated are significantly different between all ads, except where the table states they were not. For example, the ad with the “good” image, generated significantly more clicks than all the other ads except the ad with a “bad” image including a smiling person (see table 7).

Overview result clicks		
	<u>Picture</u>	<u>No. of clicks</u>
1	"Good"	3587
2	"Bad" + smile	3425
3	"Good" + smile	3378
4	"Bad"	1823
5	No image	1234

No sign. difference

No sign. difference

Table 7. An overview of the number of clicks each ad generated. All ads are significantly different from each other in terms of clicks except those that are marked with "No sign. difference".

Overview result e-mails		
	<u>Picture</u>	<u>No. of clicks</u>
1	"Good"	62
2	"Bad" + smile	53
3	"Good" + smile	46
4	"Bad"	12
5	No image	7

No sign. difference

No sign. difference

Table 8. An overview of the number of e-mails each ad generated. All ads are significantly different from each other in terms of e-mails except those that are marked with "No sign. difference".

As can be seen in the two tables above, the result regarding the number of clicks and the number of e-mails differ somewhat. The number of clicks will therefore be discussed first, and after this we will address in which ways the result regarding e-mails is similar, where it is not, and potential reasons for the difference. Sub-conclusions will be drawn along the discussion, to keep track on what we find. The whole analysis will thereafter be summarized into one Main Conclusion (5.3).

Note: It is highly recommended to go back to table 7 and table 8 above while reading the following discussion, as they show a good overview of the entire result of the main study.

5.2.2 Number of clicks

Starting by discussing the overall result of the number of clicks that each ad generated, we can see that the "good" image without a smiling person and the "bad" image including a smiling person were the most popular ads. Further, the "good" image, including a smiling person was as popular as the "bad" image with a smiling person, but not as popular as the "good" image without a smiling person, according to the statistical analysis. The ad with the "bad" image without a smiling person was

clearly less popular than the other three ads containing images. This ad only got 1823 number of clicks, while the others got clicks in the range from 3378 to 3587. Using no image at all was significantly less popular than all other ads, only producing 1234 number of clicks.

We will now discuss the result (regarding clicks) of the images that were perceived as good, followed by a discussion of the images that were perceived as bad. Finally, the ad with no image at all will be discussed.

The images that are perceived as good

The most popular ad in terms of clicks was the ad including an image that was perceived as good, without a smiling person. Consequently, this ad was more popular than the ad with an image that was perceived as good, including a smiling person. This is addressed in below discussion, followed by sub-conclusion 1.

As previous research has stated, a higher level of joy can lead to several positive things, such as more positive expectations of future events (Masters and Furman, 1976), influencing the evaluation of objects that are unrelated to the object that created to mood (Forgas and Moylan, 1987) and lowering the perceived risk of buying products that are associated with high risk (Chaudhuri, 1988). All these factors could lead to a higher interest in the product, and therefore a higher interest in the ad. It is therefore quite surprising that the ad with a good image without a smiling person generated more clicks than the good image including a smiling person, since the image including a smiling person created a higher perceived level of joy. One explanation to this could be that the previously presented theory that states that a higher level of joy creates a higher interest in the ad does not work in a C2C setting, at least not for images that are perceived as good. However, we do not believe that this is the whole explanation. More likely, there are other factors than the “joy” that matter and affect the result as well. One such factor could be trustworthiness. We concluded in the literature review that a buyer’s level of perceived risk or trust in the seller in a C2C setting is an influencer of the attitude towards purchasing (Lori 2012). Since a “good” and “normal” image might seem trustworthier than the same image

including a smiling person, this can have affected the result.

Conclusion 1: The results shows that the “good” image without the smiling person is more popular in terms of clicks than the same image including a smiling person, even though it has been shown that the latter created a higher level of perceived joy. Even though trustworthiness is discussed, no clear explanations to this can be proved.

The images that are perceived as bad

In this section we will start by discussing the observation that shows that a “bad” image including a smiling person is more popular in terms of clicks than the same image without the smiling person. The discussion will be followed by sub-conclusion 2. A comparison between the “bad” image without a smiling person and all other images will then be discussed, followed by sub-conclusion 3.

It is very interesting to see that the “bad” image including the smiling person is as popular in terms of clicks as both the “good” image with and without the smiling person. It seems like adding a smiling person in a bad image really can weigh up for the image being “bad”. While the ad with the “bad” image without the smiling person generated 1823 number of clicks, the added person made the ad generate 3425 number of clicks and the p-value when comparing the clicks for these ads was $p < 0.01$.

From pre-study part (2) we found that adding a smiling person in the “bad” image created a significant higher level of joy. The result therefore goes well in line with previous research, showing that a higher level of joy can lead to several positive things, described in the previous section. It seems like the emotion-loaded marketing that previous researchers have shown works in a B2C context, also works in a C2C context, for images that are perceived as bad.

Conclusion 2: Observing the ads with the images that were perceived as bad, one can clearly see that adding a smiling person into the image gives the ad significantly higher interest in terms of clicks on the ad, reaching the same level of clicks as the ad with an image that is perceived as good, including or not including a smiling person.

Another unambiguous observation when looking at the result for the “bad” images is that the ad with the “bad” image without a smiling person was less popular than all the other ads including images. This does not come as a surprise, since this image also created the lowest level of perceived joy and even this result goes therefore well in line with previous research stating that a higher level of joy can lead to several positive things for the marketer (Chaudhuri, 1988; Forgas and Moylan, 1987; Masters and Furman, 1976).

Conclusion 3: As expected, the ad with the image that was perceived as “bad” and did not include a smiling person was less popular in terms of clicks than all other ads including an image.

Showing no image at all

This section discusses the interest of the ad when showing no image at all compared to the interest for all other four types of ads, ended with sub-conclusion 4.

Showing no image at all turned out to be the least popular way of showing an ad in terms of clicks, even less popular than showing an image that is perceived as bad. This was somewhat surprising, since theory states that a bad image can create “avoidance”-responses (Staats and Lohr, 1979). However, as mentioned, the research also states that the buyer’s perceived risk influences the attitude towards purchasing in a C2C setting (Lori 2012). One might guess that buying a product with no image at all seems risky and maybe therefore a bad image is appreciated more than not having any evidence at all of the fact that the product actually exists.

Conclusion 4: Showing no image at all creates a lower level of clicks than all other images tested, including the bad images.

In order to provide a full understanding of the results, sub-conclusions 1-4 that were just presented cover a comparison (in terms of clicks) between each of the five ads in relation to each of the other ads. Before summarizing the result into one big conclusion, the number of e-mails sent to the seller will be discussed.

5.2.3 Number of e-mails

The second type of data that was gathered was the number of e-mails that was sent to the seller, showing an interest to buy the car. Since this data shows a behaviour that is as close to a real purchase you can possibly get, we find it very interesting to look at. However, one should be aware of that the sample is much smaller than the sample of clicks on the ad, and it is therefore interesting to look at both types of data.

Table 8 presented above, shows how many people showing an interest in buying the product by e-mailing the seller.² One can see that the “good” image with/without a smiling person and the “bad” image including a smiling person, was the most popular and showed no significant difference in terms of number of e-mails between each other. The ad with a “bad” image without a smiling person, and the ad showing no image, were equally popular and was significantly less popular than the other three ads. Below, the similarities to the already discussed result regarding clicks will be addressed. This will be concluded into sub-conclusion 5. After this, the differences will instead be elaborated upon, followed by sub-conclusion 6.

Similarities to the result regarding number of clicks

Comparing the result regarding number of e-mails to the result regarding number of clicks that was discussed before, one can see a clear pattern. Except for the fact that when looking at number of e-mails we can see no significant difference between the “good” image with or without a smiling person and that we can see no significant difference between the “bad” image and showing no image at all, the outcome is exactly the same. This is fairly unsurprising since if more people have clicked on one ad compared to another one, chances are of course higher that more people will contact the seller.

It is worth to emphasize the fact that the most interesting and clear finding from the discussion regarding the number of clicks, is again proved in number of e-mails. That is the result showing that a “bad” image including a smiling person is significantly more popular than a “bad” image without a smiling person. While the latter image

² The e-mail adress was the only contact information that was given

created 12 e-mails, the ad with the identical image with a smiling person included, created 53 e-mails. This proves that adding a smiling person in a bad image will *not only* generate a higher number of clicks, but also a higher number of contacts with the seller (by e-mail). As mentioned, this goes well in line with previous research regarding emotion-loaded marketing, stating that a higher level of joy leads to several positive things for the marketer (Chaudhuri, 1988; Forgas and Moylan, 1987; Masters and Furman, 1976)

Conclusion 5: Except for the fact that when looking at number of e-mails we can see no significant difference between the “good” image with or without a smiling person and that we can see no significant difference between the “bad” image and showing no image at all, the outcome is exactly the same as for number of clicks. Consequently, it is proved that adding a smiling person into an image that is perceived as bad, generates a significantly higher number of e-mails sent to the seller.

Differences compared to number of clicks

As mentioned, there are only two differences when comparing the result regarding e-mails and the result regarding clicks. The ranking of how popular the ads were is exactly the same for e-mails and clicks. The differences regard only that a significant difference between ads could be proved for two more scenarios regarding clicks compared to for e-mails. These scenarios are the “bad” image compared to showing no image at all and the “good” image with a smiling person compared to a “good” image where a smiling person is not included. For these comparisons, no significant difference could be found regarding e-mails. This will be discussed below and summarized into sub-conclusion 6.

One potential reason for this result could be simply that the sample regarding e-mails is too small. When looking closer at the sample, comparing the number of e-mails the ad with the “bad” image generated and the number of e-mails the ad with no image generated, the total sample is 19 (12+7). This can definitely be seen as a too small sample to draw any big conclusions from. Looking at the other difference, which is that we can see no significant difference for number of e-mails between the “good”

image with a smiling person compared to the same image without a smiling person, the sample is bigger. This sample consists of 108 (62+46) people and is more reliable.

Looking at this latter finding, it is more consistent with what theory suggests than the finding regarding clicks: The “good” image including a smiling person created a higher level of joy and should therefore get more clicks and e-mails than the “good image” without a smiling person. As the two images got an equal number of e-mails, but the image without the smiling person got the highest number of clicks, the result regarding e-mails goes more in line with theory. Why is this? Could it be that the joyful person affected the number of e-mails more than she affected the number of clicks? One potential explanation is that when you scroll down through different ads (before clicking on any of them), you will not look at each ad for many seconds. As described in the literature review, it is rather likely that you scan through the options in an unstructured and fast way when being exposed to many alternatives that are presented in a visual way (Townsend and Kahn, 2014). At this stage, the attention drawing aspect might be more important than anything else. However, when you have clicked on the ad, you get exposed to the image for a longer time, and maybe this affects your joy more and thereby affects your interest in contacting the seller more. This is nothing that is proved and just a suggestion. One should however also remember, that this scenario is just seen regarding the images that were perceived as good. The interest number of clicks and e-mails did not differ in the same way regarding the images that were perceived as bad.

Conclusion 6: Two differences are observed regarding the result of number of e-mails and the number of clicks. The first one is that there is no significant difference between the ad showing the “bad” image and the ad showing no image for e-mails. The sample is considered as too small to draw any conclusions from. The second difference is that there is no significant difference between the ad showing a “good” image with or without a smiling person for e-mails. The finding indicates that the ad with a “good” image including a smiling person creates a higher number of e-mails than could be expected when looking at the interest of the ad in terms of number of clicks. It is discussed whether this can be explained by a longer exposure to the image when having clicked on the ad. No clear explanations can however be proved.

5.3 Conclusion

To get a full understanding of how ads with no images, with images that are perceived as “good”/”bad” or with images that does or does not include a smiling person in a C2C context affect the consumer behaviour, ten hypotheses were formulated. The hypotheses aimed to investigate how popular the different ads were in relation to the others in terms of clicks on the ad and e-mails sent to the seller. Not very surprising, it was found that an image that is perceived as “good” was the most popular both in terms of clicks and in terms of e-mails. Including a smiling person in the “good” image turned out to be as popular in terms of e-mails, but was shown to be less popular in terms of clicks. *The most interesting finding however, was that an ad with an image that is perceived as bad, including a smiling person, is significantly more popular than an ad containing the same image but without a smiling person, both in terms of clicks and e-mails.* This finding goes well in line with previous research.

From this study the following recommendations are made to consumers that are about to sell goods on a listing site online:

- To optimize number of clicks on your ad:
Add a “good” image without a smiling person to the ad. To increase the chances of your image being perceived as good, make sure that light, background, placement of object and sharpness are in line with what is described in this study.
- To optimize number of e-mails sent to you:
Add a “good” image in the ad, including or not including a smiling person. Alternatively, add a “bad” image including a smiling person in your ad. These types of images will all generate the same amount of e-mails.
 - Adding a smiling person to a “bad” image, will significantly increase the number of e-mails – reaching the same amount of e-mails as an image that is perceived as good (with/without a smiling person) would.
- Always include an image (even an image that is perceived as bad is better/equal than not including any image at all).

5.4 Managerial Implications

This thesis has broken new ground by being the first of its kind investigating how images affect the commerce at the website blocket.se. As this website has five million visitors per week (blocket.se, 2014), the results are of big importance and can be used by many users.

We can conclude that the consumers wanting to buy products at blocket.se are definitely affected by what type of image the seller has chosen to show. Consequently, also the seller's odds of selling the product, is affected by which type of image he or she shows. Sellers that not display any image at all are the least likely to sell their product and hence many sellers can learn from this study, as ads showing no image is somewhat commonly seen at blocket.se. Also, this study has confirmed that showing a "good" image is better than a "bad" image, if you want to increase your chances of selling your product.

Emotion-loaded images are, at least as far as we as authors have been able to find, not common at all at blocket.se. Using the result regarding emotion-loaded marketing from this thesis can definitely help sellers increase their odds of selling their products. It is clear that adding a smiling person to an image that is perceived as bad increases the chances of clicks and e-mails significantly. If a seller is not very skilled at taking photographs or do not have access to a good camera, adding a smiling person into the photo is a good solution. For those sellers that are aiming for taking a good image of the product, our study has shown that fulfilling the four factors, light, background, sharpness and placement of object will increase the likeliness of the image being perceived as good.

5.5 Criticism

This thesis has entered an unexplored field, namely images used in C2C e-commerce, and thereby opened up for new areas of research as well as contributed with practical advice to people wanting to sell their products online. However, there are some critical reflections that we would like to present.

Regarding the experiment (the main study at blocket.se), there are some potential

misleading issues that we have not been able to adjust for:

- The five ads were uploaded after each other, and there is a risk that some of the consumers have seen several of these, understood that they are connected, and behaved in a certain way due to that. For example, maybe they e-mailed us when seeing the first ad, but not when seeing the second ad because they understood that it was the same product. Therefore the order of when the ads were uploaded might have affected the result.
- Also, we can not be sure that the demand of the car is exactly the same for each week. A lot of people might have been looking for such a product a certain week and thereby affected the result regarding number of clicks and e-mails. In order to overcome this, it would have been desirable to repeat the experiment several times and see if the result stayed the same.
- In the same way, we can not be sure that the number of other car-ads added to blocket.se was the same for each week. If other people ad a lot of ads, our ad will fall down and this can affect the result regarding clicks and thereby number of e-mails. In order to overcome this, it would have been desirable to repeat the experiment several times and see if the result stayed the same.
- To be more secure about the result regarding number of e-mails sent, a bigger sample would have been desirable.
- The age and gender of the people being exposed to the ads are unknown.

Regarding the pre-study, there are some potential critique as well:

- The questionnaires in the pre-study were distributed by a car salesman, who also gave the respondent instructions. He can have failed to follow our instructions and affected the respondents in a way that we are not aware of.
- A larger sample in the pre-study would have provided us with an even more accurate result.
- The two interviews with photographers did not follow a certain method or framework and did not open up for deeper thoughts from the photographers. Each interview took around 10 minutes and more focus on this part might have led to even more interesting findings that could have contributed to the thesis.

Some critique should be directed towards the choice of references. All references in the literature and hypothesis generation chapter are academic research and thus reliable sources. However, regarding the sections of the thesis that focus on giving an overview of how reality works for c2c etc., some references that refer to websites that are not of academic kind can be found.

Finally, we again want to highlight the delimitations that were presented in the first chapter. These regarded for example choice of website, used product category, used product model in the ad etc. In the best of worlds we would have wanted to test the experiment on different sites and on different product categories to be able to be more secure about drawing general findings. Also it would be interesting to test in other countries than Sweden. Also, the fact that we choose a girl as a smiling model might have affected the result and including some ads with a smiling man in the experiment could have partly helped us overcome this issue.

5.6 Suggestions for future research

By taking inspiration from the previous section, some future research could be done in order to verify our results even more. Repeating our experiment at different C2C sites and for different product categories and products could be an interesting build-on. Also including other types of emotion-loaded images in the ads could provide new insights as well as investigating whether a smiling man in the photo affects the result in another way than the smiling girl.

As mentioned in the discussion, we were very surprised about the fact that an image that is perceived as good without a smiling person is more popular in terms of clicks than an image that is perceived as good, including a smiling person. A deeper investigation regarding this would be highly interesting. For example, one could investigate which part “trustworthiness” plays and if this could be a reason for the result.

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APPENDIX I

Pre-study part 1 survey

Note that the image below is just an example of one of the six used images.



Vad tycker du om bilden?

Dålig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Bra

Gillar inte 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Gillar

Negativ 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Positiv

Vad tycker du om bildens ljus?

Mycket dåligt 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mycket bra

Vad tycker du om bildens skärpa?

Mycket dålig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mycket bra

Vad tycker du om bildens bakgrund?

Mycket dålig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mycket bra

Vad tycker du om objektets (bilens) placering i bilden?

Mycket dålig 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mycket bra

Ålder: _____ Man/Kvinna: _____

APPENDIX II

Pre-study part 2 survey

Note that the image below is just an example of one of the four used images.



Hur känner du dig när du ser den här bilden?

Glad

Inte alls 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mycket starkt

På gott humör

Inte alls 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mycket starkt

Positiv

Inte alls 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mycket starkt

Munter

Inte alls 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mycket starkt

Hur upplever du personen i den här bilden?

Mycket ledsen 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Mycket glad

Ålder: _____ Man/Kvinna: _____

APPENDIX III

Complete Ads uploaded to blocket.se



Pris	330 000:-
Inlagd	Igår 10:30
Kategori	Bilar, Säljes
Plats	Stockholm, Kungsholmen
Bränsle	Diesel
Växellåda	Automat
Måltal	1 500 - 1 999
Modellår	2014
Biltyp	SUV
CO2-utsläpp	169 g/km
Färg	Vit
Drivhjul	Fyrhjulsdriven
Modell	VOLVO D + XC60 XC60
Märke	VOLVO
Lån	Lendo Upp till 350 000:-
Försäkra	TRYGG HANSA

Volvo XC60 D5 AWD Summum Business Edition:
*Mätarställning: 1645 mil
*Modellår: 2014 (Uttagen 2013-08)
*Färg: Vit
*Karosseri: SUV

Tillbehör:
*Adaptiv farthållare med avståndskontroll
*Kollisionsvarnare med autobroms
*Driver alert system
*Lane departure warning
*Backkamera
*Parkeringshjälp bak
*Glastaklucka el
*Tonade rutor 3st
*El-baklucka
*Keyless drive

Summum paketet innehåller;
*Aktiva Xeonljus
*Eluppvärmt baksäte
*Einfällbara sidobackspeglar
*Regnsensor för vindrutan
*Einfällbara sidobackspeglar
*Regnsensor för vindrutan
*Tillsatsvärmare
*Skinnklädsel svart
*Multifunktionsratt
*City Safety
*High Performance Ljudanläggning
*Blåtands handsfree
*Hastighetsberoende servo
*Dieselvärmare
*18" vinter och sommarhjul

Bilen är som ny, säljer den enbart för att jag inte längre är i behov av större SUV.

Vid frågor eller visat intresse, kontakta mig vänligen via mail.

Vänligen,
Oscar



Pris	330 000:-
Inlagd	Igår 10:30
Kategori	Bilar, Säljes
Plats	Stockholm, Kungsholmen
Bränsle	Diesel
Växellåda	Automat
Måltal	1 500 - 1 999
Modellår	2014
Biltyp	SUV
CO2-utsläpp	169 g/km
Färg	Vit
Drivhjul	Fyrhjulsdriven
Modell	VOLVO D + XC60 XC60
Märke	VOLVO
Lån	Lendo Upp till 350 000:-
Försäkra	TRYGG HANSA

Volvo XC60 D5 AWD Summum Business Edition:
*Mätarställning: 1645 mil
*Modellår: 2014 (Uttagen 2013-08)
*Färg: Vit
*Karosseri: SUV

Tillbehör:
*Adaptiv farthållare med avståndskontroll
*Kollisionsvarnare med autobroms
*Driver alert system
*Lane departure warning
*Backkamera
*Parkeringshjälp bak
*Glastaklucka el
*Tonade rutor 3st
*El-baklucka
*Keyless drive

Summum paketet innehåller;
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*Eluppvärmt baksäte
*Einfällbara sidobackspeglar
*Regnsensor för vindrutan
*Einfällbara sidobackspeglar
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Inlagd	Igår 10:30
Kategori	Bilar, Säljes
Plats	Stockholm, Kungsholmen
Bränsle	Diesel
Växellåda	Automat
Måltal	1 500 - 1 999
Modellår	2014
Biltyp	SUV
CO2-utsläpp	169 g/km
Färg	Vit
Drivhjul	Fyrhjulsdriven
Modell	VOLVO D + XC60 XC60
Märke	VOLVO
Lån	Lendo Upp till 350 000:-
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*Tonade rutor 3st
*El-baklucka
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Summum paketet innehåller;
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Kategori	Bilar, Säljes
Plats	Stockholm, Kungsholmen
Bränsle	Diesel
Växellåda	Automat
Måltal	1 500 - 1 999
Modellår	2014
Biltyp	SUV
CO2-utsläpp	169 g/km
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Modell	VOLVO D + XC60 XC60
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Lån **Lendo** Upp till 350 000:-

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Vänligen,
 Oscar

Pris	330 000:-
Inlagd	Igår 10:30
Kategori	Bilar, Säljes
Plats	Stockholm, Kungsholmen
Bränsle	Diesel
Växellåda	Automat
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Vänligen,
 Oscar

APPENDIX IV

Analytic tools for main study

