SWEDEN - WE HAVE A RESULT!

THE MELODIFESTIVALEN BRAND AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract:

Melodifestivalen is one of Sweden's most viewed television programs. However, for the past few years, its viewings and ratings have suffered a decline. One explanation for this phenomenon is a change in the consumers' attitude towards the program, and a shift in Melodifestivalen's brand equity as a result.

This thesis examines the concepts of brand equity and priming to see if the Melodifestivalen brand has created such negative connotations in people's minds that they automatically have negative opinions of anything associated with the brand. It is examined through a quantitative experiment in which people get to listen to songs from Melodifestivalen and rate them on different factors. One group is told that the songs are from Melodifestivalen, and the other is not.

The results are that all songs were ranked lower by the group which had been told that the songs were from Melodifestivalen. This indicates that Melodifestivalen currently has a negative brand equity, with consumers' attitude towards the program affecting their opinions of the songs themselves. These results are both relevant to aspiring music artists considering joining the competition, and for companies when trying to enhance their brand equity.

Keywords:

Melodifestivalen, Brand Equity, Priming, Consumer Attitudes, Marketing Activities

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1. Introduction

On the second Saturday of March, over a third of Sweden's population are gathered in front of their televisions to watch the final of Sweden's largest annual music competition. Dating back to 1958, Melodifestivalen has a long history of generating hits, scandals and impressive viewing figures (Svenskt Kulturarv, 2016). In 2000, an era had begun in which Melodifestivalen would be the most viewed television program in Sweden for 14 consecutive years, peaking at over 4.2 million viewers in 2006. Since 2016, however, *Kalle Anka och hans vänner önskar God Jul*, "From All of Us to All of You", has reestablished itself as the most viewed program after dominating the late 90s. (Mediamätning i Skandinavien, 2019). Meanwhile, in 2018, Melodifestivalen recorded its lowest viewing figures since 1999 (Dahlander, 2019). Considering that Kalle Anka is essentially the same one hour show every year, the development suggests that there may have been a negative shift in attitudes towards Melodifestivalen in recent years.

With the development of the internet, smartphones, and social media in the past few decades, companies have also had to experience an evolution of brands and brand communication. Information is easier than ever to come by, and the attitude towards a brand can quickly shift. The question is, however, how brand equity affects the customer's minds when looking at a product. How strongly can the association of a brand affect consumer attitude?

1.1. Theory and Previous Research

The hypothesis of this thesis will be based primarily on four different areas of previous research. This research concerns different aspects of attitude towards brands and their behaviors, and factors that might explain them. Different theories focusing on different aspects are brought up in order to give the hypothesis a nuanced theoretical background.

1.1.1. Brand Equity

Hoeffler and Keller (2003) described brand equity as "the differential effect that brand knowledge has on consumer response to marketing activity". This meant that if two companies performed the same marketing activity, they might experience different reactions due to the consumers having previous knowledge of the respective brands. Depending on the attitude towards the brand and the associations the consumers have made to it, the reaction to a new marketing activity - or, by extent, product - will thus be influenced by this previous knowledge the consumer possesses. The extent of the influence partially depends on the strength of the brand. If the brand is strong and well-established, its brand equity tends to be larger, which leads to stronger reactions from its consumers. Hoeffler and Keller theoreticized that this impact can move both ways; a brand with positive brand equity might get an over-exaggerated positive response from

its activities, while it is also possible for a company to have negative brand equity. In this case, activities performed by the brand might be met with a more negative attitude than the product itself deserves, due to the consumer's pre decided brand image.

Keller (1993) conceptualized a model, in which he discussed brand knowledge, and the factors which build it. Brand knowledge is what he defined as the "differential effect" of which brand equity can be measured. In his model, Keller constructed brand knowledge as a product of multiple factors, including previous awareness of the brand and brand image. Brand image is then further branched out to include types of brand associations and favorability of brand associations. This indicates that if the favorability and type of brand associations were perceived as negative by the consumers, that will spill over into their total brand knowledge, and with that coloring the consumer's opinion of the products that the brand puts forward.

Severi and Ling (2013) argued that brand equity, from a consumer's perspective, is determined by how a consumer reacts to a brand name. Based on an extensive literature review, they suggested that brand equity consists of a variety of dimensions. These include brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty, brand image and perceived quality. Each of these dimensions have a direct impact on brand equity. By distributing a questionnaire to 300 people and conducting a mediated regression analysis on the data gathered, Severi and Ling also found evidence for indirect relationships between the dimensions and brand equity.

> "In terms of theoretical implication, this study has concluded as follows; relationship between brand awareness and brand equity is mediated by brand association; relationship between brand association and brand equity is mediated by brand loyalty; relationship between brand loyalty and brand equity is mediated by brand image and finally relationship between brand image and brand equity is mediated by perceived quality." (Severi & Ling, 2013)

Brand Awareness

Severi and Ling (2013) argued that brand awareness refers to how durably embedded a brand is in customer's memory. Companies may enhance their brand awareness by being visible and improving their familiarity for customers. Brand awareness often precedes the construction of brand equity and the other dimensions of brand equity.

Brand Association

Attitudes, attributes and benefits formed brand association. While brand awareness made customers remember brands, brand association is what customers remember brands by, including if the brand is associated with a positive or negative attitude. (Severi & Ling, 2013)

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty, from a behavioral perspective, was characterized by constant purchasing or consumption of a brand over time. Severi and Ling (2013) argued that brand loyalty is the dimension of brand equity that generate profit in the most direct way. Brand loyalty incentivizes customers to keep purchasing the same product and makes them reluctant to consider competing brands.

Brand Image

Brand image referred to how customers think and feel about a brand. Often, a set of particularly significant associations is what forms brand image from a customer's perspective. The higher the brand image, the more likely the customer was to judge a product as being of superior quality and value, compared to similar products of competing brands. (Severi & Ling, 2013)

Perceived Quality

Perceived quality referred to how customers subjectively judge the quality of products of a specific brand, as compared to rivalry products. To appraise brand equity, measuring perceived quality was a key element. (Severi & Ling, 2013)

1.1.2. Priming

In 2014, Janiszewski and Wyer Jr. discussed priming theory, which concerned situations in which an initial stimulus influences how a subsequently encountered stimulus is responded to. According to them, priming occured because certain content is made more accessible when the prime stimulus is being processed. Accessibility is particularly influential in forming perceptions and judgement (Kahneman, 2003). Tversky and Kahneman (1983) showed that accessible attributes are produced automatically, effortless and without intention, and call these attributes natural assessments. One of these natural assessments was of particular importance, namely the evaluation of stimuli as good or bad. Thus, priming will automatically increase the accessibility of previously formed concepts and trigger natural assessments, including an evaluation of good (approach) or bad (avoid). When the subsequent stimulus occurs, priming theory predicts that the judgement of it, for example whether it is good or bad, will be influenced by the concepts and attributes that came to mind due to the prime stimulus. Janiszewski & Wyer Jr. (2014) called this evaluative priming.

Janiszewski & Wyer Jr. also identified five basic characteristics of priming paradigms. First, both a prime stimulus and a target stimulus are required. Second, the judgement about or response to the target stimulus must be altered by the prime. Third, the cause of the altered response to the target stimulus must be a specific characteristic of the prime. Fourth, the prime only influences the target stimulus temporarily. Finally, the effects of

the prime can occur without awareness and are unintended. Once individuals find out about the possible bias that the prime caused, they tend to correct for its influence.

Furthermore, priming may produce contrast effects, for at least two reasons (Janiszewski & Wyer Jr., 2014). First, individuals may resist using the primed concept because they are aware that the concepts that have come to mind due to the prime have nothing to do with the judgment of the target stimulus. If the priming stimulus is recalled, individuals may be aware of its biasing influence and correct for it. Second, the primed concept may be perceived as inapplicable if its implications are not in line with the meaning of the information.

1.1.3. The Bias Blind Spot

Pronin, Lin and Ross (2002) found that people tend to show a "bias blind spot", whereby they are unaware of how their judgments are influenced by biases. Their research, investigating eight potential judgment biases, strongly suggested that people perceive other people to be susceptible to biases when making choices. However, people are less likely to acknowledge biases in themselves, as illustrated by the average perceived susceptibility being significantly lower for selves than for others across all eight biases investigated in the article.

1.1.4. The Halo and Horns Effect

The term "halo effect" was first used by Thorndike (1920). It referred to how people and products whom or which are judged positively based on one aspect, automatically tend to be judged positively based on several other aspects that we only possess ambiguous information about (Belludi, 2010). The "horns" or "devil effect" was the exact opposite of the halo effect, suggesting that if someone or something is judged negatively on one aspect, the judgment tends to spill over to several other aspects without much evidence. Historically, the halo effect has mostly been explored in the context of trait assessment, whereas the horns effect is a relatively new addition to the theory and, thus, rather unexplored in any context.

However, Amos, Allred and Zhang (2017) explored the halo effect in a product evaluation context and noted that a signal or cue may cause customers to make inferences about unknown product qualities. Also, customers may be affected by the signal or cue when rating product attributes.

1.2. Problem Area and Scope

Recognizing that there is likely to be several relevant explanations to Melodifestivalen's recent negative trend, the thesis and research will be limited to the potential impact of brand equity. Brand equity adds value to a product and may therefore change

customers' attitude towards particular products, for better or worse (Farquhar, 1989). Our research is further delimited to brand equity as a general theoretical concept. Rather than attempting to make a theoretical contribution by investigating what may generate brand equity, we build our research based on existing brand equity theory. Thus, we are able to focus on the practical implications of our research, which we believe will be of more interest to a larger audience.

Currently, there are multiple previous articles written about Melodifestivalen. However, upon closer inspection, none of these were written within the area that we wanted to investigate. Some of them were analyzing the content of the songs or the feminism/equality aspects of the competition, which felt far from the area we wanted to investigate. Several other studies were regarding how the program was reported on by different media outlets. While it was then discussed in these articles how the reporting might affect the population's opinion of Melodifestivalen, it was not something that was actually measured in the studies. This points towards the research gap we wanted to investigate: people's opinions regarding Melodifestivalen. So while previous research about Melodifestivalen exists, we would fill a gap by being the first to write about Melodifestivalen from a brand equity perspective. The research can also be seen as an investigation of brand attitude in large, and how a brand and its associations can affect the attitude of the people it is trying to reach. As such, the thesis may be of interest for any company wishing to understand the effect of branding and brand knowledge.

1.3. Purpose and Research Question

While earlier research has worked on conceptualizing and defining brand equity, we wish to take the concept and measure it in practice. Applying a theoretical concept to a real-life situation and seeing if it holds true is an important part of science and research, since it tests the validity and strength of the concept. In this thesis, the main focus will be to examine whether brand equity can be seen as a concept which holds up when applied to a real-life brand. The reason that the Melodifestivalen brand is chosen is because it is one of the most recognized brands in Sweden, and is one which appears to currently be in decline.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how brand equity may work in practice. The purpose is partially based in Keller's previous work regarding the different parts that make up brand knowledge, specifically those concerning brand associations. The thesis aims to explore how associations to a brand and brand attitude might affect people's opinions to products related to the brand, and see if that effect is significantly different compared to when no brand is mentioned. This is done through investigating Swedish people's attitude towards the television program Melodifestivalen. The aim of the research is to understand how branding may affect the perceived quality of a product, as

well as to try and get further understanding of how people react to the Melodifestivalen brand.

The research question that the thesis is centered around is thus: “how does the knowledge that a song is from Melodifestivalen affect Swedes’ opinion of said song?”

With this question, the thesis will explore the brand equity of Melodifestivalen. The working hypothesis, based on the theoretical framework and previous research within areas regarding brands and attitudes, is that Melodifestivalen is a strong enough brand to have amassed a big amount of brand equity. This, in combination with the fact that Melodifestivalen is experiencing declining viewing rates, creates the hypothesis that Melodifestivalen’s brand may experience negative brand equity.

This concept is briefly touched on in “The Marketing advantage of strong brands” (Hoeffler and Keller, 2003). The idea is that if a brand has managed to create a negative brand knowledge in its consumers’ minds, the consumers may react more negatively than the product - in this case a song - may actually deserve. Our hypothesis is that Melodifestivalen has a negative brand equity that will result in people automatically liking a song less if they know that it is from Melodifestivalen.

1.3.1. Hypotheses

H1: H1: Consumers’ opinion of songs will be negatively affected when the songs are associated with Melodifestivalen.

H2: Consumers’ opinion of songs associated with Melodifestivalen will be mediated by their attitudes towards Melodifestivalen.

1.4. Expected Contributions

By applying brand equity, as an established theoretical framework, to the context of Melodifestivalen, we expect the practical implications of our study to be of interest for different audiences. Our study is expected to be of interest for artists considering participating in Melodifestivalen, as they ought to take into consideration whether launching a new song in Melodifestivalen enhances positive attitudes towards their personal brand or not. Additionally, it would be of interest for SVT, being the producers and broadcaster of Melodifestivalen, to see whether or not the brand attitudes are negative enough to influence the perception of songs associated with Melodifestivalen. Finally, by applying brand equity theory to a context in which it has not yet been tested, we expect our study to be of interest for our fellow marketing researchers, students and professionals.

2. Method

The next step is to determine which matter of data collection will be used, a quantitative or qualitative approach. While a qualitative research might give more insight as to why the brand equity slants one way or another (if that is the case), the purpose behind this thesis is to measure the brand equity rather than trying to explain it. When it comes to measuring the brand equity, the results will be more reliable if as many opinions as possible are gathered, to get a nuanced set of data. Hence, the quantitative approach is selected.

2.1. Participants

Because the thesis will be asking questions about Melodifestivalen, which is a Swedish TV program, the research is limited to Sweden, and the research questions will be asked in Swedish. Conducting the research in Swedish is a measure to make sure that the sample is not skewed to a single part of the population which might feel more comfortable with English than others.

2.2. Procedure

When gathering quantitative data, a selection of approaches can be used. In this particular case, the aim of the data is to measure the difference between two groups: those who know that the song they are listening to are from Melodifestivalen, and thus part of its brand, and those who do not know this. In this case, all of the other parameters are ideally to be kept as similarly as possible, so that the only possible variations in answers can be attributed to the knowledge of the brand. Because of this, the data collection will be designed as an experiment.

When designing the experiment, the manner of spreading it is an important factor. In order to be able to spread it to as many people as possible, who were not supposed to know what the purpose of the experiment was, the experiment was designed in the form of a digital survey. The survey was then spread on social media platforms.

The reason for designing a survey is that it is easy to communicate to as many people as possible. It is also important to have the survey be digital, since part of the experiment consists of listening to samples of songs. By making the survey online, all respondents could listen to the songs in their own time.

The survey is designed by picking three different songs that the respondents would listen to and give feedback on. By having three songs instead of one, there can be a variance in the song genres, which can then appeal to a broader audience. The survey includes 30-second excerpts of the chosen songs, so that they are not too long.

The three songs included in the survey is “Don’t Stop” by Isa, “Kizunguzungu” by SaRaha, and “The Hunter” by Melody Club. These three songs are chosen because they are all from Melodifestivalen, but competed a few years ago and were not winners. Our intention is that while they are “Melodifestivalen songs”, these songs will not be recognized by people who are not Melodifestivalen fans, since they are a bit older and were not audience favorites. For further discussion about the choice of songs, please see section 4.2.1.

The survey first asks a question about a short audio clip, which is a control question to ensure that the participants can correctly hear the sounds from the survey. Then, the participants are randomly put in either the control or experiment group; the control group is merely told they will be listening to three songs clips, while the experiment group is told that they will be listening to songs from Melodifestivalen, while also being shown a picture of the Melodifestivalen logo.

Next, both groups listen to the three songs, with five questions following each song where they rate it on different aspects, such as lyrics and interest in artist, on a seven-point scale. For more details about the questions, please see appendix 1. All of the questions were about whether the respondent liked the song, but asked in a slightly different manner regarding different aspects of the song, such as the lyrics or the instrumental part. With this, the hope is to better be able to understand the responses given to the question “I liked the song”, which is the main question for analyzing. By getting the respondent’s attitude towards different aspects of the song, a deeper understanding of their answers can be gained.

In the next part of the survey, the participants are asked questions about their moderators, such as age, size of city they live in, gender, and regular taste in music. This is done so that if the results can’t be explained through our hypotheses, it might be possible to explain it through these moderators.

The next section asks the mediating questions, which is the respondent’s attitude towards Melodifestivalen and their previous knowledge of it. These are factors that we believe will affect the answers they give.

Finally, a control question is asked to try and make sure that the responses are given somewhat seriously and with attention.

As stated by Bryman and Bell (2015), a truly random sample may be difficult to achieve for students due to limited time and resources. When spreading the survey on social media, there is a risk of skewing the sample collected because of the followers and friends on the social media sites of the thesis authors. A means to try to counter this problem was to have friends and family members of different gender and ages spread the survey on different social media platforms, such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram, in order to try and reach the most varied respondent group possible.

2.3. Reliability and Validity

Reliability concerns how certain we can be that several questions regarding the same thing will produce similar answers. A high reliability in this case would mean that the rating of a song would be similar to the ratings of the different factors of the song. For instance, if the "I like the song" was given a score of 6, the other factors should receive ratings between 4-7. If not, the rating of the song becomes very inconsistent, and with that, unreliable.

To ensure that our test results are reliable, we measured how internally consistent our responses were. That is, rather than just asking one question aimed at examining the perceived quality of a song, we asked five questions that were essentially meant to measure the same thing; how well a song was liked. We used Cronbach's alpha to determine whether our data was reliably consistent. A value of Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 or more is considered acceptable (Cavana, Delahaye & Sekaran, 2001). Cronbach's alpha for our data varied between 0.910 and 0.958 across our two groups and three songs. This indicated that our measures were reliable enough to compute a mean value index for each of the three songs.

Validity concerns how well we manage to capture what we actually set out to measure. In short, if a work has high validity, it has managed to accurately gather the data it needed to answer its hypothesis. Since we wish to measure the attitude towards Melodifestivalen, our work to ensure that we reach high validity is to outright ask about the respondents attitude towards Melodifestivalen, as well as prime the experiment group as much as possible by both having the logo of the program and mentioning its name several times. With this, the hope is that what is captured in the ratings of the songs is the difference between those who know that the songs are from Melodifestivalen and those who don't, which is exactly what we wish to measure.

2.4. Statistical analysis

In order to be able to fully analyze the responses, only fully recorded responses were included in the results. Since the survey was conducted online, a certain amounts of drop-offs were to be expected. Since the survey was randomized, the dropping out of certain responders is not assumed to significantly change the results or implications of the research.

The next step is determining how many responses will be acceptable as a minimum. With this survey, the aim is to try and measure the opinion of the Swedish population. Because of this, it is important that enough responses are gathered to be able to approximate a normal distribution. Bryman and Bell (2015) state that while the biggest sample possible is ideal when conducting a quantitative study, it might not be feasible, and as such, it is important to try and find a minimum level of responses that is

justifiable. In statistical work, the minimum for approximating a normal distribution is when N = 30. Because of this, the minimum amounts of completed answers required is set to 60, or so that there are at least 30 completed answers in each research group.

The possible complications with having only 30 people as the minimum in each group is that it is still relatively few people; not many statistical outliers are required to severely skew the data. Because of this, once the data is collected, it is important to see that the responses somewhat follow a normal distribution, and if not, to see if the statistical outlier can be removed for a more reliable analysis of data.

By designing our survey in a way that enables the respondents to rate the songs on a continuous scale, forming the dependent variable, we are able to compare the mean difference in the scores given by two unrelated groups, that form the independent variable. The aim of our experiment and statistical analysis is to empirically test our hypotheses, H1 and H2. Therefore, we have chosen to compare mean differences using independent samples t-tests. By applying this method of statistical analysis, we will be able to determine if there is empiric support for our hypotheses.

Neyman and Pearson (1933) note, regarding the t-test, that "it has now been shown that starting with information in the form supposed, there can be no better test for the hypothesis under consideration." That is, as long as the sample satisfies the assumptions of normal distribution and homogenous variances, the t-test produces a low rate of Type I and Type II errors.

After the research was done, there were 62 complete and 14 incomplete answers recorded. The incomplete responses were removed from the data collection before the analysis. This gave us a response rate of 62/76 = 81.58%.

3. Results

3.1. Were opinions about a song affected by association to Melodifestivalen?

Using the mean value indexes for the three songs, for which descriptive statistics for the control group and experimental group can be found in Table 1 below, we compared the means for the two groups. In the descriptive statistics we saw that, on average, all three songs were liked better by the control group than the experimental group, who were exposed to the Melodifestivalen logotype.

Table.1 Descriptive statistics of the ratings given to each song

Group	Song	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Control	Don't Stop	30	1.00	6.80	3.68	1.73
	Kizunguzungu	30	1.00	7.00	3.88	1.67
	The Hunter	30	1.00	6.20	3.32	1.76
Experiment	Don't Stop	32	1.00	5.60	2.97	1.43
	Kizunguzungu	32	1.00	6.80	3.38	1.64
	The Hunter	32	1.00	5.60	2.49	1.17

Note: The index-variable was averaged across responses to 5 questions that were answered on a 7-points scale with the endpoints 1 and 7.

An independent samples t-test was conducted to determine if there were any differences in perceived song quality between the control group and the experimental group. There were no outliers in the data, as assessed by inspection of a boxplot (see appendix 2). The perceived song quality scores were assumed to be approximately normally distributed, since $N \geq 30$ in both groups. The assumption of homogeneity of variances was violated for The Hunter, as assessed by Levene's Test for Equality of Variances (p = .007), so separate variances and the Welch-Satterthwaite correction were used for The Hunter. Don't Stop was liked better by the control group (M = 3.68, SD = 1.73) than the experimental group (M = 2.97, SD = 1.43), but the difference was not statistically significant, M = .71, 95% CI [-.09 to 1.52], $t(60)$ = 1.769, p = .082. Kizunguzungu was also liked better by the control group (M = 3.88, SD = 1.67) than the experimental group (M = 3.38, SD = 1.64), but the difference was not statistically significant, M = .5, 95% CI [-.34 to 1.34], $t(60)$ = 1.189, p = .239. However, The Hunter was also liked better by the control group (M = 3.32, SD = 1.76) than the experimental group (M = 2.49, SD = 1.17), a statistically significant difference, M = .83, 95% CI [.06 to 1.59], $t(50.157)$ = 2.164, p = .035.

Hence, our results pointed in one direction; knowing that a song is from Melodifestivalen makes it less likeable. Additionally, our results suggest that knowing that The Hunter is a song from Melodifestivalen makes it significantly less likeable. To

get a measurement of the practical significance, we measured the effect size, i.e. the magnitude, of the difference for The Hunter by calculating Cohen's d. Cohen's d is a standardized effect size measure with reference points of .2, .5 and .8, ranging from a small to a large effect (Cohen, 1988). The difference of .83 scale units indicated a moderate effect (scale range: 1 to 7; $d = .56$).

3.2. Did attitudes towards Melodifestivalen have a mediating effect?

In addition to testing the impact that our independent variable had on our dependent variable, we investigated the potential mediating effect of people's attitude towards Melodifestivalen. We intended to determine if there were any differences in perceived song quality between people who were positive or neutral towards Melodifestivalen and people who were negative towards it. The data was split into two groups, with one group only including the responses from our control group and the other only including the experimental group. This way, we could tell if Swedes' attitude towards Melodifestivalen affected their perceived song quality differently depending on if they knew that they had listened to a song from Melodifestivalen or not.

Table.2 Descriptive statistics of how attitude towards Melodifestivalen affects the ratings given to each song

Group	Song	Attitude	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Control	Don't Stop	Positive/Neutral	20	1.00	6.40	3.63	1.47
		Negative	10	1.00	6.80	3.78	2.26
	Kizunguzungu	Positive/Neutral	20	1.00	7.00	4.20	1.63
		Negative	10	1.00	6.00	3.24	1.63
	The Hunter	Positive/Neutral	20	1.00	6.20	3.16	1.57
		Negative	10	1.00	6.20	3.64	2.14
Experiment	Don't Stop	Positive/Neutral	24	1.00	5.60	3.33	1.44
		Negative	8	1.20	3.00	1.90	.67
	Kizunguzungu	Positive/Neutral	24	1.00	6.80	3.86	1.56
		Negative	8	1.00	3.00	1.95	.86
	The Hunter	Positive/Neutral	24	1.00	5.60	2.71	1.18
		Negative	8	1.00	3.60	1.85	.94

Note: The index-variable was averaged across responses to 5 questions that were answered on a 7-points scale with the endpoints 1 and 7. The mediating variable (attitude) was generated by responses to a question that was answered on a 7-points scale with the endpoints 1 and 7 (1-3 expressing a negative attitude, 4 being a neutral option and 5-7 expressing a positive attitude).

A comparison of the mean scores in the control group showed that Don't Stop was liked more by those who were negative towards Melodifestivalen ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 2.26$) rather than those who were positive or neutral ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.47$). Comparing the scores for The Hunter under negative ($M = 3.64$, $SD = 2.14$) and positive or neutral (M

= 3.16, *SD* = 1.57) conditions revealed the same tendency. Only Kizunguzungu was liked better by those who were positive or neutral (*M* = 4.2, *SD* = 1.63) rather than those who were negative (*M* = 3.24, *SD* = 1.63).

For the experimental group, we observed that Don't Stop was liked better by those who were positive or neutral towards Melodifestivalen (*M* = 3.33, *SD* = 1.44) rather than those who were negative (*M* = 1.9, *SD* = .67). Kizunguzungu was also liked better under positive or neutral (*M* = 3.86, *SD* = 1.56) rather than negative (*M* = 1.95, *SD* = .86) conditions. Finally, The Hunter was also liked better by those who were positive or neutral (*M* = 2.71, *SD* = 1.18) rather than those who were negative (*M* = 1.85, *SD* = .94).

By comparing the means, we could see that attitude towards Melodifestivalen did not seem to impact the ratings in the control group in any clear and decisive way. In the experiment group, however, the mean differences were consistent and pointed in the direction that negativity towards Melodifestivalen made respondents increasingly negative towards songs that they knew were associated with it. We were unable to conduct independent samples t-tests to determine whether the mean differences observed were significant. By dividing our responses into two additional groups consisting of negative and non-negative attitudes towards Melodifestivalen, the groups for which we wished to compare mean differences became too small and too uneven (10 to 20 and 8 to 24).

3.3. Were there any moderating effects?

Several mean comparisons were conducted to see if any of our measured moderators had an impact on perceived song quality. There were no large differences in the scores for any of the songs under any moderating variable condition. However, favorite music genre, was the moderator with the seemingly highest impact on perceived song quality. We chose to compare the mean differences between the ratings made by those who favored pop, compared to those who favored any other genre, because all three songs that we used in our survey are associated with the pop genre (like most other Melodifestivalen songs).

Table.3 Descriptive statistics of how favorite genre affects the ratings given to each song

Group	Song	Favorite Genre	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Control	Don't Stop	Pop	11	1.60	6.40	4.02	1.42
		Other	19	1.00	6.80	3.48	1.90
	Kizunguzungu	Pop	11	1.40	7.00	4.22	1.86
		Other	19	1.00	6.00	3.68	1.56
	The Hunter	Pop	11	1.00	6.20	3.45	1.92
		Other	19	1.00	6.20	3.24	1.70
Experiment	Don't Stop	Pop	6	2.00	5.40	3.83	1.41
		Other	26	1.00	5.60	2.77	1.38
	Kizunguzungu	Pop	6	1.80	6.80	3.67	2.06
		Other	26	1.00	6.00	3.32	1.57
	The Hunter	Pop	6	1.00	5.60	2.53	1.65
		Other	26	1.00	4.40	2.48	1.08

Note: The index-variable was averaged across responses to 5 questions that were answered on a 7-points scale with the endpoints 1 and 7. The moderating variable (favorite genre) was generated by responses to a question where respondents were to pick one of eight pre-defined (or "other", as a ninth option) genres that they usually listen to the most.

When comparing the mean differences for all three songs in both groups, we could see that the respondents who favored pop as music genre liked all songs better, on average. Seemingly, favoring pop did not affect the song ratings differently depending on if a respondent knew that the song was from Melodifestivalen or not, suggesting that the moderating impact of favorite genre did not affect the mean differences between the control and experimental group observed in section 3.1.

Thus, favoring pop as music genre seems to have positively moderated the perceived quality of the songs. However, similarly to the previous section where we addressed potential mediating effects, the groups for which we compared the mean differences are too small and too uneven (11 to 19 and 6 to 26). Thus, we could not test for statistical significance of our results.

4. Discussion and Analysis

The working hypotheses of this thesis and research were that Melodifestivalen as a brand has negative brand equity, negatively influencing people's opinions of songs associated with Melodifestivalen. When conducting an experiment, this was supposed to be seen in differences between the control group and experimental group's attitudes towards the songs that they were to listen to. The hypothesis was that the group who knew that the songs were from Melodifestivalen would give the songs consistently lower scores compared to those who did not know, because of the negative brand associations of Melodifestivalen.

4.1. Implications

When looking at the statistical analysis of the responses, there is empiric support for the alternative hypothesis, H1. Even though statistical significance can't be found for all songs, all three songs had a lower mean rate by the experimental group in comparison to the control group. This is important because even though the ratings were only statistically significant for one of the songs, "The Hunter", the general trend fell in line with the hypothesis formulated in the beginning of the thesis. However, this is not enough to claim that there was empirical support for the hypothesis that the association of a song to Melodifestivalen does not negatively affect Swedes' opinion of said song.

Based on the results from the survey, it appears as if though the idea that Melodifestivalen carries negative brand equity was correct. Even though we are unable to determine which parts of the brand carry the negative associations for people, it becomes clear that there is something with the attitude towards Melodifestivalen that make people automatically think that things that come from it is bad.

This proves the theoretical idea of brand equity, and how it affects consumers. In our thesis, we have showed that for a real-life brand, people who know of it have such strong opinions and associations about the brand that they spill over on their opinions on the product itself.

This ties into the Halo and Horns effect, where a person's opinion about one aspect of a brand or product spills over to all other aspects of it. In this thesis, that effect can be seen most clearly in the analysis of the people in the experimental group who had a previous negative attitude towards Melodifestivalen. In their case, the ratings of the songs were lower compared to those who said that they had a positive or neutral attitude towards Melodifestivalen. Here, we can see that the negative attitude really gave the songs "horns", which earned them drastically lower scores. This indicates that once a person has a decided attitude towards a brand, that attitude may be difficult to change, since they will instantly like or dislike anything the brand is marketing.

The results of the independent samples t-test conducted to investigate the mediating effect of attitudes towards Melodifestivalen suggest that we can reject the null hypothesis that attitudes would not have a mediating effect. We can see that while a negative attitude towards Melodifestivalen affected the scores for the three songs in the control group in various, inconclusive ways, negativity had a negative impact on the scores for the songs in the experimental group. With the knowledge that the songs were from Melodifestivalen being the only difference between the two groups, the results suggest that associating a song with Melodifestivalen makes negative attitudes towards Melodifestivalen spill over to the perceived song quality. Thus, our results indicate that the alternative hypothesis, H2, may be supported. However, with too few responses to test whether these results are significant, we cannot reject the null hypothesis.

The negative impact on perceived song quality of negative attitudes towards Melodifestivalen imply that our negative prime affected people's opinions. In line with priming theory, we were able to affect people in a way that made them reveal their judgment biases. We believe that we were able to design the questionnaire in such a way that the bias blind spot prevailed. Even though we could see in the results that the Melodifestivalen logotype affected the respondents, they were unaware that their judgments of the songs were biased by their opinion of Melodifestivalen. We do not believe that any of the respondents in the experimental group were aware that there even was a control group that did not possess the information they had. Thus, the priming stimulus is unlikely to have been recalled, and we were able to avoid contrast priming effects.

The lack of significant moderating relationships with our variables is a positive indication that our results derive from differences generated by our independent variable and mediator, which is what we intended to measure. Favorite genre being the moderator closest to significance is not surprising, considering that all three songs researched are to be considered pop songs.

The findings are useful for the branding industry in general, but for aspiring Swedish musicians specifically. If they wish to gain exposure, Melodifestivalen might appear as a good channel, as it is so widely viewed. But as this thesis has found, songs that are associated with Melodifestivalen will get a lower rating and be less liked by people. The question is then if the benefits of exposure outweighs the drawbacks of the negative associations that might arise due to the involvement with Melodifestivalen.

4.2. Limitations

4.2.1. Limitations in Method

The drawback with having an experiment as the matter of data collection is that the variations in answers can be due to mediators or moderators that are not asked after in

the research, and thus cannot be explained by the data. In order to try and avoid this kind of error, we try to ask mediating questions that we find relevant. There will also be several moderating questions, to see whether factors such as age or occupation might affect brand attitude. Questions are asked about the respondents' attitudes towards and previous knowledge of Melodifestivalen, as well as their preferred genre of music. By having this data on the respondents, it will hopefully be satisfactory to explain possible variations in response. If the respondent is someone who greatly enjoys Melodifestivalen, then it is possible to assume that they would give the songs higher ratings than someone who does not like the TV program at all. It is neither unreasonable to think that someone who primarily listens to hard rock would give the often pop or schlager songs that compete in the competition lower scores than someone who regularly listens to those genres of music.

When it came to the music samples, an important decision was whether the music should actually be from the competition, or if it should be songs picked at random and then posed as songs from Melodifestivalen.

The risk with having actual Melodifestivalen songs in the survey was that the respondents in the control group might recognize the songs as being from the competition, and give the possible brand equity effect in the wrong respondent group.

The problem with taking songs that have not participated in the music competition and posing them as Melodifestivalen songs would be that there would be a risk of respondents in the experimental group recognizing the songs as not being from the competition and with that risking compromising the possible brand equity impact. A further problem with using unrelated songs would be that songs from Melodifestivalen often are quite distinct in genre and music type, which might be difficult to imitate.

As such, the decision was made to use songs that have been previous participants of Melodifestivalen. In order to try and minimize the risk that someone in the control group might recognize the songs, the songs selected are all from a few years ago, and neither of them won the competition, but rather placed somewhere in the middle of the competition. All three songs are different in manner of music and lyrics, in order to try and minimize the risk that they only appeal to those who listen to one particular genre. Another moderator was also added to the survey, where the participants were asked if they had heard any of the songs prior to taking the survey. With this data, anomalies in the control group had the possibility of being explained by the respondent having previous knowledge of the songs and their origins.

4.2.2. Limitations in Results

A possible explanation to the lack of statistically significant results might lie in the fact that there were relatively few respondents to the survey. While the sample was big enough to approximate a normal distribution on both respondent groups, the total amounts of responses were still less than one hundred. When the sample population is so small, one or two outliers are enough to skew the responses enough that a statistically significant response can no longer be found.

The few numbers of respondents is one factor which weakens the reliability of the findings in the survey. Another factor which affects the reliability is the manner in which the survey was spread. The fault with this somewhat lies within the type of research conducted in itself. Because the research was done in the form of an experiment, the amount of information provided about it had to be limited, lest the participants understood that they were actually in an experiment. This also meant that the survey could not be spread to groups that might have a special interest in Melodifestivalen - be it good or bad - as that might skew the data and not provide answers that are representative of the general population.

Our chosen experiment method is used because we are interested in how the entire Swedish population reacts to the Melodifestivalen brand, but for obvious reasons we cannot reach an entire population. There are limitations to be aware of when assessing how well our conclusions will hold on practice. Our use of negative priming by giving one group of respondents the information that the songs are from Melodifestivalen is a source of concern in this regard. In real life situations, it is imaginable that Swedes' may hear a song they like on the radio and subsequently add it to their Spotify playlist or in any other way become a consumer of the song. This song could well be a Melodifestivalen song without the person ever knowing it. In order for negative attitudes towards the Melodifestivalen brand to have a mediating effect, the consumer needs to possess the information that the song is associated to Melodifestivalen. Again, this information may not always be as easily accessible as in the context of our experiment. This limitation is further enhanced by people being negative towards Melodifestivalen presumably not caring much for broadening their knowledge of Melodifestivalen and songs that have been on the show.

4.3. Conclusions

From this research and experiment, it can be understood that a brand and the knowledge that the consumers have of it greatly influence their attitude towards the product offered. The concept of brand equity appears to hold fast in the music industry as well, where all of the songs that were played to the respondents of the research received lower ratings if the people knew that they were from Melodifestivalen. It was also found that when a person in the experimental group had previous negative attitudes towards the television

program, their ratings of the songs were significantly lower, indicating that the priming and halo and horns effect played into their judgement of the songs.

4.4. Further research

An interesting follow up to this thesis would be to make a qualitative study, in order to try and find out exactly what the negative brand equity stems from and how Melodifestivalen might work to try and change it. Understanding which factors create the negative brand equity that Melodifestivalen currently seems to have is an important step in understanding how the brand is perceived, and with that how to evolve it in order to get a more positive reaction.

Another possible further research is to redo the thesis on a larger scale, in order to get more statistically accurate results. Understanding how a brand association might affect attitude towards a product is something that is very relevant in today's society, where brands play a huge part in marketing of different products and activities.

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6. Appendix

6.1. Survey

Kandidatuppsats undersökning

Start of Block: Introduktion

Q2 Hej! Vi är två studenter från Handelshögskolan i Stockholm som skriver vår kandidatuppsats. Det här är en undersökning om musik och musikvanor. Alla svar kommer vara anonyma. Tack för din medverkan!

Q17 Den här undersökningen kräver att du har fungerande ljud. Lyssna på följande ljudklipp och svara vad det föreställer.

Vad är det för ljud?

- ○ En fågel som kvittrar (1)
- ○ En toalett som spolas (2)
- ○ En ko som råmar (3)

End of Block: Introduktion

Start of Block: Kontrollgrupp

Q3 Den här undersökningen utforskar den möjliga marknadspotentialen för olika låtar. Vi vill se hur respondenterna utvärderar tre olika sånger utifrån faktorer som text, musik och liknande.

Du kommer nu få lyssna på utdrag från tre olika låtar. Efter att du lyssnat på låtarna kommer det komma frågor där du kan utvärdera vad du tyckte om dem.

End of Block: Kontrollgrupp

Start of Block: Testgrupp

Q4 Den här undersökningen utforskar folks attityd till Melodifestivalen och andra musiktävlingar. Vi vill få folks utvärderingar av Melodifestival-bidrag baserat på olika faktorer som text, musik och liknande.

Du kommer nu få lyssna på snabbrepriser från tre låtar som tidigare varit bidrag till Melodifestivalen. Efter att du lyssnat på bidragen kommer det komma frågor där du kan utvärdera vad du tyckte om dem.

End of Block: Testgrupp

Start of Block: Låt 1

Q13 Låt 1

Q6 Utvärdering

	1 instämmer inte alls (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 instämmer helt (7)
Jag tyckte texten var bra (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag tyckte musiken var bra (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag skulle lyssna på den här låten på radio (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag skulle vilja lyssna på fler låtar av den här artisten (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag gillade låten (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Låt 1

Start of Block: Låt 2

Q14 Låt 2

Q15 Utvärdering

	1 instämmer inte alls (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 instämmer helt (7)
Jag tyckte texten var bra (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag tyckte musiken var bra (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag skulle lyssna på den här låten på radio (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag skulle vilja lyssna på fler låtar av den här artisten (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag gillade låten (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Låt 2

Start of Block: Låt 3

Q16 Låt 3

Q17 Utvärdering

	1 instämmer inte alls (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 instämmer helt (7)
Jag tyckte texten var bra (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag tyckte musiken var bra (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag sulle lyssna på den här låten på radio (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag skulle vilja lyssna på fler låtar av den här artisten (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jag gillade låten (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Låt 3

Start of Block: Moderatorer

Q11 Välj din ålder

- ○ Yngre än 15 (1)
- ○ 15-20 (2)
- ○ 21-25 (3)
- ○ 26-30 (4)
- ○ 31-35 (5)
- ○ 36-40 (6)
- ○ 41+ (7)

Q12 Välj din huvudsakliga sysselsättning

- ○ Studier (1)
- ○ Arbete (2)
- ○ Sjukskriven (3)
- ○ Arbetssökande (4)
- ○ Annat (5)

Q18 I vilken miljö bor du?

- ○ Storstad (200,000+ invånare) (1)
- ○ Stad (100,000-200,000 invånare) (2)
- ○ Större ort (50,000-100,000 invånare) (3)
- ○ Småstad (10,000-50,000 invånare) (4)
- ○ Tätort (mindre än 10,000 invånare) (5)

Q17 Vilken musikgenre brukar du främst lyssna på i vanliga fall?

- ○ Rock (1)
- ○ Hårdrock/Heavy metal (2)
- ○ Hiphop/Rap (3)
- ○ Pop (4)
- ○ Punk (5)
- ○ Jazz (6)
- ○ R&B (7)
- ○ Soul (8)
- ○ Annan (9)

Q22 Vad är dit kön?

- ○ Man (1)
- ○ Kvinna (2)
- ○ Annat (3)
- ○ Vill inte uppge (4)

End of Block: Moderatorer

Start of Block: Kontrollfråga

Q13 Har du hört någon av de här låtarna tidigare?

- ○ Ja (1)
- ○ Nej (2)

End of Block: Kontrollfråga

Start of Block: Mediatorer

Q19 Vad är din attityd till Melodifestivalen?

- ○ Älskar (1)
- ○ Gillar starkt (2)
- ○ Gillar (3)
- ○ Varken gillar eller ogillar (4)
- ○ Ogillar (5)
- ○ Ogillar starkt (6)
- ○ Hatar (7)

Q20 Hur mycket känner du att du vet om Melodifestivalen?

- ○ Allt! (1)
- ○ Ganska mycket (2)
- ○ En del (3)
- ○ Ganska lite (4)
- ○ Ingenting (5)

End of Block: Mediatorer

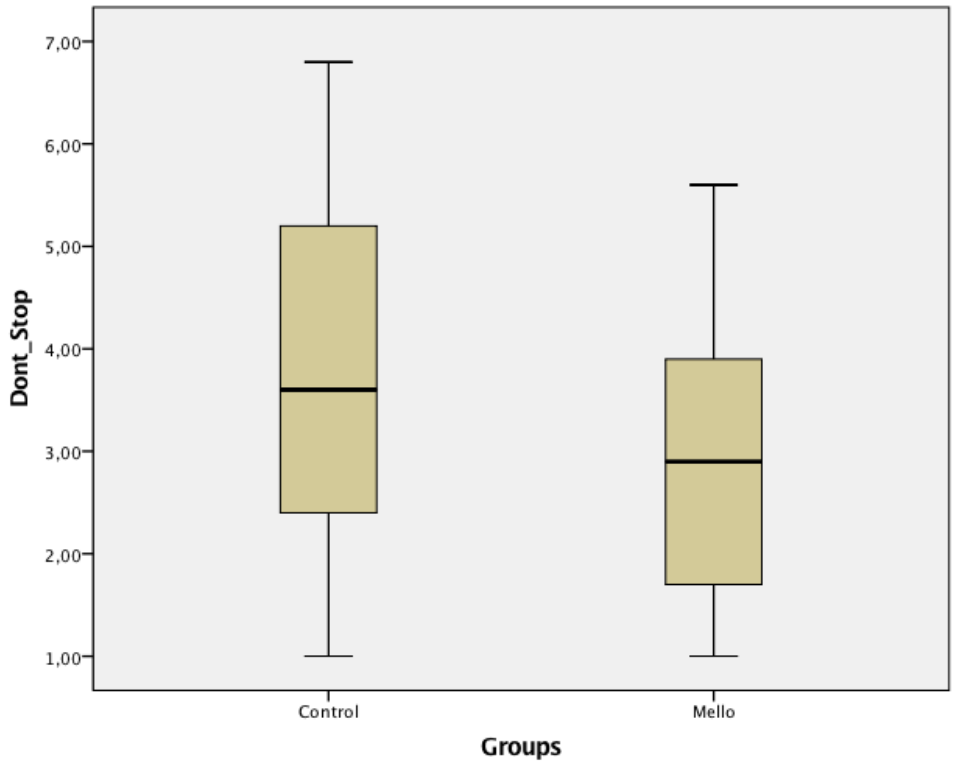
Start of Block: Kontrollfråga

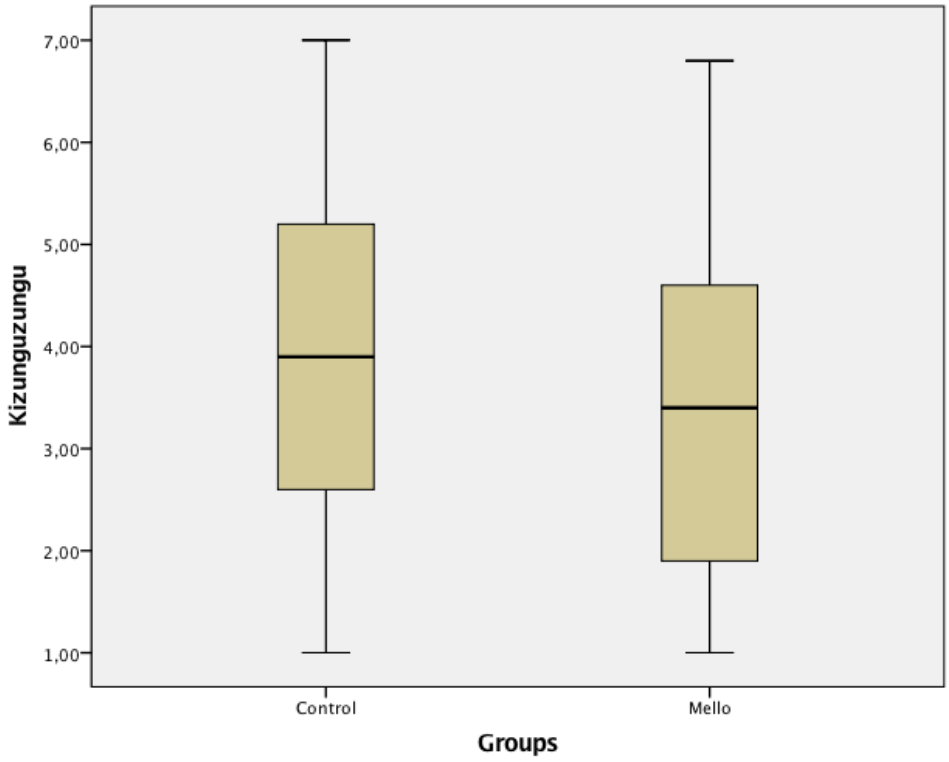
Q14 Vad handlade undersökningen om?

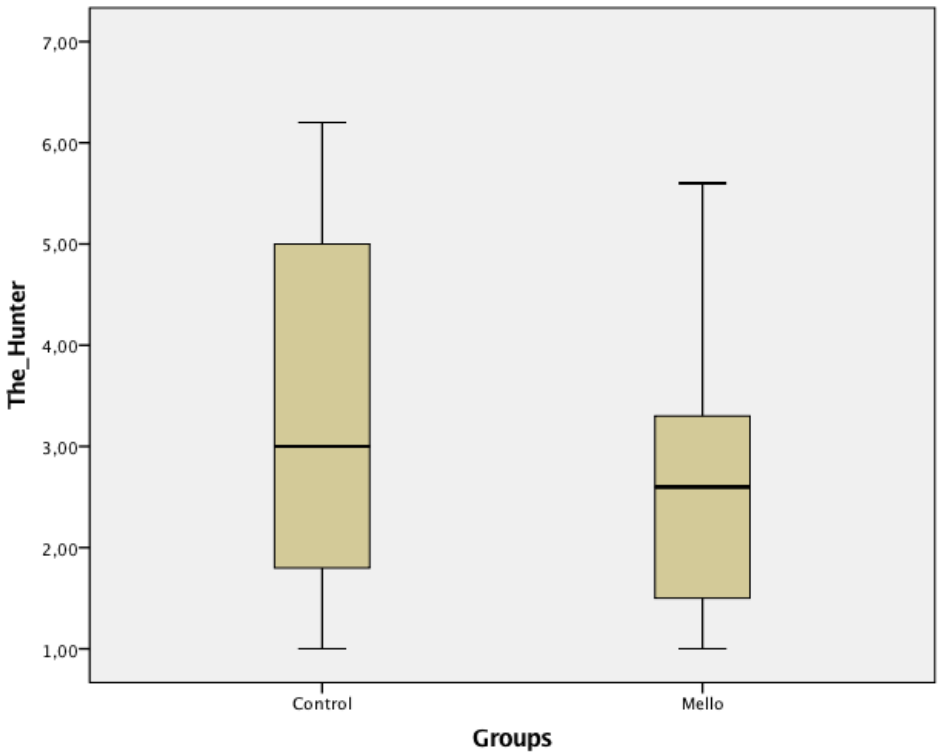
- ○ Vädret (1)
- ○ Musik (2)
- ○ Matlagning (3)

End of Block: Kontrollfråga

6.2. Boxplots showing the distribution of ratings for each song



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The_Hunter
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Groups