IS IT TOO BOLD TO PORTRAY THE OLD?

A STUDY ON NON-STEREOTYPICAL PORTRAYALS OF AGE IN ADVERTISING TARGETING GENERATION Y AND Z

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Is It Too Bold to Portray the Old?: A study on non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising targeting Generation Y and Z

Abstract:

A recent stream of research has investigated the use of non-stereotypical portrayals in advertising and their effects. However, an area that has not gained much research attention is that of age stereotypes. This study contributes to closing this knowledge gap by investigating the advertising effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age and the underlying mechanisms of these effects. Furthermore, the effects are compared across Generations Y and Z, the consumer segments which will soon command the largest part of the world's purchasing power. Two product categories serve as the stimuli for investigation, namely sunglasses and underwear. Through conducting two experimental studies, the authors show that non-stereotypical portrayals of age can increase the level of perceived brand effort and ability, which in turn leads to more positive brand attitudes and higher word-of-mouth intentions, at least in the underwear category. The findings extend signaling theory by showing that product quality is not a necessary mediating variable for the more positive brand attitudes and higher word-of-mouth intentions when using non-stereotypical portrayal of age. The authors hence suggest that that the positive effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age can be observed on a brand level, rather than a product or ad level. This implies that non-stereotypical portrayals of age can be expected to be most effective for brand building or PR purposes, rather than for the purpose of increasing specific product sales. The findings also show that there are few differences in advertising effects between Generation Z and Y when using non-stereotypical portrayals of age. However, when using stereotypical portrayals, more negative effects can be observed among Generation Y consumers.

Keywords:
Advertising effects, Age stereotypes, Generation Y, Generation Z, Signaling theory

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"Kindness is a language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see."

—Mark Twain

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1. Introduction

In advertising, elders are often excluded, or when present, portrayed as weak or in need of care (Lagercrantz, 2019). These stereotypes are imprinted from a young age, and subconsciously lead to negative expectations of one's own aging. The negative expectations have been shown to decrease the average lifespan by as much as 7.5 years. In other words, a fear of aging acts as a self-fulfilling prophecy, leading to a lower quality of life when older, and possibly even shortening of lives (Lagercrantz, 2019). Realistic portrayals of age have long been absent in advertising, the argument being that using older models in advertising could decrease the brand's attractiveness in the eyes of younger consumers (Deuisch et al., 1986; Mazis et al., 1992). However, the question remains if this assumption still holds for young consumers today?

In recent years, there has been a shift in the market and older models have been increasingly featured in ads. Examples include Maye Musk (69) for Cover Girl, Jane Fonda (81) for L'Oréal, and Isabella Rossellini (67) for Lancôme. The increased use of older models calls for researchers to examine the effects these might have on consumer perceptions and intentions.

Lately, researchers have shown an increased interest in examining stereotypes in advertising, not only to investigate their social effects but also to understand their occurrence and advertising effects (e.g. Åkestam et al., 2017; Dahlen et al., 2018; Eisend, 2017; Liljedal et al., 2020). However, research has mainly focused on gender stereotypes, and to some extent stereotypes concerning ethnicity or sexual orientation (Åkestam et al., 2017) but in the area of age stereotypes, research is still scarce.

Further, the research that has been conducted has mainly focused on the advertising effects in regard to older consumers, while the effects of targeting younger generations with ads portraying older models have largely been overlooked. However, Bank of America and Merrill Lynch have suggested that Generation Y and Z are "the world's most important demographics" (2016). Making up 59 percent of the world's population, the generations' combined gross income is expected to reach $62 trillion by 2030. The immense purchasing power of these generations make them an important audience for advertisers to reach. The generations are known for their more progressive views compared to previous generations, and for questioning stereotypes of e.g., gender and ethnicity(Dimock, 2019). However, questions remain regarding the advertising effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age in regard to the younger generations. Do they appreciate these

portrayals, or could the effects be negative? Is there a trade-off between advertising effects and doing good for society, or are non-stereotypical portrayals of age a win-win for both advertisers and society?

1.1 Background

There are several stereotypes prevailing in society. Stereotypes are defined by Taylor and Stern (1997) as:

> *"a generalized and widely accepted belief about the personal attributes of members of a social category, such as gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation".*

As stereotypes apply to a certain group of people, there are few stereotypes which apply to all. Most stereotypes apply to people from the moment they are born, such as those regarding sex or race. However, age is different from other stereotypes in that it starts applying to people as they grow older.

The average expected life span is increasing, creating interest to study stereotypes and discrimination against older people. While there are different definitions of "old", WHO has referred to people being elderly or older when exceeding the age of 60 (World Health Organization, 2018). In Sweden, the life expectancy is 81.3 years for men and 84.7 years for women (Statistiska Centralbyrån, 2020). This indicates that most Swedes will, in time, belong to this group of "elderly" or "old" people. When this time comes, there is a risk that they will be discriminated against due to long-withstanding stereotypes (Isopahkala-Bouret, 2015), especially in the advertising context (Lagercrantz, 2019).

According to Rättvisaren (2020), a yearly study on how people are represented and portrayed in Swedish advertising, older people are largely portrayed individually or as a part of a heteronormative relationship. Some ads show older people with grandchildren, but apart from these, the portrayal of life as an older person is very restricted in terms of relationships, roles, and situations. The same study also shows an underrepresentation of larger body shapes and non-white people among older individuals.

Overall, in advertising, older models are less present than younger ones. In the advertising world the models seem to be moving into the category of "elderly" at a much younger age than 60. It has been claimed that a model over the age of 35 can expect to be referred to as old (Wallman, 2019).

Hence, in the world of advertising, ageing has a strong connection to being left out of the spotlight. This not only leaves models without employment but is also reflected in the advertising consumers are exposed to. Women start feeling left out of advertising or portrayed in an insensitive way already as they reach menopause (WARC, 2018), which on average takes place between the age of 45-55 (NHS, 2017). Thus, around this age, women feel they can no longer identify with the adverts they are exposed to. In Sweden, only one percent of women portrayed in advertising are over the age of 64, while women between 24 and 35 are overrepresented, accounting for 26 percent of women portrayed in advertising, but only 7 percent of the population (Lundahl et al., 2020).

1.2 Problem Area and Knowledge Gap

Although the positive effects of non-stereotypical portrayals in advertising have been suggested by several scholars (Åkestam et al., 2017; Eisend, 2019; Liljedal et al., 2020), stereotypical portrayals are still prevalent in advertising. In recent years, the advertising industry has taken initiatives to reduce the use of stereotypes. These efforts have mainly centered around gender stereotypes, such as the Cannes Glass Lion award, created in 2015, focused on challenging gender bias. Advertising research could further contribute to this development by providing the industry with more research on the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals (Liljedal et al., 2020).

Although there has been an increase of older women in advertising (Liljedal et al., Forthcoming), few studies have been conducted on non-stereotypical portrayals of age, the resulting effects, and whether these effects differ across consumer segments. The limited research available has mainly investigated the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age on senior consumers (e.g Erffmeyer & Milliman, 1990). It has been suggested that the usage of older models could have positive or neutral effects on the brand for younger consumer segments (Greco et al., 1997; Gubernick, 1996). However, these studies were made on in-store point-of-sales ads (Greco et al., 1997), or the term "young" was not explicitly defined (Gubernick, 1996). Still, the belief that stereotypical portrayals in advertising are effective in convincing consumers prevails (Windels, 2016), even if negative effects have been shown (Åkestam,2017). In a similar way as expensive or creative advertising (Dahlen et al., 2018; Modig et al., 2014; Modig & Lethagen, 2008), non-stereotypical adverts have been shown to elicit positive signals creating favorable advertising effects through an increased perceived brand effort, brand ability, and product quality (Åkestam et al., 2017; Liljedal et al.,

2020). However, studies regarding the mechanisms behind advertising effects of non-stereotypical portrayal of age are scarce, where this study aims to make a theoretical contribution.

In advertising, elders are often portrayed in a one-dimensional way. Subconsciously, these portrayals lead to negative expectations of aging, which in turn could lead to a lower quality of life when older, reinforced by own ideals and expectations (Lagercrantz, 2019; Nilsson, 2019). Further, as stated by North and Fiske (2012), little research about prejudice on the grounds of age has been made, even if it is becoming an increasingly important subject considering the aging world population. Advertising portrayals of age is hence not only a question of equal representation, but also a question of mitigating the negative effects of unequal and non-representative media portrayals. Even if the usage of non-stereotypical portrayal of age could have important implications for society it is of outmost importance for advertisers and researchers to understand the advertising effects that such portrayals could elicit among consumers. Because of this, it is important for brands that more research is conducted on this topic, concluding how to include portrayals of older people in a way that is not discriminatory yet favorable for the brand. A Scopus search for "age stereotypes" and "advertising" gives only four results, and a search for "ageism" and "advertising" gives a total of 18 results, few of which concern advertising effects. This emphasizes the need to conduct further research in this area.

Up to date, little research has been made on how Generation Z differs from Generation Y. A suggested reason being that Generation Z has not yet been a powerful force in the market, due to their young age. However, as this new generation enters the workforce, gaining increased purchasing power, it is of importance to understand them. Both business practitioners and scholars encourage companies to get to know Generation Z and how they differ from previous generations (Gomez et al., 2019.; Heather, 2017; Keyes, 2017; Knee, 2015; Think with Google, 2019). Pew Research center (2015), stated that using generational cohorts to investigate differences across groups of consumers is plausible as:

"An individual's age is one of the most common predictors of differences in attitudes and behaviors. On issues ranging from foreign affairs to social policy, age differences in attitudes can be some of the widest and most illuminating. Age denotes two important characteristics about an individual: their place in the life cycle […] and their membership in a cohort of individuals who were born at a similar time."

As mentioned, previous studies concerning older models and younger consumers (Greco et al., 1997; Gubernick, 1996) have not included these generations as they were deemed too young, or were not born, at the time of the studies. It is important to understand how to attract both Gen Y and Z and if advertising effects differ across the cohorts. Further, companies currently using non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising should find it valuable to understand the effects this entails. By comparing the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age across these two generations, this study contributes to start filling this theoretical and practical gap.

1.3 Purpose

The primary purpose of this thesis is to contribute to research by addressing the existing knowledge gaps related to non-stereotypical usage of age in advertising and its effects. The study aims to establish what advertising effects usage of non-stereotypical portrayals of age generate. The purpose is further to understand the underlying mechanisms of these effects by applying signaling theory.

A secondary purpose is to investigate if the advertising effects of using non-stereotypical portrayals of age differ across Generation Y and Generation Z. This by applying an additional theoretical layer though cohort theory.

1.4 Delimitations

Stereotypes can be applied to many different social categories such as gender, religion, age, sexuality, or ethnicity. For the purpose of this thesis, the scope has been limited to age stereotypes and non-stereotypical age portrayals. Further, the study is limited to two product categories, sunglasses and underwear. These products have been chosen as they are age neutral and can be used by an older or a younger person. It is argued that the adverts are relevant to all genders as the products could be bought as gifts. The fashion industry was deemed suitable as it is an industry where model characteristics are salient in advertising.

The stimuli further contain only female models, which is the most underrepresented group when portraying older models (Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998; Zhang et al., 2006). It is within this category that the shift has been most evident over the last few years, especially with the increased use of older models in beauty and fashion, where a majority of models are female. The focus on female models was also chosen to isolate the stereotype of age. Had male models also been included, this

would have raised other questions regarding effects of gender stereotypes, which is outside the scope of this thesis.

The study is further limited to the Swedish market. This focus was chosen due to time and resource constraints. It is important to consider that stereotypes are dynamic and vary across cultures. As the research focuses on Sweden, the stereotypes discussed are those commonly seen in the West.

The study investigates the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising with regards to Generation Y and Z. This as the authors aim to deliver as much value as possible to practitioners, through investigating what has been claimed to be the most important market segments (Kuwait Times, 2016), under the prevailing time and resource constraints. Generation Z is further a group where research is limited. Their increasing purchasing power coupled with their progressive values make them an interesting group to investigate in the area of advertising stereotypes.

1.5 Expected Knowledge Contribution

Brands are increasingly including older models in their advertising, indicating a shift in industry practice. However, the effects of these portrayals are yet to be examined. This thesis therefore aims to contribute to both research and practice by determining the advertising effects of using non-stereotypical portrayals of age. The paper contributes to advertising literature by widening the research on portrayals of different stereotypes and their effects though an extension of signaling theory. Furthermore, it contributes to advertising practitioners by providing implications for what effects might be expected when using non-stereotypical portrayals of age, and for what purposes these portrayals can be expected to be most effective. To create a deeper understanding of the implications and effects, generational differences between Generation Y and Z, the group of consumers that will soon make up the largest part of the world's purchasing power, are examined. This as, to the authors' knowledge there are up to date, no studies which have investigated the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age on these groups of younger consumers.

1.6 Disposition

Firstly, the relevant literature on stereotypes and their use in advertising is reviewed. The authors also review the literature on age stereotypes specifically and signaling theory as an explanatory model of advertising effects, before taking an in-depth look at generational cohorts and how generations may be affected differently by advertising. Based on the literature, hypotheses of

advertising effects are developed. Secondly, the methodology of the thesis is explained and justified. Thirdly, the results and relevant analyses are presented. Fourthly, the findings and their implications are discussed. Lastly, the study is concluded, its limitations are addressed and areas for further research are proposed.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

This section contains a review of the literature on stereotypes in advertising and their effects, with a focus on age stereotypes. Signaling theory is investigated to understand the mechanisms behind advertising effects. To gain an understanding of how Generation Y and Z might be affected differently by non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising, the relevant literature on the two generations' respective characteristics and their implications for advertising is reviewed. Hypotheses are subsequently developed in accordance with previous literature.

2.1 Synthesis of Literature Review

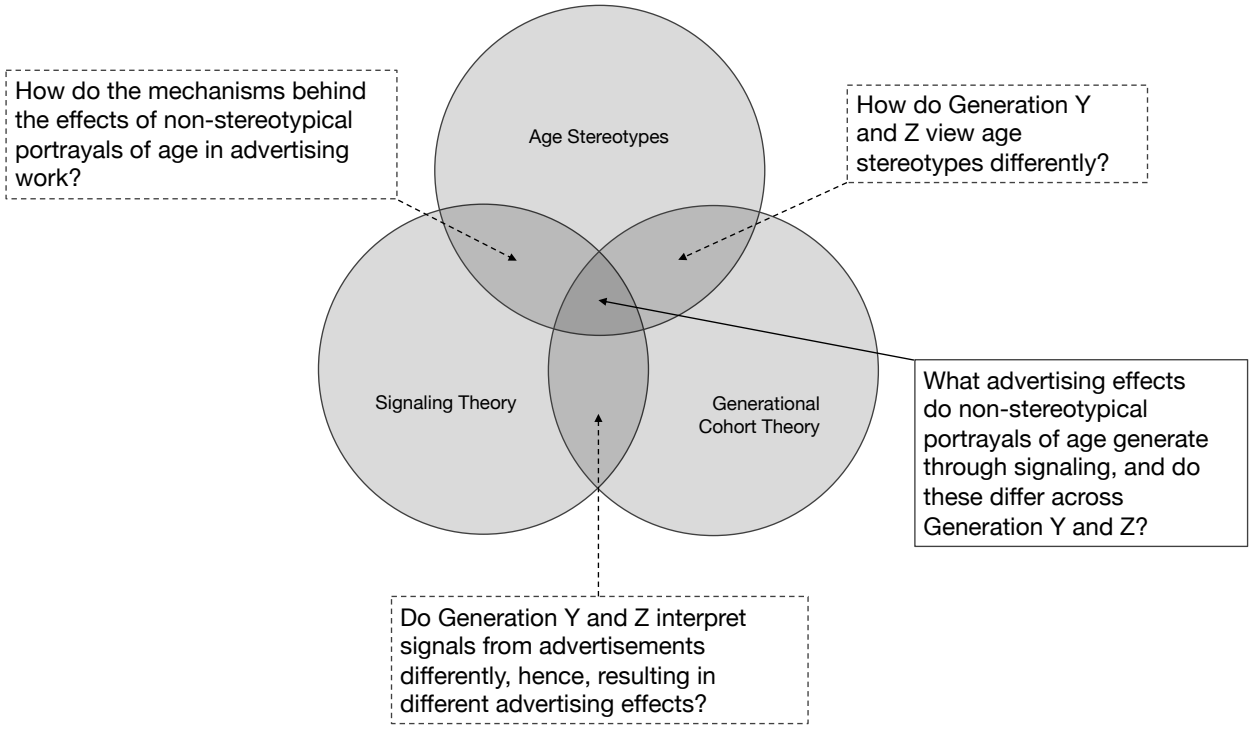


Figure 1: Synthesis of Literature Review

To address the defined knowledge gap, the authors review the literature on stereotypes, signaling theory, and cohort theory. By combining these three elements, the authors are able to develop hypotheses about possible advertising effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age, the mechanisms behind these effects, and how these differ across Generation Z and Y, which is the purpose of this thesis. This study applies a hierarchy-of-effects model (Lavidge & Steiner, 1961) in that it examines how responses to ads such as attitudes and intentions are formed through different stages (Smith et al., 2008). Through conducting an experiment, the authors examine how and where non-stereotypical portrayals of age affect consumer responses to advertisements.

2.2 Stereotypes and Schemas

To understand the concept of stereotypes and how they function, it is useful to look at how the human brain processes, and makes sense of, information. This process is commonly referred to as schemas. The concept of schemas describes brain patterns, ways of thinking or behaving to organize and categorize information. This, in order to make sense of the information, and understand the relationship between different parts of information (Wahlund, 2020). This is useful in everyday life as schemas make it possible for the brain to quickly understand and sort information. The usage of existing schemas, also called assimilation, is a constant process within the human brain.

When imagery or stories are repeated continuously over time, it can create generally adopted beliefs about the people being portrayed (Taylor & Stern, 1997). In this way, stereotypes are a sort of schemas. The brain can be said to create stereotypes around how things usually are or have historically been.

Non-stereotypical portrayals in advertising can be beneficial to advertisers, but also to consumers. There are many negative effects of being exposed to stereotypes, both for individual consumers and society. Eisend (2010) suggests that using stereotypes in advertising can lead to expectations and judgments that restrict life opportunities for the social category being stereotyped. Studies have shown both negative effects of using stereotypes (e.g. Åkestam et al., 2017; Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011; Richins, 1991) and positive effects of challenging stereotypes (e.g. Bissell & Rask, 2010; Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004; Peck & Loken, 2004).

2.2.1 Stereotypes, Schemas and Processing

As humans tend to believe their schemas to be universally true, when they prove not to be, the brain is forced to further process this contradicting information (Wahlund, 2020). As stereotypes are related to our cognitive schemas, they make it easier for us to organize and interpret information (Wahlund, 2020). Non-stereotypical portrayals hence make it harder for consumers to process the information in the advertisement, as the viewer cannot use their schemas to more easily do so. According to Liljedal et al. (2020), using non-stereotypical portrayals is thus a way to "cut through the clutter", much like creative or expensive advertising (Dahlen et al., 2018; Modig et al., 2014). If an advert requires more processing by the receiver, it will stand out in comparison to others.

2.2.2 Ageism

Stereotypes of or discrimination against older people has also been referred to as "ageism" (Levy & Macdonald, 2016). The term "ageism" was first introduced by Robert N. Butler who defined it as: *"prejudice by one age group toward other age groups"* (Butler, 1969). Before the term of ageism was coined, researchers such as Tuckman and Lorge (1953, p. 249) investigated negative perceptions towards aging. They suggested that with aging comes an expectation to take a passive role in society, which in turn creates stereotypes.

Studies investigating the negative aspects of ageism have been made on topics such as behaviors towards older people (Hummert & Shaner, 1994; Kite et al., 2005; Erdman B. Palmore, 2004), treatment at work (Carrns, 2013; Duncan & Loretto, 2003; Gee et al., 2007; North & Fiske, 2012; Rampell, 2010, 2011) and treatment in the healthcare sector (Coudin & Alexopoulos, 2010; Dong, 2014; Nussbaum et al., 2005).

Even if to a lesser extent, there has also been research on the positive aspects of ageism (Erdman Ballagh Palmore, 1990, p. 4), where it has been documented that older people are often seen as helpful, reliable, kind, and neat. These attributes can be interpreted as positive, but as Kenalemang (2019) emphasizes, it is a very one-dimensional view of elderly people, leading to stereotypes around their behavior.

2.2.3 Ageism in Advertising

Decorative models in advertising commonly conform to norms regarding gender, ethnicity, body type, and attractiveness (Åkestam et al., 2017). A non-stereotypical portrayal is hence when the

person being portrayed does not adhere to these norms. This can be done in many ways, such as looks, acts, or what product category a model is featured in advertising for.

A stereotype that prevails in advertising is that of youth, where people who no longer fit into this category are left out (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2003; Greco, 1988; Prieler et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2006). Carrigan and Szmigin (2003) state that older people have been absent from adverts, or when present, been portrayed in a stereotypical or inappropriate manner. Further, the share of older models in advertising is not representative of society at large. Older women are being discriminated in favor of older men (Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998; Zhang et al., 2006) or younger women who are considered more attractive (Carrigan & Szmigin, 2003). Previous researchers have pointed to advertising and its role in creating and reinforcing ageism in society (Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998; Long, 1998; Roberts & Nan Zhou, 1997; Zhou & Chen, 1992).

2.3 Attitudes

There are many different definitions of attitudes. According to Fishbein & Ajzen (1975), an attitude can be defined as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner with respect to a given object". This means that attitudes are established over time through learning, are predictors of actions, and that these actions stemming from attitudes are either favorable or unfavorable. In this way, attitudes can be a way of predicting intentions and behaviors.

2.3.1 Attitudes Towards Brands and Advertisements

Attitudes are a measure of importance to advertisers as they can be said to predict consumers' intentions and behaviors with regards to a product or brand, such as purchase intentions (Belch & Belch, 2018, p. 117; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Katz, 1960; Spears & Singh, 2004). A division has been made between attitudes towards the brand and attitudes towards a specific advertisement. According to Mitchell and Olson (1981) the two should be seen as conceptually separate. Brand attitude is defined as a consumer's evaluation of a brand, which often shapes consumer behavior. Ad attitude on the other hand, is defined as the consumer's response to a specific ad during a specific occasion of exposure (Modig & Lethagen, 2008). Ad attitude has been shown to somewhat mediate effects on brand attitude (Mitchell & Olson, 1981).

2.3.2 Attitudes Towards Stereotypical Advertising

In advertising, products are often showed in idealized settings (Richins, 1991). People portrayed often conform to ideals around e.g. attractiveness, body type, of ethnicity (Åkestam et al., 2017). Advertisers often assume using an attractive model will lead to more positive attitudes and increase the likelihood of consumers buying the product (Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011). However, ads with stereotypically attractive women have been shown to result in lower satisfaction with the self and one's own appearance among other women (Richins, 1991), potentially due to the enforcement of stereotypes which creates similar effects (Åkestam, 2017). This is somewhat conflicting as the goal of advertising can be seen as increasing consumer satisfaction (Richins, 1991), while in practice marketing using stereotypical imagery can do the opposite.

A brand's attractiveness has been defined as positive appraisal towards the associations and characteristics that are central or distinctive for a brand (Ahearne et al., 2005; Currás-Pérez et al., 2009). It has been claimed that using older models in advertising could decrease the brand's attractiveness in the eyes of younger consumers (Deuisch et al., 1986; Mazis et al., 1992). Research has not fully supported this claim, but rather also suggested that it can affect the younger consumers positively or have neutral effects (Day & Stafford, 1997; Erffmeyer & Milliman, 1990; Greco et al., 1997; Gubernick, 1996).

Previous research has studied the effects of breaking other stereotypes in advertising and the resulting consumer attitudes. Dismantling these stereotypes has shown positive effects on attitudes towards the ad and brand, as well as the perceived product quality (Åkestam et al., 2017; Eisend et al., 2014; Liljedal et al., 2020).

The authors of this thesis suggest that similar effects as those of dismantling other stereotypes in advertising will be observed in relation to non-stereotypical portrayals of age, and therefore hypothesize the following:

H1: Attitudes towards advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will be more positive than attitudes towards those using stereotypical portrayals of age.

H2: Attitudes towards brands using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will be more positive than attitudes toward brands using stereotypical portrayals of age.

H3: Products in advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will be perceived to be of higher quality than products in advertisements using stereotypical portrayals of age.

To explain the hypothesized positive effects of using non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising proposed in H1-H3, the authors suggest signaling theory, which will be further elaborated on below.

2.4 Signaling Theory

The concept of signaling was created by Michael Spence for which he received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2001 (The Nobel Foundation, 2001). Signaling theory is based on information asymmetry, where a sender conveys information to a receiver who interprets the signals (Connelly et al., 2011). In advertising, the company or brand is the sender, and the receiver is the potential buyer or customer. The messages sent are a way to signal characteristics of the product or brand, such as price or quality. The concept of signaling is a necessity for consumers' decision making as it is impossible for a single individual to try all products available on the market (Kirmani & Rao, 2000).

According to Malmelin (2010), advertising is more intense and present than ever before. A constant flow of advertising in different media channels creates saturation. Advertising literacy, described by Malmelin as "*the ability to recognize, evaluate and understand advertisements and other commercial messages*", is needed among consumers to understand these ever-present signals. Saturated receivers and senders, combined with new media channels and forms of advertising, have made it increasingly challenging for companies to get a good return on their advertising investments (Zyman & Brott, 2002). Further, receivers of advertising messages

become more difficult to reach as advertising becomes integrated and inseparable from other media (Malmelin, 2010). This emphasizes the importance of using the appropriate signals to be able to "cut through the clutter" in the advertising landscape.

Signaling theory connected to advertising spend proposes that when asymmetric information exists, the rational consumer considers it to be economically unwise of the brand to be dishonest in their signaling activities, as that would create dissatisfaction among the receivers (Ambler & Hollier, 2004; Dahlén et al., 2008; Kirmani & Rao, 2000). In line with this, Kirmani and Rao imply that expensive signaling can be used to signal to the receiver that the brand delivers higher quality products. This concept is known as the "theory of costly signaling" (Bird & Smith, 2005) which indicates that a high-quality company is more likely to have the capability to absorb the cost for more expensive signaling. Another area that has received attention is creative advertising (Dahlén et al, 2008; Modig et al., 2014).

A common measure to evaluate signals from creative or expensive advertising is brand attitudes (Dahlen et al., 2018; Modig et al., 2014). Signaling creativity has been shown to positively affect brand attitude through increased perceived brand effort, which in turn increases perceived brand ability, followed by perceived product quality, which finally affects brand attitudes (Modig et al., 2014). Further, the mediation on brand attitude through effort, ability and quality has been shown when using non-stereotypical portrayals of occupational gender roles (Liljedal et al., 2020).

Signaling brand effort

Online advertising has grown exponentially the last few years. Modig, Dahlén & Colliander (2014) propose that this might make it more accessible to use signaling theory to signal high effort without having to spend large amounts of money. In previous research, both creative and expensive advertising have been shown to increase consumers' perception of how much effort was put into the advert by the brand (Ambler & Hollier, 2004; Dahlén et al., 2008; Modig et al., 2014). Increased perceived brand effort was shown to have brand-related effects, by mediating effects of creative advertising on ad attitudes (Dahlen et al., 2018) and brand attitudes (Modig et al., 2014).

The authors of this thesis propose that use of non-stereotypical age portrayals in advertisements can elicit similar effects as using expensive or creative advertising. In line with the reasoning above, it is argued that advertising using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will send a positive

signal leading to higher perceived brand effort than advertisements that use stereotypical portrayals of age. This higher perceived brand effort is proposed to explain the more positive effects hypothesized in H1 and H2.

Consequently, the following is hypothesized:

H4: Perceived brand effort will be higher for advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age than for advertisements using stereotypical portrayals of age.

Signaling brand ability

Perceived corporate ability refers to consumers' beliefs that a company is smart and can innovate (Luo & Bhattacharya, 2006). Brand ability is similar to corporate ability, but on the individual brand level (Dahlén et al., 2008). The above-mentioned higher perceived brand effort has been shown to lead to higher perceived brand ability (Dahlén et al., 2008; Dahlen et al., 2018). The reasoning behind this argument is that because of the higher perceived brand effort, consumers are likely to infer that the brand is going to innovate more, both now and in the future; implying a higher brand ability (Ambler & Hollier, 2004; Dahlén et al., 2008; Kirmani & Rao, 2000; Kirmani & Wright, 1989).

In light of this, the authors hypothesize that using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will signal higher brand ability:

H5: Perceived brand ability will be higher for advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age than for advertisements using stereotypical portrayals of age.

Signaling brand quality

Research suggest that consumers are likely to expect that the above-described ability, will be used not only to create more creative advertising but also higher quality products (Ambler & Hollier,

2004; Dahlén et al., 2008; Kirmani & Rao, 2000; Kirmani & Wright, 1989). Hence, the authors propose brand ability as an explanation for the effects hypothesized in H3.

Signaling and its mediating effects

In summary, in the same manner as for creative or expensive advertising, the authors of this thesis propose that the signaling mechanism will be present for brands using non-stereotypical portrayals of age in their advertising, explaining the hypothesized positive effects in H1 and H2. Sending a positive signal in the form of non-stereotypical portrayals of age will increase consumers' perceived brand effort, which in turn affects perceived brand ability, followed by perceived product quality, finally affecting the attitude towards the ad and brand.

H6: Perceived brand effort, perceived brand ability, and perceived product quality will mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on consumer attitudes toward ads and brands.

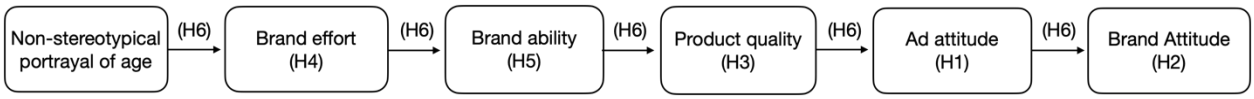


Figure 2: Theoretical framework for Hypotheses 1–6 in line with signaling theory

2.5 Intentions as Outcomes of Non-Stereotypical Advertising

The use of definitions of intentions differs widely across theoretical fields. In law, for example, intentions are taken seriously, because the level of intent is a basis for decisions on appropriate punishment for committed crimes, but in marketing contexts intentions are frequently not explicitly defined at all but nevertheless often seen as carriers of information about behavior. In any event, in this thesis, we define intentions as the extent to which a person plans to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 1985), and we view intentions as possible predictors of subsequent behavior (Blackwell et al., 2005; Söderlund, 2001; Warshaw, 1980).

Even if critique towards the usage of intentions as a way of predicting behavior has been raised, where researchers propose that consumers might not act in accordance with their stated intentions (Belk, 1985), the usage of intention as a measure is generally argued in the field to be the best way

to predict behavior in response to advertising (Blackwell et al., 2005; Dahlén et al., 2003). In summary, signals are often sent with the aim to create an outcome in the form of an intention.

2.5.1 Word of Mouth Intention

Studies have shown the necessity of brands to create attitudes extending beyond the product, to be sustainable in the long term (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). To do so, brands need to influence consumers to speak about and recommend the brand (e.g. Chu & Kim, 2011; Keller, 2007; Reichheld, 2003), which is referred to as WOM intentions. In this thesis, WOM is hence defined as consumers plans to spread information about a brand to others. Word-of-mouth can be either negative or positive (East et al., 2007).

It has been shown that WOM intentions increase if the consumer believes more effort was put into the creation of the advert, which has been achieved through e.g., creative advertising (Modig & Colliander, 2009). If the effort is perceived as higher, this results in positive spillovers on brand attitudes and other brand evaluations in accordance with signaling theory (Modig et al., 2014).

In light of this, the authors of this thesis suggest that, similar to creative advertising, non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising will increase WOM intentions for the brand. The authors also propose that this effect can be explained by signaling theory. Consequently, the following is hypothesized:

H7: A brand's use of non-stereotypical portrayals of age will increase positive WOM intentions compared to brands using stereotypical portrayals of age.

H8: The positive effects on ad and brand attitudes explained in H6 will further mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on WOM intentions.

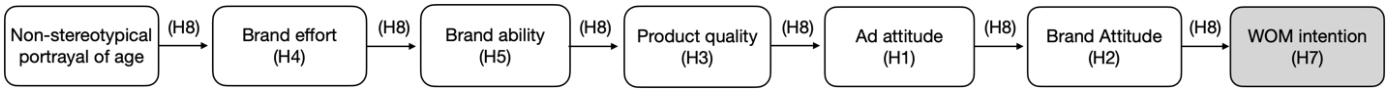


Figure 3: Theoretical framework for Hypotheses 1–5, 7 and 8 in line with signaling theory.

2.5.2 Purchase Intention

Purchase intention can be defined as a consumer's intent to purchase or plan to purchase a product or service. It is in this thesis defined as a *"conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand"* (Spears & Singh, 2004). In order to go through with a purchase, there is a process of matching a motive to purchase with specific characteristics or attributes of the brand considered (Belch & Belch, 2003, p. 120). Mitchell and Olsson (1981) suggest that purchase intent is mediated by the consumer's attitude towards a brand. Similarly, behavioral intentions are said by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) to be influenced by attitudes. It has further been shown that an increased brand attitude can increase purchase intentions (Dahlén et al., 2003).

Several studies have found that stereotypical portrayals in advertising can lead to more negative ad and brand attitudes, and lower purchase intentions (Eisend et al., 2014; Feiereisen et al., 2009; Huhmann & Limbu, 2016; Martin et al., 2007). Non-stereotypical portrayals on the other hand, have been shown to lead to more positive effects such as increased brand attitude (Bian & Wang, 2015; Bissell & Rask, 2010). For example, when using non-stereotypical portrayals of female body size (Bian & Wang, 2015; Bissell & Rask, 2010).

The authors hypothesize that these effects should also be observed for adverts using non-stereotypical portrayals of age, and that these portrayals can lead to higher purchase intentions by affecting consumers' brand attitude positively.

H9: Advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will lead to higher levels of purchase intention than advertisements using stereotypical portrayals of age.

H10: The positive effects on ad and brand attitudes explained in H6 will further mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on purchase intentions.

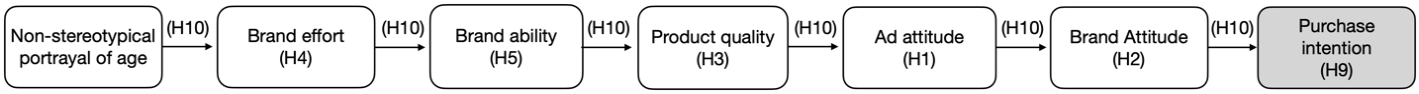


Figure 4: Theoretical framework for Hypotheses 1-5, 9, and 10 in line with signaling theory.

2.6 Generations and Generational Cohorts

The term “generations” is often used in a broad sense, when a person is said to belong to the “older generation” or “younger generation”. Further, it can refer to roots or heritage when used as “first-” or “second-generation immigrants”. Both ways of usage imply a linear progression of generations where grandparent, parent and child belong to different generations, this is the linear view on generations. However, one could also group people based on the time period when they were born. People who are born around the same time then become one generation or one “cohort”, in the cohort view (Vincent, 2005).

In the linear view, the timespan of a generation is usually about 20-25 years, which is supposed to mirror the approximate time it takes to be born and live until the stage where one gets a child oneself (Schewe & Meredith, 1994; Strauss & Howe, 1991). As the linear view, the cohort view implies a linear relationship between generations, however, not necessarily between related people. The span of a generational cohort rather focuses on circumstances during the group's childhood and young adulthood. Events during these years are said to form them into who they are. Wyatt (1993) stated that:

“I shall define ‘generation’ as a cohort of persons passing through time who come to share a common habitus and lifestyle. Generations are often defined culturally by sharing a ‘traumatic event’ (war-time experience, civil war or natural catastrophe), collective rituals and memories (such as Woodstock), and adversarial political mentors.”

This implies that generational cohorts are formed and bound together by events that impact society as well as their worldview, creating similar habits and lifestyles.

In the cohort view, it would be possible for a parent and a child to both fit into one generation. Exact time spans for generations are no exact science, and there is no defined number of years making a generation. Dimock (2019) stated that the time spans are mainly tools to help analysis.

2.6.1 Generation Y and Z

Generation Y has also been called the millennials, digital natives or the me-generation, indicating a large focus on the self (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; TIME, 2013). Scholars define the spectrum for Generation Y differently. For the purpose of this study, Generation Y has been defined as people born between 1981-1995 (Barr, 2020; Finn & Donovan, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2015).

Again, there are differing opinions about which individuals to include in Generation Z. While it has been defined in loose terms such as those born in the mid-to-late 1990s (Merriam-Webster, 2020) others have argued for 1995, 1996 or 1997 as the cut-off point. For this thesis, the year 1996 has been chosen as the first year to be included, the span used in this research is hence 1996-2010 (Finn & Donovan, 2013; Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Heather, 2017; Iberdrola, 2017; Keyes, 2017).

Gen Y and Z are often grouped together due to their more progressive views compared to previous generations. The two generations have similar views on issues such as Donald Trump's presidency, racial equality and climate change (Dimock, 2019). They are also more negative towards stereotypes around factors such as gender, ethnicity, and sexuality than previous generations (Dimock, 2019). While there are many similarities between the two cohorts and their values, it can be argued that there are also important differences which could affect how they perceive advertising.

2.6.2 Growing Up During Different Times Shaping Outlooks on Life

Generation Y has always had technology at close access and have therefore been referred to as digitally native. However, even if technology is ever present in their day-to-day life, they did not grow up with a tablet in their hand. Rather, they lived through the shift of the world from analogue to digital (Iberdrola, 2017). When growing up, the economy was prospering, and possibilities seemed endless. According to Rasmus Lindgaard, Insight and Analysis Leader at CompanYoung, this is the reason self-confidence has been named one of the top traits of millennials (Feitsma, 2019), and spills over onto their purchase patterns. Growing up with economic stability, Generation Y has become comfortable spending their money (Feitsma, 2019) as soon as they receive it, and are aware of their possessed purchasing power (Der Hovanesian, 1999).

Generation Z did not experience the shift from analogue to digital but were born with technology fully incorporated into their lives (Keyes, 2017). It is a big part of everything they do, from education to social interactions. Because of this, technology has been said to be incorporated into Generation Z's DNA (Iberdrola, 2017). Being so intertwined with the internet, Generation Z, although being fact fostered and innovative, have a limited attention span, demanding everything instantly (Feitsma, 2019; Iberdrola, 2017). Generation Z are realists, growing up when the 2008 financial crisis hit, many saw their families struggle, leaving them to not see stability as a given and with low trust in established systems (Knee, 2015). Because of this, they search for value and

quality, both when it comes to price but also in their overall life (Keyes, 2017; Knee, 2015) and have been called "savers" regarding income (Feitsma, 2019).

2.6.3 Different Values and Issues Close to Heart

Pew Research (2018) states that Generation Z is the most racially and ethnically diverse generation that has existed. They are more polycultural than any previous generation (Dimock, 2019; Knee, 2015). It is claimed that this has made the generation more open-minded and accepting than previous generations (Business Insider, 2020), and the most progressive generation yet. They are also more negative towards stereotypes around factors such as gender and ethnicity than any previous generations (Dimock, 2019). Therefore, it could be argued that the generation should be more open and positive towards non-stereotypical portrayals of age, compared to previous generations.

Further, Generation Z wants advertising to be personalized (PR Newswire, 2018), have an individual expression (Francis & Hoefel, 2018), and be new and different (Rodriguez, 2015). Consumption for Generation Z is a way to express their identity (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). While both Gen Y and Z are known to emphasize environmental issues, Generation Z also puts more emphasis on social issues (Amed et al., 2019). As Generation Z values personal expression and inclusiveness, it could be argued that they should positively evaluate non-stereotypical portrayal of age, as it might be a way to signal inclusiveness and uniqueness. Therefore, the authors suggest Gen Z will be more positive towards non-stereotypical portrayals of age than Gen Y.

2.6.4 Different Brand-Related Behaviors

Generation Z's progressive attitudes raise pressure on brands to stay "woke", a phrase made popular on social media, essentially meaning to stay alert and updated on social issues (Amed et al., 2019). 90 percent of Gen Z believe companies should address both social and environmental issues. The increased focus on social issues is further reflected in widespread movements such as #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo. Brands have started to take notice of these changing attitudes and adapting their marketing messages, for example Nike supporting Colin Kaepernick during the NFL "anthem protests" (Amed et al., 2019).

During recent years, brands that showcase more diverse portrayals in terms of gender, ethnicity, and body type have grown more popular among Generation Z. Examples include Milk Makeup, Glossier, and Fenty Beauty (Helen Carefoot, 2020). As beauty brands, they rather focus on creating

a more authentic version of oneself through creative makeup, than on conforming to a certain ideal or stereotype, which is otherwise common in this product category. This is further reflected in the brands' advertising and packaging (Helen Carefoot, 2020). As Generation Z is less inclined to adhere to stereotypes, it could be argued that they are likely to positively evaluate non-stereotypical portrayals of age.

Generation Z is more focused on a brand's values, ethics, and how well these align with the generation's own, rather than factors such as brand size (Feitsma, 2019; Webster, 2019), compared to Generation Y. These factors further affect their consumption decisions (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Gen Z questions brands' decisions and do not hesitate to leave a brand if another brand is thought to better fulfil their needs (Heather, 2017). They also evaluate brands along the lines of ethical practices and their impact on society (Gomez et al., 2019). The generation is inclined to pay more for brands if they identify with the causes they stand for (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). For a brand to become attractive for Gen Z, the company needs to show that they aim to be a good global citizen, where actual actions and commitments are of high importance (Gomez et al., 2019). If the brand fails to create overall value for Gen Z, the reaction can be negative. In a study by Google, 80 percent of Gen Z consumers claimed they would switch from their favorite brand if they came across a comparable product with higher quality or value (Think with Google, 2019). Because of this, the generation is seen as less loyal to brands compared to previous generations (Gomez et al., 2019). If a brand uses advertising that is e.g., macho, racist, or homophobic, Generation Z is inclined to boycott the brand and stop spreading the word about it (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). However, if the brand succeeds in catching the consumer's attention in a favorable way, Gen Z can become brand ambassadors (Rodriguez, 2015). If mistakes are made by a brand, they can be forgiven by Gen Z if they clearly and thoroughly correct their mistakes (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Importantly, Gen Z's values and opinions also affect their purchasing behavior more than for previous generations. According to McKinsey (2018), 81 percent, of Gen Zers, more than for any other generation, would stop buying a brand not fulfilling what they see as value. Even if there are some indications, it is not yet clear how Generation Z's views are reflected in their evaluation of advertisements, as there is not much academic research on the issue. This is where the authors hope to contribute.

2.6.5 Expected Differences in Results Depending on Generational Belonging

Based on the differing attitudes, values and consequent effects on brand evaluations described above, the authors hypothesize that using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will have different effects on Generation Z and Generation Y. The authors argue that both generations will evaluate non-stereotypical portrayals of age more positively than stereotypical portrayals of age. However, the authors suggest Generation Z will evaluate the non-stereotypical portrayals more positively.

In summary, due to their more progressive views and disapproval of stereotypes, Generation Z should express more positive responses to non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising in comparison to Generation Y. Generation Z does value social responsibility and being a good global citizen more highly than does Generation Y. The authors argue that usage of non-stereotypical portrayals of age could be a way to signal social responsibility and good citizenship, as the negative effects of stereotypical portrayals and the positive effects of breaking stereotypes in advertising are well-documented. Thereby, non-stereotypical portrayals of age should create more positive effects among Gen Z. As Generation Z is also more likely than Generation Y to switch from brands that do not live up to their progressive values, they should have different WOM intentions and purchase intentions for brands signaling inclusiveness through non-stereotypical portrayals of age.

In light of this, the authors hypothesize the following:

H11: The effects observed in H1-H10 will be more positive for Generation Z than for Generation Y.

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3. Methodology

This section outlines the approach to conducting research and the subsequent methodological choices in terms of research strategy and design. Limitations of the chosen methods and the quality of data are also addressed. The research methodology is largely based on the recommendations for business research provided by Bryman & Bell (2011) *and Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill* (2016).

3.1 Research Philosophy

This research applies a positivist research philosophy (Saunders et al., 2016). Epistemologically, the focus is on observable and measurable facts to produce the data. The authors attempt to

establish causal relationships within the data to arrive at law-like generalizations, which can help explain and predict behavior. The positivist research philosophy also entails that researchers try to remain an objective and value-free stance, meaning that the aim is to be neutral and detached from the data to avoid influencing the findings.

3.2 Methodological Approach

The research approach of this thesis is deductive (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A quantitative research approach is applied, which is generally associated with the deductive strategy (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Hypotheses are developed based on existing theory and subsequently tested through data collection in the form of an experiment. Findings are then analyzed to confirm or reject hypotheses, possibly leading to a revision of theory. This approach is suitable to the purpose of this thesis and is also the dominant approach when studying advertising effects (Åkestam et al., 2017; Hunt, 2014).

3.3 Research Design

The hypotheses are tested in an empirical study, designed as two between-subjects experiments. This design is commonly used in psychology and advertising research, to test effects and outcomes of different messages (Allen, 2017). Participants are randomly assigned to either the treatment condition (non-stereotypical portrayal of age) or control condition (stereotypical portrayal of age). A between-subjects experiment implies that the differences in conditions occur between the separate group participants, as opposed to a within-subjects design, where each participant is exposed to multiple conditions. The experimental design emphasizes the importance of replicability, reliability, and validity, which will be addressed later in this section.

The experimental design is chosen as it allows for establishment of causal relationships (Spencer et al., 2005). As the researchers are in control of the stimuli, this design increases the possibility to conclude that the exposure to the non-stereotypical or stereotypical portrayals of age causes the observed effects. As the chosen stimuli are highly similar except for how stereotypical they were perceived to be, the possible difference between respondent groups is most likely to stem from this manipulated variable (Perdue & Summers, 1986). Furthermore, when investigating stereotypes, which are often unconscious, a quantitative method like an experiment can capture psychological processes more adequately than qualitative methods (Åkestam et al., 2017). Stereotypical advertising portrayals are also sensitive to demand effects, meaning that respondents' answers are

influenced by what they think is socially desirable or what they think the researcher wants to hear (Eisend, 2017). Compared to qualitative methods like interviews, demand effects decrease when using an anonymous experiment (Lynn & Lynn, 2003).

There are, however, limitations to the experimental design. Firstly, an experiment can only answer the questions posed by the researchers before conducting the experiment, meaning that assumptions or prejudices held by the researchers could influence the design and results of the experiment. Secondly, the causal relationships that can be explained by an experiment are also limited to the variables included, meaning that there could be other explanations for the observed effects that would perhaps be better to capture with a qualitative method such as in-depth interviews (Åkestam et al., 2017).

The nature of this research is explanatory, as it seeks to explain the relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2016). This design is coherent with the positivist research philosophy and the deductive approach. As the effects of non-stereotypical and stereotypical portrayals of age are compared between groups, namely Generation Z and Generation Y, there is also an evaluative aspect to the study (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.4 Experiment Design

The experiment was operationalized as a digitally distributed questionnaire. In the pre-study the respondents answered questions about all the stimuli, shown in a randomized order. In the main studies, the respondents were randomly assigned to answer questions about one of the stimuli used. The non-stereotypical ads represent the treatment groups, and the stereotypical ads represent the control groups. In this section the authors will further elaborate on how the experiment was constructed, and how the stimuli and measures used were arrived upon.

3.4.1 Stimuli Development

In order to measure the developed hypotheses, the adverts used had to be perceived as stereotypical and non-stereotypical, respectively.

In the pre-study, five potential adverts were tested. The two stereotypical underwear ads were included to test which one was most appropriate to use in the main study. One of the two was perceived as significantly less stereotypical than the other and was subsequently excluded from the main study.

In the main studies there was one non-stereotypical image and one stereotypical image for each product category. In both cases, conforming to the ad stereotype would be to portray a young woman. Besides the differing ages, the women were similar in terms of ethnicity (white/Caucasian) and body shape (slim), this in order to avoid any other stereotypes than age affecting the consumer evaluation of the ads or brand. The ad pairs were further similar with regards to product and background. Real product adverts, rather than mock-up adverts, have been used as stimuli. The ads used were active in advertising campaigns at the time of the study or have been a part of a consumer campaign in the past.

However, as the stimuli were real ads, the researchers could not control the background of the images. All brands were blurred from the ads to avoid effects of already prevailing attitudes towards the brands. This was stated in the questionnaire to ensure awareness among respondents. The stimuli used in the pre-study and main studies can be found in Appendix 1.

3.4.2 Differing Stimuli

Different products could carry different implications for the outcomes of non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising. For example, a product such as anti-aging cream is more likely to feature an older model because of the inherent characteristics of the product. In the same manner, an advert for diapers for newborns could be argued to naturally feature a baby.

In this study, two different products have been used, namely underwear and sunglasses. The products have been chosen as they are age neutral, meaning they can be used by both an older and a younger person. The authors also claim that the products are relevant for all genders, as they could be bought as gifts if the respondent does not use them themselves. The choice of product categories was further partly dependent on the availability of real ads.

The authors expect different results between the two product categories. The underwear category has been claimed as suitable when portraying physical characteristics of the model and connected stereotypes, such as body types (Åkestam et al., 2017). The authors argue that this is a suitable product to use in this study as showing the model's body can be a clear way of portraying age. The underwear category is also chosen as a contrast to the sunglass category, where sunglasses can be seen as a more neutral product and underwear as a more provocative or progressive product category regarding portrayals of older models. This is interesting to investigate further in order to find out if there are limits to where non-stereotypical portrayals of age have different advertising

effects. Possibly, there could be less acceptance of age stereotypes within certain product categories. Hence, the authors conducted two separate studies to investigate if the two product categories would generate different effects.

3.4.3 Measures

All measures used have been validated by previous research. As the original language of the measures was English, the same was chosen as the language of the questionnaire. This in order to avoid the risk of decreasing validity, replicability, or reliability of the measures through translation.

The authors acknowledge that different Likert scales, with differing numbers of available responses, are used in the field (Darbyshire & McDonald, 2004). In this study, all measures used a 10-point Likert scale. Some of the original measures used this scale and the rest were adapted to reach consistency. The interval scales ranged from 1 to 10 with equal distances. The scales were bipolar, meaning that respondents were asked to judge statements from e.g., bad to good or positive to negative. This is a well-established technique used in marketing research, which allows for key statistical analyses (Malhotra, 2004). A low value on the scale (1) represented a bad/negative value, and a high value on the scale (10) represented a good/positive value. All bipolar scales were labeled in the same direction, with low values to the left and high values to the right, following the recommendations of Söderlund (2005). For questions using a scale with several items, a test of internal consistency was performed using Cronbach's alpha, where the standard recommendation of values above 0.7 were deemed as acceptable (Saunders et al., 2016).

The 10-point Likert scale has been argued to be superior the 7-point Likert scale as it proposes a more precise measure, which allows for respondents to show more variances in their answers. In turn, by allowing for a greater spread, it has been argued that it is superior for usage in statistical analysis. Further, while a 7-point Likert scale has been suggested for telephone questionnaires, scales with a larger number of points have been suggested for electronic questionnaires (Darbyshire & McDonald, 2004).

3.5 Pre-Study

A pre-study was conducted to ensure that the stimuli were interpreted as non-stereotypical or stereotypical portrayals of age. As the aim is to examine the effects on individual consumers, respondents were to define what was a non-stereotypical advertising portrayal. As the definition of stereotypes employed is *"a generalized and widely accepted belief about the personal attributes*

of a social category", there is an issue of proving that what the researchers personally define as stereotypes is generalized and widely accepted (Åkestam et al., 2017). By letting the experiment participants' rate if they perceive the advertisements as stereotypical or non-stereotypical, this could be overcome. Further, pilot testing increases the reliability and validity of the study and its results (Saunders et al., 2016).

3.5.1 Sample

The pre-study used a convenience sample of $n = 36$; 75 percent female; mean age = 25.5 years old, participants similar to, but not included in, the main study.

3.5.2 Measures

Except for ensuring that the non-stereotypical portrayals of age were in fact interpreted as such, the pre-study also tested that the models in the stimuli used were considered of different ages, and that the stimuli were comparable in term of model attitude. Model attractiveness was expected to differ between the older and younger models, as younger models are generally considered more attractive (McLellan & McKelvie, 1993). Hence, model attitude was deemed a more appropriate measure for evaluating the level of comparability between the stimuli. As one of the models is famous, which might affect attitudes, respondents were asked if they recognized the models. Attention check questions were also included.

MEASURE	QUESTION ITEM	SCALE	SCALE RELIABILITY	ADAPTED FROM
Stereotype	1. "This is a stereotypical portrayal of age." 2. "This is a stereotypical portrayal of age in advertising."	Both measured on the scale "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (10)	Pearson correlation = 0.98, $p < 0.01$ for sunglasses; 0.94, $p < 0.01$ for underwear.	Liljedal et al., (2020).
Age of Models	"How old would you guess that the person in the ad is?"	Free-text numerical response.		
Model Attitude	"What do you think about the woman shown in this ad?"	"Bad" (1) to "Good" (10), "Dislike" (1) to "Like" (10), "Negative impression" (1) to "Positive impression" (10)	Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.99$ for sunglasses, and 0.94 for underwear	Liljedal et al., (2020).
Recognition	"Do you recognize the woman in the ad?"	Multiple-choice. "Yes", "No", and "I don't know".		
Attention Check	Attention check questions were asked to check that the respondents had viewed the ad and their content. The questions used were multiple choice questions asking, 1. "Did the ad include a person 2. "What products did the ads display?"	Multiple-choice answers 1. "Yes"; "No"; "I don't know" 2. "Underwear and sunglasses"; "Bag and sunglasses"; "Underwear and bag"		

Table 1: Overview of Measures Used in Pre-Study

3.5.3 Results of Pre-Study

PRE-STUDY	*Non-stereotypical*		*Stereotypical*				
Sunglasses	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Stereotype	*2.00*	*1.10*	*7.20*	*2.36*	*-11.67*	*35*	*< 0.001****
Age of models	*77.25*	*4.90*	*25.50*	*2.22*	*50.32*	*35*	*< 0.01***
Model attitude	*8.25*	*1.58*	*7.36*	*1.64*	*2.40*	*35*	*0.054*
Underwear							
Stereotype	*2.79*	*2.36*	*8.00*	*2.63*	*-6.55*	*35*	*< 0.001****
Age of models	*64.25*	*7.14*	*24.25*	*1.74*	*28.39*	*35*	*< 0.01***
Model attitude	*7.28*	*1.60*	*7.22*	*2.01*	*0.11*	*35*	*0.91*

*Significance level: *p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p< .001*

Table 2: Summary Results of Pre-Study

Stereotypes

The results in the pre-study were satisfactory for both pairs of stimuli in that the ads with older models were perceived as less stereotypical portrayals of age.

($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 2.00, SD = 1.10; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 7.20, SD = 2.36; t(35) = -11.67, p < 0.001), ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 2.79, SD = 2.36; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 8.00, SD = 2.63; t(35) = -6.55, p < 0.001).

For the underwear ads, the pretest included two stimuli depicting younger women. As one of these were perceived as less stereotypical than the other ($M_{Stimulus4}$ = 5.92, $M_{Stimulus5}$ = 8.00), the stimulus that was considered relatively less stereotypical was excluded from the rest of the analysis and not included in the main study.

Age of models

As expected, the older models were perceived as older, which further points towards the appropriateness of the stimuli for the purpose of this study.

($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 77.25, SD = 4.90, $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 25.50, SD = 2.22; t(35) = 50.32, p < 0.01)

($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 64.25, SD = 7.14, $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 24.25, SD = 1.74; t(35) = 28.39, p < 0.01).

Model attitude

There was no significant difference in the attitude towards the models, hence the models in the different stimuli were deemed comparable.

($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 8.25, SD = 1.58, $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 7.36, SD = 1.64; t(35) = 2.40, p < 0.05).

($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicaldUnderwear}$ = 7.28, SD = 1.60, $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 7.22, SD = 2.01; t(35) = 0.11, p = 0.91).

Recognition

For one stimulus, the one featuring a famous person, three out of 36 respondents or 8.3 percent of the sample, claimed they recognized the woman in the ad. These responses were further analyzed but showed no significant difference in responses for the other questions. Hence, these respondents were still included in the analysis, and the stimuli was deemed appropriate to include in the main study.

3.5.4 Changes to the Main Studies

As a result of the pre-study, two changes were made to the main studies. Firstly, one of the original stimuli, Stimulus 5 (Appendix 1), was excluded as it was perceived as less stereotypical than the other ad depicting a young model. The other stimuli were included in the main studies, as the results of the pre-study were satisfactory. Secondly, the flow of the questionnaire was altered in a way that made it possible for respondents to scroll up and see the advertisement during all questions related to its contents, as several respondents commented on this in the pre-study.

3.6 Main Studies

The learnings from the pre-study were brought on to the main studies. Apart from one of the stereotypical adverts for underwear, the stimulus used were the same as they were proven to be stereotypical and non-stereotypical, respectively. Study 1 investigated the effects of using non-stereotypical portrayals of age in the sunglass category, while Study 2 investigated these effects in the underwear category.

3.6.1 Sample

Respondents were recruited through distributing the questionnaire on the authors' social media pages, namely Facebook and LinkedIn. This method was chosen because of its convenience, restrictions in terms of time and resources, as well as the current Covid-19 pandemic. To encourage respondents and increase the completion rate of the questionnaire, 2SEK was donated to The Swedish Cancer Society for every completed response. This was stated in the social media posts encouraging people to participate in the experiment.

The full sample consisted of 392 respondents. Firstly, 17 responses were removed as the respondents were born before 1981, hence not belonging to the defined Generation Z or Y. Secondly, as suggested by our supervisor, to achieve a relatively equal balance of respondents in

Generation Z and Y, some answers from the respondents belonging to Generation Z were removed. A balance of 60 versus 40 percent in Generation Z and Generation Y respectively was decided on to remove as few responses as possible but keep a relatively balanced number of responses in the two groups. Subsequently, the 50 last recorded responses from respondents belonging to Generation Z were removed, leaving the total sample included in the study at 322 respondents. The gender distribution was 49.1 percent female, 49.1 percent male, 0.3 percent non-binary, and 1.5 percent preferred not to say. Respondents were born between 1983 and 2002, mean 1995.76, indicating that the mean age was approximately 25 years. The mean age of Generation Z was 22, and the mean age of Generation Y was 28.

3.6.2 Measures

For the main studies, the measures for stereotypes (Pearson correlation = 0.75, $p < 0.01$ in Study 1; 0.71, $p < 0.01$ in Study 2) and model attitude ($\alpha = 0.98$ Study 1; 0.97 Study 2) were the same as those used in the pre-study. In the main study the measures used further aimed at examining consumers attitudes as well as plans to perform a certain behavior in the future. The following measures were used:

MEASURE	QUESTION ITEM	SCALE	SCALE RELIABILITY	ADAPTED FROM	COMMENT
Ad Attitude	"What do you think about this advertisement?"	Three items on a 10-point bipolar scale. "Bad" (1) to "Good" (10); "Dislike" (1) to "Like" (10); "Unpleasant" (1) to "Pleasant" (10)	Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.91 in Study 1, and 0.95 in Study 2	Liljedal et al., (2020).	
Brand Attitude	"What do you think about the brand behind this advertisement?"	1. "Bad" (1) to "Good" (10) 2. "Dislike" (1) to "Like" (10) 3. "Unpleasant" (1) to "Pleasant" (10)	Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.97 in Study 1, and 0.98 in Study 2	(Liljedal et al., 2020)	
Word-of-Mouth Intention	1. "I want to recommend [brand]" 2. "I want to talk about [brand]"	Both measured on the scale "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (10)	Pearson correlation was 0.80, $p < 0.01$ in Study 1, and 0.71, $p < 0.01$ in Study 2.	Modig et al. (2014)	[Brand] was replaced by "this brand" as the brands were excluded from the stimuli used in the study.
Purchase Intention	"If you were to buy [product], how likely is it that you would choose something from Brand X?"	"Not at all likely" (1) to "Highly likely" (10)		Dahlen et al., (2009)	[Product] was replaced by either "underwear" or "sunglasses" for the respective stimuli. "Brand X" was replaced by "this brand" as the brands were excluded from the stimuli
Product Quality	"What is your perception of the quality of the advertised product?"	"Low" (1) to "High" (10), "Lower than average" (1) to "Higher than average" (10), and "Worse than competing brands" (1) to "Better than competing brands" (10).	Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.92 in Study 1, and 0.90 in Study 2.	Ambler and Hollier (2004), Dahlen et al (2008), Liljedal et al. (2020), and Modig et al (2014)	
Brand Effort	1. "I feel that the brand has put a lot of time behind the ad" 2. "I feel that the brand has put a lot of effort behind the ad," 3. "I feel that the brand has put a lot of thought behind the ad."	All measured on the scale "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (10)	Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.95 in Study 1, and 0.93 in Study 2.	Ambler and Hollier (2004), Dahlen et al (2008), and Modig et al (2014)	
Brand ability	1. "The brand is leading within the product category" 2. "The brand is successful" 3. "The brand is modern."	All measured on the scale "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (10)	Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.88 in Study 1, and 0.82 in Study 2.	Dahlén et al. (2008)	
Age of Models	1. "How old would you guess that the person in the ad is?" 2. "How would you describe the person in the ad on the scale below?'	1. Free-text numerical response 2. Two items on a 10-point bipolar scale using the items "Young" (1) to "Old" (10) and "Youthful" (1) to "Elderly" (10)	For the second question the Pearson correlation was 0.80, $p < 0.01$ in Study 1, and 0.81, $p < 0.01$ in Study 2	Liljedal et al. (2020).	

Model Attractiveness	"What do you think about the woman shown in this ad?"	10-point bipolar scale "Not good looking" (1) to "Good looking" (10), "Unattractive" (1) to "Attractive" (10), "Ugly" (1) to "Beautiful" (10),	Cronbach's α coefficient was 0.92 in Study 1, and 0.94 in Study 2.	Praxmarer (2011).	Praxmarer (2011) used the items unattractive/attractive, ugly/handsome, and unappealing/appealing. "Appealing/unappealing" was changed to "good looking/not good looking" to further focus on the model's appearance and avoid any ambiguity in the interpretation of the measure. "Handsome" was changed to "Beautiful" as handsome tends to be more masculine while beautiful is more feminine. As the models depicted were female this measure was adapted to the gender of the models.
Thought Processing	What comes to mind when you see this ad?	Free –text response			
Attention Check	1. "Did the ad include a person" 2. "What product did the ad display?"	Multiple-choice answers 1. "Yes"; "No"; "I don't know" 2. "Underwear; "Sunglasses"; "Bag"			

Table 3: Overview of Measures Used in Main Study

Thought processing

The main studies also included a qualitative element in the form of a question asking, "What comes to mind when you see this ad?", where respondents wrote down their thoughts. The listed thoughts were coded independently by the two authors. For each stimulus, the number of thoughts about age (e.g., *"old people can be cool"*), about the product (e.g., *"cute underwear"*), or about the brand (e.g., *"progressive brand"*) were counted. For each of these categories, it was first ensured that the two authors' individual coding were positively correlated, indicating that the authors had interpreted the data in similar ways. The number of thoughts reported was then arrived at by calculating the mean number of thoughts between the two authors' coding. This method is in line with the research by Liljedal et al. (2020) and was included to capture possible reflections of the respondents that might provide more depth to the analysis of the results.

3.7 Data Quality

A quantitative research design raises concerns of reliability, validity, and replicability. These are addressed below.

3.7.1 Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency of the results produced, in particular, how consistent the results would be if the studies were repeated (Saunders et al., 2016). To increase reliability, the questions and measures used in the questionnaire are all well-established and validated by previous research. All scales were tested for internal consistency using Cronbach's α, with a value of 0.7 or above deemed as acceptable (Saunders et al., 2016).

Reliability was further increased by pilot testing whether the stimuli used were in fact perceived as different ages and as non-stereotypical or stereotypical portrayals of age by respondents (Saunders et al., 2016). The satisfactory results of the pre-study further increase the likelihood of the stimuli as being adequate to measure differences in effects of non-stereotypical versus stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising.

To further ensure internal reliability, the qualitative data in the form of thought protocols was coded independently by the two authors. An index was then computed to ensure that the data had been interpreted in similar ways.

3.7.2 Validity

External validity refers to the extent to which the results can be generalized to other contexts such as different samples, times, or settings (Saunders et al., 2016). The distribution method of the study raises issues of external validity. As the questionnaire was distributed on the authors' social media pages, the sample exists only of respondents in the authors' extended networks and cannot be seen as representative for the entire population of Generation Z and Generation Y consumers in Sweden. This method was chosen due to time- and financial restrictions, as well as the current Covid-19 pandemic. As the researchers did not observe the respondent environment, it was not possible to control for possible external effects on responses. For example, there is a possibility that respondents communicated while taking the questionnaire, which would further decrease the external validity of the results.

3.7.3 Replicability

Replicability refers to the extent to which the study could be replicated to support or disprove the findings and research conclusions (Bryman & Bell, 2011). To assure replicability, the authors have documented the method of data collection and analysis extensively, ensuring that the process can be easily followed. The established reliability and validity of the measures used also positively affect the replicability of the study (Saunders et al., 2016). The authors hence argue that the replicability of this study is sufficient.

3.7.4 Research Ethics

Research ethics refer to the standards of behavior of the researchers in relation to the research participants (Saunders et al., 2016). To ensure the anonymity of the participants, data was collected through an anonymous online questionnaire. Before taking the online questionnaire, the respondents were informed of the purpose of the data collection and what personal data would be collected (gender and age), and gave their consent to participate in the study. The researchers maintained an objective stance in analyzing the data, through following the recommendations for statistical analysis by Pallant (2013), Preacher & Hayes (2008) and Zhao, Lynch, and Chen (2010).

3.8 Instruments and Methods of Analysis

The questionnaire (Appendix 2) was created using the online survey tool Qualtrics. Data was collected through electronically distributing the questionnaire and the raw data was subsequently directly exported into IBM SPSS. The data was collected in the period of October 25th, 2020 to November 1st, 2020. The data collected was stored in the SSE Microsoft One Drive, in accordance with GDPR.

SPSS was used for all statistical analysis, which included independent t-tests and serial mediation analysis using bootstrap analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) in PROCESS version 3.5 plug-in for SPSS. The same questions were used for both Study 1 and Study 2, although the data corresponding to the different product categories was individually analyzed. This method of analysis was chosen based on the recommendations by Preacher & Hayes (2008) and Zhao, Lynch, & Chen (2010), it is also a method used in related literature (Liljedal et al., 2020). The authors used bootstrapping with 5000 bootstrap samples, and a 95 percent confidence interval, consistent with Liljedal et al. (2020).

4. Analysis and Results

In this section, the results are reported and analyzed. To assess the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising, the hypotheses are tested to determine what the effects are, how the causal effects are mediated and whether these can be explained by signaling theory. Further, it is examined whether there is a difference in effects between Generation Z and Generation Y.

4.1 Study 1 – Sunglasses

4.1.1 Manipulation Check and Model Perception

Firstly, a manipulation check was made to ensure that the older model was perceived to be older, which was confirmed ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$= 78.21, SD = 7.41; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$= 24.20, SD = 3.16; t(82.77) = 55.53, $p < 0.001$). The models were also perceived to be "old" and "young" respectively ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$=8.46, SD = 1.38; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ =3.49, SD =1.51; t(148.02) = 21.34, $p < 0.001$). It was further established that the adverts containing younger models were perceived to be more stereotypical than the adverts with older models ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$= 3.99, SD = 2.19; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$=4.98, SD =2.25), t(153) =-2.77, $p < 0.01$).

The **attitude towards the model** showed a significant difference between the two groups, the attitude towards the older model was more positive than towards the younger model ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$= 7.62, SD = 1.88; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$= 6.41, SD =2.02), t(153) = 3.83, $p < 0.001$). This is important to keep in mind when evaluating the other results.

The assessment of the **attractiveness of the model** showed no significant difference between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$=6.38, SD = 2.01; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$= 6.61, SD = 1.95), t(153) =-0.71, p = 0.48). As there was no significant difference, the perceived attractiveness of the model is not likely to have affected the other results.

As mentioned above, a question about whether the respondents recognized the model was used to control for possible effects. Out of the full sample (N = 155), 5 respondents, 3.3 percent of the total sample, claimed to recognize the model. Four respondents recognized the model in Stimulus 1, and one respondent recognized the model in Stimulus 2. These responses were further analyzed but were coherent with other responses. As only one of the models, Stimuli 1, was a famous person, the possible effects stemming from recognition were deemed to be insignificant and all responses were hence included in the analysis.

4.1.2 Effects of Non-Stereotypical Portrayals of Age in Advertising

Hypotheses 1-5, 7, and 9 were tested by running independent t-tests comparing the treatment group (respondents who saw a non-stereotypical ad) and the control group (respondents who saw a stereotypical ad).

Ad attitude was not significantly different between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$=6.57, SD = 2.26; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 6.32, SD = 1.98), t(153) = 0.73, p = 0.47).

H1 is thus not supported in Study 1.

No significant differences were observed in the **brand attitude** between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 6.70, SD = 2.16; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 6.4, SD =1.75), t(125.05) =0.93, p = 0.35).

H2 is thus not supported in Study 1.

The assessment of the **product quality** showed no significant differences between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 6.67, SD = 1.97; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 6.52, SD = 1.89), t(153) = 0.49, p = 0.63).

H3 is thus not supported in Study 1.

The perceived **brand effort** was higher for the non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$= 5.59, SD = 2.61; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 4.40, SD = 1.98), t(119.17) = 3.10, p < 0.01).

H4 is thus supported in Study 1.

The assessment of perceived **brand ability** showed no significant difference between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$= 6.18, SD = 1.98; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 5.92, SD = 1.88), t(153) = 0.842, p = 0.40).

H5 is thus not supported in Study 1.

The **WOM intention** was not significantly different between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 5.30, SD = 2.28; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 4.62, SD = 2.04), t(153) = 1.95, p = 0.053).

H7 is thus not supported in the Study 1.

The **purchase intention** was not significantly different between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 4.96, SD = 2.53; $M_{StereotypicalSunglasses}$ = 5.42, SD = 2.58), t(153) = 1.12, p = 0.26).

H9 is thus not supported in Study 1.

As only H4, (perceived brand effort) was supported in Study 1, the decision was taken to not run mediation analyses to test hypotheses 6, 8, and 10. As the purpose of the mediation analysis is to examine the causal explanation of observed effects, it would not be valuable to run the analysis without having observed any significant effects. The finding that model attitude was more positive for the older model was not analyzed further, as there were no significant differences in the other factors that might have been affected by this. Instead, the authors move directly on to comparing the results between Generation Z and Y, to examine if there are any differences in effects between the generations.

STUDY 1 **N=155**	Non-stereotypical N= 67		Stereotypical N= 88				
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Stereotype	*3.99*	*2.19*	*4.98*	*2.25*	*-2.77*	*153*	*<0.01***
Age of model	*78.21*	*7.41*	*24.20*	*3.16*	*55.53*	*82.77*	*<0.001****
Old/Young	*8.46*	*1.38*	*3.49*	*1.51*	*21.34*	*148.02*	*<0.001****
Model attitude	*7.62*	*1.88*	*6.41*	*2.02*	*3.83*	*153*	*<0.001****
Model attractiveness	*6.38*	*2.01*	*6.61*	*1.95*	*-0.71*	*153*	*0.48*
Ad attitude	*6.57*	*2.26*	*6.32*	*1.98*	*0.73*	*153*	*0.47*
Brand attitude	*6.70*	*2.16*	*6.4*	*1.75*	*0.93*	*125.05*	*0.35*
Product quality	*6.67*	*1.97*	*6.52*	*1.89*	*0.49*	*153*	*0.63*
Brand effort	*5.59*	*2.61*	*4.40*	*1.98*	*3.10*	*119.17*	*<0.01***
Brand ability	*6.18*	*1.98*	*5.92*	*1.88*	*0.842*	*153*	*0.40*
WOM intention	*5.30*	*2.28*	*4.62*	*2.04*	*1.95*	*153*	*0.053*
Purchase intention	*4.96*	*2.53*	*5.42*	*2.58*	*1.12*	*153*	*0.26*

*Significance level: *p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p< .001*

Table 4: Summary Results of Study 1

4.1.3 Comparing Generation Z and Y in Study 1

To compare how the results differ between Generations Z and Y, independent t-tests were conducted between the two groups.

The data showed no significant differences between generations for the non-stereotypical condition. Consequently, independent t-tests were performed between the two generations for the stereotypical condition as well. For the stereotypical condition, there were some significant findings:

Ad attitude was significantly higher for Generation Z than for Generation Y in the stereotypical condition.

($M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenZ}$ = 6.72, SD = 2.02; $M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenY}$ = 5.67, SD = 1.75, t(86) = 2.47, $p < 0.05$).

Brand attitude was significantly higher for Generation Z than for Generation Y in the stereotypical condition.

($M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenZ}$ = 6.72, SD = 1.75; $M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenY}$ = 5.89, SD = 1.66, t(86) = 2.22, $p < 0.05$).

Brand effort was significantly higher for Generation Z than for Generation Y in the stereotypical condition.

($M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenZ}$ = 4.76, SD = 2.07; $M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenY}$ = 3.80, SD = 1.68, t(86) = 2.27, $p < 0.05$).

Brand ability was significantly higher for Generation Z than for Generation Y in the stereotypical condition.

($M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenZ}$ = 6.28, SD = 1.99; $M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenY}$ = 5.31, SD = 1.52, t(86) = 2.40, $p < 0.05$).

WOM intentions were significantly higher for Generation Z than for Generation Y in the stereotypical condition.

($M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenZ}$ = 5.07, SD = 2.06; $M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenY}$ = 3.86, SD = 1.80, t(86) = 2.80, $p < 0.01$).

Purchase intentions were significantly higher for Generation Z than for Generation Y in the stereotypical condition.

($M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenZ}$ = 5.96, SD = 2.67; $M_{StereotypicalSunglassesGenY}$ = 4.51, SD = 2.17), t(86) = 2.64, $p < 0.01$)

H11 is thus not supported in the sunglass category.

This suggests that non-stereotypical portrayals of age lead to lower ad and brand attitudes for Generation Y than for Generation Z. Generation Y also perceives lower brand effort and brand ability for stereotypical portrayals of age than does Generation Z. Additionally, Generation Y are less inclined to talk about or purchase a brand advertised using stereotypical portrayals of age compared to Generation Z.

STUDY 1 **Stereotypical** **N= 88**	*Generation Y* *N= 33*		*Generation Z* *N=55*				
	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Model attitude	6.27	1.83	6.49	2.14	0.48	86	0.64
Model attractiveness	6.12	1.93	6.90	1.91	1.85	86	0.07
Ad attitude	5.67	1.75	6.72	2.02	2.47	86	<0.05*
Brand attitude	5.89	1.66	6.72	1.75	2.22	86	<0.05*
Product quality	6.39	1.57	6.59	2.06	0.48	86	0.63
WOM intention	3.86	1.80	5.07	2.06	2.80	86	<0.01**
Purchase intention	4.52	2.17	5.96	2.67	2.64	86	<0.01**
Brand effort	3.80	1.68	4.76	2.07	2.27	86	<0.05*
Brand ability	5.31	1.52	6.28	1.99	2.40	86	<0.05*
Non-stereotypical **N= 67**	*Generation Y* *N= 22*		*Generation Z* *N=45*				
	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Model attitude	7.77	2.06	7.55	1.81	-0.46	65	0.65
Model attractiveness	6.83	1.94	6.16	2.03	-1.31	43.61	0.20
Ad attitude	6.73	2.34	6.50	2.25	-039	40.37	0.70
Brand attitude	6.70	2.38	6.70	2.06	0.01	65	0.99
Product quality	6.64	2.13	6.69	1.91	0.10	65	0.92
WOM intention	5.48	2.41	5.21	2.24	-0.45	65	0.66
Purchase intention	5.27	2.60	4.80	2.51	-0.72	65	0.48
Brand effort	6.18	3.10	5.30	2.32	-1.31	65	0.19
Brand ability	6.32	2.22	6.11	1.87	-0.40	65	0.69

*Significance level: *p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p< .001*

Table 5: Summary of the Results Across Generations in Study 1

4.1.4 Thought Processing

The recorded thoughts of the respondents were coded independently by the two authors. Firstly, there were more frequent thoughts about age e.g., *"elegant older woman"* (Pearson correlation 0.89, $p < 0.01$) for the non-stereotypical advert. 20.15 percent of respondents thought about the age of the older model, compared to only 1.13 percent of respondents who thought about the age of the younger model. For thoughts about the product e.g., *"expensive sunglasses"* (Pearson

correlation 0.92, $p < 0.01$), there were more thoughts for the stereotypical ad. 7.46 percent of respondents thought about the product in the non-stereotypical condition, compared to 9.09 percent of respondents in the stereotypical condition. Lastly, the thoughts about the brand e.g., *"New cool approach to advertising by the brand"* (Pearson correlation 0.85, $p < 0.01$), were more apparent for the non-stereotypical ad. 11.94 percent of respondents thought about the brand in the treatment group, compared to 6.81 percent of respondents in the control group.

4.2 Study 2 – Underwear

4.2.1 Manipulation Check and Model Perception

Firstly, a manipulation check was performed. As expected, the older models were perceived to be of older age ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalUnderwear} = 64.2$, $SD = 4.49$; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear} = 24.05$, $SD = 2.93$; $t(117.78) = 51.80$, $p < 0.001$). The models were also perceived to be "old" and "young" respectively ($M_{Non\text{-}StereotypicalUnderwear} = 7.32$, $SD = 1.39$; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear} = 2.79$, $SD = 1.06$), $t(156.81) = 23.76$, $p < 0.001$). It was further established that the advert containing a younger model was perceived to be more stereotypical than the advert containing an older model ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear} = 4.05$, $SD = 2.29$; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear} = 6.33$, $SD = 2.41$), $t(165) = -6.26$, $p < 0.001$).

The attitude towards the model was not significantly different between the treatment and control groups ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear} = 7.44$, $SD = 2.17$; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear} = 7.00$, $SD = 2.10$), $t(165) = 1.31$, $p = 0.19$), indicating that the stimuli are comparable.

The assessment of the **attractiveness of the model** showed a significant difference between the groups, where the non-stereotypical model was perceived as being less attractive than the stereotypical model ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear} = 6.39$, $SD = 2.52$; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear} = 8.28$, $SD = 1.67$), $t(146.27) = -5.72$, $p < 0.001$). As younger models are generally perceived as more attractive than older models, this result was expected. However, model attractiveness was still measured, to be aware of the differences.

Once again, a question about whether the respondents recognized the model was used to control for possible effects. Out of the full sample (N=167), 5 respondents, 3 percent of the sample, claimed to recognize the model. These respondents claimed to recognize the model in Stimulus 3.

The responses were further analyzed but were coherent with other responses. Also, as none of the models in this study was a famous person, the possible effects stemming from recognition were deemed to be insignificant and these responses were hence included in the analysis.

4.2.2 Effects of Non-Stereotypical Portrayal of Age in Advertising

Hypotheses 1-3, 7, and 9 were first tested by running independent t-tests comparing the treatment and control groups.

Ad attitude was not significantly different between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 6.38, SD = 2.46; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$= 6.61, SD = 2.10), t(165) = −0.64, p = 0.53).

H1 is thus not supported in Study 2.

Brand attitude was higher for the non-stereotypical portrayal of age than for the stereotypical one ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 7.10, SD = 2.16; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 6.05, SD = 2.11), t(165) = 3.19, p < 0.01.).

H2 is thus supported in Study 2.

The assessment of the **product quality** showed no significant difference between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical portrayal of age ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 6.20, SD = 1.62; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 5.81, SD = 1.70), t(165) = 1.49 p = 0.137).

H3 is thus not supported in Study 2.

The **WOM intention** was higher for the non-stereotypical advert ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 6.09, SD = 2.23; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 4.45, SD = 1.90), t(165) = 5.05, p < 0.001). As the measure used the items "I want to recommend this brand" and "I want to talk about this brand", with a Pearson correlation of 0,75, the WOM intentions are assumed to be of a positive character.

H7 is thus supported in Study 2.

The **purchase intention** was not significantly different between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical adverts ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 4.85, SD = 2.72; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 4.85, SD = 2.84), t(165) = -0.02, p = 0.988).

H9 is thus not supported in Study 2.

In the next section, it is further examined how signaling theory might be used to explain the observed positive effects on brand attitude and WOM intention from using non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising.

STUDY 2 **N= 167**	*Non-stereotypical* *N=85*		*Stereotypical* *N=82*				
	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Stereotype	*4.05*	*2.29*	*6.33*	*2.41*	*-6.26*	*165*	*< 0.001****
Age of models	*64.2*	*4.49*	*24.05*	*2.93*	*51.80*	*117.78*	*< 0.001****
Old/Young	*7.32*	*1.39*	*2.79*	*1.06*	*23.76*	*156.8*	*< 0.001****
Model attitude	*7.44*	*2.17*	*7.00*	*2.10*	*1.31*	*165*	*0.19*
Model attractiveness	*6.39*	*2.52*	*8.28*	*1.67*	*-5.72*	*146.27*	*< 0.001****
Ad attitude	*6.38*	*2.46*	*6.61*	*2.10*	*−0.64*	*165*	*0.53*
Brand attitude	*7.10*	*2.16*	*6.05*	*2.11*	*3.19*	*165*	*< 0.01***
Product quality	*6.20*	*1.62*	*5.81*	*1.70*	*1.49*	*165*	0.14
WOM intention	*6.09*	*2.23*	*4.45*	*1.90*	*5.05*	*165*	*< 0.001****
Purchase intention	*4.85*	*2.72*	*4.85*	*2.84*	*-0.02*	*165*	0.99
Brand effort	*6.96*	*1.94*	*3.77*	*1.89*	*10.77*	*165*	*< 0.001****
Brand ability	*6.22*	*1.62*	*4.81*	*1.83*	*5.27*	*165*	*< 0.001****

*Significance level: *p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p< .001*

Table 6: Summary Results of Study 2

4.2.3 Mediation

To assess whether the effects observed above can be explained by signaling theory as hypothesized in H6, independent t-tests were run for perceived brand effort and perceived brand ability, followed by a serial mediation.

The assessment of the perceived **brand effort** showed a significant difference between the groups ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear}$= 6.96, SD = 1.94; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 3.77, SD = 1.89), t(165) = 10.77, p < 0.001). This indicates that the respondents perceived the brand using the non-stereotypical portrayal of age as having put more effort behind the advert.

H4 is thus supported in Study 2.

Brand ability was also perceived to be higher for the non-stereotypical portrayal of age than for the stereotypical one ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear}$= 6.22, SD = 1.62; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwear}$ = 4.81, SD = 1.83), t(165) = 5.27, p < 0.001).

H5 is thus supported in Study 2.

As no significant difference in ad attitudes were observed in Study 2, ad attitude was excluded from the subsequent mediation analysis. This led to the adapted hypothesis:

H6b: Perceived brand effort, perceived brand ability, and perceived product quality will mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on consumer attitudes toward brands.

The serial mediation analyses were performed using bootstrap analysis (Preacher & Hayes, 2008), in PROCESS version 3.5. PROCESS model 6 was first used to test H6:

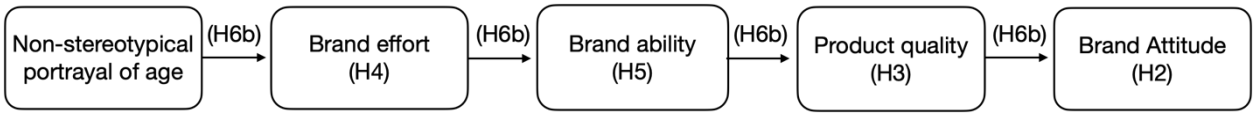


Figure 5: Theoretical framework for Hypotheses 2-5 and 6b in line with signaling theory.

The serial mediation analysis showed a significant mean indirect effect of 0.265 (5000 bootstrap samples, 95 percent confidence interval CI: 0.107 to 0.485). These results lend support to the explanatory model using signaling theory. As the confidence interval does not contain any negative numbers or zero, this indicates that the effect is positive with 95 percent confidence. Therefore, it shows that there is a mediating effect of perceived brand effort, perceived brand ability, and perceived product quality on brand attitudes, when using non-stereotypical portrayals of age in the advert.

H6b is thus supported in Study 2.

No significant difference in perceived product quality was observed, but as this is an integral factor in signaling theory, a separate serial mediation analysis was made. This analysis excluded the quality measure and tested whether perceived brand effort and perceived brand ability still mediated the effects on brand attitude. This led to the further adapted hypothesis:

H6c: Perceived brand effort and perceived brand ability will mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on consumer attitudes toward brands.

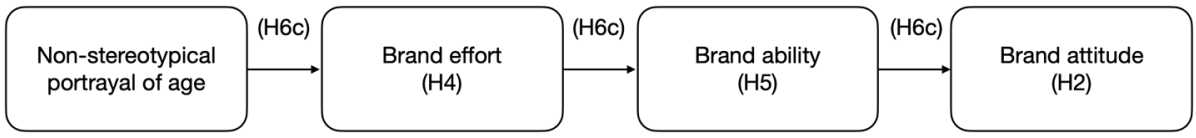


Figure 6: Theoretical framework for Hypotheses 2, 4, 5 and 6c in line with signaling theory, excluding product quality.

In the subsequent serial mediation analysis, a significant mean indirect effect of 0.843 (5000 bootstrap samples, 95 percent confidence interval CI: 0.445 to 1.368) was observed. These results lend support to the adapted hypothesis. As the confidence interval does not contain any negative numbers or zero, this indicates that the effect is positive with 95 percent confidence.

Therefore, it shows that brand effort and brand ability mediate the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising on brand attitude even without product quality as a mediator.

H6c is thus supported in Study 2.

When testing H8, ad attitude was once again excluded from the mediation analysis, as no significant difference in ad attitudes were observed in Study 2. This led to the adapted hypothesis:

H8b: The positive effects on brand attitudes explained in H6b will further mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on WOM intentions.

A second bootstrap analysis was made, following the same procedure as described above, to test H8b:

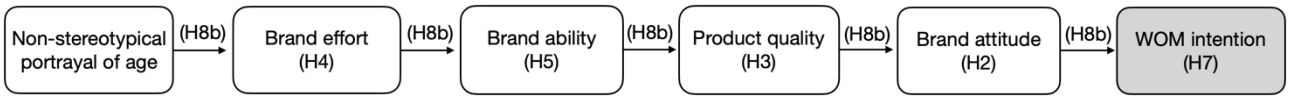


Figure 7: Theoretical framework for Hypotheses 2-5, 7 and 8b in line with signaling theory.

A significant mean indirect effect of 0.139 (5000 bootstrap samples, 95 percent confidence interval CI: 0.051 to 0.270) was observed. These results lend support to the explanatory model using signaling theory. As the confidence interval does not contain any negative numbers or zero, this indicates that the effect is positive with 95 percent confidence. Therefore, it shows that there is a mediating effect of perceived brand effort, perceived brand ability, perceived product quality, and brand attitudes on WOM intention when using non-stereotypical portrayals of age in the advert.

H8b is thus supported in Study 2.

Again, as no significant difference in perceived product quality was observed, a separate serial mediation analysis was made, excluding the quality measure and testing whether perceived brand effort perceived brand ability, and brand attitude could have effects on WOM intentions without including the perceived product quality variable.

This led to the adapted hypothesis:

H8c: The positive effects on brand attitudes explained in H6c will further mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on WOM intentions.

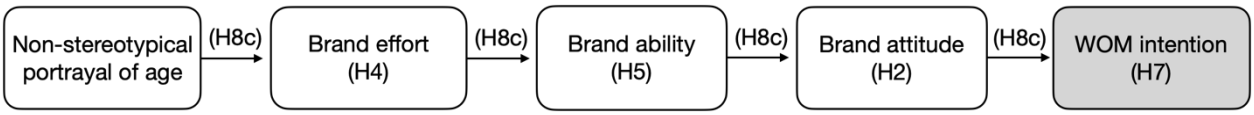


Figure 8: Theoretical framework for Hypotheses 2, 4, 5, 7 and 8c in line with signaling theory, excluding perceived product quality.

In the subsequent serial mediation analysis, a significant mean indirect effect of 0.440 (5000 bootstrap samples, 95 percent confidence interval CI: 0.203 to 0.810) was observed. These results lend support to the adapted hypothesis.

As the confidence interval does not contain any negative numbers or zero, this indicates that the effect is positive with 95 percent confidence. Therefore, it shows that brand effort, brand ability, and brand attitude mediate the effects on WOM intention when using non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising, even if product quality is not included as a mediator.

H8c is thus supported in Study 2.

As there were no observed effects on purchase intentions from using non-stereotypical portrayals of age (H9 was not supported), a mediation analysis to test H10 was not run, instead the authors move on to compare the results between Generations Z and Y.

4.2.4 Comparing Generation Z and Y in Study 2

To compare how the results, differ between Generation Z and Y, independent t-tests were conducted between the two groups.

The data showed very few significant differences between generations for the non-stereotypical condition. The one variable that differed significantly was the **purchase intention**, where Generation Y had a higher purchase intention than Generation Z ($M_{Non\text{-}sereotypicalUnderwearGenZ} = 4.30$, SD = 2.34; $M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwearGenY} = 5.63$, SD = 3.04, $t(83) = -2.28$, $p < 0.05$).

As there were few differences observed between the generations in the treatment group, additional independent t-test were performed to compare the results between the generations in the control group. For the stereotypical condition, perceived **brand ability** was higher for Generation Z ($M_{StereotypicalUnderwearGenZ} = 5.36$, SD = 1.63; $M_{StereotypicalUnderwearGenY} = 4.21$, SD = 1.86, $t(80) = 3.00$, $p < 0.01$).

This shows that, contrary to what was hypothesized, Generation Y showed a higher purchase intention for brands using non-stereotypical portrayals of age than Generation Z. Additionally, Generation Z consumers perceived a higher brand ability for brands using stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising than did Generation Y consumers.

H11 is thus not supported in Study 2.

STUDY 2

Stereotypical **N= 82**	*Generation Y N= 39*		*Generation Z N= 43*				
	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Model attitude	6.67	2.32	7.31	1.85	-1.40	80	0.17
Model attractiveness	8.22	1.69	8.33	1.67	-0.30	80	0.77
Ad attitude	6.20	2.20	6.99	1.94	1.73	80	0.09
Brand attitude	5.77	2.24	6.30	1.98	1.15	80	0.26
Product quality	5.64	1.85	5.97	1.55	0.87	80	0.39
WOM intention	4.26	2.19	4.67	1.58	1.00	80	0.32
Purchase intention	4.49	2.65	5.19	2.99	-1.12	80	0.27
Brand effort	3.62	1.98	3.92	1.81	0.72	80	0.48
Brand ability	4.21	1.86	5.36	1.63	3.00	80	<0.01**
Non-stereotypical **N= 85**	*Generation Y N= 35*		*Generation Z N=50*				
	M	SD	M	SD	t	df	p
Model attitude	7.70	2.14	7.25	2.19	-0.93	74.38	0.37
Model attractiveness	6.58	2.60	6.26	2.48	-0.57	71	0.57
Ad attitude	6.81	2.48	6.09	2.43	-1.33	72.42	0.19
Brand attitude	7.23	2.12	7.01	2.21	-0.45	83	0.65
Product quality	6.29	1.55	6.13	1.68	-0.43	83	0.67
WOM intention	6.56	2.21	5.77	2.20	-1.62	73.26	0.11
Purchase intention	5.63	3.04	4.30	2.34	-2.28	83	<0.05*
Brand effort	7.14	1.84	6.83	2.01	-0.75	77.07	0.45
Brand ability	6.35	1.68	6.13	1.58	-0.63	83	0.53

*Significance level: *p < .05, ** p < .01, ***p< .001*

Table 7: Summary of the Results Across Generations in Study 2

4.2.5 Thought Processing

The recorded thoughts of the respondents were coded independently by the two authors. Firstly, the thoughts about age e.g., *"uncommon to see someone of this age in an underwear ad"* (Pearson correlation 0.86, $p < 0.01$) was higher for the non-stereotypical ad. 20 percent of the respondents thought about the age of the model in the treatment group, compared to only 4.27 percent of respondents in the control group. For thoughts about the product e.g., *"nice underwear"* (Pearson correlation 0.86, $p < 0.01$), there were more thoughts for the stereotypical ad. 11.77 percent of thoughts were about the product in the non-stereotypical condition, compared to 29.27 percent in the stereotypical conditions. Lastly, the thoughts about the brand e.g., *"progressive brand"* (Pearson correlation 0.81, $p < 0.01$), were more apparent for the non-stereotypical ad. 10 percent of respondents thought about the brand in the treatment group, compared to 3.05 percent of respondents in the control group.

4.3 Summary of Study 1 and Study 2

HYPOTHESIS	RESULT STUDY 1 	RESULT STUDY 2 
H1: Attitudes toward advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will be more positive than attitudes towards those using stereotypical portrayals of age.	Not supported	Not supported
H2: Attitudes towards brands using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will be more positive than attitudes toward brands using stereotypical portrayals of age	Not supported	**Supported**
H3: Products in advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will be perceived to be of higher quality than products in advertisements using stereotypical portrayals of age.	Not supported	Not supported
H4: Perceived brand effort will be higher for advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age than for advertisements using stereotypical portrayals of age.	**Supported**	**Supported**
H5: Perceived brand ability will be higher for advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age than for advertisements using stereotypical portrayals of age.	Not supported	**Supported**
H6: Perceived brand effort, perceived brand ability, and perceived product quality will mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on consumer attitudes toward ads and brands.	N/A	N/A
H6b: Perceived brand effort, perceived brand ability, and perceived product quality will mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on consumer attitudes toward brands.	N/A	**Supported**
H6c: Perceived brand effort and perceived brand ability will mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on consumer attitudes toward brands.	N/A	**Supported**
H7: A brand's use of non-stereotypical portrayals of age will increase positive WOM intentions compared to brands using stereotypical portrayals of age.	Not supported	**Supported**
H8: The positive effects on ad and brand attitudes explained in H6 will further mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on WOM intentions.	N/A	N/A
H8b: The positive effects on brand attitudes explained in H6c will further mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on WOM intentions.	N/A	**Supported**
H8c: The positive effects on brand attitudes explained in H6b will further mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on WOM intentions.	N/A	**Supported**
H9: Advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age will lead to higher levels of purchase intention than advertisements using stereotypical portrayals of age.	Not supported	Not supported
H10: The positive effects on ad and brand attitudes explained in H6 will further mediate the positive effects of advertisements using non-stereotypical portrayals of age on purchase intentions.	N/A	N/A
H11: The effects observed in H1-H10 will be more positive for Generation Z than for Generation Y.	Not supported	Not supported

Table 8: Summary of Outcomes of Hypothesis Testing Study 1 and 2

5. Discussion

In the following sections, the results from the two studies are analyzed and discussed. Differences and similarities in the studies as well as across the generational cohorts are discussed. Further, the authors provide their reasoning around the different studies' managerial implications.

5.1 Study 1

The only hypothesis supported in Study 1 was that of increased brand effort, while the hypotheses about increased ad attitude, brand attitude, product quality, brand effort, brand ability, WOM intentions, purchase intentions, and generational differences were not supported. The hypotheses regarding mediating effects were not tested, as mediation analysis was not deemed worthwhile with non-significant links.

Brand effort was perceived as higher when using an older model, suggesting that non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising for sunglasses signals that the brand has put more effort into the creation of the ad. The full chain of signaling mechanisms was however not examined in this study, as no other hypothesized effects were significantly different across the treatment and control group.

When investigating non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising for sunglasses, a significant difference in the attitude towards the model was shown, where the attitudes were more positive towards the older model. This study failed to show any positive advertising effects apart from a higher perceived brand effort, which implies that simply using an older model might not be enough to elicit positive advertising effects. However, the finding that attitudes towards the older model were significantly more positive suggests that there could be positive social effects. It would be interesting to research this further, for example using measures such as perceived social-connectedness and empathy, like e.g., the research by Åkestam et al. (2017) on portrayals of homosexuality.

The analysis of the thought protocols showed three main themes. Firstly, there were more thoughts about age when using the non-stereotypical model. A suggested reason being that the advert is not a stereotypical advert and the respondents therefore reacted to this "unusual" factor. Secondly, in the stereotypical condition, there were more thoughts about the product than in the non-stereotypical condition. This could be because this advert is seen as stereotypical and similar to

adverts that respondents are regularly exposed to. As there is nothing unusual about the ad, attention might rather be directed towards the product. Finally, the non-stereotypical advert evoked more thoughts about the brand than the stereotypical ad. Though no conclusions about causal relationships can be made, this finding could be a part of the explanation for the higher observed brand effort for the non-stereotypical ad.

The hypothesis that non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising would lead to more positive effects for Generation Z than for Generation Y was not supported in Study 1. However, when examining the few differences observed, Generation Y was more negative toward the stereotypical portrayals than Generation Z. Interestingly, the differences were not observed in the treatment group but rather in the control group. This indicates that although there might not be any significantly different effects on the two generations when using non-stereotypical portrayals of age, using stereotypical portrayals of age can have more negative effects on Generation Y than on Generation Z. This is a surprising finding which contradicts previous research (Dimock, 2019), and will be discussed further below in the general discussion.

5.2 Study 2

In this study, the hypotheses about increased brand attitude, increased perceived product quality, increased purchase intentions, and generational differences were not supported. However, the results showed increased brand attitude, brand effort, ability, and WOM intentions. Further, the hypotheses that the effects on brand attitude and WOM were mediated by brand effort and ability were supported. The supported hypotheses imply that there are positive effects of using non-stereotypical advertising, as suggested by previous research (Dahlen et al., 2018; Liljedal et al., 2020; Modig et al., 2014). The results indicate that this applies not only to stereotypes such as gender roles and sexuality, but also to non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising, at least in the product category of underwear.

As has been shown throughout this study, the effects could be explained by signaling theory. This implies that, in a similar manner as using creative advertising (Dahlén et al., 2008; Modig et al., 2014), non-stereotypical portrayals of age can be used to make consumers perceive that the brand has put in more effort and has higher brand ability, which in turn lead to more positive brand attitudes and increased WOM intentions. However, neither the product quality, as suggested by (Dahlen, Rosengren, 2008) nor the purchase intention, were significant. It was hypothesized that

the usage of non-stereotypical age portrayals in advertising would be a way to signal higher product quality in a similar way that Kirmani and Rao (2000) showed that price has been an indicator of quality, this was however not supported.

When conducting the mediation analyses testing whether the observed effects could be explained by signaling theory, quality was first included. The analyses showed significant indirect effects. However, as no significant difference in quality was observed, quality was excluded from the meditation analysis in a second stage, in order to not dilute results by incorporating non-significant variables. The subsequent mediation analyses testing H6c and H8c also showed significant indirect effects. This implies that even without higher perceived product quality, a higher perceived brand effort and brand ability created spillover effects on brand attitude and WOM. When perceived quality was excluded from the mediation, the indirect effects were larger, suggesting that removing this factor removed some noise from the data.

In this aspect the current study expands knowledge from previous research on signaling theory. The reason for this would be interesting to examine further, but the authors propose a possible explanation being that the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age occur on the brand level rather than the product level. The reasoning for this being that the non-significant effects were more connected to the advertised product while the significant effects were seen on the brand level. This is further in line with the observation of increased WOM intention for the non-stereotypical advert, which is also a factor on the brand level rather than the product level.

A similar logic can be applied to the measure of ad attitude, which did not show a significant difference between stereotypical and non-stereotypical ads. This is an interesting finding as the attitudes towards the brand were heightened when using the non-stereotypical advert. It implies that the respondents in the study separate the advert and the brand into different entities. Again, this implies that there is no need for a positive ad attitude to create spillover effects on the brand attitude, but the brand-level measures of perceived brand effort and ability were shown to lead to positive brand-related effects in the form of more positive brand attitudes and increased WOM intentions. It is of interest to investigate this further to understand why this is the case and understand the further implications.

In study 2, the younger model was perceived as more attractive. This could be argued to possibly have affected the other results. However, as younger models are generally seen as more attractive

than older models, this has been argued to be a part of the age stereotype (McLellan & McKelvie, 1993). The authors hence argue that the perceived attractiveness of the model does not have to be taken into account when evaluating the other measures. In line with this reasoning, using a model that is considered less attractive might also be seen as breaking a stereotype and thereby the schema, and could hence demand more processing by the receiver. This could be a way to "cut through the clutter" which in accordance with suggestions of Malmelin (2010) is of increasing importance. These findings are further in line with the suggestions by Richins (1991), that a stereotypically attractive model might result in more negative effects.

As in Study 1, the thought protocols showed that for the stereotypical ad, there were more thoughts related to the product. For the non-stereotypical ad, more thoughts were related to the age of the model and the brand. This further supports the argument that non-stereotypical portrayals of age produce effects on the brand level rather than the product level, which could be an explanation to why no significant differences in ad attitude and perceived product quality were observed.

This indicates that non-stereotypical portrayals of age might be able to cut through the clutter, in a similar manner as creative advertising (Dahlén et al., 2008), at least on the brand level where more thoughts were recorded. This could be especially important when trying to reach the constantly connected Generations Z and Y, as they are exposed to a constant flow of advertisements and have a very short attention span (Feitsma, 2019; Iberdrola, 2017).

The comparison between Generation Z and Y in Study 2 showed few significant differences. The only two differences observed were that in the non-stereotypical condition, purchase intention was higher for Generation Y. Further, in the stereotypical condition, brand ability was perceived as lower among Generation Y respondents. These findings will be further discussed in the general discussion.

5.3 General Discussion of Both Studies

The authors proposed that non-stereotypical portrayals of age could be used as a signal to make the receiver perceive higher brand effort, brand ability, and quality, and thereby higher ad and brand attitude as suggested in previous research on creative and expensive advertising (Dahlen et al., 2018; Modig et al., 2014). The effects where further hypothesized to mediate WOM intentions as well as purchase intentions.

The current study has shown that non-stereotypical portrayals of age could be beneficial in underwear adverts through mediating effects suggested by signaling theory, increasing brand attitudes and WOM intentions. However, the mediating effects were only partly observed and only observed in Study 2. A proposed explanation for this is that the brand effort was not considered high enough in Study 1. After observing that the mean brand effort in Study 1 was quite low (5.59), an independent sample t-test was performed, comparing brand effort across the two studies. This test showed that brand effort was perceived as significantly higher for the non-stereotypical underwear ad than for the non-stereotypical sunglass ad ($M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalUnderwear} = 6.96$, SD =1.93; $M_{Non\text{-}stereotypicalSunglasses} = 5.59$, SD = 2.61, $t(118.11) = 3.59$, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that the brand effort might need to reach a certain threshold in order to showcase the mediating effects suggested by signaling theory. Even though there was a significant difference in perceived brand effort between the stereotypical and non-stereotypical conditions in Study 1, the mean brand effort (5.59) is not far above the mean of the scale (5.50), indicating that even though the brand effort was perceived as higher than for the stereotypical ad, it might not have been over the potential threshold.

Further, the results raise questions regarding whether it is the age of the model rather than the product, or the two in tandem that affect the respondent's impressions. In the two adverts the perceived mean ages of the older models were not the same, approximately 78 years old for the sunglass model and 64 for the underwear model. The results of the studies differed in terms of attitudes towards the model, which were significant for the sunglass advert. In this advert, the older model created a positive attitude towards the model. The authors question if this sprung from the fact that the sunglass model was perceived to be older than the underwear model and if the reverse would have applied if the ages would have been perceived differently. A similar reasoning could be applied to the WOM intention. WOM was significantly higher for the non-stereotypical condition in the underwear advert but not in the sunglass advert. An interesting aspect to investigate further is therefore why this is the case. Could it be that there is a limit to how old the model can be, which cannot, or needs to be, exceeded in order to achieve different effects? If the non-stereotypical model in Study 1 would have been perceived to be a bit younger, would this have created an increased WOM intention but decreased attitudes towards the model? Further, if the non-stereotypical model in Study 2 would have been perceived as older, would this have created less WOM intention but more positive attitudes towards the model? Although no such

causal conclusions can be drawn from this study, this would be an interesting area for further research.

The above discussion raises questions about where lines are drawn or where limits are crossed when portraying age in a non-stereotypical way. How far away from a stereotype can or should a brand move to observe positive effects? The results of this study suggest that simply showing an older model might not be enough to observe positive advertising effects, but that the ad might need to do so within certain limits. Arguably, an older woman wearing sunglasses is not uncommon to see in everyday life. An older woman in underwear on the other hand, might elicit stronger responses as, for the respondents in this study, it is a less common sight. The positive effects observed in Study 2 could then possibly be explained by the fact that the ad forces increased consumer processing, as has been shown with creative advertising and advertising breaking occupational gender-role stereotypes (Liljedal et al., 2020; Modig et al., 2014). In line with this, the analysis of the thought protocols showed that more thoughts were evoked regarding both age, brand, and product in Study 2 than in Study 1. This also raises questions related to intersectionality and breaking several stereotypes at once. As emphasized by Rättvisaren (2020) there are other characteristics such as body shape and ethnicity that are also underrepresented when portraying older women. Would the same effects have been observed if the models were e.g., of a minority ethnicity or "plus-sized"? If the underwear ad would have had a more sexual undertone, would the positive effects still have been observed? Would breaking several stereotypes at once result in even more positive effects, or is there a limit to how non-stereotypical an ad can be? Examining where these "lines" are drawn would be an interesting area for further research. However, it must also be acknowledged that as society develops, these lines naturally move, and what is perceived as non-stereotypical today might not be so in a few years.

Examining the thought protocols, the findings further point towards the suggestion that the effects of non-stereotypical age of advertising can be observed on a brand level rather than a product level. In both studies, the stereotypical ad evoked more thoughts on the product, while the non-stereotypical ad evoked more thoughts on the brand. Furthermore, there were a larger number of thoughts related to age for the non-stereotypical ads, indicating both that the intended manipulation worked, but also that these ads might have led to increased thought processing due to not falling into the respondents' existing schemas. The authors suggest that this increased processing could

help explain the positive effects observed, as it can be a way for the ad to "cut through the clutter". In Study 2, more thoughts were evoked regarding both age, brand, and product than in Study 1. It is plausible to state that the stimuli used in Study 2 led to a higher degree of processing, indicating that it succeeded in cutting through the clutter, which could help explain the more positive effects observed in Study 2.

5.3.1 Comparing Generation Z and Y

There are several possible explanations for the surprising results when making a comparison of the two generations. Firstly, the mean age of Generation Y and Z had close proximity in the current sample. Had there been larger age differences, other results might have been observed. This is further dependent on where the line between generations is drawn, a common issue in generational cohort research (Pew Research Center, 2015). In this study, the line was drawn between 1995 and 1996. Some researchers claim individuals born in 1995 should also be considered part of Generation Z, and some claim Generation Z should only include those born after 1996 (Dimock, 2019). As most of the respondents in this study were born in 1995-97, drawing the line at another year could potentially have produced other results. For example, if all respondents born in 1995 would have been included in Generation Z instead of Y, the mean age of the Generation Y sample would have increased, potentially affecting the results. The authors did not test this in the current study, as doing so would have resulted in highly unequally weighted groups. The authors encourage future research to make comparisons using a wider age span within Generation Z and Y, as there could be differences providing implications for brands and advertisers.

Secondly, Generation Y consumers are inherently older than Generation Z consumers. As one's own aging has been shown to be viewed as something negative (Lagercrantz, 2019), the evaluations of ads depicting young models could have a negative correlation to the respondent's age, due to for example higher identification, self-referencing or perceived social connectedness. Following the same logic, this might make Generation Y appreciate the older models more. For Generation Z on the other hand, still being very young, it might be that older women are a group they do not identify with or that older people feel very distant to them.

The hypothesis about generational differences was based on arguments claiming Generation Z to be the most inclusive generation to date. The results of the studies raise the question "How far does Generation Z's inclusiveness reach?". It is interesting that the generation values inclusion and

evaluates breaking stereotypes around factors such as gender or race more positively than other generations (e.g. Dimock, 2019), but that these views might not extend to breaking age stereotypes. A possible explanation is that due to their young age, they might not reflect on age or ageing to the same extent and hence not put as much thought into the age of the displayed model. However, to be able to compare the effects on Generation Z of breaking different stereotypes in the context of advertising, more research needs to be conducted.

The fact that few differences were observed between the generations in the non-stereotypical condition further strengthens the arguments of signaling theory and point at the strength of the model. A non-stereotypical portrayal of age generates positive brand-related effects through signaling higher brand effort and ability, and the results of this study indicates that this does not vary significantly across the generations.

5.4 Theoretical Implications

This thesis provides theoretical implications through expanding the literature on signaling theory and proposing new mechanisms to the existing theory. The study suggests that signaling theory could explain the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age on brand attitudes and WOM intentions through heightened perceived brand effort and brand ability. As shown in this research, the perceived product quality is not necessarily a key variable in this context. This suggests that non-stereotypical portrayals of age, at least in the underwear category, have effects at the brand level rather than the product or ad level. Hence expanding previous research on signaling theory and how it can be used in advertising research. However, the few differences observed between generations point to the robustness of the signaling model.

5.5 Managerial Implications

As stated above, the studies conducted suggest the usage of non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising could be beneficial for brands, targeting Generation Z and Y and advertising certain products, namely underwear. In Study 2, the effect was shown to be higher perceived brand effort and ability which in turn created more positive attitudes towards the brand and finally increased the WOM intentions. This is an important implication as it has been suggested that attitudes that increases WOM can be part of creating a long-term sustainable brand (Modig et al., 2014). The findings are valuable both to brands that are currently using non-stereotypical advertising, and to brands who have considered to start doing so. The study emphasizes that non-stereotypical

portrayals of age could be a powerful tool in the brand building process rather than directly on specific product sales. A suggested reason being that non-stereotypical portrayals of age indicate that the brand takes societal responsibility. The implication for practitioners is therefore to start off by assessing what the aim of the advert or campaign is. If the main intention is brand building, usage of non-stereotypical portrayals of age within the underwear category should be beneficial, as shown in this study.

Previous studies have shown that stereotypes can have negative effects on brands (Åkestam et al., 2017; Buunk & Dijkstra, 2011; Richins, 1991), however, these studies have investigated other stereotypes than age. Further, there has been concern that usage of older models might impose a risk in regard to younger consumers, as they would have more negative attitudes towards such portrayals (Deuisch et al., 1986; Mazis et al., 1992). As this research outlines, this is not necessarily the case. Rather, the usage of older models in underwear adverts creates positive outcomes for the brand through not only effort, ability, and attitudes but also WOM intentions. Further, the results showed no significant differences between Generation Z and Y of using non-stereotypical portrayals of age. Hence, advertisers should not refrain from using older models when targeting younger consumers, contrary to what some previous research has suggested. This study further extends the existing suggestions by (Greco, 1988; Gubernick, 1996) that non-stereotypical portrayals of age could generate positive or neutral effects among younger consumers. This by showing that this relation holds for the previously not included Generation Y and Z.

As generational cohorts are a common way of segmenting target audiences, this study could contribute to practitioners' understanding. The study concludes that few differences were observed between Generation Y and Z under the non-stereotypical condition. This is a surprising finding, as the differences between the generations suggest that their evaluations of non-stereotypical advertising should differ. Another surprising finding was that the few differences observed showed that Generation Y were more opposed to stereotypical portrayals than Generation Z, which contradicts previous research (Dimock, 2019) and implies that practitioners should be more careful in using age stereotypes when targeting this generation. As the suggestions in this study differs from previous suggestions, more research should be conducted before suggesting any generalizable guidelines for practitioners in this regard.

Ageism is a societal issue as it discriminates against a large group of people around the world. As stated, women start feeling left out of advertising around the age of 45 (NHS, 2017; WARC, 2018). Hence, the inclusion of older people in advertising should not only be assessed from a product or brand perspective but also from a corporate social responsibility perspective. There might be other positive social or societal effects of including a wider representation of age in advertising. As emphasized by Kenalemang (Lagercrantz, 2019), stereotypical portrayals of older people in advertising can lead to negative expectations of aging, which could lead to a lower quality of life when older. Hence, breaking age stereotypes can be valuable even if the advertising effects are neutral. Whether it is the responsibility of advertisers or policymakers to look to wider societal effects and not just advertising effects can be discussed. As researchers have emphasized the role of advertising in reinforcing ageism (Carrigan & Szmigin, 1998; Long, 1998; Roberts & Nan Zhou, 1997; Zhou & Chen, 1992), the authors argue that this is of increasing importance for advertisers to consider. Especially when targeting the younger Generations Y and Z, as they are known to leave brands which do not live up to their values. The authors encourage researchers to include these aspects when investigating the usage of non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising.

As the number of non-stereotypical portrayals increase, they will inherently become less and less unusual. This means that they might no longer induce increased thought processing, and the positive effects observed might then not be as apparent. This provides implications for advertising practitioners. Because stereotypes are dynamic, the effects shown in this study might not remain for long, indicating that there could be a certain advantage to being a "first-mover". To benefit from the effects derived from breaking age stereotypes, the time to start including these portrayals in advertising is sooner rather than later.

6. Conclusion

In the final section of this thesis, the authors provide concluding remarks, address limitations of the study and suggest areas for further research.

This study makes contributions to the knowledge gap on non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising by extending the understanding of, and providing implications for what effects these might have, and how the mechanisms behind the effects can be explained. Further it elaborates on

in what contexts the portrayals might be most effective, and investigates if the effects differ across Generation Y and Z.

Through conducting two experimental studies, the authors show that non-stereotypical portrayals of age can increase the level of perceived brand effort and ability, which in turn increases the brand attitude and WOM intentions, in the underwear category. This contributes to an extension of signaling theory by showing that a mediation through product quality is not necessary when using non-stereotypical portrayal of age, the brand attitude and WOM intentions can still increase by mediation straight from brand effort and brand ability. The positive effects observed were significant at the brand level, rather than the product or advertisement level, implying that brands should use non-stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising for branding or PR purposes, rather than for the purpose of increasing sales.

These findings have important implications for advertising practitioners. All mentioned effects were observed in Study 2, depicting an ad for underwear, but only partly through brand effort in Study 1, depicting an ad for sunglasses. This implies that the effects of using older models differs between product categories. The study also investigated whether the effects differ across Generation Z and Y. The only significant difference in the non-stereotypical condition was an increased purchase intention for underwear for Generation Y in comparison to Generation Z.

However, the ad attitude, brand attitude, perceived brand effort, perceived brand ability, WOM intentions and purchase intentions were significantly lower for Generation Y in the stereotypical condition for sunglasses while brand ability was lower for Generation Y for underwear. This indicates negative effects of using stereotypical portrayals of age in advertising targeting this generation. These findings suggest that advertisers should not refrain from using older models when targeting younger audiences, but rather be careful not to portray age in a stereotypical way. However, contrary to what was hypothesized, Generation Y might be more opposed to stereotypical portrayals of age in adverting than Generation Z.

As none of the studies showed significant negative effects of using non-stereotypical portrayal of age, the authors encourage brands and advertisers to consider using older models even when targeting younger consumers. Not only could these portrayals have positive advertising effects, but there could also be positive societal effects of breaking stereotypes and portraying a wider

range of people in advertising media. The authors also encourage further research into age stereotypes in advertising and their effects, as this is still an under-researched area within the field.

To answer the initial questions, the younger consumer cohorts do appreciate the usage of non-stereotypical portrayal of age, at least as indicated by higher perceived brand effort, perceived brand ability, brand attitudes and WOM intentions. The adverting effects can over all be positive. This indicates that there should not have to be a choice between brand building and societal good for practitioners, but it should rather be a win-win to start incorporating older models in advertising.

6.1 Limitations and Further Research

This study has contributed to the research on usage of non-stereotypical portrayal of age in advertising. However, the scope was limited to two product categories, namely sunglasses and underwear. The different studies evoked differing results, suggesting there might be categories where the effects would be higher or lower. This should be taken into consideration for practitioners and be a starting point for future research. The authors suggest that more research is conducted on this matter to understand if there are other product categories or stereotypes where this relationship holds.

The study has expanded the research on signaling theory by uncovering an area where brand effort and ability might not create spillover effects to quality, while the mediation to increased brand attitude and WOM intention still holds. The authors argue that this can be because non-stereotypical portrayals of age create effects on the brand level rather than the product level. The same reasoning applies to the fact that the study showed positive effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of age on brand attitude, but not on ad attitude. This was further supported when conducting a qualitative analysis of quantitative data, examining the respondents thought processes. However, these findings are somewhat biased in that they depend on what the authors' deemed to be coded into each category and are merely a complement to the quantitative analysis in order to provide support and a deeper understanding. The authors suggest that more research is conducted both on the extension of signaling theory as well as on the thoughts evoked in respondents when exposed to non-stereotypical portrayals of age.

Even if the study has made contributions regarding age stereotypes and advertising, it did only investigate one stereotype. Therefore, the aim was to eliminate any effects of other potential

stereotypes on the results. The concept of intersectionality between different stereotypes would be interesting to investigate further, as there are not only white and slim women who age. The authors of this study encourage research on the effects of challenging additional stereotypes such as race and body shape. Further, it would be interesting to investigate the effects of non-stereotypical portrayals of not only older women but also older men to understand whether and how the effects differ. Also, as previously discussed, the age of the older models was perceived differently. If this had explicit effects on the outcomes could not be concluded in this study, but the authors encourage further investigations on how and if different ages within the category of "older people" create different advertising effects.

This study provides valuable findings on the advertising effects of using non-stereotypical portrayals of age. It would however be interesting to further research whether there are social effects, such as perceived social-connectedness or empathy. The authors also suggest that non-stereotypical portrayals of age could have wider societal implications, such as consumers' views of older people and their own aging. It is encouraged to conduct further studies on this topic, both through experiments but also through qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews.

The respondents in the study belong to Generation Y and Z. The study hence makes a valuable contribution to research on non-stereotypical portrayals of age in relation to the groups with the, soon to be, largest purchasing power. However, the research on which the initial claims about the generations were founded was to a large extent non-academic. This as there is up to date, little academic research in this field. However, the authors want to encourage to extend this study with more academic research once available.

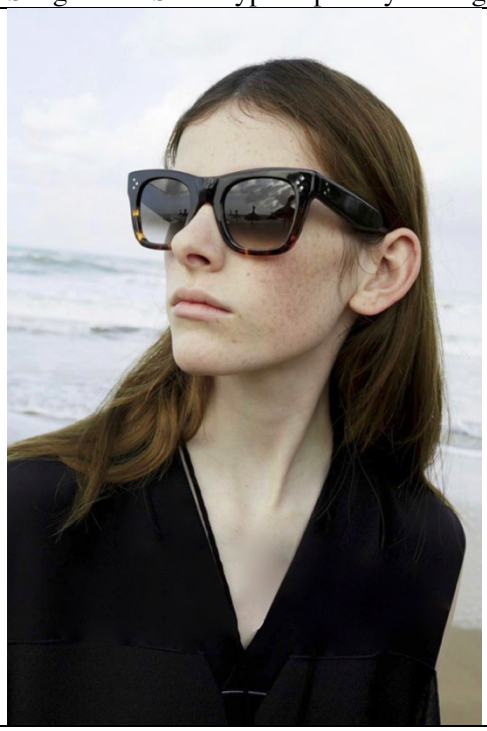
A further limitation of the study is that the difference between the mean age of Generation Z and Y was quite low in the sample; 22 for Generation Z and 28 for Generation Y. If the age difference would have been larger this could have yielded different results. It is also suggested to compare the generations used in this study, both together and separately, to previous and forthcoming generations. This, as they have been suggested to have more progressive views than other generations (Dimock, 2019) and it would be interesting to understand if there are different mechanisms behind the results. However, older people could possibly be more attracted to the brand or product through self-referencing or social connectedness, theoretical models that the authors encourage future research to incorporate.

Generational theories, such as the cohort theory, have been criticized as it implies that all people in a generation are similar, no matter where or in what culture they grew up (Yelkur, 2002). The nature of Generation Z being digitally native has been claimed to overcome this issue, as this generation, through their interconnectivity, is more similar across national borders than previous generations (Kuwait Times, 2016; OC&C Strategy, 2019). Further, the focus on the Swedish market counteracts this potential issue. At the same time however, this focus might decrease the potential replicability of the study in other markets or countries, especially as stereotypes are dynamic and can vary widely between various parts of the world or different points in time.

Another limitation of this study is the representability of the sample. Due to time and resource constraints, a convenience sample was recruited from the authors' social media pages. The respondents are hence all part of the authors' networks. This indicates that they are likely to be similar in aspects such as socioeconomic background. This is also a potential explanation to the small difference between the mean age of Generation Z and Y. This as the authors, both age 24 at the time of writing, are connected to more people in this age span than people on the younger or older ends of the generational spans. As discussed above, this could be part in explaining why the hypothesis about generational differences was not supported. The authors recognize that the usage of a convenience sample decreases the external validity of the study, indicating that the results might not be generalized to the wider population of Generation Z and Y consumers in Sweden. However, the authors claim that this study still contributes with new findings in the area of age stereotypes in advertising, an area that has previously not gained much research attention. These findings can be used as a springboard for future researchers to generate and test hypotheses for the wider population.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix 1: Advertising Stimuli Pre and Main Studies

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Stimuli Pre-Study</th></tr>
<tr><td>Stimulus 1
Sunglasses: Non-stereotypical portrayal of age</td><td>Stimulus 2
Sunglasses: Stereotypical portrayal of age</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Stimulus 3
Underwear: Non-stereotypical portrayal of age</td><td>Stimulus 4
Underwear: Stereotypical portrayal of age</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td></tr>
</table>

	Stimulus 5 Underwear: Stereotypical portrayal of age 

Stimuli Main Studies	
Stimulus 1 Sunglasses: Non-stereotypical portrayal of age	Stimulus 2 Sunglasses: Stereotypical portrayal of age
	
Stimulus 3 Underwear: Non-stereotypical portrayal of age	Stimulus 4 Underwear: Stereotypical portrayal of age
	

7.2 Appendix 2: Questionnaire

Age stereotypes in advertising

Start of Block: Intro

Q1.1
Thank you for taking part in our study, which is a part of our master thesis at the Stockholm School of Economics.

The purpose of this study is to investigate consumer attitudes towards portrayals of age in advertising. For every completed survey, 2SEK will be donated to Cancerfonden.

Thanks again!

Best regards,
Paula & Elin

Page Break

Q1.2
Please read the following information

Project title: Age stereotypes in advertising
Year and semester: 2020, fall semester
Aim of the study: To investigate consumer attitudes towards non-stereotypes versus stereotyped portrayals of age in advertising
Students responsible for the study: Paula Britsman, MSc student (41603@student.hhs.se), Elin Lindström, MSc student (23765@student.hhs.se)
Supervisors and department at SSE: Karina Töndevold Liljedal, Department of Marketing and Strategy
Supervisor e-mail address: karina.liljedal@hhs.se
Type of personal data about you to be processed: Age, gender, nationality, personal opinions

Information regarding GDPR:
As an integral part of the educational program at the Stockholm School of Economics, enrolled students complete an individual thesis. This work is sometimes based upon surveys connected to the subject. Participation is naturally entirely voluntary, and this text is intended to provide you with necessary information about that may concern your participation in the study. You can at any time withdraw your consent and your data will thereafter be permanently erased.
Confidentiality - Anything you say or state in the survey
will be held strictly confidential and will only be made available to supervisors, tutors and the course management team.
Secured storage of data - All data will be stored and processed safely by the SSE and will be permanently deleted when the projected is completed.
No personal data will be published - The thesis written by the students will not contain any information that may identify you as participant to the survey or interview subject.
Your rights under GDPR - You are welcome to visit
https://www.hhs.se/en/about-us/data-protection/
in order read more and obtain information on your
rights related to personal data.

- ○ I have taken part of the information provided above and consent to take part in this study
- ○ I do not consent to take part in this study

Page Break

Start of Block:

Q2.1 In the next section of this survey, you will be shown an advertisement followed by questions regarding its contents. Please state your spontaneous opinion, even if the information is limited. All brands have been blurred from the ad.

[STIMULUS]

Q3.2 What do you think about this advertisement?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Bad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Dislike	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Like
Unpleasant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Pleasant

Q3.3 What do you think about the brand behind this advertisement?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Bad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Dislike	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Like
Unpleasant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Pleasant

Q3.4 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Strongly agree 10
I want to recommend this brand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I want to talk about this brand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3.5 If you were to buy [product], how likely is it that you would choose something from this brand?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not at all likely		○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Highly likely

Q3.6 What is your perception of the quality of the advertised product?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Low	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	High
Lower than average	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Higher than average
Worse than competing brands	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Better than competing brands

Q3.7 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Strongly agree 10
I feel that the brand has put a lot of time behind the ad.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that the brand has put a lot of effort behind the ad.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that the brand has put a lot of thought behind the ad.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3.8 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Strongly agree 10
The brand is leading within the product category.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The brand is successful.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The brand is modern.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3.10 How old would you guess that the person in the ad is?

_____

Q3.11 How would you describe the woman in the ad on the scale below?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Young	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Old
Youthful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Elderly

Q3.12 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly disagree 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Strongly agree 10
This is a stereotypical portrayal of age.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This is a stereotypical portrayal of age in advertising.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q3.13 What do you think about the woman shown in this ad?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Bad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Do not like	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Like
Negative impression	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Positive impression

Q3.14 What do you think about the woman shown in this ad?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Not good looking	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Good looking
Unattractive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Attractive
Ugly	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Beautiful

Q3.15 Did you recognize the woman in the ad?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ I don't know

Q3.16 What comes to mind when you see this ad?

_____

Q7.1 What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say

Q7.2 What year were you born in? E.g. 1992

_____

Q7.3 Did the ad include a person?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q7.4 What product did the ad display?

- ○ Sunglasses
- ○ Underwear
- ○ A bag

Q7.5 Please provide any additional comments or feedback on this survey below.

_____

End of Block

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