# EXPOSING STEREOTYPES

## A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF SWEDISH TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS

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**Exposing stereotypes: A content analysis of Swedish television advertisements**

Abstract:

Stereotypes in television advertising have long been a topic of interest to researchers. Existing studies have shown that both gender stereotypes and age stereotypes are still present in advertising despite changing gender and age roles in society. This thesis aims to investigate the extent to which gender and age stereotypes exist in Swedish television advertising. The thesis takes inspiration from a study by Kay & Furnham (2013) that analyzed age and sex stereotypes in British television advertising. A content analysis was conducted using a coding scheme inspired by Kay & Furnham (2013). The original coding scheme was developed by McArthur & Resko (1975). Advertisements were viewed and analyzed by one of the authors and three other coders. In total, advertisements were coded between 18:00-23:00 Monday-Sunday between March 27 until April 9. Indications of some gender and age stereotypes were found after analyzing the data. However, they were fewer in comparison with previous research. Older people in general were found to be underrepresented, especially older women. The results are discussed and compared to previous research. Implications and suggestions for future research is given as well.

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# Contents

# 1.    Introduction

In 1960, the four Ps of marketing were introduced and have since come to serve as a framework for businesses when developing their marketing strategies. They are Product, Price, Place and Promotion (Perreault & McCarthy, 2002). Over the years, Ps have been added to also include People, Processes, Program and Performance as well (Kotler & Keller, 2016) One of the original Ps, Promotion, refers to how businesses communicate with their audience to create awareness and influence behavior. Thus, promotion, or advertising, plays a crucial role in the success of a business. Advertising can, for example, build relationships and create meaning (Deighton & Grayson, 1995), increase materialism, and decrease well-being (Dittmar et al., 2014) and contribute to stereotypes being perpetuated (Furnham & Mak, 1999). The content of the advertisements is therefore important to carefully consider for marketers. Otherwise, the advertisements run the risk of not being appealing to the target audience, or even worse, offend people.

Businesses can reach their target audiences through various channels. These channels can be anything from magazines and radio to television and social media platforms. The global advertising market is expected to grow over the next few years. The Internet is expected to see the largest gain. Television is also expected to gain while magazines and newspapers are forecasted to lose money (Zenith, 2022). In Sweden, the advertising market as well as television and video advertising has also grown over the recent (Statista, 2023).

Given the role that advertising plays for companies, the power it has to influence individuals and society along with an increased spending on advertising, it is of interest to study the content of advertisements. More specifically, the content that may have negative consequences would be of interest to examine.

## 1.1.    Background

This section will provide a background on stereotypes as well as the advertising landscape in Sweden.

### 1.1.1.    Stereotypes

Stereotypes can be described as cognitive structures used by humans to categorize people as well as social groups based on characteristics that they have in common. Researchers seem to agree on this description of stereotypes. Ashmore & Del Boca (1981) furthermore defined stereotypes as "A set of beliefs about the personal attributes of a group of people" (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981, p. 16). Moreover, there exist different types of stereotypes. One of the most researched is sex stereotypes.

Rosenkrantz et al. (1968) provided a definition of sex stereotypes that reflects how such stereotypes are defined in literature: "consensual beliefs about the differing characteristics of men and women in our society (Rosenkrantz et al., 1968, p. 287). The content of sex stereotypes has been limited by researchers to include only characteristics that separate the genders from each other as well as shared societal beliefs about men and women (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). Moreover, age stereotyping is another form of stereotypes. It is referring to discrimination based on the age of a person, also defined as ageism. Though the definition includes discrimination against all age groups, it is commonly used when referring to discrimination against older people (Nelson, 2007).

There exist disagreements among researchers about whether stereotypes are good or bad (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). Although arguments have been made about stereotypes not being bad, research shows that stereotypes can have negative effects on both individuals and society. It can negatively impact mental health and cause false perceptions of individuals and social groups (Rosenthal & Overstreet, 2016). As technology has developed and new media channels have been created, both individuals and companies' abilities to reach new and larger audiences have increased. Thus, the media's role in creating and sustaining stereotypes has become an important discussion.

### 1.1.2. The Swedish Advertising Ombudsman

The Swedish Advertising Ombudsman, also known as Reklamombudsmannen (RO), is a self-regulatory organization responsible for overseeing commercial advertising in Sweden (Reklamombudsmannen [RO], 2021). It was formed in 2009 because of a merger between Näringslivets Etiska Råd mot Könsdiskriminerande Reklam (ERK) (EN: Trades Ethical Council against Sexism in Advertising) and Marknadsetiska Rådet (EN: Council on Market Ethics) which had started at the end of 1980s. ERK had focused on gender discrimination while the Council on Market Ethics dealt with misleading and child advertising (Reklamombudsmannen [RO], 2021).

Reklamombudsmannen main objective is to ensure that advertising is to make sure advertising standards are kept high. The Advertising Ombudsman operates independently and is funded on a voluntary basis through an annual fee from advertisers, advertising producers and media. It focuses on both gender discrimination and otherwise unethical advertisements. RO has a jury which decides on subjects which have not been addressed and complex cases. The jury consists of members from industry, creators as well as consumers (Reklamombudsmannen [RO], 2023)

Reklamombudsmannen is a member of the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) which promotes responsible advertising in Europe (EASA, 2023). RO ensures that advertising in Sweden is adhering to ICC Marketing Code which are ethical guidelines established by the International Chamber of Commerce for responsible and ethical marketing. While this code isn't legally binding it serves as a global benchmark.

It is continually updated to ensure it is relevant to industry and society today (ICC, 2018).

For 2022, The Advertising Ombudsman received 617 complaints, which has been decreasing since 2020. Misleading advertising was the most common cause of complaints, with 87 complaints leading to 86 decisions, of which 87% were upheld. Complaints against gender-discrimination advertising decreased; the number is now half of its peak 8 years ago. No specific numbers are provided for decisions regarding age related stereotypes (Reklamombudsmannen [RO], 2023).

### 1.1.3. Money spent on advertising

Overall, the advertising market in Sweden has been on the rise over the past five years. During 2017, the market spent 3.41 billion US dollars on advertising. In 2022, this number increased to 5.13 billion US dollars and is projected to continue in that direction in the coming years (Statista, 2023). The segments which seem to be increasing are influencer and search marketing while the print advertising, unlike the sector, has been on continuous decline. When focusing on TV and video advertisements, the market wide increase is seen here as well, increasing from 0.79 billion US dollar in 2017 to 1.14 US dollar now (Statista, 2023). We can also see within this section that digital advertising is increasing its share, with most of the increase having happened in recent areas with it now for the first time being larger than television advertising. It is projected that most of the change has happened, and the rate would be slowing down going in the future (Statista, 2023).

### 1.1.4. Gender and age distribution in Sweden

Understanding the gender and age distribution is relevant to determine whether any gender or age group is underrepresented in advertisements. Sweden has an almost equal number of men and women, with men slightly outnumbering women (5.23 million and 5.15 million respectively in 2022) (Statistics Sweden, 2023). Regarding age, in Sweden approximately 31% of the population is older than 55 years, the number is higher for females and is rising. Middle-aged adults (older than 35 and younger than 55) and young adults (older than 18 and younger than 34) are 26% and 21% each. Under 18-year-olds take up roughly 22% of the population (Statistics Sweden, 2023). See appendix 4 for table of the distribution.

For gender and age stereotypes to not be present, these numbers should be reflected in advertising. The distribution of men and women should be equal, and the age distribution should be similar to the distribution in Sweden.

## 1.2. Aim and research questions

### 1.2.1. Research questions

The above discussion has resulted in the following research questions:

*How prevalent are stereotypes in Swedish television advertisements?*

*What does the Swedish television advertisement landscape look like in relation to stereotypes?*

### 1.2.2. Aim

The above research questions have two aims. Firstly, this thesis aims to investigate the prevalence of stereotypes in Swedish television advertisements. Secondly, this thesis aims to examine advertisements and its content in relation to stereotypes. Furthermore, this thesis will build upon a study by Kay & Furnham (2013) done in a British setting to examine whether similar results can be found in a Swedish setting.

## 1.3. Expected contribution

Firstly, this thesis aims to contribute with knowledge to how prevalent stereotypes are in Swedish television advertisements. More specifically, the thesis aims to provide insights into what types of stereotypes exist in Swedish television advertisements, both in relation to gender and age. Secondly, this thesis aims to serve as a comparison for future studies on Swedish television advertisements.

As described in chapter 1, advertisements can have many different influences on both individuals and society. Thus, understanding present stereotypes may help practitioners understand the advertising landscape better. Moreover, it may help practitioners understand problematic representations of different groups and thus avoid using them.

## 1.4. Delimitations

This thesis only examines gender and age stereotypes in television advertisements. Therefore, the results cannot be generalized for all stereotypes or advertisements. Furthermore, the advertisements examined are targeted towards the general population. Hence, it does not include advertisements aimed at children or advertisements targeting any other specific group. Further, because the thesis only examines Swedish television advertisements, the results cannot be generalized to include advertisements showed across other types of media channels and contexts. Advertisements were only coded during 18:00-23:00 for two weeks and thus other times and days are not represented. The coding scheme used only allows for coding of one central character. Therefore, advertisements with more than one central character were excluded from analysis

during data analysis, following the method of Kay & Furnham (2013). Thus, our findings do not represent these advertisements either.

# 2.    Literature review and theoretical framework

Researchers have investigated the prevalence of stereotypes across different types of media. For example, stereotypes in magazines (Tsichla & Zotos, 2016; Bazzini et al., 2015) radio (Hurtz & Durkin, 1997; Furnham & Thomson, 1999), newspapers (Matud et al., 2011; Colburn & Melander, 2018), as well as television (see chapter 2.4) have been analyzed. Moving forward, only television advertisements will be examined. Furthermore, only gender and age stereotypes will be addressed.

In the following section we review previous research on stereotypes in advertisements. The literature was found on HHS Library, Scopus, and Google Scholar by using keywords such as *"Content analysis", "Stereotypes", "Gender", "Age", "Advertising"*. The aim of this thesis is to examine the prevalence of stereotypes in Swedish television advertisements. Furthermore, it aims to provide insights into the content of Swedish television advertisements. Our theoretical framework consists of previous studies of gender and age stereotypes in advertising.

## 2.1.    Mirror and Mold

This section will shed light on two arguments that provide explanations of the relationship between marketing and society. It may help explain what the presence, or absence, of stereotypes in advertisements tell us about society.

When attempting to explain the impact stereotypes in advertisements has on humans and on society, two opposing explanations have been formed. They argue whether advertisements try to influence social values or if they reflect values already present in society. The mirror explanation (Holbrook, 1987) argues that advertising reflects already existing values and norms in society rather than influencing or shaping them. When changes in, for example, gender roles occur in society, advertisers will adapt to the new circumstances and create advertising that will better reflect these new roles. They will use this new information to promote their brands and products (Holbrook, 1987). The mold explanation (Pollay, 1986, 1987) however argues that advertisers try to influence values in society and shape the opinions held by their target group. Therefore, it is important for advertisers to understand the potential consequences that advertising may have as it may promote stereotypes and behaviors that could potentially be harmful for society.

In Eisend (2010), the author performs a meta-analysis of 64 studies on gender roles in television and radio advertising. The studies were published from 1975 to the end of 2007. The author found that gender stereotypes are still present in advertising and most commonly occur in relation to occupational status. Furthermore, the results suggest that there has become less stereotyping in advertising over the years. However, the decline is

mostly due to a decrease of stereotyping in more masculine countries. The author furthermore performed a correlation analysis to investigate the relationship between societal gender values and gender stereotyping in advertising. The results showed that gender stereotyping in advertising changes as developments around gender occur in society. Thus, Eisend (2010) is the first study to show empirical results in favor of one argument, the mirror argument, over the other.

## 2.2. Practitioners and consumers view of stereotypes

The following section provides insights into how practitioners and consumers perceive stereotypes. If stereotypes are prevalent in advertising, this section may shed light on the effects they may have.

### 2.2.1. Practitioners

Windels (2016) conducted interviews with practitioners and found that they consider stereotypes to be effective tools. Stereotypes are used to convey information about the character in the advertisement so that the consumer quickly can shift focus to the actual message. Furthermore, stereotypes can be considered truthful and to reflect societal views of roles. Non-stereotypical roles were perceived to raise questions, cause confusion, and distract consumers from the message in the advertisement (Windels, 2016). Tuncay Zayer and Coleman (2015) found that practitioners consider men to not experience the negative consequences of stereotypical gender portrayals. For women, the perception was the opposite. Practitioners recognized that stereotypical portrayals of women could have negative consequences for women and therefore they tried to avoid such elements in advertisements. The behaviors and decision making of practitioners were found to be guided by institutional regulations to either avoid legal actions or to adhere to the culture within their agencies rather than by concerns for the advertisement's potential consequences on consumers (Tuncay Zayer & Coleman, 2015).

### 2.2.2. Consumers

Non-stereotypical gender portrayals are positively received by consumers regardless of their gender (Baxter et al., 2016; Liljedal et al., 2020). Chu et al. (2016) found that the need for uniqueness and self-construal to have an impact on consumers' attitudes toward non-stereotypical advertising. Consumers' attitudes towards advertising were found to be positively affected by the perceived novelty of the advertisement and negatively affected by cognitive resistance (Chu et al., 2016). Furthermore, non-stereotypical advertising is processed for a longer time by consumers than stereotypical advertising, which positively influences the evaluation and, in turn, the consumers attitude of the brand (Liljedal et al., 2020). However, a longer processing of the advertising could

cause the consumer to not pay attention to the advertisement's message and thus make the message ineffective (Baxter et al., 2016). Non-stereotypical advertising has been found to decrease consumers gender role stereotyping (Chu et al., 2016) and lower advertising reactance (Åkestam et al, 2017).

Stereotypical gender portrayals have negative consequences for both men and women. Lorenzen et al, (2004) found that men exposed to images of muscular men reported lower satisfaction with their bodies afterwards compared to when looking at images of average men. For women Clayton et al, (2017) found them to be less satisfied with their bodies the thinner the model shown were. Women's attitudes towards stereotypical gender portrayals in advertising are more negative than men's (Theodoridis et al., 2013) and their willingness to purchase is lower when they perceive advertisements to be offensive (Huhmann & Limbu, 2016). A reason for females' negative response to stereotypical gender portrayals is due to the perceived negative impact it could have on other women (Åkestam, 2018).

## 2.3.   Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Geert Hofstede, a Dutch social psychologist, established Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory as a framework for comprehending how cultural variations affect behavior and communication in various countries (Erdman, 2017). According to the theory, Sweden is seen as a feminine culture. This means that traditionally feminine qualities like nurturing, collaboration, and quality of life are highly valued in Swedish society. The differences between genders in terms of their roles are smaller than in masculine countries. Female cultures typically place more of an emphasis on relationships and social harmony than on violence and competition (An & Kim, 2007). Furthermore, feminine countries strive to reach decisions through involvement. Equality and solidarity are also highly valued (Hofstede Insights, n.d.). While Sweden scores similarly as the UK on Power Distance, Individualism, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long Term Orientation, and Indulgence, they differ in the Masculinity category. The UK has a score of 66 whereas Sweden has a score of 5. The UK's score indicates that British society values achievements and is driven by success (Hofstede Insights, n.d.).

Moreover, Milner & Collins (2000) found a link between how women and men are portrayed in television commercials and how they are classified according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. In masculine countries there were more differences in how the genders were portrayed. In feminine countries, like Sweden, less differences were found in the portrayal of men and women (Milner & Collins, 2000).

## 2.4. Stereotypes in advertising

### 2.4.1. Gender stereotypes

The following table provides a sample of content analyses on gender stereotypes in advertisements, including two reviews, that have been done over different times and contexts. The coding scheme used in these content analyses originates from the coding scheme developed by McArthur & Resko (1975). It was developed to investigate whether any differences existed in the portrayal of men and women. The central character was rated based on *sex* (male or female), *credibility* (product-user or authority), *role* (relational or independent), *location* (domestic or work settings), *argument* (scientific or nonscientific), *reward*, and *product type* (body, home, foodstuff, other). They found significant differences in the portrayal of the sexes with women often being portrayed in an unfavorable manner.

**Table 1.** Previous literature on gender stereotypes in advertising.

| Research | Methodology | Findings |
|---|---|---|
| McArthur & Resko (1975) | Content analysis | They found significant differences in the portrayal of the sexes with women often being portrayed in an unfavorable manner. |
| Furnham & Mak (1999) | Review of content analyses published since McArthur & Resko (1975). | Women are more frequently portrayed as product users, in a dependent role, in a domestic location, promoting domestic products. Males are on the contrary more often portrayed as authoritative, professionals, in different types of settings, advertising non-domestic products. Women are more likely to be portrayed as young whereas males are often middle-aged. |
| Milner & Collins (2000) | Content analysis | Males were authoritative roles and product user equally often. Meanwhile, 80% females in Swedish advertisements were product users. 77.9% of females were portrayed as young in Sweden, while 50.5% of males were portrayed as middle-aged. Only 1.9% of females were portrayed as old compared to 14.4% of males. |
| Furnham & Paltzer (2010) | Review of content analyses published between 2000-2008 | Women are most commonly portrayed as dependent, as product users, with domestic products, in a home setting. They are often young, visual and more likely than men to not make arguments. Men are more likely to be shown as autonomous/professional, with non domestic products, as voice-overs, and making factual arguments more often than women. Most often there were no people in the background. |
| Kay & Furnham (2013) | Content analysis | Women were often younger than men. Men were more often portrayed as experts and shown in non domestic locations. Women were most commonly shown as consumers and shown in domestic settings. Both genders were more likely to be independent than dependent, but men more so. Both sexes were most often shown against a background with their own sex. It was more common for women to be shown against a background with males than the opposite. |
| Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel (2014) | Content analysis and experiment | The findings show that male stereotypes are more prevalent in humorous advertisements whereas female stereotypes are more prevalent in non humorous advertisements. |
| Tartaglia & Rollero (2015) | Content analysis | Women were commonly portrayed as decorative and were more often sexualized than men. This was more common in Italy than in the Netherlands. Men were more likely to be professional. |
| Lim & Furnham (2016) | Content analysis | In British advertisements, women were more likely to be portrayed with health, beauty and household products than men. They were also more likely to be depicted as non professionals. Men were more often authorities and women users. No significant gender differences were found for location. |
| Daalmans, Kleemans & Sadza (2017) | Content analysis | Women were more commonly portrayed in a stereotypical way on Dutch men's channels than on women's channels. Gender distribution was more equal on women's channels than on men's channels. |

Table 1 shows that men are commonly shown as authoritative/professionals and women as product users (*credibility*) (Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Lim & Furnham, 2016). Milner & Collins (2000) further showed that 80% of females in Swedish advertisements were product users. However, the proportion of men in authoritative roles versus product user roles were similar. Further, Table 1 hints that it is common for women to be portrayed in domestic settings (*location*) and advertise domestic products (*product type*) whereas men are depicted in non-domestic settings with non-domestic products.

There seem to be contradictions between studies on whether men and women are more often portrayed as independent or dependent. Tartaglia & Rollero (2015) and Furnham & Mak (1999) found that men are more often portrayed as independent and women as dependent. Kay & Furnham (2013) did on the contrary find that both males and females were more commonly portrayed as independent. For the argument category there seem to be differences between countries and over time. Thus, the argument category does not necessarily show that sex stereotyping is present (Furnham & Mak, 1999).

Based on the above discussions, the following hypotheses have been developed:

> **H1:** Women will be shown as consumers significantly more often than men.
>
> **H2:** Women will be shown in a domestic setting significantly more often than men.
>
> **H3:** Women will be promoting domestic products significantly more often than men.

### 2.4.2.  Age stereotypes

The following table provides insight into literature that has conducted content analyses exploring age in advertisements. See Table 1 for additional literature on age stereotypes. Some studies, such as Kay & Furnham (2013) included both age and gender stereotypes.

**Table 2.** Previous literature on age stereotypes in advertising.

| Research | Methodology | Findings |
|---|---|---|
| Ganahl, Prinsen & Baker Netzley (2003) | Content analysis | Women are often portrayed as younger than men. There is a lack of older people in advertisements. Older women were the most underrepresented group. |
| Stern & Mastro (2004) | Content analysis | No significant difference in the frequency of men and women in the senior, young adults and teen categories. For the children and middle-aged categories, the frequency of men was higher than for women. |
| Lee, Carpenter & Meyers (2007) | Content analysis | Older people are often underreprenseted in advertisements, this is especially true for older women. Older people are often portrayed positively in advertising. |
| Kessler, Schwender & Bowen (2010) | Content analysis | Older people are often portrayed in intergenerational settings. Only 4.5% of characters were 60+ and they were often kept further away from the camera in commercials for younger people. |
| Hoppe, Tischer, Philippsen & Hartmann-Tews (2015) | Content analysis | Older people are often shown in advertisements related to food and medical/health products. They are often positively portrayed. |
| Rosenthal, Cardoso & Abdalla (2021) | A qualitative study drawing from interviews | Older participants evaluating images in adverts tended to reject images they perceived as being stereotypical portrayals of their age group. This was the case even when the adverts were positive. |

The main conclusion that can be drawn from research seems to be that older people are underrepresented in advertisements. This underrepresentation is more common among women. Milner & Collins (2000) found that 77.9% of females were portrayed as young in Sweden, while 50.5% of males were portrayed as middle aged. Only 1.9% of females were portrayed as old compared to 14.4% of males. Stern & Mastro (2004) did not find any significant differences in the frequency of men and women in the senior category. However, women were found to be significantly younger than men. Women most often appeared in the young adults' category and men in the middle-age category (Stern & Mastro, 2004). Further, both Furnham & Mak (1999) and Furnham & Paltzer (2010) found age differences to be present in the studies they reviewed.

Furthermore, when older people were shown in advertisements they seem to be portrayed positively. Despite older people being portrayed in a positive light, these advertisements are not necessarily positively received by the age group. Rosenthal et al. (2021) found that older participants evaluating images in adverts tended to reject images they perceived as being stereotypical portrayals of their age group. This was the case even when the adverts were positive. As noted by Kessler et al. (2010) older people are often portrayed in intergenerational settings. These settings are not necessarily stigmatizing for older people but as noted by Rosenthal et al. (2021) it is how realistic the relationships within these settings are that determine how the adverts are perceived. If they were similar to what it could look like in reality, they were well received.

Based on the above discussions, the following hypothesis has been developed:

> **H4:** There will be significantly more older men than older women in television advertising.

## 2.5.    Replication crisis

The replication crisis, often referred to as the replicability crisis or reproducibility crisis, is a serious issue in scientific research when it is challenging or impossible to replicate the findings of many published studies. This problem is particularly widespread in social sciences and especially psychology (Serra-Garcia & Gneezy, 2021). A replication project trying to replicate the findings of 100 studies found that only a third of the studies could be replicated (Dreber Almenberg & Johansson, 2019). The prevalence of publication bias, whereby researchers are more likely to publish papers with favorable and statistically significant results, which results in an overestimation of the effect size of a certain occurrence, is one of the main causes of the replication crisis. Furthermore, numerous studies have poor statistical analyses or flawed research designs, which can produce unreliable or inaccurate results. In many cases due to the favorable results, studies which cannot be replicated get more citations in other papers (Serra-Garcia & Gneezy, 2021). Although this thesis does not attempt a replication, it builds upon a previous study and thus this crisis may become relevant when comparing results.

## 2.6.    Further explorations

In addition to the proposed hypotheses this thesis will explore gender and age stereotypes in relation to additional categories. One category for Argument and one for End comment will be added. These categories may indicate differences in authority and knowledge between genders and age groups. Traditionally men may be the ones with authority and might thus be shown in an authoritative manner more often. How the central character is presented will also be examined. Women may be chosen for their appearances while men for their knowledge and thus how they are presented may indicate stereotypes. The background is also examined to investigate whether some gender is more prevalent in advertisements. The thesis also examines humor since it was proposed by Kay and Furnham (2013). Humor may be seen as a masculine trait and could perhaps vary between genders due to gender roles. Lastly, a category for celebrity will be added as the central character being a celebrity could affect the perceived credibility. These categories are drawn from Kay and Furnham (2013) as well as other reviewed literature.

# 3.    Methodology

The following section will provide information about how the study was conducted. First, we discuss methodological approaches and alternative approaches. Second, we explain the selection of television channel and time of the day as well as coders. Thirdly, the construction of the coding scheme, the data collection and data analysis are discussed. Lastly, we discuss the reliability and validity of the study.

## 3.1.    Methodological considerations

Content analysis was chosen as the method for this thesis. It was determined to be an optimal method since we want to study the content of advertisements. Furthermore, Kay & Furnham (2013), as well as multiple other studies analyzing advertisements (see chapter 2.4), used content analysis. Content analysis is considered an objective method due to its transparency (Bell et al., 2019). It offers possibilities for replication. Content analysis also makes analyses over time possible which allows for comparisons of different time periods and contexts (Bell et al., 2019). Thus, we can compare the results from this study with previous content analyses. This thesis is further building on a previous content analysis by Kay & Furnham (2013).[1]

The thesis studies to what extent stereotypes exist in Swedish television advertisements and is thus assuming that stereotypes can be objectively observed. Therefore, it is appropriate to adopt an objectivist ontology. Objectivism assumes that reality exists independently of the observer and its experience (Bell et al., 2019). Furthermore, a systematic way of data collection through measuring stereotypes with a coding scheme is used. This makes using a positivist approach as our epistemological position appropriate (Bell et al., 2019). A deductive approach is chosen since we are developing hypotheses and testing them to either accept or falsify them to objectively determine if and to what extent stereotypes exist in Swedish TV advertisements (Bell et al., 2019).

## 3.2.    Alternative approaches

Alternative approaches could have been using a qualitative method or conducting an experiment. A qualitative method could have included interviews with people that have watched advertisements. An analysis could have been done on their subjective views to see if patterns could be found and whether the opinions differed between groups. However, this method would require a change of focus from objectively exploring the presence of stereotypes to looking at subjective opinions of individuals and groups.

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[1] Content analysis also has limitations. For example, creating a coding scheme that does not require interpretations is a difficult task (Bell et al., 2019). Furthermore, content analysis is good only if, in this case, the advertisements are (Bell et al., 2019).

Qualitative research could be difficult to replicate and lack transparency as opposed to content analysis (Bell et al., 2019). Another possible approach could have been to set up an experiment. We could have created our own advertisements and have viewers rate them. However, this may raise questions about how well those advertisements reflect reality.

## 3.3. Selection

### 3.3.1. Television channel

Following Kay & Furnham (2013) we decided to use one television channel to gather advertisements. SVT1 and TV4 are the largest television channels in Sweden and have the highest viewing numbers (MMS, 2023). Considering that SVT1 does not show advertising, we chose TV4 for data collection. Furthermore, TV4 is a free-to-air (FTA) network and thus accessible to anyone for free (Boxer, n.d). Therefore, the entire population could be exposed to the advertising on TV4.

### 3.3.2. Time

We chose to collect data during the evening hours since most people watch TV during that time (MMS, 2023). The audience size is approximately the same Monday to Sunday at 18:00 as it is at 22:00. At 23:00 the audience size has decreased but since we cannot determine at what time during 22:00-23:00 it decreases, we decided to continue data collection until 23:00.

### 3.3.3. Telia Play

Advertisements on television are shown with no pause in between. This leaves no time for the coder to fill out the coding scheme for one advertisement before the next starts. Therefore, we decided to use Telia Play for our data collection. On Telia Play, the coder could go back two days at most to watch the programs and the advertisements shown on TV4 during our selected time slot. It also allowed the coders to skip forward to the advertising breaks. This allowed for increased efficiency and flexibility.

## 3.4. Coders

When conducting these types of content analyses, it is common to let one individual code the entire sample and let a second coder code approximately 10% of the sample (e.g., Kay & Furnham, 2013; Lim & Furnham, 2016; Daalmans et al., 2017). This is done to check for inter-rater reliability. Following these studies, in particular Kay & Furnham (2013), one individual (Coder A, a co-author familiarized with the coding scheme) coded all advertisements using the coding scheme. To improve the method, but not deviate too far from Kay & Furnham (2013), three other coders were recruited.

These three coders were not involved in the study other than as coders and remained unaware of the hypotheses throughout the process. Before coding commenced, they were able to read through the coding scheme and ask questions. They could also test the coding scheme before coding started. They were instructed to watch an advertisement, then pause the advertisement break to fill out the coding scheme for the advertisement they had just watched, before continuing.

## 3.5.  Construction of the content analysis

This part contains a description of how the coding scheme was developed and which aspects were considered. The content of each block is specified and illustrated in Figure 1. The variables used in the study and how they are coded is described as well.

### 3.5.1.  The coding scheme

Kay & Furnham (2013) was used as a reference when constructing the coding scheme. We also reviewed McArthur & Resko (1975) who invented the original coding scheme to discover stereotypes in advertising. This was done to ensure that our coding scheme would be similar to McArthur & Resko (1975) and thus our results would be comparable with other content analyses that have used the same source as inspiration. The coding scheme was tested before data collection began to correct any issues and clarify instructions when necessary. This ensured that the coding scheme that was ultimately used was of good quality. Bell et al. (2019) noted the importance of giving clear instructions to the coders as well as making the categories exhaustive and mutually exclusive. This was taken into consideration when constructing the coding scheme. Descriptions were added to those categories that the pre-test revealed needed further clarifications. Explanations to some of the answer options were also added for the same reason. The coder had the ability to move back and forth in the coding scheme while coding to review their answers and make changes if needed. To make the coding scheme exhaustive, categories were developed and added to the coding scheme by Kay & Furnham (2013) to include more elements of advertisements, such as humor. The coder also had the option of answering "other" and specifying their own answer in a blank space if they felt that no option suited their answer. To make the categories mutually exclusive, each question focused on one aspect of the advertisement. This prevents overlap between categories and thus prevents confusion for the coders (Bell et al., 2019).

Qualtrics was used to construct the coding scheme. The coding scheme was shown to the coders before coding started and instructions were given on how the coding scheme worked. All coders were given information on GDPR and had to agree to the terms before coding could commence. Since the coder's coded multiple advertisements, we made the decision not to include GDPR consent in the beginning of the questionnaire

but to instead have the coders agree to the terms beforehand. This was done to make the coding process more efficient for each coder.

Figure 2 provides an overview of the coding scheme flow. Block five is an addition to the coding scheme asking for subjective views of the advertisements regarding gender and age stereotypes. See Appendix 3 for the full coding scheme.

**Figure 2.** Flow of the coding scheme.
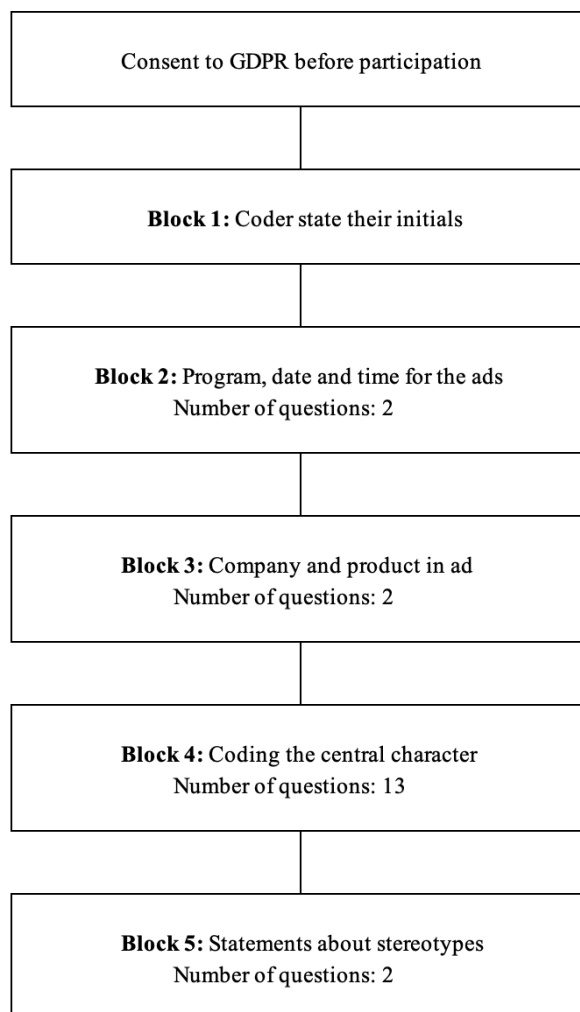


### 3.5.2. The categories

The advertisements were coded according to the categories below:

**Gender**

This variable referred to the central character's gender. The gender could be rated as 1 = male, 2 = female, 3 = non-binary/third gender, 4 = not sure. The advertisements that had more than one central character were coded but later excluded from analysis as done by Kay and Furnham (2013).

**Age**

This variable was used to define the age of the central character. Kay & Furnham (2013) only used three age categories in their coding scheme because the method of determining someone's age can be subjective. This study did instead give more age categories for the coder to choose between. The coder could also choose more than one age category. This was done to enable a more nuanced analysis. It does also enable for the data to be collapsed into fewer categories later in the process. Age was rated as 1 = below 18, 2 = 18-24, 3 = 25-34, 4 = 35-44, 5 = 45-54, 6 = 55-64, 7 = 65-74, 8 = 75-84, 9 = 85+.

**Product (or service)**

This category rated the product or service advertised. This study uses more product categories than Kay & Furnham (2013) to enable more nuanced results and analysis. The product/service was coded as 1 = food and beverages, 2 = major home appliances, 3 = minor home appliances, 4 = consumer electronics, 5 = home products, 6 = health and body, 7 = finance, 8 = leisure, 9 = apparel, 10 = home décor, 11 = other.

**Presentation**

This category refers to how the central character appeared in the advertisement. It was coded as 1 = visible, 2 = voice-over (not visible), 3 = both visible and hearable.

**Humor**

Including a humor category was proposed by Kay & Furnham (2013) when considering improvements for future research. It refers to whether humorous elements were present in the advertisement and whether it was related to the central character. Inspiration was taken from Eisend (2014). This category was coded as 1 = humorous elements were related to the central character, 2 = humorous elements were not related to the central character, 3 = no humorous elements were present, 4 = not sure / do not know.

**Credibility**

This variable reports the central character's perceived credibility based on their relationship to the product or service. The central character could either be rated as 1 = consumer (a consumer or potential consumer, someone that praised or admired a product or service), 2 = expert (an expert has knowledge about the product/service/company, someone that recommends the product or service for its qualities), or 3 = other.

**Argument**

This variable was rated as 1 = a personal comment, 2 = a fact-based argument, or 3 = no argument was made. It refers to whether an argument for the product or service was made by the central character as well as defines the nature of the argument.

**Role**

This category was used to explain the central character's role in relation to their life in the advertisement. They could be depicted as 1 = dependent (in relation to someone else, a spouse/partner, parent, child, career), 2 = independent (a professional, leader, narrator or someone that was not responsible or in a caring position of someone else), or 3 = other.

**Location**

The location in which the central character and/or the advertisement takes place is coded here. They could be in a 1 = home setting, 2 = store, 3 = leisure setting (e.g., hotel, travel, spa), 4 = work setting (outside the home), 5 = outdoors (garden not included), 6 = other.

**Celebrity**

This category defined whether the central character was a celebrity or not. It was rated as 1 = yes (celebrity), or 2 = no (not a celebrity).

**End comment**

This variable referred to whether the central character made an end comment (like a product slogan) at the end of the advertisement. It was coded as 1 = present, or 2 = absent.

**Background**

This variable coded the gender of other characters included in the advertisement. Some advertisements did only show one additional character. This category was coded as 1 = females only, 2 = males only, 3 = both genders, or 4 = no other people in the advertisement.

**Statements**

The last block contained two statements. They are separate from the objective coding of the advertisements. The first statement is about to what extent the coder perceived the advertisement to be a stereotypical portrayal of gender roles. The second one is about to what extent the coder perceived the age of the central character to be stereotypical for advertising. The statements were rated on a scale of 1-5 with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

## 3.6.    Data collection

A link to the coding scheme was sent out to the coders prior to starting data collection. All coders were given access to an account on Telia Play to access the advertisements for TV4. Advertisements were watched from Monday 27th March 2023 to Sunday April

9 2023 between 18:00-23:00. We decided to collect data for two weeks, as opposed to Kay & Furnham (2013) who did one week, to improve the method. In total, 298 unique advertisements were viewed during the period. See Appendix 1 for companies.

The questions in the coding scheme were constructed to be descriptive, except for the last two statements. This was done to avoid individual interpretations or opinions to affect the result. The coders also had the ability to answer, "don't know" or "other" and specify their own answer if they were unsure or did not think that their answer fit the options provided. The intention with these options were to prevent coders from guessing or feeling forced to give an answer they did not think fit. When they perceived there to be more than one central character, they were asked to describe the characters they perceived as central as well as note who they decided to code. They were instructed to code the one they perceived the most central to the story or the one that had the most screen time. These advertisements were later excluded from further analysis (see chapter 3.7). The coding scheme was furthermore translated from English to Swedish to facilitate the process for the coders since Swedish is their native language.

It could be worth noting that this study provides a snapshot of advertisements shown on television and might therefore not be a representation of television channels or television advertisements overall. However, data was collected over two weeks from the most popular channel showing advertisements during a time of the day with the highest viewing numbers (see chapter 3.3.1). Therefore, it could be argued that the sample is as representative as possible with the time constraints of completing the data collection in mind. To avoid the coding to be representative for only one age group we made sure that different genders and ages were represented among the coders.

## 3.7. Data analysis

All data was collected in Qualtrics and later exported to Excel where it was cleaned. Following Kay & Furnham (2013), advertisements with more than one central character were excluded from further analysis. In total 76 advertisements with more than one central character were removed, which could be considered a large number. This could potentially affect the results. We could have included them and tested for inter-rater reliability to ensure that they were coded similarly. However, because we are following a study that excluded these advertisements, we decided to do the same to be able to compare the results. Furthermore, the coding scheme used does not allow for coding of more than one central character. Duplicates were also removed. The categorical values were translated to numbers to facilitate analysis. Sub-categories for Gender, 3 = non-binary/third gender and 4 = not sure, for Humor, 4 = not sure/do not know, and for Role, 3 = other, were removed since no advertisements were categorized as such. The category Age was collapsed into four sub-categories, Under 18 (18 or below), Young adults (18-34), Middle-aged (35-54), and Older adults (55+), to facilitate analysis. The

categories Product and Humor were collapsed due to low cell counts across genders. For Product, major home appliances, minor home appliances, home products and home décor were collapsed into the new category Home appliances. Furthermore, consumer electronics and apparel were moved to the category Other. For Humor, humorous elements were related to the central character and humorous elements were not related to the central character, were collapsed into Humor.

The data was then exported to R, version 4.2.1, which is a program for statistical computing. The libraries readxl and irr were used. In accordance with Kay & Furnham (2013), analysis was run on Coder A's data. Cohen's kappa was used to assess inter-rater reliability between the coders to ensure that Coder A's results were reliable. It is a statistical measure of inter-rater agreement for nominal categorical data (Cyr & Francis, 1992). A chi-square was performed for each category. It is a statistical test used to examine whether there is a meaningful correlation between two category variables. It requires a sample size of five or greater (Hitchcock, 2009). As seen from Table 3 in chapter 4.1, cell sizes fall below five at a few occasions. Yates' continuity correction can help with this. However, it is used to adjust the chi-square test for 2x2 contingency tables (Hitchcock, 2009) and our tables are often larger. Following Kay & Furnham (2013), we perform a chi-square test for each category and point out where results may be unreliable. Furthermore, in chapter 4.2, for Tables 4 and 5, a larger number of cells fall below five. Thus, Fisher's exact test may be more appropriate. Because some cell sizes are still large, both chi-square and Fisher's exact test are performed for chapter 4.2, to receive more reliable results.

## 3.8.     Reliability and validity

### 3.8.1.    Reliabiility

Reliability is concerned with the degree to which results can be repeated and whether the measurements used are consistent (Bell et al., 2019). Four coders analyzed the advertisements. To ensure that the coders interpreted the advertisements in a similar way, we performed a Cohen's kappa test to measure the inter-rater reliability. Since Coder A (co-author) coded all advertisements, the test was performed between Coder A and the other coders. A coefficient between 0.4-0.6 is considered fair, between 0.6-0.75 is considered good, and >0.75 is considered very good (Bell et al., 2019). Moreover, it is worth mentioning the possibility that the coding could have been different if other coders had done the coding. However, the questions were designed to ask about what the coders could observe objectively. This, together with high Cohen's kappa measures between Coder A and the other coders (See Appendix 2), we do not have any reason to believe that the coding and thus the results would have been different with other coders. Furthermore, this coding scheme has been well used by many content analyses since it was developed. The only part where we may expect different results depending on the

coder are the last statements. However, the purpose of those questions was to get a subjective view that might help indicate the level of stereotypes in advertisements.

Furthermore, all advertisements shown on TV4 during the chosen time period were collected. It could be regarded as a sample of all advertisements shown on TV4 and may therefore be different if the study were to be repeated during another period or for another television channel. However, for our chosen time period and channel our data is a population. This means that if our study were to be repeated for the same time period, the population would be the same.

### 3.8.2. Validity

Validity relates to whether the measurements used in the study accurately measures what it was intended to measure (Bell et al., 2019). The coding scheme used in this thesis is inspired by Kay & Furnham (2013), which is based on the original coding scheme by McArthur & Resko (1975). Multiple studies on the same topics (see chapter 2.4.1) have also used the coding scheme by McArthur & Resko (1975) in different time periods and contexts. This, we argue, ensures measurement validity. Had it not been accurate, it would not have been used. Credibleness refers to the extent to which the results are believable (Bell et al., 2019). Since the prevalence of stereotypes in Swedish television advertisements are relatively unexplored, this may put our results into question. However, the coding scheme has been used over many years, and in many settings, and has been proven to work and thus we argue that the results are believable.

# 4. Results

In the following section, we present our findings from the content analysis on stereotypes in Swedish TV advertisements. The results are presented in frequency tables below, one for gender-based differences and two for age-based differences, one for each gender. Results of chi-square tests and Fisher's exact test are presented for the categories. As can be seen in the tables below, the cell size falls below five on some occasions. See chapter 3.7 for how this is dealt with. We point out that caution should be taken when reviewing and evaluating the results. Support will be found for a hypothesis when the alpha level is < .05.

## 4.1. Gender based differences

Table 3 visualizes how often each gender appeared in each sub-category. It presents the number of men and women, the percentage of men and women of the total men and women respectively, and the percentage of men and women of the total number of advertisements watched. Results for each category are presented below.

**Table 3.**

Advertisement breakdown for i) All advertisements, ii) Advertisements with male central characters, and iii) Advertisements with female central characters.

| Content categories | | All | | Males | | | Females | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number | % total ads | Number | % of males | % total ads | Number | % of females | % total ads |
| Gender | | | | | | | | | |
| | Male | 114 | 51 | | | | | | |
| | Female | 108 | 49 | | | | | | |
| Age | | | | | | | | | |
| | Children | 14 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 10 | 9 | 5 |
| | Young adults | 59 | 27 | 27 | 24 | 12 | 32 | 30 | 14 |
| | Middle-aged | 125 | 56 | 64 | 56 | 29 | 61 | 56 | 27 |
| | Older adults | 24 | 11 | 19 | 17 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| Presentation | | | | | | | | | |
| | Both | 81 | 36 | 48 | 42 | 22 | 33 | 31 | 15 |
| | Voice-over | 61 | 27 | 25 | 22 | 11 | 36 | 33 | 16 |
| | Visible | 80 | 36 | 41 | 36 | 18 | 39 | 36 | 18 |
| Credibility | | | | | | | | | |
| | Expert | 71 | 32 | 36 | 32 | 16 | 35 | 32 | 16 |
| | Consumer | 143 | 64 | 74 | 65 | 33 | 69 | 64 | 31 |
| | Other | 8 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| Role | | | | | | | | | |
| | Dependent | 52 | 23 | 26 | 23 | 12 | 26 | 24 | 12 |
| | Independent | 170 | 77 | 88 | 77 | 40 | 82 | 76 | 37 |
| Location | | | | | | | | | |
| | Work | 29 | 13 | 21 | 18 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 4 |
| | Store | 12 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 9 | 8 | 4 |
| | Leisure | 21 | 9 | 14 | 12 | 6 | 7 | 6 | 3 |
| | Home setting | 76 | 34 | 41 | 36 | 18 | 35 | 32 | 16 |
| | Other | 31 | 14 | 14 | 12 | 6 | 17 | 16 | 8 |
| | Outdoors | 53 | 24 | 21 | 18 | 9 | 32 | 30 | 14 |

**Table 3**. (*continued*)

| Argument | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Personal comment | 10 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 2 |
| | Fact-based argument | 39 | 18 | 17 | 15 | 8 | 22 | 20 | 10 |
| | No argument | 173 | 78 | 92 | 81 | 41 | 81 | 75 | 36 |
| End comment | | | | | | | | | |
| | End comment present | 55 | 25 | 20 | 18 | 9 | 35 | 32 | 16 |
| | End comment absent | 167 | 75 | 94 | 82 | 42 | 73 | 68 | 33 |
| Background | | | | | | | | | |
| | Both genders | 107 | 48 | 55 | 48 | 25 | 52 | 48 | 23 |
| | Females only | 14 | 6 | 8 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 3 |
| | Males only | 33 | 15 | 20 | 18 | 9 | 13 | 12 | 6 |
| | No people | 68 | 31 | 31 | 27 | 14 | 37 | 34 | 17 |
| Product | | | | | | | | | |
| | Food and beverages | 38 | 17 | 17 | 15 | 8 | 21 | 19 | 9 |
| | Home related | 35 | 16 | 20 | 18 | 9 | 15 | 14 | 7 |
| | Body and health | 35 | 16 | 14 | 12 | 6 | 21 | 19 | 9 |
| | Finance | 19 | 9 | 11 | 10 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 4 |
| | Leisure | 45 | 20 | 31 | 27 | 14 | 14 | 13 | 6 |
| | Other | 50 | 23 | 21 | 18 | 9 | 29 | 27 | 13 |
| Humor | | | | | | | | | |
| | No humor | 168 | 76 | 76 | 67 | 34 | 92 | 85 | 41 |
| | Humor | 54 | 24 | 38 | 33 | 17 | 16 | 15 | 7 |
| Celebrity | | | | | | | | | |
| | Yes | 13 | 6 | 9 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| | No | 209 | 94 | 105 | 92 | 47 | 104 | 96 | 47 |

## Credibility

Men and women did not differ significantly in this category $X^2 (2, N = 222) = 0.026767$, $p = .9867$. Since the cell size for "other" was <5, caution should be taken when evaluating the results. Women were not shown as consumers significantly more often than men. Therefore, H1 was not supported.

> **H1:** Women will be shown as consumers significantly more often than men. *Not supported.*

## Location

There was a significant difference between men and women in this category $X^2 (5, N = 222) = 14.056$, $p = .01526$. As visualized in Table 3 above, both genders were most often portrayed in a home setting. Furthermore, they were almost equally likely (18% vs. 16% respectively of total advertisements) to be portrayed at home. Thus, no support was found for H2. However, the genders differed more in the category Work with men being shown in a work setting more often than women (9% vs. 4% respectively of total advertisements). The genders also differed in the category Outdoors with women being more likely than men to be shown in an outdoors setting (14% vs. 9% respectively of total advertisements). Thus, there were significant differences in the type of locations men and women were portrayed in but not in a domestic setting.

**Product**

As visualized by Table 3, men and women were almost equally likely to portray food and beverages, home related products, body and health related products and finance related products. The greatest difference between the genders is found in the category Leisure where men appeared more often than women. Women were slightly more likely to be shown in the category Other. However, the chi-square test showed no significant differences between men and women overall for this category, $X^2 (5, N = 222) = 10.557$, $p = .06091$. Given these results, H3 was not supported.

**Age**

There was a significant difference between men and women in this category, $X^2 (3, N = 222) = 11.08$, $p = .0113$. Both men and women were most often middle-aged. They were almost equally likely to be portrayed as young adults. However, men were significantly more often in the older adults' category than women (9% vs. 2% respectively of total advertisements). Thus, there were significantly more older men than older women. Therefore, support was found for H4.

**Presentation**

As visualized in Table 3, the frequency of women was slightly higher than the frequency of men in the voice-over category. Further, there were slightly more men being both visible and hearable in the advertisements than women. However, no significant difference was found between the genders in this category, $X^2 (2, N = 222) = 4.6526$, $p = .09766$.

**Role**

Men and women were equally likely to be shown as dependent. The number of men shown as independent was slightly higher than for women. However, the difference

between the genders was not significant for this category $X^2$ (1, N = 222) = 0.0041304, $p$ = .9488.

**Argument**

There were no significant differences between men and women in the type of argument they made, $X^2$ (2, N = 222) = 1.1791, $p$ = .5546. Most common for both genders were to make no argument at all. They were equally likely to make personal comments.

**End comment**

There was a significant difference between men and women in this category, $X^2$ (1, N = 222) = 5.8009, $p$ = .01602. Both men and women were more likely not to make any end comments. However, when end comments were made, women were significantly more likely to make end comments than men.

**Background**

No significant difference between the genders was found for this category, $X^2$ (3, N = 222) = 2.2235, $p$ = .5273. Both genders were most featured in advertisements that included both genders. Further, both genders were more likely to be portrayed in advertisements with only men than only women.

**Humor**

There was a significant difference between men and women in this category, $X^2$ (1, N = 222) = 9.3506, $p$ = .002229, with men being portrayed in humorous advertisements more often than women. It was most common for both men and women to be portrayed in advertisements that contained no humorous elements.

**Celebrity**

Most central characters from both genders were not celebrities and the difference between the genders was not significant for this category, $X^2$ (1, N = 222) = 1.0885, $p$ = .2968.

## 4.2.    Age based differences

The number of cell sizes below five increased when the genders were divided into age categories. As explained in chapter 3.7, both a chi-square test and a Fisher's exact test are performed for each category. For Production and Location only chi square was performed due to the contingency tables being too large for R to compute Fisher's exact test for. Due to the limited research looking into age differences for the categories in the coding scheme, no hypotheses were developed for this section. This section will instead explore whether there is an association between the age groups and the categories. It

should be noted that due to small cell sizes for many categories the results are unreliable and should be evaluated with caution.

Table 4 and 5[2] (see p. 31 and 32) visualizes how often each age category appeared in each sub-category. It presents the number, the percentage of the total age category, and the percentage of the total number of advertisements watched. Results for each category are presented below.

**Credibility**

There was a significant difference between the age groups for both men, $X^2$ (6, N = 114) = 16.41, $p$ = .01172, and women, $X^2$ (6, N = 108) = 22.062, $p$ = .00118, in this category. Both genders, across all age groups, were most portrayed as consumers. Both middle-aged men and middle-aged women were portrayed as experts far more often than the other age groups. Fisher's exact test showed significance as well, for men $p$ = .005074, and for women $p$ < .001.

**Location**

No significant differences were found between the male age groups and location, $X^2$(15, N = 114) = 22.31, $p$ = .09993, or between female age groups and location, $X^2$ (15, N = 108) = 23.218, $p$ = .07962.

**Product**

There was a significant difference between the male age groups and what type of product (or service) they advertised, $X^2$ (15, N = 114) = 42.7541, $p$ < .001. Middle-aged men advertised both home related products, leisure products and products in the "other" category more frequently than the other male age groups. For the female age groups, no significant difference was found, $X^2$ (15, N = 108) = 12.243, $p$ = .6606.

**Presentation**

There was a significant difference between the male age categories for this category, $X^2$ (6, N = 114) = 17.652, $p$ = .007164. Fisher's exact test was performed, giving $p$ = .004596. Middle-aged men were almost equally likely to be in either sub-category, whereas the other age groups were all least likely to be voice-overs. Older men most appeared as both visible and hearable. The results were also significant for the female age groups and this category, $X^2$ (6, N = 108) = 21.512, $p$ = .001484, and Fisher's exact test $p$ < 1. Middle-aged women appeared as voice-over most often, compared to young adults and children who were portrayed in that sub-category less frequently than other sub-categories. Young adult women were more likely than the other age groups to

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[2] Numbers in the tables have been rounded in accordance with APA guidelines. Rounding error might be present. 0.5 in table indicates 0.5 or less.

appear as visible. Thus, there were differences between the ages for both genders in terms of how they were presented.

**Table 4**
Breakdown of male advert age groups

| Content categories | | Male children | | | Male young adults | | | Male middle-aged | | | Male older adults | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Number | % children | % of total ads | Number | % young adults | % of total ads | Number | % middle-aged | % of total ads | Number | % older adults | % of total ads |
| Presentation | Both | 1 | 25 | 0.5 | 12 | 44 | 5 | 21 | 33 | 9 | 14 | 74 | 6 |
| | Voice-over | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 15 | 2 | 21 | 33 | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Visible | 3 | 75 | 1 | 11 | 41 | 5 | 22 | 34 | 10 | 5 | 26 | 2 |
| Credibility | Expert | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 29 | 45 | 13 | 4 | 21 | 2 |
| | Consumer | 4 | 100 | 2 | 24 | 89 | 11 | 32 | 50 | 14 | 14 | 74 | 6 |
| | Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0.5 |
| Role | Dependent | 3 | 75 | 1 | 5 | 19 | 2 | 11 | 17 | 5 | 7 | 37 | 3 |
| | Independent | 1 | 25 | 0.5 | 22 | 81 | 10 | 53 | 83 | 24 | 12 | 63 | 5 |
| Location | Work | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 11 | 17 | 5 | 7 | 37 | 3 |
| | Store | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0.5 |
| | Leisure | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 11 | 17 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 0.5 |
| | Home setting | 4 | 100 | 2 | 8 | 30 | 4 | 22 | 34 | 10 | 7 | 37 | 3 |
| | Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 22 | 3 | 8 | 13 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Outdoors | 0 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 30 | 4 | 10 | 16 | 5 | 3 | 16 | 1 |
| Argument | Personal comment | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0.5 | 3 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 0.5 |
| | Fact-based argument | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 15 | 23 | 7 | 2 | 11 | 1 |
| | No argument | 4 | 100 | 2 | 26 | 96 | 12 | 46 | 72 | 21 | 16 | 84 | 7 |
| Product | Food and beverages | 1 | 25 | 0.5 | 4 | 15 | 2 | 9 | 14 | 4 | 3 | 16 | 1 |
| | Home related | 1 | 25 | 0.5 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 15 | 23 | 7 | 1 | 5 | 0.5 |
| | Body and health | 1 | 25 | 0.5 | 6 | 22 | 3 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Finance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0.5 | 8 | 42 | 4 |
| | Leisure | 0 | 0 | 0 | 11 | 41 | 5 | 17 | 27 | 8 | 3 | 16 | 1 |
| | Other | 1 | 25 | 0.5 | 1 | 4 | 0.5 | 15 | 23 | 7 | 4 | 21 | 2 |
| End comment | End comment present | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 11 | 1 | 17 | 27 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | End comment absent | 4 | 100 | 2 | 24 | 89 | 11 | 47 | 73 | 21 | 19 | 100 | 9 |
| Background | Both genders | 1 | 25 | 0.5 | 11 | 41 | 5 | 31 | 48 | 14 | 12 | 63 | 5 |
| | Females only | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 0.5 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 2 | 11 | 1 |
| | Males only | 3 | 75 | 1 | 6 | 22 | 3 | 8 | 13 | 4 | 3 | 16 | 1 |
| | No people | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 33 | 4 | 20 | 31 | 9 | 2 | 11 | 1 |
| Humor | No humor | 3 | 75 | 1 | 14 | 52 | 6 | 48 | 75 | 22 | 11 | 58 | 5 |
| | Humor | 1 | 25 | 0.5 | 13 | 48 | 6 | 16 | 25 | 7 | 8 | 42 | 4 |
| Celebrity | Yes | 1 | 25 | 0.5 | 1 | 4 | 0.5 | 6 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 0.5 |
| | No | 3 | 75 | 1 | 26 | 96 | 12 | 58 | 91 | 26 | 18 | 95 | 8 |

**Table 5**

Breakdown of female advert age groups

| Content categories | Female children | | | Female young adults | | | Female middle-aged | | | Female older adults | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Number | % children | % of total ads | Number | % young adults | % of total ads | Number | % middle-aged | % of total ads | Number | % older adults | % of total ads |
| **Presentation** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Both | 3 | 30 | 1 | 7 | 22 | 3 | 21 | 34 | 9 | 2 | 40 | 1 |
| Voice-over | 1 | 10 | 0.5 | 5 | 16 | 2 | 28 | 46 | 13 | 2 | 40 | 1 |
| Visible | 6 | 60 | 3 | 20 | 63 | 9 | 12 | 20 | 5 | 1 | 20 | 0.5 |
| **Credibility** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Expert | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 16 | 2 | 28 | 46 | 13 | 2 | 40 | 1 |
| Consumer | 8 | 80 | 4 | 25 | 78 | 11 | 33 | 54 | 15 | 3 | 60 | 1 |
| Other | 2 | 20 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Role** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Dependent | 10 | 100 | 5 | 6 | 19 | 3 | 9 | 15 | 4 | 1 | 20 | 0.5 |
| Independent | 0 | 0 | 0 | 26 | 81 | 12 | 52 | 85 | 23 | 4 | 80 | 2 |
| **Location** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Work | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 10 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Store | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0.5 | 7 | 11 | 3 | 1 | 20 | 0.5 |
| Leisure | 2 | 20 | 1 | 4 | 13 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0.5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Home setting | 4 | 40 | 2 | 5 | 16 | 2 | 24 | 39 | 11 | 2 | 40 | 1 |
| Other | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 | 28 | 4 | 8 | 13 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Outdoors | 4 | 40 | 2 | 11 | 34 | 5 | 15 | 25 | 7 | 2 | 40 | 1 |
| **Argument** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Personal comment | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Fact-based argument | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 19 | 31 | 9 | 1 | 20 | 0.5 |
| No argument | 10 | 100 | 5 | 30 | 94 | 14 | 37 | 61 | 17 | 4 | 80 | 2 |
| **Product** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Food and beverages | 1 | 10 | 0.5 | 9 | 28 | 4 | 10 | 16 | 5 | 1 | 20 | 0.5 |
| Home related | 2 | 20 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 10 | 16 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Body and health | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 19 | 3 | 14 | 23 | 6 | 1 | 20 | 0.5 |
| Finance | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Leisure | 3 | 30 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 13 | 4 | 1 | 20 | 0.5 |
| Other | 4 | 40 | 2 | 9 | 28 | 4 | 14 | 23 | 6 | 2 | 40 | 1 |
| **End comment** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| End comment present | 1 | 10 | 0.5 | 5 | 16 | 2 | 27 | 44 | 12 | 2 | 40 | 1 |
| End comment absent | 9 | 90 | 4 | 27 | 84 | 12 | 34 | 56 | 15 | 3 | 60 | 1 |
| **Background** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Both genders | 7 | 70 | 3 | 11 | 34 | 5 | 31 | 51 | 14 | 3 | 60 | 1 |
| Females only | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 0.5 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Males only | 2 | 20 | 1 | 4 | 13 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 3 | 1 | 20 | 0.5 |
| No people | 1 | 10 | 0.5 | 16 | 50 | 7 | 19 | 31 | 9 | 1 | 20 | 0.5 |
| **Humor** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| No humor | 8 | 80 | 4 | 30 | 94 | 14 | 49 | 80 | 22 | 5 | 100 | 2 |
| Humor | 2 | 20 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 12 | 20 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| **Celebrity** | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 6 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| No | 10 | 100 | 5 | 30 | 94 | 14 | 59 | 97 | 27 | 5 | 100 | 2 |

**Role**

The age groups of both genders differed significantly in this category. It may be due to low cell sizes for children and older adults. Men, $X^2$ (6, N = 114) = 9.7451, $p$ = .02086, and women, $X^2$ (3, N = 108) = 34.979, $p$ = .00112. Fisher's exact test gave the following for men $p$ = .02841 and for women $p$ = .00447, which indicates significance as well. All age groups from both genders were more often portrayed as independent than dependent, except for children.

**Argument**

No significant difference was found for male age groups in this category, $X^2$ (6, N = 114) = 9.7451, $p$ = .1297, and Fisher's exact test giving $p$ = .06532. However, female age groups differed significantly in the type of argument they made, $X^2$ (6, N = 108) = 16.524, $p$ = .0112, and Fisher's exact test $p$ = .007639. It was most common for all female age groups to not make any arguments at all. However, when arguments were made, middle-aged women made them more often than the other age categories. This was especially true for fact-based arguments. Although no significant differences were found, this was the case for middle-aged men as well.

**End comment**

Male age groups, $X^2$ (3, N = 114) = 9.2644, $p$ = .02597, and Fisher's exact test $p$ = .0234, and female age groups, $X^2$ (3, N = 108) = 10.452, $p$ = .01509, Fisher's exact test $p$ = .01117, both differed significantly in whether they made end comments or not. It was most common not to make any end comments across both age groups and gender. When end comments were made, middle-aged women and men made them more often than the other age groups within their gender groups.

**Background**

The age groups did not differ significantly in what genders were present in the advertisements except for the central character. This was true for both men, $X^2$ (9, N = 114) = 15.349, $p$ = .08179, and women, $X^2$ (3, N = 108) = 9.971, $p$ = .3528. Fisher's exact test supported this for men $p$ = .1447, and women $p$ = .3036.

**Humor**

Although there was a significant difference between the genders for this category (see chapter 4.1), there were no significant differences within the genders, between age groups. For men, $X^2$ (3, N = 114) = 5.4496, $p$ = .1417, and Fisher's exact test $p$ = .1235. For women, $X^2$ (3, N = 108) = 4.0831, $p$ = .2526, and Fisher's exact test $p$ = .2381.

**Celebrity**

There was not a significant difference between male age groups, $X^2$ (3, N = 114) = 2.6355, $p$ = .4513, or female age groups, $X^2$ (3, N = 108) = 1.1895. Fisher's exact test

for men $p = .4396$, and women $p = .7851$. No age group was more likely to be portrayed as a celebrity than the others.

## 4.3. Perception of stereotypes

As an addition to the coding scheme, statements where the coders could rate the advertisements were added. It should be noted that the coders watched different advertisements and thus conclusions for specific advertisements cannot be drawn. Instead, we examine whether there is a difference in how they perceived the advertisements they each watched separately. Doing so may be of interest later as we can compare their perception of stereotypes with what the results from the coding scheme says about stereotypes. Coder A was not included due to knowledge of the literature which could therefore lead to bias affecting the results. Thus, only Coders B, C and D's results were analyzed.

**Table 6.**

Breakdown of how coders responded to the statements

|  |  | All | Strongly disagree | | Disagree | | Neither agree nor disagree | | Agree | | Strongly agree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  | Total | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % | Number | % |
| Gender |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Coder B | 51 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 25 | 8 | 16 | 25 | 49 | 4 | 8 |
|  | Coder C | 46 | 2 | 4 | 13 | 28 | 8 | 17 | 17 | 37 | 6 | 13 |
|  | Coder D | 45 | 1 | 2 | 23 | 51 | 10 | 22 | 11 | 24 | 0 | 0 |
|  | Total | 142 | 4 | 3 | 49 | 35 | 26 | 18 | 53 | 37 | 10 | 7 |
| Age |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  | Coder B | 51 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 16 | 31 | 30 | 59 | 0 | 0 |
|  | Coder C | 46 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 11 | 1 | 2 | 39 | 85 | 0 | 0 |
|  | Coder D | 45 | 0 | 0 | 14 | 31 | 4 | 9 | 27 | 60 | 0 | 0 |
|  | Total | 142 | 2 | 1 | 23 | 16 | 21 | 15 | 96 | 68 | 0 | 0 |

**Gender**

Statement: *This advertisement is a stereotypical portrayal of gender roles.*

The coders differed significantly in how they responded to this statement, $X^2 (8, N = 142) = 15.917$, $p = .04359$. Fisher's exact test $p = .02509$. Coder D was more likely than the rest to not agree that the ad was stereotypical. Coder B answered that they agreed that the advertisements were stereotypical more often than the rest. Coder C strongly agreed to the statement more often than the other coders.

**Age**

Statement: *The central character's age is stereotypical for advertising.*

There was a significant difference in the way the coders responded to this statement. Chi-square could not be performed due to all zero in Strongly agree. Fisher's exact test $p = .02046$. As for the previous statement, Coder D disagreed more often than coder B and coder C. Coder B answered that they neither agreed nor disagreed more often than the other coders. Coder C was more likely to agree that the age of the central character was stereotypical than coder B and coder D.

# 5.    Discussion

## 5.1.    Gender stereotypes in Swedish television advertising

Main findings

- Location: Men and women were most often, and almost equally often, portrayed in a home setting. The significant difference between genders arose from men being portrayed in a work setting significantly more often than women, and women in an outdoors setting significantly more often than men.
- Humor: Men were significantly more likely to be in humorous advertisements than women.
- End Comment: There was a significant difference in this category. The genders were most likely to not make end comments. However, when end comments were made, women made them significantly more often than men.
- Age: Significant age differences between men and women, with less older women than older men.
- No significant differences for Presentation, Credibility, Role, Product, Argument, Background, Celebrity.

The results suggest an equal distribution between men and women (51% and 49% respectively). This is in line with the distribution of men and women in the Swedish population. It is also in line with e.g., Stern & Mastro (2004) but contrary to the findings of Kay & Furnham (2013). However, there were just slightly more women (53%) compared to men (47%) in Kay & Furnham (2013).

Our findings for Location contradict previous studies (eg. Furnham & Mak, 1999) that found women in a domestic location significantly more often than men. Furthermore, they go against Kay & Furnham (2013) who found both men and women to be outdoors/at work more often than in a domestic setting, with the difference being significant for men. On the other hand, our results show men significantly more often at work than women. This may indicate a gender stereotype, that men are the breadwinners. Women were significantly more likely to be outdoors than men, which goes contrary to gender stereotypes and Kay & Furnham's (2013) results. Further, men were significantly more likely to be in humorous advertisements. Perhaps it could be that leisure ads and humor go hand in hand and men were commonly promoting leisure products. Also, humor may be associated with masculinity. Therefore, this could indicate gender stereotypes.

Both our results and Kay & Furnham's (2013) results for End Comment show significant differences between the genders. However, Kay & Furnham (2013) found that both genders made end comments more often than not. When end comments were made, our results both showed that women made them significantly more often than

men. If this is a gender stereotype or not is difficult to determine. Perhaps women making end comments is appealing to a certain audience and used by practitioners to draw attention. More research in the future is needed for this category. Further, our findings for Age are consistent with previous research (e.g., Milner & Collins, 2000; Kay & Furnham, 2013), and may hint that women are chosen for their looks, and that as they get older, they are not as attractive or appealing for advertising as older men. Thus, this may suggest gender stereotypes.

For the remaining categories, no significant differences were found for gender. Instead, they may indicate the opposite. For example, both men and women were most often portrayed as consumers, which is supported by Kay & Furnham (2013) and Lim & Furnham's (2016) findings. However, they found women to be consumers significantly more often than men. Similar results were found for the category Role, where both men and women were most often, and almost equally likely shown as independent, whereas previous literature (e.g., Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010) show women as dependent more often than men. Thus, our results may indicate progression. Although no significance was found for Product, it is still worth noting that there was a larger gender difference in leisure products with more men portraying them than women (14% and 6% of total advertisements respectively). This may be of interest for future research. Our findings for Presentation, Argument, Celebrity, and Background further shows a relatively equal distribution of men and women in the sub-categories. Thus they are not indicating gender stereotypes.

Taken together, Swedish television advertisements indicate little gender stereotypes, especially compared to previous studies. According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Sweden is a feminine country and thus gender differences are expected to be small in society. If the mirror explanation (Holbrook, 1987) holds true, it is only logical for this lack of substantial gender differences to be reflected in advertisements. Where our results indicated gender stereotypes, further discussions must be had with the purpose of the advertisements and the definition of gender stereotypes in mind. For example, that men are significantly more often depicted in a work setting could indicate a gender stereotype. There could however be other explanations for this gender difference other than stereotypes. Perhaps television advertisements are a suitable channel for companies targeting working men but not for companies targeting working women, so they use other channels. Thus, it may be necessary to examine stereotypes in advertisements across different media channels to draw conclusions for television. Going back to the definition of sex stereotypes, it must be a consensual belief in society that men and women differ in certain characteristics. This raises the question of whether there is still a consensual belief in society that, in this example, men possess certain characteristics that women do not have, that make them more suited for work. If not, this may be an outdated stereotype. Or perhaps it is an effective tool to gain the attention of the target audience that we have spotted. The same discussion must be had for Humor. It may be

the case that humor is associated with masculinity. It may also be the case that humorous advertisements with men are more appealing to the audience they target, and they are used for that reason. So, on the one hand the results may indicate some gender stereotypes. On the other hand, they may just indicate that some tools and portrayals are more efficient and are thus more used. For Age it may however indicate more strongly towards gender stereotypes, and possibly a harmful one, as the results support the notion that women are less attractive and thus less appealing as they age compared to men. Age stereotypes will be discussed further in the next section.

## 5.2.     Age stereotypes in Swedish television advertising

Unfortunately, many cell sizes are small (less than 5) when data is separated into different age categories for gender. Hence it is difficult to draw reliable conclusions. We did however make some observations which are discussed below.

Firstly, we check if different age segments are represented in advertising proportionally to their percentage in the general population (see Table 3). Those under 18 are central characters in 6% of total advertisements while their population is significantly higher (22%). Although it may indicate unfair representation, it could be explained by the advertisements on TV4 not being focused on children. Thus, this underrepresentation may be expected and not be an indication of age stereotypes. The percentage of young adults in advertisements is higher than in the population. Meanwhile, the percentage of older adults in advertisements is about a third of what they represent in the population (11% vs 31%), even though older people watch television more than any other younger age category (Mediamätning i Skandinavien, 2022). This could also indicate stereotypes, that older people are not as appealing to portray. This underrepresentation of older adults is supported by previous research (e.g., Lee et al., 2007). As for younger adults, middle-aged adults are also overrepresented in advertisements compared to the population. Our findings could indicate gender stereotypes, that young adults and middle-aged adults are more attractive and appealing than older adults. This representation could however also be due to television being an efficient channel for companies targeting the overrepresented age groups. Working middle-aged adults may also have a higher purchasing power than older people. On the one hand these results may indicate gender stereotypes, but it is also likely that they are logical. It will not make sense for companies to use older people if that will not appeal to their audience.

Main findings

- Credibility: For all age categories both men and women were most often portrayed as consumers. The middle-aged categories for both genders are both more likely to be portrayed as experts than the other age categories.
- Product: Middle-aged men were portraying home related products, leisure products and "other" products more frequently than the other male age groups.

Older males were more frequently portrayed finance related products more often than the other age categories.

- Presentation: Children are much more likely to be only visible. Young women were more likely to only be visible, and voiceover is higher for middle aged females.
- Role: Children for both genders are more likely to be portrayed as dependent while other the other age segments from both genders are portrayed as independent.
- End Comment: Both middle-aged women and middle-aged men tended to give end comments more often than the other age categories.
- Argument: Middle-aged women made arguments more often than the other female age categories.
- No significant differences were found for Location, Background, Humor and Celebrity.

As we have mentioned before, low cell sizes make it difficult to draw conclusions. Thus, this section is only meant to be exploratory. The significant results obtained should be evaluated with caution. We saw some results that may indicate gender stereotypes. For example, within credibility, more middle-aged characters from both genders are shown to be experts. While this could be a stereotypical representation, it may also be a fair representation of society. Research (Ericsson & Pool, 2007) shows that it takes time to become an expert, when even talented people need a minimum of 10 years to be experts. With most being young adults while in higher education (Statistics Sweden, 2022), most would only become experts when they are middle-aged. For children as central characters, we find them to be more dependent than other age groups, just as Kay & Furnham (2013). This representation may be explained by the general societal understanding that children are dependent on a parent or guardian. Thus, this representation is likely not an indication of age stereotypes but rather a fair representation of society.

Another example is the Presentation category. Young female adults were more likely to only be visible (9% of total advertisements) than the other female age categories. This may relate to the notion that younger women are portrayed for their looks. When looking at Table 4 we notice that middle-aged men are also more likely than the other male age categories to be only visible (10% of total advertisements). Although this may also indicate a similar stereotype it is important to remember that the cell sizes are small. Furthermore, when searching for something we tend to find it. Therefore, it is possible that these findings depend on other factors than stereotypes. Thus, we cannot determine for sure that these are age stereotypes.

Overall, the only age stereotype we may have observed is the underrepresentation of older adults, which is supported by previous research. The other categories need to be

researched further to determine whether they are relevant when examining age stereotypes in television advertisements.

## 5.3. Replication crisis

As this thesis builds upon a previous study by Kay & Furnham (2013), we wanted to investigate if their results could be found in Sweden. Given our results, they were not found. Firstly, this could be due to the replication crisis. As described in chapter 2.5, there is a problem in social sciences where results from one study are difficult to repeat. Since we are not attempting a full replication, we cannot speak as to whether Kay & Furnham (2013) could be fully repeated. We can solely note that we did not manage to find their results in our study. This may however be due to other factors than the replication crisis. Secondly, our study is conducted in a different setting with different advertisements than Kay & Furnham (2013). Therefore, cultural differences must be considered. As discussed above, Sweden is considered a feminine country according to Hofstede's cultural dimensions where gender differences are smaller. Meanwhile, the UK is categorized as a more masculine country and thus differences between the two countries may be expected. In the UK, masculine traits such as success and competition are valued whereas getting along with others is not as valued. Going back to the mirror argument (Holbrook, 1987), it is reasonable that Kay & Furnham (2013) found more stereotypes since masculine attributes should be reflected in UK advertisements. It is also worth noting that 10 years have passed since Kay & Furnham's (2013) study and differences in the results may also be due to changed societal values and progression towards equality. Lastly, we attempted to develop their method by for example adding sub-categories. This may also have affected the outcome as the analysis becomes a different one.

## 5.4. Perception of stereotypes in the advertisements

The results from the statements show significant differences between the coders in how they perceived the advertisements. This may be due to the coders watching different advertisements. It could also indicate different perceptions of what a stereotype is between individuals as well as between genders and age groups. Due to the low number of coders, we are hesitant to draw any conclusions for the perception of stereotypes in the advertisements watched. Meanwhile, it is an important discussion for the future. Although the results from the coding scheme indicate few stereotypes in Swedish television advertisements it will not be the general opinion if people still perceive advertisements to be stereotypical. Thus, rather than making advertisements less stereotypical, it may be that the general belief of what a stereotype is needs to change before the perception of stereotypes in television advertisements reflects what is objectively observable. If the mold argument (Pollay, 1986, 1987) holds true,

advertisers may play an important role in such change. However, that perceptions differ from what is observed objectively may also be because viewers of advertisements perceive nuances that are not captured by the coding scheme that indicates stereotypes. This leads us to the discussion of suggestions for future research held in chapter 5.6.

## 5.5.    Conclusion and implications

Given our results we see relatively few gender and age stereotypes compared to, for example, Kay & Furnham (2013). The stereotypes that were observed may further be explained by other factors, such as television being an efficient channel for only certain gender or age groups. Thus, gender and age stereotypes are not very prevalent in Swedish television advertisements. This could mean that Swedish society has relatively few stereotypes, as Hofstede's cultural dimensions indicate, and that this is reflected in television advertisements (the Mirror argument) (Holbrook, 1987). Since stereotypes are not prevalent, it could mean that advertisers do not necessarily have to rely on stereotypical portrayals but can be creative with the choice of central character when creating advertisements. The only hypothesis that was confirmed by our results was that significantly more older men were portrayed than older women. Furthermore, our results indicate that older people are underrepresented both compared to the population as well as in relation to how much they watch television. This could indicate that some age stereotypes exist. However, we cannot draw this conclusion for the entire Swedish television landscape. There could also be other explanations for this underrepresentation such as television advertisements not being efficient when targeting older people. These findings could potentially help bring understanding to how older people are portrayed as well as help marketers and companies better understand how to include this age group.

## 5.6.    Limitations and suggestions for future research

Methodological

All research has limitations, and this study is no different. First, this study only analyzed advertisements from one television channel for two weeks. This may raise questions about the representativeness of the data, both for television advertisements and advertisements in Sweden overall. This brings to light a second limitation, namely time constraints. It would be advisable for future research to examine advertisements in Sweden both across different media channels, and during longer time periods. Third, the cell sizes became very small for some sub-categories, especially for children and older adults, when breaking down the results into age categories. This could make the results unreliable. Again, research over longer time periods to collect larger samples is advisable. Fourth, the coding scheme has its limitations. Although it has been well used by researchers over the years, it is still limited in the information that it codes. It puts focus on one central character and may not capture nuances that indicate stereotypes.

Therefore, a development of the coding scheme to analyze advertisements beyond what is in relation to the central character is suggested. Lastly, there is a possibility of human error when answering the questions in the coding scheme. To ensure assertiveness among coders, a control question could be added. However, we decided not to include one. The first reason is that we argue that coders would become familiar with the question eventually, since the same coders coded multiple advertisements. Thus, the question would eventually not be useful. The second reason is that no study we reviewed, including Kay & Furnham (2013) indicated using a control question.

Theoretical

Our theoretical framework builds upon previous literature in the same research area. To provide more reliable results for Sweden, more research over time and different media channels is needed. Furthermore, our results differ from previous research in many categories, which may put our findings into question. It further makes it difficult to generalize our findings. Cultural differences might explain this. However, more research, especially in countries similar to Sweden, is needed to draw conclusions.

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# 7.   Appendices

**Appendix 1.** Companies behind advertisements included in data analysis.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1-Fits-All | Grumme | McDonalds | Svenska Postkodlotteriet |
| Agria | Guldfågeln | Medifacts | Svenska Röda Korset |
| Allerum | Hallon | Melleruds | Swedoor |
| Always | Harry Boy | Mio | Swiffer |
| Apotea.se | Head and Shoulders | Mix Megapol | Synoptik |
| Apotek Hjärtat | Hello Fresh | Mr Green | Synsam |
| Apoteket | Hemköp | MrVegas | Systembolaget |
| Arla | Hill's | Net on Net | Tele2 |
| Arvid Nordquist | Hornbach | Nicorette | Telenor |
| Astrid Lindgrens Värld | HSB | Nicotinell | Tre |
| ATG | Husqvarna | Nordea | Triss |
| Avtalat | ICA | Nordsjö | Unibet |
| Bauhaus | Ikea | Oddset | Unicef |
| Blocket | Intimissimi | OKQ8 | Vagidonna |
| Bokadirekt | Ipren | ÖoB | Vagisan |
| Bolist | Jalla Casino | Operation Smile | Vattenfall |
| Boozt | Jula | Oral-B | Vaxol |
| Booztlet.com | Jotun | Oreo | Videoslots |
| BYD | Jysk | Pågen | Viking Line |
| Bygghemma | Kinder | Parodontax | Ving |
| Byggmax | Klarna | Pepsi | Visit Denmark |
| Cancerfonden | KPA | Philadelphia | Volt Natura |
| Carglass | Kronans apotek | Rädda Barnen | Volvo |
| Carlsberg | Kry | Re:member | Willab Garden |
| Colgate | L'oréal | Refunder | XXL |
| Coop | Läkare Utan Gränser | Rusta | Yes |
| Cykelkraft | Lambi | Sambla | Yoggi |
| Dafgårds | Lantmännen | Samsung | Zalando |
| Doz Apotek | Lendo | Samtrygg | Zhero |
| Dyson | Leo Vegas | SAS | |
| Elgiganten | Lidl | Seng | |
| Elon | Lindt | Siemens | |
| Enklare.se | Listerine | SJ | |
| Euro Jackpot | Livostin | Sketcher | |
| Findus | Löfbergs | Småa | |
| Finish | Marabou | SOS Barnbyar | |
| Folksam | Marbodal | Specsavers | |
| Generation Pep | Maria Casino | Stryktipset | |
| Gillette | Mariestads | Svensk Fastighetsförmedling | |
| Granngården | Max | Svensk Hypotekspension | |

**Appendix 2.** Cohen's kappa for Coder A and Coder B, C and D respectively. Cohen's kappa shows percentage of agreement.

|  | #Ads both coders coded* | Cohen's kappa | Interpretation** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Coder A & B | 51 | 0.802 | Very good |
| Coder A & C | 46 | 0.875 | Very good |
| Coder A & D | 45 | 0.838 | Very good |

*When duplicates and ads with more than one central character were removed. **Bell et al. (2019).

**Appendix 3.** Coding scheme.

**Start of Block 1**

Du kommer nu att få svara på frågor om reklamen som du har sett.

Ange dina initialer.

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

**End of Block 1**

**Start of Block 2**

Ange under vilket program som reklamen visades.

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                │
│                                                                │
│                                                                │
│                                                                │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Ange datum för reklamen och tid för när reklampausen startade.

```
┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                │
│                                                                │
│                                                                │
│                                                                │
└──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

**End of Block 2**

**Start of Block 3**

Du kommer nu att få svara på frågor om produkten/tjänsten i reklamen.

Ange produkten/tjänsten och företaget i reklamen.

Vilken kategori passar produkten/tjänsten in i? Du kan välja flera alternativ.

☐ Livsmedel

☐ Stora hushållsapparater (vitvaror t.ex. diskmaskin, frys, tvättmaskin)

☐ Små hushållsapparater (t.ex. kaffemaskin, brödrost, dammsugare, mixer)

☐ Hemelektronik (t.ex. TV, radio, dator, mobiltelefon)

☐ Hemprodukter (t.ex. tvätt- och diskmedel, toalettpapper)

☐ Kropp och hälsa (t.ex smink, hygien- och renlighetsprodukter, hälsoprodukter)

☐ Finans (t.ex försäkring, banker)

☐ Fritid och nöje (t.ex spa, hotell, restaurang, resa, sport)

☐ Kläder

☐ Heminredning (t.ex möbler, sängar)

☐ Annat (specificera)

**End of Block 3**

**Start of Block 4**

Du kommer nu att få svara på frågor om huvudpersonen i reklamen. *En huvudperson är någon som spelar en huvudroll i reklamen (synlig och/eller hörbar)*. Om det finns mer än en huvudperson ber vi dig att välja den som du anser är mest central/syns mest.

Fanns det mer än en huvudperson?

| Ja | Nej |
|---|---|

Om det fanns mer än en huvudperson, ange hur många och beskriv dem kort. Specificera även vem du väljer att koda.

Hur skulle du beskriva huvudpersonens kön?

| | |
|---|---|
| Man | Icke-binär / tredje kön |
| Kvinna | Vet ej |

Hur gammal skulle du säga att huvudpersonen är? Du kan välja flera alternativ.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Under 18 | 35 - 44 | 65 - 74 |
| 18 - 24 | 45 - 54 | 75 - 84 |
| 25 - 34 | 55 - 64 | 85 eller äldre |

Är huvudpersonen synlig (du kan se den) och/eller hörbar (du kan höra den)?

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Synlig | Hörbar (inte synlig) | Både synlig och hörbar |

Finns det humoristiska inslag i reklamen och är de i sådana fall relaterade till huvudpersonen?

*Utgå från hur du själv uppfattar reklamen och gör en bedömning.*

| | |
|---|---|
| Humor är relaterat till huvudpersonen | Det finns inga humoristiska inslag |
| Humor är inte relaterat till huvudpersonen | Jag är osäker / vet ej |

Vem är huvudpersonen i relation till produkten/tjänsten?

*Huvudpersonen kan vara en konsument eller en expert på produkten/tjänsten.*

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Konsument (potential konsument/användare, beundrade eller berömde en produkt eller tjänst) | Expert (rekommenderade produkten/tjänsten för dess speciella egenskaper (läkare, tandläkare, advokat)) | Annat (specificera) |

Vilken typ av argument använde huvudpersonen för produkten/tjänsten?

*Huvudpersonen kan argumentera för varför du ska köpa produkten/tjänsten. De här argumenten kan antingen baseras på den*

*huvudpersonens åsikter eller på fakta.*

| En personlig kommentar om kvaliteten på en produkt/tjänst baserat på preferenser och erfarenhet | Ett faktabaserat argument som förklarar varför produkten/tjänsten var innovativ eller överlägsen på något sätt | Inget argument framfördes av huvudpersonen |
|---|---|---|

Vilken roll har huvudpersonen i reklamen?

| Beroende (som förälder/vårdare, make/maka eller barn) | Oberoende (som professionell, ledare, celebritet eller berättare) | Annan roll (specificera) |
|---|---|---|

Vilken miljö befinner sig huvudpersonen i?

| Hemmiljö (hemma, inom hemmets gränser (inklusive trädgård)) | Fritid/nöje (hotell, restaurang, spa, resor, sport) | Utomhusmiljö (utanför, utanför hemmets gränser) |
|---|---|---|
| Butik (livsmedelsbutik, klädbutik, företagets butik som annonseras) | Arbete (utanför hemmet, på ett kontor eller en arbetsplats) | Annan miljö (specificera) |

Är huvudpersonen en kändis i verkligheten?

| Ja (ange vem) | Nej |
|---|---|

Gjorde huvudpersonen ett yttrande eller en anmärkning (exempelvis en produktslogan) i slutet av annonsen?

| Yttrande/anmärkning fanns | Yttrande/anmärkning fanns inte |
|---|---|

Fanns det andra personer i reklamen förutom huvudpersonen?

| | |
|---|---|
| Endast kvinnor | Både kvinnor och män |
| Endast män | Inga personer i bakgrunden |

**End of Block 4**

**Start of Block 5**

Beskriv kort huvudpersonen med dina egna ord.

Ta ställning till följande påståenden:

| | Håller absolut inte med | Håller inte med | Håller varken med eller inte | Håller med | Håller absolut med |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Den här reklamen är en stereotyp porträttering av **könsroller** | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| Den porträtterade huvudpersonens **ålder** är stereotypisk i marknadsföring | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

**End of Block 5**

Tack för att du tog dig tid att göra denna undersökning.
Ditt svar har registrerats.

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**Appendix 4.** Statistics for the Swedish population.

| | Male | Gender % | Age % | Female | Gender % | Age % | Both genders | Age % |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Under 18 (18 or below) | 1190797 | 51 | 23 | 1123184 | 49 | 22 | 2313981 | 22.00 |
| Young adults (18-34) | 1115015 | 52 | 21 | 1035891 | 48 | 20 | 2150906 | 21.00 |
| Middle-aged (35-54) | 1354964 | 51 | 26 | 1300757 | 49 | 25 | 2655721 | 26.00 |
| Older adults (55+) | 1567450 | 48 | 30 | 1695393 | 52 | 33 | 3262843 | 31.00 |
| Total | 5228226 | | | 5155225 | | | | |

Table created using statistics from (Statistics Sweden, 2023)