The Use of 'Real' Woman Advertising

Effects, Consequences and Ethics

Pernille Nørgaard Videbæk
Student no.: pv87288
MSc Marketing
Business and Social Sciences, Aarhus University

Supervisor: Jessica Aschemann-Witzel
Department of Marketing and Organisation, Aarhus University

"At the very least, advertising helps to create a climate in which certain attitudes and values flourish, such as the attitude that women are valuable only as objects of men's desire"
(Kilbourne, 1999: 291)

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Executive summary

This paper sets out to determine the response a female audience has towards advertising using "real" women as opposed to ads using traditional, Photoshopped models. For many years, companies have created print advertisements under the assumption that sex sells, but this assumption has been questioned recently, and some companies have started to advertise using a more realistic portrayal of women. But the vast majority is still using objectifying images of women in their ads.

Social norm theory and self-objectification theory are used in order to outline the consequences of advertisers using these traditional images of women. Women exposed to extremely thin and beautiful models have a much more negative view of themselves and are much more dissatisfied with their bodies. This lowered body- and self-esteem can lead to disordered eating, unnecessary dieting, and a constant focus on getting the perfect body seen in advertising, which is in reality unobtainable. With this theory in mind several hypotheses were proposed: 1) Attitude towards the ad will be higher when using "real" women, 2) Attitude towards the brand will be higher with "real" women, 3) "real" women advertisement is seen as more effective, and 4) Self-objectification is correlated positively with pressure to be thin and with concern for one's weight.

With data from a focus group interview and a questionnaire using Danish women between 20-30 years of age (N=86) it was possible to confirm all proposed hypotheses, indicating that using "real" woman advertisement will have a positive influence on attitude towards the ad, attitude towards the brand, and by that also a positive influence on intention to buy. However, the study also shows that women are not ready to boycott a brand for using traditional, objectifying advertisements in their marketing. This finding suggests that marketers can use the easy way out and use the ads they have always been using.

The perspective of CSR is discussed, arguing that companies have a responsibility to their stakeholders and the community when the consequences of using traditional ads are so severe for women's mental health.

1 Introduction

In recent years the discussion of how to improve equality for women and encourage more egalitarian values in society have been debated and, according to some, one of the main areas to work on is how the media portrays women (Politiken, 2013). Especially in the beauty industry and their advertising towards women is only the image of women as thin, beautiful, fit, and well-groomed present and this gives a very one-sided and stereotypical impression of how women should be and how they should look (Fraser & Taylor, 2012). Pictures of women in advertising have been manipulated digitally and airbrushed to give a perfect, thin and flawless appearance.

A change can be detected in the imagery used to portray women in advertising, where companies such as Dove (Dove, 2014) and Aerie (Huffington Post, 2014) have launched campaigns focusing on real and diverse women of all shapes, sizes and colour. Companies choosing to use "real" models are still uncommon, though, and often creates headlines in the news and thousands of comments and shares on social media sites (Huffington Post, 2014). This could indicate that a norm is present regarding the use of flawless, beautiful models in ads, since people expect to see these models and are surprised when they see the use of "real" women in ads (Bicchieri, 2006).

Even though the changing portrayal of women in advertising is more and more visible, the vast majority of advertisers are still following the idea that "sex sells" when they are developing print ad campaigns (Blair et al, 2006). This often stereotypical and one-dimensional portrayal of women in the media as sex objects has a devastating effect on women, both with regards to lower self-esteem, lower body confidence, and increased self-objectification (Halliwell et al, 2011; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

It is important to examine whether or not the response the audience have towards ads using "real" women differ from the response they show towards ads using traditional, highly beautiful, digitally altered models, because the negative effects digitally altered models in ads have on a female audience could be potentially devastating, and if ads using "real" women are just as effective it could be argued that the advertising industry has a responsibility to promote a healthier and a more normal portrayal of women.

1.1 Problem statement

This leads to the following problem statement which will be researched in this thesis:

What kind of response do a female audience have towards ads with traditional models versus "real" women?

The following working questions will be answered in the process:

- What kind of social norm could explain the use of digitally altered and highly beautiful models in advertisements?
- Are respondents more positive towards both ads and brands using "real" women advertisement, and what is the consequence of their attitudes on their intention to buy?
- How is intention to buy influenced by the attitudes towards the ad and the brand?
- To what extent do the viewers of the ads find them to be effective?

In order to answer the problem statement and working questions above, a number of hypotheses are outlined:

- H1: Ads that utilise "real" women will elicit a more positive response than ads using digitally altered, highly beautiful models (Attitude towards the ad).
- H2: Brands that use "real" women in their advertisements will get a more positive rating than brands using digitally altered models in their ads (Attitude towards the brand).
- H3: Respondents will think that ads with "real" women are more effective than ads using digitally altered models.
- H4: A high degree of self-objectification within respondents will correlate positively with a high degree of pressure to be thin as well as a higher degree of weight concerns.

1.2 Delimitation

In order to study the above problem statement and hypothesis thoroughly, it is necessary to delimit the area of study on several dimensions, both with regards to the theories and also the data collection.

A very common assumption in attitudinal behaviour studies has been that your attitude will influence your behaviour and this will also be an assumption in this study (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000). This means that if you know the attitude of a consumer, you have a better chance of predicting their behaviour: "positive attitudes should predispose approach tendencies whereas negative attitudes should predispose avoidance tendencies" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000: 16). This can be transferred onto the situation of the consumer buying decision. The more the consumer likes the ad for a specific product or brand, the higher the likelihood is that the consumer is going to buy the product. The evaluation of the ad or the brand happens on an overall level, so it is the entire ad or brand that the consumer develops an attitude towards.

Objectification theory assumes that objectification in society is existing and only theorise on the consequences on women. The assumption is, however, somewhat tested in this thesis, in section 4.1. But since the assumption is only tested and analysed using one focus group interview, to a large extent it is also as-

sumed that an objectification environment is present. Not all aspects and consequences of self-objectification are examined, and only those of appearance anxiety, body shame, and to some extent disordered eating and mood changes.

Print advertisements from three different industries are tested: underwear, fitness apparel, and beauty products. The target group are Danish women between 20-30 years of age. The research is conducted in Denmark, but the theories and the empirical research is American, but it is not within the scope of this thesis to show that the two cultures are alike and can be compared and this is therefore only assumed here.

1.3 Definitions

Throughout this thesis the concept of "real" women ads will be used. By "real" women in advertisement is meant either the use of everyday women as opposed to models, as is the case with Dove's advertisements (Appendix A, figure 6), or the use of models that have not been Photoshopped, as is the case with Aerie's ads (Appendix A, figure 6). As a central element of the portrayal of "real" women is a more realistic presentation of women and their appearances. This is in opposition to the concept of traditional ads, which are centred around an idealised female image that is young, thin, beautiful, flawless, and digitally altered to perfection, and is realistically impossible to attain (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

1.4 Overview/Structure

This thesis is divided into four main sections. The first section explains the theoretical framework of the study, describing the relevant theories: Social norm theory and objectification theory.

The next section describes the methodology used and also explains both the qualitative and the statistical methods used. The third section focuses on the analysis, and using a very descriptive language explains the findings of the study and whether or not they were significant.

These findings lead into the fourth section, where a discussion of the results is outlined. Within the discussion, new findings and perspectives are merged with the previous results, in order to give an in-depth understanding of the problem and the possibilities.

After these four sections a conclusion is given, outlining the implications the findings have for management, and limitations of the study that could have influenced the results.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Women in the media – representation and portrayal

Women in advertising have in recent decades to a larger extent been portrayed as sex objects (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). The sex role portrayal of women as housekeepers, carers, or merely as a decorative element has decreased (Jaffe, 1991; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008), but the pervasiveness of the use of

women as sex object in advertising have reached new heights. In a recent study it was found that an average of 50 % of all advertisements featuring women in different magazines portrayed them as sex objects (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). This statistic is only considering print advertisements. The objectification of women is prevalent in all kinds of media, such as movies, art, television, and music videos (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

The portrayal of women as sex objects in advertisements is defined by a certain way of showcasing women's bodies: "The visual media portray women as though their bodies were capable of representing them" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 177). This means that the sexual objectification in an ad is strong when the woman is only there as a body or as a set piece, and nothing about her personality or skill set is emphasised, and she is but an object placed in the ad to sell. A consequence of this is that the message to the viewer becomes that "possession of a 'sexy body' is presented as a woman's key source of identity" (Bratu, 2013: 168).

When women are portrayed as sex objects in ads a stereotypical representation of beauty is also outlined. According to the images of women in print ads, to be sexy and beautiful in Western societies you have to be thin, Caucasian, heterosexual (Kilbourne, 2010), and often times also to be submissive (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). The prevalence of print ads showcasing women in this regard has only increased in recent years and is by some researchers seen as a threat to women's physical (Kilbourne, 1999; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008) and mental health (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

2.2 Social norms and how ads influence the public opinion

Most people follow the written rules and laws of the society they live in, but they also adhere to a number of norms that prescribe how it is appropriate to act in certain situations. These norms are not made explicit, but merely exist in a tacit form (Bicchieri, 2006). We often follow these norms without giving it much thought and thereby follow a heuristic route to behaviour (Bicchieri, 2006). This heuristic route to behaviour makes it easier for us to manoeuvre in society without having to process the huge amounts of information present in most situations. Social norms come with a script as to how to act in certain situations which makes it much less effortful to navigate in society (Bicchieri, 2006).

For a social norm to exist two conditions need to be fulfilled. First, a condition of contingency should be present, which emphasises that the individual must be aware of the norm and the situation it applies to (Bicchieri, 2006). Secondly, a conditional preference for following the norm in the situation it applies to must be in place. Furthermore in order for the individual to have a preference to follow the norm they must have an expectation that a certain number of other people in society will follow the norm in the given situation. Also, these other people will expect the individual to conform to the norm, and a threat of sanctions might be in place if the norm is not followed (Bicchieri, 2006).

Potential sanctions or other forms of punishment are great motivators to follow a social norm (Bicchieri, 2006). Social norms often go against the individual's self-interest and therefore both positive and negative motivators are often found when following a norm. A lot of the motivators are external: you might fear that others will punish you or sanction you if the norm is not followed, it could be a desire to please other people, or that you accept that the expectations of you are legitimate (Bicchieri, 2006). However, an internal state could also function as a motivator to follow a social norm and that is the feeling of guilt if the norm is not adhered to (Bichieri, 2006).

In the context of following a potential social norm of beauty, as described in section 2.1, empirical research has been conducted and it has found that more attractive females have greater opportunities in life (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). For instance, women that are overweight are less likely to go to college; they are less likely to experience upward social mobility, and even show "lower educational and economic attainments than their parents" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 178). Overweight women are also more likely to be described negatively by their co-workers, which have an impact on the work environment that tend to be hostile towards obese females (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). If your appearances are characterised as unfeminine, it has been shown to have a negative impact on the likelihood of being promoted and has resulted in job discrimination (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

All of these negative consequences for women who do not live up to the ideal image of beauty as constructed by society can be seen as social sanctions or punishments for not following the social norm. However, these sanctions are only a reality for women. Men do not have to adhere to the same norm, and do not experience the same sanctions if they are obese or overweight (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Bicchieri (2006) have developed a model of how a social norm is activated and the factors that influence it. An illustration of the model is shown below in figure 1.
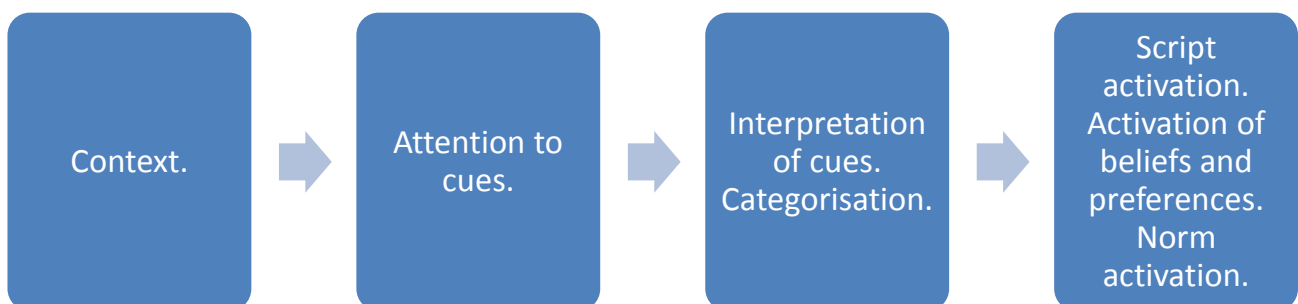

Figure 1

The context or the environment has a huge impact on social norms (Bicchieri, 2006). Both preferences and beliefs are very context-dependent which makes the context the starting point. When you know the envi-

ronment you are in, you can begin to pay attention to the cues around you, which is the second step in the model (Bicchieri, 2006). These cues could for instance be the elements of an advertisement and how women are portrayed in the ads.

After becoming aware of the cues, the interpretation of them begins. When a new instance, object, situation or interaction has come to one's attention it is compared to the categories that already exist in our minds (Bicchieri, 2006). These categories can be thought of as a "collection of instances that have a family resemblance" (Bicchieri, 2006: 83). Dividing all the inputs we get from our surroundings into categories is helpful in our everyday life because it helps to simplify all the inputs and information we get daily, in order for understanding to be easily reached.

Gorham (1999) have developed a framework to describe how images and stereotypes, that is the cues, we see in the media have an effect on us. The portrayals and images in the media are seen as social constructs that have an influence on the way we perceive reality and how we interpret the information around us. Traditionally it has been through social interaction that we have been able to learn about the world and construct the reality around us, but given the prevalence of the media in recent years, both with the rise of the Internet and also the development and heavy use of social media, the media now play a much bigger role when we perceive information about the world around us (Gorham, 1999). "We have many images about the world, [but] very few of them are actually based on personal experience" (Gorham, 1999: 231), since much is perceived through the media.

The social construction of the world results in social reality beliefs, which is concerned with "that 'large amount of unverified information' that people generally accept because the people around them accept it" (Gorham, 1999: 234). Stereotypes are a particular type of these social reality beliefs because they are "understandings about particular social groups that we have learned from our social world" (Gorham, 1999: 232). The social reality that is constructed is a group effort and the majority needs to agree on the values and beliefs in society before they can be trusted and followed, and therefore it is most often constructed by the dominant group in society (Gorham, 1999). The dominant group constructs reality by taking "social/cultural differences and make those differences appear natural" (Gorham, 1999: 232). Oftentimes these constructions go unquestioned and often also unnoticed because of the natural perception they seem to foster.

Even though Gorham (1999) examined racial stereotypes in the media his definition of a stereotype is still valid when substituting race with gender: "A *gender* stereotype [is] the operationalization of *gender* myths as social reality beliefs concerning members of *gender* groups based on perceived group affiliations" (Gorham, 1999: 233; emphasis not in original). As stated above, social reality beliefs often go unquestioned and is taken as reality, and people in society tend to accept these beliefs because they are accepted by

most people around them (Gorham, 1999). This can be equated with Bicchieri's (2006) definition of a social norm, which also only is present if enough people follow the norm or are expected to do so.

In order to understand how an individual comes to be influenced by the media's portrayal of women and form stereotypical ideas of what it means to be a woman it is necessary to look at how the human memory works (Gorham, 1999). When we perceive a stimulus or a cue, a trace is stored in the brain for this particular cue. "Every time that stimulus is perceived, all relevant traces previously encoded are also automatically retrieved from memory" (Gorham, 1999: 235). This means that whenever we encounter a cue similar to what we have already seen before, priming is happening in the mind that has an effect on our further processing of the information. Of course the strength with which we perceive and encode the cue is dependent on the amount of attention we pay at the time of perception (Gorham, 1999). Also, with repeated exposure of the same or similar cues, it becomes more and more embedded in your memory and retrieval of these prior cues will be much easier and eventually it will become completely automatic (Gorham, 1999).

This has consequences for the stereotypical portrayal of women in the media. When the stereotypical portrayal of women as extremely thin, beautiful, and flawless is constantly shown in the media they feed the underlying myth that this is how women are supposed to look like and this unattainable ideal is what is beautiful. Furthermore, since the cues from the ads showing women are encoded in memory and is eventually retrieved automatically, it might have an influence on the way information is processed (Gorham, 1999). This means that when women are encountered in real life, the stereotypical portrayal seen in the ads come to mind, and these cues as to what is beautiful will work as the standard from which all other women are judged.

Returning to figure 1, there are essentially two basic categories that Bicchieri (2006) is talking about: A natural kind category and a human artefact category. The difference between these two classes of categories is that the natural kind is "independent of human beliefs and behaviours, whereas human artefacts are made by man and are there to fulfil some specific function" (Bicchieri, 2006: 88). The natural kind category is often perceived as more true and sincere, and the objects or members of the category have an underlying true identity and share many similarities. Also, if a category is perceived as a 'natural kind', the scripted interactions it activates are also perceived as "stable, projectable, and 'right'" (Bicchieri, 2006: 96) which means that people will often believe that there are certain characteristics that are just inherent in the members of the category, which cannot be changed.

Research in human artefact categories, or social categories, "suggests that people tend to perceive social categories as natural kinds having high inductive potential and stability" (Bicchieri, 2006: 89). This means that even though gender, for instance, is a social construct, people perceive it as being something stable and natural. This is true for social roles and gender roles as well. "In treating social categories as natural

kinds, people pay disproportionate attention to surface characteristics and physical signals, taking them as diagnostic of deeper, essential traits" (Bicchieri, 2006: 90).

Finally, returning to figure 1, when the categorisation has taken place, script activation takes over. The right category has presumably been found, the script that match is followed and thereby also the norm that is expected to prevail in that situation (Bicchieri, 2006). With norm activation follows the underlying beliefs and preferences that the norm prescribes which are parts of the norm structure. Gorham (1999) explained how repeated exposure to certain cues will eventually alter your beliefs, and this is also the case in Bicchieri's (2006) model. Essentially, the more cues you are fed about a certain portrayal of women, the more this will alter your beliefs about women, how they are supposed to look and act.

Bicchieri's (2006) and Gorham's (1999) theories both help explain how advertisements have an influence on people's perceptions and how the images of ads feed into a social norm that prescribes how women are supposed to look like in order to be considered beautiful and basically also to be worth anything (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Miss Representation, 2011). If such a social norm is in place it will be limiting for women in several ways. First of all, if they choose to follow the norm they have to constantly monitor their appearances in order to make sure they look up to standard. Secondly, if they choose not to follow the norm, they will most likely be sanctioned, either by missing out on opportunities or by directly being discriminated against or harassed (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Miss Representation, 2011). The next section goes on to explain some of the potential consequences to women's mental health when subjected to sexual objectification.

2.3 Objectification theory

Objectification theory is a framework developed to better understand the consequences sexual objectification has on women and their mental health (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Objectification theory takes it as a given that sexual objectification of women occurs and only theorise of the impact it has on women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In the previous section on social norms, a theory was outlined as to how a social norm of objectification might come about, but here it is taken as a given that objectification is happening.

Sexual objectification can result in many forms of objectification, ranging from a sexualised and evaluative gaze to sexual and physical assault such as rape (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). However, "the common thread running through all forms of sexual objectification is the experience of being treated *as a body* (or collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 174). In other words, sexual objectification is present when a woman's body is taken as separate to her person, and when she is "reduced to a mere instrument, or regarded as if [her body, body parts and sexual function] were capable of representing her" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 175).

The less severe and more subtle form of sexual objectification, the sexualised gaze, is very common in Western society today, and is almost an everyday experience for many women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The sexualised gaze is always a starting point for potential sexual objectification and can take place in three related areas: "Interpersonal and social encounters", "in visual media that depicts interpersonal and social encounters", and third, "in people's encounters with visual media that spotlight bodies and body parts and seamlessly align viewers with an implicit sexualising gaze" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 176).

The third area is of interest to this study, because visual media encompass everything from film to visual arts, from music videos to women's magazines, and from television programming to advertisements (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). "The visual media portray women as though their bodies were capable of representing them" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 177) and in this sense the media and advertisements are contributing to the creation of a sexually objectifying environment (Szymanski et al, 2011).

In addition to the influence of the media, Szymanski et al (2011) has put forth five criteria that are to be met in order for a sexually objectifying environment to exist. The first criteria states that traditional gender roles exist in the environment. Traditional gender roles are characterised by men being socialised to "be powerful, controlling, and dominant" (Szymanski et al, 2011: 21), whereas women are encouraged to have "characteristics such as nurturance, emotionality, passivity, dependence, and harmony" (Szymanski et al, 2011: 21).

The second criterion for a sexually objectifying environment to be present is that there is a high probability of experiencing male contact. In other words, that the environment is male-dominated (Szymanski et al, 2011). The third criterion states that women typically are less powerful than men in these environments, both when it comes to the workplace and in society in general. Szymanski et al (2011) argues that due to the patriarchal structure of society, women are less powerful than men most of the time.

The fourth criterion is that there is a huge emphasis on women's bodies, their sexuality and their physical appearance. It is basically the extent to which "women's bodies [are] on display" (Szymanski et al, 2011: 23). This can be seen in anything from the type of clothes women wear and how tight it is fitted (Szymanski et al, 2011), to how the media portray women and whether or not ads impose a sexualising gaze on the viewer (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This is related to the fifth and final criterion that states that there is "approval and acknowledgement of male gaze in that setting" (Szymanski et al, 2011: 24). This is the same gaze that Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) terms the sexualised and evaluative gaze, as described above.

The male gaze, also labelled "girl watching by Quinn (2002), functions both as a way for men to exert power over women by using their gaze to keep them in their place, but it also functions as a game for men (Quinn, 2002). Through the playful activity of "girl watching" men assert to other men that they are heterosexual and in this way they are building masculinity as their identity (Quinn, 2002). One of the implications

of this is that the male gaze is very much accepted in society, even though it has a huge impact on the way women are perceived, as the men engaging in "girl watching" see the women or girls as objects, without feelings or opinions, and only as a prop in their masculinity-establishing game (Quinn, 2002).

Szymanski et al's (2011) five criteria for sexually objectifying environments are hard to escape. Especially in Western societies, like the United States, are these criteria almost always met, thereby creating an environment that is supporting men in their right to evaluate, sexualise and objectify women (Moradi, 2011). Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) also assume objectification of women to be present in society and made it an underlying assumption when they developed their theory (Moradi, 2011). When images of idealised beauty in the portrayal of women are shown repeatedly in the media and the resulting objectification of women is so unavoidable in today's Western cultures, most girls and women are affected by it in one way or another (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

"Objectification theory posits that the cultural milieu of objectification functions to socialise girls and women to, at some level, treat *themselves* as objects to be looked at and evaluated" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 177; emphasis in original). This means that girls and women come to look at themselves with an outsider's perspective, turning their point of view away from themselves and their own feelings and sensations. Through the process of socialisation, Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) explains how girls and women come to internalise the feelings of objectification: "Effective socialisation begins with compliance to minimally sufficient external pressures, proceeds through interpersonal identification, and ends with individuals claiming ownership of socialised values and attitudes, often incorporating them into their sense of self" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 177).

The internalisation of the attitudes and values as if they were a part of the individual's self, come from repeated and continual exposure to external pressures (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). These external pressures are centred round women's appearance and the need for women to look attractive in order to be worth anything or to have any power (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Meyers & Crowther, 2007; Miss Representation, 2011). Meyers & Crowther (2007) emphasise thinness as the ultimate ideal, and Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) ad that it also includes being young and White. A sociocultural model have been defined that try to explain where this pressure comes from, emphasising the importance of social and cultural pressures for women to conform to the social norm of thinness (Morry & Staska, 2001). The main component that contributes to the external pressures is, according to the model, the media and its glorification and portrayal of thinness of women (Myers & Crowther, 2007; Morry & Staska, 2001).

The internalisation of these beauty ideals in the media is a key concept to understand in the theory, because "once a woman has internalised the thin-ideal, it is the process of self-objectification, i.e. of viewing herself on the basis of her appearance, that leads to body dissatisfaction" (Myers & Crowther, 2007: 298).

Just as Gorham (1999) theorised, the process of internalisation is grounded in the repeated and continual exposure to the idealised and thin image of women in the media, and it is this constant confrontation and exposure that will lead women to internalise the stereotypical image (Morry & Staska, 2001), thereby "assimilating this thin-ideal, and its associated values into their own world view such that these ideas become the guiding principles in the women's lives" (Myers & Crowther, 2007: 297).

According to Fredrickson & Roberts' (1997) objectification theory, there are two routes that can lead to self-objectification and thereby harm women and their mental health state. The first is a direct route, where the woman has been the victim of sexual harassment and sexual violence. The other route is more indirect and subtle, and develops through the mechanisms described above, when the woman moves in a sexual objectification environment and is continuously confronted with sexual objectification. The first route is very severe and harmful, but not much research has been done in the area (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The second route will be emphasised here, because more research have documented it, objectification theory is developed with it as the foundation, and because most women are affected by sexual objectification in this way (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Self-objectification can have a range of consequences for women's mental health and quality of life (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). It is worth mentioning, though, that not all women are affected in the same way and to the same degree, but objectification theory and its proposed consequences have been researched thoroughly in the literature and significant results have been found for almost all of the consequences of objectification theory (Moradi & Huang, 2008). The proposed consequences of objectification theory are outlined in the following and are illustrated in figure 2 below.
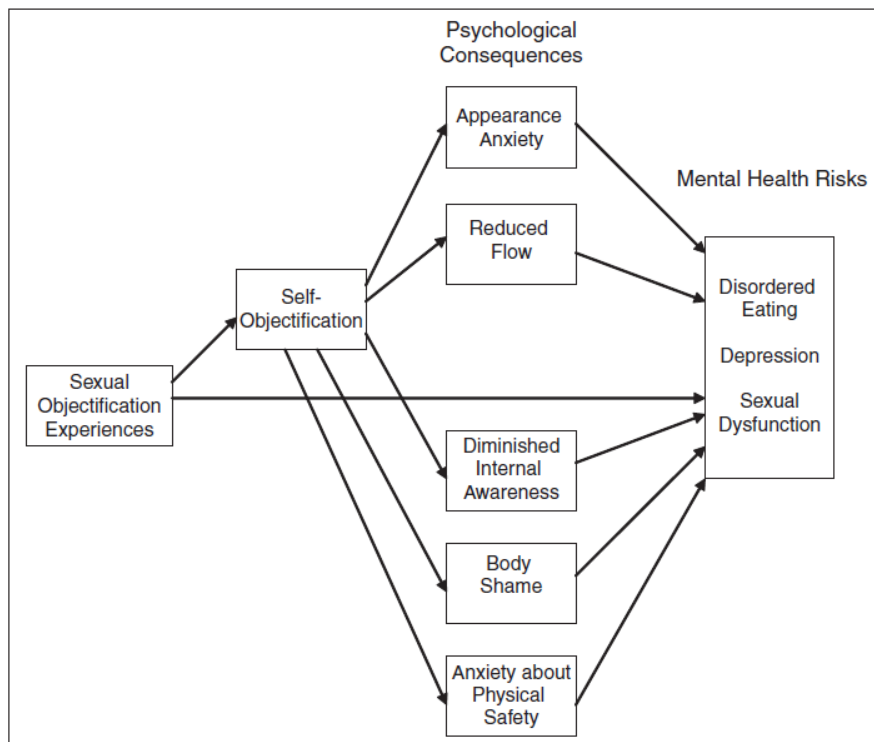
Figure 2: (from Szymanski et al, 2010)

One of the consequences is body shame (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Body shame is the feeling that arises when you compare yourself to the images of women in the media and fail to live up to the same thin- and beauty standards that the models in the ads do. "Individuals experiencing shame tend to attribute their shortcomings globally to the self in its totality ('I am a bad person') rather than narrowly to their specific actions ('I did something bad')" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 181). Therefore, body shame can lead to feeling you are a bad person and can also lead to feelings of depression.

The portrayal of women in the media is very unrealistic and almost impossible to live up to. Therefore women are exposed to many opportunities daily to experience body shame, because these images are virtually unavoidable (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Shame is a very powerful feeling, and in feeling it towards their body, having to meet society's standards of beauty becomes a moral issue and "women who fail to live up to this obligation have been deemed uncivilised and immoral" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 182).

Another consequence of self-objectification is increased levels of anxiety. Anxiety is a feeling that arises when a threat is felt but cannot be fully perceived (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). There are two types of anxiety – safety anxiety and appearance anxiety (figure 2). Safety anxiety is grounded in the statement that "sexual objectification is a key component of sexual violence" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 183). When most women are at risk of being sexually objectified because of their presence in a sexual objectifying environment, they are also at risk of being harmed or attacked physically, and this creates a threat that leads to

the negative feeling of anxiety (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

Another form of anxiety is felt when worrying about one's appearance. "Not knowing exactly when and how one's body will be looked at and evaluated can create anxiety about potential exposure" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 182). This can manifest itself as constantly monitoring your body, checking if clothes are in the right position, or adjusting your hair and makeup. It is a very time and energy consuming task and one that can create a great deal of anxiety in many women, as the evaluation can be very harsh if standards are not met (Miss Representation, 2011).

A lack of peak motivational states is another important psychological consequence of self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). When your mind constantly drifts to your appearance, checking to see if everything is in its place and if you are presentable, you are very much self-conscious. A disruption can also come from others making the woman aware of her body, for instance by harassing her on the street, or shouting names at her. The self-consciousness that results from both kinds of disruptions limits your ability to be fully "absorbed in mental or physical activity" which can be "immensely rewarding and enjoyable" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997: 183). In other words, your quality of life diminishes since you cannot lose yourself in a rewarding task, because you cannot let go of your self-consciousness.

The last consequence mentioned in Fredrickson & Roberts' (1997) objectification theory is awareness of internal bodily states. When seeing themselves through the eyes of others, women not only see themselves as objects, but they also lose touch with how they are feeling and the sensations of their body. In studies, women have been less accurate when having to report on internal sensations such as their heart rate, stomach contractions and sexual excitement (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

All of these psychological consequences of self-objectification might lead to serious mental health risks for women, where the most common ones are disordered eating, depression, and sexual dysfunction (figure 2). The fact that some women are constantly anxious of their appearance and their safety and are losing their ability to correctly identify their bodily sensations is a serious matter and one that potentially could influence half the population in Western cultures. The main focus here will be on appearance anxiety, since it is more easily measured and also because, being the less severe of the consequences, it potentially has an impact on most women.

Fredrickson & Roberts' (1997) objectification theory explains the consequences for women of being objectified and to experience self-objectification. Not all women experience objectification in the same way, and might not respond exactly in the same manner, but research have shown that many women do show at least some of the consequences to an extent (Moradi, 2011; Szymanski et al, 2010).

3 Methodology

3.1 General methodology

The literature in this study was found using first a search of the keywords for the relevant terms: Social norms, Objectification theory, Stereotypes, Stereotypes in advertising. In the search, different versions and combinations of these terms were used so all the relevant articles would appear in the search results. When relevant articles or books were found, a snowball effect was used in order to find more relevant literature, meaning that the reference lists from the articles were used to find more articles (Flick, 2009). Eventually, a broad overview of the literature within the topic and field was found and most of the relevant literature was included in this study.

Both theoretical literature and empirical literature was used in order to learn about the area of study (Flick, 2009). The theoretical literature was used in order to develop the underlying theories and assumptions of this study, and the empirical literature was used to gain knowledge and understanding of the area, as well as to emphasise and validate results found in the present study. Methodological literature was used as well, so the research method and approaches were correct and would yield useful and generalizable results (Flick, 2009).

A lot of the empirical and theoretical research has been conducted in the USA. Also, objectification theory itself was developed by American researchers (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The perspective of American culture on the studies and theories might have implications for the present study, in that the theories and results found in the literature cannot be directly applied to a Danish environment. However, it is assumed that since the two cultures are both Western, and America has a very big influence on Western societies and their culture, the cultural differences might not be as problematic, and the literature can therefore be used in the present study.

3.1.1 Philosophical approach

The research design of this study is divided in two: The first part is using a qualitative approach and the second part is using a quantitative approach. These two approaches rest on fundamentally different assumptions and world views, and these will be explained in turn. Afterwards, an argument as to how two so different methods can work in the same research design is outlined.

A focus group is chosen as the approach for the qualitative part of the study. The methodology of social constructivism, also called interpretivism, fits under a qualitative approach (Flick, 2009; Research Methodology, 2014). On its epistemological level, interpretivism assumes that reality is socially constructed and there is not one objective reality. The goal of the analysis is to understand a specific situation or case and find the meanings behind the data. Understanding can only come from analysing groups of people and how

they interact and communicate, or individuals and how they explain the case or the problem (Carson et al, 2001; Research Methodology, 2014). This is why a focus group is chosen for this part of the research design.

Within an interpretivistic approach the researcher have a rather visible position and role, opposed to a quantitative design, where the researcher is merely and objective observer (Research Methodology, 2014). The researcher often times have an active role in the data collection, as is evident by the use of focus groups where the researcher is the interviewer and steers the conversation (Flick, 2009). The deep involvement of the researcher is especially evident in the interpretation stage of qualitative research, since the understanding of the data happens from the perspective of the researcher.

Therefore, it is important to acknowledge the authors position as a researcher, since this can potentially influence the meanings found (Carson et al, 2001). The author of this study is herself in her mid-twenties and therefore part of the target group. The issue of equality is something that has interested the author for some time and has also been the subject of previous research on her part. These perspectives might have an influence on the interpretation of the data. However, since the author is very much aware of her own position, this is assumed to be of minor importance.

Interpretivism takes the position that everything socially constructed, developed by society and the actors in it. Both Bicchieri's (2006) and Gorham's (1999) theories build on this basic assumption. Also objectification theory sees social constructivism as a main truth on how the world functions (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). It would seem that when the basic theories and assumptions build on this perspective it will be difficult to use a quantitative approach to examine the subject. But, as Flick (2009) argues, it is often times easier to use a quantitative approach on qualitative data or methods, than it is the other way around. This is why the second part of the research design uses a quantitative approach, with a questionnaire developed and distributed to a number of respondents.

A quantitative approach is often grounded in the epistemology of positivism, which can be seen as the opposite of interpretivism (Research Methodologies, 2014). Positivism emphasises that there is an objective reality that quantitative research can help uncover. The goal of this type of research is to explain data, come up with generalizable results, and to make predictions. The focus is not on a specific or unique situation, but to find out predictions or laws that hold for as many as possible (Research Methodology, 2014).

These two approaches to research seem impossible to fit into one design when their views of the world differ so dramatically (Carson et al, 2001). Within an epistemology exists different rules, procedures and guidelines for carrying out research and these are very different in interpretivism and positivism (Carson et al, 2001; Research Methodology, 2014). However, a research design can be carried out where both these approaches are included. In the design of this study, each approach is carried out independent of the other,

so the two methods do not mix at any time (Flick, 2009). Firstly, the qualitative approach is carried out using the method of the focus group interview. This data is analysed and some of it is also used in the development of the quantitative questionnaire, but the questionnaire itself is strictly quantitative. This is a very common way of conducting research (Flick, 2009).

3.1.2 Mixed methods – why?

The combination of using both a qualitative and a quantitative method both gives a deeper knowledge of the issue and at the same time it further validates the findings, in that if the same result is reached using different methods then the conclusion is more sound (Flick, 2009). It is very common to use both methods in a research design. Often a qualitative study is used first to explore the subject and the key problems, and using these findings later on in a quantitative design (Carson et al, 2001). This is exactly what is done in this study, so the two different methodological approaches and their different assumptions and world views do not clash (Flick, 2009).

Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses, and complement each other well (Flick, 2009). The qualitative method is more in depth and specific and is a great approach for better understanding a particular case, sample or situation. The focus is not on generalising the findings, but to find the meaning of the situation. The quantitative approach, on the other hand, is much more focused on findings that can be generalised and results that can explain or predict a certain phenomenon (Carson et al, 2001; Flick, 2009).

3.2 Focus group interview

Focus groups can contribute to information regarding very complex issues and may be able to establish why certain behaviours prevail and also reveal the motivations behind it (Carson et al, 2001). The issue of the portrayal of women in the media and its consequences is rather complex, and it might be difficult to uncover all of the underlying issues and perspectives with only a questionnaire. When using a focus group interview, more in-depth knowledge is obtained and may help to explain some of the findings in the questionnaire if they seem puzzling. A focus group interview is chosen over individual interviews since interpretivism believes that reality is constructed in interactions (Research Methodology, 2014) and also because a group discussion might help uncover more viewpoints among the participants (Flick, 2009).

The method of a focus group interview is used in this study in order to examine the beliefs held about women in society, to explore the participants' view of the use of "real" women in advertising and to what extend they find it effective. It is also used to examine the responses the participants have towards the advertisements used in the questionnaire, so possible patterns of answers by respondents can be explained better.

Two focus groups were planned in the research design but due to time constraints and difficulties in

participant recruitment only one was conducted. With data from two separate groups it would have been easier to validate, to make sure that no biases were inherent in the groups, and to increase the chance that all relevant areas and discussion have been covered (Carson et al, 2001). However, given the limitations one interview was considered satisfactory.

3.2.1 Focus group participants

Studies have already been conducted on especially children and adolescents (Fraser & Taylor, 2012; Martin & Kennedy, 1993) on how they respond to advertisements of this kind, and therefore a slightly older age group is examined in this study in order to make a contribution to the existing literature and to see if the effect of traditional advertisements is still present when older subjects are studied. Previous focus group research within the area of "real" women in advertising has shown that opinions can differ between age groups and therefore young women in the age group of 20-30 years are targeted here (Millard, 2009).

The number of participants in the group was determined based on Carson et al's (2001) recommendations, which suggest between six and twelve participants. In recent years the trend in research has been to limit the participant number in focus groups, and five participants have therefore also come to be satisfactory (Carson et al, 2001). Five participants was the goal in the present study, since the topic of beauty, appearances and the portrayal of women can be a sensitive topic for some, and participants might not feel comfortable discussing it in a room with too many strangers. Fewer participants also ensure that everyone in the group is heard and get their points across (Carson et al, 2001).

Participants of a focus group interview do not have to consist of a representative sample of the population, but can be experts on a particular topic, or a certain segment of consumers (Carson et al, 2001). For this study, the respondents did not have to be experts on the portrayal of women in the media. It was actually preferred that they were regular consumers, so it was possible to examine the underlying beliefs about women and the media. Therefore, recruitment of participants was done using social media and the author's contacts, to get women of the age of twenty or above to participate in the interviews.

The recruitment process was difficult, and it was hard to find participants for the focus group. After having increased the incentive for participation to include a gift certificate for the cinema five participants signed up. Everybody showed up on the day of the interview. Before beginning the interview, the participants were asked to fill out a small questionnaire with questions on demographics and media habits. The questions asked in the questionnaire were adapted from Millard (2009) and were used to check if the participants were in fact of the target group and what kind of relationship they had with the media and how much they used it (Appendix A, figure 1). Due to one participant being late, only four filled out the questionnaire (Appendix A, figure 1).

The focus group was conducted on April 10th 2014. It started at 16:00 and lasted an hour and twenty

minutes. The group consisted of five participants, all women, between twenty four and thirty years of age, and all had at least finished a bachelor degree (Appendix A, figure 1). All participants indicated that they were heavy consumers of TV and online platforms such as Netflix and Viaplay, indicated by everyone answering that they use it several times a week, and two even every day (Appendix A, figure 1). However, the participants' consumption of magazines and other forms of print media were limited to once a week or less (Appendix A, figure 1), which could indicate that they might not be exposed to print media as much. This could potentially be a limitation of the findings.

3.2.2 Procedure – Focus group

The session was planned to last no more than one and a half hours, so participants would not back out because of time issues, and also because research have shown that participants get restless and lose concentration after approximately one and a half hours (Carson et al, 2001). The focus group took place at Aarhus University, Business and Social Sciences, where a room was booked in advance. The environment is critical when conducting interviews and should make the participants feel comfortable and at ease, since this will help facilitate the discussion (Chrzanowska, 2002). At the university it was possible to book a room to ensure a quiet place where participants felt assured that they could express their views in confidence. Snacks were also served in order to reward the participants for showing up. The session was conducted in the afternoon in order to make sure that everybody had time to participate (Carson et al, 2001).

The author of this thesis functioned as the moderator of the interview and an assistant was present to help with practical tasks, such as handling sound equipment, making sure everyone had refreshments and generally contributing to a positive atmosphere. The role of the moderator was to facilitate discussion amongst the participants and focus on getting everybody to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts in the group (Carson et al, 2001).

The interview guide was developed with several key themes in mind. Firstly, it was important to examine the beliefs the participants held about women and how they felt this was connected to advertisements and their portrayal of women (Appendix A, figure 2). This was needed in order to strengthen the assumption that a social norm is present for women in a Western society with regards to how they are supposed to look. Some of the questions in this section were adapted from Millard (2009) in order to use questions that had already been tested in another focus group. The second theme of discussion was regarding the participants' view of traditional advertisements versus ads with "real" women (Appendix A, figure 2). This theme was necessary in order to elaborate on the findings in the quantitative questionnaire in the second part of the research design.

Furthermore, the ads with "real" women were the ones to be used in the questionnaire so that possible biases or views would become clear that might not be easily interpreted using only the quantitative data.

Some of the questions in this section were adapted from Scott & Cloud (2008) that had been used in their focus group study. A section with questions on advertising in general and the influence this has on the participants was also included, both to get the discussion going, but also to examine the beliefs about advertisements and their effectiveness held by the participants (Appendix A, figure 2).

All questions were chosen on the basis of relevance and also to try and minimise bias and social desirability. This was done by asking as neutral questions as possible and not use words that might either have a positive or negative connotation in the interview guide. Questions from previous research were used where possible, because these questions had been tested before and found to fit the criteria. The ads shown were selected based on the quantitative questionnaire and the ads used in this. For a discussion of how these ads were chosen see section 3.3.2. The outline of the interview guide was developed to be semi-structured, so that a more flexible interview was possible (Flick, 2009). A deviation from the questions was possible, if the discussion covered topics that came up later or if new themes were brought up that needed to be explored further.

The outline of the questions was chosen so the easiest questions were asked early on in the interview, and the more demanding and sensitive questions came later on. This was done to ensure that respondents felt comfortable discussing with the other participants and that they felt like they were capable of answering the questions asked (Carson et al, 2001; Chrzanowska, 2002). Furthermore, an introduction was given by the moderator before the interview started, were the topic was presented, and participants were reassured that their answers were completely anonymous, that there were no right or wrong answers and that everyone's opinion matter (Chrzanowska, 2002). The participants were then asked to present themselves to the group, also to facilitate the discussion and making sure that everyone got to say something at first (Appendix A, figure 2; Chrzanowska, 2002).

Before conducting the focus group interview, the interview guide was tested on several subjects to ensure that the questions were understood correctly and to see whether or not the outline of the questions worked well or if another line of questioning felt more natural (Carson et al, 2001). Based on these test subjects, a few questions were rephrased, but the outline stayed the same.

3.2.3 Data analysis – Focus group

In the days following the focus group interview, transcribing of the data began. Flick (2009) recommends keeping recordings of the focus groups to a minimum, so the discussion will flow as natural as possible and so the participants will not feel observed or uncomfortable. It was necessary to record the session using a voice recorder, so transcribing was possible and the analysis of the precise statements made by participants were interpretable. However, this was seen as minimally invasive and the focus group participants did not seem affected by being recorded.

The transcribed data was then analysed using coding. In its basic form, coding is a method of data reduction and re-organisation, and it is used to get an overview of huge amounts of data stemming from, for instance, focus group interviews (Carson et al, 2001; Flick, 2009). However, coding is also a method of opening up the data (Flick, 2009) and "to expand and tease out the data, in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretations" (Carson et al, 2001: 30). In this study, coding is used as a mixture of the two, which is also most common in practice. This will facilitate both an important organisation of the data and a more in-depth and thoughtful process of interpretation (Carson et al, 2001).

Before analysing the transcript, a preliminary list of start codes was created. These codes were mainly selected on the basis of the overall themes of the interview guide, and topics that had been covered during the interview by the respondents (Appendix A, figure 5). This list served as preliminary codes, as during coding it is important not to force any labels on the data (Flick, 2009). Instead, new codes were created if necessary. Also, these starting codes were only overall themes. When going through the transcription several times, more and more sub-categories or sub-codes were used, in order for the meaning of the interview to come forth (Carson et al, 2001; Flick, 2009). The final list of codes can be found in Appendix A, figure 5.

The interpretations and conclusions that are derived from the focus group interview are on the one hand used for the grounding of the assumption that a social norm exists for women's appearance, and on the other hand it is used to support some of the data from the questionnaire. However, some limitations and analytical issues are important to remember, before drawing conclusions from the focus group data. These will be outlined in the next section.

3.2.4 Limitations – Focus group interview

An important limitation to have in mind when analysing focus group data is to what extent the participants affected each other (Carson et al, 2001). There was to some extent a degree of influence by one member on the others. Participant M, who before the interview had mentioned that she had a huge interest in the topic and might have some rather radical opinions compared to others, often introduced concepts, viewpoints and statistics that the others had not heard about before or had not thought about in that regard. However, the other participants seemed to genuinely agree with her and think that what she said was right. But there might be a bias because their opinions have been more skewed in one direction than it otherwise would have been.

Also, one of the participants, participant LE, seemed to disagree with the other participants, but did not comment very much or elaborate on her viewpoints. When there are viewpoints that only some members express, there will be some issues with the analysis of them, especially in this study since only one focus group was conducted and it is difficult to say whether or not another group might have agreed more with

the statements of LE (Kidd & Parshall, 2000). However, it is difficult to analyse using only the statements of LE (Appendix A, figure 4).

The interview went off track a couple of times, but when it did the conversation stayed for the most part on feminist issues (Appendix A, figure 4). Had the off topics been completely different from the themes of the interview guide it would have been a bigger problem, but since the conversations outside the planned themes were still in the same area as the main subject it is not seen as a big concern (Carson et al, 2001).

3.3 Quantitative questionnaire

3.3.1 Sample – Quantitative questionnaire

The questionnaire was distributed using Facebook and email. This made it possible to reach a lot of people in the target group, which are women in the age group of 20-30 years of age, given that the author and her network is in this age group. However, due to the length of the questionnaire and the fact that only women were of interest to the study it was difficult to obtain a high number of respondents, and as many as fifty respondents dropped out when filling out the questionnaire (Appendix B, figure 1).

154 people opened and answered the questionnaire, but of these 68 were deleted, either because of missing values because a case-wise deletion method was chosen, or because they did not pass the screening question (Appendix B, figure 1; Malhotra, 2009). This left 86 completed questionnaires to analyse. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 68. Even though this seems like a wide spread, 82 % are 30 years old or younger (Appendix B, figure 1), and the primary target group of women between 20-30 years of age are therefore assumed to have been reached. This also explains why the typical respondent is a student, or has a full-time job (Appendix B, figure 1). The sample is highly educated with 33 % having finished a bachelor degree and 21 % a master's degree (Appendix B, figure 1).

3.3.2 Stimuli and measures

The quantitative questionnaire was developed in order to test hypotheses regarding the responses participants had towards ads using "real" women and ads with traditional, digitally altered models, respectively. Also, questions in the survey were developed in order to probe the mental states of the participants so the consequences of the portrayal of women in the media could be explored. In order to do this, the questionnaire was divided into two main parts: The first part was a rating of specific advertisements and how favourably each respondent found them (Appendix A, figure 6). The second part consisted of different rating scales regarding the mental states of the respondents and their attitudes towards the different kinds of ads.

All questions were rated on a seven-point Likert-scale (Appendix A, figure 6). An uneven scale was chosen so that respondents had the opportunity of rating specific items as neutral, using the middle point of

the scale. This is important because some of the items might be on a topic that some of the respondents have not thought about, or do not have an interest in. It might have made even more respondents drop out if they were forced to make a decision on all items.

For the first part of the questionnaire, advertisements had to be selected for the participants to rate. Some researchers in the field have chosen to develop ads themselves and use them in their studies (for instance Jaffe & Berger, 1994). However, Feiereisen et al (2009) argue that using real ads have a greater effect on respondents, and will lead to a greater external validity, because the real ads help create as close to a real advertising environment for the respondents as possible, and this will in turn "stimulate valid models of actual consumer behaviour" (Feiereisen et al, 2009: 824). Real published ads are therefore chosen for this study in order to heighten the realism for the respondents and in that way enhance the generalizability of the findings (Feiereisen et al, 2009). However, it should be noted that in using real ads from real brands will make it hard to control for any previous knowledge of the brand that might influence the respondents' ratings.

The ads were chosen based on the criteria listed by Stankiewicz & Rosselli (2008) on how to determine whether or not a woman is portrayed as a sex object in advertisements. Their criteria are the woman's facial expression, posture, what she is doing, her make-up, the camera angle used, and how much skin is shown in the ad (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). Stankiewicz & Rosselli (2008) emphasise that even though these guidelines might give an indication as to whether or not the woman is portrayed as a sex object it is a very individual conclusion and it depends on the "feel" of the ad the viewer gets.

In addition to these criteria, the amount of digital alterations made to the model in the ad where also estimated and taken into consideration in the selection process. The women in the traditional model ads needed to be digitally altered as compared to the "real" women so a difference could potentially be detected. It was important in the selection process that different industries were represented, in order to eliminate potential industry bias. Three industries were chosen: Underwear, beauty products, and fitness apparel. Two ads were chosen for each industry, one with "real" women and one with a traditional portrayal of women. It was important that the ads within each industry were as similar as possible and that the woman in the ad was the focus. For the ads chosen for each industry see Appendix A, figure 3.

The scales used in the questionnaire were a mixture of scales verified and tested in other studies, adaptations of such scales, and items developed with a background in the theory. This will ensure that the information that is extracted from the data will be more valid, since a lot of the items have been tested and validated in other studies, and the adaptations will be close to the originals and will therefore also lead to more valid results. The questionnaire was done in Danish, so all the scales had to be translated from English into Danish. This could potentially create some validation problems, in that the chosen word in Danish

might not have the exact same connotation as their counterparts on the English scale.

The scales used to test the attitudes towards the ads and the attitudes towards the brands were both adapted from Gao et al (2013). Each of the scales consists of three items, but only two from each is chosen in the present questionnaire. The items are very similar on each scale (e.g. "I rate this ad favourably", "I have a positive impression of this ad", and "I like this ad" (Gao et al, 2013: 516)) and one from each scale is taken out in order for the questionnaire not to be too long. Even though the items of these scales are very simplistic and easily answered, too many questions will still tire out the respondents and given the risk of respondents dropping out before the end of the questionnaire, one of the items from each scale was deleted.

In the literature, the measurement of self-objectification has been approached in different ways. The two most common approaches used by researchers in this field are both self-reported scales, but using two different methods. The first is developed by Noll & Fredrickson (1998) in their study linking self-objectification, body shame, and disordered eating. Their questionnaire is built so that respondents rank 12 body attributes according to how important they are for the individual respondent. Half of the attributes are based on appearance, such as weight, sex appeal and measurements, whereas the other half are attributes concerning competence and ability, such as stamina, muscular strength, and physical energy level (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998). The scale is examining how concerned the respondent is with her physical appearance. This corresponds with objectification theory since it suggests that "the consequences of self-objectification occur solely as a result of being concerned with physical appearance, regardless of individuals' level of satisfaction with their physical appearance" (Noll & Fredrickson, 1998: 629).

A second very popular self-reported measure of self-objectification has been developed by McKinley & Hyde (1996). Instead of focusing on a single scale, like Noll & Fredrickson (1998), they focused on the dimensionality of self-objectification and found three distinct dimensions within the concept: Surveillance, body shame, and appearance control beliefs (McKinley & Hyde, 1996). They developed items for each dimension and ended up with a scale consisting of 24 items.

McKinley & Hyde's (1996) scale is one of the only scales developed for the measurement of self-objectification that has been based on theory (McKinley & Hyde, 1996), and, furthermore, it has been validated and found reliable on separate occasions (Moradi & Huang, 2008). Even though McKinley & Hyde's (1996) scale is seemingly longer with 24 items as opposed to Noll & Fredrickson's (1998) scale where only 12 body attributes are ranked, it is assumed that the task of ranking is more demanding and challenging, than indicating how much you agree or disagree with specific statements. Choosing Noll & Fredrickson's (1998) scale is assumed to heighten the risk of respondents dropping out before answering the rest of the questionnaire. Therefore the McKinley & Hyde (1996) scale is used in this study.

In order to examine where the respondents feel the most pressure to be thin from a scale by Irving (1990) is used. This scale originally consists of three items where respondents are asked to rate the amount of pressure to be thin they feel from different groups – their families, their peers and the media (Irving, 1990). Since all of the groups one way or another have an influence on the individual in the development of values and standards in the socialization process (Irving, 1990), it is interesting to examine where the respondents feel the most pressure from. Two additional potential sources of pressure are added in order to cover the whole spectre of people and institutions that might have an influence on the amount of pressure the respondent's feel, and that is their partner and themselves (Appendix A, figure 6).

Especially the item stating "I feel a lot of pressure to be thin from myself" (Appendix A, figure 6) is interesting, since objectification theory explains how the feeling of having an outsider's perspective on your own body can become so incorporated into your own perspective that it seems like it is a natural part of you and a voluntary choice (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

A section with items examining the consequences of self-objectification is constructed with adaptations from different scales from the theory (Appendix A, figure 6). The mental health consequences that objectification theory emphasises are disordered eating, depression and sexual dysfunction (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Not a lot of studies have focused on the consequence of sexual dysfunction (Moradi & Huang, 2008) and therefore it was difficult to create items on this subject. Furthermore, the subject of sexual dysfunction and sexuality in general is very sensitive, and many respondents might feel that the questions would be too personal and not answer them. The focus in this study is therefore mostly on the consequence of disordered eating and somewhat on the consequence of mild depression shown by mood swings.

Some of the scale items of the consequence scale is adapted from Strien et al (2007) and their revised restraint scale. This scale focuses on the consequence of disordered eating, to what extent women try to control their diet, and how much they strive for thinness (Strien et al, 2007). Only some of the items from this scale are used in the questionnaire. Some of them are adapted to the context of this study and some of them are in the same wording as Strien and her colleagues (2007) put them. This is due to the fact that the original scale has items that focus on specific kilos gained and lost, and since this might be hard for respondents to estimate precisely they are left out of the questionnaire. In addition to items from the revised restraint scale, items developed for this particular study and grounded in the theory are also included on the consequence scale (Appendix A, figure 6). These put an emphasis on the mood aspect when experiencing a weight gain, trying to tie together the respondents' physical appearance with their mental state (Appendix A, figure 6).

The next section of the questionnaire is focused on the respondents' attitudes towards advertising in

general and the consequences an offending ad has on their attitudes towards the brand that uses these portrayals of women. The items are a selection of statements from a scale which originally consisted of 17 items, adapted from Ford et al (1991). Since the scale in its entirety would be too extensive to include in the questionnaire given its length only relevant items from the scale were chosen (Appendix A, figure 6). The relevance was based on the topics the focus group participants brought up and their opinions on those matters (Appendix A, figure 4). The attitude towards advertising is interesting to examine in this study because the items will contribute with data that is comparable to the last section, with questions on the respondents' attitudes towards advertising utilising "real" women (Appendix A, figure 6).

The section on attitudes towards the use of "real" women in advertising was based primarily on the topics that the focus group participants brought up (Appendix A, figure 4). Measures on their attitudes towards them, but also items on the companies' reasons for using "real" women are explored, along with items on respondents' willingness to buy from companies using "real" women marketing (Appendix A, figure 6).

The order of the questions can potentially have a huge influence on the answers the respondents give (Flick, 2009). The questionnaire is built so the respondents are kept in the dark for the longest time possible as to what the topic really is, that is their attitudes towards using "real" women in ads. In the introduction page of the questionnaire, the respondents are told that they are participating in a study on advertisements and their effect on their audiences, which is very unspecific. This is done in order to minimise a potential bias and not affect the respondents in answering in a certain way. If the respondents know the topic in advance, social desirability might become a factor in their answers, or the respondents feel there is a "right" answer to the questions if they know the topic.

3.3.3 Data analysis – Questionnaire

The analysis of the data was to give an indication as to which portrayal of women in advertising the respondents preferred, one with "real" women or one where the models in the ad had been Photoshopped. In order to do this, different methods of statistical analysis were conducted (Appendix B). The design of the study was a within-subject, repeated measures design, because only one group of respondents were used, and they were to answer the same questions. Given this design, to test H1-H3 a dependent t-test was used for each of the relevant variables to detect whether or not the different ads had significantly different means (Field, 2009). Also, in order to describe the relationships between the variables, correlations were done for relevant variables and items. A multiple regression analysis is run as well, in order to test a proposed model of the attitudes toward the ad and brand and the variables of intention to buy (Appendix B).These statistical methods are explained in turn.

The t-test is used to analyse H1-H3 and is a method of testing whether or not two groups are significantly different (Field, 2009). This test, the paired-samples t-test or the dependent t-test, is chosen because the

data is metric, there are two or more samples, and these samples are related, since they are drawn from the same population (Malhotra, 2009). A t-test is testing whether or not the two means differ significantly (Field, 2009).

The assumptions behind a dependent t-test are two-fold. Firstly, the data should be measured on at least an interval level, and secondly, the differences between the scores are normally distributed (Field, 2009). These assumptions are checked in Appendix B, figure 2. The test itself for the different hypotheses was done using SPSS and the outputs can be found in Appendix B, figure 3, 4, and 6. The output provided by SPSS gives the correlation coefficient between the variables tested, since large or significant correlations can be an issue when using a repeated measures design. The t-test statistic is, of course, also shown, providing information as to how big the difference is between the two means and whether or not the difference is significant.

Correlations are also a big part of the analysis in this study, since they can give a good descriptive indication as to what the relationship between two variables looks like. A correlation coefficient is an expression as to what extent the variables examined co-varies (Field, 2009). The only assumption that needs to be met when running correlation analysis is that the data is interval-scaled. In order to make the method of correlations more useful in practice, a hypothesis can be tested for every correlation examined that analyse whether or not a significant relationship is present (Field, 2009). The hypothesis tested is whether or not the correlation is significantly different from zero (Field, 2009). However, when using this test, another assumption is relevant and that is that the sampling distribution is normally distributed (Field, 2009). These assumptions are tested in Appendix B, figure 2.

The final method of quantitative analysis used in this study is that of multiple regression. Regression analysis is a way of estimating a linear equation that can predict the value of a dependent variable using one (simple regression) or more (multiple regression) independent variables (Field, 2009). There are several assumptions that need to be met if conclusions are to be drawn from the analysis. If the analysis is for descriptive purposes only then the following assumptions can be relaxed (Field, 2009).

The first assumption to be met is that the predictor variables should be quantitative or categorical. There are to be variance in the predictors, and there can be no complete multicollinearity. The predictor variables chosen should be the ones that matter for the dependent variable, so that no other variables outside the model could influence the outcome variable. Homoscedasticity should be present and errors should be independent and normally distributed. Also, linearity and independence are critical assumptions (Field, 2009). For further discussion of the assumptions for multiple regression see Appendix B, figure 7.

The analysis is done in SPSS and the outputs can be seen in Appendix B. A method is chosen prior to the analysis as to how the independent variables are to be included in the linear regression model. In this study

the method chosen is forced entry, where all the variables are entered into the model at once. This is because the variables to be included have been determined on the basis of theory and past research, and therefore the forced entry method is the most optimal here (Field, 2009).

The output from SPSS for a regression analysis shows first how well the model fits, indicated by R^2. This is a measure showing how much variance in the dependent variable the independent variables can account for (Field, 2009). The output also shows the coefficients for the different independent variables and whether or not they are significant for the model, together with the constant, b_0. With these coefficients it is possible to estimate the dependent variable using the scores for the independent variables together with the coefficients (Field, 2009).

3.3.4 Limitations – Quantitative questionnaire

Given the limitations of the software program used to develop the questionnaire is was not possible to automatically randomise the order of the ads shown in the beginning of the questionnaire (Appendix A, figure 6). To eliminate or minimise any order effects the order of the ads where changed approximately after every fifteen respondent. However, even though a similar cell size for each new ad order was aimed for this was not completely possible to obtain in reality, since different amounts of people answered at different times of the day, and the program did not allow for a change of order when respondents where in the middle of registering their answers. The results would have been much more valid if a complete randomisation were possible.

There were several methodological issues that can have made the data invalid or flawed. First of all, the problems with randomisation during the data collection could have resulted in an uneven cell size for each order. The order of the ads were changed during the data collection process, but an order effect might still be present, given that it was not possible to get an equal amount of respondents to answer all of the different order-conditions. This might have caused a bias in the data and caution in the analysis should be shown. Also, the normality assumption for some of the data might have been violated. The data used, for instance, in the dependent t-test showed some abnormalities, but were assumed to be normal in order to conduct the analysis. This might influence the results and make them less valid.

4 Analysis

4.1 Social norms

According to Bicchieri (2006), in order for a social norm to be in place, certain conditions need to be fulfilled. Firstly, the condition of contingency must be met. The participants of the focus group interview were not keen on stating directly that certain expectations are to be met for women, but they are still very much aware of the "ideal [for women] which is impossible" to live up to and mention it several times (Appendix

A, figure 4). This means that even though they do not mention the specific features of how a woman is supposed to look like, they are still conscious of the fact that a certain ideal exists for a woman's appearance, which is how women are mostly portrayed in the media in traditional ads (Appendix A, figure 4).

The second condition that has to be in place for a social norm to exist entails that people must have a preference for following the norm, which means that enough other people are expected to follow the norm and that they also expect the individual to follow it (Bicchieri, 2006). Again, the participants do not precisely state that this is the case, but they do seem to be genuinely concerned with their appearances and how they look to other people. They mention all the beauty products they use, compared to what their partners or male friends use, and several participants mention that they care about how they look. So even though they do not state it correctly, the participants seem to know the importance being placed on appearances by society (Appendix A, figure 4).

Another important condition for a social norm to be present is that you know to what situation it applies (Bicchieri, 2006). It can be argued, using Szymanski et al's (2011) concept of sexual objectification environments, that most times a woman is out in public there is a risk that she might be sexually objectified. This is due to the fact that in Western societies the criteria for a sexual objectification environment are almost always met (Szymanski et al, 2011). Especially the criteria that "a high degree of attention is drawn to sexual/physical attributes of women's bodies" (Szymanski et al, 2011: 21) is very often the case, especially because the media and advertisement industry are often using women in a sexualised way in their presentations and portrayals (Jaffe, 1991; Myers & Crowther, 2007).

This is evident from the focus group transcript as well. The participants are aware of the over-sexualised images of women in the media and also the very stereotypical gender roles they are subjected to in the media in general. For instance, during a discussion of women's magazines most of the participants find the articles to be very similar and simple, only showing one dimension of women. One participant puts it like this: "I get angry sometimes, and I actually do not buy [women's magazines] anymore. It is like that all women care about is clothing and looks, and fashion and appearances – that is all there is in this magazine. It is rare you find an article with some content that show some women that went through something, or something like that" (Appendix A, figure 4). It is a very narrow view of women that the media in general showcase and most participants mentioned that they were missing some meaningful content to inspire them, or at least have different views on women than to just focus on their appearances. Even in women's magazines the participants feel that there is an extreme emphasis on women's bodies, how they look and how to improve their appearances. This just adds to the sexualisation of the environment, which is also present in other media, not only the ones addressed to women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

The participants mention specific situations where they feel the social norm to look good must be fol-

lowed. It seems that when you are out in public, you need to be aware of your appearances (Appendix A, figure 4). One participant says: "I have a friend, she feels naked without makeup and I am not like that" (Appendix A, figure 4). She does not acknowledge that she herself feels like this, but she is aware of the fact that other people do have these feelings. Another participant compares it to a man's perspective: "I came to think about it, compared it to go out without makeup, I mean, a man would never say that. He would never say that, well I do not care that much about my looks and I can for instance go out without makeup" (Appendix A, figure 4). The participant points to the fact that it should be normal to just be able to go outside without thinking too much about it, just like men can. But women have to think about their appearances, and even though some of the participants mention that they can go outside without makeup, they have still given the subject a lot of thought since they have come to the conclusion that they can be natural in public.

Another participant tells the story of how she was doing her laundry in the common laundry room in her building: "This morning I went down to get my laundry in the laundry room and then I thought, did I put on my mascara today? That is stupid, right […]. But I have to be honest and that was what I was thinking" (Appendix A, figure 4). The idea that appearances matter is so ingrained in the participants that they do not even have to step out in public for the norm to be followed. Also in the comfort of their own building it is something they are very much aware of. All these accounts from the participants show that they are aware that a norm is in place when they are in a public space, or there is a chance of running into other people. And even though not all participants acknowledge they follow the norm, they are still very much aware of its presence.

When it comes to attention to the cues surrounding them, the participants feel like they are drowning in advertisements and some have actually developed strategies to avoid seeing too many ads during the day (Appendix A, figure 4). One of the participants turns off the sound of the commercials on TV when she is watching a programme, quickly skips through ads in papers and magazines, and several of the participants actually stopped buying magazines because of the ads and the articles and their offending portrayal of women (Appendix A, figure 4). But even though they try to avoid them, in today's environment with billboards, posters and advertisements in every magazine, and the almost unavoidable customised ads that appear online, it is impossible not to perceive the images of the ads (Gorham, 1999).

This is also the opinion of the participants that do not think they can completely escape advertisements all together (Appendix A, figure 4). However, they do feel that the ads they do perceive do not hold as big of an influence over them now as they did when they were younger and in their teens. According to Gorham (1999), the more you are exposed to and perceive ads that portray a certain stereotype, the more you come to believe the stereotype and believe the underlying myth that women are supposed to be thin

and beautiful in order to be worth anything. So the more you see the ads with an objectified portrayal of women, the more you come to believe the stereotype to be true, which does not correspond with the view of the participants (Appendix A, figure 4).

Empirical studies have found that other factors, and not only the perception of ads, play a part in the effect they have on the viewer. For instance, Bullen (2009) and Goodall (2012) found that media literacy could potentially mediate the effect of stereotypical images in advertisements. Media literacy is knowledge about how the media and advertisements work, covering everything from the digital alteration of images, to the gender stereotypical representation of women (Goodall, 2012). Media literacy will make it easier to criticise and question the images that the advertising industry develops, and this scepticism will help girls and women develop more self-esteem via a critical approach to the media and its messages (Bullen, 2009).

Another mediating effect of media's influence on women is feminist beliefs (Myers & Crowther, 2007). Feminist beliefs stem from feminist theory and "criticises and rejects the thin-ideal and women's need to conform to it" (Myers & Crowther, 2007: 297). The basic belief that men and women are equal and that women should not be scrutinised for the way they look seem to help women reject the images and portrayals of women in the media. Both the strategy of media literacy and the strategy of feminist beliefs suggest that there are ways around Gorham's (1999) view of just perceiving the ads and thereby building on the stereotypical beliefs and perceptions.

The participants mention both these strategies as a way to relate to the media. Media literacy is something they are often made aware of by their peers via social media. Several times are videos of how Photoshop is used in advertisements mentioned, where they are made aware of the unrealistic ideal that a lot of ads portray: "Nobody actually looks that perfect as some of the images that you see, where they have three meter legs and a waistline the size of a Barbie, and stuff like that, and their skin is completely clean. You have yourself seen some of the movies that go around on Facebook, where they correct and alter even the supermodels" (Appendix A, figure 4).

Feminist topics and beliefs are often discussed, and most participants mention, sometimes implicit, that men and women are equal, or at least should be, when talking about job opportunities, and also when relating the standards that women are held to with the standards that men are to live by (Appendix A, figure 4). Also, it seems that these feminist beliefs have influenced the way the participants relate to media images that have an extreme focus on how women should look like. One participant distance herself from those images by saying that "[how you look] is not what makes you, you know" (Appendix A, figure 4). Meaning that looks and appearances are not everything and there is much more that makes women valuable.

However, even though these strategies might play a role for the participants, they all still agree that they care about how they look, and several participants also mention, implicitly, that they are not satisfied with

how they look. They all agree that they are more confident with their own appearances now than they had been in their teenage years, but one participant emphasise that the thoughts on how you are supposed to look, according to the media, are still present in her: "We say that it means less now, but I would say that I still look in the mirror sometimes and just think that, oh, why can the people on TV look like that, and if they can, why, I mean, then I should be able to look like that too" (Appendix A, figure 4).

So even though the participants describe avoiding advertisements, and how they use the different strategies in order to mediate the effect of the ads, they still perceive the cues fed to them about a woman's appearance and the thin, flawless, and beautiful ideal (Appendix A, figure 4). This also suggests that they interpret the cues they perceive from the ads and categorise them, as Bicchieri's (2006) framework in figure 1 suggests.

Using the distinction between the natural kind and human artefact categories (Bicchieri, 2006), the data from the focus group suggests that the participants tend to view the category of women and their appearances as a natural kind category. This can be seen in statements like "I also think that it is more a pressure you put on yourself [to look a certain way] than it is something that comes from the outside" (Appendix A, figure 4), and "I think that it is natural for women to care about how they look no matter their age and that" (Appendix A, figure 4). These statements indicate that some of the participants might have an underlying belief that women have an internal and core value of caring about their appearances and looking the best they can. This internalisation of the beliefs shown in the above statements is in line with the predictions of Fredrickson & Roberts' (1997) objectification theory. This is the final stage in the process of self-objectification, where the internalisation is complete, and the woman does not feel much pressure from society but only from herself.

When the images and cues from the ads have been categorised, a script is activated that state the way a follower of the social norm is supposed to act. In this case, the participants are both aware of the norm and also know when to follow it. At the same time they are aware of what the ideal would be to look like: thin, young, beautiful, have long legs, a small waist line, and big breasts (Appendix A, figure 4). This ideal shown in the media affects the participants, even though they try to fight it, and they do mention that they are not completely satisfied with their bodies when they compare themselves to women in the media (Appendix A, figure 4). They know that they, too, are expected to look that way, and are held to the same beauty standards. It then follows that the participants act according to the norm and care about how they look to other people when they go out in public (Appendix A, figure 4).

In conclusion, a social norm seems to be present on how women are supposed to look like, and the participants are aware of this norm and when to follow it (Appendix A, figure 4).

4.2 Hypothesis 1 – Attitude towards the ad

Hypothesis H1 states that ads the attitude towards the ad is going to be higher for ads with "real" women portrayals than for the traditional ads. This is examined using a dependent t-test on the items 1 and 2 of the statements shown for each of the advertisements (Appendix B, figure 3). The analysis is conducted for each of the three industries of underwear, fitness apparel, and beauty products, and in the following paragraphs they will be examined in turn.

For the underwear industry, the Victoria's Secret's ad is a good example of an advertisement that uses traditional models, whereas Aerie has been promoting themselves on the fact that the models they use in their ads have not been Photoshopped at all (Appendix A, figure 3; Huffington Post, 2014). The correlation between the items is first tested, since this can be an issue when doing repeated-measures studies when the respondents are drawn from the same sample and asked the same questions (Field, 2009). For the items Aerie_overall_ad and Victoria_overall_ad this is not an issue, since there is a very small and insignificant correlation between them (Appendix B, figure 3). When comparing the means of the two items using a t-test it is found that there is a significant difference between them. This means that, on average, respondents significantly elicit a more positive response towards Aerie's "real" woman ad (M=5.3) than towards Victoria's Secret's traditional models ad (M=3.4), $t(85)=7.516$, $p<0.01$ (Appendix B, figure 3).

When a significant effect is found it is relevant to look at the actual size of that effect (Field, 2009). Because small effects might become significant when the number of respondents increase, a calculation of the effect size is important (Appendix B, figure 3). It shows that the significant result found for the underwear industry had an effect of 0.63, which is fairly high (Field, 2009). So both statistically and practically this finding could have implications given the effect size.

When it comes to the industry of fitness apparel with the "real" woman ad from Nike and the traditional ad from Reebok the conclusion is not so straight forward. Nike's "real" women advertisement has a lower rating than the traditional ad from Reebok, with a mean value of 3.9 for Nike and 4.2 for Reebok. The correlation between the two items, Nike_overall_ad and Reebok_overall_ad is significant, but the correlation coefficient is only 0.268 which is considered to be very small, and is therefore discarded here (Field, 2009). However, when looking at the result of the t-test it is clear that there is no significant difference between the two items' scores, since the p-value far exceeds the cut off-point of 0.05 (Appendix B, figure 3).

This finding might not be so puzzling when relating it to the data from the focus group interview. When confronted with the Nike-ad in the interview, several of the participants were confused about the message the company wanted to put across (Appendix A, figure 4). "I think the ad is a bit of a rebellion, that is, when you read the text. She says something about that if you speak badly about my butt then you can just kiss it. I think it is good with the rebellion in it, but I just don't think, I mean, because of the picture I would have

skipped through it" (Appendix A, figure 4). More participants agree on this point, and find that the idea behind the ad is good, but the execution and the picture do not appeal to them. This might be a reason why it has scored so low on average in the questionnaire (Appendix A, figure 4). Also, both the Reebok and the Nike ads fit Stankiewitz & Rosselli's (2008) criteria of an ad that portray women as sex objects, since in both ads only a part of the woman's body is shown, in Nike's case her buttocks (Appendix A, figure 3).

Turning to the last industry, beauty products, the brand Dove have been dominating for years in the "real" women segment with their ads (Millard, 2009), whereas Venus is still using traditional models in their advertisements (Appendix A, figure 3). Of all the ads in the questionnaire and across all industries, Dove is by far the one that has scored the highest rating for an ad with a mean of 5.9. The ad from Venus rated a little above average, with a mean of 4.6 (Appendix B, figure 3). There is a significant correlation between the two items, but since the correlation coefficient is only 0.279 this will not be considered a problem in the analysis (Appendix B, figure 3). The t-test also finds a significant difference between the two means, indicating that on average respondents had a more favourable attitude towards the ad from Dove (M=5.9) than the one from Venus (M=4.6), t(85)=7,228, p<0.01 (Appendix B, figure 3). The effect size is also calculated for this industry, and as before the size is relatively large, with r=0.62 (Appendix B, figure 3). This means that for the industry of beauty products using a "real" woman strategy could potentially have a huge effect.

H1 is therefore confirmed by two of the three industries analysed, with high effect sizes for both the underwear industry and the beauty products industry. Practically speaking, this means that having "real" women in ads will increase the positive rating of the ad amongst female viewers.

4.3 Hypothesis 2 – Attitude towards the brand

The method of the dependent t-test is also used to analyse the relationships between the different brands and which ones the respondent like the most as stated in H2. Again, by just looking at the means overall across all industries Dove is again ranked highest with a mean of 5.6 (Appendix B, figure 4). When looking at the specific industries starting with the underwear industry, the correlation between the variables measuring the liking of the two brands, Aerie and Victoria's Secret, is small and not significant. The result of the t-test shows that respondents have a significantly higher ranking of the Aerie brand (M=4.6) than of the Victoria's Secret brand (M=3.9), t(85)=3.663, p<0.01 (Appendix B, figure 4). The effect size is 0.37 which is considered to be a medium effect (Appendix B, figure 4; Field, 2009).

For the fitness apparel industry Nike ranked higher than Reebok. The correlation coefficient is 0.168 and not significant. The dependent t-test shows that Nike (M=5.2) ranks significantly higher than Reebok (M=4.7) when it comes to attitude towards the brand, t(85)=2.649, p<0.05 (Appendix B, figure 4). When calculated, the effect size turns out to be 0.28, which is a small to medium effect (Appendix B, figure 4; Field, 2009). For the beauty industry, the results get more blurred, since there is a significant correlation

which is relatively high among the variables Dove and Venus (Appendix B, figure 4). This could cause problems with the t-test and the results need to be analysed with caution. The t-test is also highly significant, showing that respondents prefer the Dove brand (M=5.6) over the Venus brand (M=5.1), t(85)=3.889, p<0.01. The effect size is calculated to be 0.39, which is again a medium effect (Field, 2009).

H2 stated that using "real" women in advertisements would result in a higher rating of the brands that use this method. This hypothesis is supported, given that the brands that used "real" women in their ads had a significantly higher brand rating than brands using traditional ads for all three industries.

4.4 Hypothesis 3 – Effectiveness of the ad

H3 states that respondents will find the ads with "real" women more effective than ads using digitally altered models. With every ad shown to the respondents an item was put forth stating that "This is an effective ad that will make people buy the product" (Appendix A, figure 6), and this item was used in a dependent t-test for each of the three industries. The underwear industry is again examined first. The correlation between the effectiveness items for Aerie and Victoria's Secret is almost non-existent and highly insignificant, and can therefore be discarded. The t-test shows a significant difference between the respondents' ratings of Aerie's (M=4.4) effectiveness and Victoria's Secret's (M=3.5) effectiveness, with Aerie being considered the most effective ad of the two, t(85)=3.6, p<0.01 (Appendix B, figure 6). The effect size is 0.36, which is a medium effect size (Field, 2009).

For the fitness apparel industry Nike (M=3.7) and Reebok (M=3.7) seems very equal. There is a small correlation between them, which is significant, but given its size it is not assumed to cause any problems in the analysis. The t-test is highly insignificant, and a difference between the two means cannot be shown (Appendix B, figure 6). For the beauty industry, on the other hand, there seems to be a difference, even though the two variables are slightly correlated. The correlation coefficient is 0.41 and is highly significant, which could cause problems with the results of the t-test. The analysis is continued with caution. The t-test shows that the two are significantly different and that Dove's (M=5.4) ad is considered to be more effective than Venus' (M=4.3) ad, t(85)=5.7, p<0.01. The effect size is relatively high, with r=0.53 (Appendix B, figure 6; Field, 2009).

These results would suggest that, in general, respondents believe the ads using "real" women to be more effective, which supports H3. Later in the questionnaire, the respondents are asked about the subject again, using the item "It is more effective to use "real" women than Photoshopped models in ads" (Appendix A, figure 6). With a mean value of 4.73 it is well above average, which would indicate that when asked directly respondents also find "real" women ads more effective (Appendix B, figure 6). The histogram of the item shows that a large percentage of the respondents were neutral on the subject, but that a relatively

high portion did agree with the statement that "real" women ads are more effective (Appendix B, figure 6). This only further supports H3.

4.5 Hypothesis 4 – Self-objectification

H4 states that a high degree of self-objectification within respondents will correlate positively with a high degree of pressure to be thin and also correlate positively with a focus on weight and restrained eating. In order to examine this, the relevant variables and items are analysed first.

Pressure to be thin was measured on five different dimensions: Family, friends, partner, the media, and yourself (Appendix A, figure 6). Of these, the respondents only felt a pressure to be thin from the media (M=4.92) and mostly from themselves (M=5.01). The respondents disagreed with feeling any pressure from their immediate family (M=2.53), from their friends and peers (M=2.72), and from their partner (M=2.7) (Appendix B, figure 8). Objectification theory states that the internalisation of external pressures to look a certain way, in this case to live up to the thin-ideal, is one of the final stages of self-objectification. The woman has adopted the expectations and values of beauty from society and now treats these as her own (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This seems to have happened to some extent for this sample, given that they feel the most pressure to be thin from within themselves. However, they also feel a high degree of pressure from the media, which could indicate that they still perceive external pressures to be relevant too.

When it comes to the measures of self-objectification, the analysis is not completely clear. The three scales of surveillance, body shame, and appearance control beliefs (Appendix A, figure 6) each represent one component of self-objectification according to McKinley & Hyde (1996). Analysis is done in order to check whether or not this study found the same three factors as McKinley & Hyde (1996), which is the case. The reliability for all three scales is acceptable, after a few items are deleted (Appendix B, figure 8). However, only the surveillance scale (M=4.8) and the appearance control beliefs (M=4.7) scale seem to indicate that a level of self-objectification is found. The body shame scale (M=2.9) indicates that respondents do not find this to be an issue and they are not ashamed of the way they look (Appendix B, figure 8). Since two out of the three scales do show an above average level of ratings, self-objectification is considered to be an issue amongst the respondents.

The significance of the surveillance scale is further validated using item s_12_4 which states that "I never really think about how I look to other people" (Appendix A, figure 6). Here respondents strongly disagree (M=2.21), meaning that they often think about how they look to other people (Appendix B, figure 8). The same is true for the item s_12_9: "I am satisfied with my looks all the time" (M= 3.2) although the respondents disagree a little less severely as with the previous item (Appendix B, figure 8).

One of the consequences of self-objectification is a heightened awareness of what you eat, which in its most severe form leads to disordered eating (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In the questionnaire, a number

of items are concerned with this issue with an emphasis on weight and the respondents' relationship with food and dieting (Appendix A, figure 6). The scales, called the consequence_weight scale, is tested for reliability and after deleting an item the scale has a fairly good internal consistency and with a mean a little above average (M=4.2) (Appendix B, figure 8).

Another consequence self-objectification can lead to is that of depression (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Depression is not measured directly in the questionnaire, but items on how the respondent's mood changes if their appearances change is included, which will give an indication of this mental health consequence. Two items in the questionnaire are on the issue, and they are tried as a single scale: s_12_1: "If I feel I have gained weight I become in a bad mood" and s_12_3: "My mood and my feelings are unchanged even though my weight goes up and down" (Appendix A, figure 6). S_12_3 turns out to be insignificant, and only s_12_1 (M=5.1) regarding the relationship between mood and weight gain is used.

When examining the correlations between self-objectification and pressure to be thin and restrained eating, only the surveillance scale is used as a measure of self-objectification, given that it is the scale that seems to be the best indicator of self-objectification in this sample. Also, only the measure of pressure to be thin from one self is included in this analysis, because it is the dimension that the respondents in this study find most relevant (Appendix B, figure 8). It is found that there is a high positive correlation between self-objectification (measured by level of surveillance) and the pressure to be thin stemming from yourself, r=0.485, p<0.01 (Appendix B, figure 8). It is also found that there is a high positive relationship between self-objectification (measured by level of surveillance) and concerns for one's weight and diet, r=0.388, p<0.01 (Appendix B, figure 8).

Other items were tested for their relationship with self-objectification. A significant positive relationship between self-objectification (measured by level of surveillance) and whether or not your mood changed if you gained weight is found, r=0.431, p<0.01 (Appendix B, figure 8). Also, a significantly negative relationship is found between self-objectification and both s_12_4, r=-0.294, p<0.01, and s_12_9, r=-0.353, p<0.01 (Appendix B, figure 8) indicating that the more you self-objectify, the more you will think about how you look to other people and thereby be more unsatisfied with your appearance.

H4 is therefore supported, since significant, positive relationships are found between self-objectification, and pressure to be thin and restrained eating, respectively.

5 Discussion

5.1 Hypotheses confirmed – What does it mean?

H1 is confirmed for both the underwear and the beauty industry, showing that at least for some industries using "real" women ads will give a more positive ranking amongst female viewers (Appendix B, figure 3).

The large effect sizes seem to indicate that changing to "real" women ads will have a huge impact on the attitude towards the ad. However, as shown by the fitness apparel industry, it matters how these "real" women are used. Even though Nike used a model that was not Photoshopped, the Reebok ad which did use a Photoshopped model ranked higher (Appendix B, figure 3).

A reason for this could be found in the way the two women in the different ads are portrayed. Both in the Nike and in the Reebok ad only a part of the woman is shown. In the Reebok ad it is only the models lower body, and in the Nike ad it is only the models buttocks that are visible (Appendix A, figure 3). As Stankiewicz & Rosselli (2008) pointed out, the classification of a woman as a sexual object in print media cis rated on different dimensions, where camera angle is one of them. The woman is not shown as a whole but the focus is merely on one or some of her body parts, which can be classified as sexual objectification. So even though the model in the Nike ad has not been digitally altered, objectification can still be detected in the ad.

The participants in the focus group interview noticed this sexual objectification as well in the Nike ad. They were very confused about the ad, and even though they liked the text of the ad and found it both funny and rebellious, they were not fond of the picture used (Appendix A, figure 4). "I guess they are trying to be kind of women-power. But that picture really annoys me", and "The text is pretty cool, the idea they have with it, but they have missed the target with the way they portray it" (Appendix A, figure 4) are just two of the comments made by the focus group participants. The Nike ad is seen as similar to all other traditional ads where women are sexually objectified, because unless you give yourself the time to read the text in the ad the focus is only on one body part of the woman and the viewer does not get to see her as a whole person.

The support for H1 provides a very important lesson for companies portraying women in their ads: Using "real" women will give a significantly higher positive rating for the ad, whether it is models that have not been Photoshopped or "real" everyday women used. It is important for companies using this "real" woman strategy to be aware of how they portray the women they use. It is not enough to just not use Photoshop. Instead it is necessary to critically examine the images used, making sure that they do not portray the women as sexual objects, exemplified by the Nike ad.

Using the logic of Ajzen & Fishbein (2000), a positive attitude towards an ad should lead to a higher intention to buy the product. However, even though the effect sizes are relatively high, an examination of the correlation with intention to buy shows that liking the ad does not seem to predict whether or not you are going to buy from the company in the future (Appendix B, figure 5). It could indicate that how much you like the ad is not a factor that has great influence of whether or not you plan to buy the product in the future.

Another relationship that does indicate a high and significant interaction, however, is that between the rating of the brand and the intention to buy (Appendix B, figure 5). All correlations for all brands are above 0.6 which indicates a very high correlation. This means that the more the brand is liked, the higher the intention to buy from the brand is in the future. Not only this, but the brand is also liked more if "real" women are used in their ads, as was shown by the analysis of H2. H2 was confirmed for all three industries (Appendix B, figure 4), so the use of a "real" woman strategy leads to a higher rating of the brand, which in turn leads to a higher intention to buy, regardless of the industry.

A very plausible reason as to why the attitude towards the brand has a higher correlation with intention to buy than the attitude towards the ad could be that the respondent has bought products from the brand before. The respondents would then have created a brand attitude prior to seeing the ad in the questionnaire in this study. This can be illustrated by the ratings of the Nike ad, which were relatively low, and the ratings for the Nike brand overall, which were among the highest ratings (Appendix B, figure 3 and 4). It is clear that there is not an obvious link between the rating of the ad and the rating of the brand, so another factor must influence the high attitude towards the brand. Nike is a well-known and popular brand, which has been advertised quite heavily in recent years, and this could influence the rating of Nike.

For the other brands analysed in this study, the picture is a bit clearer and the variables of attitude towards the brand and intention to buy have a high significant correlation, all above 0.5 (Appendix B, figure 5). Also, for all but Nike, the correlation between attitude towards the ad and attitude towards the brand is very high and above 0.7 (Appendix B, figure 5). This could indicate that a link between these two variables is highly likely and that the more the target group likes the ad, the more they will like the brand.

The above analysis would seem to suggest that the link between liking the ad and intention to buy is less strong than the theory would seem to suggest. This is also emphasised by the participants in the focus group interview. They all mention that they do not really notice print ads in their everyday life, and many of them also develop strategies to avoid them altogether. "I don't notice [ads] at all. I don't see them, it is just something that is there. Not even, you know, in magazines I just flip through them without looking" (Appendix A, figure 4). Ad avoidance is not only limited to print ads, the participants also come up with strategies to avoid commercials: "I have gotten into the good habit of putting my TV on mute every time the commercials come on, so they are a there a bit less" (Appendix A, figure 4).

Ad avoidance can be seen as a consequence of the massive amounts of ads that a person sees in a day. This advertising clutter makes it hard for companies to get through with their message, especially when consumers are actively trying to avoid ads in order to limit the information overload they are experiencing. Advertisers have for years operated under the assumption that sexual imagery will break through this clutter and get the consumer's attention – basically, that sex sells (Blair et al, 2006). Studies have shown that

sexualised imagery does get the attention of consumers, but it does not enhance brand recall for the ads. So the ads using women as sexual objects might break through the advertising clutter, but does not seem to get through with the message of the brand (Blair et al, 2006).

The fact that the advertising environment is so cluttered today, coupled with consumers' tendency for ad avoidance, the influence that ads have on consumers' buying intention today is questionable. What seems to be a better predictor of the respondents' intention to buy is the overall evaluation of the brand, which has much higher correlation coefficients, all above 0.6 and all highly significant (Appendix B, figure 5).

The relationship between overall evaluation of the ad and intention to buy seems to be rather contradictory, since the participants have two very opposite reactions towards the "real" women ads. On the one hand, when they are presented with the "real" women ads for all three industries, they are relatively positive towards all of them, except the Nike ad. Especially the Aerie advertisement is popular amongst the participants and all except one say that such an ad would make them buy the product (Appendix A, figure 4). This supports the findings in the quantitative questionnaire in that respondents are significantly more positive towards ads using "real" women, and assuming that attitudes can predict behaviour, this would result in respondents buying more from the companies behind these ads (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000, Appendix B, figure 3).

However, the focus group participants also emphasise that seeing an ad that they did not like would not have a very big impact on their shopping behaviour. "You might get annoyed at the ad, but sometimes I cannot even remember what the ad was for afterwards, I mean what product was advertised", "I also drink Cola Zero, even though I hate the ads as the plague", and "There is a long way from getting annoyed at an ad, to remember that you are annoyed, I mean, to remember that that is the product you are annoyed at" (Appendix A, figure 4). These quotes all emphasise the fact that the ad and the brand are not necessarily closely connected in the minds of the consumer. It is possible that an ad that respondents hate will not have an effect on the perception of the brand or the intention to buy. This is also what was found in the quantitative analysis – Nike's ad ranked as one of the lowest, but the brand did not suffer in the same way. Quite the opposite, actually, Nike was one of the highest ranking brands (Appendix B, figure 3 and 4).

Furthermore, in the questionnaire respondents made it clear that even though they find an ad to be offending they would not stop buying the product and they would also buy other products from that company (Appendix B, figure 5). They say this even though most respondents also agree that women in ads are most often portrayed as sex objects and that the way women are portrayed are not the way they are in real life (Appendix B, figure 5). In other words, they are not offended by the ads and they are not willing to punish any brands that use a very stereotypical portrayal of women (Appendix B, figure 5).

This is a finding that corresponds with Zimmerman & Dahlberg's (2008) study that examined women's attitudes towards advertisements and their buying intentions. Their study was a replication of a study done in 1991 and when comparing the results Zimmerman & Dahlberg (2008) found that the perception of women as sex objects in ads had not changed from 1991. But whereas in 1991 women would stop buying brands that used this kind of advertisements, in 2008 a sexist ad would not alter the respondents' purchase intention. The results found in the present study points in the same direction – respondents are aware of the harmful portrayal of women in ads, but they are not offended by it and they are certainly not going to change their buying habits because of it (Appendix B, figure 5). The objectification of women in advertisements has become so prevalent that it is everyday life for many women – it is just the way it is.

Since the findings of this study have shown that advertisements might not have a great influence on purchase intentions, an alternative model is proposed, illustrating the relationships between the overall evaluations of the ad and the brand, and purchase intentions. Whether you are going to buy a product in the future also depends on whether or not you have bought it in the past so this variable is included in the model as well.
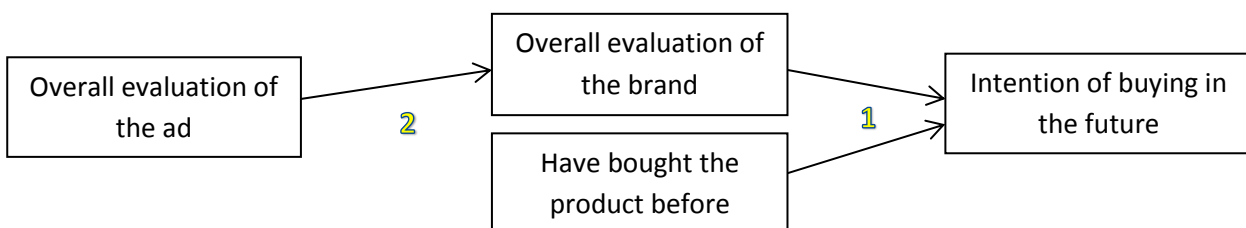

Figure 3

Figure 3 above shows the proposed relationship between the variables. The part of the model labelled 1 is examined first using multiple regression analysis for one brand at a time. In order to validate the relationships proposed in the model, the variable of overall evaluation of the ad is included in the analysis (Appendix B, figure 7). With no exceptions, the overall evaluation of the ad was found to be an insignificant predictor of the intention to buy for all of the brands. Both the overall evaluation of the brand and whether or not a product from the brand had been bought previously turned out to be significant predictors of intention to buy. The multiple regression models for the brands had a R^2 that ranged from 0.419 to 0.801 with most being above 0.5. This means that these regression models are relatively good for predicting a consumer's intention to buy (Appendix B, figure 7; Field, 2009).

The part of the model labelled 2 in figure 3 is analysed next, where a link between the overall evaluation of the ad and the brand is to be established to test the model. This is done using a simple regression, where evaluation of the ad is the independent variable and the evaluation of the brand is the dependent variable

(Appendix B, figure 7). A significant regression is found for all the brands, although R^2 is not as high as before with values only a little above 0.5 for all brands, except Nike, which had a R^2 of 0.32 (Appendix B, figure 7).

The model proposed in figure 3 would seem to suggest that the relationship between attitude towards the ad and intention to buy is mediated by attitude towards the brand. So even though ads using "real" women do not seem to affect intention to buy directly, it will still have an influence on how the brand is perceived and how positive consumers' attitudes are towards it, and affect intention to buy via this route. However, this model only holds for a positive rating, meaning that if the ad is perceived as more positive, then the brand is perceived more positive, and this will influence the intention to buy in a positive direction. But if the ad is perceived negatively, this might not have the same effect on the brand, and thereby neither on the intention to buy (Appendix B, figure 5). Respondents do not seem to care if an ad is sexist or offending, and it might not have as big of a negative influence on the brand as a positive rating of an ad will have in the opposite direction.

The perceived effectiveness of ads is significantly higher for the ads using "real" women, than for the traditional ads using Photoshop, across all industries (Appendix B, figure 6). But as mentioned previously, consumers are not going to punish the brands that do not adhere to a "real" woman advertising strategy, and even though a "real" woman strategy will increase attitude towards the brand and thereby increase intention to buy, a negatively perceived ad will not decrease neither of the variables. However, if consumers are more willing to buy your product if you use "real" women advertisement it will have an impact on the profitability of the brand.

In conclusion, both ads and brands are more liked when they use a "real" woman advertising strategy, and it is also believed to be more effective advertising by the respondents. However, these findings only seem to hold in a positive direction, since respondents are not going to punish brands by not buying them if they do not follow a "real" woman strategy. The traditional advertisements with objectification of women are seen as a great way to break through the advertising clutter and to get viewers' attention by the advertising industry. But the same could be argued for the use of "real" women in ads. A company that uses this strategy does attract attention as well by standing out from the clutter and being different.

5.2 Self-objectification in the sample

H4 states that there will be a positive relationship between self-objectification, and pressure to be thin and restrained eating, respectively. This was examined in order to determine how severe the consequences are of the social norm that seemingly exists for women to be thin and beautiful, which is emphasised in traditional advertisements. H4 was supported in this study.

When looking at the items measuring the amount of pressure the respondents feel to be thin stemming

from different influence groups, a clear picture emerges. Respondents do not feel any pressure to be thin from their family, their friends, or their partner (Appendix B, figure 8). Instead, the pressure seems to come from the media, but most of all from the respondents themselves (Appendix B, figure 8). This could indicate that the respondents have internalised the cultural beliefs and preferences, and have adopted them as their own (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

The internalisation is not the only indication that the sample does experience a degree of self-objectification. The respondents agree highly with the item stating that "I go into a bad mood if I have gained weight" (Appendix B, figure 8), indicating that their mood and their appearances are highly connected. Appearance anxiety within the respondents become evident when they answer that they are concerned with how they look to others, and also that they are not always satisfied with how they look. Between the appearance anxiety and the mood changes, it is highly likely that self-objectification does play a role for this sample.

Appearance anxiety is closely linked to the surveillance scale by McKinley & Hyde (1996). The surveillance scale is the one that respondents rank the highest on with a mean of 5.1 (Appendix B, figure 8). This scale is an indicator of "the amount of time a woman spends watching her body as an outside observer, rather than the importance of appearance" (McKinley & Hyde, 1996: 209) as previous research has focused on. It means that the surveillance scale is a good indicator as to how much time and energy the respondents put into their appearances and how aware they are of their body from an outside perspective. Given that the respondents in this study score relatively high on this scale, it could indicate that body surveillance is a relatively severe consequence for the women's mental health.

Appearance anxiety and surveillance take up a lot of energy and time, because it demands attention to be drawn to the body to check whether or not everything looks as it should. Surveillance of the body can be an issue at all times, but is most severe when there is a chance of being seen in public (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). It is a big issue for many women, as illustrated by a story by one of the focus group participants. That same morning she had gone down to do her laundry in the basement of the building she was living in and had caught herself thinking: "Am I wearing mascara today?" (Appendix A, figure 4). Even in an everyday situation in the comfort in her own building, she was still vigilant as to her appearances and how she looked to others even though no one was around.

Not only does body surveillance take up a lot of time and energy, it also takes time and energy away from other relevant mental tasks. When the respondents spend so much time thinking about their appearance, there simply is no mental capacity for becoming completely absorbed in solving a challenging task, which can be extremely rewarding (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This becomes a huge issue when women aspire to become leaders, because they not only have to worry about the tasks at hand, they must also

struggle with their attention being repeatedly interrupted by thoughts on their appearance. Women aspiring to become leaders also have to take appearance anxiety into account as a potential barrier, because women in higher positions are often judged very harshly on their appearances (Miss Representation, 2011), so the cost of not controlling and correcting your appearances constantly can be very high.

In this sample body shame does not seem to be present to a very high extend. In fact, with a mean of only 2.9 it is below the average, which means that respondents do not feel ashamed of their bodies even though they do not live up to the societal standards of beauty (Appendix B, figure 8). This result is startling since the respondents indicate such a high degree of surveillance. The low score on the body shame scale could be a measurement error, given that the items had not been tested when translated to Danish.

It could also be because the sample is relatively young, and since the majority of the sample are students (64 %, Appendix B, figure 1) and relatively young (80 % of the sample is below 30 years of age, Appendix B, figure 1) it could be assumed that the majority of them fit the description of young and thin, given that they might not have given birth yet and thereby have offset some biological changes of their body and shape. However, the respondents do stay alert with regards to their body, which is seen in the high score on the surveillance scale.

The control scale show a high ranking within respondents. This scale measures the "extent to which women believe they control their appearance" (McKinley & Hyde, 1996: 210) and in this sample the belief is relatively high. The scales are interrelated and a high degree of control beliefs could potentially lead to higher shame, when your body, during surveillance, does not live up to the cultural standards in society. When this happens you are not only ashamed of your body, but you will also attribute this shame as a failure to you as a person – you are a bad person, because you cannot control yourself and live up to the expectations (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).

According to this study, the sample of female respondents do experience some of the dimensions associated with self-objectification, with body surveillance is the most pronounced factor. With such a high degree of body control beliefs coupled with the body surveillance and appearance anxiety, the respondents are in danger of becoming depressed if their bodies one day do not hold up to comparison with the women in advertisements. This indicates that this is an issue which needs to be dealt with, before it gets any worse.

The range of mental health consequences for women could end up creating barriers for women both with regards to being comfortable in your own skin and feeling safe to express your personality, and also with regards to climbing up the job ladder and thereby becoming more visible and open to scrutiny by others. Even though print advertisements are only one factor influencing how women see themselves, they are still a significant influence according to researchers (Kilbourne, 1999), and changing the portrayal of women in advertising could potentially have a positive effect on women's mental health.

This study have taken the perspective of examining what consequences objectification in the media have on the women experiencing it, but other studies have also focused on how society is affected at large, and especially with regards to violence against women sparked by a public opinion that women are not worth as much as men (Kilbourne, 1999; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008). In recent years there has been an increase in the amount of assault and sexual violence against women and it is considered a serious public health problem by the World Health Organisation (WHO) (WHO, 2011). WHO actually describe violence against women as "perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and the most pervasive" (WHO, 2011). Objectification of an individual "is almost always the first step toward justifying violence against that person" (Kilbourne, 1999: 278) and "the presentation of women as sex objects [...] in various forms of media increases acceptance of violence against women" (Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008: 580). This shows that the consequences of objectifying ads could have other consequences than just poor mental health of women.

Of course, the media and advertising is not the root to all evil and advertising is not the only direct cause of inequality and violence against women (Kilbourne, 1999). Influences on our attitudes and stereotypes that we perceive comes largely from social interactions, but given our increasing consumption of media in recent years, the way we perceive the world around us is now largely influenced and affected by imagery used by the media (Gorham, 1999). "At the very least, advertising helps to create a climate in which certain attitudes and values flourish, such as the attitude that women are valuable only as objects of men's desire" (Kilbourne, 1999: 291).

Changing the portrayal of women in the media is not going to have an effect on women's mental health overnight. As Bicchieri (2006) and Gorham (1999) explained, you attend to the cues of an ad and with repeated exposure to the similar cues they will eventually change your beliefs and preferences. By companies changing their portrayal of women in their ads they could in the long run have a real positive impact on women's mental health. This positive impact will be even greater, if women are also taught media literacy, to make them aware of the stereotypical portrayals and their effect (Bullen, 2009; Goodall, 2012). The question remains – are companies obligated to take this into account when creating ads?

5.3 A corporate social responsibility perspective

When taking into account that the respondents do feel a huge amount of pressure to be thin from the media, and that the sample also show signs of self-objectification, it could be argued that the responsible way of acting as a company is to try and change this portrayal of women in ads. Since theories have indicated that the media could potentially have a very large influence on how we perceive women, advertisers should be advised to think twice before they put an offending ad out in society.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has often been associated with companies making their financial information and environmental initiatives available to the public, but little attention has been directed to

CSR advertisement (Farache & Perks, 2010). CSR advertisements are defined as ads that "inform about a company's commitment to environmental concerns, community relations or the future of mankind, without any overt attempt to promote a specific product" and they "demonstrate how companies want to be perceived (or evaluated) by society" (Farache & Perks, 2010: 235).

The ads used in this study are trying to promote the product or the brand itself, but ads using "real" women can still be seen as a solution in between traditional ads and CSR ads, due to their almost political statement about the portrayal of women when choosing not to use models or to at least not use Photoshop. The "real" woman ads take a stand against the norm and promote a healthier female body ideal, which in some cases are made perfectly clear in the ads. For instance, in Aerie's underwear ads they use a model that has not been Photoshopped, but in addition to this, the ad is also delivered with the message "The girl in this photo has not been retouched – The real you is sexy" (Huffington Post, 2014). This could indicate that the company has gone in a direction of CSR advertisement, since they are concerned about the portrayal of women in the media and its effect on audiences, and they are actively trying to change this image through their advertisement.

However, Aerie and the other brands using "real" women in their ads are still trying to promote a product, which is why it cannot be considered a true CSR ad. But with these "real" women ads the companies using them are looking out for stakeholder interests in the community, the stakeholders being women. Of course, it could be argued that the brands are only using this new portrayal of women in order to sell more products, because this is what their consumers want to see. The view that brands are only doing it as a marketing trick is also held by one participant in the focus group (Appendix A, figure 4). The other participants, however, feel that even though it might be a marketing trick they would still rather see the "real" women ads used than the traditional ones (Appendix A, figure 4).

Given the findings in this study indicating that brands using "real" women ads make consumers feel more positive towards both the ad and the brand it seems only reasonable for companies to adopt this advertising practice. Brand image does have a significant influence on intention to buy, so a more positive brand image would lead to a higher profit if it is assumed that the respondents will carry out their intentions in real life (Appendix B, figure 4; Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000). So the decision to use "real" women in ads does make sense.

However, the finding that companies that do not use "real" women in their ads are not punished by consumers and will not lose much of their sales by still using a traditional portrayal of women in their ads points in a different direction (Appendix B, figure 5). With purely using a business perspective, companies might not need to go through the effort of changing their advertisements, since consumers might like the traditional ads less than "real" women ads, but they are not willing to stop buying products simply because

of an ad (Appendix B, figure 5).

Since the media's representation has an influence on our perceptions and how we view the world (Gorham, 1999) it could be argued that companies do have a responsibility towards their stakeholders and society in general to show a realistic and healthy portrayal of women. According to objectification theory, the portrayal of women in the media has, among other factors, a huge effect on women's mental health (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), and therefore companies might be obligated to think of their actions and the advertising images they put out in the public and their effect on the stakeholders in society (Farache & Perks, 2010).

6 Conclusion

This thesis set out to examine the response women have towards advertisements using "real" women compared to their response to traditional ads. With data from both a focus group interview and a questionnaire it was possible to establish that both the ads and the brands are more liked when they use a "real" woman strategy. Furthermore, ads with "real" women are perceived as being more effective than ads with a traditional portrayal of women.

A second goal of this thesis was to establish whether or not it could be assumed that a social norm regarding women's appearances were present and the consequences such a norm have on women. A portrayal of women in the media as sex objects is considered to be harmful for women's mental health, and in order to examine whether or not the sample were affected by the objectified imagery, Bicchieri's (2006) and Gorham's (1999) theories were used first in order to examine the beliefs held by participants about society's norm regarding women and their appearances. A social norm was found to exist, where women are supposed to adhere to society's standards of beauty: be thin, young, beautiful, and flawless.

This social norm, which is only emphasised further by the media, puts pressure on women and could potentially end up with women objectifying themselves. Self-objectification results in appearance anxiety, concern for one's weight, and disordered eating and these consequences were examined in the present study (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Appearance anxiety and weight concerns were found to be issues for the respondents, showing that even in a relatively young and well-educated sample of women, self-objectification is a problem. A discussion of companies' responsibility to act in accordance with stakeholders' best interest is outlined, with the principle of CSR as the driving argument.

6.1 Managerial implications

These conclusions lead to a number of implications for companies. First of all, since "real" woman advertisements are liked more, create a more positive attitude towards the brand, and are considered to be more effective, companies should consider using this form of marketing. Considering the effect sizes found

in this study it will result in considerable influence and market share for the company.

If the company is not ready to change their advertisements to a "real" woman portrayal it is estimated that their sales will not suffer, since customers are not ready to punish brands that do not portray women in a realistic way. However, a serious consideration is to be made regarding the brand image the company wish to have in society, and also whether or not the company sees themselves as a social responsible actor in society, that need to consider the consequences of their advertisements on women's mental health. Since the emphasis on the portrayal of women in ads is becoming more and more discussed in society, being a first mover of using "real" women ads might be better, than be forced to change when women eventually become discontent with unrealistic portrayals of women.

6.2 Perspectives and future research

In order to further explore the area of research, it would be valuable to test the self-objectification scale used in this study, to see whether or not it fits within a Danish culture, or if the scales need to be modified. This would be extremely valuable if a replication of this study were to be conducted, in that a clearer picture of Danish women's level of self-objectification would be obtained.

Another interesting perspective to research would be that of the power of "real" women advertising. This could be measured by administering the questionnaire to two groups, one with only "real" women advertisements and one with only traditional advertisements, and the measure the level of self-objectification, concern for weight and appearance and disordered eating. If a difference is detected it could indicate that seeing a realistic portrayal of women in the media could have a very big influence on women's mental health.

A perspective that has been left completely out of this study is that of the male perspective. Studies examining how men react to "real" women advertisements and traditional advertisements could indicate another dimension of consequences and further describe the social norm prevalent for women. A male perspective study could also focus on the fact that men have increasingly been portrayed as sex objects in advertisements (Blair et al, 2006) and the effect of this is still unknown.

6.3 Limitations

A number of limitations are detected in this study. First of all, only one focus group was conducted. With two focus groups the findings would be further validated and more viewpoints and opinions could have been detected.

The fact that it was not possible to completely randomise the order of the ads in the questionnaire is another limitation. Complete randomisation would have ensured that no order effect could influence the findings, whereas in this study it cannot be ruled out completely.

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