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# Gender Stereotypes in Advertising: The impacts of stereotypical portrayals

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## Abstract

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This thesis aims to investigate gender stereotypes in advertising and their effects, including social and brand-related effects. Previous literature is examined to understand what stereotypical gender role portrayal is and how it can affect people's attitudes, behaviours, and thoughts. The theoretical framework is established based on the literature review, which helped to develop two testable hypotheses: The negative effects of gender stereotypes are more evident in individuals who do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes in advertising than those who do, Individuals from the countries with lower masculinity index respond more negatively to stereotypical gender portrayals in advertising. The research question is: "What are the impacts of gender stereotypes in advertising?"

The research employed a quantitative method approach, using a survey to collect the data. The survey was conducted to identify the effects of stereotypically portrayed gender roles in ads and test hypotheses. The quantitative analysis which was performed using Microsoft Excel was employed to analyse the survey responses. The results suggest that gender stereotypes in ads can lead to restrictions in professional and personal life, and a lack of self-esteem, confidence, and self-love. The research supports the hypothesis that the negative effects of gender stereotypes are more evident in individuals who do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes than in those who do. However, it does not support that individuals from countries with a lower masculinity index respond more negatively to stereotypical gender portrayals in advertising. Overall, this thesis contributes to the understanding of the impacts of gender stereotypes in advertising on people's behaviour, thoughts, and attitudes.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, advertising, social effects, brand-related effects

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# 1 Introduction

Advertising is an essential element of today's consumerist culture, shaping people's attitudes, behaviours, and thoughts. It aims to influence consumers' behaviour and bring attention to products and services. (Taminul, 2022.) For attracting consumers, advertisers utilise stereotypes to create a sense of familiarity for the audience. Throughout history, most advertising has depicted individuals stereotypically. A stereotype is a widely accepted opinion or belief about a certain group of people that relies on presumptions and generalizations. (Akestam, 2017.) Stereotypes are considered dynamic and can evolve over time (Eisend, 2010). Research suggests that advertising that depicts stereotypes can reinforce existing stereotypical portrayals in society (Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014). Therefore, the individuals featured in advertisements can influence how individuals view themselves and others (Akestam, 2017). Advertisers use stereotypes in order to simplify communication and quickly classify the target audience. However, it can have negative impacts on consumers, including limitation of possibilities, lack of self-confidence, body dissatisfaction, etc. (McCabe & Ricciardelli., 2004.)

Gender stereotypes are the more prevalent type of stereotypes in advertising (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). These stereotypes mostly support the traditional gender roles, namely, women being primarily focused on family or men being successful professionals. Advertisements frequently portray a woman as a sexualized object or as a housewife depending on her husband or depict a man as dominant and aggressive (Holanchova & Orth, 2004). These traditional role portrayals in advertisements are considered problematic, as they can lead to negative impacts on customers (Van Hellefont & Van den Bulck, 2012). Some studies suggest that the impacts are considered negative for people who do not conform to traditional gender depictions (Matthes, Prieler & Adam, 2016). The negative impacts of gender stereotypes in advertising can be social and brand related. Brand-related impacts are consumers' reactions toward stereotypically portrayed advertisements. While social impacts refer to people's thoughts,

behaviours, expectations about their gender, and interaction with others. (Akestam, 2017.)

The primary reason for investigating gender stereotypes in advertising is to contribute a better understanding of the effects of gender stereotypes. It may allow advertisers to see the social and brand-related effects of gender stereotypes in advertising. They can be aware of the brand-related effects as it is reflected in their sales or consumer reviews. However, this topic allows advertisers to see the social effects, including body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and confidence can lead to serious health issues, namely bulimia or anorexia. Moreover, it explores the reason why some people are affected by gender stereotypes, but some do not consider it a problem. Therefore, the main research question for this thesis is, "What are the impacts of gender stereotypes in advertising?" The research will also investigate additional factors, including the evolution and prevalence of stereotypical portrayals in ads.

This thesis will first focus on what gender stereotypes in advertising is. The evolution of gender stereotypes in advertising will be explored to show how it changed over the years. The stereotypical portrayal of each gender will be separately discussed to show how women and men are depicted and what are their roles in ads. Moreover, the prevalence of gender stereotypes will be analysed in different positions, namely, how prevalent among advertising mediums, or in different cultures. The investigation of prevalence in different cultures will be used to discuss the level of effects of gender stereotypes in different countries. Furthermore, the positive and negative effects of stereotypical portrayals of genders in ads will be explored through the previous research. For the primary data, quantitative data from the survey will be analysed to identify the effects of gender stereotypes and their relationship with different cultures. Lastly, the study findings will be analysed, the conclusion will be drawn, and recommendations for future research will be provided.

The main objective of this paper is to demonstrate what outcome stereotypical ads can bring and how harmful they can be for some people. It can raise awareness of how traditional role depiction can limit people's opportunities and affect their mental and physical health. This thesis can develop an understanding for advertisers to create more positive and non-stereotypical ads. It can also be helpful for regulators to increase guidelines that prohibit the harmful use of stereotypical gender portrayals in ads.

## **2 Literature Review**

The purpose of this literature review is to provide background information about gender stereotypes and their effects. The review focuses on how gender stereotypes are perpetuated in advertising, and how this affects individuals' perceptions of gender roles. The sources such as journal articles, notes, analyses of researchers, and some case studies were used to examine the topic. Articles of marketing journals are analysed, as the materials provided by journals are reliable and appropriate to the research topic. These relevant sources for conducting the literature review were collected from online sources, including Taylor & Francis Online, EBSCO, MetCat Finna, and ProQuest. They mostly consist of magazine articles, peer-reviewed and other academic papers. The criteria for choosing literature depend on the date, relevance, reliability, author, and accessibility. The collection process of the relevant literature started with searching it in appropriate databases using relevant keywords.

### **2.1 Gender Stereotypes in Advertising**

Gender stereotyping is one of the main advertising research topics. Many advertising journals have published articles related to gender stereotyping for many years (Tsiehla, 2020). According to the meta-analysis of Eisend (2010), gender stereotyping has four different and independent components: traits, physical characteristics, occupational status, and role behaviours. Each component has a masculine and feminine version, which is associated with men



and women. Gender stereotypes are used to promote a certain product, and therefore, researchers have shown interest in men and women portrayals in advertising. (Eisend, 2010.) Grau and Zotos (2016) proposed that women are frequently portrayed in decorative or family-oriented roles, with an emphasis on their appearance or bodies. They are also less likely to be portrayed in professional roles and are often shown in more modest positions. In contrast, men are frequently depicted as independent, authoritarian, and professional, with little regard for their age or physical appearance. The settings where men and women are portrayed also demonstrate gender stereotyping. Women are often shown at home doing domestic chores or caring for children, while men are shown in active outdoor roles. (Åkestam 2017.) Some authors, such as Holanchova and Orth (2004), argued that women are frequently portrayed as sexual objects in ads. They are represented as objects in advertisements promoting cosmetics, tobacco, and alcohol. It must be admitted that the level of stereotypical portrayals of men in advertising is also on the rise (Barlett, Vowels & Saucier, 2008). Gender roles are changing dramatically in society over the years, and portraits also change. The meta-analysis of Eisend (2010) showed that gender-related development in society and changing values impact gender stereotyping in advertising.

### 2.1.1 The evolution of gender stereotypes in advertising

Gender stereotypes and the roles of men and women in advertising are changing over time. Early research conducted during the 1960s and 1970s define that in terms of settings, stereotypical portrayals of women were limited to the roles in the household settings, as perfect mothers, and happy housewives whereas. Men were frequently portrayed outdoors and in professional settings, namely, as professionals, well-educated individuals, and protective fathers. Moreover, females were most likely to be depicted as depending on men and in need of their protection. Stereotypical women roles were often shown as lacking intelligence and unable to make significant decisions or objectified and portrayed sexually. On the contrary, the

representation of professional women and career roles were rarely seen in advertisements. (Tsuchla, 2020.)



Figure 1. Schlitz beer advertisement (Xprize, 2020)

The Schlitz beer advertisement described in Figure 1 was introduced in 1952, and it portrayed a housewife that almost burnt the beer. She was portrayed in the kitchen, and she was not able to do even one job she was supposed to do. This advertisement trivialized women and made fun of her role as the housewife, which she was told to represent in society. (Xprize, 2020.)

**LADIES' DEPT.**

*What she looks for—*

- ✓ COMFORT AND ROOMINESS
- ✓ SMART GAY COLOURS
- ✓ REALLY LARGE LUGGAGE TRUNK
- ✓ EASILY ADJUSTABLE SEAT
- ✓ SENSIBLE DOORS—*safe for children*
- ✓ EASY GEAR CHANGE

**MAINLY FOR MEN**

*What he insists on—*

- MORE MILES PER GALLON—*up to 36 m.p.g.\**
- GOOD ACCELERATION—*0.75 m.p.h. in 45 sec.\**
- SAFE BRAKING—*no doubt about that!*
- VISIBILITY—*Excellent. Good distance too.*
- EFFICIENT SPRINGING—*superb!*
- HANDLING—*what a joy!*

\* The Autocar 25.10.57

**Together**  
you'll choose a

**MORRIS OXFORD**

Remember, too, Morris quality protects your investment—your Morris is always worth more in resale value. TWELVE MONTHS' WARRANTY—and backed by B.M.C. Service, the most comprehensive in Europe. Morris Owners planning a Continental Tour are invited to see their Morris dealers for details of a free service to save foreign currency.

MORRIS MOTORS LTD., COBLET, OXFORD. London Representatives: Morris Motors, Berkeley Square, W.1. Overseas Representatives: Nuffield Export Ltd., Oxford and 41-46, Piccadilly, London, W. 1W2C

Figure 2. Morris Oxford advertisement (Xprize, 2020)

Previously, car advertisements mainly focused on men and their needs. The 1958 Morris Oxford ad was considered progressive as it also mentioned women's need for a car. However, their needs were taken into account through shopping, aesthetics, and safety. While men were paying attention to technical features, women were looking for the safety and well-being of their children. (Xprize, 2020.) Women were portrayed as dependent on men, caring housewives, and mothers.

While recent studies indicate a decline in the portrayal of women in domestic and dependent roles, there has been a noticeable increase in the depiction of women and men in sexually decorative roles. Sexualization of both men and women was spread over the last several decades. (Tsiehla, 2020.) Figure 3 illustrates the video advertisement of the Nissan Juke launched in the USA in

2011. The investigation done by Baker and Churchill (1977) concluded that physically attractive models used in automobile advertisements have an impact on an individual's perception of cars. They stated that participants rated the car mostly based on the attractiveness of the model rather than its quality, appearance, and other positive features. When considering this research, it would be obvious that Nissan used a sexual appeal to sell its cars. The advertisement described a side-by-side comparison test between Nissan Juke and an attractive bikini model. (TransmissionOne, 2011.)



Figure 3. Nissan Juke video ad launched in 2011 (TransmissionOne, 2011)

In terms of men, they also tend to be depicted with themes of sexual appeal. According to Rohlinger (2002), the sexual male image was the common portrayal of men in magazine advertisements from 1987 to 1997. The portrayal of muscular and fit bodies of men spread the image of an ideal men figure. It was one of the most used advertising themes in magazines. Nowadays, these body types of men become display objects and physical ideals. The depiction of men in a such way continues to exist in perfume or clothes ads (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2021). According to the studies done about gender stereotypes (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2021; Çiftçi, 2014), even if the stereotypical role of women as housewives and men as the main character of ads decreased, the portrayal of men and women in sexual roles still exist.

Changing gender-related values in society affects gender roles in advertising. Evidence states that gender roles have significantly changed professionally and socially, during the last decades. Participation of women in the labour force has continuously increased from 32% in 1950 to 57% in 2018. The education level of women has shown a similar trend where more women are finishing their higher education and pursuing advanced degrees in fields, including law and medicine. This shift may be happening at the same time as changes in societal attitudes toward women's roles. Additionally, unlike a few decades ago, women are no longer restricted from joining the workforce due to their family obligations. Currently, 58% of married women and 65% of mothers with children under the age of 3 are employed full-time outside of their homes. (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2021.) Moreover, employment opportunities also become more equal between genders. A study by Bosak and Sczesny (2011) discovered that both men and women were equally likely to hire or consider a candidate based on their qualifications, rather than their gender. They indicated that jobs may no longer be seen as being specific to one gender. A shift also occurred in the number of men who choose to stay at home and take care of their children. In 2008, approximately 140,000 fathers chose to stay at home, which is a 33% increase since 2002. This change was not only due to the higher unemployment rate among men but also due to the more accepting attitude of society towards men who choose to stay home and raise children. Society is breaking slowly the taboo of the stay-at-home father of men. (Fowler & Thomas, 2015.)

These changing trends in gender portrayals are noticed in advertising too. The roles of influential, confident, independent, active, and sexually powerful women, “new man” and “new father” is becoming increasingly common in advertisements. Brands started to use an advertising strategy that challenges traditional female stereotypes in advertising and this strategy is called “femvertising”. Femvertising involves using messages, imagery, and talent that promote female empowerment and aim to eliminate gender-based disparities. While feminist themes have been used in advertising previously, this is the first time that advertising appeals try to challenge the gender stereotypes created

and maintained by advertising itself. (Yoon & Lee, 2021.) In a related study, Middleton, Turnbull, and de Oliveira (2019) explored the views of advertising practitioners on the portrayal of women in advertising. They highlighted a new type of gender stereotype, the "sexually powerful" woman, who is in control and achieves her goals because she is sexually powerful, rather than being objectified for male consumption or gratification.

Femvertising gained some attention in 2004 with Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign. Dove took a bold step to challenge conventional beauty standards by releasing an advertisement called 'Real Beauty' that displayed realistic portrayals of women. The campaign was inspired by a survey carried out by Dove's public relations agency, Edelman, which revealed that only 2% of the 3,000 women surveyed considered themselves beautiful. The advertisement first appeared in the United Kingdom and aimed to empower women to be happy in all shapes, sizes, and colours. Dove Campaign for Real Beauty featured images of women who did not conform to traditional beauty standards. These women had physical traits, which are typically considered unattractive, such as freckles, stretch marks, pregnancy, being overweight, or having grey hair or small breasts (Figure 4). Dove claimed that the images in the campaign were not digitally retouched. The campaign gained popularity in the UK and soon spread to North America and Europe. (Murray, 2013.) Nowadays, the CFRB is a crucial component of Dove's global marketing strategy. The Dove campaign was very successful and had a major impact on the company's sales. Within the first ten years of the campaign, Dove's revenue increased from \$2.5 billion to \$4 billion. Additionally, the campaign was found to have a positive impact on women's self-confidence. A study conducted by McCleary looked at how women perceived beauty before and after the launch of the Dove campaign. The study found that women began to define beauty based on a variety of qualities beyond physical appearance after the campaign. This advertisement was a huge step to break the taboos of women's appearance and after this campaign, many brands started to launch ads against stereotyped roles of women. (McCleary, 2015.)



Figure 4. Dove Campaign for Real Beauty (Live Oak Communications, 2021)

As mentioned before, advertising has started to show women in non-traditional roles, such as business owners, athletes, doctors, and professors. These roles were previously associated only with men. Women are depicted as having control over their decisions and influencing the thoughts and behaviours of others in these ads, demonstrating a different dimension of power for women. (Bhatia & Bhatia, 2021.) This trend in advertising shows a shift towards challenging traditional gender roles and promoting gender equality. The Always #LikeAGirl advertising campaign is an example of showing the power dimensions of women and challenging negative attitudes and thoughts towards women and girls. Always launched a campaign in 2014 to empower girls to maintain their confidence during puberty and overcome societal limitations. The #LikeAGirl campaign has since evolved into a significant and inspiring movement. The phrase "like a girl" is commonly used as an insult towards both girls and boys, which can have a detrimental impact on the confidence and self-esteem of girls, particularly during puberty. (Yoon & Lee, 2021) The video depicts a production crew filming individuals of different ages and genders, asking them to demonstrate what it means to run, fight, and throw like a girl. The respondents act out negative stereotypes associated with femininity, such as being weak and shallow. However, when young girls are asked the same questions, they respond confidently and use their strength to run, fight, and

throw. The campaign wanted to give a message of not afraid of failure, believing in yourself, being confident to play sports, and smashing limitations. (Always, n.d.) The case of the Always campaign shows how non-stereotypical portrayals became during the last decade. The results of femvertising campaigns are positive in terms of revenue and effect on females, thus, they increasingly spread among advertisers. (Yoon & Lee, 2021.)

On the other hand, due to the changing roles of fathers in the household, advertisers are changing the way they market their products to this target audience. Advertisements for dads now show fathers as being actively involved in parenting. This form of advertising is often referred to as "dadvertising". Dadvertising highlights that the modern standard for masculinity includes being an involved parent and a partner who is emotionally open and vulnerable. (Leader, 2019.) The Father's Day commercial "Real Dad Moments" created by Dove in 2014 is one of the famous cases where fathers are shown as caretakers. The advertisement shows several children saying the word "dad" in different situations and with varying emotions. Often, the requests for their fathers are accompanied by a scene of the father taking care of the child by helping or playing with them (Figure 5). Dove's research team conducted surveys that revealed 90% of men worldwide believe that caretaking is a part of their strength and masculinity. Dove further justifies the creation of the ad by arguing that it is necessary to recognize the moments of fatherhood where men display their caring nature, which is often ignored. The ad aims to challenge and overcome negative stereotypes about fathers and fatherhood by emphasizing the caring and nurturing aspects of fatherhood that are often overlooked in media and society. The campaign seeks to give credit to fathers for their role in promoting well-being and positive outcomes for their children. #RealDadMoments campaign shows real moments of fathers taking care of their children and it encourages viewers to recognize and appreciate the important and often underestimated role of fathers in parenting. (Men SXP, 2014.)





Figure 5. Dove #RealDadMoments advertising campaign (Men SXP, 2014)

Similar to femvertising, dadvertising aims primarily to remove gender stereotypes and to promote gender equality and empowerment within families. Nowadays, advertising typically depicts men as heroic figures for their children, loving husbands, devoted fathers, and occasionally, domestic workers. (Leader, 2019.) According to Baxter, Kulczynski, and Ilicic (2016), advertising featuring fathers as caregivers is well-received regardless of people's views on gender roles. Fowler and Thomas (2015) found in their research that the portrayal of fathers in advertising had increased over time, indicating a greater acceptance of men in domestic and child-caring roles. Moreover, the roles of professionally dressed women coming home from work and engaging in domestic duties have been widespread in advertising (Fowler & Thomas, 2015).

### 2.1.2 Stereotypical portrayals of women in advertising

Stereotypical female roles in advertising often involve portraying women as being primarily focused on their physical appearance, emotional well-being, and domestic responsibilities (Middleton, Turnbull & Oliviera, 2019). Common stereotypical portrayals of women are weak roles, sexualized roles, housewives, or submissive individuals (Grau and Zotos, 2016). Matthes et al. (2016) found that a nation's culture plays a significant role in gender role

portrayal, and gender stereotypes are more prevalent in countries with a higher rating in the Hofstede masculinity index.

Hofstede's masculinity dimension was created to help understand how gender roles and socialization differ across cultures. In advertising, this dimension can be seen in two different ways. In cultures that are considered feminine, there is an emphasis on modesty, relationships, and a good quality of life. On the other hand, in cultures that are considered masculine, there is more focus on productivity, achievement, and material success that are often associated with occupation-related variables.

Researchers identified that women's roles in advertising are mother, the passive little girl, the perfect grandmother, and the sexualized and observed woman. Moreover, another stereotype in advertising associated with women is beauty and cosmetics products, which involves them appearing in such advertisements instead of products related to cars, computers, gaming, etc. (Shequal, 2022.)

The model mother is one of the commonly portrayed stereotypical women roles in advertising. Women are mostly shown as taking care of both the home and children rather than work. While portraying women as a mother or housewives, they are usually either in the kitchen or in the bathroom, which limits the role of women to cooking and cleaning. They are also more likely to be shown in relationship roles, including mother, sister, wife, etc. not as individuals. Ads often portray women caring, dressing, cooking, and cleaning up after children, while men are mostly depicted playing outside with children. (Sharma & Bumb, 2021.) As illustrated in Figure 6 below, Knorr has created a campaign for Mother's Day and has described a mother cooking together with her daughter.



Figure 6. Knorr advertisement (Business Wire, 2019)

According to the Bureau of Labour Statistics, the rate of employed mothers with children under 18 was 72.3% in 2019 (AAUW, 2019). It proved that most women do not spend most of their lives in the kitchen or at home, they also actively participate in their working life. They are balancing home and employment. As reported by Sharma and Bumb (2021), the use of these stereotypes can be considered unethical by depicting an unrealistic image of women.

Moreover, a lot of research was conducted about the sexual appeal role portrayal of advertisements. Women are often depicted as sexual objects to provoke a sexual appeal in the advertisement, including nudity and sexual appearances (Courtney & Whipple, 1983; Rohlinger, 2002; Matthes et al., 2016). Parts of the women's bodies, legs, breasts, etc., are used in ads, and women are demonstrated dressed in either swimwear or leisurewear (Milner et al., 2000). Grau & Zotos (2016) also have stated that one of the most portrayed women roles in ads is sexually appealing roles, and the usage of these roles in advertisements is increasing.



Figure 7. Dolce & Gabbana Campaign of Summer 2007 (Mancunione, 2013)

In 2007, Italian luxury fashion brand Dolce & Gabbana launched a controversial ad campaign that sparked anger and criticism for portraying women as sexual objects. The campaign, which featured images of half-naked women observed by men, was widely condemned by feminists and women's rights activists. The Dolce & Gabbana campaign was widely seen as objectifying women, reducing them to nothing more than sexual objects to be used. Many critics argued that the campaign reinforced harmful gender stereotypes and perpetuated the objectification of women in popular culture. (Mancunione, 2013.) Zotos and Tsihla (2014) supported the idea that the increase in sexualization in advertising is linked to the goal of the advertisers to create a sensation, excite the male gaze, and provoke.

On the other hand, the other role of women in advertisements is “the magical grandmother”. Shequal (2022) provided research that found that the advertising industry tends to overlook women aged 55 and above. Moreover, even when older women are depicted, they are often portrayed as stereotypical and one-dimensional characters. Typically, older women are presented as idealized and nurturing grandmothers, and they are often in the kitchen preparing meals for

younger family members or providing support and encouragement to them. Their appearance is always perfect, and they are rarely given significant speaking roles or complex storylines. (Shequal, 2022.) Regarding younger girls, Shequal (2022) argued that girls were given fewer dominant roles and were more passive than boys. The results of this study showed that the appearance of boys is more than girls in television commercials.

Despite stereotyped women roles, the physical appearance of women in advertisements also conforms to a certain stereotype. Both aspects of gender stereotypes, namely physical characteristics, and role behaviour have been discussed by many researchers. (Paek, Nelson & Vilela, 2011; Van Hellefont & Van den Bulck, 2012; Sharma & Bumb, 2021.) Keh, Park, Kelly & Du (2016) stated that one of the most used stereotyping in advertising is physical characteristics, such as beauty ideals or standards. It is not only about how the women or men present but also how makeup, styling, facial expressions, and poses are used in the advertisements. According to the study investigated by Akestam (2017), in the advertising sector, preferred physical characteristics for women are white, skinny, and attractive. Advertisers often use these characteristics to portray the “ideal woman”. Marketing messages targeted at women are related to idealized images of women (Çiftçi, 2014). Fang et al. (2012) mentioned that attractive female celebrities are often used to promote or recommend a product to women. The study by Grabe (2008) supported that the media is full of portrayals of female bodies that are very thin and skinny. Moreover, the bodies depicted in the media are considerably slimmer than the average woman's body. According to the research conducted by Peck and Loken (2004), portrayed women's image in advertising continues to be below average in weight, in comparison with the general U.S. population of women.

### 2.1.3 Stereotypical portrayals of men in advertising

Stereotypical male roles in advertising often involve portraying men as being primarily focused on physical strength, power, and financial success. A lot of

research has been done to analyse male roles in advertising, and researchers determined that sexualized male roles appear more frequently in television and print advertisements. (Ricciardelli, Clow & White, 2010.) Papaja and Swiatek (2021) argued that traditionally, discussions of gender in media have focused on the portrayal of women and the inequalities and stereotypes associated with femininity. In contrast, the representation of men and masculinity has been somewhat neglected. However, research by the authors has highlighted some key differences in the way men and women are portrayed in television commercials. Specifically, men are more likely to be depicted outside of the home, while women are often limited to being portrayed as mothers at home in the kitchen. Furthermore, male characters promoting the products in television commercials are more likely to be associated with social and career advancement. (Papaja & Swiatek, 2021.)



Figure 8. Old Spice advertisement (Grist, 2010)

Studies concluded that men are depicted as well-educated, an expert, and sharing their knowledge. They always demonstrate self-confidence and high social status. The other role of men in ads is “a real man”, who can easily achieve everything. He is independent, handsome, good-looking, athletic, and beautiful women surrounded him. The social orientation that emphasizes authority and status is the traditional male role stereotyped in advertising. (Kniazian, 2014.) Figure 8 illustrated above is the advertisement of Old Spice. It

can be an example of a stereotyped male role, where a man is depicted as strong, powerful, athletic, and good-looking.

The other type of stereotyped men role is a father. Men are typically seen as the head of the household. They occupy dominant roles and are portrayed as providers, career-oriented and independent in society. Men often spend time with their children outside, while women are typically portrayed in the kitchen. Male stereotypes often emphasize shared interests and activities, such as going to a football match or the pub, while rarely being depicted doing housecleaning. (Ember & Ember, 2004.) Kniazian (2014) also supports the studies that male voice-overs in advertisements are in a higher proportion than females. They are considered more knowledgeable about products than women. Even advertisements targeting children feature male voice-overs.

In addition, Mason (2003) argues that men are also being depicted in advertisements using beauty products and emphasizing their body image, fashion, and sexuality. This suggests that male advertising also focuses on the sexual aspect of men as their most important characteristic. Men are portrayed as half-naked, fit, and handsome in the advertisements (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Calvin Klein MAN advertisement (Oregonlive, 2007)

Advertisements that are displaying men as sexual objects are growing every year. Weeden and Sabini (2005) assert that advertisements commonly depict men with unnaturally fit and muscular bodies. They portray the male body ideally as having a low body fat percentage combined with a high level of muscularity. Furthermore, Ricciardelli et al. (2010) discovered through their analysis of lifestyle magazines targeted towards men that the ideal male body was portrayed as lean and toned. This emphasizes the importance of physical fitness for men, which stands in contrast to the thin ideal that is commonly promoted for women. Elliot and Elliot (2007) also supported the studies about the use of the male body in advertisements and found that advertisers portray men as sexual objects through the use of muscular and lean body-builder images with defined abdominal muscles, massive chests, and inflated shoulders. According to them, the men's lifestyle magazine industry focusing on body image has significantly grown in the past few decades.



## 2.2 The prevalence of gender stereotypes in advertising

The prevalence of portrayal of men and women in advertising is different across countries and cultures and in advertising mediums, including print, television, and social media (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). Gender stereotypes in advertising are not limited to a specific culture or region but are prevalent across various cultures. Studies have shown that gender stereotyping in advertising is a global phenomenon and can be found in different parts of the world, however, the degree of stereotyping varies across cultures. (Paek et al., 2011.) In terms of advertising mediums, gender stereotypes appear in all types of advertising. The degree and type of gender roles differ in each advertising medium (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010).

### 2.2.1 Global prevalence

Researchers have begun to focus on the portrayal of gender roles in international advertising and have conducted cross-cultural studies to examine the societal expectations placed on men and women in advertising. While these studies have been limited to magazine and television advertising, they have revealed a consistent pattern of differences in the way men and women are depicted in advertisements across cultures. According to the research, in cultures where feminine values are more prominent, the distinction between the types of roles that women and men portrayed in advertising is seen less than the masculine cultures. On the other hand, in cultures where masculine values are more prevalent, the inequality in the societal roles assigned to women and men in advertising is often greater. (An & Kim, 2007.)

Hofstede's research on cultural differences is widely regarded as significant and innovative in various fields, including management, social psychology, anthropology, sociology, marketing, and communication. He developed a model of five value dimensions based on an extensive survey of IBM employees worldwide. His study identified four major dimensions on which societies differ:

power distance (the desire for hierarchy or egalitarianism), individualism (preference for group or individual orientation), masculinity (gender-role differentiation), and uncertainty avoidance (societal resistance to uncertainty). Later, a Chinese value survey in 23 nations conducted by Hofstede identified the fifth dimension, long-term orientation. The model has been validated in numerous cross-cultural studies across various disciplines, making it one of the most frequently tested and validated models in the field of cultural values. (Hofstede, 2001.)

The Masculinity dimension of Hofstede's model was introduced to explain the similarities and differences in gender roles and socialization across different cultures. In the context of advertising, this dimension has been operationalized in two ways. Feminine cultures tend to emphasize modesty, quality of life, and relationships, while masculine cultures focus on productivity and occupation-related variables such as achievement and material success. Additionally, the masculinity dimension has been used to examine social differentiation and gender-role differences between men and women. Feminine cultures aim for reduced social differences between genders, while masculine cultures expect maximum social differentiation. (Paek et al., 2011.) Research done by An and Kim (2007) has shown that men tend to have more prominent roles in advertising than women, regardless of cultural orientation, but the between-gender differences are more significant in masculine cultures like Japan, the USA, Mexico, Australia, and Malaysia compared to feminine cultures like Sweden, The Netherlands, Singapore, and Taiwan. Wiles, Wiles & Tjernlund (1995) found that gender-role differences were more pronounced in print advertisements in the United States, which is a more masculine country, compared to those in Swedish ads. This discovery is in line with the hypothesis of the masculine value dimension.

On the contrary, some mixed findings came across when comparing gender-role portrayals in advertising across different countries with varying levels of masculinity. Some researchers found that a lower masculinity index in the

country does not mean less stereotypical portrayals of gender in advertising. For example, Milner's study (2005) of television advertisements in three African countries with different levels of masculinity did not support the hypothesis that predicted greater gender-role differences in the highly masculine country compared to the low masculine country. Other studies (Milner & Collins, 2000) have also examined gender-role portrayals in advertisements across countries that score differently on the masculinity dimension. These studies have compared ads in high-masculine countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, and France with those in medium-masculine countries like Taiwan and low-masculine (high feminine) countries like the Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, and Denmark. The results of these studies have been mixed, suggesting that the masculinity value dimension does not consistently predict the nature of gender-role portrayals in advertising.

### 2.2.2 Advertising mediums

Gender stereotypes are prevalent across various advertising mediums, including television commercials, print ads, and social media ads. Research shows that traditional gender roles and stereotypes are often reinforced in advertising. Studies investigating gender role depictions in TV advertisements were first conducted in the US during the 1970s, and later in Europe during the 1980s and Asia during the 1990s. These studies have consistently found that gender roles in television advertisements tend to be heavily stereotyped across various variables. The most commonly examined variables include the gender of the main character, the gender of the voiceover, the age of the main character, and the setting in which the main character appears. (Matthes et al., 2016.)

Researchers have done analyses about the gender of the main character of television advertisements, and the results showed that the primary male characters are more prevalent (Eisend 2010; Furnham and Paltzer 2010). On the other hand, one of the commonly studied variables in advertisements is the

age of the primary character. According to most studies, women are predominantly portrayed in the younger age segment (below 35), whereas men are more often depicted in the middle and older age segments. A meta-analysis by Eisend (2010) showed that women are three times more likely to be portrayed as younger than men in advertisements. Furthermore, Matthes et al. (2016) suggested that one of the most consistent findings in the literature is that male voiceovers are more common. It is found that male voiceovers were used more in TV ads as thoughts of males were considered more reliable. However, nowadays, female voiceovers increased steadily, especially, in ads related to households, beauty, and children. Regarding product types, women were frequently associated with beauty, personal care, household, and cleaning products, whereas for men, product association between males and cars, technology, electronics, telecommunications, and computers. (Jörg, Adam & Prieler, 2016.)

Studies conducted in Europe and the USA have highlighted the growing portrayal of women in decorative roles in print advertisements. Lysonski's research (1985) found that British women were frequently depicted in decorative roles, particularly emphasizing their physical attractiveness and sexual appeal. This trend was also observed in studies carried out in Germany, Greece, The Netherlands, Sweden, and the USA, which indicated an increase in the use of themes centred on physical beauty and sexual objectification of women in print advertising. Similar to TV ads, women were portrayed as dependent on men, young and attractive. Male stereotypical depiction as sexual appeal could also be seen in magazine ads. Even if these sexualized roles of both men and women decreased, they continue to exist, especially in beauty magazines. (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009.)

Gender role studies have primarily focused on traditional media, such as TV and print, with limited attention given to online media. Online advertising differs from traditional advertising in various aspects, including personalized advertising and targeting younger consumers. In recent years, social media has

become a significant platform for advertising. Social media advertising primarily stereotyped based on physical characteristics rather than occupational status, while traditional advertising relied more on occupational status. The level of stereotyping in terms of role behaviours was found to be in both traditional and social media advertising. (Roth-Cohen, 2023.)

## 2.3 The dialectical relationship between gender stereotypes in advertising and individuals

The impacts of advertising stereotypes are not necessarily negative but can also be positive for advertisers (Czopp, Kay & Cheryan, 2015). Not only do stereotypes affect society, but also society has an impact on advertising stereotypes. The impact of stereotypical portrayals on consumer evaluations depends on multiple factors. One crucial factor is the current societal gender roles and how advertising aligns with them, as these roles evolve. Traditional gender-role portrayals may not be well-received by consumers, leading to disconnection. Another factor is that gender roles change at different rates across various cultures, resulting in varying responses to traditional gender-role portrayals. Lastly, men tend to respond more favourably to traditional gender-role portrayals, while women tend to prefer non-stereotypical or counter-stereotypical depictions. (Meulenaer, Dens, Pelsmacker & Eisend, 2017.)

### 2.3.1 Social impacts

Social effects are effects on mood and feelings, social connectedness, body ideals, creativity, helpful behaviours, and social comparison. These are effects on individuals that do not necessarily have to be related to the sender or the persuasive purpose of the advertisement (Åkestam, 2017). The consequences of each gender stereotyping component can be negative and restrict life opportunities, especially for women. Dickinson et al. (2009) pointed out that the impact of physical characteristics stereotypes can lead to body dissatisfaction and decreased self-satisfaction, role behaviour stereotypes can restrict self-

development opportunities, and occupational roles stereotypes can create disadvantages in the careers of women.

Cultivation theory proposes that the media shapes people's perception of social reality. The theory suggests that people adopt the stereotypes portrayed in the media and incorporate them into their belief systems and values regarding quality of life. As a result, individuals create a perception of reality that aligns with the images presented in advertisements. (Gerbner, 1976.) According to the cultivation theory discussed by many researchers, people can be affected by stereotypical ads, and it can lead them to internalize the ideas and values promoted in the ads, shaping their attitudes and behaviours. Thus, the impacts of these behaviours can be negative. (Sharma & Shelat, 2017.)

Richins (1991) stated in his research that Social Comparison Theory is often used to study how young people compare themselves to others. This theory suggests that people have a natural tendency to evaluate their abilities and opinions. Moreover, in the absence of objective criteria for comparison, they may turn to social comparison with similar or dissimilar others, such as reference groups or social categories. Researchers have examined the outcomes of social comparison behaviour in various contexts, including its impact on issues such as self-esteem, self-concept, satisfaction with appearance, and feelings of insecurity. The study by Bower (2001) focused on this topic and determined that some women compare themselves with the images of women idealized in advertising. This comparison with highly attractive models can lead to negative emotions. The significance attributed to physical appearance can lead to individuals comparing themselves with highly attractive models, causing a greater impact and emotional response. This comparison can result in negative feelings such as frustration and anxiety. A study conducted by Richins (1991) revealed that half of the young adult female participants reported frequently comparing themselves with models in advertising, and approximately one-third of them felt dissatisfied with their appearance due to these ads. Furthermore, a study explored on white junior

high and high school girls found that around 90% of them were dissatisfied with their weight, resulting in more than 60% of them dieting at least once in the past year (Bower, 2001).

Barlett et al. (2008) conducted two meta-analyses to examine the impact of pressure from mass media on men's self-images, specifically in relation to the ideal muscular male body. The meta-analyses aimed to determine the extent to which media pressure influences men's body satisfaction, body esteem, and self-esteem. A lot of people are worried about their physical appearance, and this situation can lead to a negative self-image, which in turn can lead to unhealthy behaviours such as excessive exercising and an increased likelihood of developing a negative self-image. The authors observed that having a negative self-image is associated with having negative thoughts and emotions about one's body, which can have an adverse impact on an individual's self-esteem, body image, and overall satisfaction with their body. Moreover, research has demonstrated that women who were exposed to media representations that portray a thin body type as an ideal had lower levels of self-esteem, body satisfaction, and body esteem compared to women who were not exposed to such idealized images. (Barlett et al., 2008.)

Meulenaer et al. (2017) investigated gender stereotypes from different perspective and suggested that high-femininity countries are more critical regarding gender role portrayals. Their proactive participation in society and sense of importance negatively affect advertisers' corporate image and result in a lower purchase intention. According to Hofstede (2001), even if femininity is not strictly a cultural variable, research shows that feminine role orientation impacts cultural differences. For example, women in New Zealand, which is one of the high femininity countries perceive the way women are stereotyped in advertising as offensive. On the contrary, women in the US, Japan, and Thailand, which scored as the highest masculine countries consider it normal or a little offensive. The values of individuals of high femininity countries are contradictory with this type of portrayal because they value female autonomy.

Therefore, this research leads us to predict that individuals from higher femininity countries will respond more negatively to stereotypical gender role portrayals in advertising. (Meulenaer et al., 2017.)

### 2.3.2 Brand-related impacts

Gender stereotypes in ads can have both positive and negative brand-related effects. On the one hand, advertisements that align with traditional gender roles and stereotypes may be more relatable to some consumers, and they can increase brand familiarity and loyalty. However, on the other hand, such advertisements may also lead to negative reactions from those who feel marginalized or misrepresented by the gender stereotypes portrayed. (Akestam, 2017.) Researchers tried to identify if the stereotypical portrayal of gender roles have an impact on their purchase intentions and thoughts about product or brand. Eisend (2016) supported that stereotypes can affect consumer reactions, including behaviours, attitudes, and choices. Studies in advertising literature have frequently examined the impact of advertising on attitudes towards advertisements, brand attitudes, and purchase intentions. Nonetheless, research indicated that stereotypical depictions in advertisements are linked to reduced levels of advertisement, brand, and product attitudes, as well as purchase intentions, compared to advertisements that do not include such portrayals. (Eisend, 2016.) According to Akestam (2017), different people respond differently to stereotypes in advertising. It depends on whether consumers belong to the stereotyped group or not. The findings show that those who fall into the stereotyped group do not have a negative reaction to the brand, whereas those who fit into this category have a neutral or even favourable reaction (Johnson and Grier, 2011). However, Matthes et al. (2016) suggested a counterargument and mentioned that people who do not conform to stereotypical portrayals react more negatively than those who do.

Holancova and Orth (2004) indicated that women are more conscious of gender stereotyping in advertising than men. Females who hold less favourable



attitudes towards such stereotyped portrayals are more inclined to develop negative attitudes towards companies or products that use them in their ads. It may cause the target audience to form negative perceptions towards the brand or company associated with the advertisement. However, the advertisements that align with traditional gender roles and stereotypes may be more relatable to some consumers and they can increase brand familiarity and loyalty.

## 2.4 Positive impacts

Stereotypes are not necessarily negative and can be seen as useful tools for advertisers as they simplify communication. According to Courtney and Whipple (1983), stereotypes can be beneficial in advertising because they serve as a shorthand that enables quick and clear delivery of ideas and images. As advertisements need to be processed rapidly and with minimal effort, stereotypes are often used as a means to achieve this goal. Affecting these impacts positively is often seen as the ultimate goal of advertising. The effects of stereotyping on advertisers are mainly positive because it is regarded as a quick method of classifying or categorizing, and it can generate expectations that correspond to the everyday experiences of individuals of the stereotyped group. However, stereotyping can also have adverse effects, as it may create expectations that limit the potential for personal growth and self-discovery of individuals who do not belong to the stereotyped social category. As previously stated, individuals who conform to stereotyped portrayals tend to react positively to them. (Matthes et al., 2016.)

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Theoretical framework

Eisend (2010) defines gender stereotyping as widely accepted beliefs or thoughts about gender roles, and it has four different and independent components: traits, physical characteristics, occupational status, and role

behaviours. Grau and Zotos (2016) build on his statement and suggest that women are mostly presented in decorative roles, mostly at home, in caregiver roles, and in fewer professional roles. While men are depicted as professional, independent, strong, and aggressive.

Cultivation theory suggests that media has an impact on how individuals view and interpret social reality. The theory indicates that people adopt the stereotypes portrayed in media and create a perception of reality that conforms to the portrayals demonstrated in advertising. The ideas and values promoted in ads lead to shaping the attitudes and behaviours of individuals. The impacts of their behaviours can result negatively, including restrictions in their lives, abilities, or social interactions. (Gerbner and Gross, 1976.)

On the other hand, Bower (2001) explains the effects of gender stereotyping in advertising through the Social Comparison Theory. He posits that individuals compare their opinions, abilities, or behaviours with others. According to advertising, women and men compare themselves with the idealized images in ads. Bower (2001) examined that the outcomes of social comparison behaviour can be body dissatisfaction, insecurity, lack of self-esteem, and confidence. Social Comparison Theory is important for this study as it allows to identify the trigger of social negative impacts of gender stereotypes in ads.

Moreover, Eisend (2016) found that gender stereotypes in advertising can have brand-related effects. These effects are consumer reactions towards brands or products, namely, purchase intentions, brand attitudes, etc. Johnson and Grier (2012) improved this definition and suggested that reactions depend on whether consumers belong to the stereotyped group or not. In other words, people who do not belong to the stereotyped group do not react negatively to the brand, however, people who belong to that group react negatively. On the other hand, Matthes et al. (2016) argued the contrary and stated that not only brand-related effects, but also social effects depend on individuals belonging to the stereotypically portrayed group. They mentioned that people who conform to the

stereotypically portrayed images react neutrally or even positively negatively or have negative effects.

An and Kim (2007) approached the effects of gender stereotypes from a different perspective. They examined the relationship between the masculinity dimension of cultures and the representation of gender stereotypes in ads through Hofstede's research (1984). According to the researchers, gender stereotypes in ads are more prevalent in masculine cultures than feminine ones. Moreover, feminine cultures are affected more negatively by gender stereotypes. On the contrary, Milner's study (2005) did not support this theory.

### 3.2 Research design

The theoretical framework of this study was developed based on the comprehensive literature review, to identify key theories related to gender stereotypes in advertising. Based on the theoretical framework, the research question and hypotheses were formulated.

The research question is, "What are the impacts of gender stereotypes in advertising?".

H1: The negative effects of gender stereotypes are more evident in individuals who do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes than in those who do.

H2: Individuals from countries with lower masculinity index respond more negatively to stereotypical gender portrayals in advertising.

This thesis employs primary research to test the hypotheses and answer the research question. The theoretical framework is used to create a survey for collecting the primary data. The survey was conducted on March 20 in Google Forms and distributed to a sample of the general population. The data collected from this survey was analysed using quantitative data analysis. Moreover, it is analysed in Excel with Pivot Table to find the relationship among variables.

### 3.3 Data collection

The data collection process for this thesis started with conducting a survey using Google Forms. The main purpose of this survey is to identify the relationship between age and the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising and test hypotheses. The survey consisted of questions where the participants' answers were based on a 5-point Likert scale and ternary response scale, and all questions were compulsory to answer. The questions were developed to determine the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising in relation to demographics, namely age, occupation, and country. Therefore, the survey is divided into two parts. The first part of the survey was focused on demographic questions, on the other hand, the second part consisted of questions purposing to identify people's attitudes, behaviours, or feelings toward gender stereotypes. With a 5-point Likert scale respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with the effects of gender stereotypes was determined. These questions were formulated to evaluate the social and brand-related impacts on themselves.

Participants were chosen only from Azerbaijan, Germany, and Finland. The reason for this choice is that these countries have a different level of masculinity index which is needed for testing hypotheses. Moreover, reaching the participants from these countries was easy for the writer due to the personal and university connections. Respondents of different age ranges were targeted to participate as age was considered to be an important variable in this study. A total of 65 individuals participated in the survey, with an almost close number of participants from each country. The respondents were reached through social connections, namely, university groups, friends, and personal connections. The goal was to have a diverse group of participants to compare variables and understand the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising across different perspectives. The survey was sent through social media, email, and other online platforms, as well as through the personal contacts of the researcher. It was available for a week, and during that time, participants were invited to complete it. At the end of the survey period, the data was downloaded from

Google Forms and analysed using Excel. The use of Google Forms allowed the recruitment of participants easily and illustrated the results clearly.

### 3.4 Data analysis

The survey data were analysed using Excel Pivot tables. Such as SPSS, and Pivot Tables are used to organize and summarize the survey data. Excel Pivot table is an effective way to analyse the data and organize them easily. It helped to compare the variables and use the results to answer the research question and test the research hypotheses. The independent variables are age, country, employment status, and relevance to stereotypical portrayals. The dependent variables are the effects of gender stereotypes.

After cleaning and organizing the needed data, Pivot tables are created for each key variable of the hypotheses and used to calculate the summary.

Crosstabulations are created to determine the potential relationship of the subgroups of the respondents. It is significant to analyse each variable to check if the hypotheses are correct and answer the research question. It helps to understand the research and see if the results support the analyses of previous studies done by researchers explored in the extensive literature review. The findings help to get insight into the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising and identify the area that needs further research.

## 4 Findings

The total number of survey respondents is 65 and all of them are from Azerbaijan, Germany, and Finland. The responses to the survey are discussed with visual graphs and analysed with Excel Pivot tables. The questions for identifying the demographic characteristics of respondents and if respondents fit traditional stereotypical gender roles will be shown with visual graphs. These are the independent variables of the hypotheses. The relationship between

independent and dependent variables will be analysed by creating crosstabulations with Pivot tables.

What is your gender identity?

65 responses

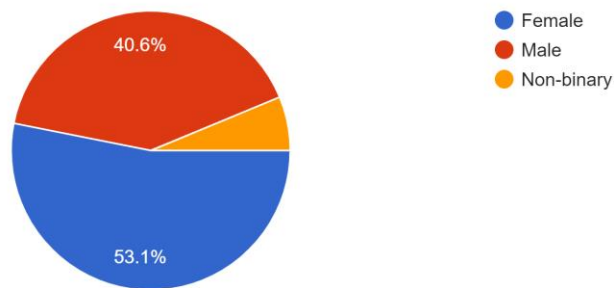


Figure 10. Gender of respondents

According to the results, around 53% of the respondents are female, 40% of them are male, and the rest are non-binary.

What is your age?

65 responses

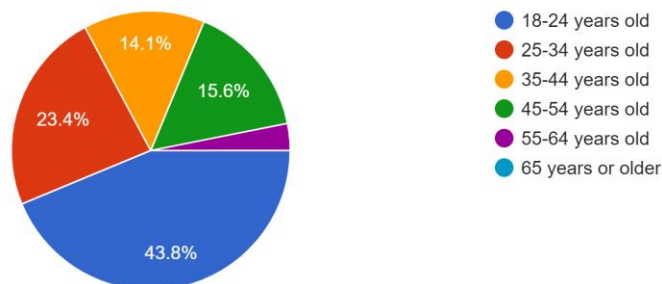


Figure 11. Age of respondents

According to Figure 11, the majority of respondents were aged between 18-24 years, which is 43.8%. About 23% of the respondents fall into the 25-34 years age category. Approximately 14% of them are 35-44 years old, 16% are 45-54

years old, and only a few percent of respondents are aged between 55-64 years.

Where are you from?

65 responses

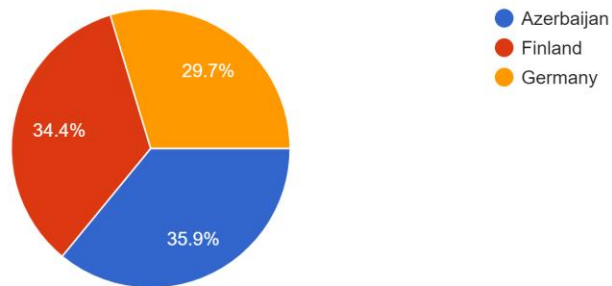


Figure 12. Country of respondents

The survey was focused on participants from three countries, namely, Azerbaijan, Finland, and Germany. The research tried to attract nearly the same number of respondents to have clear comparisons for hypothesis 2. Around 36% of respondents are from Azerbaijan, 34% of them are from Finland, and 30% are from Germany.

What is your employment status?

65 responses

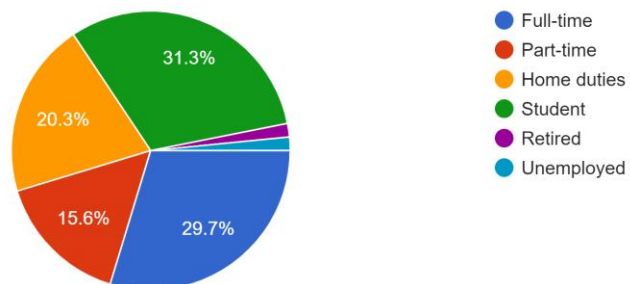


Figure 13. Employment status of respondents

The percentage of employed respondents is around 45%, including both part-time and full-time employers. 31% of survey participants are students from three countries and around 20% of them are homemakers, stay-at-home parents, or caregivers.

Do you agree with any of the following statements about stereotypical portrayals in ads?

1. Women are caregivers, while men are the head of the household
2. Women should be thin and attractive, men should be muscular and handsome
3. Women spend most of their lives in the kitchen or at home, while men actively participate in the working life
4. Women are passive and dependent, while men are dominant and powerful
5. Men are main characters, while women are secondary characters, mainly described in decorative roles

65 responses

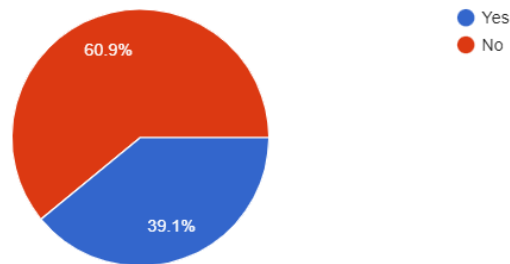


Figure 14. Responses related to agreement with the gender stereotypes in ads

This question was asked to identify if respondents agree with the stereotypical portrayals of gender in ads. Several statements about gender role portrayals were introduced in the question. People who agree with these statements conform to these traditional role portrayals. According to Figure 14, nearly 61% of respondents did not agree with the statements about gender stereotypes in ads, however, around 39% of respondents agreed with them.



## 4.1 Age

Crosstabulations were created using Excel Pivot tables to identify the potential relationship between age and other dependent variables. They will be used to test the correctness of the hypotheses.

Table 1. Crosstabulation: Age & Do you think ads negatively portray the role of your gender?

"Do you think ads negatively portray the role of your gender?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
18-24 years old	4	7	17	28
25-34 years old	2	5	8	15
35-44 years old	2	5	2	9
45-54 years old	1	6	4	11
55-64 years old		2		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>65</b>

Table 1 above distributed that most respondents aged between 18-24 and 25-34 years think that advertisements negatively depict the role of their gender. On the other hand, more than half of 35-44- and 45–54-year-old respondents think that their gender roles are not portrayed negatively.

Table 2. Crosstabulation: Age & Do you agree that ads reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society?

"Do you agree that advertisements reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society?"	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
18-24 years old	15	6	4	1	2	28
25-34 years old	7	6	1	1	0	15
35-44 years old	0	1	2	4	2	9
45-54 years old	1	1	2	2	5	11
55-64 years old	0	0	0	1	1	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>65</b>

The results show that 18-24 and 25-34-years old respondents either strongly disagree or disagree that ads reflect the norms and values of society. However, more older respondents agree with the statement.

Table 3. Crosstabulation: Age & Have you ever compared yourself with the images portrayed in advertisements?

"Have you ever compared yourself with the images portrayed in advertisements?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
18-24 years old	5	6	17	28
25-34 years old	1	3	11	15
35-44 years old	0	6	3	9
45-54 years old	0	8	3	11
55-64 years old	0	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>65</b>

Respondents aged 18-24 and 25-34 have compared themselves with the images described in the ads. On the other hand, participants between the 35-54 age range have not evaluated themselves in relation to the images depicted in ads.

Table 4. Crosstabulation: Age & Have you ever felt limited or constrained by gender stereotypes in your personal or professional life?

"Have you ever felt limited or constrained by gender stereotypes in your personal or professional life?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
18-24 years old	5	9	14	28
25-34 years old	4	5	6	15
35-44 years old	0	5	4	9
45-54 years old	0	6	5	11
55-64 years old	0	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>65</b>

According to the crosstabulation illustrated in Table 4, respondents aged 18-34 have felt limited in their personal or professional life due to gender stereotypes. However, respondents that are older than 35 have never felt constrained by gender stereotypes in their life.

Table 5. Crosstabulation: Age & Have you ever been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising?

"Have you ever been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Grand Total
18-24 years old	6	11	11	28
25-34 years old	3	7	5	15
35-44 years old	1	5	3	9
45-54 years old	2	7	2	11
55-64 years old	1	1	0	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>65</b>

The number of respondents aged 18-24 who have been influenced and not influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising is equal. 6 of them answered "Maybe". Other age groups responded that they have never been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising. The result shows that the purchase intention of the younger generation is more likely to be affected by gender stereotypes in ads.

Table 6. Crosstabulation: Age & Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in an advertisement?

"Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in an advertisement?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
18-24 years old	1	8	19	28
25-34 years old	0	4	11	15
35-44 years old	0	6	3	9
45-54 years old	0	7	4	11
55-64 years old	0	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>65</b>

More participants of the 18-24 and 25-34 age groups responded that they have felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in an advertisement. Respondents of other age groups mostly said that they have never experienced pressure due to the idealized body and beauty image in ads.

Table 7. Crosstabulation: Age & Have you ever experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence due to the images portrayed in advertisements?

Have you ever experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence due to the images portrayed in ads?	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
18-24 years old	4	8	16	28
25-34 years old	0	4	11	15
35-44 years old	2	4	3	9
45-54 years old	0	7	4	11
55-64 years old	0	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>65</b>

Table 7 above demonstrates that mostly younger respondents aged 18-34 are affected by body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence because of the stereotypical portrayals in ads. Stereotypical images did not affect the self-confidence and body satisfaction of most of the 35-64 years old respondents.

Table 8. Crosstabulation: Age & Do you feel offended when you see women or men sexually described in ads?

"Do you feel offended when you see women or men sexually described in ads?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
18-24 years old	4	9	15	28
25-34 years old	2	4	9	15
35-44 years old	0	5	4	9
45-54 years old	0	6	5	11
55-64 years old	0	2	0	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>65</b>

The crosstabulation displays the relationship between age and reactions to sexually described ads. Most respondents of younger age groups, including 18-24 and 24-34, answered that they feel offended when they see women or men as sexual appeal in advertisements. However, more than half of the 35-44- and 45-54-years old respondents said that they do not react negatively to sexually portrayed women or men in ads. Both of 55-64 aged participants responded that they are not offended due to these ads.

The overall results show that young people respond more negatively to gender stereotypes in advertising, and these ads affect them more negatively than others.

## 4.2 Employment status

The crosstabulations of employment status and other variables are used to determine if hypothesis 1 is correct.

Table 9. Crosstabulation: Employment status & Do you think ads negatively portray the role of your gender?

"Do you think ads negatively portray the role of your gender?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Full-time	3	7	9	19
Home duties	3	8	3	14
Part-time	1	2	7	10
Retired	0	1	0	1
Student	2	6	12	20
Unemployed	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>65</b>

According to the crosstabulation, employed participants more negatively responded to the stereotyped gender roles in advertising. Students also think that ads negatively portray the role of their gender. Respondents who are homemakers, stay-at-home parents, and caregivers are more likely to accept stereotyped portrayals as normal and did not think that these ads portray the role of their gender negatively.

Table 10. Crosstabulation: Employment status & Do you agree that ads reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society?

"Do you agree that advertisements reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society?"						Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Full-time	11	3	3	1	1	19
Home duties	1	2	2	3	6	14
Part-time	2	4	3	1	0	10
Retired	0	0	0	1	0	1
Student	11	6	0	3	0	20
Unemployed	0	0	0	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>65</b>

According to Table 10, the majority of employed participants and students said that they do not agree that advertisements are a reflection of society. On the other hand, other groups of respondents agreed with the statement.

Table 11. Crosstabulation: Employment status & Have you ever felt limited or constrained by gender stereotypes in your personal or professional life?

"Have you ever felt limited or constrained by gender stereotypes in your personal or professional life?"					Total
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total	
Full-time	3	8	8	19	
Home duties	0	8	6	14	
Part-time	3	3	4	10	
Retired	0	1	0	1	
Student	3	6	11	20	
Unemployed	0	1	0	1	
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>65</b>	

Table 11 demonstrates that students mostly feel limited by gender stereotypes in their personal or professional life. Respondents doing home duties, retired, and unemployed mostly think that gender stereotypes in ads limit their personal and professional life. Difference between "yes" and "no" responses of full-time and part-time employees is almost equal.

Table 12. Crosstabulation: Employment status & Have you ever been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising?

"Have you ever been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Full-time	5	9	5	19
Home duties	2	9	3	14
Part-time	1	4	5	10
Retired	0	1	0	1
Student	5	7	8	20
Unemployed	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>65</b>

According to Table 12, most students and part-time employees, that also mainly consist of students, have been affected to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising. Respondents doing home duties, full-time employment, and others answered that gender stereotypes in advertising did not affect their purchase intentions.

Table 13. Crosstabulation: Employment status & Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image in an advertisement?

"Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in an advertisement?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Full-time	0	8	11	19
Home duties	0	9	5	14
Part-time	0	3	7	10
Retired	0	1	0	1
Student	1	5	14	20
Unemployed	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>65</b>

The crosstabulation in Table 13 shows that students and employees among respondents mostly agree that they have felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image in an advertisement. Others said that body and beauty images in ads did not affect them.

Table 14. Crosstabulation: Employment status & Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image in an advertisement?

"Have you ever experienced body dissatisfaction and lack self-confidence due to the images portrayed in ads?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Full-time	1	7	11	19
Home duties	1	8	5	14
Part-time	0	4	6	10
Retired	0	1	0	1
Student	2	5	13	20
Unemployed	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>65</b>

Most of the full-time and part-time employed respondents and students said they experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence due to the images in the ads. Homemakers, unemployed and retired respondents mentioned that stereotyped ads do not affect body satisfaction and self-confidence.

Table 15. Crosstabulation: Employment status & Do you feel offended when you see women or men sexually described in ads?

"Do you feel offended when you see women or men sexually described in ads?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Full-time	1	8	10	19
Home duties	0	8	6	14
Part-time	1	3	6	10
Retired	0	1	0	1
Student	4	5	11	20
Unemployed	0	1	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>65</b>

According to Table 15 above, working respondents and students feel offended when they see women or men sexually depicted in ads. Retired, unemployed, homemaker or caregiver respondents said that they do not feel offended due to the genders portrayed as sexual appeal.



Overall, women are mainly depicted as caregivers, doing home duties, while men are portrayed as successful professionals in working life. According to the results of crosstabulations between age and responses to other questions, employed respondents and students were negatively affected by gender stereotypes in advertisements. They feel pressure to conform to idealized images in ads, are offended by the sexual depiction of genders, and are limited due to the stereotyped ads in their personal and professional life.

#### 4.3 Responses related to agreement with the gender stereotypes in advertisements

The question related to respondents' agreement with the gender stereotypes in advertisements included five statements about gender role portrayals in ads. The responses to this question are used in the crosstabulation as independent variables to identify if there is any relationship with the responses to other questions.

Table 16. Crosstabulation: Agreement with the gender stereotypes in ads & Do you think ads negatively portray the role of your gender?

"Do you think ads negatively portray the role of your gender?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
No	6	4	30	40
Yes	3	21	1	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>65</b>

Respondents who agree with any of the statements about gender stereotypes in advertising mostly answered that they do not think that their gender is depicted negatively in advertisements. In terms of respondents who disagree with the statements, they mostly think that ads negatively portray the role of their gender.

Table 17. Crosstabulation: Agreement with the gender stereotypes in ads & Do you agree that advertisements reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society?

"Do you agree that advertisements reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society?"	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
No	25	11	3	1	0	40
Yes	0	1	4	4	16	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>65</b>

Crosstabulation above shows that the majority of people who do not conform to the stereotypical portrayals strongly disagree that the ads are the reflections of society. However, those who align with the stereotypically portrayed group think that ads reflect existing cultural norms and values of society.

Table 18. Crosstabulation: Agreement with the gender stereotypes in ads & Have you ever compared yourself with the images portrayed in advertisements?

"Have you ever compared yourself with the images portrayed in advertisements?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
No	5	5	30	40
Yes	2	18	5	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>65</b>

According to crosstabulation 18, most people who do not conform to the traditional gender roles have compared themselves with the images described in ads. Those who fit the stereotypical portrayals have not compared themselves with the depictions in ads.

Table 19. Crosstabulation: Agreement with the gender stereotypes in ads & Have you ever felt limited or constrained by gender stereotypes in your personal or professional life?

"Have you ever felt limited or constrained by gender stereotypes in your personal or professional life?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
No	9	5	26	40
Yes	0	22	3	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>65</b>

According to the crosstabulation, participants that conform to the stereotypical portrayal of gender have not felt limited in their personal or professional life due to the gender stereotypes in ads. Those who do not align with those stereotypes have not been affected by gender stereotypes in their life.

Table 20. Crosstabulation: Agreement with gender stereotypes in ads & Have you ever been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising?

"Have you ever been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
No	10	11	19	40
Yes	3	20	2	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>65</b>

The result for this crosstabulation is the same as the previous crosstabulations for agreement with gender stereotypes in ads. Respondents who agree with the stereotypical portrayals were not influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in ads. However, the purchase intentions of those who do not agree were affected.

Table 21. Crosstabulation: Agreement with gender stereotypes in ads & Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in an ad?

"Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in an advertisement?"				Total
	Maybe	No	Yes	
No	1	6	33	40
Yes	0	21	4	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>65</b>

Table 21 illustrated that most respondents who agree with the stereotypical portrayals have never felt pressure due to the idealized body images in ads. On the contrary, respondents who did not agree with gender stereotypes experienced body dissatisfaction or pressure to conform to the ideal image.

Table 22. Crosstabulation: Agreement with gender stereotypes in ads & Have you ever experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence due to the images portrayed in ads?

"Have you ever experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence due to the images portrayed in ads?"				Total
	Maybe	No	Yes	
No	0	6	34	40
Yes	1	21	3	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>65</b>

The results of this crosstabulation are almost the same as the previous. Most respondents that agree with gender stereotypes in ads have not experienced body dissatisfaction or low self-confidence due to the gender-stereotyped ads. On the contrary, those who do not agree have faced body dissatisfaction and a lack of self-confidence because of the images portrayed in ads.

Table 23. Crosstabulation: Agreement with gender stereotypes in ads & Do you feel offended when you see women or men sexually described in ads?

"Do you feel offended when you see women or men sexually described in ads?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
No	6	4	30	40
Yes	0	22	3	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>65</b>

The crosstabulation above shows that respondents who align with traditional gender roles feel offended when they see sexual images in ads. Participants who do not align with the traditional gender roles feel insulted due to those ads.

As a result, respondents who conform to traditional gender roles do not think that gender-stereotyped ads have negative impacts on them. However, those who are in the traditional gender roles group respond negatively to the stereotypical portrayals of gender roles in ads.

#### 4.4 Country

This analysis is done to identify if there is a relationship between countries with different masculinity indexes and the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising. According to the Hofstede model, the masculinity index of Finland is 26 which is considered a feminine society. The masculinity index of Azerbaijan is 50, and of Germany is 66. These countries were chosen due to the different masculinity levels.

Table 24. Crosstabulation: Country & How often do you notice gender stereotypes in advertising?

"How often do you notice gender stereotypes in advertising?"					Total
	Occasionally	Rarely	Somewhat frequently	Very frequently	
Azerbaijan	1	1	8	13	23
Finland	14	5	4	0	23
Germany	7	0	4	8	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>65</b>

According to the answers in Table 24, most respondents from Azerbaijan somewhat frequently or very frequently noticed gender stereotypes in ads. In Finland, gender stereotypes are not often seen in advertising. More than half of the respondents from Germany answered that they frequently see stereotypical gender role portrayals in advertising. Even if the masculinity index of Germany is higher than Azerbaijan, gender-stereotyped ads are seen more frequently than in Germany.

Table 25. Crosstabulation: Country & Do you think ads negatively portray the role of your gender?

"Do you think ads negatively portray the role of your gender?"				Total
	Maybe	No	Yes	
Azerbaijan	2	12	9	23
Finland	5	5	13	23
Germany	2	8	9	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>65</b>

The crosstabulation above illustrates that even if the difference is not huge, more respondents from Azerbaijan think that ads do not negatively portray the role of genders. In Finland, most Finnish respondents said that ads negatively portrayed their gender. On the other hand, responses from German participants are almost equal.

Table 26. Crosstabulation: Country & Do you agree that advertisements reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society?

"Do you agree that advertisements reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society?"	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Azerbaijan	4	1	3	8	7	23
Finland	11	5	4	3	0	23
Germany	3	2	2	5	7	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>65</b>

According to Table 26, respondents from Azerbaijan and Germany mostly agree that ads reflect the norms and values of society. In terms of Finland, the majority of the respondents strongly disagree with the statement.

Table 27. Crosstabulation: Country & Have you ever compared yourself with the images portrayed in advertisements?

"Have you ever compared yourself with the images portrayed in advertisements?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Azerbaijan	3	11	9	23
Finland	3	5	15	23
Germany	2	5	12	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>65</b>

The crosstabulation below demonstrates that most Azerbaijani respondents do not compare themselves with the images portrayed in ads. However, Finnish and German respondents compare themselves with the stereotyped portrayals in ads.

Table 28. Crosstabulation: Country & Have you ever felt limited or constrained by gender stereotypes in your personal or professional life?

"Have you ever felt limited or constrained by gender stereotypes in your personal or professional life?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Azerbaijan	2	12	9	23
Finland	3	6	14	23
Germany	4	9	6	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>65</b>

Table 28 discussed that most Azerbaijani and German respondents have never felt limited in their life due to the gender stereotypes in ads. However, in Finland, more participants agree that they have felt constrained by stereotypical gender roles in advertisements in their personal or professional life.

Table 29. Crosstabulation: Country & Have you ever been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising?

"Have you ever been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising?"				
	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Azerbaijan	6	13	4	23
Finland	6	7	10	23
Germany	1	11	7	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>65</b>

As the crosstabulation above shows, respondents from Azerbaijan and Germany mostly answered that there is not any influence on their purchase intentions. Most Finnish participants responded that they were influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising.



Table 30. Crosstabulation: Country & Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in an advertisement?

"Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in an advertisement?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Azerbaijan	1	13	9	23
Finland	0	6	17	23
Germany	0	8	11	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>65</b>

More than half of the respondents from Azerbaijan mentioned that they did not felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty image portrayed in ads. In terms of Finnish and German participants, most of them were affected by idealized beauty and body images in ads.

Table 31. Crosstabulation: Country & Have you ever experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence due to the images portrayed in ads?

"Have you ever experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence due to the images portrayed in ads?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Azerbaijan	0	14	9	23
Finland	2	8	13	23
Germany	1	7	11	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>65</b>

According to Table 31, most of the respondents from Azerbaijan have not experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence due to the images portrayed in the ads. Most participants from Finland and Germany have been influenced by gender stereotypes in ads and experienced body dissatisfaction and a lack of self-confidence.

Table 32. Crosstabulation: Country & Do you feel offended when you see women or men sexually described in ads?

"Do you feel offended when you see women or men sexually described in ads?"	Maybe	No	Yes	Total
Azerbaijan	2	12	9	23
Finland	3	5	15	23
Germany	1	9	9	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>65</b>

The crosstabulation illustrated in Table 32 shows that almost half of the respondents from Azerbaijan did not affect due to the sexualized women or men in the media. However, most of the participants from Finland feel offended. The result for Germany is equal.

In conclusion, the result for country crosstabulations is mixed. More respondents from Azerbaijan are affected negatively by gender stereotypes in ads. In Finland, most of them are impacted. The result for Germany is mixed.

## 5 Analysis

This thesis was intended to achieve the role of age in the impacts of gender stereotypes in advertising. The research gaps in the literature were addressed to achieve the result. The main gap explored in this research was the relationship between age and the level of impact on gender stereotypes in advertising. Moreover, mixed results were founded regarding the relationship among culture, relevance to stereotypical portrayals, and the effects of stereotypical gender portrayals. Firstly, a general discussion of the main findings will be examined, followed by answering the research question and discussing two hypotheses.

Most of the respondents notice gender stereotypes in advertising and think that they negatively portray the role of their gender. This shows that stereotypical portrayal of genders still exists, even if previous research suggests that it

decreased. More than half of the respondents are exposed to the negative effects of stereotypical gender depictions in advertisements. They have felt limited in their personal and professional life, experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence and have felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in the advertisement. Moreover, most of them do not agree with the portrayals of their gender in advertising. In terms of brand-related effects, half of the respondents have not been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising. This shows that portraying people in a stereotypical way in ads does not necessarily affect their purchase intentions or attitudes toward a brand or product.

The responses highlighted the problem discussed by Plakoyiannakki et al. (2009) regarding sexually portrayed men and women. He stated that promoting sexual attractiveness has backlash impacts on men and women. According to the survey results, people feel offended when they see men or women sexually described in ads. This supported the discussions of Plakoyiannakki (2009).

H1: The negative effects of gender stereotypes are more evident in individuals who do not conform to traditional gender stereotypes than in those who do.

This hypothesis is based on the idea that individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles may experience more significant impacts from gender stereotypes in advertising. According to the survey results respondents who agreed with gender stereotypes in advertisements were not negatively affected by these stereotypes. They have never experienced body dissatisfaction or been limited in their personal or professional life due to the stereotypical portrayals in ads. On the other hand, people doing home duties, namely stay-at-home parents or housewives also responded that they agree with the description of their gender at home doing home duties and do not feel offended when they portray in that way. Research by Matthes et al. (2016) stated that positive advertising effects are observed when consumers perceive gender portrayals as consistent with their pre-existing social and cognitive patterns and

align with their expectations of gender roles. While negative advertising effects occur when people are offended by how they are depicted in ads and did not match their anticipations of how gender roles should be portrayed. The result of this survey supported this research. It was consistent with the predictions made by the hypothesis.

H2: Individuals from countries with lower masculinity index respond more negatively to stereotypical gender portrayals in advertising.

The second hypothesis relies on the discussion that cultural factors may influence the impact of gender stereotypes in advertising. By exploring this hypothesis, this paper provides a better insight into the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising across different cultures and regions. According to research, nations with low masculinity indexes are more critical of how gender roles are portrayed. Their proactive involvement in society, sense of significance, and decreased purchase intent have a detrimental impact on the corporate image of advertising. Although femininity is not purely a cultural trait, according to Hofstede (2001), research indicates that feminine role orientation influences cultural differences. For instance, Meulenaer et al. (2017) explored that women in New Zealand, one of the nations with a large proportion of women, find it upsetting when women are portrayed in stereotypical ways in advertisements. Women in the US, Japan, and Thailand, which received the highest scores for masculinity, on the other hand, view it as common or barely objectionable. However, not all researchers supported this point of view. Some of them stated that this statement is not correct as it does not work with all countries. Therefore, a survey was conducted to identify whether the cultural context has an impact on the reactions toward gender stereotypes in ads.

According to the survey, the results are mixed. Germany has the highest masculinity index among these three countries. However, the results did not support the hypothesis as most German respondents feel offended when their gender is sexually depicted in ads. They feel pressure to conform to the

idealized body images in advertising. In Azerbaijan, even if it has no dominant value as its masculinity index is 50, respondents from Azerbaijan do not feel offended due to the stereotypical portrayals. They do not think that genders are negatively portrayed in ads. The hypothesis works only for Finland. It is a feminine cultural country and the respondents mostly answered that they are affected negatively because of gender stereotypes. This shows that the second hypothesis is not supported by the evidence.

Research question: "What are the impacts of gender stereotypes in advertising?"

The effects of gender stereotypes are mostly negative regarding consumers. It can influence their abilities, thoughts, attitudes, and behaviours negatively. According to the survey, respondents think that the role of their gender is portrayed negatively in ads. Most of them do not agree that ads reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society and think that they are depicted incorrectly. Bower (2001) stated in his study that people are affected by gender stereotypes in media due to Social Comparison Theory. The survey results supported this theory and showed that most of the respondents compared themselves with the stereotypically portrayed images in ads. Moreover, participants have negative impacts on their body satisfaction, self-esteem, self-confidence, opportunities, and abilities. They feel limited in their personal and professional life due to the gender stereotypes in advertising. In terms of brand-related impacts, most of the respondents do not make their purchase or choose a brand due to the stereotypical portrayals. The majority of respondents who have been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in ads are young people.

On the other hand, during the survey data analysis, it is noticed that the negative effects of gender stereotypes can be related to age. As the majority of the students who participated in the survey responded that stereotypical gender roles in ads have negative impacts on them. The younger people stated that

they have felt offended due to the sexual portrayal of their image in ads, they tried to conform to the ideal body image and experienced restriction in their personal and professional life. They also mentioned that they have compared themselves with the images or roles portrayed in advertisements. Moreover, young people are more likely to be affected by the brand-related impacts of gender stereotypes in advertising. This topic also needs more research and discussion. This topic can be further researched and explained if there is a relationship between age and the effects of gender stereotypes in ads. Additionally, the reason why young people are affected more can be explored.

## **6 Conclusion**

In conclusion, gender role stereotypes still exist in advertising. This thesis supports that gender stereotypes have both positive and negative effects. It can be beneficial for advertisers to group and classify the target audience. However, it can have significant implications for individuals and society, including reinforcement of gender norms, objectification of men and women, harmful effects on body image, etc. The negative effects on people can be social and brand related. It is observed that gender stereotypes can cause negative social effects, namely, limitations in personal and professional life, low self-esteem, and body dissatisfaction, resulting in eating disorders. On the other hand, it also affects consumer reactions toward a brand or product. It seems to lower brand or product attitudes and purchase intention. According to the findings, traditional stereotypical role portrayals are considered offensive for people who do not align with those portrayals; however, they are accepted as normal for people who are in those stereotypical groups. Moreover, the relationship between culture and the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising was not supported by this study.

Even if this research was efficient to explore several factors of the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising, it has a potential flaw that is important to address. With only 65 participants, the sample size may not be large enough to

accurately represent the broader population and could lead to biased or unreliable results. A larger sample size would provide more accurate and reliable data, as it would allow for a greater representation of the population and increase the statistical power of the study. It would be good to repeat the research with a larger sample size to provide more meaningful and accurate data.

This research can shed light on further investigation of the relationship between age and the effects of stereotypes. During this research, it is noticed that younger individuals react more negatively to stereotypical gender portrayals, and the impacts are more prevalent for them. Therefore, the research about the investigation of the role of age in the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising can be useful to identify if the younger generation is affected more than others by stereotypical portrayals.

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## Appendices

### Survey: Gender stereotypes in advertising

## Gender stereotypes in advertising: the effects of stereotypical portrayals on people

Hello!

This survey aims to gain a better understanding of the effects of gender stereotypes in advertising. The results of this survey will be used for my Bachelor's thesis. The survey is anonymous and will take 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you for your time and participation.

aminaahmedli03@gmail.com [Switch accounts](#)

Not shared

\* Indicates required question

What is your gender identity? \*

Female

Male

Non-binary

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

What is your age? \*

18-24 years old

25-34 years old

35-44 years old

45-54 years old

55-64 years old

65 years or older

Where are you from? \*

- Azerbaijan
- Finland
- Germany

What is your employment status? \*

- Full-time
- Part-time
- Home duties
- Student
- Retired
- Unemployed

How often do you notice gender stereotypes in advertising? \*

- Very frequently
- Somewhat frequently
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

Do you think ads negatively portray the role of your gender? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do you agree that advertisements reflect the existing cultural norms and values of society? \*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Have you ever compared yourself with the images portrayed in advertisements? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Have you ever felt limited or constrained by gender stereotypes in your personal or professional life? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Have you ever experienced body dissatisfaction and lack of self-confidence due to the images portrayed in ads? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe



Have you ever been influenced to purchase a product based on its gender role portrayal in advertising?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Have you ever felt pressure to conform to an idealized beauty or body image portrayed in an advertisement? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do you feel offended when you see women or men sexually described in ads? \*

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Do you agree with any of the following statements about stereotypical portrayals in ads?

1. Women are caregivers, while men are the head of the household
2. Women should be thin and attractive, men should be muscular and handsome
3. Women spend most of their lives in the kitchen or at home, while men actively participate in the working life
4. Women are passive and dependent, while men are dominant and powerful
5. Men are main characters, while women are secondary characters, mainly described in decorative roles

- Yes
- No