“They think we’re stupid”

A study of the perceptions and attitudes of young women towards the objectification and sexualisation of women in women’s magazines

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ABSTRACT

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This master thesis examines how women between the age of twenty and twenty-five construct their attitude and perception from sexual content and images in women’s magazines. Previous studies in the field of media and communication as well as gender studies have shown that there is an increasing amount of sexual content in women’s magazines and that often this has a very negative effect on the self-image of young women. This thesis attempts to look at how women give meaning to the content themselves, rather than looking at effects or the content itself. By using a qualitative approach with focus groups. The aim of this study is to find out what the attitude and perception of young women towards the sexualisation and objectification of women in magazines was. In the focus groups respondents made mood boards. The mood boards were made from pictures and content taken from women’s magazines such as Elle, Cosmopolitan and Vogue. The mood boards created a starting point for the focus groups. This research shows that there are several ways to look at the perception and attitude of young women. Three main topics were signalized during the focus groups, which are self-objectification, gender stereotypes and discrepancy. The analysis shows that respondents perceive the content in magazines mostly as negative, because they show an unrealistic version of the truth. More specifically real-life stories or interviews, as well as pictures in the magazines are as negative because they portray women in a stereotyped way, mostly promoting a product or being perceived as a lust object for men. However even though the respondents perceive the content as negative, their attitude towards women’s magazines does not change that much. They have stopped reading magazines a long time ago.

**Keywords:** gender in media, sexualisation, objectification, young women, sexualisation debate, women’s magazines
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1. Introduction

Not since the feminist pornography debates in the 1980s has there been such an outburst of discussion, but also research and publications about female objectification as well as the sexualized images of women and girls in main-stream media such as videoclips, television series and mostly women’s magazines (Duits & Van Zoonen, 2011). Over the decade the sexualisation of women in modern media, meaning the portrayal of women as objects and sex objects in the media, and the effects it can have on the self image of young women created a lot of discussion on every level of society. For example at the kitchen table, in schools and in parliaments. What are the effects of sexualized media messages including sexualized stereotypes on the identification of young women, or even on society? And which role do mainstream media, such as magazines, play in this debate? Several studies show that mainstream media still portray woman as the weaker sex and objectify aspects of their body, such as breasts, to sell products in advertising campaigns. In addition to that images of women appear more often in a sexual context compared to the images of men in magazines (Sharda, 2014).

A lot of studies focus on the growing amount of sexualized images of women in mainstream media, with a special focus on how women are being portrayed. However none of these studies focus on how the audience of media, for example women, actually perceive and make sense out of the content. These studies do not focus on how the audience perceive that content and shape their attitude towards images and texts where women are being sexualized and objectified. This creates a rather interesting research gap, a missing link. There are several studies exploring the effects of the objectification and sexualisation in media on young girls. But how can one be sure of the effects if one has not researched perception and attitude, and therefore has no information about the process of sense making?

In a time where there is a huge discussion about the effects of sexualized images on young women, how come that academic studies focus more on the content in women’s magazines but not the outcome of the content on its audience and how the audience uses the content? In this case that audience is young women.

The aim of this study was to research the attitude and perception of young women towards the sexualisation and objectification of women in women’s magazines. Both sexualisation and objectification will be highlighted in this study, as they are different, but so much alike. One can think of both terms as two threads in the same sand. Objectification means turning a woman into an object, highlighting an aspect of her body. Sexualisation or sexual objectification means turning a woman into a sexual object in male presence. Furthermore
the study aimed to create a useful insight and wider knowledge into the minds and motives of these young women in order to add a valuable part to the sexualisation debate in society.

When looking at the social problem, the sexualisation and objectification of women in the current media landscape, a report from the European Council (2016) claims that progress in the field of media was made in the last years. National and international targeted media campaigns about the portrayal of women in media are being founded, more awards go to woman who do not portray a gender stereotype in films or series and female experts databases are being founded in order to let them appear in talk shows where they would normally not even be invited. Cinemas in Sweden founded a classification system for films based on how sexist they are. To be awarded the highest level of classification a movie must contain two women talking to each other about something other than a man (Higgins, 2013).

Actions like these are being taken, however the media and especially magazines are still often accused of playing an active role in producing and perpetuating gender discrimination, objectification of women and causing sexism (Sharda, 2014). According to studies done by the European Council (2016) the media play an important role in forming society’s perceptions, opinions and behaviours. This is because media has the power to hinder or hasten structural advancements towards for example gender equality. Therefore it could be argued that the media is able to promote a campaign against gender inequality and reflect the different reality of women and men in all their diversities (Phillips, 2012). Could the media also play a positive part in the sexualisation discussion?

Gauntlett (2008) studied the effects that mainstream media, such as magazines and television shows, have on the self-esteem on both male and female self-esteem in the United Kingdom and the United States. Stereotypes might be changing, but the process of sexualisation is still very much active in the world of magazines, with negative outcomes. According to Gauntlett women are still being portrayed as sex objects in magazines, this is called sexualisation. Sexualisation is the process where women are more often than male counterparts are being portrayed in a sexual manner, objectified and in addition the narrow and unrealistic standard of physical beauty is highly emphasized (Zurbriggen et al., 2007). Journalists, child advocacy, parents and psychologist have argued that the process of sexualisation is harmful especially to young girls. Previous research done by De Graaf et al. (2008) shows that there is a correlation between on one hand the portrayal of woman in media, for example the gender stereotypes, and on the other the self-worth and self-image of women. Other research (Felten, Janssens & Brants, 2009; De Graaf, Van Egten, De Hoog & Van Berlo, 2009) shows that the self-image of women suffers from sexual subtle media messages. This means: images where a specific body part of a woman, such as her breasts or legs is highlighted to promote or provoke commercial success. Proving that their self-image is
more negative after seeing media messages where female narratives are being portrayed as sexual objects in terms of nudity. Men, on the other hand, tend to be sensitive to misogynistic media messages too: they think more negative about women and are more likely to agree on gender based stereotypes concerning women after seeing sexual images of women (Felten et al. 2009, Kenrick & Gutierres, 1980). It can be argued that this will eventually create a bigger gap between men and women in our modern society, where there are already so many differences. Because according the Council of Europe (2014) inequalities between men and women exist in to many areas; there is a gender gap in pay and pensions. Furthermore the (sexual) violence against women, with all its consequences, is still a widespread phenomenon and too often it is tolerated.

If the media tends to have the effects on both women and men as previous studies show this will not only influence our pension or pay check, but also our values and more importantly: the respect for each other. It will create an unequal world, which can result in a nightmare scenario that no one profits from. However, the theory of the manipulated mass audience needs to be revised too (Ekström, 2014). According to Ekström the arrival of new communication technologies have opened up new forms of engagement, such as blogs, chats and news groups. This has to be brought into the discussion too. Because this could mean that the media does not only influence the audience, but the audience influences the media too. Nonetheless, this discourse is an important development to keep in mind during research about the influence on audiences and the attitude and perception of audiences. As the audience is not a ‘victim’ of media, but rather also plays an active role in the debate of women’s representation in the media.

According to Hall (1973) the receiver of a message partly believes the code in the message and broadly accepts what is presented to him or her. However, the receiver has the ability also modify the message in a way, which reflects the reader’s own position, experiences and interests. This is called ‘negotiated reading’. When there is room for negotiation, what role do we as an audience have in this debate?

But more importantly we must ask ourselves the question what is the effect on those who are being sexualized and stereotyped? Meaning: what are the effects of sexualized media messages on girls and women? In order to answer that question we must not forget to take in mind that we have to research how girls and young women make sense out of the content in magazines before answering that question.

Previous research done on this topic will be thoroughly discussed and analysed in the section called ‘research review’. However, I would like to shortly summarize and explain my main question in relationship to previous research. As stated in the previous paragraph research about the correlation between the sexualisation of women in media and the self-esteem and image of women has been done. Nevertheless, none to little research has been done about the
specific age group of women between the ages of eighteen to twenty-five. Which is interesting, as this generation of women has grown up during a time where there was an ongoing political debate about the portrayal of women in media (Philips, 2012). Furthermore, this group of women has grown up in a time of daily access to news and mass media, hence the arrival of social media. This narrow age group is especially interesting because they are aware of the arrival of the Internet, but were not born in a completely digitalized world. Which still gives a sort of reassurance that they have used magazines at some point in their lives. Furthermore, they are the biggest consumers of mass media and find themselves growing up in the midst of this political debate about the sexualisation of women in the media. This makes this particular group interesting to focus on. The choice for women’s magazines is because, even with the arrival of the Internet, they are still described as one of the most resilient print media, with an enduring popularity and vast array of titles and offers for young women (Saner, 2010). Women’s magazines as an institution, online and offline are still very influential. This is because women’s magazines have successfully migrated to digital channels such as Instagram accounts, Facebook pages and websites.

How do young women who as it is assumed are still influenced by magazines perceive the sexualized content in women’s magazines? Do they care or do they feel indifferent? This study shows that sometimes perception and attitude can cut both ways and create an interesting, diverse perspective. This perspective can hopefully add important knowledge to the current sexualisation debate, as discussed earlier.
2. Aim and research questions

2.1. Problem formulation
European women between the age of eighteen and twenty-five grow up in a time where there are two phenomena happening at the same time. First, there is a 24/7 access to media, with their generations being the biggest consumers (Buckingham, 2009). Secondly, there is an on-going debate in the western world about how women are being portrayed in the media. Often proving that women are being portrayed as objects highly emphasizing on their looks and not on their other abilities, in other words ‘the objectification of women’. Objectification can come in several forms, such as for example sexualisation. This is a specific kind of objectification where women are being seen as sexual objects in the presence of men. Even with the arrival of Internet magazines such as Cosmopolitan, Elle and Vogue are still an important influence for young women. This makes it interesting to see what the attitude and perception of young women is towards the sexualisation of women in women’s magazines.

2.2. Aim
The aim of this study is to understand how women feel about women in women’s magazines. This study will especially focus understanding the perception and attitude towards the sexualisation of women in women’s magazines.

2.3. Research Questions
The main research question is: how is the perception and attitude of young women towards the sexualisation and objectification of women in women’s magazines? In order to answer the research question, it has been divided into two different questions. Each research question answers a different part of the main questions. All together the two research questions form the main question. The research questions will be:

1. *How is the perception of young women towards the sexualisation of women in women’s magazines?*

2. *How is the attitude of young women towards the sexualisation of women in women’s magazines?*

What interests me, as a researcher is the question if my respondents perceive the sexualisation of women as negative and if their attitude towards sexualisation of women will automatically be negative too. For example an editorial in a magazine with scantily clad women can be perceived as negative by a respondent, but does this automatically mean that
her attitude toward the sexualisation of women in magazines is negative too? In other words: perception is the way things appear to you and attitude the opinion you have about those things. In order to form an opinion about something (attitude) you must give a meaning to that what you see (perception).

2.4. Definitions of research terms

**Perception:** Perception is the organization, identification and interpretation of sensory information in order to understand the environment (Schacter, 2011). In this study perception defines how informants in the focus groups identify and interpret information they select from magazines. How do they perceive and make sense of the pictures and headlines they selected?

**Attitude:** Attitude is a learned global (typically emotional) evaluation of an object (person, place or issue) that influences thought and action (Perloff, 2003). In this study the concept of attitude defines how informants in the focus groups evaluate information they have selected from magazines. In other words: what is their opinion about what they see? What is their outlook on the pictures and headlines they selected in relation to their previous knowledge?

**Objectification:** Objectification, or societal objectifications, is the process where a human being or an animal, is portrayed or being treated as an object (Nussbaum, 1995). In this specific study this term relates to women being portrayed as objects. More specifically objectifications means that there is a high amount of attention focussing on the female body, but not on the character or

**Sexualisation:** Sexualisation is the process where women are more often than men being portrayed in a sexual matter, objectified and in addition the narrow and unrealistic standard of physical beauty is highly emphasized (American Psychological Association, 2007). Sexualisation is a part of objectification. Objectification is the first step, which means seeing a woman as an object. Sexualisation is the next step, where you objectify a person through a specific frame. This frame means that sexualisation is threatening or portraying a person as an object of sexual desire.

In this study the concept of sexualisation will help explain to amount of unrealistic standard of physical beauty in magazines, if there is any according to the informants in the focus groups.
3. Previous research

In this section I will map the field in which my study belongs, furthermore I will help to identify the research gap that my study will fill.

3.1. Sexualisation

The Pornofication of Society is a study done by Philips (2012) which compares the effects that sexual images of women in video-clips and magazines have on Dutch women in the ages between eighteen and twenty-five. Philips’ study is very much similar to the study that will be conducted here. Philips' research aims to look at the meaning that women themselves give to sexual images in magazines and video clips by using two different types of qualitative research. Philips compares the effects that women themselves give to sexual images in mainstream media, however the study does not measure attitude or perception, which this study aims to do. Nonetheless, the method that Philips uses can be seen as an example for this study. Philips used focus groups and a qualitative analysis to produce answers to her research questions. Young women would make mood boards during her focus groups, after that Philips would interview them about their mood boards and their view on images in women’s magazines and video clips and how they experienced sexual images themselves. In her conclusion Philips writes that younger woman are more likely to be influenced by pictures in magazines than older woman, however since her focus groups were not divided into age she can not really prove it. In this current studies age will play a role and there will be one homogeneous age group during the focus group sessions. Furthermore Philips methodological choice to focus on both video clips and magazines is never motivated and therefore seems random. Therefore neither magazines nor video clips get the full attention. In this study only one medium will be chosen to research, namely women’s magazines.

Another study done in the same field in which I will conduct my research in is ‘measuring the short-term media effects upon women’s self-esteem’ (Bari, 2007). In this research, just like in Phillips’, Bari’s aim is to investigate the effects upon women’s self-esteem after seeing sexual images in magazines. Again, this study does not research the perception and attitude of young women just the short-term effects. However this is also a good example of qualitative research in the field of women and media studies as Bari uses of focus groups in order to gain answers to her research questions, just as this studies is planning to do. Bari’s focus groups all consist of high-educated young women. Bari uses a large amount of focus groups and therefore has access to a large amount of data. Her conclusion shows that even if a woman is highly educated and aware of the validity of content and images, her self-esteem and body esteem are nevertheless still affected in a negative way. After being exposed to pictures in magazines woman tend to have a lower self-esteem and body image. There was another interesting finding in Bari’s studies. The more
positively woman are being depicted in magazines, the more secure and satisfied they make woman feel about themselves and the better woman feel about magazine publication. This is interesting to keep in mind during my study, as they show the negative but also positive outcome of the publication of women in magazines.

Other studies in the field of women’s studies in media are Bhagwandin (2010), who researches the effects that video clips with sexual images of women have on teenagers between the ages of twelve and sixteen. Interesting is that she has both boys and girls as her respondents. Her study comes to the conclusion that younger girls are not influenced by the sexual images of women they see in video clips. Bhagwandin explains that this is because in their everyday life they are associated with women and girls who do not look like the women in those video clips. Bhagwandin uses a survey as a method, which allows her to compile substantial data. However she only researches if there are effects on young people after seeing video clips, but she does not research what these effects are. Even though the latter one was her aim at first. By using a focus group one could more easily find out underlying motivations of the respondents instead of using a survey as a method.

Norval (2011) and Ytre-Arne (2011), who both research the identification of women through women’s magazines go more deeper into the effects that sexualized images have on young women. They both link sexualized images of women to the identification of young women. Both studies have conducted focus groups; Norval has taken age into account as a factor that could play a role in the identification of women through women’s magazines.

The researchers (Bari, 2007; Bhagwandin, 2010; Norval, 2011; Phillips, 2012; Ytre-Arne, 2011) argue that they have specifically selected a group of young women because they have grown up in a time where media is our number one source of information. These five studies show that a qualitative research by using focus groups is the best approach to research underlying thoughts about the attitude and perception of the respondents towards sexual images of women in women’s magazines. Or as mentioned by Hermes (1995): “the small but steady stream of publication about women’s magazines have hardly ever taken the perspective or experience of the reader into account because of the amount of content analysis of magazines themselves. Researchers have focused much more on the content in magazines than on the reception of it by its audience.” Researchers have not been able to ask audiences what they think about the content in magazines. Therefore it seems highly probably that we know more about the content analysis of magazines than we do about the actual perception and attitude of for example women towards women’s magazines. This for me is a good argument to especially focus on perception and attitude, as this is a unexplored part in this field of studies. Furthermore, these studies prove to me that a qualitative research by using focus groups is the best approach in order to get answers to my research questions.
The results of Phillips, Bari and Bhagwandin show that there is a between the self-image of women and the sexual images and stereotypes in the media, however Phillips argues that she has found out that this has a lot to do with age, because younger respondents were more vulnerable to the effects of sexual images. Bari only discusses the short-term effects that sexual images of women have on young women. Which brings me to the research gaps, because even though Phillips points out that age plays an important factor in her conclusion, she also says that her three research groups have not been selected by age, arguing she cannot really necessary show evidence of big differences between age groups. Considering my own study I could divide my focus groups by age in order to research the role that media plays. Taken Philips study into consideration I see that age can play a certain role in the outcome of the results from the focus groups in what their attitude and perception is towards the sexualisation of women in magazines.

3.2. Objectification through media

Norval (2011) has selected her groups by age and her research shows a better overview of the field. Age plays a role in perception. The younger women are the more vulnerable to the images and texts in magazines. However Norval only focuses on one magazine, Grazia. This can be seen as a gap, because it would be interesting to compare magazines and different attitudes of respondents. Nonetheless, it is not clear if women have a negative attitude towards one women’s magazine, or if they have a negative attitude towards women’s magazines in general. During previous research a lot of comparative studies tend to focus on just one magazine, rather than three various magazines.

In Airaskorpi’s study (2014) blogs and magazines are being compared. An interesting study as blogs are also influencing their users. However the aim of the research is to investigate the attitude of the reader towards magazines and blogs, and then compare blogs and magazines. However the study’s main focus becomes comparing blogs with magazines and therefore the aim to find out what the motivation of female respondents to choose blogs over magazines gets lost. Therefore it makes it different to generalize the attitude of woman towards women’s magazines in general when just one magazine is tested, or magazines are being compared to blogs. By selecting focus groups by age it is argued that a more solid claim about the relationship between self-image, sexual images in the media and age can be made.

In addition to that Phillips focuses both on video clips and magazines and tries to compare them. However it is never explained why and the combination seems random. This also means that neither video clips nor magazines get the full focus in Phillips research, which is a shame. Therefore I have chosen to just focus on one medium, which is magazines because they are still, in a time where the Internet is largely expanding, one of the biggest influencers for women of every age (Saner, 2010).
3.3. International context and age
Furthermore, Phillips respondents only consist of Dutch women. However in the light of the studies International Communication I think it would be interesting for my part research if the focus groups could contain of women from several countries in Europe with the knowledge that the studies of the European Council (2015) show that there is still a lot to improve in Europe when it comes to gender representation in the media. The results might be hard to generalize, since one young woman does not represent a whole country. Nevertheless, following the master in International Communication I decided to have focus groups of informants from several European countries. With the knowledge of Phillips, age would play a factor when it comes to dividing the focus groups.

3.4. Perception and attitude
Another thing I saw when I read most of the conclusion and results is that factors such as age and education (Phillips, 2012; Norval, 2011) are being given as if they would explain attitude and perception. Of course the perception of a younger respondent might be different to that of an older respondent. But does that explain an attitude or how they perceive magazines? Furthermore the research gap has proven that there is a lot to investigate about the use of media and the self-identification of its audience, in other words what is the perception and what is the attitude of the audience towards magazines? The studies (Philips, 2012; Norval, 2011; Ytre-Arne, 2011) that have been discussed here show that focus groups are a fitting method to research underlying motivations of the informants. I also find one of the concluding theories coming from Bari (2007) very interesting to bring into my own theoretical frame. The more positively woman are being depicted in magazines, the more secure and satisfied they make woman feel about themselves and the better woman feel about magazine publication. The theory relates to my studies as this shows how the effects of women’s magazines on women can contribute in a positive way to women’s self-esteem as well to the publication of magazines. Furthermore, Bhagwandin also has interesting conclusion in her studies and that is that young woman are not merely influenced by what they see in magazines and video clips as they know woman in real-life look different than the photoshopped reality that is presented to them in magazines. The previous research has given me a good insight in which method to use and which theories could be interesting for my further studies as well as the question which research gaps still need to filled in and what analytic concepts to use.
4. Theoretical frame and concepts

In this section I will describe the theories, models and concepts from which I will build my own theoretical framework and analytic tools. The relevant scientific material from earlier studies, as discussed in the sections before, will be specified and related to the research that will be conducted here. First, a closer look will be given to concepts about the sexualisation debate in society and the role media plays within that debate. Second, theories about how women are being portrayed in the current media landscape as well as how women perceive themselves in that landscape will be highlighted and discussed. Three effects and allying theories of sexualisation on society from the field of media-psychology will be discussed. These three effects are gender stereotypes, self-objectification and discrepancy. With the help of the three steps, as mentioned here, a theoretical frame will be built for this research. Finally the concept of sense making will be explained.

4.1. Debate on sexualisation

As said earlier, there is an on going debate about the sexualisation of women in western society. There are several reasons for this debate. An example of that can be seen when more and more western clothing retailers started producing clothing lines containing lingerie and high heels for seven-year old girls, creating a debate in society about which age girls should be given the opportunity to buy high heels, lingerie and cosmetics (Veen, 2010). Another reason and example of the discussion around sexualisation in the modern western world can be seen in the commercial advertisement, where physical appearances and beauty standards are highly emphasized. A direct effect of this is the increasing amount of plastic surgery for women (Levy, 2007). In her book Levy describes how independent women see their sexuality or appearance as a tool to gain personal success. These women perceive themselves as ‘lust objects’. These two effects are described by Levy as being a vital part of ‘bimbo culture’. The increasing amount of plastic surgery among young women, including injection of Botox and breast enlargements, is also part of this bimbo culture according to Levy. The fact that plastic surgery among young girls and women is becoming normal is what has become one of the main discussions points in the sexualisation debate. Why has it become all about looks and are women being perceived as objects for sexual pleasure? Last but not least, there is one final actor in the heated debate of sexualisation in society, which is the media. The media in general are named as ‘the guilty ones’ in the on going sexualisation debate in the modern, western society (Nikken, 2008). Their emphasis on physical appearance, beauty standards and the large range of sexual messages and images in magazines, television shows and online ads are mentioned as the biggest reason for the sexualisation, or pornification (Hilkens, 2008) of our modern society (Nikken, 2008). Especially the last years the large amount of sexual images in the media created greater
turbulence in society (Felten et al., 2009). Examples of these are including naked women in magazines and using sex as a sales tool. But also the two examples mentioned earlier, such as lingerie for young girls and the increasing amount of plastic surgery among young women. Mulvey’s Male Gaze (1975) shows that this is the way in which visual arts or literature, including magazines, depicts the world of women from a masculine point of view, mostly presenting women as (sex) objects for male pleasure. The turbulence in society about sexualisation and the effect it could have on young girls was scientifically supported by research done by the American Psychological Association (2007), the biggest scientific organisation in the United States. This study showed that there is a demonstrable link between sexual converted media messages in western media and the behaviour and self-esteem of young women. Girls and young women who are being shown images of naked women are more likely to feel bad about their body and themselves than girls and women who were shown pictures of other things than female bodies.

4.2. Theories
Most of the mentioned research examines the effects and influence this so-called sexualisation of society has on young women. The main reason to conduct research like this is because the media are being accused of giving an unrealistic perception of the world (Milestone & Meyer, 2012) and that this has negative effects on society, such as the lower self-esteem of young girls as well as inequality between men and women (Nederlands Jeugd Instituut, 2011). But several media outlets say the opposite, claiming that the content they publish represents reality (Webb, 2009). Dutch researchers Duits & Van Zoonen (2008) think the debate of sexualisation is highly dramatized and claim that the effects of sexualisation as mentioned above are misleading because the research has been conducted over a short amount of time. Therefore the research does not measure the long-term effects. During this research there will not be any focus on the possible effects, but on the way women themselves perceive and experience sexual content in women’s magazines. Hall (1997) shows that the social environment of the individual is constantly influencing attitudes and perception and those effects are very much related to attitude and perception. Because of Hall’s claim it is assumed that there is a possible effect on women’s attitudes and perceptions after being exposed to the content of a women’s magazine, as media can also be seen as an instrument in a social environment. This is because research has shown that the representation of women in media has increased and that this is the effect of society changing (Hilkens, 2008). In other words society has an effect on media. On the other hand there is also research showing the opposite. The representation of women has changed because of the media (Ter Bogt, 2008). In this theory section several theories will be discussed and divided under ‘media theories’ and ‘gender theories’.
4.2.1. Media theories

McQuail’s Media Theory (1994) gives us an insight in the history of media influence. The theory is built up in four different stages. The first stage shows the almighty media, during the beginning of the twentieth century until the late nineteen-thirty’s. The media had all the power and decided what the public thought. The second stage took place from the early 1940’s until the late 1960’s, where a discussion went on about the role media plays and if it’s really as powerful as once thought. Research showed that the public is not paralyzed by the message the media sends and that the public plays an active role. Stage three sets in the 1970’s, where it was thought the media is not almighty, but still has a certain power. The fourth stage is the stage we are in right now. It does not differ that much to the one from the 1970’s. The media still has a certain power. However, in this stage the audience who perceives the message of the media in its own way takes the message of the media into thought. Both media and audience are active and influence each other. The audience does not take a media message for granted, but thinks about the message first. Relating to this research this could mean that women from eighteen until twenty-five see images in women’s magazines, take the content of women’s magazines into consideration and form their own opinion and attitude on the matter. Of course the additional factors such as social background and social reference frame play an important role in their final conclusion on how they feel, perceive and what they think about the media content they are shown.

Three theories will be discussed in the next few pages. Two theories will be used to explain the influence of media on its audience namely Gerbner’s cultivation theory (1973) and the Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1977; Nederlands Jeugd Instituut, 2001). These theories, or models, test the amount of influence the media has on its audience. However each theory does it in a different way. And there is another theory that does not question what media do to people, but what people do to media namely The Uses and Gratification Theory. All three theories cover an aspect of the fourth stage of McQuail’s Media Theory, which is the influence and effects on people and media are a two-way street.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory (Severin & Tankard, 1997) is used to understand why people actively search for media to fulfil specific needs. This is particularly interesting for this studies because according to Hermes (1993) women are very critical towards magazines and do not read or pay attention to what they do not like. Relating to the U&G theory this could mean that women do not use magazines or use magazines because they fulfil specific needs. Those needs could vary from cognitive needs such as gaining knowledge or understand certain topics to affective or personal needs such as emotion, pleasure and status.

Acknowledging the active role of the audience is an important understanding in analysing the attitude and perception of that audience. This is because attitude and perception are linked with needs. According to the theory you have a more positive attitude to things that you think
you need, than to things you think you do not need.

However there are also theories in this research that look at how media has an effect on the perception and attitude of the audience, which is also important to take into perspective.

For example, Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory is based on the principle that young people adjust their behaviour and attitude according to the standard as given by the media. It is here to understand that media, or in this case magazines, play in shaping an individual’s perception of the world. For this current research this could mean that young people, the respondents for this research, adjust their attitude to the standard about sexualisation as given by women’s magazines. In other words the values the media sets become their values. Gerbner came up with this theory in 1973, measuring the effects of long-term exposure of television on people. According to his theory the image that people have of reality is mostly determined by television. The television is seen as the storyteller of the modern world and the longer people are exposed to the reality on television, the more likely they are to perceive that reality as to be true. Gerbner claimed that lasting contact with television has led to long-term effects on the perception and attitude of the audience towards society. In relation to the research that will be conducted here the cultivation theory shows a possible co-relation between the way people can be influenced by the message the media sends and how that message can influence their own thoughts and values on a specific matter. The cultivation theory is often used in current studies about the perception and attitude of young people towards sexual images in mainstream media, especially focussing on television. However this theory has proven to be also of with other mainstream channels such as magazines (Philips, 2012). In the light of this study the cultivation theory claims that people who are often being showed sexual encrypted messages in the media change their behaviour, attitude and perception according to the values the media holds on sexualisation.

On the other hand we have the Social Learning Theory from Bandura (1977), the name of the theory explains itself people learn by being social. By observing and imitating others as well as using role models we set out an identity for ourselves. Bandura’s theory claims that young people take over examples the media sets out under the condition that these examples are presented in a way, which is appealing to this young audience.

In 1977 Bandura conducted a meanwhile famous experiment to prove his claim. Through this experiment Bandura showed a direct link between watching television, taking it as an example and behaving the same way as on television. Previous theories claimed that the increasing amount of violence on television would directly result in more violence in society. During the research three groups of children were shown three different videos of a bobo doll, the interesting aspect for the children. Group A was showed a video of an adult beating a bobo doll, and for doing that the adult was rewarded. Group B was shown the same video, however the adult was punished after beating up the bobo doll. Group C was shown the video,
and the beating did not have any consequences for the adult. The children that were in group A showed more aggressive behaviour afterwards than the children in group B and C. However 88% of all respondents showed aggressive behaviour after seeing the video of the bobo doll that was assaulted. Bandura’s theory claims that people adjust their ideas, attitude and behaviour to what they see in the media, no matter what the consequences are. In relation to this current research the Social Learning Theory could mean that the audience is sensitive to sexually encrypted messages and can also adjust their own values to the reality that is presented through the eyes of the media. This could mean that the pictures influence the respondents, even though they are aware of the consequences. What would this mean for their attitude? Even though Bandura based the research on video clips, the emphasis on visual images is as much applicable to images coming from a television as it is from images from magazines (Phillips, 2012).

4.2.3. Gender theories

Gauntlett (2008) claims women are being portrayed more independent than compared to magazines of twenty years ago. Women work, and are not seen as housewives. However Hellemont (2006) claims that women in media are still being associated with lifestyle, beauty, children and sexuality. Or as De Graaf et al. (2008, p. 28) states:

“Being hot and sexy is, becoming an object for male pleasure, is a very important message of articles, stories and pictures.”

The quote of De Graaf et al. (2008) shows that images from the media have underlying thoughts. Magazines give an unrealistic standard of reality and therefore portray an unrealistic beauty standard. However other research claims that magazines are not only here to help women identify themselves, but that magazines also have another function, which is pure entertainment. According to Hermes (1993) women are very critical towards magazines and do not read or pay attention to what they do not like. This could be related to Bandura’s theory, which says young people can only be influenced by media messages once they appeal to them. You are more influenced by an article about your idol, because you want to read it. And you are not inspired or influenced by an article about somebody you do not like, because it does not appeal to you.

4.3. Three perspectives

There are various perspectives on the sexualisation debate. Especially studies coming from the media-psychology field try to study the effects of sexualisation on society. Several studies have shown that there are three main perspectives to identify: (Philips, 2011; Gauntlett, 2008; Frederickson & Roberts, 1997; Higgins, 1987). The first perspective claims that sexual encrypted messages create gender stereotypes in the thoughts of people and therefore in
society (Gauntlett, 2008). The second perspective shows that women are being influenced by sexual encrypted messages and this influences their identification process (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997) and the third perspective shows that there is discrepancy between the reality and the self-image women hold to themselves after the use of media channels (Higgins, 1987). These three perspectives will be discusses and explained more in detail in the next paragraphs.

4.3.a. Gender stereotypes

It is clear that the media is often using stereotype characters (Gauntlett, 2008; Goffman, 1979). Especially gender stereotypes are used frequently in advertisement in media (Nicolai, 1992). The Institute For Equality Between Women and Man (2009) claims that the media are creating gender inequality by using sexual encrypted messages and stereotypes in advertisements in television and magazines. According to Gauntlett (2008) changes have been made in the field of media the last years. Gauntlett claims that not only women, but also men are now being portrayed as sex objects too. The study also shows that women’s magazines do not define the identity of women in general, but they do help women create their personal identity.

Several researches has shown that there is a co-relation between the behaviour of media, self-esteem of the receiver and the attitude the receiver has towards the opposite sex after seeing gender stereotypes in the media (De Graaf et al., 2008; Felten et al., 2009; De Graaf et al., 2009). The sexual encrypted message in several media, such as television as well as magazines, has a very negative influence, and therefore impact on especially women. The so-called ‘perfect’ portrayal of women in media, where the female body is highly emphasized, leads to negative effects. Women feel they have to meet the beauty standard, which leads to a disturbed self-image, eating disorders and an increasing amount of plastic surgery at a very young age.

However there could be an explanation for emphasizing high beauty standards and physical appearance in magazines. The beauty and diet industry is guaranteed success by telling women they need and can look more beautiful by using their products. It is proven that women who are insecure about their bodies buy more clothes, beauty and diet products (Gerber, 2010). The high amount of women who are being portrayed as sex objects and stereotypes will lead to seeing women as sex objects and stereotypes in our current society (Philips, 2011). Felten et al. (2009) shows that after showing sexual encrypted media messages to young people they not only think of the other sex in a more gender stereotype way, but also think about sex in a stereotype way. By showing sexual media images the following ideas were constructed under youngsters. For example boys always want sex, girls are more focussed on relationships than on sex, men are more focussed on physical beauty than women, if a boy has a lot of girlfriends he is ‘cool’, if a girl has a lot of boyfriends she is
called a ‘slut’. As seen by the statements above, the sexually encrypted media messages that were shown in the research done by Felten et al. (2009) created thoughts based on gender and gender stereotypes. The theory of Peter & Valkenburg (2007) claims that when young adults see sexual images of women this will automatically result in seeing women as lust and sex objects. This would mean that the respondents would automatically see themselves as sex objects after seeing images of women who are being portrayed as lust objects in magazines. Even though Gauntlett (2008) shows that there is a slight change in the world of women’s magazines and the images of women in those magazines, Gauntlett also claims that stereotypes are still playing a very active role within that industry. The media shows images of how society ought to look like and by looking at these pictures the audience can be influenced by the thoughts the media has about that society. By constantly creating images of the ‘perfect body’ or ‘the perfect women’, the media can influence, or probably define, our values of ‘the perfect body and women’. The same goes for the way media is visualizing the difference between men and women (Van Zoonen, 1994). Goffman (1979) shows that adverts and media images do not really show the actual behaviour of men and women, but show how we think men and women are behaving. According to the theory of Bergman (2007) women who are being showed the ideal body of a woman according to the media will also perceive this image as the ideal body. For this research it is interesting to see how the respondents give a meaning to the pictures in magazines and if their attitude and perception is the same as the respondents have in for example De Graaf et al. (2008) and Felten et al. (2009). How do they perceive the images of stereotypes? Do they follow the ideas and values the magazines set out?

4.3.b. Self-objectification

Fredrickson and Roberts Objectification Theory (1997) claims that many girls and women are sexually objectified and treated as an object to be valued for its use by other outsiders. Sexual objectification occurs when a woman’s body, or body parts, are singled out and a woman and her body are viewed as an object. The woman is not viewed as a person with her own mind and character. In the process of sexual objectification this theory claims that women are internalizing the view of the outsider who is observing them and begin to self-objectify themselves and see themselves as objects of sexual desire. They learn to see their body as an object of the desire from someone else. This is called ‘third-person-view’, you see yourself through the eyes of somebody else, a social objectified lens. A reason to sexually objectify a woman is to control the way they look at their sexuality. In Noll (1996) several women tried on bathing suits. But the women felt very bad after trying on bathing suits because of seeing images of thin women dressed in the same bathing suits just beforehand. Richins (1991) shows that women compare their own beauty to that of models in magazines. The women
felt they needed to eat less to be as thin and in their eyes ‘perfect’ as the models. This is one of the psychological effects. Frederickson and Roberts (1997) also claim that there is a correlation between repeated visual images in media and psychological effects on an individual as well as collective scale. Examples of effects on individual scale are as mentioned earlier such as eating disorders but also depressions. Bartky (1990) claims there is a link between sexual and self-objectification of women and social gender roles in society. They influence each other. Because if women want to live up to the beauty standards of media, this eventually can be seen in society, this creates a new ‘gender role’.

4.4.c. Discrepancy between self-image and reality
During the process of self-objectification women and girls learn to see their bodies through the eyes of someone else. This comparisons leads to unsatisfied thoughts about their own body after seeing pictures of bodies. When girls feel they do not live up to standard society set outs for being beautiful there is a discrepancy between the reality and the self-image they have. Self-discrepancy is the gap between the actual self-image and the ideal self-image society shapes. The bigger the gap, the more self-discrepancy appears. This results in a negative body image and low self-esteem (Higgins, 1987). By seeing more and more images of this so-called perfect image women perceive this more as true (Bergman, 2007). This creates discrepancy between reality and self-image. Women tend to set the bar higher for their own ideal self-image and value their own real beauty less. As a result young women develop a false image of their own body, get depressed and have less self-confidence (Philips, 2011). During this research there will be a deeper look into how women perceive images from magazines, but also if there is any discrepancy to be found and what their attitude towards the matter is. During the analyses of the gathered information there will be a closer look at the matter if women themselves declare that they notice a difference between reality and self-image and which associations they have with that.

4.5. Sense making
Last, the concept of sense making will play an important part in this research. Sense making can be defined as the construction of realities in a social group at a certain time. This is the process where the receiver of the message focuses their attention on that message, thinks about it and gives meaning to it (Weick, 1995). In other words the process of sense making can be seen as the construction of reality within a social group at a certain time. During this research respondents will be in a focus group and will be shown images of women in magazines. The aim is to find out how the women perceive the content of the magazine. Sense making is a very vital part of analysing the women’s thoughts as the questions behind
perceiving is how do women make sense of pictures in the magazine? The concept of sense making finds its origin in Symbolical Interactionisme by Blumer (1969). This theory shows that people act based on the meaning they give to a certain situation. The way young women perceive images in magazines has a strong relationship to the way they make sense of things. Sense making will be one of the foundations of this research. In the next section a method will be discussed.
5. Method

I have chosen a qualitative approach in order to research the perception and attitude of young women towards the sexualisation of women in women’s magazines. I chose this method because this would give me more space and time to investigate underlying reasons in order to explain concepts such as attitude and perception. Those are hard to measure in a survey or any other kind of quantitative research. I did keep in mind that topics such as gender, sexualisation and the portrayal of women do not have universal definitions. The portrayal of women in American media is very different to for example Saudi-Arabia or Latin America. Therefore I did choose to focus on European women’s magazines. Hence, I placed my study in a European context. I chose three magazines that are published all over Europe which are Elle, Vogue and Cosmopolitan, all published between January and May 2017. This is because I wanted the magazines to be recent, knowing that magazines change in a vast tempo. So from each magazine there were six different issues. A total of eighteen issues of women’s magazines were used during this thesis. This contextualized my study in place and time. Women’s magazines have had a very successful transition from print to digital formats. However, I did specially choose print magazines for a couple of reasons. First, all these online women’s magazines found their origin in print media. Second, because it was easier for my focus groups to perform the assignment with print magazines. Thirdly, because it did not make any difference whether this study looks at online websites or magazines as they still post the same articles and picture offline and online. With the knowledge that I would focus on European women’s magazines I did also choose young European women as respondents for my study. The criteria for selecting the respondents were that they should be between the age of twenty and twenty-five and European. Which led me to the next part of my method, namely focus groups. My aim was to find out what the perception and attitude of young women was towards women’s magazines. Focus groups, as argued by Wester (2006) have proven to be a good approach in order to research underlying thoughts of media users. Focus groups have also been used before when it came to study the underlying thoughts of the attitude of women towards the sexualizing of women in media. For example, ‘measuring the short-term media effects upon women’s self-esteem’ (Bari, 2007). My qualitative research consisted out of four focus groups, each would consist of a small number of young European women, approximately four to seven respondents in each group all between the age of eighteen and twenty-five. According to Philips (2011) focus groups in the field of media and communication studies can be conducted with a minimum of 10 respondents in total of all focus groups. There were a total of 19 respondents in this study. The focus groups sessions were all recorded and later transcribed. I gathered the respondents via Jönköping University. The university has a lot of international
students, coming from all different parts of the world. I approached them during courses, at parties and during other social activities with the question if they wanted to participate in the research.

All the focus groups were conducted in a class room at the university of Jönköping between the 1st and the 8th of May 2017.

Three focus groups were heterogeneous, meaning they consisted out of young women with different European nationalities between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. One focus group was homogeneous, meaning they contained young women from the same age group. This I did in order to measure if age played a role in the perception and attitude of young women towards the magazines. My selection criteria were European and between the age of eighteen and twenty-five. They did not have to be frequent readers of magazines.

The structure of my focus groups consisted out of the following: first I would introduce my study to the respondents. Secondly I would ask my respondents questions by using a topic list (attachment 1.) Furthermore, I would also ask them about their top of mind associations with women’s magazines and terms such as ‘sex sells’. Thirdly I asked them to make a mood board of the magazines in front of them. The method where participants make mood boards is called the Photovoice method (Hergenrather et al., 2009), as used by Phillips (2012). This approach was very interesting for my research because it is argued (Hergenrather et al., 2009) that by letting participants select images themselves, they were more willing to explain how they perceive images from magazines and what the effects of those images do to them.

According to Homan (2006) especially the dialogue in a focus group could create a bigger understanding of underlying thoughts when it came to media use and the readers of women’s magazines. Furthermore, the participants could explain what they think was important to them in the picture and for their self-esteem. This was especially important for my research as it could lead me to answering my research questions and research the difference between attitude and perception as well as the underlying arguments and motives of my participants.

The mood boards will consist out of two parts: pictures, headlines and texts that they like and pictures, headlines and texts that they do not like. They based their choices on what they thought was interesting, what stroke them. I would then ask them to choose texts, headlines and pictures that were striking to them and the complete opposite. I also would let the respondents present their mood boards to each other and discuss the pictures they have chosen, what was their perception and attitude towards the pictures and headlines in the magazines? Last but not least I would discuss questions I asked them in the beginning of the focus groups about their attitude and perception and let them answer them again. Had their perception and attitude changed? What was their perception and attitude towards the pictures they have chosen?

Then I would proceed by doing a qualitative analysis. The analysis of the four focus groups
consisted out of two parts. The first part would be transcribing all the gathered data and dividing general discussed themes of the focus groups. The second part was mainly looking more thoroughly into the discussed themes to identify patterns and subsequent categorise the answers (Powell & Single, 1996). By applying this method I hoped to find answers to my research questions.
6. Analysis (and results)

During this research four focus groups have been questioned. One focus group was homogenous, consisting out of young women from the same age, namely twenty years old. This was also the minimum age as criteria for the respondents. The focus group consisted of four women. The other three focus groups were heterogeneous and were women between the ages of twenty-one and twenty-five. Two focus groups consisted of four informants; one focus group had seven informants. In total there were nineteen informants questioned during the focus groups. The focus group discussion consisted of two parts: the first part was making a mood board. This was done to create a context for the focus group. The informants were asked to make a mood board with on one side images coming from magazines they liked and on the other side pictures that they disliked, all the pictures came from the three magazines that were mentioned before: Elle, Cosmopolitan and Vogue. Most pictures contained images of women. Throughout the focus group questions were asked to make the informants explain their mood boards to each other as well as questions about if the informants read magazines, what they thought of women in magazines in terms of role models and if they liked the way women were being portrayed in those magazines. This all stood in relationship to the concept of sense making, as discussed in the theory section. Furthermore I was also interested in how women perceive images in magazines and what their attitude towards magazines is after perceiving images and making the mood board. In other words how they saw things (perception) and later created an opinion about that what they saw (attitude). The answers to the questions asked during the focus groups as well as the mood boards will be analysed and discussed in the next few pages.

During the focus groups three important themes have been signalised: the reality of magazines vs. the reality according to the respondents, gender stereotypes and lastly the influence of magazines on the respondents when it comes to self-discrepancy. There will also be a closer look at which role age plays in perception and attitude of young women towards magazines.

6.1. General impression of women’s magazines

At the beginning of each focus group the informants were asked why and if they read women’s magazines. The main reason to read a magazine was to relax. However when asked about constructing identities through magazines as a reason to read them, most of the informants agreed that this was the main reason to use magazines when they were teenagers. Nevertheless they found out during their teenage years that magazines were not the place for those needs to be fulfilled, because a magazine does not represent the reality, as respondents perceive it. According to the respondents women’s magazines focus more on beauty aspects such as fashion and make-up. Yet all of the informants have read women’s magazines
frequently at some point in their lives, most of them during the time when they were teenagers. Apart from one, all of the informants also said that they stopped reading them frequently when they were around the age of eighteen, nineteen. Looking at the age of the young women, one could say that this also has to do with the transition of women’s magazines from paper to online, as well as the rising prices of print magazines. However the informants choose neither of those two as reasons to stop reading. The respondents argued that women’s magazines online and offline did not appeal to them anymore. In other words: magazines as an institution did not get their attention anymore. The arguments the respondents gave focused more on the content of the articles than on the channel and price.

Informant V. (4): When I was eighteen I collected a lot of magazines but then I just stopped because it was such bullshit. The content is not real.

Informant L. (3): When you’re a teenager and then everyone reads it, you read it too. But at some point that gets so boring when they say this is all about make-up and what they buy, than it gets boring.

Informant A. (3): I think I had the Cosmopolitan at the dentist and I threw it away after a minute. It does not appeal to me anymore.

Informant A. (3): I would say that they don’t really reflect that they we are their target group. Because as you said earlier we used to read it when we were seventeen, but right now I don’t think we would use it.

Informant K. (2): You would maybe read it when you are sixteen. But it is all about sex in the end. And make-up.

Informant L. (1): I feel like they are really flat like not really inspiring.

**6.1.2. The uses and gratification of women’s magazines**

The answers given here create an interesting bridge to the Uses and Gratification Theory. The respondents say they all used to read it at some point, but stopped because the content of the magazine did not appeal to them anymore. One respondent even says she used to read magazines because everyone read it, which can be related to one of the primary factors in the U&G theory, namely ‘personal relationship factor’: we use a medium as a social tool, in order to gain information which we can use in conversations with our peer group. The medium fulfills the need we have to belong to a group, a social argument. The respondents were and
are still an active audience and therefore they have also made the choice to stop reading women's magazines frequently. Only when they are on holiday a magazine is now seen as a nice ‘way to relax’ and ‘escape reality for a brief moment’.

Researcher: Do you read it?

Informants: No really no.

Informant Le: Yes, but I read it just like yeah for example in the summer or when I have to wait in the train or something like that.

Informant Li: Sometimes I read it but it is just for fun, just wandering what they are saying.

This argument is related to the ‘diversion factor’, of the U&G theory. Because according to this factor media is used to escape routine and release emotions for a while. However, common reasons that are being named for the decision to quit reading a magazine can also be explained by using the U&G theory: unrealistic content, uninspiring articles and uninteresting topics. Again, this related to another ‘need’ as mentioned by the Uses & Gratification theory: personal identity. Self-understanding and reality exploration are reasons to use a medium. The respondents claim that these are reasons to use media, especially magazines when they were teenager. However that this need was not fulfilled by the medium. Or in this case specifically a women’s magazine. Because the reality presented by the magazine was unreal. This they found out in their late teenage years. The medium did not fulfil the needs of the respondents and the content is described ‘boring’ and ‘bool shit’. Hence there is no reality to explore or self-identity to create because the reality as given by the magazines is perceived as unreal.

Researcher: I see it in the other focus groups too is that the likeable site (of the mood board) is more like the real world that like the more pictures are real and spontaneous the more young women tend to like them. Which is actually the opposite of what vogue is. So that is interesting. But just a question, do you feel different about yourself does it influence you?

Respondents: No.

Respondents: Not anymore.
Respondents: No, not anymore. But maybe when I was younger. But no not anymore, it’s all fake.

Firstly, this relates to the theory of Philips (2011) who claims women are more likely to be influenced by magazines when they are younger. This claim is supported by research done by De Graaf et al. (2008) and Felten et al. (2009). This also relates to Bandura’s Social Learning theory, which claims an audience follows the example the media sets out on the condition that the context in which that example is given, is appealing to this specific group. If the content is perceived as fake and uninteresting, which is the case in this research, the audience will not change their behaviour or attitude towards a specific matter. In other words: the magazine will have no influence or a negative influence, on the perception and attitude of the audience if the content is perceived as unreal. Relating to the U&G theory this means that ultimately the respondents of this focus groups will not use the women’s magazines as a medium anymore because it does not meet the needs of the active media user. With the arguments that the content of a magazine was fake and uninteresting, the respondents were asked if their attitude towards women’s magazines changed.

Researcher (1, 2, 3, 4): Do you think with that knowledge of you know it is photo shopped and it is not real life, does your attitude towards magazines change?

All informants (1, 2, 3, 4) Yes.

Informant (4): Yes, because (that is why) I stopped reading.

Which in this case is true: the respondents stopped reading the magazines on a frequent basis. This is interesting because the respondents are the target group of the magazines discussed in the focus groups. This also shows evidence for what Hermes argues (1993) namely that women are critical towards magazines and do not read or pay attention to what they do not like, therefore it is assumed it does not influence their attitude or perception. When the focus groups were asked what the first thing was that would come into their mind if they thought of a magazine there were just a few terms that were repeated time after time. Those themes were make-up, fashion and skinny models. According to the respondents these three terms gave a very limited idea or a minimal aspect of what women are interested in, or more specifically what the respondents were interested in. Out of the nineteen respondents only three thought positively about the term women’s magazines. The other sixteen thought again, it was all about make-up, beauty and skinny models. Topics that they could not identify with and therefore they were uninteresting. The three respondents that were interested in make-up and beauty thought that therefore the
magazines were interesting. However they also agreed with the other respondents they felt they needed more from women’s magazines. More over the respondents felt that magazines did not take them seriously as a target group. Therefore they did not take the magazine seriously.

6.2. A negative perception
Nevertheless a target group should be attracted to the content of the magazine. With the knowledge the majority of the informants had a negative perception of the magazine it was interesting to look at more specific reasons to explain this negative attitude and perception. This was strongly related with the reality in magazines versus the reality of the respondents. Young women perceived the content in women’s magazines as well as women’s magazines as negative. The content of the magazines does not interest them anymore because it does not fulfil a need to self-identify. Furthermore, they do not feel taken seriously and that the reality as perceived by the respondents is not at all presented in an earnest way in the magazines. The result of this is that their attitude is changing towards negative and not buying the magazine anymore.

This was concluded during the first part of the focus group. However it was interesting to look further. What role does sexualisation play in the perception and attitude of young women towards women’s magazines? And if they stopped reading magazines frequently during the time they were nineteen, would this mean that there is a difference in attitude towards magazines between younger and older respondents? The mood boards prove to be a helpful tool.

6.3. Moodboards
Looking at the nineteen mood boards one can see several similarities, as well as differences. A difference can be seen in the fact that some informants tend to choose more fashion related pictures for the likeable side of the mood board. The first group selected pictures where women are being portrayed as a model for fashion clothing on the positive side of the mood board. Others did tend to put pictures of different aspects of a woman, such as for example a woman’s foot promoting a shoe, on their positive side. They argued this was mostly because they liked the shoes or what the model was wearing. A third group, on the contrary tend to put pictures of women where a model is being used to promote a new fashion trend or accessory on their dislike side. This could of course also have to do with the individual interests of each informant, because what can also be seen in the mood board is the personal touch and individual character of each informant. Some informants choose pictures with colours for their mood boards; others choose black and white pictures as their personal favourites. That of course is a matter of taste that does not have anything to do with the
research. As this research looks at the content of the pictures on the mood board and how young women perceive the content as well as why they have selected the pictures. One informant is more interested in interior design and therefore she has chosen a lot of pictures of women who show their houses for her mood board. Another informant hated fashion, and therefore she chose to put all fashion-related pictures on her dislike side.

Informant (2): I hate fashion. So out of everything, I wouldn’t put a fashion picture on it (mood board) because I don’t like it. That is the difference here.

Informant (3): I like them (pictures) because the interior design and I really like that I would love to see more in the magazines and actually it is a thing of mine to look in peoples houses and see how they live.

Even though the personal interest of the informants as well as the level of fashion-related pictures might differ and can also be seen in the mood boards, there tend to be more similarities than differences in the mood boards. In all four focus groups these similarities were seen during the presentation of the mood board as well as in the answers to the questions that were asked in the focus groups.

6.4. Gender stereotypes and sexualisation

Sexually oriented images of women are defined as gender stereotypes in mainstream media (OCW, 2007). These images often have a negative context because it is assumed that women are being objectified. Women are being seen as a object, mostly focusing on one single aspect of their body such as breasts or legs. They are not showed as an individual human being. This is called ‘objectification of women’ and in addition to that the narrow and unrealistic standard of physical beauty is highly emphasized, especially in women’s magazines

Sexualisation on the other hand is almost the same as objectification, but this happens in the presence of a man in the image or other content (American Psychological Association, 2007). During the making of the mood boards the respondents saw a great deal of these sexualized images. All respondents agreed on the fact that women are being portrayed as lust objects in women’s magazines, which can be supported by several scientific material (Felten et al., 2008; de Graaf et al., 2008). However most of the respondents also said that they are hardly influenced by images where women are being objectified in magazines as they do not correspondent with their reality, hence the women and body types they see in their everyday lives.

According to Courtney & Lockeretz (1971) four gender stereotypes based on women can be
seen in the media: women stay at home, women do not make any important decisions, women need protection from men and women should be seen as a sexual object in the presence of a man. According to the participants of the focus group especially the last gender stereotype, that of the sexual object, can be seen in the world of women’s magazines. Furthermore, the participants say that females are often being portrayed in a sexualized way by the media, but argue that this is not what they see in reality.

Researcher (2): Do you think that women are being portrayed in a certain way?
Informants (2): Yes.
Informants (2): How are we portrayed in magazines?
Informants (2): Very sexy and always half naked.
Informants (2): Especially in advertisements.
Informants (2): Yeah advertisement, but articles is as well.
Informants (2): Men are always dark, taller, though.
Informants (2): It is weird because when you look in a shopping street you see the opposite I assume?
Informants (2): Yeah.

The fragment from the focus group above shows that the informants are aware of the sexualisation process in women’s magazines. Gauntlett (2008) claims that both women and men are being sexualized in magazines these days. The respondents also notice this. The other focus groups agreed with this as well.

Researcher (2): Do you think that women are being sexualized in these magazines? That they are being portrayed in a sexual way?
Informants A. (2): Yes. They all look kind of hot. Even if it’s not your type of women you know they are all like skinny, have nice skin they are sporty. Everything
Informants Le. (2): Perfect shape boots and buts.
Informants Lo. (2): You rarely see a woman with more weight.
Informant Len. (2): I think people see through it (sexualisation of women in magazines) more because people will write articles about it (...) we also had it in school.

According to the theory of Peter & Valkenburg young adults will see women as a lust objects as a result of seeing sexual encrypted messages of women in the media. However the respondents perceive the images differently. All the respondents had at least one picture of a naked women on the dislike side of their mood board and they motivated their choice by saying the following:
Informant A. (3): She is too fake to me, too sexy, she is like come to me men. I don’t like it all.

Informant (4): And it’s more like natural and more like spontaneous pictures I guess, unlike this kind of things (pictures, like here) she is pretty naked and it is more like sexy.

Informant E. (2): It was something for the necklaces and this is just a stereotypical like, to be sexy and photoshopped picture. So that is the bad side.

The images do not appeal to them because the women in the photos are being perceived as unrealistic compared to people they see in their everyday life. Furthermore, the idea that women are a ‘wanted object’ for men (Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971) is also named as a reason to choose pictures like that on their dislike side. However, when asked about the term ‘sex sells’ as a way to promote product, the respondents say they accept the fact that women are being portrayed like that, however as active users of media they have made the decision to quit reading magazines for that reason as well.

Researcher (4): Do you think with that knowledge o you know it is photoshopped and it is not real life they don’t look like your average neighbour here, does your attitude towards magazines change?
Informants (4): Yes.
Informants (4): Yes, because I stopped reading. When I was eighteen I collected a lot of magazines but then I just stopped because it was such bool shit. The content is not real. Even in this model says I don’t want to be over reduced on my look than they are still super skinny.

6.5. The social learning theory
Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (2008) shows that information does not influence people if it does not appeal to them, which can be seen with the respondents at this age. The information is perceived as fake. According to the respondents they perceive things as fake when they do not correspondent with the reality. Examples of ‘fake’ information in magazines according to the informants are the high amount of digital alterations in pictures as well as the amount of thin, white models instead of a more diverse range of models with different skin-colours and body types. They argued that the small amount of those diverse picture were therefore a reason to put them on the likable side of their mood board. Interesting is that they argue that not only men and women should be shown in a more ‘real and diverse’ way, but the same goes for relationships between men and women in magazines. Furthermore, pictures of spontaneous and ‘real’ emotions instead of posed, turned out to be a very important similarity in mood boards.
During two focus groups the respondents showed that pictures where women take the lead or are presented powerful in comparison to a male in the picture are more attractive to them. Furthermore they also agree on the fact that women’s magazines do not pay enough attention to homosexual and lesbian relationships.

Felten et al. (2009) claims that young people think of the other sex in a more stereotyped way after seeing images of sex. This would mean that the respondents would think of men in a stereotyped way, for example that men need to give women protection or that men are always tough. But the respondents do not agree with this, the main reason again is because the content in magazines is perceived as fake. After the focus group one of the respondents compared it with seeing the movie Shrek. Just because you saw a cartoon with an ogre, does not mean you started to believe in ogres.

Nevertheless the respondents realise that women are being portrayed in a sexualized way to make products in advertisement more attractive. This relates to the theory of Michielsens where it is said that women are portrayed in a sexualized way to make advertisement more attractive. After seeing the images in magazines the respondents do not perceive themselves as lust objects, as the theory of Peter & Valkenburg might suggest. Both the mood boards as well as the results from all the focus groups show that the respondents do not share the vision of this theory.

Furthermore, they do not perceive the content as negative. However, what is interesting is that they do perceive the magazine as ‘uninteresting’ and ‘stupid’. On the contrary, the respondents are very much aware of the diverse aspects of being a women and also pledge for more awareness of male and female diversity in magazines. When presenting the positive sight of their mood boards they each argue that they would like to see more ‘real women’ and hear ‘real stories about life and not just beauty and fashion’. De Graaf et al. (2008) as well as Felten, Janssens & Brants (2009) argue that mostly the negative effects on women of the sexualisation of women in the media are highlighted.

According to the focus groups that have been conducted here the respondents are aware of the sexualisation of women in magazines. However they argue that just because something is there, it does not mean it influences you. As active users of media they can perceive images in their own way and therefore also make the decision to quit reading a magazine.

Gauntlett (2008) claims that women’s magazines help women create their personal identity. But all of the respondents agree that this was a reason to read magazines in their teenage years but that the unrealistic content and one-sighted topics, such as beauty and fashion, made them realize magazines were more for fun. Furthermore they put the magazines content into perspective by differentiating. Often the informants argue that they feel they are not being taken seriously, therefore they stopped taking the magazines seriously.

Informant: I think (magazines) they think we are stupid.
The respondents do not use a magazine as a tool to create a personal identity. In all four focus groups the lack of role models in magazines play an important part in not feeling inspired by personal identity. The respondents do not see women who are often being used in magazines, such as Kim Kardashian, as role models. On the other hand, the magazine cover and the interview with Emma Watson in Vogue, is by far the most used content in all the mood boards. In each focus groups the respondents explained how much they like Emma Watson as a role model, showing that the respondents do look for role models in magazines, or at least like it when someone who inspires them is shown.

Researcher (2): And you have the vogue cover with Emma Watson.

Informant D. (1): Talking about role models on the cover of a magazine and here it is Emma Watson. I love her.

Informant Mar. (2): Yes, I like Emma Watson. She is really fighting for women’s right and being really feminist. She is really a role model I think.

Informant Mat. (4): And this is Emma Watson and what I like is that the article also talked about her struggles with her love life. Yeah that is important.

Nevertheless, the informants think that role models such as Emma Watson are very rare in women’s magazines.

Researcher (3): Do you think role models in women’s magazines are existing?

Informant L. (3): Yes, depending on the magazine.

Informant A. (3): Like in Neon you have some inspiring series. But when I look through women’s magazines I don’t have a role model for my life.

Researcher (4): And what do you think of role models? Are they existent?

Informant V. (4): No, I don’t think so. I think when, (they) are really not representative of what we are. They all need to look sexy.

In addition to that the informants argued that they all choose the picture of Emma Watson
because they liked her as a person and admire her for her achievements, however they did not choose the pictures because the of content in the magazine about Emma Watson. That was rather perceived as negative. Again, this relates to Bandura’s theory, as the content appeals to the respondents because they can relate to Emma Watson.

Researcher (1): But you just said you really like Emma Watson, who is on the cover of that magazine.

Researcher D. (1): Yeah and there is nothing about Emma Watson in the magazine. This thingy like Emma Watson is on the cover and this is what she wears. I could not find anything about what she did as a person but then there is this. Cover look, which goes to about one thousand roughly three hundred pounds for her look.

Researcher L. (1): I really like Emma Watson like they also go on a really flat level in that interview. I think she has so much more to tell.

The fragments from the focus groups above also show that even though women find role models in magazines, women’s magazines still portray a role model in a way that the respondents perceive as ‘flat’ and ‘not finding anything what she did as a person’. According to Felten et al. (2008) using women, in this case the fashion shoot with Emma Watson, in media can be also seen as a way of objectifying. Something the respondents perceive as negative.

Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory (1973) claims that young people adjust their behaviour and attitude according to the standard as given by the media. This on one hand could be true, as the respondents seem to accept the fact that the media often use sexualisation of women in order to sell a product or make something seem more attractive. On the other hand it does not become the standard of the respondents, as they shift to a more different medium.

Researcher: what do you think about the term sex sells?

Informant (1): It’s true.

Researcher: Yes? Do you think that sex sells easier for women or men?

Informant (1): For both.

Informant (1): I think when it comes to those women magazines it is not sex sells.

Informant (1): But maybe we are not aware. It still appeals to us.
Informant (1): I would still buy the magazine even though she would be skinny or undressed or...

6.6. Self-objectification

The self-objectification theory of Frederickson & Roberts (1997) claims that young women learn to see themselves through the perspective of someone else. According to Levy (2007) this goes as far as changing the way they look by using plastic surgery to meet the standards of someone else. The theory claims that women focus on only the way they look and create a third-person-perspective. According to Noll (1996) the repeated visual images in media should lead to self-objectification with young women. In that case young women will perceive themselves as an object. However this research concludes a more differentiated view on the matter.

This creates a very important difference between the respondents. On one hand, there is the group of respondents who used the argument that they perceived the images in magazines as fake. As a result of that they did not feel like they objectified themselves after seeing the images. This speaks against De Graaf (2008) who claims women’s magazines have a big influence on the way young women perceive themselves.

Informants (3): And they photoshop still so much.
Informants (3): Even if there is one detail, you know it looks different in real-life.

However the informants do agree that when they were younger, between the age of thirteen and eighteen, magazines used to have a greater impact on them. A main reason to use a magazine is to create an identity, which brings new light to Gauntlett (2008) who says magazines help women create an identity and also influence behaviour and attitude (Bandura, 1977). However the respondents say that this was up to the age of eighteen. After this age they started to perceive the magazines content in a different way, more unrealistic. After this the attitude towards women’s magazines changed but also the need: a magazine was there to relax, escape reality.

Philips (2011) argues that age plays a role in the self-objectification of women. Arguing that women around the age of twenty are more likely to be influenced by women’s magazines than women who are around the age of twenty-three, twenty-four. There was a very interesting difference signalized. The younger focus group said magazines did not influence them at all when they were younger. But on the other hand, the older focus groups recalled memories of their teenage years when magazines did affect the way they looked at themselves and how they felt they all went through a time of self-objectification. According to Phillips (2011)
women become more aware of the influence of media on their self-esteem after they have reached the age of twenty. This could also be an explanation for the change in attitude of the respondents during these years. A possible explanation for the difference in age could be that the older participants were all born around 1992 and 1993, and therefore were more dependent on women’s magazines than for example the participants from 1996 and 1997, who grew up in a completely digitalized world where fashion bloggers and Instagram took over parts of the role of a magazine.

Concluding that the respondents do not recognize any form of self-objectification, it is still interesting to look at how the informants feel about discrepancy. Because they all said that they used to be influenced by magazines in their teenage years and some still up to today. Does this mean that an influence can be seen and therefore maybe influence their perspective and attitude towards the sexualisation of women?

6.7. Discrepancy

The participants of the focus groups admitted that they see sexual images of women as ‘normal’ for women’s magazines, furthermore they understand the use of it in advertisement. The images are not received as shocking anymore. But does this also mean that the perception and attitude of the respondents is ‘normal’ towards sexualisation of women in magazines? The theory of description goes a step further than self-objectification. Self-objectification is the process where a woman sees her self through the eyes of others. Discrepancy is the process where a woman feels unsatisfied about her own body and compares herself to the images she sees in the media. This creates a negative self-image (Higgins, 1987). No significant difference of discrepancy in age was seen during the focus group.

This is opposite to what Phillips (2011) saw with the respondents from that research. However respondents do show signs of discrepancy.

Informants (3): Even though I am really happy with myself, but sometimes I am like why am I not like this or have less fat when I see these magazines.

Informants (3): You start to compare yourself with them and that is very unrealistic but you can’t stop comparing.

Informants (3): Then I don’t like that one because she has such a good skin and I have problems with my skin and this is just perfect. I know it is photoshopped, but it just so pure and clean and its so unrealistic.
Researcher (3): Can I ask you a question about it? Even though you said it was photoshopped and you know it. Does it make you feel bad about yourself or does it annoy you?

Informant (3): Yes. Because especially when you are a person who has pimples and then you see that. And because this was like an advertisement for skin cream yeah even if I use that one I don’t look like her.

Even though images in magazines are seen as unrealistic, that does not mean the respondents do not compare their bodies, or skin to those of the models in magazines. The fact that the respondents agree with the idea that magazines portray their version of the perfect body onto their readers shows that magazines still have a certain influence on this group, or at least they mirror themselves through the eyes of the magazine, which still shows sign of self-objectification and self-discrepancy.

Informant (2): No, most of the time I read like fashion magazines and than I feel sometimes like o I don’t know am I doing it right you know?

Informants (2): Yes the same

Informant: And that is so weird you know because you can have like your own style but they say you have to do this right now but no if I want to wear the socks like in my jeans I want to do that and if a magazines says you can’t you feel like uh shit

Informant: Shit.

Informant: Do you feel like they influence you in a way?

Informant: Yes.

Informant: Well I don’t care about that at all.

Informant: No you don’t?

Informant: You are more like when you read it

Informant: Well I don’t like fashion anyways it is so much bullshit

Researcher: Do you think it is a shame that all the magazines are all about fashion?

Informant: Yes but that is why I don’t read it.

According to the theory of Richins (1991) women compare their own beauty to that of models in magazines. Looking at the analysis of the focus group the results correspond with Richin’s theory. The respondents in all the focus group agreed that they used to be influenced more by pictures when they were younger especially comparing themselves with models was one of
the main factors of the influence. However, even though they say that they are not influenced by the images anymore, the analysis of their answers still shows that especially when it comes to fashion trends and body ideal, the pictures in magazine do still influence them. One must note that some respondents agree with this more than others do. Still, unlike Philips (2011) says, no clear correlation between age and perception can be constructed with this analysis.
7. Conclusion

The previous sections have already given some conclusions as a result of the analysis of the mood boards and focus groups. During this final section the research question will be answered. Furthermore a short explanation about why and in which way this study contributes to the sexualisation discussion in society will be given.

7.1. Answer to the research questions

1. How is the perception of young women towards the sexualisation of women in women’s magazines?

- Three main topics were signalized during the focus groups: the reality of magazines vs. the reality according to the respondents, gender stereotypes and lastly the influence of magazines on the respondents when it comes to self-discrepancy. The analysis shows that respondents perceive the content in women’s magazines mostly as negative, because they show an unrealistic version of the truth.

- More specifically real-life stories or interviews, as well as pictures in the magazines are seen as negative because they portray women in a stereotyped way, mostly promoting a product to look better or being perceived as a lust object for male pleasure.

2. How is the attitude of young women towards the sexualisation of women in women’s magazines?

- However even though the respondents perceive the content as negative, their attitude towards women’s magazines does not change that much. They have stopped reading magazines a long time ago and do not seem to care much about current content in magazines.

- There were some individual differences seen when it came to attitude. If an informant had difficulties with an aspect of her body, such as skin or legs, the reality the magazine shaped did have an influence on that. This is important to note as the amount of influence from the magazine can have an effect on the way you shape your attitude towards it (Phillips, 2011). This however did not have a clear correlation to
age, as different individuals in different focus groups said it.

- What can be seen as well, and what is also important to notice, is that women who are more interested in fashion-related topics are also easily influenced by the content about fashion and such. It is where your interest lies that influences you, as the Social Learning Theory predicts.

- Also Gerbner’s cultivation theory, in which young people adjust their behaviour and attitude according to the standard as given by the media, did not appear to be applicable onto the respondents and their relationship to magazines. Again an important reason was that they did not read magazines anymore, which was interesting because they are the target group of the magazine.

7.2. Computability
This specific study contributes a good deal of information to the field of both gender and media studies as well as to the current debate in society about sexualisation. First of all, because this study covers a group of respondents that have rarely been taking into account when it came to gender-media related studies, namely women in their early twenties. Second, this study shows how women themselves give meaning to the (sexualized) content in magazines. This study has analysed attitude and perception. This is unlike other studies that wrote about possible effects of media use under young women. As earlier said, related studies often research negative effects that sexualisation of women in media can have on women. However, it was important for this study to look at how women interpreted the content in magazines and how they perceived it, and what their attitude towards it was. As it is proven that media and audience are a two-way-street who both influence each other.

Nevertheless this study also has its limitations. The biggest limitation lies in the fact that this is a small-case study, it consisted out of four focus groups with a number of respondents varying between four and eight in total per group. In total there was a number of 19 respondents. The answers of the small focus groups are not generalizable for a bigger group. However, according to Philips (2011) focus groups in the field of media and communication studies can be conducted with a minimum of 10 respondents in total. Another point to reflect on in the demographic of the focus groups. Even though the first group was selected by age, all groups had a similar background and were very homogenous: European, middle-class and higher educated. Hall (1997) shows that the social environment of the individual is constantly influencing attitudes and perception. And that factors such as social background and social reference play an important part in
the final conclusion on how respondents feel, perceive and what their attitude is towards pictures shown. A more varying range of answers could have possibly be traced had the focus groups been of a more diverse demographic. Last but not least, a notice must be made about the focus groups. All focus groups lasted between an hour and two hours, in that time information for the analysis was gained. There is an immense trust in the respondents that have participated in this research. However, when working with informants a researcher should always be careful not to take statements from face value, but the given answers are the only reliable prove of evidence to answer the research question. This means the attitude and perception over a short-term were analysed. One can never be sure that the answers gained in such small amount of time show us a correct answer of how the perception and attitude of young women towards sexualisation is in general. But it sure is a start for further, deeper and longer research in order to gain more information to add to the sexualisation debate.

7.3. Further research
For further research on a larger scale I would recommend on one hand a quantitative research with surveys. Surveys give you the option to test the validity of the answers given in this study on a larger scale. However, on the other hand focus groups give the researcher the ability to go deeper into a specific matter that comes across during the session, as well as answers given by the respondents. If one has the ability to perform a larger studies based on focus groups in the future a more generalizable answer to the research question could possibly be the outcome. Gauntlett (2008) has suggested that there is a shift in sexualisation in media, meaning that not only women but also men take on a more sexual role in advertisement as well as magazines and television. In further research one could also look at young men and how they feel about how they are being sexualized in media. Or a magazine specifically as that is related to this study. It would be very interesting to compare the results of these studies.
8. Reference list


I think it is recording now. It is always so difficult because when it does not record, I have to transcript all of what you are saying so than it would be a problem. Anyways, welcome to this focus group. Thank you very much for being here. I will tell a little bit more about my thesis and about what we will do here. Like I said I hope you are all okay with the fact that this is being recorded. If you do not want it to be recorded or if you do not want me to put your answers into my thesis, I have my serious face on now (laughing)

Ok, continue

Now this I also have to transcript. I am just going to say what I have here because otherwise I am afraid I will miss things. Yeah, I am currently studying international communication and I am researching the perception and attitude of young women, like yourself, towards the sexualisation of women in women’s magazines. Therefore, what we are going to do today is make a mood board and I will ask some questions before you will make the mood board and after you made the mood board. And then, there are no wrong answers. It is really your opinion that I value, so I would love to have a discussion, so if you do not agree with each other you are aloud to say so if you do agree with each other you are also aloud to say so. I just hope that apart from the serious facts we will just have a lot of fun because that is also what the thesis is about also having fun. I already put down your first name and your age. Lois, are you born 95 or 97? 97, okay than I’ll write that down. And I will just start with a very easy questions. Who of you reads women’s magazines?

Me.

What kind of magazines do you read?

Linda.
Okay, Linda. Oh, put some of the magazines here. But none of you reads women’s magazines?

No.

Do you have a membership? Do you get it every month?

No, my sister has it. So I get all the olds ones.

Nice.

And my grandma.

Yes, what kind of media do you use? Websites? Blogs?

Facebook.

I read some blogs and facebook things. But also I try not to click to much on the Cosmopolitan articles. Makes me really angry.

Why does it make you angry?

Because it is like click bait next level.

Cosmopolitan always has like thirteen reasons why you should date a guy that looks like this or...

Yeah. And they are re-posting the same articles all the time that I already saw.

Or they say, you never believe what Justin Bieber did now. And than he was eating a cookie or something.

Yeah, yeah. (laughing)

They do that.

But they also sometimes have articles where they say thirteen reasons why women always
do this or you have a friend that does things like this. Do they make you angry when they stereotyped women in those, or do you even feel like they stereotype women?

No. I just want to...

My facebook is a bubble, I do not really get things like that.

When I see something like that I do not really feel connected with it. And, not feeling like o maybe I am that or she is.

Sometimes I read it but it is just for fun, just wandering what they are saying.

What they came up with now.

So it is more like you do not take it seriously, you make fun of it?

Yeah.

I am going to say some things and I would like to say ask you all to say the first thing that comes to your mind when I say it. It is called top of mind associations. Maybe you have had this in your communication studies too? Okay, I’m just going to say it. When you think of women’s magazines, what do you think of?

Fashion.

Clothes.

Fashion.

Both.

Make-up, or like lifestyle. Just fashion, make-up, lifestyle.

Make-up. No, I do not know the word in English.
And when you think of women in women’s magazines?

Pretty.

Photoshop.

Same.

An unrealistic kind of pretty? Okay, and when I say the term: sex sells? What do you think?

That is true.

Well, they try but maybe it is not actually true. But they try.

Well, there is actually something that I think will make it work. But I think people see through it more because people will write articles about it. I do not know, because we also had it in school. So maybe because they say it all the time. That is the psychological theory or something that yeah but I see I know it is like that.

And do you think that a naked man on a perfume bottle, like for example David Beckham campaign sells as easy as a women in a perfume add for example?

It depends. If it is perfume for man than I think a women works better. But I do not think a naked women will work.

I think for a man if it is like a masculine man than man want to be like that. So then also a men works.

That is true.

And if they would put on the cover of a magazine? Like do you think women would buy a magazine with a naked women on the cover?

I would not. Like why?

I do not know in which context.
Yeah. Okay last and next term. Role models in magazines.

Role models?

Like examples, people you look up to.

I do not feel that.

No.

No.

Not really, I mean it is funny because I have it the other way around. Like if I follow someone on facebook and they appear on a magazine I can see it. But they do not appear that often.

Yeah. Exactly. So they are not, there are very few. But they are mostly not existend in magazines for you guys.

Not like, one person that is always the role model. Like, if I would read an article it is really interesting and I would like that person than that could be a role model for that article. Not like you are now my role model forever.

Yeah, yeah. Ok, we are going to go to the mood part or mood board part of the focus group. In front of you I think we have two, three different magazines. Denisa, I have the English vogue for you. Because all the other magazines are Dutch. It is also about headlines so what we are going to do it you are just going to take a magazine maybe two magazines and you are going to make, I have the papers here, you are going to make a sort of your own mood board and I would like you to choose pictures you really like. So not for a really clear reason, you do not have to thoroughly explain it. But I would also like you to choose pictures you don't like. Like, I really cannot identity with it or it is an ugly picture in my opinion. Just pictures you have a negative association with. I will give you twenty minutes to do the exercise if you have any questions you are more than welcome to let me know. And you can choose each magazine, whatever you want, make something out of it. And I just want to say that if you choose a magazine and there are no pictures that you like or only pictures that you like than that is okay too.

Can you also use quotes?
You can also use quotes. Yes.

Talking about role models on the cover of a magazine and her it is Emma Watson. What the hell?

Voice of a generation. So...

I love her.

Good, that is a good thing to start with. Even mijn laptop aan de kant doen.

And you can also talk during the exercise, you can also discuss with each other what you find.

I am a bit shocked like the first thirty pages are only adds.

So vogue.

Yes, that is so vogue.

Just what we like?

Just what you like. And also what you do not like.

Lenna, could you give me a cookie?

And if you are ready to make a mood board I can give you one of these or one of these, you still have a lot of choice in colour. And they also have two sides. They are from Flow.

O like Flow!

Yeah but I did not think Flow was a good magazine to research because there are only like cartoons in it.

Ik heb hier ook scharen als je wilt.

Ik vind dit toch wat makkelijker. Ik kan niet goed met scharen overweg.
I was always so jealous at the kids in kindergarten that could cut well. Because I was always like a kid that could never cut well.

I think, not is not true, when I am left, cause you need the other scissors when you are left-handed, right?

Is that true?

I do not know. I thought it was bullshit. Another pen, because I was left.

Another pen?

Yeah but I mean like why would you have another pen for that?

Yeah I got like another special pen because I was left handed. I thought it was kind of cool but now I think why?

Holy shit.

Is it bad that as a future advertiser I start to be discussed with adds?

I think it is aggressive.

Do you think that as a photoshoot that they are nicer than the adds in the magazine? That the photoshoots and interviews are nicer than the photoshoots?

Some of them of the photoshoots are fucking like nobody normal person that is not handicapped would sit like that. I do not understand why like this yeah it is okay and she is also fully clothed which is a miracle. But there are others and what the fuck is this?

I think it is cool.

Like weird but cool.

But she is like I don’t like that she is like so hunched maybe I am...

But you just said you really like Emma Watson, who is on the cover of that magazine.
Yeah and there is nothing about Emma Watson in the magazine. This thingy like Emma Watson is on the cover and this is what she wears. I could not find anything about what she did as a person but then there is this. Coverlook, which goes to about onethousand roughly threehundred pounds for her look.

But isn’t the interview in the end of the magazine?

I don’t know. I’m still having a look. It is a big magazine.

You can just put in on the ground if you want too. Do you enjoy making moodboards? Did you like the exercise? Do you sometimes do it yourself?

No.

No.

No. I didn’t find the motivation.

Yes, I needed to do it a lot when I was doing my fashion management study.

O, you studies fashion management? Okay. To get like ideas and such.

Yeah.

I like pinterest.

Yeah me too.

And sometimes for videoproduction as well, before you want to a video you have to think like what kind of atmosphere you want to bring out so.

Yeah.

O girl did you see the groups for intervention?

Did you see Nanne?
Oh god.

But she is with...

She is with Neele.

That’s a thing.

It’s just that she doesn’t want it. Before the groups were posted she said that if she was in a group she asked the teacher to change.

Yes she did. But he couldn’t change anything anymore.

Are you serious?

That sucks.

I am so happy I am with Remo and Lukas, the guy from my radio class.

Not French.

French Lukas?

I am with a Swedish-German Lukas. How can you fit all on that? How will you fit on all on that?

Well I just do.

That is the part you like right?

I think I’m not going to glue it because of the time.

Let me get this straight, is this an add magazine? Or I’m confused now because I...

Yeah but Vogue is really about the advertorials and not about stories. Not that much. It is all about pictures.
Because

It is more about photoshoot.

Looking back to make sure her identity and here you have it dress that is...
Five thousands.

It is all about how you perceive a magazine or what your attitude is towards it.

Is that your mood board?

Am I going to stick it down? Because...

Yes, I am going to take a picture of it. And you can also take the mood board...

I think it is fine like this.

You can still glue it, because Denisa is still working on hers. And Jaimy you also have time. Pritt, I don’t know if it is still working.

Should we first take a picture?

O yes, that is smart.

Put on... Can you put on oe a hele natten?

No I can’t, because I just found that if I put it on it won’t record anymore. So,

Is it still recording now?

Yes, because I am going to ask you some questions in a minute. So watch out what you are saying because the gossip just got it but...
Klootviool. Ja Neele.

No, I don’t think she is in the thesis.
No, and I also don’t think I would say o look what I recorded the other day.

Well, you never know with you.

Yes now that I finally have friends Lenna.

O she has three friends.

O I have something so nice for our motherday. Like yeah I didn’t want to anything, next Sunday, you really have to see this.

Normally I don’t do anything. My mom has kind of chips thing.

Denisa, you can also stop with the magazine because you have the double amount of what everyone has. So it is okay if you can’t finnish the magazine.

I was about the stop anyways.

O good, yeah because I was just thinking the vogue that you have is as much as everyone has.

No I don’t have much. I try too.

But I always buy that for her. Just two bags of chips. And it is so crunchy.

O cute. Tebbie.

Nice.

Beetje pritt eronder.

How can they judge you when there is like Dutch things it in it?

Well I mean it is a mood board that you make so they cannot judge you whenever. But it is more the idea because apart from the quotes there is still a lot of pictures and the good thing is that I have the Dutch vogue here but I also have the English vogue. So it is about the same magazine you are about to research.
And you can translate it right?

Yeah exactly.

And I will explain everything in my master thesis. So yeah.

When is the deadline going to be?

In three weeks. So a lot of analysing.

I think I will be sick of the textile lyme.

Yeah I got it on my hand.

Yeah, I think it like. Yeah and at some point I have to glue patches because I was lazy. And I have to keep my window open. To strong.

This is such a..

Are you going to Sockertoppen Lois?

Yeah I want too.

We are behind with our ping pong training.

Well I did, well Scott is really good. So I did like serious games with him. Well I lost all of them. But it is a good training.

Is he really good? Is he better than Phillip?

Phillip USA?

Yes he is always doing better than Scott.

And I look sometimes I try with Phillip.

Sometimes I win and that is...
Is Nanne also in the other group?

Yes. Yeah she was suppose to be here but she said she couldn’t make it. So I said because this group is quite large she could also be in the other group.

We went to the ICA Maxi. And it was really Maxi.

Yeah?

I loved Ica maxi.

Very smart.

Maybe I want to go tomorrow as well. Since I don’t have class tomorrow.

Yes they have like soup uit de zak zeg maar and I never saw that at Willys. Like the unox zakken.

Mushroom and broccoli coup. And like small... noodles they have instant noodles for two euros.

Can you get a water boiler of there? Where are we going to stay?

In different things.

But one night in the bus. That is the way back right?

Yes, but the way back is fine. Then you are tired of all the...

Ella could I also get some cola?

Yes there is still a little bit of cola left.

Yes that is fine.

I will give you a glass.
Okay, can we start discussing the mood boards?

Of course.

I am done I guess.

Just finished the magazine.

Great. Ok. Yes the last twenty minutes you scrolled through magazines could each and everyone tell a little bit about your moodboards about which pictures you like and which pictures you do not like and why you selected them. Does anyone wanna start?

I will start.

So this is my moodboard. Ok. So something I just selected because I thought it was funny like this one. And it was with this article about like famous Dutch people that are so rich that they pay everything for their parents and their parents work for them as accounting uh but most of the things I choose because I like the pictures because the things in the articles and subjects do not really inspire me. It is more about the pictures are nice so that is why I choose that picture and the picture of Douwe Bob with the tattoo free on his ankle.

O.

And I also really like that picture really nice, this one is little I did not like because I was like live more intense. I like that. But then it was about we approve of the signs of skin aging.

And then I was like: o. never mind.

So it is suppose to be a really deep quote and than it is all about apparenace looks?

Yes. And I think this was most I don’t know I do not like to read all the women’s stuff. I feel to young for it or something. So this I didn’t like. But this sort of reflects what I don’t like about the magazine and the rest of it.
Yes of course.

Jaimy do you want to represent yours? Because I will ask some more questions after everyone represents theirs.

Yes, well I have a lot of quotes but also some pictures and the pictures of women I choose were because in my opinion they are very natural. And I see some happiness in them, not fake. And that is what I like. A bit art. Wine. Explore. That is what I want. Smeerkaas, like cheese. Creamcheese. Cheese. Power quotes. You are so beautiful. You are your own boss. And you can do it. That is a little bit my life. Because power yourself. Then maybe some heavy things. This one is quote from someone she thinks it is strange that you have to say something about yourself when you don’t have a boyfriend. It is not accepted when you are just on your own. And I think it is good that she says it. Like why do we have to live the life that people expect from us? I would never become a mother. Because I think I don’t want to have kids right now when I take a look in the future. But also people have to say something about that.

Do you think that the idea that magazines think you should have a boyfriend, have a family or become a mom? Do you think that is an idea that a lot of magazines support? That when you open a magazine that that is the life they sort of think you should lead?

No, I don’t think so. This was just the major topic of this this one. This number. So this is the reason that this is a bit of my flow. But I can understand it. But normally it is only going about fashion. Like a very difficult than Lenna’s because she has another topic. So I think it is fitting.

So it is nice that you read topics that are a little bit more out of the box?

Yes. Stories with true feeling in it. So yes.

Nice, good. Denisa, the Vogue.

So let’s see. This is easier. This I like. And I don’t know they just seem happy or something, singing. And this is also like this was random there I think it was a cover of a magazine and it is just written. These two seems like pretty natural like not heavy make-up or anything and this is Emma Watson and what I like is that they the article also talked about her struggles
with her love life. Yeah that is important. But they also talk about pictures from a lot of her other moments. So she was with the..

United Nations? You mean the top one?

No she had the photoshoot in their like extravagant. But they also took pictures like these. And this, I didn’t really like this it is just like..

What the fuck?

Yes, like what the fuck? I am not even sure what is being promoted here. And they seem so fucking sad like they have no facial expression. She is also super heavy make-up and she seems very sad. This is maybe the thing that the magazine does but it is everywhere so it is just generable dislike they put the prices and everything so it is way to commercial and this I did not like as far as the article because they describe Emma Watson and blablabla UN ambassador whos internet fan number is more than forty five million and brackets but however unlike a Kardashian she has never posted a bikini selfie of herself or something like what the fuck is this? So no, I do not like this I do not like Kardashian but you do not slutshame.

Yes, as if it is almost an exception.

This is total dislike and what the fuck.

Lois, yours.

Well I made two sides this is the one I don’t like and this I like. I think there is one overall thing that I like and what you can see everyone I think it the black and white. And it is more like natural and more like spontaneous pictures I guess unlike this kind of things she is pretty naked and it is more like sexy and I don’t know this is posed and with the flowers even thought I like the pictures with the flowers, but this is more like every girl needs to look like. The same with this on the catwalk they are always so angry and sad.

It is what I see with overall when I look at all your moodboards is that you like it natural. When it is natural and spontaneous and not when it is like this is the perfect example of a picture where there is like to much make up and yes
No one is going to wear that.

What do you think of each others mood boards? Are there things that you do not uh.. No just a question what do you think of each others mood boards?

I understand them.

I think overall we did almost the same thing.

Yes that is what I can see too. It is very interesting to see because especially when I see the black and white side and the spontaneous side and the enjoying life I see that with everyone I see what you enjoy that more than the selling skin improvements products by using a deep quote. Yes, what do these magazines do to you when you read a magazine? Like do you feel an emotion? Like happiness or sadness? Or maybe inspired even?

Is this real life really?

I feel like they are really flat like not really inspiring.

Not really inspiring. The topics are like so yeah...

It is like wining. And some stories are really interesting. But I am not really into that so that is also something personal opinion. But I don’t know.

I think different. I know the vogue. I didn’t read it now, but normally I don’t like it because it is only selling and products like twohundred euros I am not going to buy that ever. But I really like Linda and like they give a voice to people from another way. You can say something, you can say something.

Yes people with normal life.

That is true.

And sometimes the facts, the facts are really interesting. I think that there is a lot of power with it.

So that is what I like about it. This one.
Do you feel different about yourself? And you see pictures like this one here?

No.

No.

Not about myself. I feel more like what the fuck why would you even take a picture like that? Like this one why would you stand in your bra and take a picture like that? If I would do a photoshoot I would more be like fun post it everywhere. But this I won’t put this as my facebook profile picture on facebook.

I just don’t I don’t know. I don’t resonate. And I struggle with it through half of the pictures to figure out who the fuck would wear this.

What I like about Linda they also have the pictures like the Versace photoshoot but I think most of the people know they are really photoshop pictures like the one at America’s Next Top Model.

But he also has a lot of pictures of natural woman and the balance is that right that they also have a lot of pictures of natural woman, Of normal people that helps with the cue against photoshop pictures.

And I think with the Linda what you are saying as well. But the pictures like this the photoshop pictures are most of the time advertisement and the pictures like this are more pictures that they took themselves for articles and I think in the Linda the Vogue has emma Watson and they talk a little bit about her but not in a deep way in the Linda that when they have a famous person it always tries to look like what happened in life that is really not good or really good so they go deep into their lives.

Exactly.

So that is why I like Linda.

Interesting.
I really like Emma Watson like they also go on a really flat level in that interview. I think she has so much more to tell.

But you mean with flat that there is a whole photoshoot planned around her character, or?

Yeah, I know that she a lot of interesting interviews and I also know that Vogue is not the place for that kind of interviews. But that is why I don’t like to read..

It is also like what you read in the vogue and what Emma Watson you can find everywhere on the internet.

Maybe the intention of vogue is also really different than Linda.

But I really think that Vogue you can count the real articles on your fingers it is more like eighty per cent advertising.

Yes. Do you think, because when I hear what you are saying, you also think that women are not in vogue for example, women are presented in a very unrealistic way where compared to Linda it is more about reality right?
It is more about reality. I know you had the vogue so you could not really look into it, but when you see things like this for example, do you think that women are also more projected in a realistic way in Linda than they are in vogue? Pure looking at beauty and photoshop.

Yes but I think it is more like about that and I think in Vogue it is more about the products and clothes and fashion so it makes sense so the function is totally different and I think Linda wants to show women like that. That they are a person and not like women that wears the clothes.

Have you been influenced by magazines in the past? That when you think different about yourself?

No not that I can remember.

Or internet websites like cosmopolitan or elle?

When I read ten things you might do to annoy men so yes...
Most of the things can’t look like true. Like is this really high fashion? Like is this like a personal article? It can effect me more because it is not that far away. In Women’s magazines the topics are mostly the same.

What I see here is that you perceive that you perceive them in a very own way at least or at least you have the same idea that when you see a picture you automatically think o yeah it is photoshopped but when you read an article or when you scrolled through vogue you started to take it less and less serious.

It is just I know I wouldn’t never but anything of that but it is all about money and that.

Yes, when you perceive like a magazine like vogue like in an unrealistic way does your attitude towards the magazine change too?

Not, most likely. I am not there target group. I don’t like, but someone likes it because they buy it. But another target group. If I don’t like it that doesn’t mean I can’t respect it.

It is kind of interesting because for vogue and linda you are the target group. Because you are women between the age of 19 and 50. I mean it can also depend on special interest ofcourse and then you are interested in fashion, but vogue also identifies itself as a magazine that has like high-end photoshoots and really good articles and than I hear you and that is not like...

What the hell strong articles?

Yes that is how they identify themselves.

No I thought it is more like very yeah very general target group. Yeah but you really have to make it very customized and then I think I am not in that specific target group because my interest are not the same.

Good. I am actually done with all the questions I had for you. Do you still have questions for me? Or things that you want to say about your mood board or the last hour?

No.

Only that I like it.
It was fun

I will tell you more about the result of the studies after I’ve done all the other focus groups.

But for now I just really want to thank you because your answers have been so interesting as a researcher to see that the mood boards that the mood boards all have the same sort of view in a way. I am really curious to see if that happens with the other focus groups too.

No, yeah I had a test focus groups with my friends back in the Netherlands. But of course that was in Dutch. So it is different, but they all studied media studies. So I mean you all study at HLK, but you all have a different background. When you have studied about magazines than you have more knowledge about it then the average reader.

It messes with your research in a way. Like I did a research for advertisers. And they were all talking scientific in a way.

Yes, because you are my informants now. You are not my neighbours.

But that is also because I had also...
Yes, Noelle, could you tell me how old you are?

Yes, I am 19.

Yes. I will write it down. So you are born in 97? You are turning 20 in this year?

You're 20? No, 20 n a few months.

24.

24.

I am 20.

21 this year?

Yes.

So you are born 96. And then the question is: who of you reads magazines? It could also mean you read magazines on a beach when you are on holiday.

Yes, I do.

And do you read women’s magazines like Elle, Cosmopolitan, Vogue?

Yes.

Yes. Okay. It is kind of interesting that the French girls read it. Do you read it?

No really no.

Yes, but I read it just like yeah for example in the summer or when I have to wait in the train or something like that.
Which magazines do you read then?

Something like this. Or in French like Grazia

Different magazines.

Something like the same.

Grazia we have too.

But you don’t read women’s magazines?

No I don’t do that.

Is there a special reason? Did you?

No I just like reading books better

Was there ever a point when you read women’s magazines or were you never?

Yes, I did. Like sometimes when my stepsisters had them and they read them and I was like okay I read them. But I wouldn’t buy them myself

It is superinteresting because I see in a lot of focus groups that young women who used to read these magazines when they were like seventeen eighteen and out of a sudden most of them stopped because they all realized it was photoshopped and that was the reason for them to stop reading them.

Valerie, you don’t read?

No for me these are to expensive. So I don’t read. Just like German magazines which are all like

But you do read a lot online?

Yes.
Is that the same for you girls do you read a lot of Cosmopolitan online or elle online?

No.

No.

I like to have something in my hands.

Yes me too. I think it is different.

Yes. It is.

And a lot of this in magazine, you can call this clickbait but how can I say this when you read cosmopolitan online it is like a supershort article and here it is more like an hour of time goes into it. Okay, we are going do to some top of mind associations and you can say the first things that comes into your mind, even if its you say like something that does not have anything to do with it. Altough I might ask further in that case.

When you think of women’s magazines what do you think of?

Skinny models.

Fashion.

Bikinis.

Valerie, do you?

Yes, same thing. Really skinny.

Next question has to do with it. Women in women’s magazines.

Skinny.

Perfect.

Yes.
Almost unrealistic perfect?

And when you think of the term sex sells?

I don’t think its I mean if they make advertisments for bikinis ofcourse you have a bikini and if it is a perfume but I don’t have the feeling they sell themselves.

Yes. But do you think the concept of sex like for example here on the cover of Elle you see like a person holding a pen like I would never do a presentation like this.

Yes, a bit.

Do you think sex sells easier, like do you think sex would also sell easier in women’s magazines? Like if we have a topless model on the cover of Elle do you think that would attract women or men?

I don’t know.

If it nicely done. Maybe. If she is completely naked, but if she has a transparent dress.

And what do you think of role models? Are they existend?

No, I don’t think so. I think when they say there are really not representative of what we are, so I don’t think it is a good role model for a young women.

Do you think, because in the beginning you said skinny, do you think that women in women’s magazines are objectified that it is all about their body and not what they achieve or what they are trying to do?

Yes I think so. It is not only like the skinny problem, but also no imperfection. There are no scars, no spots, no stretch marks anything they have really nothing they are really perfect

Do you think with that knowledge o you know it is photo shopped and it is not real life they don’t look like your average neighbour here in raslatt, does your attitude towards magazines change?
Yes.

Yes, because I stopped reading. When I was eighteen I collected a lot of magazines but then I just stopped because it was such bullshit. The content is not real. Even in this model says I don’t want to be over reduced on my look than they are still super skinny.

Exactly. Yes, okay we are going to go over to the mood board exercise. Like I explained it a little bit before and you can just grab magazines you like and choose pictures you like and you don’t like. I would say it takes about 20 minutes, I would say that most of the respondents here like it so much that it takes about half an hour and I think once you get a magazine in your hand you scroll through it and you can also exchange the magazines I would say if you are like a quote kind of person than here is the English vogue. Emma Watson was on the cover but I think a lot of people liked Emma Watson so she is not on the cover anymore. She is in here so if you like Emma Watson take her out. Take your time, I will just be here if you have any questions, let me know. And Mathilde, Noelle, you don’t have a paper but you can just wrap this off and put it on here.

Done?

Yes.

I think everyone else is almost done too. By the way, the mood board does not have to be pretty no.

I really want to red one. It is such nice weather and now this.

When will you go back?

To the Netherlands?

Yes. On the 9th of June. Because I have trainingsweekend for my summer job that week so I have to be back.

When will you be going back?

21st. But I am going back with a friend from Austria by car.
Yes, exactly. Well wow that is a long way when you go all the way.

We are going to Hamburg and then take the car train. That’s okay.


Yes, three more weeks.

And Noelle when will you go?

The 13th. So you are still here for midsommar?

No midsommar is in July.

I thought it was in the third week of June.

It is in the 24th.

You can still do it with international students.

Yes, I have to leave my room on the 17th so I was like oh no fuck my life.

You can still stay with someone.

Yes I can still stay with someone but I did not know that when I booked the ticket, so I was like: oh this room is free.

Yeah I have it too with my internship in Palestine. They invited me to celebrate Christmas with them in Bethlehem because I will be living with the family that I am doing my internship with so of course so cool because Bethlehem is where the Christmas tale takes place my internship officially ends the first week of December so I asked my teacher today because this is a once in a lifetime opportunity so I could do the course on a distance but...

Then he said no.

But everyone had to attend the lectures.
It starts the 7th of December.

In Jönköping?

Yes. My internship is also a five week course so only five weeks. But because I don’t know it is OK too in my opinion it is a once in a lifetime opportunity and not to attend lectures but do the assignments.

Yes, when will you be back in Jonkoping? I will be back in January. But now we are going to discuss the mood boards. So what I would like you to do is each explain or present your mood board and say why you have chosen the pictures you like and why you have chosen the pictures you don’t like.

The pictures I like are these ones the left. I like them because I never like fashion in magazines it is too expensive and not real. But I like Keira Knightley so she is on mine as well, she also has a really pretty face because I like it when one is different and not like normal. He was the only guy in the vogue magazine. I think he is pretty cool. I think she had a cool style so same goes for her because yeah. I really dislike her because she is on every advertisement.

Who is she?

Gigi Hadid.

Yeah, I just get really bored. And I always see like these pictures because they look superskinny and yeah wear nothing over her and a bit of I don’t like it. I don’t think this advertisements I don’t like it is fur and just the wrong message.

What I see is that you like real people, like more realistic.

Yes. Yeah. And what they are wearing.

Very clear. You can also interact with each other, if there are questions you want to ask about each others mood boards.

Mathilde, would you like to present yours?
Yes. I don’t have as much as you but I was more focussed on face. So this is what I don’t like, I don’t like this one because of the outfit the bag too and her face. And it’s the same for her. I really don’t like the necklace the mix of lipstick the make-up and they look like really angry and I don’t know I don’t want to buy what they are wearing. So I don’t like it. And this is what I like. So this is really my favourite and it isn’t here to say something but it is really her face, her laugh it is really sponteanous. Same I think she is really pretty and the dress too but I cut it. It was really matchy. And I like the colour. And I love nailpolish.

Can I ask you a question about this one because a lot of people choose darker skin people because it represents racial diversity in a magazine is that also why you choose it?

Yes. Maybe. Because I think black people are always happy.

Smiling.

Yes.

Always smiling.

So maybe because of that.

Chloé?

Yes. I, well, contrary, I love that girl many advertising she can really dress I love that girl. Anyways, after that, I love the shoes. I love the shoes. Even that girl with the shoes and the dress. I focuss more on the accesoiry I don’t like the shoes, this watch and I don’t like this shoes and I don’t like.

It is also more unrealistic trends. Like how am I going to wear that to school?

And I don’t like this picture because we saw a perfect girl with hot dogs so it doesn’t really make sense and some accoesiry I don’t like. I don’t like this picture. No I don’t like this picture. I don’t know the message of that picture.

It reminds me a bit of the before and after picture you have on instagram.

Yes but it is weird because it is like the other way around.
Normally you would have like the other way around

That’s true

It makes you a lot more happier because than you think I don’t have to watch my diet. Okay, Noelle, yours.

Okay this is the dislike side this is the like side. I picked this because I did not know who would like to wear this one. This I picked because of the teeth gap, suddenly everyone has a teeth gap and I would be like what the fuck why would you like to have that everyone is like I want to have braces because I want pretty teeth and now everyone I just don’t get it. Same goes for this I just don’t get why someone would wear that I don’t know. I like this because they all look happy I just like them I just like the colours. I picked this because I like cameras and it is nice because I like black and white in a magazine. And this I just yeah it looked nice.

I see the quote that you have here I realized I was more looking at faces than at fashion. What do you like about that quote?

Well I don’t know what she meant with it because I did not read anything but I saw it as she looks at the faces and not about what the people are wearing. So that is what I like because normally you don’t look at the person but what they are wearing when you look at fashion things and what I like is that she looks at the person and she says like o I like to look at their faces and not only at the clothes, that is how I interpreted it.

What I see overall what your mood boards and what is interesting to see because I see it in the other focus groups too is that the likeable site is more like the real world that like the more pictures are real and sponteanous the more young women tend to like them. Which is actually the opposite of what vogue is. So that is interesting. But just a question, do you feel different about yourself does it influence you?

No.

Not anymore.

No, not anymore. But maybe when I was younger. But no not anymore. It's all fake.
There was one girl in the other group and I think what she said was really interesting. She said magazines think we, we as young women, they think we are stupid. They don’t take us seriously, they think we are only interested in beauty and fashion.

Yes, really true.

Do you agree with that?

Yes.

Yes.

You feel like, because you are the target group of vogue and of elle, but you do not do you feel represented?

No.

No. But there must be people really liking it because they produce it and put these pictures in the magazine.

Yes, people still buy it. So maybe not everyone agrees with us.

Could it also be like when we were little you use to read fairytales and even though you knew deep down in your heart that they were not real you still kept reading them do you think that magazines are like the modern fairytale you want to escape to a dream world?

Could be. But I don’t feel that way.

Yes the same.

Would you like to be more inspired by real things and real women when you read a magazine?

Yes. I would like that better.

More people.
Often I try to read it again. But it all looks the same and like ten pages of these fashion things it is like things I would not wear in school of whatsoever so would be able to buy it?

No one. I am not sure if vogue if we are there target group or older people.

Yeah, Vogue has a target group between the age of 20 and 50. Of women all ages.

I’m just going to ask this last question. Because we talked about it before a lot and I think I have an idea of what you feel.

Do you think women are being portrayed in a fair and honest way in magazines?

No, I don’t think so.

No.

And if, they are like super off. Like to be mean, like a fat women to show that

Very extreme.

Yes I said that yesterday in a focus group there is no size 42 or 44, the average size women in a magazine.

You have these models that say I don’t want to stand only for my body but also for who I am because I went to uni.

And there is the big difference. Yeah and there it goes because women’s magazines eitherway represent a size 2 or 4 or obese. There is no like..

You have to super slim or fat, but there is no middle.

Great, that was the focus group. I am going to keep the mood boards to analyse. I really want to thank you for participating I hope you enjoyed it a bit.

Yes, it was really nice.

Thank you, thank you. Now the real work begins because now I have to analyse it.
Focus group 2  
Margaux, Nanne, Sara, Marta, Karen, Lisa, Else

Ok. Here we go. I’m sorry that I do not put music on, but when it put music on it does not record.

Yeah, make sense.

As you all know I am studying international communication and right now I am studying what the attitude and perception of young women is towards women’s magazines and therefore I thought it would be a nice idea to let you make a mood board of pictures that you like for yourself and of pictures that you do not like and that could be everything it could be pictures that you think are pretty it could be pictures that you think are ugly but it could also be pictures that you I don’t really see how a naked women can sell a perfume add or how it confuses me. There could also be pictures where you think I feel bad about myself when I see that picture or happy about myself when I see that picture. So what I would like you to do I’m going to ask some questions first but what I would like you do to is make a mood board and on one side of the moodboard you put the picture that you don’t like and one side of the pictures that you look and we are going to discuss it. I am going to ask some questions about it but first I would like to ask you the question who of you reads women’s magazines?

Only on holidays.

Yeah

Only on holidays

In a plane. Or at the hairdresser.

Yes.

But it’s one year ago.

But then it’s one article. But not the whole magazine.

I think because the previous focus group said that they read a lot of online articles..
Yeah

A lot of online articles, a lot of in their facebook timeline. I see everyone nodding so I guess that is the same with you.

Yes.

What kind of online magazines, or magazines do you read? Like what you see in your facebook timeline? Like Elle or Vogue or...

Sometimes cosmopolitan. And I really don’t like those ones.

And Ensemble. But that is only online.

Flair.

Flair is quite big in Belgium isn't it? In the Netherlands it is not that big anymore.

It has moved to Belgium

O, okay. Okay. Well interesting I am just going to say some I have to put my laptop here so that I am reminded of some things. We are going to do some top of mind associations I am going to say some words or some sentences and I would like you to say the first thing that comes into your mind. Is that clear for everyone?

Yes.

When I say women’s magazines what do you think?

Fashion.

Make-up.

Make-up beauty.

And when I say women in women’s magazines?
Yeah, how do you say it lifestyle. Like real-life stories

But a bit fake

Very fake actually

I don’t know. But maybe it is different in Sweden because when I read women’s magazines you can succeed in being a woman. Role models.

Are there a lot of role models in Swedish magazines?

I think so. Yeah. Depending on the ones I read they are very eager to lift up show of women that actually succeed within a different type of I don’t know within their work and careers. So I would say so actually.

Is it like in vogue and elle you see a lot of models, actresses, it-girls people that you don’t why they even got famous. Is that in Sweden more like politicans, teacher, people who work in public service?

I think it depends on which kind of news uh women’s magazine you are reading. Because I actually haven’t read Elle or Vogue or anything like that I am not interested in. But we have but maybe the one I am reading is väckor de vi, you can read it actually, it is online too. And they are very like they are they used to have this more about being very focused on the stereotype of woman like being sexy and being good looking and have a good life and that kind of stuff. But now it is more like embracing women like to have the guts to be themselves. Life the dream life. It is focussing a lot on I think it is a magazine that actually gives to younger females. Because I think that women between the age of like fifteen to twenty and there is a lot about giving them confidence to be strong and independent to be proud of themselves so I would say so.

Yes. Do you also think that in Spanish or French and Belgian magazines there is a sort of role model thing going on?

No.

No.
No. Very different.

But I think in the The Netherlands it is more like Linda I think she is quite a role model, I read this already and I’m like this magazine is not really representing whatever she is normally posing, I mean this is not.

Linda is one of the most famous tv presenters in Holland.

Yes she is like the thing is she is plus-size she is merely quite a role model but when I read the covers here I am like not really

But sometimes Linda they want to talk about taboos and that kind of things so I think that is good but yeah it depens

But just looking at my first yeah first point of view or how to say it

Impression?

Yeah like the commercial picture of it they are showing of it is very like giving women confidence but at the same time they are showing of with a commercial that really stereotypes the women.

Yes. Flawless and that kind of stuff.

We can look into that more. Next question. What do you think of the term sex sells?

Maybe for men? No but to be honest I am not going to buy something if there is a naked woman.

If Linda would be naked on the cover of the magazine, you wouldn’t be interested?

No no, yeah yeah. But if for example David Beckham for his perfume campaign, he was nude on the advertisement, does that make you more attracted to the perfume or to david beckham?

No.
No, not really now.

Just look at him and I’m like, no won’t buy it.

It is not for me, so.

Okay, interesting. So what we are now going to do is we are going to make the mood board, so like I just explained the exercise. Just scroll if you don’t want to have one magazine, you can also exchange the magazines of course. You can talk, you can chat, talk about everyday life. I have some very interesting gossip on the other tape, no no no, but there are papers where you can put the tapes on, there is glue here. You will get about twenty, twenty-five minutes so I will just really scroll through the magazines. Just look at pictures but if there are really interesting headlines you can also take them out. Really stay close to you. Yeah you can choose the side. Really stay close to yourself, but what you like in life and what you don’t like in life.

How many pictures?

It doesn’t matter. If you, also if there are if you find only pictures that you like or that you dislike that is okay too. As long as you can motivate it too me. If there are any questions just let me know.

This one is good.

Here you go.

I like that.

(indistinct chatter)

You make a mood board out of things that you like and dislike.

But it can be every picture?

Yes it be can be every picture.

But even if is advertisement?
She looks like a Barbie

Advertisement in magazines you can also choose because it is part of a magazine.

I had exactly the same with this. I thought it is a nice person. But then you know the person.

And then you don’t know if you like it or not.

Yes it’s like...

You mean Monica Geuze?

Yes it's like guilty pleasure thing. Not that I no

She just wrote a book.

It was from people from broken families because she wanted to show that if you come from a broken family you can still make a career and do what you like. Very interesting

mmm...

but everyone is writing a book all the young people are writing books now so it is a bit like... mmmm

about your life

yeah exactly

but it gets young people reading that’s a good thing

yes that is true

Hey so cute

I think I have the same one
O here I think I have the same on as well

This one is good

Otherwise

Heavy topics sometimes.

Yeah pregnant and such

But sometimes I think the picture is okay and than I look at the topic and

I can cry from this

About miscarriages?

Yeah. That is really weird.

The lady did a photoshoot about the baby clothes she got for her unborn babies and what name and all that is what I found so shocking.

Just a quick question as a follow-up from one of the beginning questions because you all said you think women’s magazines are about beauty and fashion but if they weren’t about beauty and fashion do you still think you would read it?

Say it again.

Depends on the magazine.

Would you feel would you be more likely to buy a magazine if for example like for example the example that Sara gave with women are being represented in a fair, honest and inspiring way?

I think so.

Depending on the people in there. I think we have a lot of people in the magazines that would want to buy it. There I don’t know feminist.
Yeah because I was so shocked that for example the Opzij a magazine that shows women in a very real way that it has become superthin because they have really difficulties getting it together.

Yeah.

I was with my mom in de Opzij last year.

Really?

Mother-daughter interview

Really?

O that is so nice.

I have it on my computer I think.

Have you ever noticed that scrolling through these magazines you never find a person with dark skin actually?

Yeah that is what I just found in the elle

A person with what?

It said not a green spot and lot of Nigerians

Only like

There are not that many blond people in the Netherlands

If you ask the first French person above Belgium everyone is blond

If you ask for the typical Dutch person everyone is blonde.

You know who looks really Dutch but isn’t, patt the guy from Australia
Yeah

Thinks he looks so Dutch

We also had a German guy

Hey my levi’s

(indistinct chatter)

So she wanted to translate a word to me, but I kind of understand so I wanted to walk away but my t-shirt was stuck in the curtain

But everyone has it anyways.

O thank you.

Do you like the exercise of making mood boards?

Yes but it is kind of hard

Because you cannot find nice pictures?

No sometimes I think it is nice but because I like all the pictures it sounds so oppervlakkig how do you say it ...

Superficial?

Yes superficial.

Do you think magazines are superficial?

Most of them are yes

Yes
I found someone

You did?

Yes that’s cool.

She is a news presentator from the NOS

O is she?

Yes she does the morning news

Never seen that

I only know Dieuwertje Blok, from the sinterklaas journal

Then you know the most beloved and hated women on the whole Dutch television.

Yeah during the black pete discussion she got death treats.

Really? O I did not know.

That’s cool. What is it about?

About chicken breast.

About men talking about torso like about men talking like men and having a sixpack.

O, okay.

Is there some other magazine?

Yes on the floor.

O, yeah here is the Elle and the Vogue.
It is a nice way of portraying it. Does anyone else? I think I am going to start my mood board. Do you have a scissor or any glue?

Yes I think scissors are on the table and I think I have one here still.

I don’t know.

I think so.

Like they say in all the magazines.

Oh, intimate questions.

Interested in that?

You don’t have to read it.

What I like about it is that they show all people in different ages.

Yes.

But when you look at the advertorials, none, completely.

Do you feel different about yourself when you read a magazines?

Yes.

Yeah?

Yes sometimes. If I read a magazine than I feel different about myself. If you read a good article or how?

No, most of the time I read like fashion magazines and than I feel sometimes like o I don’t know am I doing it right you know?

Yes the same
And that is so weird you know because you can have like your own style but they say you have to do this right now but no if I want to wear the socks like in my jeans I want to do that and if a magazines says you can’t you feel like uh shit

Shit.

Do you feel like they influence you in a way?

Yes.

Well I don’t care about that at all.

No you don’t?

You are more like when you read it

Well I don’t like fashion anyways it is so much boolshit

Do you think it is a shame that all the magazines are all about fashion?

Yes but that is why I don’t read it.

Finland. O Lapland.

Do I really wanna?

Do it.

You can decide later

O shit.

If you girls wanna have cookies and such they are like

Somewhere

What do you think of this?
Aah I don’t know, if you wanna choose it

What is it?

It’s man in women’s clothes.

It is really interesting to see because some of you are picking the exact same things photoshoots and advertisements as the previous group?

O really?

Yes really very interesting to see. Which is not bad.

This is the clothes like or this is fashion right now.

There was someone in the past group that said that she feels mistreated by magazines that they think that like she is the target group but they write to her as if she is more stupid than she is. Do you guys agree with that?

I think like always with like the cosmopolitan articles online they like it is so stupid what they write I it is really annoying

They make the titles clickable,

Yeah like click-bait

But sometimes it feels like written for a 14 year olds or something

Because that is so interesting because the magazines that are here also cosmopolitan on the table we are their target group

Yeah

What are you reading?

Yeah it is weird sometimes
Want the Swedish one?

I think their like the magazines from the Netherlands are more like: we say it. And the magazines from Belgian are more like: ok, it is still a taboo be careful with it and here I read orale sex Is buitengewoon prettig You never see that in Belgium. But is is. Maybe in Flair sometimes.

Yes because that is because they work together with the Netherlands.

But never in ...

But when I read an interview in Linda no matter what kind of interview it is I always hate the person in the end. Because it is so like short quote and there is no deeper meaning behind it more like oral sex is really amusing.

But that is the whole point of interest in the Linda that is sometimes really good people but just shitty questions it is like OK

Does reading a magazine do anything to you on a emotional level?

No like sometimes like this articles

No but sometimes sad articles

I don’t think you will find that in those articles.

Just time-wise if everyone has a magazine and finish it and making a mood board then, but I know it is really addicting

Can I take all of these?

Might do for the other focus groups.

You have another one?

I have two more.
So with twenty young women.

O but that’s a big group.

Could I have the scissor?

Between 92 en 97, so there is an age scale. And the previous group they were all 97, so I have a homogenous group and another group.

You can use these ones if you want.

You can start yeah because

This was mine.

Also big all the

Mine also

And maybe you can change the scissors that when one person is ready with it that...

Yeah if you’re done

I was just worried about getting the pictures

Well you are good at it

Oh no, heb de kaas gescheurd

The cheese.

Yeah sorry

Shame on you

Smart that you are doing to sides
Yeah I know

So true

Yeah but I don’t have that much

Everyone has a lot, I have like two

This is like, this side of the mood board

Very sexist

It’s going to look like something out of a

Like yeah

Someone who...

Blijf eraf.

What do you think about gender stereotypes in the magazines that you have wrirped trough? Do you think that women are being portrayed in a certain way?

Yes.

But men as well. It is both.

How are we portrayed in magazines?

Very sexy and always have naked.

Especially in advertisements.

Yeah advertisement, but articles is as well.

Men are always dark, taller, tough.
It is weird because when you look in a shopping street you see the opposite I assume?

Yeah.

Because in the summer too.

And they photoshop still so much.

Even if there is one detail, you know it looks different in real-life.

But when I look at my own experience, I don’t know how you feel about it when I look at a picture I don’t automatically think it is photoshopped. I just look at the picture and then I think it is photoshopped. And than the damage is already be done, because I start to admire that person. Do you feel the same?

I think it depends. It’s education because we do media and communication so we learn a lot about it. And that makes you more aware of it. But young girls don’t realize it.

But even though you still are aware it still influences you. You keep reminding yourself this is not real, this is fake. People cannot live like that.

Gonna take this pile away. Is everybody OK with presenting their mood boards? I didn’t mean now but later.

Anyone we needs a lot of glue or anything?

Really curious to see. Looks so promising.

We will see about it. Is that your good or bad side?

You can’t tell.

I assume the good one says stupid?

It is really interesting to see but with most of them I can already tell that by the amount of sex that is often the bad side. No this is the good side. I can see it. Calendar slash moodboard.
Yeah what you said it can embody like

Does someone has a scissor? No I thought it was fine but I thought there would be another one.

But he is super stereotypical. He thinks he is everything. This is also a stereotypical girl: blond hair, lots of make-up.

Totally amazed by myself. So beautiful.

But I think about the colours using in this magazines. Cold colours. Comparing to the other colours in magazines. It is just black. Or it is just me.

I never noticed that before.

I can put some of it away. Here they are.

Karen, can I take this ones?

What a weird way to stand. Doesn’t look very comfortable.

You guys can talk.

We are just watching.

So sad I have nothing.

But how do you feel after you scrolled trough the magazines, is it like you said I totally understand why I don’t want to buy them now?

Yeah, haha.

Yeah I think most of it does not interested me. Not enough to buy the magazines.

Yes because I try to come up with the idea about why I would like to read a magazine but only I could think about is fashion.
They have a few interesting stories, because I always like these stories but than it is like five pages in the entire magazines and than you have like twenty pages about magazines and what not to wear, use this make up because it will make you look like pretty and this.

When you look, we are going to present the mood boards in a bit, but for those who are already done, what do you think?

I think they are sort of similar. Looking at the good side and the bad side.

I really love the picture, that one.

If the whole magazine would be about food, I would buy it. Not diets and that kind of stuff.

Yeah I can really google photos of food when I’m hungry

Do you follow tasty on facebook? Have you tried any one the recipes?

No, I really should.

There was also one facebook user Sara I think you advised it to me about the lady that has like her own...

You mean Celeste Barber. When I was in the previous focus group I thought about her for a second because one of the people in the previous focus group was making like a comment on how unrealistic people pose like the jacket when they have like an unhappy face and to much make-up on.

That was one of my things as well.

She is so funny you should look her up on facebook, her name is Celese Barber and I really admire her because she picks out these images that are like she doesn’t do it in a same way, she doesn’t have like the perfect body I think she is a mom to. She is just an everyday woman. But it really shows the...

But you just said perfect body, is that the perfect body as you would see it or the perfect body in magazines?
Perfect bodies the way magazines make it.

But she really shows of how the perfect body should look like. How it actually look.

There is someone who said magazines are suppose to create a dreamworld because that is what people would like to see to escape reality. Is that true?

Half-half.

Karen is shaking her head.

Depends what you are looking for.

People are always looking for it. Also in movies and really now with facebook and instagram, the fashion bloggers are really populair.

If you look into a fashion magazine you would expect that. But I wouldn’t buy women’s magazines because it is so stereotypical and you know how much photoshop is in there.

Would you buy a magazine with for example crooked teeth or for example people that are overweight or don’t look like the ideal that media shape?

I would.

You would.

The problem is they always see it as special. O special model, and you’re like no that is the average person.

Yeah that is actually true. Don’t make such a big thing out of it. The thing is about magazines is that they have plussize people on the cover and than they have size 42 and then you are like this is not even that much plussize.

In that case, why call it plussize? Why don’t call it the normal body?
Because the norm in European countries is size 42, it is the average size of women.

Interesting.

They always show off the really thin girls. All women have like different types of body shapes. Some women have more hips that others, but you don’t see those women in the magazines. It is all about being I don't know no hips, no fat whatsoever.

Were you influenced by those images?

I think so. In someway it influences you. It might be a problem finding jeans, I know I have from time to time. The fashion about having these really thight jeans and I don’t know how many times I have been standing in the closet no

The fitting room.

Yes, I have been this close to crying because you really want to have these jeans because everyone else has it and it is this kind of jeans you should have according to all the magazines so it can be frustrating.

It also depends where you grow up. I come from a really small village and trust me fashion is not there. Like not at all. So then you don’t really get influenced by because it is not there and nobody cares.

But when you were went to high school there were these trends.

I didn’t care.

I remember when I went to high-school all-stars were huge.

I am actually going to grab a chair. Because than I can sit.

It’s me. But not all for me.

Pringles are the best chips. I never eat pringles, only when I am travelling.

The same.
I never knew why.

Could I have a glass of water?

Yeah sure, do you have a glass? I’m going to the dishwashing tomorrow.

O diskmaskin.

No I mean the soap.

I wish I had a dishwasher. Maskin would make my life so much easier.

I think nanne and Margaux are still working on it.

My mind was actually caught up into something, speaking about the jeans. Lots of magazines actually show of like fashion and they show like fashion from everyday people but you always see a thin model and clothes look different depend on what model. Mostly you see like a small person wearing the clothes and not how it looks with a person who was a bigger size.

No one is in between. Eitherway you have size 48 or a size 34 there is no kind of in between, or 40, 42. But what I see with plussize models but that is more my personal opinion, not as a researcher, they still have beautiful body because it is all in proportion. But if you have a very long upperbody and tiny legs, you can never identity with it.

It is still the stereotype but than from a plussize perspective

And that is something you cannot have an effect on, you can’t change.

What would you think about the idea if magazines did less photoshop?

I think there is a magazine that does not use it at all.

And they talk about it about a symbol and they have to put it by the photo if they use it.

They have talked about if for a long time now.

It is interesting to see if they used it or not.
I knew like the magazine I read, when I read magazines, they did like a campaign like the same thing. And what they did is they put like a mark on the photo when they had used photoshop for making the model look better but when you looked at the model you still thought she looked thin.

What I think Monki is really good at showing of women in a good way and I mean it is not a fashion magazine, it is a fashion chain that has a lot of clothes in magazines. So when I was looking for a bathing suit the other day I was so relieved to someone in my size wearing a bathing suit and at least I knew how it looked on me.

But I think that is for everyone.

I was in Stockholm and were in COS and I always call those clothes shapeless and they said according to my friend I spend an hour in that store saying the whole time it is so weird your body shapes the clothes, the clothes don’t shape itself and according to my friend I said it five times because I was obsessed with the shapelessness, your body sort of shapes the dress. But for me, I need an example to see how it looks, I had changing rooms not because I see myself in the mirror but more because of the fuzz..

Especially jeans.

I always buy the same ones.

Is there somebody who would like to present their mood board first?

Yes I can start. But does anyone else wanna do it?

And you can also ask questions about each others mood boards. I know it would be really nice for me as a research if there is a discussion. Even if you don’t like pictures you can also questions why on earth you choose pictures, why you choose to like that picture.

Should I start of with the?

Choose yourself.
I first will end with the good stuff and then I start with the bad side. As you can see I choose a lot of stereotypes and a lot of pictures posing of sex. I also find some weird pictures of children, there was something weird about it and it just got me. Most of the things here are about how they portray women in pictures, especially in these ones about sex I don’t know if you can see it but their focussing a lot on the women's body and at the same time the girls face is covered she doesn’t really have a personality, so it’s all about focussing on the body of women. What else to say, I found this other weird picture about once again it was hard to know what the article was about but there were two people in the article covering up their faces. And in someway I thought it was so weird, giving him a white shirt because white was something positive and she got the grey skirt. Maybe while thinking about it and I don’t know grey is something, it can be quite boring

But wouldn’t this be about something covering up or to be ashame for?

I don’t know. But once again he is like on the top and she is underneath and being vunreable, I don’t know. Take care of me. I have a lot of pictures and I like the colourful way of showing of people, playing with that stereotypical roles like they do down here with the women being on top being the strong independent women and there was a picture of men dressing up as a women and women dressing up as a men and once again there was this article about children and what I like was that they did not put the children into stereotypical, like for example put the boy in blue colours environment. But he got like maybe typical clothes for a boy but he was put in an environment with a female touch. I found a picture of a girl with tattoo and no hair too, very ungeneral.

Ungeneral?

When you look like a female but you have both the yeah

Gender neutral

And the way they can see the half-naked man and what is the it is an interesting way on focussing on a man’s body instead of focussing on a women’s body. And there were some really nice pictures in which way women look like role models and weren’t doing this typical thing. Yeah, I think that is.

Do you have any questions or anything?
No I don’t crystal clear.

Who wants to present next?

I could go. I don’t have that much but on this side I just have stom, the dutch word for stupid and here is a little text that says after every surgery I became prettier, so I put it there because more and more people feel that way in the Netherlands there are more people that feel they have to change themselves and that isn’t necessary at all and it was something and maybe you get a free bra and it was something for the necklaces and this is just a stereotypical like, to be sexy and photoshopped picture. So that is the bad side. And here I have a lot of quotes and there in Dutch so I don’t know if I can translate. O this one is in English, this one says give from the heart. So it is not really about appereances. I like this one because it shows that women can have, are strong as well, and it says don’t crack under pressure. This one says keep exploring. And this one I don’t know, I just thought of it. I thought it was cute. And this was, how can you translate it?

Ode to imperfection.

Yes, this was kind of the same. Outsiders. Ode to perfection, all the men and women in magazines are way to perfect looking. I think it is way more interesting to hear about outsiders, to be more real. That is what I would like.

What is so interesting to see what I can see with the two of you that you choose taboos or outsiders pictures that are more connected to the real world and are more special and natural in a way. Is that true?

Yes, definitely.

Do you girls also have that with your moodboard that you felt more attracted to pictures that showed a real life and taboos?

Yes. But not all the time.

You can present yours now. Or Marta?

Yes you can go first.
Ok, Lisa we can start with yours.

Okay, this is my bad side. This was I choose this one because you can see her face it is so fake, if you saw it in a magazine it was to fake. I also saw the line, they cut it off. This one it was not because she wears the bra, yeah not because the background was screaming it was not in a nice way.

But is is a lingerie ad.

Yeah but it is not because of the... More the background, the whole setting.

Do you mean because she is casually there in her underwear, or?

No, more it is from Livera. So, but I didn’t like the feeling. You saw a lot of logo’s around the picture.

I didn’t like this one, because it was so angry. Not sponteanous.

I just have question about the first one. Is it an add about the watches?

Yes, and it was also like, she looks so depressing.

This is my good side. You can see, this one is not that sponteanous but I like that it is on the street. Not in a studio, where they make pictures. This is a behind the scenes picture, it is not all about the finer things. And I like this pictures, they wear make-up it is still, but it looks...

It looks natural.

Yes, it is still sponteanous.nAnd I have the same for this one. And a lot of colours, not boring.

Questions?

No, not at all. Great.

Marta.
So that is my bad side. And well I this pictures here are really like sexist. This one I thought about you Sara because you said there were not many black women but sometimes I feel that they put black women to show that they have such a good women and that is using the image in a wrong way.

She is still being, she is not native African.

Naomi Campbell?

Yeah, with straight hair and such.

This picture also looked very depressing for me. I feel that she is to young she should not be in magazine, trying to be that adult. This one I didn’t like because I think her body is to skinny and her background is not matching. And here I also put this picture here because it is really sponteanous and now I feel like everyone has done the same. With this pictures there is no emphasy on the body but more on the character. I like this picture because there are two women who are strong and indepent.

I like the one down to the right. Because they show pictures that portray women in a good way, happy.

When you see those pictures do you feel happy about seeing another women smiling?

Yes.

Yes, but really often it is not a real smile.

But this one is sponteanous I think.

And you have the vogue cover with Emma Watson.

Yes, I like Emma Watson. She is really fighting for women's right and being really feminist.

Do you think more women like Emma Watson should be on the cover of magazines?

Yeah.
Yes, because she is really a role model I think.

Yes, because she escaped the role of Hermione. Daniel Radcliffe is still fighting the Harry Potter image. Which is interesting because I think Hermione is one of the few strong characters in movies. Mission impossible.

Especially non-sexist.

And then we have many other cartoons. Like Jennifer Lawrence as Catherine Everdeen as well.

But that is more a development of the last years because before that the bond girls, the girls of mission impossible are like.

Ok, the other mood boards.

I will start with the good sight and yes the glue messed it up. But first I want help with translating this quote.

Her child my tummy

The other thing is a bit more

It is about carrying a baby for someone else and about getting pregnant.

Fertility problems.

I choose this because I really like it when they discuss things about taboos in magazines and also because it is a bit personal for me as well because I am a child from how do you say that, they made me in a laboratory. And I found out that it is sometimes hard for people to talk about it, even for my mom. So it makes me really happy that they discuss about it. And then we have a girl, I like her face, her shape, but actually I wanted to cross her face with a red colour. Why? Because I was doubting about do I like it or do I, I didn’t know if I liked it or not and I really want cheekbones like this so therefore I was like okay she is for me she is my role model actually because I really want that, and they give me inspiration to do it, how to trim my face. But on the other side she doesn’t look like natural at all. so that is why I was doubting, because I really like it. The other thing, if I see this picture I really would like to buy
this kind of clothes. Another picture of everything makes me always happy to see from vacation or pictures that I already did. I really have the happy feeling again. But also things where I never went I really like to see vacation things. And in the end I this is so funny I like the, it says eat life and it was an article about eating and she says just eat what you want and eat everything you want and it seems also I had a lot of problems with eating so it really nice to see that someone helps girls to eat what they want. Now I have the bad side, I was in shock when I saw this picture from a girl a pregnant girl with a bra drinking milk and like milk all over her belly. I don’t know why they did that, if I was this I would feel uncomfortable. Because it can be, it is a double meaning in my opinion. I didn’t like it at all for just for us for girls and women. And then I have a picture of a girl and a boy together and I put this on the bad side because of two reasons. First reason is in a lot of advertisement they use a boy and a girl together like always and they give you the impression that you always have to be together and I don’t like that because we live in 2017 and we also have to think about gay couples and lesbians and that is also fine, we have to give them. We have to boost that in the magazines. Also I don’t like it how they, I forgot what I wanted to say, just yeah the impression that is always good and that when you have a boyfriend life is way better and I don’t like it when the question everything is perfect when you have these kind of things because it is just a picture and I feel that, and than I have two pictures of a model. Yeah she is in my opinion, to thin, I don’t like it at all. I think it is a really cliché thing, because I don’t want to see that and it makes it uncomfortable. And she is I will never buy this kind of clothes, she looks mad, fake.

And she looks ugly.

And ugly. And the other thing, it was boys sleeping. It was a session, like a reportage like a lot of picture like little children sleeping on the street it was about the war in Syria and I didn’t like this picture because it is really hard to explain but since I study journalism I see lot of articles about these things and they are pushing people to think about the things that the war in Syria, they are like this and this and this but they never show the other side. Like why do they do that? And sometimes it’s like bad for me, because I ignore these kinds of problems. But it is also bad that the media ignore the other side, the children that are playing there. I saw a documentary about it and therefore I felt for me that is what not a nice picture.

Would you like to see the other side more in women’s magazines? The other side of like? The more positive?

For me I would like to see that. Of course I want to know about the problems and everything and I want to know this kind of stuff but I wish they gave more about the other side, than I
can form my own opinion about it so that I can say Okay this is bad and not this. I want to make my own opinion and not what they give me in a magazine.

It is really interesting to see that you stayed so close to yourself. I think everyone stayed really close to themselves by looking at their own interest and how the pictures made you feel. Margaux.

Yes. Ok, this is my bad sight. This picture, I just hate that women.

Donatella Versace. Is there a general thing why you hate her?

I just don’t like her.

She looks so fake. And mean

Yes she is really ugly.

The plastic surgery and such.

For those of you who have been to the efteling she always reminds me of the witch in the Indische Waterlelies, you have a sort of doll there. Anyways. Next one.

Then we have this picture of like a girl, I don’t know. Making her pretty. And there are like picture doing it like, this.

So I don’t like that. Actually I choose the wrong picture, this is quite soft. Then there is like this girl she is like seven years old.

O it is from toddlers and tiaras?

Yes. The pageant contest.

Exactly. She has so much make-up, she is wearing heels, I am sure she has push-up bra’s.

She looks like a doll.

It does. She looks like she is 35 years old and she is like 8.
It is interesting because Sara also choose children for her bad side, or the way children are being portrayed.

Yes, so I think that is like first they should be otherwise, not in that way. What are your skills? But it is too much.

No they don’t let her be a child.

No, and I think most of the time the moms are more crazy about it than the children. That is so sad. Then we have this girl in bathtub full of money, it is not really money. Then we have this lady, after I cut Nanne saw the page and she thought about oral sex.

Yes, it was about old women having sex.

Yes and I didn’t know what it was about but I cut it because I was like yes, to much.

Why make an article about that?

About old people that still have sex

Yes, because sex is, you can still see it in the pictures. The people that look sexy are often our age, as if people above the age of 35 don’t have sex anymore.

I mean, I don’t care really what she does or how she looks. It is a bit too much.

Yes come on, like her tit is right here. She looks quite good for how old she is.

Maybe she is 30.

O yeah

Well, and then for the last one it is like this really creepy picture of...

Talking about unrealistic poses

Yes, it is just like the body and the chair. So weird. I don’t even know what it is.
And the other half of the picture was like a mean watching that girl dead. So that was my bad side.

Over to the good side.

Yeah it really big. Well, you stole the Emma Watson.

I just love her so much. I want her to be big. This is one of the bad side. I love Nathalie Portman, but I think for her lipstick, she is not selling the lipstick.

You don’t put your lipstick on like that?

No.

So yeah.

And Emma Watson. Just love her. All the time.

Love the age you are.

I like this add for underwear. Because she was around like 30 or something and they didn’t flat her tummy. It is just like a natural. Maybe a little bit, but it is not like superflat like it normally is. I think they look like quite sad, it is more like babies because I love babies.

The reason why I did it because this is for a reason. I guess everything is allright not so much happiness in her life and than it is called joy in French, so she is not happy at all. And than I was like okay, but yeah so that was weird. And that was for Emma Watson as well, because she was like the voice of a generation. And for this picture it the equality between the girl and the guy they are wearing the same clothes, just having fun.

And that there is no physical attraction?

It is more like a friendship between them.

But the way they give this picture is more like I kind of like you.
And then I like this girl because she looks really happy, I love the smile and here a family again. I don’t really like the fact it is like the perfect family like two parents, each both sex and than two kids from the same sex as well. But I like the family itself. But it was from the same thing. So they did like different once so that’s it.

Karen. Yours.

Okay, I’ll start with the bad side because it is kind of not real and I don’t know what they are advertising. And she is kind of wearing nothing. That’s why I choose this one. Which is kind of strange because the hema is kind of a nice shop, but their advertorial is kind of skinny people and it is like the hema is the most cheap store for really ordinary people and then they post this, which is not people going to hema actually.

But I think I don’t know they have different faces.

Yes, it is mostly the guys that annoys me.

Yes, red hair.

There is no one with red hair on covers in france.

In that sense, yes. But it is still super skinny people. And people go the hema are not the most skinny people.

I interviewed this people and they were really like Amsterdam cool-ish I had a really hard time interviewing them.

Tifanny is like super stereotypical. Guy asks a girl to marry. Tifanny will never change because that is their whole image.

Than this one is about fragrance. But I don’t know, it doesn’t look like being for a fragrance at all. Good side though, I had this one because it is finally someone with a headscarf. It is quite special, because it is normally never. Altough the story is quite sad, because they had to escape from Syria and such. But I would like to see those kind of things in magazines. I have this one, not because of their huge age difference. But I read the story as well, she ran away from the Netherlands and they are now doing this 5000 KM track in New Sealand where they live from two back packs.
Are they dating?

No they are married.

(Laughing)

Yeah that is the thing, there is this huge age difference so that is why. But I like the story. I put this one in there because it Kruidvat. Kruidvat is this supercheap store in the Netherlands and normally in magazines you see this super expensive stuff which you cannot really afford so that they actually put something cheap in there. I have this one because of the people we were talking about. Food, I don’t have to explain food. I have this one because they have a story about autism and I also think it is good that they like that kind of stuff. Although they were those kind of pictures.

It is so interesting because when I look at the good side of you I really can see you choose the same. You choose real stories, taboos, but also real emotions and racial diversity. It is really nice that you found the little nice spots in magazines which you normally might overlook when you scroll trough it, is that true what I am saying?

Yes.

How do you feel when you close a magazine? Do you feel different about yourself?

No.

Or when you see the moodboard that you made, when you look at the good side, do you feel inspired by the pictures that you choose?

Yes, ofcourse.

Actually it makes me sad. Because I had to search for these pictures. Everything on the bad side can be easily found, but for the other things I really had to search.

Exactly.

So I feel even worse about magazines than I already that.
Yeah?

Yes, because I have to search for things that’s good in a magazine instead of something that is bad.

Do you all agree with Karen?

Yes.

No.

Nanne?

Yes, I think you are kind of. I can’t explain actually. You see a lot of good things, but you never realize that. You only focus on the bad things that is why it is kind of sad to look for it...

Well, it depends that you are looking at. I hate fashion so out of everything, I wouldn’t put a fashion picture on it (moodboard) because I don’t like it. That is the difference here.

It is so interesting because we are the target group of those magazines, we are the selected age group, but within the target group there are so many different women with different interest. Do you feel angry when you see that women are being portrayed in this way, when you see pictures like that, what does it do to you

Not really. I feel to be honest it’s a bit standard.

So everyone is used to it?

Yes.

But isn’t that a bit sad that everyone is used to it?

Of course.

But more and more. You see more and more plussize models now. It’s a step forward, but not enough.
It is trying, but is still goes really really slow.

Well it takes time to change.

Yes but the thing is if they put yeah how do you say it sometimes it works for that is the reason that they do it, its not that everyone likes it, but some people don’t think so deep about it.

Yes, if you are at the hairdresser and just flip it through you won’t think so deeply when you read it.

Great, I think I’m done with the questions. Do you girls have some comments to make or things that haven’t been said?

Questions from me?

I guess that were done.

If that’s okay with you I will grab the mood board, I really want to thank you for participating. It was really nice I think we got some great answers. I value the opinion that everyone has of you. It was really nice to hear everything. I hope you guys enjoyed it to. Thank you for spending your Sunday night with me. I will stop the recording now actually.
Focus group #3
Anca, Lotte, Lea and Anna

Okay Anca can I ask you the year you were born in?

94.

Lotte, you?
97. You are 92, right?

I am 91.

91, okay great.

No than I have women of all ages. Than the question is, who of you read’s women’s magazines? If if you read them once a year on a holiday.

I read magazines.

Yeah? And what kind of magazines do you read?

Mainly political.

So the magazines that are in front of you you wouldn’t read?

No, not so much. Probably at the dentist.

I would read exactly these ones. Or those are the ones I would buy. But I read a lot less since I came her.

Also the magazine culture in Sweden isn’t that big. And you girls?

I read crafting magazines.

So you like the flow? I have the flow here somewhere, but I use it for the mood boards.

And some of my mom’s magazine. For a women of 50 year old.

So you are not really the target group? Because that is why the magazine are here, because you are really the target group of the magazines.

No I only read the Neon, what kind of magazine?

Yeah a youngster magazine
And then sometimes the glamour in Germany.

I really like the Neon magazine because everytime I see that magazine they exactly know what is playing in my head.

It is a magazine for people our age.

It is political stuff, but also other random stuff.

Yes and what I think is interesting is that they have psycological themes. Like the last issue is like when you are 23, 24 and the rest of your life is ahead of you and that it creates a lot of panic inside of you, because you don’t know where to. And that is exactly what I thinking in the moment, they really know there target group now.

Okay, what I would like to do now is just a couple top of mind assosciation, so I am just going to say some terms and I would like you to say the first thing that comes to mind. Okay, when you think of women’s magazines, what do you think of?

Fashion.

Make-up.

I would say vogue.

Vogue? That is the first time I hear that one.

Interesting.

And when you think of women in women’s magazines?

Beautiful.

Thin.

Models.

Do you think that the magazines here are like resiprecating reality?
No, not at all.

And when you think of the term sex sells?

It’s true.

Yes?

Do you think that sex sells easier for women or or men?

For both.

I think when it comes to those women magazines it is not sex sells.

Yes, because this women seems well dressed to me.

But maybe we are not aware. It still appeals to us.

I would still buy the magazine even though she would be skinny or undressed or...

Do you think that we have here the Linda, she is naked in the bathtub, do you think sex sells?

She is to old.

To old? She is our mothers age. Yes, her face is very well retouched.

And when I think, when you think of role models in magazines, do you see role models?
Women that you look up to?

An actress that I like.

Therefore I think the Vogue cover with Emma Watson is already gone. But you can look into it here if you like Emma Watson.

Do you think role models in women’s magazines are existing?
Yes, depending on the magazine.

Like in Neon you have some inspiring series. But when I look through cosmopolitan I don’t have a role model for my life.

But what about, the vogue cover?

She is not my role model.

But there are a lot of strong women creating great things.

Yes but than it is also in relation to the content and what they write about Emma. So on, I don’t think they really write stories about her feminism and stuff.

I don’t know.

I don’t read them so I don’t know. But I think these magazines report about her make-up style and fashion...

Yeah but women magazines do not only mean that

I don’t know magazines

No like for me that is why don’t like to read it because it is all about advertisement

I think for me that is the main part.

But it is so much advertisement.

Did you use the magazines that are in front of you?

No.

Because what I saw in the previous focus groups is that girls stopped reading the magazines because it was all about beauty and all about fashion and when you are interested in that than that is very nice. I love to also read the cosmopolitan, but if you want more. If you want to
read about how Angela Merkel became Bundes president of Germany than you know cosmopolitan is not your alley.

Actually I remember now that you say it. When you’re a teenager and then everyone reads it, you read it to. But at some point that get so boring when they say this is all about make-up and what they buy, than it gets boring. But is it like that in all the magazines?

I am not sure because of course vogue, this is the English vogue I have her, because the American vogue hat Michelle Obama on the cover and I don’t think that whole interview was about, they were very happy to have her on the cover, so it wasn’t about beauty and fashion. But of course that is their main focus because it is a beauty and fashion magazine. No that is something that come across, that young women stopped reading women’s magazines because they weren’t allyining with what they were seaking for.

I think I had the cosmopolitan once at the dentist and I threw it away after a minute. Because its advertisments and I can’t afford this make-up anyways, it’s to expensive.

Right, I was thinking that as well. When it’s the target group of young girls and than they put the lipstick of 200 euros in there. Who do they want to buy it? Also the clothes. That’s always so expensive.

Do you think, I am going to pick the cover here. Here you see Selena Gomez, do you think she is portrayed her as an object and not the person that she is? I mean she is an actress, producer?

Well, depends on influence through the power shirt.

For me it doesn’t say much about the t-shirt, I more wander what she is doing. I think she should be photograph in another style to transmit the cover.

No because no person would ever stand like this. But then of course it is not a normal picture so we have to put that into perspective.

Okay, I think we are now going to go to the mood board exercise. You all now what we are going to do. If you have any questions please let me know. Of course if you want to exchange magazines, you are not obliged to one magazine, you can exchange magazines with each other. Of course you can talk and exchange thoughts. But just take the pictures that you like
and that you don’t like and put them on the thing. I also have three different colours, including pink. So if everyone could choose the colour that is mostly attractive to them, then yeah we can start.

Okay.

I will start with the Dutch one.

No pink.

So I can just put it on the like side?

Yeah you could.

It’s all about what you would like to see in magazine and when you look at a magazine and look at the pictures...

So what I would like to see in a magazine?

That’s a really good one.

I actually thought since I also promised you a fika that I would get tea and cookies but I didn’t know where to get a water boiler her and such. So here are the stuffed animals. It’s a bit of a creepy room.

I also checked if there was a room available, and this was the only here and than I thought no I can’t sit next to these stuffed animals. Like what the fuck?

I don’t like this room that much.

I’ll stop after this.

It’s more the fact that I am going to take pictures of the mood board because your answers mean much more than the pictures you have selected. So what I would like you to do now is you have selected like a lot of pictures if you could explain why you have selected them, why you like them and on the other hand the pictures why you don’t like them to the group. Who would like to start?
I can do it.

Good.

First one I don’t like is that one because I think it is so unrealistic. Because you don’t wear it like this. I actually that picture give me nothing. So even if I like this style I can’t go outside.

Do you think it is also sexist in a way that they show it with her bra?

Yes. But than again why is it in a womens magazines? For me it is like why does she wear it like this? That’s why I don’t like it like that.

Good, clear explanation.

Then I don’t like that one because she has such a good skin and I have problems with my skin and this is just perfect. I know it is photoshopped, but it just so pure and clean and its so unrealistic.

Can I ask you a question about it? Even though you said it was photoshopped and you know it. Does it make you feel bad about yourself or does is annoy you?

Yes. Because especially when you are a person who has pimples and then you see that. And because this was like an advertisement for skin cream yeah even if I use that one I don’t look like her. Than I don’t like it when they put like the fashion in Paris like the haute couture because you cannot wear this in your everyday life. So this I skipped this page. Because I am not that interested in fashion that I need to know al the trends.

But if it would be wearable?

Yes, but you know his haute couture like if you are studying design or something than for sure it helps like this is what is on the run way but as a normal communication student it is not that interesting. But actually I don’t have that much trouble with angry looking women, but she was like superangry.

She is coming to kill you.
Like really no? I didn’t even had a look at what she wears. Then I don’t like this kind of stuff, like what we just said. The super expensive stuff, you have a look at it and you think o okay. The cheapest one is hundred euros. I don’t like this one the whole page is just advertisement. And here I don’t care about the women it is just a whole page of advertisement. These are the things I don’t like. Shall we continue with the bad things or shall I...

The good side.

Yeah. I like this one it reminds me of travelling, but also because I am scared of flying. It woke some emotions, because I would love to have this view right now but also I don’t want to fly. I would love to see more pictures of travelling in these magazines. Than I like this one because I like streetstyle, it seems like a picture of a cool girl so it seems like she is wearing it in her everyday life. It’s a cool style. Than I didn’t know why I like this picture, but I like it.

Even though she looks angry?

Yeah but it is not the same angry as the other. She is super aggressive and scary. She is more like the strong girl angry. I like this football and though women style.

Can we say something about it?

Yes ofcourse ofcourse

Because I was thinking the same first but then I think she has make-up, she has lipgloss and that just destroys the whole picture for me. It seems so fake to me that she wearing the baseball thingt and trying to be like a warrior. I understand your explanation totally but I would approve but it is all destroyed because she is so beautiful and her make-up is done. But no one is playing football like this, we would be sweaty.

I think it was just like this appearance like though women, I didn’t really focus on her make-up. Than I like this one because it is supernatural. Like party pose. She looks happy. It is the same with this picture. It is natural. She is laughing. So good emotions.

Good good. I am not going to take a picture of it yet, because you have so many pictures. I will just fold it together. Than I can really understand that is the bad side. Lea, would you like to explain yours?
Yes. So I think what I like in those magazines is when women are being portrayed natural, strong and diverse. So I really like this one. This women barely has make-up, it's a warm atmosphere. She is cool, that is why I like her.

But then here is also the thing, like we know she wears our make-up to give her the nude look. But I see it's not an overlead.

Yes, of course we know she is in hair and make-up and all. And everything was done and its suppose to look like this, but I like this style better. But you can actually see her skin, you can see her freckles and everything. And I like her because she looks strong and natural. I think her hair looks natural it doesn't mean like they made to much out of. And I like her, because she is really colourful and a beautiful women. I don't know, it's diverse somehow. Very different.

Can I ask you something, because in the other focus groups a lot of girls choose pictures of darker skinned women because that is for them, that showed racial diversity. Is that also why you choose that picture?

I think in the whole magazine you can see it was very diverse of ethnicities. It was a very diverse magazine, so I like that. But I didn’t choose this picture because I thought she was black. No it’s different. She is not like the typical white women with the long blond hair. It shows that they are different.

That they have different sides? Different assets.

Yes.

Exactly this.

But I think I like mainly the pictures where they are more natural. And that is why I also think like this is advertisements for some conturing, but this girl obviously already has perfect make-up. Like they even put more on it. So that is how they cover your already perfect face. Like you said they don’t show people with actual problems.

And this picture doesn’t solve your problems. Like even if I would do that with my skin now I won’t look like her.
And all the yeah...

And than I don’t like this picture. Well I like it but I don’t like it the message it gives me because how they portray the relationship between men and women it is always a beautiful women beautiful men they are sexy they have good figures and you get those great men that you have to look sexy I don’t feel like I would look like this so I can get this one

It is also very interesting that you choose that picture because somebody else choose that picture like that and they had the motivation that they had a lot about couples that they are always like male and female and that we have come into a time where you know all couples are not female and male that that is...

Yeah that’s true. But also I didn’t see a lot of men in the magazine, no couples at all it was all about women. And this was the only picture I found about men and women. I mean it’s a beautiful picture but I can’t..

Yeah good, were those all the pictures?

Yes.

Lotte.

Do you know where to start?

I start with my bad side. I don’t like this because she is angry and it is black and white. And so dark. I don’t like this because she is not looking natural and angry. I don’t like her face

She looks likes she struggles.

Yeah, it is not natural. This is to much make-up, it is to dark. I don’t like a contrast of these colours because it is to bright and I don’t like her face.

But don’t you like her face or the expression that she has on her face?

Also and together with the colour of t-shirt. And it doesn’t work with her blonde hair. Just, I don’t want to see it.
What I see a lot with what you have on your bad side that unrealistic beauty is a bad thing for you, where you just say okay I am immediately going to put this on my bad side. Is that true? Okay. Continue.

She is also really angry. She has all piercing and looks angry. And there just cruella de ville, she also looks angry.

I think she is the most angry

And they made it extra angry with the hair. She looks scared and I just don’t want to see that. This is just not natural pose, body.

I can’t balance on those heels.

I don’t want to see this.

That is very realistic beauty.

I saw that as well and that is realistic but that you made fun out of it and they put it in their to make fun

Yes, he is just there as a loser.

Yes that’s why I didn’t like it.

I just don’t it doesn’t appeal to me. It’s not what you wear and even though it would be retro I don’t like it. I do like this by the way. And this is not natural and angry and dark. And then the bright side. Art. Colour. Happy people and not just young people, also a child and older women. And there was a picture with older men eating spaghetti. I don’t know what it was about. I like colours and flowers and I like the composition of this. I like these colours and I like food, this is also food. This is nice art, also nice art. This is what I would wear. Nice colours. And old pictures. And nature. And I liked this

The paper
Even though skeptic because they paid more to get thicker paper I liked it because it is so empty and there is just a little bit of information. That is why it attracted me, but I just don’t like that they had the attitude to do it.

Just a question to you all, when you read these magazines, do you feel taking seriously as a women? That they take you seriously

No.

Because you are the target groups for those magazines.

I think I never thought about it, not that they make fun of me. I am just not interested because most of it doesn’t appeal to me or I just don’t think it is that important and than I just don’t read it.

I would say that they don’t really reflect that they were there target group. Because as you said earlier we used to read it when we were seventeen, but right now I don’t think we would use it.

You would maybe read it when you are sixteen. But it is all about sex in the end. And make-up.

Do you think that women are being sexualized in these magazines? That they are being portrayed in a sexual way? Like naked and

Yes.

They all look kind of hot. Even if its not your type of women you know that there are people outside because they are all like skinny, have nice skin they are sporty. Everything

Perfect shape boots and buts.

You rarely see a women with more weight. And I think sometimes they put it their for sure, but it is kind of to seem diverse it is okay that we don’t have the critics we also put some thicker people.
Or what you see on Instagram and what these magazines tend to do is that they are eitherway super obese or their like a size 38. That’s is not plussize in my opinion. Okay, Anca your mood board.

I have just one negative thing. Even though they weren’t so negative to me, maybe because I used to read them

Yeah that could be true

I don’t know why I don’t like this, like you said one minute ago she is not natural and she is not a model. She is to fake to me, to sexy, she is like come to me men. I don’t like it all. But I can’t really say why.

Okay the good side.

I really like her make-up, even though it is not natural it looks pretty natural and I could also wear it. I like this picture and after seeing it I would also like to understand the interview, it seems like she as a story and there is the big house.

She is an artist I think.

I would like to know more about her. And I like this because of her attitude, but I can’t see more than that. She is a bit angry, but it doesn’t bother me. I also like this, not because of the products but because of the composition of the paper. It seems like an Instagram picture. But if I would like to buy some new shoes, I would like this.

It’s a mood board on a picture actually isn’t it?

I liked her because she is super natural and quite happy. The picture made me want to understand what is written there. I like this. But not because of that, but because they promote differences and men and men relationship. Ofcourse I don’t like men in high heels.

The heels are gigantic. But more like the shoe size.

Then I like Rihanna here because she is singing. I liked her because she also seemed a bit more natural and I liked her hair in the wind. Ofcourse I wouldn’t wear a swimsuit with a jacket. Here I like the colours a lot.
Sweden colours

Than the travelling part, I would like all of these to be bigger, to see more details and such.

I would also like my picture to be bigger.

I really like this because I like make-up and you can see the texture and everything. If you are interested you can have a good look. And I like this one and I think they are more elective. I like them because the interior design and I really like that I would love to see more in the magazines and actually it is a thing of mine to look in peoples houses and see how they live.

Yeah it it always the curiousity to see how people live.

Yeah and I can see that they live there, it is not just a house designed unrealistic. And then I liked her she is natural and not struggling.

How you can sit in a meeting like her.

That’s it.

What I see a lot is that you like natural women. Just the way they are and absoluty dislike photoshop. What I don’t see a lot in the pictures, but maybe they have already been taken out of the magazine, is that naked women but I see it there but that is more about the relationship status

I didn’t see a lot of naked women.

When you would see them: I mean there are a lot of perfume adds that are being sold under the case of sex sells what does it do to you when you see a perfume add of a naked women on it?

Yeah naked and they have the perfume add in front of their boobs.

I’m not sure to be honest. But that is okay.

I think more coco chanel and marlin Monroe was she is sleeping she is just wearing perfume.
Yes, Marilyn Monroe.

Yes I think that is where they get their inspiration.

You took picture that you like and dislike. Do you feel women are being portrayed in a fair and honest way in magazines?

No, I mean it is still the majority of these people are like of the women in the magazines are still skinny or at least have perfect figures. And even if they are plussize models it is still not normal in the society, like people in the streets like I have bigger legs, those plussize models for me they are not really natural they have the perfect plussize body.

I think for us as readers it is not fair. Because this is not reality. But if I am a start I would also love to be portrayed in a good way in magazines. So for the women in the magazine it is probably fair.

But when they look in the mirror they see something else than in the magazine.

Yeah but still, if you are the model you would also like to...

Yeah but why do you want that?

Yes but I mean if we have the norm, like if I am in this magazine. Or would you also say like the interview about me just put a normal picture without any photoshopping, would you do that?

I don’t know, if I feel confident and happy with myself,yes ofcourse.

But like if I would do it, yes ofcourse.

It is really interesting because if you ask me, because I would like to be portrayed in a non-photoshopped way because I want to set the example that I would like to be real. I would cry if I saw a picture of myself. Because than I would feel like what is not good about me that you need to retouch?
Yeah but I wouldn’t ask myself, but because it is so common nowadays. Even if you are natural beautiful, they would still edit you.

Yes, but I mean there is difference between editing a picture and photoshopping bigger boobs. Like if they photoshop me in a way they make my boobs bigger, than I would not...

No but for example if you have a day where you have a pimple on the day of the photoshoot, just put something over it. But even if it’s just a small change, it is not the way you are. But more like my hair looks strange, could you make it appeal more.

How do you feel after reading these magazines? Do you think like I totally understand why I stopped reading them? Or how do you feel about yourself?

Now that you gave them to me and I read them again after a while I don’t think I wouldn’t start again, but I wouldn’t pay money for it.

But they don’t influence yourself when you see a picture of Selena Gomez with hair or whatsoever, you don’t think that is the beauty I should reach?

No not really.

I mean I don’t read those magazines because I think there boring but also everywhere else you see those women that are so beauty. I feel like: o I need to train my core or whatever. Even though I don’t think about it, or even if I don’t recognize thinking about it it still does something because everywhere you see those beauty idols.

Yes especially in the summer when you see all those bikinis and you feel like you really want it and you see how a women wears it and how it looks on her you think maybe you should start a diet. Like maybe before summer these magazines would influence me.

I mean there are also shows where they portray women how they really are, I mean there is also one show where they interview people and how they undress. And it really makes me good to see that because I see real people and I realise, o they also have problemzones on their bodies and I can relate to that so when I go back to these pictures it doesn’t give me that feeling and it makes me feel they look better than me. Even though I am really happy with myself, but sometimes I am like why am I not like this or have less fat when I see these magazines.
You start to compare yourself with them and that is very unrealistic but you can’t stop comparing.

Yes because in Leipzig we have nude beaches. Because then you see that is how they look like. And if they act so confident you don’t have any problems with your body. Because she appears like strong and she is happy about her body. This makes me feel good. In comparison this makes me feel good. This magazine will never evoke positive emotions

But it is said isn’t it? That they don’t provoke positive emotions or that you perceive them as positive. I think personally they could do so much better if they could just listen to the target group and not the advertisers. Because I do understand why they choose it. And for me that is why I want to investigate your opinion about the studies, because a lot of people analyse pictures and advertisement. But it is way more important to see what the target group thinks of the magazines.

It would be nice with a magazine with all normal women and how it is really when you read a magazine like that. I mean maybe it doesn’t evoke all these positive emotions, I mean maybe after having this normal magazine, yeah but now I want to see it like this again. It could be.

Yes because that is what I also heard about these magazines that people use it to escape to a dream world you know as a child you use to read fairytales. So that these are like the princesses. And the fairytale books that we have now. It is really interesting to find that out. But it makes me sad to see that young, higherly-educated women are how can I say that represented in these magazines and even worse that these magazines make them feel bad about themselves. Especially for the magazines because then they don’t get to sell there magazines, but also for you. Because what I see with higherly educated women they take a step back, that is not my kind of cookie, and look at something else. But I also know that there are a lot of women who don’t study communication or don’t study studies where you become aware of it. I think it could be better. Thank you for participating, I hope you enjoyed it also for a little bit. I am going to end the recording of the session.