The Adonis Complex of the Male Millennial

A study into the perception of young men towards sexualisation and objectification of men in lifestyle magazines
This master thesis examines how young men between the age of 20 and 30 perceive sexualised and objectified content in men's lifestyle magazines. There has been much attention concerning the impact of sexualised media on girls and women with emphasis on how they perceive this content as active users of media. Less is known about how young men perceive sexualised media content. However, media research on the sexualisation of men is increasing and has found out that exposure to sexualised images can negatively affect men's self-esteem and body-image. This could lead to the so-called Adonis Complex, which is a term to describe the new obsession with appearance and the enormous pressure from society and the media on men to achieve physical perfection. Magazines are more sexually explicit compared to television and could therefore be a richer source for sexual scripts. This thesis focuses on the perception of sexualised images in lifestyle magazines of young men and how this relates to their approach towards sexualisation and objectification of themselves. By using a qualitative approach with interviews, this thesis attempts to look at how men perceive content in magazines. In the interviews, respondents made mood boards with pictures coming from three men's lifestyle magazines, which are the April 2018 editions of Men's Health, Men's Journal and GQ. The analysis of the interviews' content was performed according to the Photovoice Hergenrather Method. By letting participants select images themselves, they are more willing to explain how they perceive images from magazines and how these images affect them. According to Homan (2006), the dialogue between the respondent and researcher during the interview could create a bigger understanding of underlying thoughts when it comes to media use. The research findings point that men say they are not interested in the content of men's lifestyle magazines but, when making the mood board during the interview process, they actively search for inspiration on how to look according to men's lifestyle magazines, even though they admit that they know men are being idealised in these magazines. They might not internalise the media ideals of men completely, but they do see magazines as an example of the way they should look.

Keywords: magazines, objectification, sexualisation, men, media effects, and body image
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1. Introduction

In westernized societies physiological appearance is emphasized and idealised images in mainstream media are plentiful. Western society appears to value appearance standards as important cues for succeeding in life or being sexually attractive (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013). Over the past decades an amount of evidence was gathered that today’s media contain an abundant amount of sexualised content (Daniels & Lindner, 2018). Often it is assumed that most people occasionally compare their appearance to the standard of sexualised images that is so well drawn by the media (Blond, 2008). When those comparisons are being made, a majority of people will afterwards judge themselves less attractive than the ideal that is given by the media (Blond 2008; Lorenzen, Grieve & Thomas, 2004). This can cause body disaffection. Numerous studies have shown that exposure to idealised images of attractive women has a negative effect on the satisfaction of women on their body. This can contribute to unhealthy behaviour such as restricting eating and obsessive exercise (Ward et al, 2015; Daniels & Lindner, 2018). Whilst most research has focussed on women, recent culture changes demand that attention must be paid to men as well. For example magazines, which are seen as a type of traditional type of print media and even tough social media has taken over much of the role of traditional media, magazines are still beloved among young users (Phillips, 2012). In the past decade the number of magazines with a focus on men’s appearance has increased dramatically (Boni, 2002). Furthermore, a study has shown that men are more often seen bare chested in magazines compared to 25 years ago, more advertisement display men as sexual objects and in popular culture the male body is becoming increasingly visible, often appearing as muscular and slim (Blond, 2008). This even has an effect on children’s toys: male action figures have become more muscular too. In relation to these recent developments there have been an increasing amount of report of body dissatisfaction among young men (Leit et al., 2000). Whereas several studies in the past have proven that men and boys’ body dissatisfaction would be typically less severe than girls, they nevertheless have expressed discomfort with their self-image and appearance (Blond, 2008; Mulgrew, 2014). There are also studies that suggest that modern men are just as aware as women about the societal pressures to look good and be sexy (Miller & Halberstadt, 2005). In a number of studies, a negative impact of the muscular-ideal magazines images on college-aged men was found (Blond, 2008). Especially the age group of men between eighteen and thirty proves to be significant, as it is said that more than two thirds are dissatisfied with their bodies (Furnham & Calnan, 1998; Blond, 2008). It has been the debate of much speculation that the increase of male body dissatisfaction is related to the rising visibility of ideal male bodies in popular culture as mentioned above (Blond, 2008). According to Blond (2008) it might be incorrect to claim that phenomena such as an increasing amount of muscle dysmorphia, cosmetic surgery and use of steroids among young men are a direct
consequence of idealised media images, however her review warrants that more attention must be paid to the potentially harmful effects of media images on men’s body image and their self-esteem. After all, the focus on male appearance runs parallel with the focus of ‘handsome’ men in mass media (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013). Research suggests that young men’s body dissatisfaction increases when they see images of attractive muscular men. This creates an interesting research area. Youngsters nowadays, also known as the Millennials, grow up in a time where there are two phenomena happening at the same time. On one hand there is the 24/7 access to media, with the Millennials known to be the biggest consumers (Buckingham, 2009). Secondly, there is an on-going debate in the western world about gender roles, or more specifically gender roles in the media (Phillips, 2012) The media, which include television and magazines, are often seen as the single strongest influencing factor on a young person’s body image and view of the world (Hargreaves, 2004). One could argue that especially now media has a big influence on the way we think, because of this 24/7 access to media and because the generation of Millennials uses the media so much. According to Ward et al. (2015) most research on sexualisation of gender in mainstream media has focused on television. Therefore, less is known about other media, such as magazines, or more specifically lifestyle magazines. A lifestyle magazine is a popular publication concerned with lifestyle. Men’s lifestyle magazines are publications specifically targeted towards men often using fashion, health and gadgets as their main subjects (Benwell, 2003; Benwell, 2005). Overall lifestyle magazines aimed at men often tend to be more sexually explicit than TV aimed at men (Pardun, L’Engle, & Brown, 2005). This could mean that magazines might therefore be a richer source of sexualised content. Other than that, magazines specifically provide advice for changing one’s appearance compared to prime-time television, which tends to sexualize men trough thematic messages and stories (Fouts & Vaughan, 2000; Ricciardellie, Clow & White, 2010). This could suggest that different media may have different influences on the process of sexualisation and self-objectification. In a recent study that investigated the contributions of multiple media to young men’s sexual cognitions, the use of magazines was proven to be the most influential media contributor (Ward, Epstein, Caruthers, & Merriwether, 2011). This thesis tends to build a relationship between the way young men perceive images and how this makes them feel towards topics such as sexualisation and objectification, which can be defined ‘attitude’. Objectification is defined as the process in which human being is portrayed as an object (Nussbaum, 1995). In this thesis this term relates to the way men are portrayed as objects in lifestyle magazines. More specifically, objectification means that there is a high amount of attention focusing on the male body as an object.
2. Aim and research questions

Aim: The aim of this study is to understand how men perceive men in men’s lifestyle magazines, or more specifically the objectification and sexualisation of men in men’s lifestyle magazines. Furthermore, this study will focus on understanding how the perception of these two phenomena influences the attitude young men have towards their body image and men’s lifestyle magazines in general.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to increase knowledge on self-objectification and sexualisation among young men within the current sexualisation debate. Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2003) claim that more research on how mass media may impact self-objectification among male media users is needed because it helps us understand more about how male users act, how they use content and how the content makes them feel. Nowadays there are two phenomena happening at the same time: there is a 24/7 access to media, with the current generation of young people born between 1990 and 2000 being the biggest consumers (Buckingham, 2009). With the arrival of the Internet, the digital versions of lifestyle magazines still prove to be an important influence in the life of young people (Philips, 2012) or more specifically young men. Secondly, there is an on-going debate in the western world about the equality between men and women and how both genders are being objectified and sexualised in the western mass media (Phillips, 2012), including television and magazines. Over the past decades gender studies, also known as women’s studies, have anticipated this debate by conducting studies on both men and women. However, in recent studies (Ward et al., 2011; Pope et al., 2001) it is argued that more research needs to be done about young men in particular because they grow up in a time where there is a debate about sexualisation, objectification and gender in mainstream media as well as a 24/7 access to media. In summary, this study seeks to examine and extend the knowledge of male perception on sexualisation and objectification of men in men’s lifestyle magazines by testing the applicability of objectification and sexualisation theories on men.

Research questions:
1. How do young men perceive the objectification of men in men’s lifestyle magazines?
2. How do young men perceive the sexualisation of men in men’s lifestyle magazines?
3. How does the perception of sexualisation and objectification in men’s lifestyle magazines influence the attitude of young men towards their own body image?
4. How does the perception of sexualisation and objectification in men’s lifestyle magazines influence the attitude of young men towards men’s lifestyle magazines?
3. Previous research

Even though a majority of media and gender research on body dissatisfaction, sexualisation, appearance ideals and body surveillance has focused on girls and women, more research are starting to take men into account as well. There is for example media research which examines the Adonis Complex amongst male readers of men’s magazines demonstrating the increases in the sexualisation of men in advertising and magazines (Pope et al., 2001; Daniels & Lindner, 2018) as well as the effects that idealised images and sexualisation of men in media has on young men (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013; Daniels & Lindner, 2018). Other gender studies focus on the aftermath of those effects, such as the fact that many of today’s men have high levels of body dissatisfaction within the western world (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007). Several correlation studies from the field of media studies have shown that there is a positive relation between body dissatisfaction and viewing media idealised images (Botta, 2003; Morrison et al., 2003).

3.1. Body dissatisfaction and media visibility

The dissatisfaction with one’s overall appearances has tripled among men in the western world in the past 30 years, going from 15% in 1972 to 43% in 1997 (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007). This could possibly relate to the fact that male models have become increasingly muscular and lean over the past two decades (Pope et al., 2001; Leit et al., 2000). According to Leit et al. (2000) male models in Playgirl have lost 12 pounds of body fat, but therefore gained 27 pounds of muscle. Other than that, male models often have body types that are seen as unnatural without the use of steroids. Other magazines that are seen as mainstream magazines with a large group of male readers such as Men’s Health and Men’s Fitness also show an increase level of muscularity over the past two decades. Interesting to see is that according to Farquhar and Wasylkiw (2007) a muscular ideal is actually presented more in men’s magazines than in women’s magazines such as Cosmopolitan. This could mean that men are more exposed to unrealistic and homogenous images of the perfect body than women, which could cause them to emphasise more on the ideal body that appears to be attractive than their female counterparts. Even more interesting to see is that when male readers focus on the actual content of a magazine, meaning words and titles of articles, they are more likely to think positive about their body than when they just focus on the physical appearance of the models on the page (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007). Men who look more at the body size and shape of models are more likely to internalize these ideals and think that they have to look like them as well. Furthermore, research in the field of gender studies has shown that being unsatisfied about one’s body or appearance is not only limited to a group of men in puberty who are often seen as vulnerable (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013). Body dissatisfaction has shown up across multiple age groups, with adolescent and college men
being named as two groups with more body dissatisfaction compared to older groups of men. Women are often assumed to be more concerned with the level of fat. But with the athletic standard western media sets out for men, men are concerned about both not having too much body fat and being muscular. Pope et al. (2001) argue that this is a serious concern because the pursuit of the perfect physical appearance can often have huge psychological consequences. For men specifically, this can mean: binge-eating behaviours, smoking in order to reduce body fat or obsessive exercising. Which can lead to low self-esteem and depression.

3.2. gender and media studies

Given the negative consequences associated with body dissatisfaction among men most of the media as well as gender studies that are being discussed here focuses on the cultural ideals presented by the main-stream media, such as magazines in general as well as prime-time television shows, and how young men interpret those ideals. However, providing a better insight into how young men make sense out of content coming from specifically men’s lifestyle magazines seems to be an area mostly unexplored and therefore an interesting research gap according to both studies in the field of gender and media that have been looked at here (Ward, et al., 2015; Blond, 2008; Pope et al., 2001). How do young men define images in magazines, what do they feel when they scroll through a magazine, how do they perceive the high amount of sexualised content? These are all very vital questions in the current debate. And the answer will hopefully provide a contribution to future research within the research area of gender representation in the media. Most of the studies discussing male interpretation and the effects that men’s lifestyle magazines have on men and their self-esteem are sparse and often also conflicting. There are studies claiming men who are dissatisfied with the way they look are at an increased risk for image induced body dissatisfaction, whereas men who are satisfied with their appearance are not receptive to these messages at all (Arbour et al., 2006; Hausenblas et al., 2003). Another study found out that men who are actively trying to increase their muscularity through exercise do not suffer from image induced body dissatisfaction; they see men’s lifestyle magazines as inspiration and motivation (Halliwell, Dittmar & Orsborn, 2007). But in another study, body dissatisfaction was reduced after body satisfied males were exposed to ideal images from men’s lifestyle magazine Men’s Health (Humphreys & Paxton, 2004).

3.3. Limitations

Limitations of previous research in especially the field of media can be that it focuses on young men in English speaking countries. Apart from two studies, all others that have been taken into account when writing this chapter have been conducted in America, Australia,
Great Britain and Canada. Because of the vast cultural changes concerning men’s portrayal in mainstream media, one could argue that there is a need for research from other cultures to establish if men’s body dissatisfaction is generally affected by idealised images or if this is a phenomenon that is only restricted to specific parts of the world and certain societies. The aspect of including other cultures can be taken quite broadly, as countries but also even regions or cities could differ in culture. This could be seen as an interesting gap to fill in with future research, meaning that there is more to be found out about young men in other parts of the world. Furthermore, both Blond (2008) as well as Daniels and Lindner (2018) argue that there is a strong need for research in this field which involves older participants, meaning not just young boys but also an older group of adolescents and college students.

According to Blond only media studies analysing perception were conducted at adolescence and college/university men. This is interesting because the studies that have been reviewed suggest that young men can be negatively affected by seeing idealised images of male bodies. However, there is a lack of research examining whether this is also the case for this specific group of men. Which is even more interesting because men between the ages of eighteen and thirty are being seen as the main users of the 24/7 access to media (Buckingham, 2009). In Daniels and Lindner (2018) study on the effects of media images of athletes on the self-objectification amongst college students, it is also said that only images of white athletes from magazine *Sports Illustrated* were used in the study. They recommended that future research should also include images of men of colour. In Farquhar and Wasylkiw (2007), who also looked into the trends and consequences of body conceptualization in *Sports Illustrated* among young men, it was also said that not just one magazine or one issue of a magazine can cover the whole spectrum of magazines and define how young men feel about the content in those magazines. Therefore, Farquhar and Wasylkiw recommended that future research should try to locate magazines issues that sample a more homogenous period, which was not the case for their studies. In the studies that have been used during this chapter there was a focus on one specific magazine, rather than a variety. Having a variety of magazines for this study could possibly create a more diverse idea of male perspective and attitude towards magazines. According to Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2013) empirical studies have not yet investigated the multidimensional process of self-objectification among young men. Meaning more could be found out about individual and underlying reasons of self-objectification within this age group. More of this will be discussed during the theoretical framework.

However, it has been suggested that the process of self-objectification is likely to occur within the age group of 18 to 30. It has also been argued in Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2003) that more research on how mass media may impact self-objectification among male media users is needed because it helps us understand more about how male users act, how they use content and how the content makes them feel.
4. Theoretical frame and concepts

In this section the theories and concepts that are being used in this thesis are discussed. Relevant material from other studies, as also discussed earlier in the introduction and literature review, are specified and contextualised to this current study. First, there will be a closer look into the current debate about objectification of gender, or more specifically: objectification and the role men’s lifestyle magazines and possible other media channels play within that debate. Secondly, theories from three different fields will be discussed. Firstly, there will be two theories from the field of social studies highlighted in order to help us explain how we humans are influenced by our social environment and what kind of effect this has on the way we view ourselves and construct our social behaviour. Secondly, The Objectification Theory from the field of gender studies will be explained. Furthermore, the concept of objectification and how sexualisation derives from objectification will be discussed. Thirdly, we will have a closer look into two theories from the field of media studies to see how humans interact with media. A theoretical framework will be developed to support the findings in this current research.

4.1. On-going debate

As mentioned earlier, there is an on-going debate in society about the objectification of gender in western media (Felten et al., 2009). Most of this debate has been about women, which is not a coincidence. Numerous studies have shown that exposure of attractive images of other women has a negative effect on women’s self-esteem (Phillips, 2012; Felten et al., 2009; Blond, 2008) and can lead to unhealthy behaviour such as extreme exercising, restrictive eating or even an increase in cosmetic surgery. However, recent cultural changes demand that men also need to be included into this debate. Because according to Boni (2002), the number of magazines with a focus on men’s appearance has increased dramatically in the past decade. More advertisement display men as sexual objects and in popular culture, the male body is becoming increasingly muscular and trim (Blond, 2008). Even action figures, with young children as a target group, have become more muscular (Blond, 2008). Whilst this discussion came to life, there have been increasing reports of body dissatisfaction among young men almost simultaneous to these changes in the cultural portrayals of men. That in combination with the 24/7 media access, makes research suggest that a specific group of men, namely men of the millennial generation - people born between 1980 and 2000 - are just as aware as females of societal pressures to look good (Miller & Halberstadt, 2005) because they grow up in a world with internet. Furham and Calnan (1998) claim that there are indications showing that more than two thirds of young males are dissatisfied with their bodies and that the increase of male body dissatisfaction is related to the rising visibility of ideal male bodies in popular culture, such as men’s lifestyle magazines.
Most of the mentioned research examines the amount of objectified and muscular images of men in popular culture, or more specifically men’s lifestyle magazines. The main reason to conduct research within this area is because media are accused of giving an idealised and therefore unrealistic perception of the world (Milestone & Meter, 2012). Thus, this is thought to have negative effects on society: people will have a lower self-esteem and highlighting differences in gender, there will be more inequality between men and women (Nederlands Jeugd Instituut, 2011). According to Blond (2008) it could be possible that men who are satisfied with their bodies or actively working on their bodies perceive the media standard as attainable and therefore a positive source of information and inspiration. Dutch researchers Duits and Van Zoonen (2008) think that the debate around gender objectification of society is dramatised and the effects found by studies are incorrect because material has mainly been gathered over a short amount of time. Therefore, research does not measure the long-term effects. During this study, there will not be any focus on the possible effects of objectification in men’s lifestyle magazines on young men. This study would rather focus on the way young men perceive and experience objectified and sexualised content in men’s lifestyle magazines, as we live in a time where the audience is an active media user (McQuail, 1999). The social environment of an individual is constantly influencing attitude and perception (Hall, 1997). Because of this claim, one can assume that there is a possible relation to the content of a magazine and the perception of its viewer, as the magazine can also be seen as an instrument in a social environment. It is important to note this because, according to Hilkens (2008), the representation of objectification of gender in media has increased and this is the effect of a society changing. In this sense: society has an effect on media. On the other hand, there is also research suggesting the opposite: the representation of gender has changed because of media (Ter Bogt, 2008). It could also be considered that they influence each other. This is important to take into consideration when looking at the perception of the audience regarding the portrayal of men in men’s magazines, in other words: how they use a magazine and interpret the messages it sends out. First we will discuss general theories from the field of social studies that study human behaviour. During the framework we will go deeper into the topic of gender studies and media studies, which relate to the topic that is being discussed here.

4.2. Social theories

In order to understand the perception of young men towards the content in men’s lifestyle magazines and how this influences the attitude they have towards their own bodies and men’s lifestyle magazines, we might need to go deeper into looking at social theories describe the way we compare ourselves to media, or more in relation to this study objectified images in media, and how this changes our behaviour towards ourselves, or more importantly our
own bodies and thus, cause objectification among young men. In order to explain this two theories from the field of social studies will be discussed in this paragraph. One is Festinger’s Theory of Social Comparison and the other one is Bandura’s Social Learning Theory.

4.2.1. Festinger’s Theory of social comparison
Festinger’s Theory of Social Comparison explains how individuals evaluate their own opinion as well as (body) values by comparing themselves to others and learn how to define them by look at others. The theory was developed in 1954 and derives from the field of social psychology. According to Festinger’s Theory of Social Comparison, humans compare themselves to others in order to evaluate characteristics that have personal or social importance. Mostly we evaluate ourselves when the other person looks like us, or we think we can look like the other person. When looking at this in relation to westernized society, where idealised images of physical appearances are plentiful, it is assumed that people compare their own body to that of the media standard (Blond, 2008). When people compare themselves to others, the majority will see themselves as less attractive than the ideal, which could cause body dissatisfaction, which is the process where we let our self-worth depend on the way others view our bodies (Lorenzen, Grieve & Thomas, 2004). In recent years, studies built on Festinger’s Theory of Social Comparison showed the potential consequences that images of ideal bodies have on the body image of men, such as body dissatisfaction and obsessive exercising. However, currently there is no clear answer if media content is affecting the body of millennial men or to which extent media images of attractive male bodies in men’s lifestyle magazines play a role in this context. For this thesis this theory is useful because it will give us an in-depth look into how young men compare their own body to the standard of the media. The question is if the young men really do judge their body as less attractive based on the ideals the media sets out, as well as the question in which way their self-worth will be depended by looking at the body of others.

4.2.2. Bandura Social Learning Theory
Unlike Festinger’s Theory of Social Comparison, where the attention is focussed on the process of human beings comparing themselves to others, Bandura’s Social Learning Theory builds further on the idea how our behaviour is influenced by social situations, where it involves others. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory can also help understand media influence because media can set out a social framework for young people on how to behave and how to look (Blond, 2008). The name of Bandura’s Social Learning Theory does most of the explaining: people learn by being social. This can vary from observing and imitating others to using role models in order to set out an identity for us. The Social Learning Theory claims that children and adolescents (according to the study those are people under the age of twenty-nine) take over examples the media sets out under the condition that these examples
are presenting in a way, which is appealing to the audience. In 1977, Bandura conducted a highly regarded experiment to prove his Social Theory. Through the experiment, Bandura showed a direct link between watching television, taking it as an example and behaving according to the standards of the medium. At that time, there were several theories claiming that an increasing amount of violence on television would directly result in more violence in society. This can be related to the current debate among young men and video gaming, still showing the relevance of those questions and Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (Blond, 2008). During the experiment, three groups of children were shown three different videos of a so-called bobo doll, an object that interested all the children. Group A saw a video of an adult beating the doll, for doing this the adult was rewarded. Group B saw the exact same video: however, the adult was punished for his deed. And group C was shown the video and the beating did not have any consequences for the adult. After the experiment, the children in group A showed more aggressive behaviour than the children in group B and C. However, an overall percentage of 88% of all the children showed aggressive behaviour just from seeing violence in the clip. The Social Learning Theory claims that people adjust their idea, attitude and behaviour to those surrounding them, moreover: to what they see in the media, no matter what the consequences are. In relation to this current thesis the Social Learning Theory could mean that the audience is sensitive to media content and is also able to adjust their values to the reality as presented through the eyes of the media. This could mean that both images and text from men’s lifestyle magazines could influence young men even though they are aware of the consequences (low self-esteem, body dissatisfaction) and send out a strong message on how they should behave and look. What could that perception mean for their attitude towards themselves? Even though the Social Learning Theory is based on video clips, the emphasis on the visual images and their outcome has proven to be applicable to pictures and written content from magazines as well (Phillips, 2012). However a critic of the Social Learning Theory Ferguson (2010) said that one cannot assume that people, or young men in this case, immediately adapt to the behavioural standards of the media, or in this case magazines. There are other factors that play an important role in creating behaviour, such as the social environment that consist of family and friends as well as other media channels, such as for example social media. The fact that we cannot only direct behaviour to the influence of media is therefore also important for this thesis to keep in mind when analysing the results from the interviews, which will be conducted in this thesis and will be explained later in the method part.

4.3. Gender theories
Before looking into gender studies one has to define the concept of ‘gender’ as well be used during this thesis. According to Pope et al. (2000) gender is a socially constructed concept that divides humans into two different categories: male and female. Character trades of
human beings can also be described as feminine or masculine. This definition will be used during this thesis to describe gender. According to Thompson et al. (1999) gender has an impact on the way we perceive our bodies, our body image, because it is assumed there is more attention towards female bodies than male bodies in media. Several studies made clear that media, wither it is television or magazines, often use stereotype characters (Gauntlett, 2008; Goffman, 1979). Furthermore, men’s lifestyle magazines have proven to be a strong source of idealising images of men, making men seem like objects purely judged on their physiques (Blond, 2008). Especially gender stereotypes are used in advertisements in men’s lifestyle magazines (Nicolai, 1992). The Institute for Equality Between Women and Men (2009) claims that the media are playing an active role in creating gender equality by using sexual encrypted messages and stereotypes in advertisements in television and magazines. The study shows that lifestyle magazines do not define the identity of a person in general, but they do help to shape it. Men’s lifestyle magazines are being accused of objectification (Nicolai, 1992). From a historical perspective, most scientific studies in the field of media and gender studies addressing objectification by media and its relation it has to body image of its audience have focussed primarily on women, with less known about their male counterparts (Daniels & Lindner, 2018). Body image, the way we view our bodies and mostly concerns mostly to the negative perception of one’s body, has been used in the past to explain physiological consequences of objectification and/or self-objectification among women. Objectification is the process which a human being or an animal, is portrayed or being treated as an object (Nussbaum, 1995). In this specific thesis this term relates to the way men are being portrayed as objects in men’s lifestyle magazines. More specifically, objectification means that there is a high amount of attention focusing on the male body as an object. Objectification is relevant to study the perception and attitude of young men towards magazines because it plays an important role in the portrayal of men in western lifestyle magazines: several studies have proven the high amount of male objectification in men’s lifestyle magazines (Daniels & Lindner, 2018; Ward et al., 2015; Aubrey, 2006) Other studies also showed how lifestyle magazines in general play a key role is defining western ideal body standards (Blond, 2008) and how bodies are not just biological but also exist in social and cultural context, hence bodies convey social meaning and shape gendered experience (Frederickson & Roberts, 1997). For example: when looking at the Objectification Theory of Frederickson and Roberts young men could see their amount of muscles in relation to their masculinity. They let their self-worth depend on the image created by the magazines. This theory will be more thoroughly explained in the next paragraph. It is often assumed that reason for lack of research about men on this particular topic because men are at little or no risk of having problems related to seeing themselves as objects or the ideal image as set out by the media. This has been linked to the underlying patriarchal way of thinking in western
society, where men are still seen as strong and more self-secure than women. Moreover, it was never assumed that, as a result of that ideal image portrayed by the media, men could also suffer a negative body image from internalizing those media standards (Farquhar & Wasylkiw, 2007). However, in recent research, along with an increasing amount of studies about men and objectification in the field of gender studies, have shown that men can be just as vulnerable to objectification by media as women. Some studies suggest men are even more vulnerable to objectification of men in men’s magazines than women are to women in magazines (Campbell, 2000) unlike women who often feel like they have to meet the so-called Barbie doll standard (thin waist), there is a trend in lifestyle magazines for men where a very muscular ideal body type is presented and the idea that the amount of muscularity relates to level of masculinity. This increase of objectification of men in media is related to a negative perception of men towards their own bodies (Arbour et al., 2006). One possible way to help explain this increase but more important help to frame objectification among men themselves is the Objectification Theory developed by Frederickson and Roberts (1997).

### 4.3.1. Objectification Theory

The Objectification Theory is a theory built to understand the experiences of women and men in cultures that objectify them. The theory states that because of objectification, women and men learn to internalize an outsider’s view of their body and see themselves through that view. As a result people begin to view their bodies as object and separate that from the person that they are. This is what is called self-objectification. The theory has been successfully applied in the field of gender studies when studying female objectification; it links internalisation of media standards with objectification of the individual (Frederickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson, 2005). Over the last years, more research about objectification among men has started to emerge, especially concerning the exposure to retouched images of men and the drive for male muscularity. In this thesis, the Objectification Theory of Frederickson and Roberts (1997) is used in order to explain how young men perceive the objectification of men in men’s lifestyle magazines and if they therefore objectify themselves, if it changes their attitude towards their own bodies changes and how their attitude towards their own body changes when looking at the concept of objectification and the allying theory. Because there is such a high level of increasing objectification in men’s lifestyle it is important to take the Objectification Theory into account when looking at the way young men perceive the content in magazines and how they make sense out of it. Do they internalize the ideas the magazine gives them? To which extent does it influence them? Especially because this study is about young men, it is important to keep in mind that they grew up during a time where there was 24/7 access to media. On one hand this could mean that they are aware of the unrealistic body ideals and objectification of gender in the media. Therefore, they do not internalize these ideas, knowing they are fake
and unrealistic. On the other hand, they could rely on the media so much as a source of information that they therefore think they should look like the men in the magazines due to the constants subjection to media and its objectification of gender. Whilst self-objectification has been both found among women and men, research also says that women objectify themselves more to a greater extent than men (Blond, 2008). At the same time, there has been criticism about an absence of specifically understanding men’s objectification experiences (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013). After all, the differences in terms of objectification between men and women are different, as discussed earlier. Therefore, Moradi and Huang (2008) developed the Objectification Theory further and identified three central processes in the objectification framework that will help understand how young males experience objectification: 1) internalisation of appearance ideals, 2) self-objectification and 3) body surveillance. Furthermore, Moradi and Huang (2008) included patriarchal structures into the theory as well. Objectification stems from relatively stable patriarchal structures, institutions and processes deeply rooted into western society. They are beyond the individual. Therefore, the theory argues that living in a culture that sexually objectifies the female body creates a stream of anxiety-provoking events. These events force women to be very much aware of appearance with very little control over these experiences. Because these patriarchal structures are so deeply rooted into western society one could argue that people, or young men in this case, are more likely to see women being objectified magazines, rather than themselves. This does not mean that people ignore or are reluctant to objectification of men, but because stable patriarchal structures and believe systems have been implanted in western society for centuries. In their Objectification Theory, Frederickson and Roberts (1997) used Bartky’s (1990) definition of objectification, meaning the separation of one’s bodies or body parts from one’s identity, which reduces him/her to the status of an object. This relates to the earlier mentioned definition used by Nussbaum (1995). The Objectification Theory was originally developed with the idea that western culture socializes girls and women to view themselves as object to be evaluated based on their appearance rather than their character due to the constant subjection of their bodies to the leering gazes and evaluations. According to the Objectification Theory of Roberts and Fredrickson (1997) westernized culture teaches both men and women to internalize these societal gazes and evolutions of their bodies, reducing them to objects, which result in their increased preoccupation with their own physical appearance termed self-objectification. In relation to the current thesis this could mean that young men would be taught to internalize body standards as given to them by men’s lifestyle magazines and society. Given the fact that magazines are still an important influence in the life of young people and portray men as muscular one could argue that young men also become more occupied with the way they look, or even more: think that they have to be just as muscular and strong as the men in the magazines. Studies have shown
that after reading a women’s lifestyle magazine, women become more occupied with the way they look, they also feel the need to become thinner and express discomfort with the way they look because they do not meet the standards of the magazines. Observing one’s body from the perspective of an outsider, in this case the men’s lifestyle magazines, is called body surveillance. People who engage in high levels of body surveillance, thus who read a lot of these magazines, may constantly monitor their appearance and think of their bodies as objects rather than how their bodies feel to themselves or what the body can do. This results in self-objectification. Another important aspect of the Objectification Theory is the part where one is comparing one’s own body to the ideal bodies highly regarded by one’s culture. Magazines are a reflection of culture (Blond, 2008). Furthermore, people compare their bodies to the images they see in popular culture, especially lifestyle and fashion magazines (Blond, 2008; Farquhar & Wasyliw, 2007). The fact that these media images are often retouched to enhance, or disguise certain features has the potential to create an unreal and unachievable ideal. This results in body shame. According to Fredrikson and Roberts (1997, p. 181), “the negative emotion of shame occurs when people evaluate themselves relative to some internalized or cultural ideas and come up short”. Therefore, body shame occurs when people evaluate their bodies with the standards and ideals their culture sets out for them and come up short. Altogether, self-objectification, body surveillance and body shame make up the three-fold that is the Objectification Theory as adapted by Moradi and Huang. Thus, the purpose of using the Objectification Theory in this study is to document how young men perceive the objectification of men in men’s lifestyle magazines and to examine how the objectification of men influences the attitude towards themselves and their body image. In the process of studying this the Objectification Theory expects that exposure to objectified media content teach males about muscular, stylish, suntanned male ideals and that could lead to the internalisation of those ideals (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Moradi & Huang, 2008). This suggestion is supported by the studies done by Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2013), Statska and Morry (2001) and Knauss (2008), reporting the associations between internalisation of appearance ideals, reading lifestyle magazines among male college students and the perceived media pressure among the millennial generation.

4.3.2. The concept of sexualisation within objectification
Objectification is the first step: seeing a person as an object. Sexualisation is the next step, where you objectify a person through a specific frame. Therefore, sexualisation is another important part to take into account when studying the content of male magazines and the perception of its readers is the concept of sexualisation. Research has suggested that sexualisation of the male body is apparent in various media contents popular among young males (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013). Sexualisation is the process where people are
portrayed in a sexual context, objectified and, in addition, the narrow and unrealistic standard of physical beauty is highly emphasised. The American Psychological Association (2007, p. 1) defines sexualisation as “evaluating individuals based on their sexual appeal or sexual behaviour, equating standards of appearance to being sexually attractive, sexually objectifying a person, and/or inappropriately imposing sexuality on individuals.” This frame means: sexualisation is treating or portraying a person as an object of sexual desire, this could also be oneself. Just like objectification, also sexualisation has been widely reported to be an increasing phenomenon in modern western media (American Psychological Association, Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls 2007; Edwards 1997; Rohlinger 2002) or more specifically the world of men’s lifestyle magazines. The Task Force found out that in men’s lifestyle magazines men are often primarily evaluated based on their sexual appeal and behavior. For example: mocking overweight men, demeaning young men without any sexual experience as “uncool” and giving tips and tricks in order to create the so-called “perfect body” (Attwood, 2005). Such content may teach boys that one’s sexual appeal reflects one’s personal value and is therefore also important to take into account when looking deeper into the part how the content from men’s lifestyle magazines makes young men feel towards their own body. Do they see their body more as a way to be sexually attractive to others, as the concept of sexualisation explains?

4.3.3. The Adonis Complex
Objectification of men or when men objectify themselves as discussed in this chapter, is also a part of a concept called “The Adonis Complex”, which is a concept developed by Pope et al. (2000) to describe the new obsession with appearance and the enormous pressure from society and the media on men to achieve physical perfection, crossing the line from normal interest to pathological obsession. The name derives from Adonis, a character in Greek mythology known for his beauty and masculinity. In the book “The Adonis Complex”, Pope et al. (2000) writes that women have been struggling with the pressure from society to look good for centuries, but that the male body obsession is a relatively new phenomenon that needs to be taken seriously because the Adonis Complex poses a health threat that could result in exercise compulsion, which in the end can be just as deadly as eating disorder among women. The concept of the Adonis Complex not only includes the pursuit to become more muscular, but also the fear of becoming overweight. Objectification forms an important part of the Adonis Complex because there has to be a certain amount of objectification in order to develop a pathological obsession: your self-worth has to be depended on the way your body looks. According to Pope et al. (2000), this issue is just as visible among men as it is among women. Moreover, the Adonis Complex is a concept to help explain that men are just as vulnerable to the pressures of society as women have been in the past centuries. With the rising visibility of male bodies in western media, Pope et al. (2000) argue it is time to
include this term into future research to recognize the concept of male objectification in western society. Research suggests men are being “de-personalized” and their bodies seen as “mechanized pieces of equipment” (American Psychological Association, Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls, 2010). The ideal man in men’s lifestyle magazines has been described as: “young, usually white, muscular, strong-jawed, clean shaven (often all over), healthy, sporty, successful and therefore sexy” (Edwards, 1997, p. 41). In addition, lifestyle magazines portray the male body as something that can be worked on to make bodies more sexually attractive to others, particularly females. For example, popular men’s lifestyle magazines such as Men’s Health have been shown to promote tricks for meeting those standards, suggesting that a masculine body will also increase sexual success. Connecting this to the Objectification Theory by Frederickson and Roberts (1997) by interpreting the information media gives them, men could internalize these ideas and start to see themselves as sex objects, which could result in an Adonis Complex.

4.4. Media theories
In the past two paragraphs we have looked at several theories and concepts from the field of gender and social studies. However, in order to see how men’s lifestyle magazines, which are a part of media, can change our attitude and perception it is important to have a closer look at media theories. And the media, who according to Bandura and Festinger create social situations that influence us and teach us how to behave. But how do we influence the media and how does the media influence us? Or even more important: how do we find out what content influences us and why? In order to find out why we perceive content from men’s lifestyle magazines in a certain way and how we construct our attitude based on information coming from that content, we must have a closer look into theories from that field. McQuail’s (1999) gives us an insight in how we looked at media influence over the years. In the first stage, during the beginning of the twentieth century, it is thought that the media was an almighty power and decided what the public thought. However, that thought changed quickly during the second and third stage, from the early 1940s until the late 1970s. In that time, there was an active discussion about what role media played in our lives. The media still has a certain power. However, the audience is an independent thinker and can perceive the message of the media in its own way and use it for its own use. McQuails’ findings suggests that media influence is a combination of what Hilkens (2008) and Ter Bogt (2008) earlier said: both media and audience influence each other. In relation to the current study, this could mean that men in the ages between eighteen and twenty-eight see content in men’s lifestyle magazines, take it into consideration and, as active participants, form their own opinion and attitude over the way males are being portrayed and idealised media images are taken into account. We must also take into account that factors such as social background
and social reference frame play an important role in the way young men perceive media content and what their general attitude towards themselves and men’s lifestyle magazines is. Knowing what kind of media users the respondents could be, it is also interesting to look at theories that could explain why they would use media and in which way they would. Therefore we use the Uses and Gratification Theory, as developed by Severin and Tankard in 1997.

4.4.1. Uses and Gratification.

The Uses and Gratification Theory is here to help understand why young men (actively) search for content in men’s lifestyle magazines or not, and if they fulfil specific needs. This theory in particular can help us explain how men feel about the portrayal of men in men’s lifestyle magazines because both women and men are very critical towards magazines and do not read or pay attention to what they do not perceive as interesting and therefore do not like (Hermes, 1993). Relating to the Uses and Gratification Theory, this could mean that young men would not pay attention or use and buy magazine because they do not feel specific needs towards its content. Or they would pay attention and buy men’s lifestyle magazines, because they fulfil needs they are looking for. Or personal needs such as emotion, pleasure and status. It is important for this study to acknowledge the active role of the audience, especially keeping in mind that this study will focus on young men coming from the generation of Millennials. According to Williams and Page (2010), Millennials are strongly independent; growing up in a rapid digital revolution of computers and technology. With a large and 24/7 accesses to millions of channels, Millennials are used to following podcasts, blogs or magazines almost customized to their personal needs. Therefore, one could argue that Millennials are much more critical when it comes to selecting the media channels they use, thus which channels influence them. For a channel, such as magazine, to reach a target group and influence them can be quite a challenge these days. According to the Uses and Gratification Theory, one has a more positive attitude towards things we think we need, than things we think about as useless.

4.4.2. Cultivation Theory

Gerbner developed the Cultivation Theory in 1973 and according to McQuails findings (1999), there was a different idea about the use of media during that specific time frame. Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory is based on the idea that young people adjust their behaviour and attitude according to the standard the media sets out. Therefore, magazines can play an important role into shaping an individual’s perception of the world, let alone them or the sender of the information, which is the men’s lifestyle magazine. For this study, this could mean that young men adjust their attitude to the standard that media sets out. Because men’s
lifestyle magazines show an increasing amount of focussing on men’s bodies and sex, the standard could include the objectification of men, the ideal body images and also sexualisation of men. There will be a closer look into these concepts later in this chapter. In other words, the standards the media sets out become their standards and values. However, Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory is still very often being used now to explain how media, especially television, influences teenagers and people in their early twenties. Because the theory is developed to explain the power of television, it might be unlikely to assume it could also be applicable to magazines. However, in her studies about sexualisation and objectification of women in women’s lifestyle magazines, Phillips (2012) argued that Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory is also applicable to other mainstream channels such as magazines and radio. Relating to this study, Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory claims that young people who are often being showed idealised media images, sexual encrypted texts or objectified role models will change their behaviour, attitude and perception according to the values the media holds on these topics. On the other hand, it was earlier said in this chapter that it was important to keep in mind the social reference frame of an individual when looking at the way media influence and this is also important to keep in mind when using this theory in the research.

4.4.3. Attitude and perception

According to Adnan and Khan (2010), perception is the process in which people select, organise and interpret information to form a meaningful picture of the world. Perception is often regarded as the first and most practical step in the process of interpreting information. And in order to see how men perceive the (objectified) content in men’s lifestyle magazine, it is important to take closer look into the concept of perception. One definition of perception is that as used by Phantong and Settanaranon (2011) in their study about the difference in attitude and perception in consumer behaviour from the millennial generation. The process of perception specifically for Millennials consists out of three elements: 1) exposure, 2) attention and 3) interpretation. The process of perception begins with receiving outside information. You are exposed to something, in this particular thesis this is a men’s lifestyle magazines, whereas a picture, text or headline grasps your attention. Publishers and marketers often use attention-getting tools to accomplish getting the attention to gain the attention of the Millenial generation. It is seen as a necessary tool for magazines to understand the nature of perception from its target group in order to create something that influences them in relation to men’s magazines this could mean screaming headlines and controversial pictures. The next step, once the attention is grasped, is selecting information. Needs, expectations and past experiences help people assign meanings to the content they see and distinguish the information that will offer benefit to them. This co-relates to earlier
findings by Blond (2008), suggesting men who work out are more likely to feel inspired by the body ideal in men’s magazines than men who do not work out. This step in particular is also strongly related to the individual beliefs of a human being and the knowledge about a certain topic. The next step is organizing information and to interpret the chosen information; this will lead to the final step of overall perception. This theory, with its many steps, might sound confusing at first as it unveils the many steps in the process of perception. Therefore, it is also necessary to use a method that will help us explain these steps in practice. The Photovoice Method by Hergenrather (2009) will be thoroughly explained in the method section and will help this research create a better insight into the perception of young men towards the content in men’s lifestyle magazines, especially focussing on sexualisation and objectification. Ultimately, the way we perceive information shapes our attitude. Attitude is a learned global (typically emotional) evaluation of an object (person, place or issue) that influences thought and action (Perloff, 2016). In this study, the concept of attitude defines how young men evaluate the information they have selected from magazines and how this makes them feel towards themselves and men’s magazines in general. An attitude is the way one thinks, feels and acts towards something they have perceived (Evans et al., 2009). But attitude is sometimes a little bit more complicated than that, it is a mental concept based on motivational, emotional, perceptual and cognitive process that all play a role in evaluating an object of thought and the way one responds to it (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). Attitude can be everything people have an opinion on and helps them express themselves in either positive or negative way towards something. Evans et al., (2009) and Hawkins and Mothersbaugh (2010) stress that attitude heavily lies on three elements: an individual belief system (cognitive), feelings (affective) and tendencies (behavioral). The cognitive component consists of beliefs or knowledge of the individual about an object or a particular situation. Readers of magazines see a certain topic in the magazines and if they think it is interesting they will pay attention to it. However, interesting is a rather broad term. Something could shock you, and therefore grasps your attention (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2000). Then there is the affective component, with consist out of the feelings of the individuals, emotions or expressions on the issue which than results in interpreting the object or oneself as either way negative or positive. And finally, there is the behavioral component, which makes consumers act on the interpreted information in a certain manner. In the process of creating an attitude towards oneself or men’s magazines these three elements influence each other and together they create the overall attitude towards the topic.

4.5. Summary of the theoretical framework
The theoretical framework consist out of several theories coming for three different fields, the field of social studies, gender studies and media studies. During the two theories from social
studies help explain what happens when young men, start to comparing themselves to others. Festinger’s Theory of Social Comparison explains how individuals evaluate their own opinion as well as values by comparing themselves to others. Unlike Festinger’s Theory of Social Comparison, where the attention is focused on the process of human beings comparing themselves to others, Bandura’s Social Learning Theory built further on the idea how our behavior is influenced by social situations. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory can also help understand media influence because media can set out a social framework for young people on how to look. Furthermore, there was a closer look into the field of gender studies. According to Pope et al. (2000) ‘gender’ is a socially constructed concept that divides humans into two different categories: male and female. Objectification is the process which a human being or an animal, is portrayed or being treated as an object (Nussbaum, 1995). The Objectification Theory is a theory built to understand the experiences of women and men in cultures that objectify them. The theory states that because of objectification, women and men learn to internalize an outsider’s view of their body and see themselves through that view. Body image, the way we view our bodies and concerns mostly to the negative perception of one’s body, has been used in the past to explain physiological consequences of objectification and/or self-objectification among women. As a result people begin to view their bodies as object and separate that from the person that they are. This is what is called self-objectification. The theory links internalization of media standards with objectification of the individual (Frederickson, Roberts, Noll, Quinn, & Twenge, 1998; Moradi, Dirks, & Matteson, 2005). Self-objectification can possibly result in the Adonis Complex, which is a concept developed by Pope et al. (2000) to describe the obsession with appearance and the enormous pressure from society and the media on men to achieve physical perfection. Lastly, several theories from the field of media and how media influences human’s were discussed and highlighted. The Uses and Gratification Theory is here to help understand why young men (actively) search for content in men’s lifestyle magazines or not, and if they fulfil specific needs. This theory in particular can help us explain how men feel about the portrayal of men in men’s lifestyle magazines because both women and men are very critical towards magazines and do not read or pay attention to what they do not perceive as interesting and therefore do not like (Hermes, 1993). Secondly, Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory is based on the idea that young people adjust their behavior and attitude according to the standard the media sets out. this thesis.

5. Method (and material)

In this thesis, a qualitative approach was used in order to research the perception and attitude of young men towards the sexualisation of men in men’s lifestyle magazines. Qualitative studies had proven to be a useful way of capturing the construction of male body
image in media as well as the related drive for muscularity amongst its target group (Adams et al, 2005; Daniels & Lindner, 2018). This thesis investigates underlying reasons to explain concepts such as attitude and perception; which are hard to measure in quantitative research. In this thesis, three magazines were used, each published in Europe during April 2018. These three magazines were Men’s Health, GQ and Men’s Journal. A lifestyle magazine is a popular publication concerned with lifestyle. Men’s lifestyle magazines are publications specifically targeted towards men often using fashion, health and gadgets as their main subjects (Benwell, 2003; Benwell, 2005). The chosen men’s lifestyle magazines in this thesis meet the requirements of Benwell’s definition and were written in English. These three magazines were published in the United Kingdom (UK) but sold all over Europe (Phillips, 2012). For this thesis, these three magazines in particular were chosen because they are the number 1, 5 and 10 out of the top 10 of most read men’s lifestyle magazines in Europe (Phillips, 2012). A selection out of the most popular, middle and last choice would provide a comprehensive variety of men’s lifestyle magazines within the European context. The choice for April 2018 was because this empirical study was conducted during this specific month, characterizing an updated research. Furthermore, in order to gain relevant answers and contextualise the thesis in a time frame, the material used in this study needed to be recent and up-to-date. Limitations of previous research were that it focused on only young men in English speaking countries. Apart from two studies, all other studies mentioned earlier had been conducted in the United States, Australia and Canada. Because of the vast cultural changes concerning men’s portrayal in mainstream media, one could argue that there was a need for research from other countries to establish if men’s body dissatisfaction is generally affected by idealised images or if this is a phenomenon that is only restricted to specific parts of the world and certain cultures. Although this study looks at magazines in English, the choice was to interview European young men not just from English-speaking countries. The qualifications for the respondents were that they needed to be a European citizen, speak English (in order to understand the content of the magazines) and because this study looks specifically into young men they needed to be born between 1990 and 2000. Especially because, as earlier mentioned, unlike Millennials born earlier between 1980 and 1989, they have grown up with 24/7 media access as well as the Internet. The respondents did not need to be frequent readers of men’s lifestyle magazines used in this study nor did they need to be readers of magazines in general. The motivation for this is that although they might not be an active buyer or reader of men’s magazines, they can still stumble upon this kind of magazine in everyday life, for instance, at the supermarket or in their social media news feed and be influenced by them. This thesis gathered the respondents through Jönköping University. The university has a large number of international students that fit the selection criteria. The respondents are not millennials in general, but millennials that are students at Jönköping
University. The thesis used semi-structured interviews as one of the methods to answer the research questions. A semi-structured interview is a method of research where there is no rigorous set of questions but an open concept, allowing new ideas to be brought up during the interview as a result of what the respondent said (Phillips, 2012). To keep a certain amount of structure, a framework of themes was used during the interview. These themes descended from the research questions and were perception, attitude, sexualisation and objectification. It was important for the outcome of this research to have flexibility in relation to the posed questions to allow adaptation according to the feedback provided by the interviewees even if questions were not included in the topic list. When it comes to in-depth interviews concerning male respondents, unlike their female counterparts, it is argued that one would be better off using individual interviews instead of focus groups. It is considered that focus groups could create ‘macho’ behavior or any other kind of ‘bragging’ with its male respondents, not gathering any useful or true answers (Allen, 2005). Therefore, the choice for interviews and not focus groups seems to be more suitable to male respondents. There were eight individual interviews conducted within this thesis, each lasting around 45 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English. All interviews took place between April 21-17, 2018 in rooms of Jönköping University. The respondents are students from the university of Jönköping and they are part of the millenial generation. Each interview was recorded and later transcribed (see appendix 2). However, because of the large number of extra pages (over 100) of all the transcripts, only one example of an interview transcript and a mood board is included as appendix (see appendix 2 and 3) in the thesis for its readers to get a good idea of the interview structure and content. Therefore, as agreed with the thesis supervisor, not all transcripts and mood boards are presented. The structure of the interviews consists of the following format: first the thesis was introduced to the respondents. Secondly, the respondent was asked questions by using a topic list (see appendix 1). Furthermore, they were asked about their top of mind associations with men’s magazines and terms frequently used in this research such as ‘male portrayal in men’s lifestyle magazines’. These questions were asked in order to see how the attitude of young men is towards lifestyle magazines in general. Thirdly, they were asked to make a mood board of the magazines on the computer. The mood boards were built using the free-access software called Canva. All magazines used in the study are in PDF format. A digital format was chosen because it is part of a growing trend. Magazines do not decrease in popularity; they have transitioned from print to a digital format. Secondly, the specific group of respondents gathered for this thesis are known not to read print magazines anymore (Phillips, 2012) but are frequent readers of online editions, such as the PDF formats of men’s lifestyle magazines. In order to match the format used during the interview with its target audience, namely young males, it was chosen to use PDF formats of the three magazines. One could argue that there might be a different experience
between print magazines and their digital versions. Digital magazines include links to products, videos and brand publishers. For this study, a PDF of the print versions of magazines was chosen without all of the tools mentioned above. One could see the method as applied in this thesis as making a digital scrapbook. The method where respondents make mood boards is called the Photovoice Method or the Hergenrather Method (Hergenrather et al., 2009) as used by Phillips (2012) in her studies about the sexualisation of women in the Dutch editions of Glamour and Cosmopolitan. This approach is very pertinent for this thesis because, as argued by Hergenrather et al. (2009), by letting participants select images themselves, they are more willing to explain how they perceive images from magazines and how these images affect them. According to Homan (2006), the dialogue between the respondent and researcher during the interview could create a bigger understanding of underlying thoughts when it comes to media use. The mood board helped answering the research questions because it is a tool to find out how and why young men select content they like and do not like: we discuss the content in order to see how the respondent perceives images and how this made him feel (attitude). Content could be both pictures as well as text.

Last, there was a discussion about the questions asked in the beginning of the interview about their attitude towards magazines and by letting them answer the same questions again at the end of the interview. Would they feel differently about magazines (attitude) now that they have been asked questions about how they perceive the content? After that, the data was transcribed and divided in general discussed themes of the interviews. The second part is the analysis of the gathered data: identifying patterns and subsequent categorisation of the answers (Powell & Single, 1996). Building on the idea of the Hergenrather Method, the content of the transcripts and mood boards was analysed. In earlier gender studies, analysing data and identifying patterns with subsequent categorisation of answers as per the Hergenrather Method has been proven to be a suitable analysis method to find answers to research questions (Hergenrather; 2009; Philips, 2012). Therefore, this method was preferred to analyse the interviews’ content rather than any other more specific analysis methods such as critical discourse analysis. The categories coming from the analysis are almost identical to the ones discussed during the interviews, namely perception, attitude, objectification and sexualisation. These categories have been chosen because they are all represented in the four research questions of this thesis. In order to find answers to these questions these four topics are taken into account when analysing the outcomes of the interviews. However, there are a few critical points coming with this method and the chosen research group. First of all, the validity. There is only eight respondents questioned during this thesis. This means that the answers coming from this thesis can only be a possible indicator for further research. One cannot generalise the results coming from the analysis over the entire group of millenials. Especially because the group exist out of students of
Jönköping University. They part of the millenial generation but do not represent the group as a whole. Furthermore, this group is a very homogenious group: highly educated, white and studying. If the members of the group would come from more different backgrounds one can possibly create a more diverse spectrum as well as answers. Secondly, there is the reliability. As a researcher one can only hope that when the Hergenrather Method is used again in this context the results are the same. However, all interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, in that time all the content for the analysis was gathered. This means that attitude and perception have been discussed with respondents over a short amount of time, and this could also mean it is just a snapshot of a short amount of time. One can never be sure whether the answers gained in such a small amount of time resemble the reality and are therefore reliable. However a serious attempt has been made to made this thesis as reliable as it can be, with all of its limitations.
6. Analysis (and result)

During this research eight respondents have been interviewed. All of them were between the age of 20 and 28. Most interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. The interviews consisted of two parts: questions relating to the research topic and making a mood board. All the content from the mood board came from the three magazines as mentioned in the method part of this thesis: GQ, Men’s Health and Men’s Journal. This was done in order to create context for the interview and the questions that would be asked. The respondents made a mood board with placing on one side images and text that they liked and on the other side pictures and text they did not like. Most content included pictures of men and products (tech gadgets, clothes and other fashion items) that the interviewees were interested in. Throughout the interview, questions were asked to the interviewees to explain their mood boards and answer questions about whether the respondents read magazines, what they thought of role models in magazines and what they thought of the sexual objectification of men in men’s lifestyle magazines. Furthermore, in this thesis there is also a strong interest in how young men perceive images in magazines and what their attitude towards themselves and the magazine is after selecting content from magazines. In other words: how they perceived the content and later created an opinion on their own bodies and the magazines, which can be defined as their attitude. The answers to the questions asked during the interviews as well as the content of the mood boards are analysed and discussed in the next pages. Firstly, there is a closer look into the general impression of men towards men’s lifestyle magazines and how young men behave towards magazines as active users of media. Secondly, we go deeper into the matter of their perception of objectification and sexualisation. Lastly, we look how this perception influences the attitude towards their own body and how they feel about men’s lifestyle magazines after they have scrolled through the content.

6.1. General impressions of men’s lifestyle magazines

At the beginning of each interview the respondents were asked if they read magazines, or more specifically: men’s lifestyle magazines. Only one respondents still actively buys print editions of men’s lifestyle magazines and admitted reading men’s lifestyle magazines on a regular basis. The other seven claimed that they did not buy or read men’s lifestyle magazines, however, they did come across it frequently in their everyday life: in the waiting room at the dentist, in the supermarket or in their social media feed. Two respondents said they actively followed men’s lifestyle magazines on social media. There was no respondent who never came across or did not read a men’s lifestyle magazine. This relates to Ward, Epstein, Caruthers, and Merriwether (2011) who consider that even though the number of frequent readers of both printed and digital magazines might have dropped, they are still an
important channel and social influence in the lives of young people, and in this case young men. Respondents associated men’s lifestyle magazines with fashion, glamour and bare-chested men. A reason not to buy or read men’s lifestyle magazines on a regular basis was because these topics did not interest them, and magazines give an unrealistic idea of how men look. The respondents also described the men in men’s lifestyle magazines as muscled, naked, fit and often having a perfectly cut beard. One respondent even noticed that, although the cover of GQ featured Naomi Campbell and Skepta, the number of white models versus models of other skin colours in the magazines was unequal. Overall in the magazines there were more white models used. These answers match the results in Edwards (1997), who argued that the ideal man in men’s lifestyle magazines is often portrayed as muscular, white, healthy, sporty, successful, shaven and therefore sexy. All of the respondents’ thought the term sex sells was true. Furthermore, the respondents associated role models with celebrities, often arguing that a role model was someone who was familiar to them and showed a personality or several characters’ trades in a longer interview in the magazine. For example, that can be seen in the fact that all the respondents choose the interview and pictures with wrestling champion turned Hollywood comedian John Cena in Men’s Journal as something they very much liked. Arguing that this was the essence of a role model: a former hulk showing off his unexpected funnier, softer side. They did not feel he was objectified because multiple sides of his personality were shown. This can be related to the findings of Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1977), which considers that people see others as examples or role models when they are presented in a way that is appealing to the audience. Based on the findings in this thesis, one can therefore interpret the answers given by the young men as that they see other men as role models when they are presented in a way that is appealing to them. All respondents also said that they felt a need to see more role models like this in men’s lifestyle magazines. One of the things that most respondents did not like was the cover of GQ, which showed a bare skinned Naomi Campbell together with rapper and musician Skepta (see Figure 1). Respondents 7 and 8 called the amount of nudity in the picture “embarrassing”, “unnecessary” and “did not see the use of naked models on the cover of a magazine”.
While the GQ cover (Figure 1) was the picture most of the respondents did not like, arguing that it would be “embarrassing to pick up in a store” (respondent 8) and that “did not see the use of naked models” (respondent 7), the cover of the Men’s Journal (Figure 2) was liked by the absolute majority of respondents. They thought John Cena was portrayed in an unexpected funny and honest way, saying he was approachable and that they would therefore see him as a role model. They could relate to him. This can be explained by the Social Learning Theory of Bandura (1977). When something is presented to us in an appealing way, such as John Cena who the young men interviewed in this thesis perceive as funny, honest and approachable, we are more likely to see that person as an example on how to act and look. In other words: because John Cena is presented in a way that the interviewees perceive as approachable they are according to the theory more likely to follow his example and therefore see him as a role model.

6.2. The male millennial as active user of media

This thesis is built on the idea that the audience, young men in this case, are active users of media. Because there is a large amount of media sources available, they have the luxury to be ‘picky’ on what they do and do not want to read and see (Williams & Page, 2010). As discussed earlier during the theoretical approach of this thesis, the Uses and Gratification Theory was mentioned. All the respondents, except one, have said not to read magazines. The main reason not to read men’s lifestyle magazines was because the content did not interest them. Relating to the Uses and Gratification Theory (Severin & Tankard, 1997), this could mean that young men have no need to read a magazine and therefore do not pay attention to men’s lifestyle magazines. Furthermore, they would also not be influenced by its content because the content of the magazine does not fulfil the needs that they have. However this
cannot be true. Because if that would be true magazines would not exist because there is a lack of interest. If the magazine did not influence them, this would mean that their attitude towards themselves would also not change after reading a magazine. In the beginning of the interviews, respondents said that magazines portrayed “an unrealistic version of the truth” and that the content did not interest them. Furthermore, they said they would not compare themselves to models because “it is the full-time job of a model to look great” (respondent 1), “it is top sport to keep a body like that” (respondent 7), and describing the world of magazine body ideals as a “completely different dimension” (respondent 6). According to Bandura’s Social Learning Theory, this means that the audience would not follow or compare themselves to the example men’s lifestyle magazines set out for them because the content is perceived as fake and unrealistic. It would not influence their attitude towards themselves or the way they view their body. At the beginning of the interviews, before the mood board exercise, the respondents were asked what came first to their mind when they thought about self-comparison to media ideals in men’s lifestyle magazines. The respondents talked about “other people” (not them) comparing themselves to media ideals, and therefore being influenced by media ideals:

Respondent 6: I would say a lot of people maybe have them [self-compared], myself I do not because myself that is a whole other dimension, that is beyond me, I am only myself. But you obviously can take inspiration from people that are on the magazines and in the magazines.

Respondent 2: Well, I think, I think most people want to be fit and want to be muscular, but I think there is, I don’t know, it’s a tricky thing.

Respondent 1: Self-comparison to media ideals. I think people do that a lot.

Interviewer (Interview 1): Do you do it?

Respondent 1: I try not to. Probably do it sometimes, but not actively.

Respondent 7: [Self-comparison to media ideals is] Not applicable. Like I said, it’s their job and that is their job to look good to be fit and they spend like hours a day working out and doing diets like this is something that is required for them.

Paradoxically, then there were also respondents who talked about their own personal experiences with self-comparison to media ideals.

Respondent 3: [It] happens, that I see the differences. Especially when it comes to the outward appearance than I see that I don’t look like them [men in men’s lifestyle magazines]
and if I can elaborate on my feeling sometimes it makes me feel, first of all, I am impressed but also intimidated and I feel a bit of pressure and I cannot avoid but then I wish very often I could look like that or maybe in the future.

Respondent 5: Self-comparison that again is motivating to me. Because when I see a person, I mean, of course, it gets frustrating to see only guys with only perfect hair and things like that but then I think like there are more sides to it than that. I mean I focus on it because of who I am, but also more inspired and motivated and offended of them being perfect because I take what I want to take for it.

Respondent 4: I feel okay but it's true that since I was a teenager I started to look at these magazines and it was always like a mirror [because] you want to compare yourself and you want to be [like this] because it's this stereotype of what is accepted by society and mostly when your eighteen years [you want to be] what women want. At least this like what the society of the people is going to be happy with it.

This showed an interesting paradox. Even though men's lifestyle magazines in general were described as “uninteresting” and “unrealistic”, their content was perceived as “inspirational” and “motivating” or “intimidating” later on in the interviews. In other words: the content did have an effect on the respondents, so according to the Uses and Gratification Theory, there are certain needs to discover. Therefore, one could argue that the Social Learning Theory of Bandura would either way not appeal to this group of men, or that there is something more to it. Because when looking at the answers given at the beginning of the interview, with the knowledge from the Uses and Gratification Theory, one assumes the content does not have neither a positive nor negative influence on the young men, because they are not interested, and they do not have any special “needs” to fill. However, this claim proves to have two sides. When questioning further, indeed, it was true: young men do find magazines uninteresting and do not read the magazines but that is because they do not fulfil emotional needs such as emotion, pleasure or status, which is what they are looking for when buying products (Blond, 2008). This could also possible explain why, apart from one, none of the respondents is buying magazines. Furthermore, needs such as personal and social integrative needs, also frequently used in the Uses and Gratification Theory, such as status and staying in contact and up-to-date to discuss topics with family and friends are also not applicable to this group of men. But when trying to explain why all the respondents still frequently mentioned terms such as “motivating” and “inspirational” or even “intimidated”, in other words: why the magazine still does something to them, one has to look at the cognitive needs of the Uses and Gratification Theory. These are, for example, getting inspired and gaining information about the way they should look (Blond, 2008; Halliwell, Dittmar & Orsborn, 2007). These are terms
that all respondents used in the interviews. And according to Blond (2008) it is also something that men’s lifestyle magazines give: they play a key role in defining how young men should look. Therefore, young men turn to magazines with a, possible for themselves undiscovered, need to feel inspired. Cognitive needs can have both a negative and positive outcome, which also reflects in the varying range of answers (intimidated vs. inspirational). When analysing the answers of the respondents, they claim that magazines mostly inspire them in the way they needed to look in terms of fashion and exercising, in other words: lifestyle magazines inspire them in their outer appearance.

Respondent 4: Because they really want to show off the muscles and flexibility and things like that and that inspired me and motivated me.

Respondent 5: I mean, I focus on it because of who I am, but also more inspired and motivated by them (men in men’s lifestyle magazines) being perfect because I take what I want to take from it.

Respondent 7: Oh yeah, to me, it is an inspiration, for sure. I don’t feel like they are trying to shame me into working out because I already work out a lot because I want it for myself.

Respondent 2: Yeah, more in [the] way like this guy, I could be this guy. I don’t need to be exactly this guy but yeah, he is doing this, I might try, why not? So, I think it’s inspirational probably a bit more.

Respondent 6: I would say mostly the thing I get inspiration from is the fashion aspect. I would say because they do showcase some of the latest fashion.

The fact that men’s lifestyle magazines still fulfil cognitive needs within young men is very important in order to help us explain how young men perceive objectification and sexualisation. According to Aubrey (2007) cognitive needs fulfilled by the media create social meaning, which also means the way young men view their own body. For example: if there is a wish to fulfil a certain need, in this case be inspired by the content of pictures in men’s magazines and how men should look, the media user is likely to adapt his standards to the standards of the media. Because if young men turn to magazines in order to gain inspiration for their outer appearance, they must also notice the high amount of objectification of men in men’s lifestyle magazines (Ward et al., 2015, Aubrey, 2007; Manago et al., 2015). Furthermore, the need of young men to feel inspired will help us explain how the perception of those two terms influences their attitude towards their bodies as well as magazines in general. Early in the history of communication research, the Uses and Gratification Theory was developed to research what and how audiences are attracted to certain kinds of media.
Moreover, the theory developed a tool to research what types of content satisfied certain types of audiences and to which extent they perceived the content of media channels and if it satisfied their social and psychological needs. After all, it is said that audiences base their choice of media channel coming from specific psychological needs. For example: an audience wants to be entertained and relax (psychological needs), therefore they choose a comedy show on television instead of a newspaper with a long read in order to satisfy that need.

According to the Uses and Gratification Theory, in relation to the cognitive needs that young men have, men’s lifestyle magazines could help fulfil them and, ultimately, could contribute to the attitude of young men towards themselves, their own body and the way they perceive sexualisation and objectification. After all, during this analysis, it became clear that, when young men look at men’s lifestyle magazines, they mostly look at images of other men and compare their own bodies to the images of men in the magazines. Other needs, according to the Uses and Gratification Theory, can be affective needs, such as pleasure or personal integrative or social integrative needs such as status and contact with family and friends. As mentioned earlier, all three magazines used in this study only fulfil cognitive needs within the interviewees. And that is why men use these magazines. During the mood board exercise, it became clear that young men turn to a magazine in order to gain information on how they should look, what they should where, how they should work out, and what is fashionable right now. As active media users, they might not internalise the ideal men according to the magazines completely, but they do rely on magazines as a source of inspiration on how they should look. One could argue that the magazines fulfils both social needs as well as cognitive needs. On one hand the magazines creates meaning on how men should act in a social context, on the other hand it fulfils needs they are not aware of. This could also explain why young men themselves are not aware of the influence the magazines have on their body image and attitude, for they are mostly not aware of their own cognitive needs let alone the influence it has on them (Severin & Tankard, 1997). This would explain why the respondents, when asked about to which extent a magazine influences them, are mentioning “others being influenced by magazine content” rather than themselves. In relation to the Uses and Gratification Theory, one can say here that the media dependency of the individual is high when an individual’s (body) goal satisfaction heavily relies on information from media channels, in this case men’s magazines. When looking at the results from the interviews, it could be seen that most young men feel that the media is portraying men in the way that men should look like, according to social and cultural patterns. Furthermore, the young men in the interviews do admit relying on magazines to get inspiration on how they should look. Thus, if the young men’s individual (body) goals rely on the information from the lifestyle magazines, they are also more vulnerable to internalise that message. In addition, once the need is born to turn to a magazine for inspiration, men feel compelled to use the content
from men’s magazines more. Based on the Uses and Gratification Theory (1997), this means that there is a desire created to learn about how one should look. The individual’s desire for information from the media is the primary variable in explaining why media messages have cognitive, affective, or variable effects. What makes the outcome of this analysis relevant is the fact that the uses and gratifications of users can ultimately lead to the construction of social behaviour. For example: if there is a wish to fulfil a certain need, in this case be inspired by the content of pictures in men’s magazines and how men should look, the media user is likely to adapt his standards to the standards of the media. This also relates to the Objectification Theory (1997), where it is argued that bodies do not just exist in a biological context but can also be put into social and cultural context, meaning that bodies can create social meaning and shape gendered experience. To put this topic into perspective: one needs to keep in mind that inspiration can also be gathered from the social environment of the respondent, which can include other media channels, friends and family. The men’s lifestyle magazine might not be the dominant factor of influence. However, the inspiration that these men get from men’s lifestyle magazines therefore plays an important role in creating social meaning and, thus, shaping their attitude towards their bodies. Therefore, one could say that men do want to become more muscled, better shaved and wear more fashionable clothes once they have looked into these magazines for inspiration. This claim can be supported by several answers given during the interviews. Furthermore, when looking at the pictures the respondents chose during the mood board exercise, it can be seen that six out of the eight respondents chose work-out pictures of muscled men for the like-side of their mood board, arguing that these are good examples of where they get inspiration from:

Respondent 2: I guess when you see males in an advertisement targeted [at] you they want to portray them as if the viewer wants to be them and I think subconsciously you want to because it looks like oh they are strong and they look great and whatever.

Respondent 4: Yeah, so this is like you don’t have to go to the gym, it’s like exercise without any equipment, so I’m like oh that might be interesting I could try that, I could be like that.
Six out of the eight respondents chose pictures of men working out for the likeable side of their mood board (see Figures 3 and 4), arguing that the pictures inspired and motivated them to work out more. Figures 3 and 4 from Men’s Health. They also argued that this was
not objectification, because there was a reason why the men were bare chested: the purpose was to show the workouts.

Interviewer (interview 2): Would you like to look like the bare chested men in these magazines?

Respondent (interview 2): I mean I can take inspiration from it [don’t have to look exactly like them. It’s not like that because I don’t feel offended because of it because it is their job they are getting paid for that it’s the work they do.

Respondent (interview 5): Yes, this motivates me even more to work-out. And I mean of course they are bare chested. You have to show off.

Respondent (interview 3): Yes and if I may elaborate I also feel intimitiated because they give me the feeling I should look like them. Because they present the ideal image.

6.3. The perception of objectification

Overall, it is being shown here that lifestyle magazines do not define the identity of a person in general towards their body image completely, but they do help shape it. But which role do two frequent phenomena in men’s lifestyle magazines, namely objectification and sexualisation, have in shaping the attitude of young men towards themselves and magazines in general? After all, men’s lifestyle magazines, including the ones used in this thesis, have proven to be a rich source of content where both men and women are being objectified (Ward et al., 2015; Aubrey, 2007; Manago et al., 2015) and they are a key role in defining the way young men view themselves (Blond, 2008). Other studies (Pope et al., 2000) even go as far as claiming that men’s lifestyle magazines portray men as an Adonis: masculine, naked and therefore attractive to women. This can result in men suffering from the Adonis Complex, which is the psychological desire to live up to those standards, which could create eating disorders or body dysmorphic disorder. Objectification, especially in relation to men’s magazines, means that there is a high amount of content focusing on the male body as an object. Even though men have become more frequently portrayed bare-chested, naked and overall more physically visible over the last twenty years in men’s lifestyle magazines (Blond, 2008), the respondents did not feel men were being objectified in men’s magazines in general during the interviews. Most of them argued that as long as male models were fine with being portrayed bare chested or as an object, they were fine with it as well.

Respondent 5: If they are portrayed as objects as long as they sell a healthy lifestyle I don’t have any problems with it.
Respondent 1: I think I’m somewhat fine with it [objectification]. That is up to the person being portrayed.

Furthermore, the respondents argued that especially in magazines such as Men’s Health naked men serve the purpose of the magazine.

Respondent 4: I wouldn’t say they are being objectified. Because the thing is in these magazines you are selling health and the general opinion, or maybe not the general opinion, but what is being portrayed. Because obviously they want to sell magazines and they want to sell a healthy lifestyle for men and a healthy lifestyle is to look like this.

Interviewer (interview 5): But it’s not like they are seen as an object and there is nothing more to it?

Respondent 5: It’s not like that because I don’t feel offended because of it because it is their job they are getting paid for that it’s the work they do.

Some respondents even went further, claiming one could not speak of objectification in general as long as the person in the image was fine with his or her body being portrayed in such a way. However, just the fact that the respondents say that they do not perceive objectification as negative does not mean it does not have an influence on the way they view themselves. In other words: it does not mean they do not objectify themselves after being exposed to the content. Because when looking at the mood boards, pictures that showed strong signs of objectification (bare chested men, no visible face) according to the Objectification Theory of Frederickson and Roberts (1997), were chosen as pictures they did not like for their mood board. During the interviews, it came forward that if there is no purpose as to whether or not models should be naked, such as the earlier mentioned GQ cover with Naomi Campbell and Skepta (see Figure 1), men would perceive it more as objectification than to whether it arguably has a purpose, such as the workout pictures in Men’s Health (see Figures 3 and 4). However, it is interesting because, according to the Objectification Theory standards set out by Frederickson and Roberts (1973), later revised by Blond (2008), both pictures liked and disliked by the respondents are seen as objectification according to the standards of the Objectification Theory. Nevertheless, the young men seem to have a different perception on objectification than the Objectification Theory has, they think that as a long as there is a reason why men are being portrayed naked, there is no objectification. Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2013) argue that when analysing findings
gathered through adolescent men, one should keep in mind that there have been different outcomes of results depending on those who identify themselves as hetero and homosexual. Men’s lifestyle magazines have been suggested to have a more pronounced effect of objectification and sexualisation on the homosexual community, which may trigger self-objectification even more intensely among this particular group of media users (Duggan & McCreary, 2004). A possible explanation for these processes could be the prior negative experiences with their sexual orientation, stimulating the perception that they need to “prove” their masculinity by showing how “male” their body can be. When analysing the answers from the interviews in this thesis, one can see that respondents 2 and 3, the only non-heterosexual respondents, showed stronger signs of self-objectification than the other six respondents (see below). Although the group of respondents might not be big enough to generalise the finding, this result corresponds to the findings from Duggan and McCreay (2004). In addition, this also relates to the Adonis Complex, because there is a drive to be muscled in order to appear masculine to others.

Respondent 3: I look at the magazines because of the nice pictures of the men. [It] happens that I see the differences. I wish very often I could look like that or maybe in the future (...). This kind of feeling it stays longer, yeah, when I start to scan through the pages than maybe I realise; if I look closer there is not much behind it it’s only men as an object. [But] no, it stays most of the time when I have these things in my mind. I focus on the looks for sure.

Respondent 2: Not that much. Maybe I have a little thought in my mind that says: you need to go exercise. But that’s the extent of living or how I feel. Yeah, I used to try and go to the gym, but I didn’t know what to do so I like these articles that kind of explain it. I would read that (...) I would want to look like the men in the magazines. But I don’t know how.

Respondent 4: When I look at the pictures I don’t feel different about myself. I don’t feel I have to look like them. It does motivates me to exercise, but that is because I want it. Not because that make me.

Respondent 6: If I wish I could look more like them? No, not that I am aware of. I am what I am, which is not them. And that is okay. I don’t look at myself trough my body. I don’t think I have, is that how you say it, self-objectification.
Figure 5 was chosen on the dislike side of the mood board of many of the respondents. They argued that this picture did not really show masculinity. The only respondent who *chose this picture for his likeable side was respondent 5*, who also acknowledge he exercised a lot and this could be a good motivation for his exercising.

The majority of respondents said they did not perceive themselves as objects or recognized any form of objectification in the magazines. However, when putting this into context within the objectification and sexualisation debate in society, one should keep in mind that a possible explanation for the lack of perception of objectification and therefore also sexualisation by heterosexual men in this way can be explained by deep-routed patriarchal structures in western society. Objectification is the process in which a human being or an animal, is portrayed or being treated as an object (Nussbaum, 1995). More specifically, objectification means that there is a high amount of attention focusing on the body as an object. Objectification of men is seen as a relatively new phenomenon within our society (Blond, 2008) as well as within the field of scientific researches such a gender studies, compared to the objectification and sexualisation of women (Daniels & Lindner, 2018). Sexualisation is the result of objectification, where a person does not only limit her or himself to aesthetics, but also sees the aesthetics as a way to be sexually appealing to others. This sexualised content is highly visible in magazines and could teach its readers that the sexual
appeal of aesthetics reflects on the personal value of an individual and how attractive they are to others. Especially keeping in mind that with the 24/7 access to media, millennial men might not be aware of the objectification of men, but they are, according to the Objectification Theory by Fredrikson and Roberts, just as aware as females of the societal pressures to look good (Miller & Halberstadt, 2005). Which can also be seen back in the results from the interviews: even tough men do not feel men in magazines are being objectified, they do feel a certain pressure to take care of their bodies after seeing pictures of men in men’s lifestyle magazines. Building on Festingers’ Social Comparison Theory, it is argued that when people compare themselves to others, the majority will see themselves as less attractive than the ideal, which could cause body dissatisfaction (Lorenzen, Grieve & Thomas, 2004). In the answers given by the respondents, one can see that even though some of them might not admit they compare themselves, the way men in magazines look still has an important influence on the way they look at themselves and, moreover, their own bodies. Both positive and negative, there is a respondent who calls it inspiring and motivating. Another argues he feels impressed and intimidated. But what all the respondents have in common is that they feel the need to change something about their body after reading men’s lifestyle magazines. Important to note here is that during the interview with the respondent who feels motivated and inspired it also came forward the fact that he is very much into exercising and actively working on musculature. This sort of positive associations with idealised media images can be linked to the theory developed by Halliwell, Dittmar and Osborn (2007), where men who are actively working on their body are known to have less body dissatisfaction than men who do not work out. Therefore, they see men’s lifestyle magazines as inspiration and motivation (Halliwell, Dittmar & Orsborn, 2007). According to Blond (2008), it could be possible that men who are satisfied with their bodies or actively working on their bodies perceive the media standard as attainable and therefore a positive source of information and inspiration. During the interviews an interesting paradox occurred. At the beginning of the interviews, men in magazines were seen as fake and the respondents would not compare themselves to the models in the magazines because the models had completely different lifestyles. However, after the mood board exercise and therefore with the young men actively looking at the content of the magazines, they did start to compare themselves to the models in the magazines. The young men wanted to have the same fashion style as the men in the magazines, become more athletic and work on their body more. During the discussion of the mood boards, it became evident that men did select pictures of men because they wanted to look like the models in the magazines. They selected several of the pictures of men that they got inspired from as pictures for the likable side of their mood board. For instance, respondents 1, 2 and 8 argued they admired the men on Figure 6 because of the relaxing atmosphere, their sense of fashion style and athletic
appearance. Nevertheless, when asked at the end of the interview if they felt different about their body or lifestyle, most of them answered they wanted to have a healthier lifestyle but did not feel different about their body.

Figure 6. A picture from an advertisement featured in GQ Magazine. Source: GQ Magazine, (April, 2018)

With the respondents wanting to change parts of their bodies after seeing the images in men’s lifestyle magazines, one could argue that there is a certain amount of body surveillance amongst the respondents. Especially with several of them focussed on their appearance, there is also a certain amount of objectification. After looking at the magazines, it seems as if they look at their own body with parts of the beauty standards of the magazine, for example the need to feel more muscled. But in order to find out to which extent men objectify themselves, hence what their attitude is towards their own body and men’s lifestyle magazines in general, it might be interesting to take a closer look at the Objectification Theory of Frederickson and Roberts (1997) with the help of Moradi and Huang (2008) extended tools. Because men do perceive the content in men’s magazines as unrealistic, yet they also rely on the content as a guide to how they should look. To which extent do they internalise the ideas that these lifestyle magazines set out? In relation to the current thesis and the Objectification Theory of Frederickson and Roberts (1997), it is assumed that westernized culture teaches both men and women to internalise the societal gazes and evolution of their bodies, which would eventually reduce them into object and therefore an increased preoccupation with their own
physical appearance, which all together is called self-objectification. Given the fact that young men still turn to men’s lifestyle magazines to gain inspiration on how they should look, one could say that these societal gazes of the magazine still have a certain influence on young men. However, again it is important to keep in mind that as active users of media they look at a magazine to gain inspiration on how they should look. They become more aware of the way they look after scrolling through a magazine. Yet, they do not internalise the idea that they should look completely like the men in magazines. The respondents argue that they read a magazine to gain information about parts of their body they would like to change, the fact that they change it according to the beauty standards of the magazine is something that they do not admit, however, it strongly resounds in the answers during the interviews.

Interviewer: So, it’s an inspiration for outer appearance?

Respondent 5: Yeah, for example like if I really feel like I am lacking in upper back strength and I am looking at a picture of someone who is doing an exercise.

According to the Objectification Theory adapted by Moradi and Huang (2008), one should include three other elements when analysing objectification among people. These three elements are 1) internalisation of appearance ideals, 2) self-objectification, and 3) body surveillance. If all three elements appear within the answers of respondents, one can speak of objectification. When looking at the answers that the respondents gave during the interviews, it can be seen that they feel inspired by the content in men’s magazines: they think about using the exercises in order to look more like the models in the magazines. Thus, the young men in the interviews adapt their own appearance ideals to those of the standards of the magazines, which means that they do internalise appearance ideals (Moradi & Huang, 2008). In addition, the discussion of the mood boards revealed that men do look at other men in men’s lifestyle magazines as a way to how they should look and therefore they become more aware of their own bodies. They become more aware of their appearance and, as a result, they observe their own body from the perspective of an outsider after seeing the content in men’s magazines. This is self-objectification. Consequently, one can say, according to the Objectification Theory of Moradi and Huang (2008), that there is a certain degree of internalisation of appearance ideals (and therefore self-objectification and body surveillance) amongst young men after seeing the pictures in men’s lifestyle magazines.

6.4. Sexualisation

Another important part to take into account when analysing the content of the interviews and studying the male perception of magazines is the concept of sexualisation. Sexualisation is the result of objectification, where a person does not only limit her or himself to aesthetics,
but also sees the aesthetics as a way to be sexually appealing to others. This sexualised content is highly visible in magazines and could teach its readers that the sexual appeal of aesthetics reflects on the personal value of an individual and how attractive they are to others (Blond, 2008). The objectification and even more sexualisation of women in media such as film, art and literature has been a long-lasting and widespread phenomenon (Blond, 2008). With the millennial generation growing up in a sexualised society (Blond, 2008), these patriarchal structures are deeply rooted into our western way of life (Moradi & Huang, 2008), that one could argue, on one hand, that Millennials are blind to objectification and sexualisation, because they are so used to it. On the other hand, they might not see men as people being objectified because they are used to the sexual objectification of women and moreover, throughout the interviews, the respondents argued that women are more likely to be objectified than men. Nonetheless, this does not mean men in men’s magazines are not being portrayed as sex objects. There is enough scientific evidence proving that men are being portrayed as (sex) objects in men’s magazines, becoming more muscular, trim and naked (Blond, 2008).

Interviewer (interview 2): Do you think women are being portrayed as sex objects in men’s magazines?

Respondent 2: Yes. I mean, I wanted to say that if you compare especially men with women it's completely different worlds and I perceive that... and I think that's obvious.

Interviewer (interview 2): What is the difference about both worlds?

Respondent 2: Well, I think that mainly it's about being naked or not. Mainly, all the magazines if they try to portray like a man it's always going to be with a suit or at least with a lot of clothes and a woman is always going to be half naked at least or kind of showing more parts of her body, for sure.

Most respondents perceived objectification and sexualisation as the same thing, arguing that in the end both concepts come down to the same: being reduced to one’s body. However, they are two different concepts. Objectification is the process where the way you treat or see a human being is purely based on the way he or she looks. You see the body of a person as a reflection for who they are. Sexualisation is the result of objectification, where a person does not only limit himself or others to their aesthetics, but also sees the aesthetics as a way to be sexually appealing to others. However, most of the respondents did not see or know the difference between the concepts. This misconception is understandable because the two concepts share common grounds, in both cases the human being is defined as a one-dimensional object that is incapable of any independent thought, self-sufficiency or
autonomous decision making. Nevertheless, the difference between them relies on because the fact that objectification only sees a person as an object, whereas sexualisation takes the definition of objectification a step further, seeing a person as an object of sexual desire. Regarding this topic, we can divide the answers of the respondents into two different categories. The first group argued that men were not sexualised/objectified and the second group admitted it.

Interviewer (interview 1): Do you feel men are being sexualised in these magazines?

Respondent 1: In some pictures yeah. But I don’t mind that.

Interviewer (interview 1):1: You don’t mind that as long as they are okay with it?

Respondent 1: Yeah, of course.

Respondent 2: Yeah, I’m usually [of the] opinion (...) that it is their job, they are getting paid for it and it’s their own choice to act with their bodies and stuff.

Others argued that men were being just as much sexualised as women in media.

Interviewer (interview 8): Do you feel men are actually being sexualised in these magazines here?

Respondent 8: I do think that men are sexualised. I don’t think it’s spoken about as much as with women. But I do feel they are sexualised because when you see a guy with his t-shirt on that’s not sexualisation but you are immediately showing off somebody’s physical aspects and not what they are as a person.

Respondent 5: [the same goes for] women and men. But I think it’s really brought forward the problem of sexualisation and objectification of men.

Interviewer (interview 2): Do you think the men are being sexualised in this picture?

Respondent 2: Yes. Because it’s not about the clothes at all.

Furthermore, men argued that they feel that men’s lifestyle magazine, in particular Men’s Health, promotes tricks for meeting the standards of being “sexy”, suggesting that a masculine body will increase sexual success. This relates to earlier findings by Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2013), who argue that lifestyle magazines that are popular among young
men show a large amount of sexualisation of the male body. Men’s Heath is a magazine popular among young men and the respondents perceive the content in the magazine as largely sexualised, promoting how to be attractive to the opposite sex.

Interviewer (interview 3): And appreciated by society I think you [mean] [or] I just assume [that you mean that] as in a sexual way appreciated [by society] or find attractive [by society]?

Respondent 3: Uh, yes, I mean, you see it in his hair style and how he has his beard I mean it’s just him the typical guy like everyone wants to be like him because he is just like the typical men like everyone thinks that women want.

Interviewer (interview 3): [Do] you also feel that men are being sexualised or at least objectified in these magazines?

Respondent 3: Yes, for sure, and I see that it’s happening around me (...). Like, I see those guys to look like the people in the magazine and clothes, which is just increasing the pressure on me that I should look like them and I’m pretty sure that most of them don’t do it for the health but for the look or to be sexually attractive to someone.

Interviewer (interview 2): Do you feel that men [in magazines] are being portrayed to [give] the idea that is that what women find attractive in order for all women to want you?

Respondent 2: Yes, that is what I think because (...) they think they are trying to sell these role models like you need to be this way if you want to [be] like[d] [by] women.

The fact that respondents perceive the content in Men’s Health as a call to work on their bodies to be sexually attractive to women is also something pointed out in an earlier study done by Kim et al. (2007), arguing that both in prime-time television as well as men’s lifestyle magazine, the idea is created that masculine bodies increase sexual success. According to Kim et al. (2007), there are three invisible codes that portray sexualisation in men’s lifestyle magazines. If men are aware of these codes they are less likely to sexualise themselves. In this analyse, much is said about the like side of each mood board, where objectifying content can be found. But what is interesting is that men do not like sexualised content overall (when they can recognise it). They seem to be aware of the codes as created by Kim et al. (2007). The first code reflects the sexual double standards, which argues that sex is masculine, meaning that men are sexual initiators who are preoccupied with sex and will go to great length to have intercourse. When considering the mood boards, several respondents argued that they choose certain pictures for the dislike side of their mood board because of the fact
that men were seen seducing the woman, making her seem weak and powerless. For example: respondent 8 thought this was the case in Figure 1. According to Kim et al. (2007), portraying women as passive is also a trade relating to the first code, often used in men’s magazines to portray women as passive partners in sexual relationships, who do expect or demand or prioritise sexual pleasure. Respondents 1, 3 and 8 thought this was the case in Figures 5 and 6. The second set of codes used frequently throughout media channels such as magazines and television is that in a romantic relationship the men are seen as the protector. It portrays women as being who are attracted to wealth and power, something that men embody, according to the code. Again, the respondents noticed this code in the photoshoot in GQ with Naomi Campbell and Skepta (see Figure 1) and choose it for the dislike side of their mood board. The third set is based on the idea that lifestyle magazines do portray men as human beings that are not emotionally able to commit, nor should they. They prioritise sex above everything, even a romantic relationship. The fourth and last set relates to what is said above: men in general are not to be seen as emotional beings. They need to be strong, tough and rough. All these four elements can be traced back to the dislike side of the mood board of many respondents. They argue that when it comes to this pictures, men and women are not being portrayed in an honest way, arguing that women are seen as prays and here they strongly feel “we should look like these men, yet we don’t want to” (respondent 6). Figures 7 and 8 are examples of pictures that the respondents 1,2,3,5,7 and 8 chose for the dislikeable side of their mood board. They thought the content was too sexualising, portraying men as “the seducer” and the women as “a weak pray”.

Figure 7. First part of the photoshoot between Naomi Campbell and Skepta in GQ. Source: GQ Magazine (April, 2018)

Figure 8. Second part of the photoshoot with Naomi Campbell and Skepta Source: GQ Magazine (April, 2018)
6.5. Attitude towards body image

Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory is built on the idea that young people adjust their behaviour and attitude according to the standard the media sets out for them. Therefore, magazines can play an important role in shaping an individual’s attitude towards themselves and their body. For example, the Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1973) also claims that young people who are being showed idealised media images, sexual encrypted text or objectified models will change their behaviour, attitude and perception according to the values the media holds on these topics. Especially in this thesis where young men turn to magazines in order to find inspiration for the way they should look, it is relevant to see how the respondents did start comparing themselves to models in the men’s lifestyle magazines throughout the interview. But even more important: it had an influence on the way they saw their body afterwards, in other words, it had an influence on their body image. For example, the young men felt different about their bodies after the interview; they felt they needed to look like the models in the magazines in terms of aesthetics. To some extent, the media ideals of men needing to be muscular, fit, trim with a clean-shaven beard, were internalised. This relates to Arbour et al. (2006), who argued that the increase of objectification of men in media is related to the perception of men towards their own bodies. According to the Objectification Theory by Fredrikson and Roberts (1997), bodies do not just exist in a biological context but can also be put into social and cultural context, meaning that bodies can create social meaning and shape gendered experience. Lifestyle magazines play a general role in defining these experiences and standards (Blond, 2008), which can be linked to the cognitive need in the Uses and Gratification Theory. Young men go through the content of a men’s lifestyle magazine with the need to gain knowledge about how to look. Therefore, the way men in magazines look also influence them. Most calling content in the magazines ‘inspirational’ arguing that they would take pieces that could be of help to improve their lifestyles in terms of exercising and becoming more muscled. Most of the respondents looked at their body differently after scrolling through the men’s lifestyle magazines. Arbour et al. (2006) also claim that after men scroll through men’s lifestyle magazines, they often have a more negative perception towards their own bodies, meaning that they feel the need to create more muscles trough exercising. According to Arbour et al. (2006), men who do show more signs of the need to start exercising after being exposed to idealise media images show signs of self-objectification. However, important to note here is that respondents to not mention looking attractive to the sex that they are interested in as a main motivation to exercise, which could depict that objectification is stronger than sexualisation in the answers given by the respondents. Therefore, the respondents might objectify themselves, however they do not necessarily sexualise themselves.
Interviewer (interviews 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8): Do you think more about your body or the way you look after seeing all these men in magazines?

Respondent 2: Yeah, sure (...). I think it makes you think about it (...). I should be more muscular, I should do this and this and this oh, why can’t I grow a beard?

Respondent 3: (This is) how a man should look like and how they should take care of their body. So, (...) I mean, this has just given me an extra reason to shave my body (...). I looked through all the pictures the guys are all shaved so now I would think like they give me even more tips on how to do it.

Respondent 4: like this guy, I could be this guy. I don’t need to be exactly this guy but yeah, he is doing this, I might try, why not? So, I think it’s inspirational.

Respondent 5: I don’t really feel different about my body. I mean, I try to train more, I don’t have much time probably but, in any case, it reminds me like (...) you should go training back again because you were like that (men in the magazines) so probably you want to feel like that again.

Interviewer (interview 3): Yeah, do you objectify yourself and not [look] at your character when you see these magazines?

Respondent 3: Yes. Like you should look this and that to be sexually attractive to others. Yeah, for sure, which is just increasing the pressure on me that I should look like them and I’m pretty sure that most of them don’t do it for the health but for the look or to be sexually attractive to someone else or at least to also be perceived as sexually attractive by the same sex or the sex that is interested in them.

In the theory part of this thesis, the Social Comparison Theory of Festinger (1954) was discussed. This theory is built on the idea that humans compare themselves to others in order to evaluate characteristics that have personal or social importance. Blond (2008) argued further that people compare their own body to that of the media standard, mostly seeing their body as less attractive than the ideal, which causes body dissatisfaction and a negative body image (Lorenzen, Grieve & Thomas, 2004). In recent years, studies (Phillips, 2012; Blond, 2008; Lorenzen, Grieve & Thomas, 2004) built on Festinger’s Theory of Social Comparison showed the potential dangerous consequences that images of ideal bodies have on the body image of men. Although young men are active users of media and are fully aware of the negative consequences of media influence, the magazines’ content still did influence them in terms of the way they viewed their body. Whether it might have been to shave or exercise
more, all of the respondents felt they needed to look like the men in men’s lifestyle magazines up to certain extent. Bandura’s (1977) Social Learning Theory takes this approach a step further and argues that people adjust their attitude and behaviour towards what they see in the media, no matter if there are negative consequences such as low self-esteem and body dissatisfaction. Bandura’s Social Learning Theory can be related to McQuails findings of young men as active media users and the results of the interviews because McQuails findings derives from the idea that we are all active media users, but that media can create social context for us. Men’s lifestyle magazines have proven to be an enriching source to create those social contexts for young people. It can therefore be said that young men do adapt the standards from men’s lifestyle magazines in order to evaluate their own body. But there is more to the theory. Learning and adapting ideas from channels that create social context, such as these lifestyle magazines, can mostly occur when the viewer just observes content. This was the case of the mood board exercise, when they simply observed the content. According to Bandura’s Learning Theory, which relates to the Uses and Gratification Theory, we learn and adapt the most when our needs for information are cognitive, which in this case is true. The men have strong cognitive needs when looking at men’s magazines. They might not see magazines as important tool in their lives, but it still influences them. These findings can also be seen in the answers the respondents gave:

Respondent 3: They give me the feeling I am not man enough because I don’t look like them. I don’t wear the same clothes. Uhm, yes, they are just bad for my self-esteem. I mean, I have enough self-esteem and I am claiming I am not aware or don’t need [the] support [or] their approval. But still when I look through it I think this is another way of life I could try if I wanted to be more attractive [to others, or] to be [like] most others.
7. Discussion

In this section the answers to the research questions are discussed. In the analysis, all the material from the interviews was looked at thoroughly, analysed and discussed. Firstly, we consider how young men perceive objectification and sexualisation of men in the men’s lifestyle magazines that were being used during this thesis, which are GQ, Men’s Health and Men’s Journal. All magazines were published in April 2018. Furthermore, there is the discussion regarding the questions in which way objectification and sexualisation define the attitude of young men towards their body and men’s magazines in general and in which way the Adonis Complex is applicable to this specific group of young men.

1. How do young men perceive the objectification of men in men’s lifestyle magazines?

Overall, young men questioned during this thesis are tolerable to the fact that men are being portrayed with a strong focus on aesthetics in men’s lifestyle magazines. They argue that it serves the purpose of content such as muscle exercising but also as inspiration for themselves. Even though they might think objectification of men in men’s lifestyle magazine does not influence the objectification towards themselves, this thesis demonstrates that there is self-objectification among the interviewees. After being exposed to these images, the young men questioned during this thesis tend to focus more on their bodies, compare themselves to the bodies depicted in the magazines and, as a result, they think their body is something that they should work on to look more like the models in the magazines, in other words: objectification. However, the young men do not internalise the ideal men according to the media completely. Nevertheless, trades of the Adonis Complex (Pope et al., 2000), such as the aspiration to have muscles, becoming very sporty and being freshly shaved are much wanted. The young men depicted in this study seem to reduce themselves to their body value, objectifying themselves as well as comparing their own bodies to those portrayed in the magazines.

2. How do young men perceive the sexualisation of men in men’s lifestyle magazines?

Men argue that sexualisation of men in men’s lifestyle magazines mostly unnecessary. They choose pictures with highly sexualised content for the dislike side of their mood board. Furthermore, young men are very much aware of the sexualisation of men and women in lifestyle magazines. According to the Sexualisation Theory by Kim et al. (2007), men who are aware of the three steps (sexual double standards: women are weak, men are the protectors, men are the sexual predators) of sexual objectification are less likely to see themselves as sexual objects. They are aware of the media-psychology behind the images and therefore Kim et al. (2007) argue they do not see themselves in the way the magazines want to portray
them, which is as sex object. All men in the interviews were aware of these steps, thus, they perceive sexualisation as negative and it seems not to influence them. This links to the Uses and Gratification Theory: if young men who were questioned during this thesis do not have the need to take information from something, they are unlikely to internalise the ideas of what media tries to teach them.

3. How does the perception of sexualisation and objectification in men’s lifestyle magazines influence the attitude of young men towards their own body image?

On one hand respondents in this thesis feel intimidated by media ideals and the objectification of men. On the other hand respondents feel inspired and motivated by media ideals. The respondents in this thesis seem to be influenced by the toned and muscled body image ideal men’s lifestyle magazines set out. They feel they need to change or work on their bodies after scrolling through the magazines. This relates to earlier findings by Arbour et al. (2006), who claim that after men scroll through men’s lifestyle magazines they often have a more negative perception towards their own bodies. Furthermore, this finding also relates to an earlier study done by Edwards (1997), who claims that men's lifestyle magazines portray the male body as something that can be worked on. When looking at the mood boards (see appendix 3) of the respondents, one can see that especially tips and tricks to get more muscles are content that is overall liked and appreciated in magazines (see figures 3 and 4).

Overall, the sexualisation and objectification of men in men’s lifestyle magazines do not create the attitude that young men have towards themselves, in other words: they do not feel they have to look exactly like the men in men’s lifestyle magazines. However, the content does have a significant influence on the way they feel towards their own bodies. They do feel their body is a “piece that needs to be worked on” and that society would like to see men the way that is depicted in the magazines. It seems that young men questioned in this thesis want to be more muscled, trained and fashionable when looking at men’s lifestyle magazines. Thus, based on the results of this thesis one could say that men’s lifestyle magazines do not define the identity of the young male reader, or more specifically students at Jönköping University who were questioned during this thesis, completely. However, because of the overload of media access and the power of it, men's lifestyle magazines do help shape the attitude that the young men questioned in this thesis have towards their own body. The results of this thesis correspondent with earlier findings by Vandenbosch and Eggermont (2013), Statska and Morry (2001) and Knauss (2008) hold a strong relationship to one another, who say that internalisation of appearance ideals, reading lifestyle magazines amongst male college students and perceived pressure among the millennial generation are related.
4. How does the perception of sexualisation and objectification in men’s lifestyle magazines influence the attitude of young men towards men’s lifestyle magazines?

The young men questioned in this thesis have a positive attitude towards men’s lifestyle magazines. This can be seen by the fact that men’s lifestyle magazines tend to be an important influence in the lives of young men and the way they shape their view of themselves and their own bodies. After all, they still choose to read it at the dentist or pick it up in the supermarket. The content does interest them more than they would like to admit. Young men might not seem as active readers or buyers of magazines, but that does not mean they do not actively perceive the content in men’s lifestyle magazines as uninteresting. On the contrary, especially when it comes to advice and tips on how to work on their bodies, men feel men’s lifestyle magazines are a valuable medium to gain information from. They still come across men’s lifestyle magazines in their everyday life: at the dentist, in the supermarket or in their social media feed. However, at the end of all the interviews, the young men argued that they still would not want to buy men’s lifestyle magazine. A possible explanation for this could be the fact that social media offers most of the information offered in the magazines for free. Therefore, one could say that the content in men’s lifestyle magazines interest men more than they would like to admit at first. Hence, they have an overall positive attitude towards men’s lifestyle magazines. Nevertheless, the attitude is not that motivating that they actually would like to buy a magazine.
8. Conclusion

In this final chapter, the final outcome of this thesis is presented. The limitations of the thesis will be discussed and advice for further research in this field will be given.

8.1. Final answers

In the current sexualisation debate in western society much research has been done about the effect sexualisation and objectification have on women and how women perceive such content coming from media channels such as magazines and television (Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2013; Daniels & Lindner 2018). It is often assumed that young women are vulnerable to the idealised images of women in magazines, which could lead to serious psychological consequences such as eating disorders (Ward, 2015; Daniels & Lindner, 2017). However, with the current generation of both young women and men growing up in a time with 24/7 access to media, a society where physical appearance is emphasised and a debate about gender equality in society is very current, more research has start to look at how men perceive idealised media content and what this does to their body image and self-esteem (Blond, 2008). Especially the age group of men between 18 and 30 proves to be significant, as it is said that more than two thirds are dissatisfied with their bodies (Furham & Calnan, 1998; Blond, 2008). It has been the debate of much speculation that the increase of male body dissatisfaction is related to the rising visibility of ideal male bodies in popular culture, such as magazines. There has been evidence that men have become increasingly muscular, naked and slim in men’s lifestyle magazines (Blond, 2008). Therefore, it is interesting that less is known about men and especially millennial men, the question was how these critical youngster perceive this content and how they construct their body image in relation to the content coming from the media. They might not actively buy magazines, but they still come across it in their everyday life on online social media networks and offline interactions. Thus, the main question that motivated this thesis was regarding the perception of young men towards sexualisation and objectification in men’s lifestyle magazines. According to Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1977), we adjust our attitude to that what we see in our social environment. Magazines that we come across in our everyday life are a part of that social environment. The research findings point that men still rely on magazines as a source of information and inspiration for their physical appearance. This also relates to the Uses and Gratification Theory which says that there must be a certain need triggered in order for young men to be influenced by content from a men’s lifestyle magazine. In this case, the need is cognitive: inspiration. The thesis also discussed the Objectification Theory of Frederickson and Roberts (1997), which states that men are more likely to see themselves as an object through the eyes of others when exposed to highly objectifying media content. The research demonstrates that the men’s lifestyle magazines used in this thesis are good examples of such objectifying media
content (Blond, 2008). All the respondents wanted to change something about their outer appearance and mostly it was argued they wanted to have more muscles, become more stylish or grow a beard like the models in the magazines. They did compare themselves to the ideal in the media. As stated by Halliwell, Dittmar and Orsborn (2007), men who exercise are more likely to see work-out pictures of other men as inspirational, compared to men who do not exercise. One of the respondents was very much into body-building and one could tell that during this interview he mostly saw the work-out pictures much more as source of inspiration than other respondents who did not exercise. In summary, men’s lifestyle magazines play a very important role in the construction of a men’s attitude towards their own body image. Overall, men have a positive attitude towards magazines, but perceive objectification and sexualisation as negative. The findings also point that men are more likely to objectify themselves, rather than see themselves as sex objects. Hence, men could suffer from the Adonis Complex, up to a certain extent, feeling that they have to meet the Adonis requirements: being muscled, looking good bare chested.

8.2. Limitations
This specific study aims to contribute to the current sexualisation debate in modern society. The contribution, related to young men perception of (sexualised) content in men’s lifestyle magazines, is referred to the analysis of both the attitude that young men have towards themselves and men’s magazines as well as their perception on sexualisation and objectification in those magazines. For this study, it was important to look at how men interpret content in men’s lifestyle magazines themselves, because they grew up in a time with 24/7 media access. This is unlike other scientific research which mostly discuss possible effects of media use on young men, letting aside the meaning the audience can give to the content themselves. It was very important to this study to keep in mind that media and audience both influence each other. Nevertheless, this study also has its limitations. First and foremost, the biggest limitation might lie in the fact that this is a small case study, only interviewing eight respondents. In total there is only about eight hours of recording showing how young men think about the given topic. However, keeping in mind the instructions for this thesis eight was the maximum number of respondents for one-to-one interviews. Therefore, one could argue that a large-scale study could have been done but it was not possible within the time frame of this thesis project. Secondly, the group of respondents is homogenous. The respondents are all white, highly-educated, middle-class men. Hall (1997) shows that the social environment of the individual is constantly influencing the perception of the individual. As a result, factors such as social background and social reference play an important role in shaping the final reaction of the respondents and how they perceive content as well as what their general attitude towards that is. Possibly, a more variable palette of answers could have been traced if the respondents with a more diverse demographic had
been selected. Lastly, the time-frame of the interviews also played an important role in the outcome of the thesis. All interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, in that time all the content for the analysis was gathered. This means that attitude and perception have been discussed with respondents over a short amount of time. One can never be sure whether the answers gained in such a small amount of time resemble the reality. During this thesis it was very important to be careful not to take statements from the respondents’ body language and gesture alone, especially when it came to very personal, intimate topics, such as self-confidence and body dissatisfaction. Therefore, this thesis is a start for further, deeper and more extensive research in order to gain more information about the role and perception of men within the sexualisation debate.

8.3. Further research
One of the basis for this study was the finding of Gauntlett (2008), who suggested that there was a shift in sexualisation in the media. Not only women but also men needed to be taken more into account when it came to study sexual roles in advertising, magazines and television. Scientific research about this topic has been vastly increasing. For further research it would be recommended to conducting similar research on a larger scale. This could possibly be done by conducting surveys as this method will give one the option to test the validity of this thesis conclusion on a larger scale. On the other hand, the semi-structured interviews that have been done in this thesis allowed the possibility to go deeper into several specific matters that came across during the interview sessions. If one would have the possibility to perform a large-scale study based on interviews the outcome would possible be more generalisable. Furthermore, this thesis has been done in the European context and it might also be interesting to put the study in another cultural context, such as a Latin-American or Arabic context. Further research could also include comparative studies between the perception of men and women towards sexualisation in media.
9. References


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Appendix 1: Topic list

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS
TOPIC LIST

I. Introduction (5 minutes)
A. Introduction of the interviewer
Welcome to this interview. Thank you very much for taking the time to participate in this interview. Before we start I will give a short introduction about myself. Furthermore I will also tell a bit about my thesis and why you are in this interview. My name is Ella Put and I am student at Jönköping University. I am currently writing my master thesis for the program International Communication and Media and I am researching the perception and attitude of young men towards men’s lifestyle magazines. And because you are young men, you are here. You have probably noticed that my mobile phone is recording the session. I am recording the session because I do not want to miss any of your answers. However all your comments will be anonymously used in my research. If you would not like to be recorded, please let me know.

B. Description of the interview
In this interview we will do a mood board exercise and I will ask some questions before and after the exercise. I would like to stress that there are no wrong answers and that your opinion is very much appreciated.

C. Rules of the interview
There are no really specific rules. Also keep in mind that there is room for discussion. I most likely will repeat or summarise some of your answers, in order to see if I understood you correctly. If you disagree with something I say, please speak up. A discussion is very much appreciated. Are there any questions so far?

D. Introductory exercise
First name, age, country of origin.

E. Focus on the discussion and research
For my master thesis I am interested in hearing your opinion about men’s lifestyle magazines and how you perceive the content in the magazines.

II. Questions about men’s magazines
A. I will just start with a very easy question Do you read magazines in general?

B. Do you read men’s lifestyle magazines? Do you ever come across men’s lifestyle magazines? (social media feed, supermarket, dentist, advertisement at a bus stop)
Do you ever look at men’s lifestyle magazines?

III. Top of mind associations with broad domain of subject men’s portrayal in men’s lifestyle magazines (10 minutes)
A. I am going to name some topics and I would like you to tell me what is the first thing that comes into your mind. Just shout it. Like I said, there are no wrong answers and your personal opinion is very much appreciated.
- Men’s magazines
- Men in men’s magazines
- Men as sex objects in men’s magazines
- Sex sells
- Role models in magazines
- Self-comparison to media ideals

IV. Mood board exercise (20 minutes)
   A. Ok, great. Now we will proceed to another part of this interview I will give each of you three different magazines: Men’s Health, GQ and Men’s Journal. I would like you to just look into these magazines and just take the pictures that you like and pictures that you don’t like. Since they are on the computer, please copy paste them onto the document right next to it. You have twenty minutes time. It’s not about if you make the most inspiring or beautiful mood board. Make a mood board based on your personal choices. That is all that matters, are there any questions?

V. Explanation of the mood boards (5 minutes)
   A. The twenty minutes are up. Would you like to start by telling a little bit about your mood board? You can tell me about why you choose the pictures and what you like or maybe even dislike about them.

VI. Perception of magazines and attitude towards themselves (5/10 minutes, emotion)
   A. The last twenty minutes you have scrolled through the magazines. What do you think of the images and text of men in those magazines?
   B. What do the images in those magazines do to you?
   C. How do they make you feel?
   D. Do you feel different about yourself after scrolling through magazines?
   E. Do you think more about your body or the way you look after seeing the content in these magazines?

VII. Attitude of men’s portrayal men’s lifestyle magazines (5/10 minutes, opinion)
   A. Do you feel that men are being portrayed in a fair and honest way in these magazines?
   B. Do you think that men in these magazines are portrayed in a realistic way?
   C. Do you feel men are being sexualised in these magazines?
   D. Do you feel men are being objectified in these magazines?
   E. What do you think of the images and headlines in these men’s magazines?

VIII. Extra

IX. Conclusion
    I would like to thank you for participating in this interview. You have been of great help to my research. Thank you very much.
Appendix 2: Interview example

Okay, it is recording. Uh, welcome to this interview. You of course know me, so no introduction needed.

Yeah.

I am however going to introduce the subject of my thesis a little bit more. I’m doing a study into the perception and attitude of young men towards men’s lifestyle magazines. Three magazines in particular and as I told you before this session will be recorded. We will do a little mood board exercise in this interview which I will explain a little later. And uhm I am going to ask you some questions and I wanted to say no answers are wrong. All the answers are good uh so just relax and I was going to say enjoy this flight but I meant more enjoy this interview. Okay, first I need to know your name, age and country of origin.

Uh, my name is (undisclosed information). I am 23 years old...

And where are you from?

I am from Sweden.

You are from Sweden.

Yeah, I know that. But...

Had to think about my age. Still 23...

Well that said, I am interested in hearing your opinion about men’s lifestyle magazines. So we are going to do a couple of top mind associations, which means I am going to shout out some things but before that I would actually like to know do you read magazines?

mmm... Not much.

Not much.

No not really

But you do read a little bit?

I don’t think I read a newly printed magazine in three four years

Which were magazines you used to read before?

I’ve got no idea. News

So not men’s lifestyle magazines?
No.

You don’t follow men’s lifestyle magazines on social media?

Not really no.

No. Do you look at them when you are, for example, in a supermarket?

Uhm, passively sure. Catches my eye every now and then. But don’t really go through that.

And what do you think if it catches your eye?

I don’t know. Depends what’s on it. I suppose the thing that can catch my eye is a face I’ll recognise or a name I’ll recognise.

Yeah.

From a page.

What is your opinion about men’s lifestyle magazines?

Uh, I don’t know. Never really formed one.

Okay, well maybe you will have one by the end of this interview. Because we are going to look at a couple. Like I said we are going to do a little bit of top of mind associations before starting the interview. So I am just going to say some things I already talked about before but men’s magazines. You don’t really have an opinion about that yet.

No.

Men’s lifestyle magazines, the same?

Yeah I don’t really read it so I suppose no.

You don’t really read it because it doesn’t have your interest?

Mm. maybe I think

What are other reason why you wouldn’t read it?

I don’t know. I think also maybe not interested.

You’re not interested?

No. Usually not. And if I need to read one article, I’ll do it online.

Mmm, men as sex objects in men’s magazines?
In men’s magazines? What I think about that?
Yeah, I think I’m somewhat fine with it. That is up to the person being portrayed.

You don’t mind men being portrayed as sex objects?
Yeah.

Uhm, I don’t know. Depends on what you mean by sex objects.

Seeing a person as an object for sexual pleasure. Mostly emphasizing their body

Well if the men are fine with it, than ofcourse.

What do you think of the term sex sells?
I think it’s true.

Fair enough.

Role models in men’s magazines?
I suppose you can see a few. But I don’t read them.

Self-comparison to media ideals.

I think people do that a lot.

Do you do it?

I try not to. Probably do it sometimes. But not actively.

What are media ideals for men according to you?
Mmm.. I suppose you should be fit, maybe have a beard. I don’t know.

And by fit you mean muscles?
Yeah I think that is kind of the standard when you see men portrayed. At least, without a shirt on. Musculair
Yeah, mostly muscular

Anything else that comes into your mind when you think about media ideals for men?
Not really.
Not really. Okay good, than we will start the mood board exercise. In front of you on the computer you have three magazines. Those are GQ, men’s health... No GQ, men’s health and men’s journal if I’m not mistaking. And what I would like you to do, you will get twenty minutes to scroll trough these magazines and note down the pictures you like and you don’t like. You have the formula in front of you and yeah it’s just you choose the pictures you like or it’s very personal in the case that you decide what you like and you don’t like. There are a lot of pictures, there are three magazines. So I don’t know what you would prefer if I would say every five minutes that you need to go to the next magazines or if you want to see how far you come with scrolling trough the magazines.

We’ll see how far I come.

Okay page numbers are when you scroll up and down. Yeah that’s when you see the page number so you can just note that

One, four, five

Yeah that will do. Okay so you got twenty minutes and than I am going to ask you a bit I will ask you some questions we are going to go trough the pictures and I’ll ask you some questions. Do you have any questions for me?

Uhm, do I need to form an opinion about every image?

Uhm, that’s a good questions.

Or wither I like it or dislike it.

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Well I will ask you questions about the pictures and once you can also there is a page description there is a photo description yeah write something down the first thing that pops into your mind but I’ll ask questions about it or I hope by the the questions that I ask.

Alright.

Okay, have fun.

I shall.

Here is says picture description though.

Uh...

Should I describe the picture?

Yeah, I mean it is more a reminder for yourself so you know uh the picture

Oh, okay.
And it’s not about all the pictures just the pictures that like jump catch your eye....

Yeah.

Uh, would you like me to say after five minutes that you should scroll through the next magazine?

I think I’m okay.

Okay.

What the fuck?

What?

The pose.

I don’t know. It is kind of funny because last year I was researching women and like a lot of the comments that I got and a lot of the comments I got was about the pose from the models.

Yeah.

[name] just a question that popped into my mind when we were doing the top of mind associations you should something I asked you about men as sex objects in men’s magazines and you should something it is okay as long as the person that is being portrayed as a sex object agrees with it, right?

Yeah.

Does it influence you that men are being portrayed as sex objects?

How do you mean?

If it influences you if you if you would so to say sexualize yourself, you would see yourself as a sex object.

That it would encourage me to do so?

Yeah

Uh, I don’t think so. Not that I know of.

Okay. I wanted to ask that question now because I will forget about it.

Thirty pages per magazines?

mmm..?
Thirty pages per magazines?

No. you’re now on the first magazines. 229 is for the first magazine.

Wait what?

They’re...

266 for one magazine?

Than I got to speed up...

No, no. You don’t have to finish all. That’s why I said maybe it’s nice to have a reminder every five minutes. But you still have fifteen minutes.

Half of the time is up. Just so you know.

Okay, how do I go to the next slide

Uh you go escape and than the green the left corner and then green. Yeah there you go.

Five minutes left.

Alright.

Okay.

Yeah.

Well, wow. Within the time as well. Great. Let me see. Yeah would you like to come and sit next to me with the computer and the mood board?

Yes.

Okay we are just going to quickly go through that the pictures and we are going to start with GQ, right?

mmm.

Let me see what was the first page you selected a picture of?

15 I think.

15, so that is this one?

Just wrote sport questionmark but that could be it. It’s a series of some sort. I don’t know if it’s a tv show or whatever
And you like the picture or you did not like the picture?

Pfff... I don’t know. Picture was alright, but I wasn’t quite sure what the sports thing was in there. Just a combination and shit

Would you say you either dislike it or like it?

The picture? If it fills its purpose in the series than I like it

You like it when pictures are practical?

Yeah or stylisticly.

Stylisticly. Okay next one.

Seventeen. That was more an add thing. That’s the going theme I see with clocks and motorcycles. Especially clocks.

O here

Yeah and you see it through the entire magazines. Yeah

So clocks and motorcycles?

Yeah and cars especially clocks. As a stereotype almost or like archetype or a for the targeted magazine. I am not sure why but

Do you think the objects portray masculinity?

Could be. The big silver gold watch.

A status symbol?

Yeah sure. For some people it is. Like having a rolex you know. People see it as a status symbol.

Yeah, do you think it also relates to the more the the bigger the watch the more masculine you are?

I think there is something to it. I think that’s like that bigger better kind of a thing like the big cars and the clocks and the big muscled cars and the big Harley davidssons.

Next one.

What did I write down? I didn’t write down that many specific. O yeah 23 was clocks. Also elegance is attitude angle.

Do you like it or not?
I liked it more I think but still..

And the man in the picture?

Well he’s an actor or I think at least. But I think that’s like the typ... like what the typical men in magazines you see. Well-dressed kind of musculair underneath like a small beard going on watch

Sunday beard

So a masculine beard

Yeah well and than the only thing I wrote down is that they do not look into the camera which I thought was quite a difference from what I’ve seen from female magazines. Usually that’s more like a dreamer sort of thing

Men are more seen as dreamers?

Maybe. I don’t know. It also makes you seem more trustworthy

When you look

When you don’t look into the camera.

Do you trust men in magazines more when they don’t look into the camera? Do you trust the men that sells the watch?

No.


Number 3

Number 3

Yeah clocks plus sports questionmark. Also the clocks again and still this muscular atelic male.

Muscular athletic male yeah.

Next.

91. thought that was a really good picture there.

A picture that you liked? So that’s the first picture that you like a bit
Yeah it’s the first that was like that I thought was like a very powerful. There... There were a lot of pictures that I liked aesthetically.

But, you see a men laying on the ground and a women

He either completed or... I think he completed a marathon some sort of I’m not sure I didn’t read the text and than you see both the man’s face down on the asphalt crying either exhausted or devastated and you see possibly his wife

It’s kind of interesting to see because you know like men’s magazines they promote taugh men muscled men and the picture you choose is a picture you like and what is interesting it is a man on the ground...

He’s vulnerable

Vulnerable. Do you like vulnerability?

In pictures. I do.

Because it tells... tells more of a story I assume?

Yes, it tells you who the person is.

Yeah.

Like actually is.

So if men are portrayed more vulnerable you would say that that actually makes you more interested?

Yeah. I would say so.

Interesting.

To me at least it would make them more real in a sense.

And therefore interesting?

Yeah, yeah

Interesting. Next one.

O yeah, 123.

123
I wrote overly sexualized maybe but I did like the way they did that add if you go through that they have a few pictures I did not really watch the clothing that much or the people and architecture it’s like very futuristic

Yeah.

What do you think is sexualized about this picture?

Well, why do they need half of their shirt off? That’s what I was thinking about.

Yeah nudity.

Yeah, excessive almost. But I don’t know. Yeah

And than where shall we go to next? To a next magazine?

Yeah we can do that.

Now okay, which one is?

47 51. But that’s more an article thing.

I guess you can call the picture as well and they had a very specific difference. We’re with her and the more masculine and sport-related men to men 51. Which two different portrayed which I didn’t really read the text, but it shows a big difference.

And what’s the difference?

I think the men to men thing makes you immediately think of sports. Either sports or some form of combat, while their we’re with her is more... more friendly in a sense.

Yeah. So with females there is much more, because this is about Anna Faris an interview with a female actress and the other one is with a male...

A portrayed of a basketball player.

Of a basketball player. And with her it’s more companionship rather than competition?

Yeah.

I hope I identified correctly what you said?

Yeah, yeah I think so.

Do you think there is companionship that... like... in the three magazines you see that there is much more focus on competitiveness with men?
Mmm... mmm... maybe in a ladder two more than GQ. GQ is more artsy in their advertising. I like the way there were like a bunch of advertising photo’s that I really liked but that was more like aesthetically. Just the way they frame the picture and such. Uhm... Yeah I think that it’s kind of architectural for a male magazine the more competation aspect I suppose

And you have a lost one I see...

Yeah, 109

109

and that was just a small one, ofcourse garage. Ofcourse there is going to be a garage in it.

O, I was looking at the other picture. Haha

An add for geco full garage.

And do you like it or didn’t you like it?

I didn’t like it. Both aesthetically I just didn’t like the picture.

About how much you can have?

I just don’t like the framing of it. I really don’t like it. And than also it is also like... why I suppose? But I don't know... yeah... you can see how targeted is...

But why?

I don't know where I was going with that.

Okay.

But you can see it is very clearly targeted for the male audience. Also with the clocks, cars and motorcycles and you also see a boat.

Yeah a boat

And you see the Harley Davidsson.

Yeah so the man has to be the one taking care of the garage and stuff

And having all the vehicles.

Yeah

Okay. Yeah the last twenty minutes you scrolled trough these magazines, uh, what do you think of images and text in these magazines?
I think image wise at least in portraits they are portrayed as more powerful men and..

And what shows power?

Just the framing of the pictures of them. The lower angle and their facial expressions I think which is something about it. But I think I think that’s why I like the advertising photos more as that they don’t have the need to do that.

To portray men as powerful?

Yeah I mean of course some men do, I mean some do have the need for it and some don’t have the need for it. But I saw, at least in GQ I saw more that were kind of neutral in that sense, they were not suppose to be that atheletic and strong men.

Okay, yeah yeah. What do you think what the images do to you in those magazines?

Uh... well what I think with that’s pretty much what most advertising at least for ma... I guess for both males and females as well but I guess when you see males in an advertisement targeted you see they want to portray them as if the viewer wants to be them and I think subconsciously you want to because it looks like o their strong and they look great and whatever. And I I think it has an effect but I don’t know. I think you should be aware of it. I think I lost where I was going.

Do you think that they make you feel or they make you think that you want to be that when it’s...

When I see it I think so.

Yeah.

Because I think especially with the watches thing with the clocks that you like if I buy this watch I can be like him and I think that’s the same thing with pretty much everything. If I buy this car I can be like him, it’s very materialistic in that sense but that is advertising for you. So if I buy this perfume I can be as ... pff, attractive as this guy or whatever.

And you talk specifically about advertising now, but when you don’t look at the advertising in magazines when you look at...

What the portraits?

Yeah, the portraits. The content. I mean advertisements make up fifty per cent of these magazines so it’s a really important part to hear like the other side.

I didn’t read a lot of the text. I kind of skipped trough but I was I think of stand by the thing that men are portrayed as more powerful.

Yeah, yeah. You talk about subconsciously. Let’s talk about consciously. Do you feel different about yourself after scrolling trough these magazines?
Not really. Cause.. ah.. maybe if I read it all. Might have felt different. But I don’t think... I think that’s a individual thing as well because I’m very much aware of like of or like I try to read in to what especially with pictures I try to read into what they are trying to make me think especially as a media student uh... also with yeah pictures advertising and such... but yeah I don’t think it changed.

You don’t feel different about yourself?

No, I don’t feel different about myself.

You don’t feel like buying a watch now?

No.

Do you think more about your body or the way you look after seeing all these men in magazines?

Yeah sure

And what way?

Well I think I think most people want to be fit and want to be muscular but I think there is I don’t know it’s a tricky thing tho. Can you repeat the question?

Yeah. Do you think more about your body or the way you look after seeing the content in the magazines?

Yeah o yeah. Yeah I think it makes you it makes me think about it but than I quickly realise I’m okay with it.

And what do you think about in that moment before you realise you’re okay with it?

Well, I should be more musculair I should do this and this and this o, why can’t I grow a beard? Etcera etcera.

You want to have beard?

In that moment I do. I don’t really.

Okay, interesting.

Do you think musculair relates to masculinity?

Sure yeah.

In society or in those magazines?
Both.

And they influence each other?

Yeah I think like that’s almost like a biological thing as well, because the men generally are more muscular like biologically more muscular than women that seen that big muscles are seen as masculine. That’s why like some men look at female body builders odd because its seen as masculine. That’s my theory at least.

Interesting theory. Uh, do you feel that men men in general are being portrayed in a fair and honest way in men’s lifestyle magazines? In particular in the one you read?

Mmm.. I don’t know. I don’t know if it’s... maybe not honest but it sure is the way they want to be portrayed. I think most people want to be portrayed as powerful and yeah powerful and wise and whatever.

So is that a yes or a no?

Uh, it’s a grey zone. Mmm... I don’t know. Let’s put a no.

Put a no. Do you think that men in men’s lifestyle magazines are portrayed in a realistic way?

No.

Why not?

Uh... because everyone doesn’t look like that. That’s not the average male.

We talk about the fact that you see those pictures and that for a moment you think o I want to grow a beard I need to become more masculine and than you realise like.. nah. Is it because it is not realistic? Or is it because...?

Could be. Could be. But I think that once you realised that that is not the average that that is men that’s eats, sleeps and works out like for a living with one to two per cent body fat and does nothing else but care for their body and I think that yeah like losing track of my own thoughts.

Okay, than let’s get back to my thoughts again. Do you think men are being sexualized in these magazines?

Here and there. You see a lot of the photo’s that’s the one that I mentioned where they have their shirts off just a lot of like showing off abs I think that’s a typical one.

For sexualisation?

Yeah.

So sexualisation is linked to nudity?
Yeah sure but it doesn’t have to be.

Do you feel men are being objectified, seen as objects?

Yeah sure. Every now and than.

Not all the time?

No, not all the time. But I think especially with the shirtless things like that.

So shirtless models for you are an example of sexualized and objectified?

When there is not a clear reason to why, I would say so.

So that’s like male models without any deep interview?

Yeah.

Yeah, what do you think of the images and headlines in these magazines overall?

I don’t know.

We talked about the one Anna Faris the actress it’s with her and...

Yeah probably there were a few more of those. I didn’t read that any headlines tho, I just looked at the picture. I don’t know, yeah I don’t remember the quotes but I knew there was some very I think that was the men’s health thing magazine they had a few like manly men directed headlines don’t take my word for that tho. I just remembered.

And what do you think of manly men?

Of those headlines?

Yeah, what is your opinion about it?

I don’t know. I think it doesn’t make me really interested in reading it.

Well great that was the interview. I would like to thank you for your honesty and participation in this interview

No problem.

You have been of great help to my research.

That’s good.
### Appendix 3: Mood Board Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKE</th>
<th>DISLIKE</th>
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<td>![Image 1]</td>
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<td>![Image 3]</td>
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<td>![Image 5]</td>
<td>![Image 6]</td>
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2. Men's Health

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LIKE</th>
<th>DISLIKE</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interesting picture tells a story, makes me curious</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image1.png" alt="Image" /> The Masochist's Marathon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image2.png" alt="Image" /> showing off muscles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="image3.png" alt="Image" /> why are the men naked in this picture?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### LIKE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image 1</th>
<th>Image 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### DISLIKE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image 3</th>
<th>Image 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

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3. Men's journal