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Exploring Young Male Perspectives on Gender-Stereotyped Instagram Ads

A qualitative study on Swedish men's engagement towards gender-stereotyped advertisements in the digital context of Instagram

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Abstract

This paper examined male engagement towards gender stereotypes online. We specifically sought to address how men engage with gender-stereotyped advertisements on Instagram, and which interactions they utilize to do so. We aimed to understand how men engage with gender stereotypes in Instagram advertisements by answering the following research question:

[RQ1] How do men engage with gender-stereotyped advertisements on Instagram?

Data were collected from 10 male participants through semi-structured interviews using photo elicitation. The data was further obtained through thematic analysis using the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The findings resulted in 26 codes and 6 themes. The results demonstrated that exposure to masculine content receives more attention and recognition than feminine, non-sexualized content. The findings argued that men are hesitant to engage with sexualized and provocative content due to societal norms and fear of being judged by others. In contradiction, men believe that other men are more likely to engage with sexualised, gender-stereotyped content that idealizes masculinity. The study identified the most common engagement interactions utilized when engaging with gender-stereotyped content: liking, visiting the account or website, and sharing content with a friend.

The findings supported previous research claims that accepting a feminine image puts men at risk of violating gender roles, resulting in men preserving a masculine persona by distancing themselves from this type of material (Elliot & Elliot, 2005). Additionally, we concluded that fear of judgement from peers and society results in social pressure to conform to masculine gender norms, which may influence men's online behaviour.

The results may be delimited by social desirability and sampling bias due to the designated scope. Nevertheless, we have implemented measures to ensure the trustworthiness of this study.

Keywords

Male engagement, gender stereotypes, advertising, Instagram, social media, young men.

Preface

We would like to raise a sincere thank you to our supervisor Ida Serneberg for her support and guidance throughout the whole research process. Ida's expertise and insights have significantly guided our research and assisted us in overcoming challenges.

We express our gratitude to the participants that took part in this study, and who enabled us to gain valuable insights into how men engage with gender-stereotyped advertisements online. This research would not have been feasible without the participants' willingness to share their experiences and perspectives.

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Happy reading!

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I Introduction

“Never before in history have such a small number of designers — a handful of young, mostly male engineers, living in the Bay Area of California, working at a handful of tech companies — had such a large influence on two billion people’s thoughts and choices” (Harris, 2018, as cited in Bhargava & Velasquez, 2020). The increasing use of digital technologies in large areas of our private and professional lives means that people frequently make important decisions within digital choice environments. Most, if not all, online interactions require people to make choices (Weinmann et al., 2016).

I.1 Background

Men and women are frequently expected to look, act, and think like typical members of their gender groupings. In contrast to individuals who comply with stereotypes, men and women who deviate from gender-stereotypical norms in many areas are criticised (Wen et al., 2020). Advertising has, for a long time, portrayed gender in more stereotypical gender roles, while data also shows a shift towards a more positive gender depiction in advertising, indicating that efforts are being made to eliminate these gender prejudices (Grau & Zotos, 2018). Simultaneously, the evolution of men’s roles has been the topic of greatest interest in recent years (Grau & Zotos, 2018). Gender stereotypes have been maintained in the online space, according to Eisend (2019) because men represent the majority of users globally and have a tendency to react more favourably than women to traditional gender roles. This idea is further strengthened by Wang et al. (2019), who found variations in behavioural performances of gender stereotyping between men and women, and of which further provide evidential conclusions that males performed a higher level of gender stereotyping than females. This research paper continues the focus on male engagement towards gender stereotypes found in advertising on social media platforms. To ensure that this study is feasible, the selection of social media platforms was narrowed down to one of the most powerful sources of electronic word of mouth: Instagram (Khwaja et al., 2020).

Instagram is a popular picture-sharing social networking system that has been at the forefront of popularising image-intensive social media, where users may share their experiences by posting images (Kusumasondjaja & Tjiptono, 2019). Instagram had 2 billion registered users by January 2023, while figures from 2022 showed that men made up 51.8 % of active users (Statista, 2023). In 2018, brands could spend \$1 billion on Instagram advertising alone, and between \$5 and \$10 billion by 2022 (Kusumasondjaja & Tjiptono, 2019). This indicates a dynamic, visual mode of sharing an organisational image with a low budget, however a strong persuasive effect. Döring et al., (2016) additionally revealed that Instagram selfies reproduce traditional gender

stereotypes to a greater extent than magazine advertisements. Given Instagram's reach in terms of online usage, reproduction of gender-stereotyped content, and the prevalence of advertising (Kusumasondjaja & Tjiptono, 2019); it was decided to base our data collection on this specific platform. Considering the extensiveness of the platform, it may also generate reliable conclusions and structural behaviours that have the potential to be predicted in a potentially larger context.

The interactive properties of social media have transformed consumers from passive spectators of content to engaging players who now create massive quantities of content through their online interactions and behaviours (Dolan, 2019). Likes, shares, comments, opens, views, followers, or clicks are types of engagement metrics that are commonly used to measure digital interaction on social media monitoring tools (Voorveld et al., 2018). Advertisements that are made with a creative approach typically raise these metrics higher (Voorveld et al., 2018). Given the prevalence of digital choice environments on websites and mobile app user interfaces, designers' every decision has the potential to influence user behaviour, often regardless of the intended outcome (Sunstein, 2015, cited in Weinmann et al., 2016). Designers must comprehend how their designs affect users' choices to decide whether to implement a design that nudges users intentionally or one that lessens the effects to increase free will (Weinmann et al., 2016).

1.2 Problem statement

Although research has extensively examined gender stereotypes in traditional media such as print, radio, and TV advertisements, there has been limited investigation of the issue in online platforms such as social media (Roth-Cohen et al. 2021). Given the growing importance of new media, including digital advertising and social media platforms, it is crucial to examine how gender stereotypes may manifest in these contexts (Grau & Zotos, 2016; Roth-Cohen et al., 2021). Furthermore, unintentional design influences in digital choice environments can have unintended consequences (Weinmann et al., 2016), which highlights the need for further research on the negative effects of gender stereotypes in advertising. Tuncay-Zayer and Coleman (2014) found that male gender stereotypes in advertising can have negative impacts on the individual and underscored the importance of examining this issue in greater depth. While limited research has focused on men's perceptions of gender stereotypes (Wang et al., 2019), understanding how men interpret and respond to advertising messages is critical for developing effective business practices and advancing a transparent dialogue and understanding of gender issues (Zayer et al., 2019). Consequently, existing literature suggests that gender stereotypes may persist and be reinforced in digital advertising, and additional research is needed — particularly on male engagement — to address this research gap.

1.3 Purpose and research questions

Drawing on the problem statement, it is evident that there is a further need for more research on male engagement towards (all) gender stereotypes in social media advertising. Consequently, the purpose of this study is:

To understand how men engage with gender stereotypes in Instagram advertisements.

To fulfil this purpose, one research question has been defined. It functions as a path in which the research will be directed. This study looks to understand how gender stereotypes potentially may be reinforced or be challenged by Instagram, as well as how to design, implement and/or further develop inclusive and ethical informatics systems. Accordingly, it is supported that understanding male perspectives allows us to gain a greater understanding of the motivations and mechanisms underlying male engagement with displayed content on gender stereotypes. Hence, the study's research question is as followed:

[RQ1] How do men engage with gender-stereotyped advertisements on Instagram?

Consequently, by situating this study into a broader informatics context, valuable insights may be evolved that can be applied across multiple industries (e.g., entertainment, fashion, and the beauty industry) as well as to other social media platforms. In addition, since the practice of informatics involves studying how information technology affects society, ethics, and culture, male engagement in gender-stereotyped advertising can raise important ethical and cultural issues (as it may reinforce gender stereotypes and biases, for example).

1.4 Scope and delimitations

The scope of this study entails understanding how men respond to gender stereotypes in advertisements on Instagram, by observing their engagement in their online behaviour. This research will only examine male engagement with gender stereotypes in advertisements on Instagram. This research is therefore limited to Instagram and will not include any other social media platform.

This study will only cover the collection of data on male participants aged between 20-30 years old. This research will only involve men located in Sweden and will not include men located in other geographic locations. The study will involve semi-structured qualitative interviews and photo elicitation and will not rely on any other research methodology. This study is limited to a time frame of 15 weeks. The study will not involve any unethical or harmful practices, nor will it manipulate user information.

1.5 Disposition

The introductory chapter provides background information on the research topic, including the problem statement, purpose, research question, scope, and limitations. Chapter 2 highlights relevant literature to situate the forthcoming research with extant theoretical paradigms and an emphasis on areas where further research is needed. This chapter also deals with the theoretical framework and how it is utilised in the implementation of the methodology. Chapter 3 provides an explanation and justification of the research methodologies used, and the reasons behind the methodological choices. Chapter 4 represents the findings from the data collection and thematic analysis in detail. Chapter 5 delves into the meaning, value, and relevance of the findings by explaining and evaluating them. Chapter 6 emphasizes the new knowledge that has contributed to the field of study.

2 Theoretical background

This chapter provides an overview of gender stereotypes as a concept, followed by an examination of its intersection with the advertising industry. The chapter also delves into the topic of engagement, exploring its relationship with gender stereotypes and men. The theoretical framework is presented coherently, as it is integrated throughout the chapter to elucidate its relevance to the research objectives.

2.1 Gender stereotypes

Stereotypes are widely held beliefs about sex-related traits, which are characteristics and behaviours associated with men and women, as well as gender roles, which are activities considered more appropriate for one gender over the other (Browne, 1998). Stereotypes can be expressed as the universal practice of subconsciously grouping individuals into predetermined categories. Stereotypes have an impact on audience news perceptions, emotions, and engagement (Tian et al., 2021).

According to earlier research by Grau & Zotos (2016), gender stereotypes include characteristics and trait descriptors (such as self-assertion and concern for others), physical traits (such as hair length and body height), role behaviours (such as leadership and childcare), and occupational status (such as truck driver and elementary school teacher). There are masculine and feminine variations of each component, with the masculine and feminine variations being more strongly related to males and females, respectively. Consequently, stereotyping turns into a problem when it generates expectations and judgments that limit the life chances of individuals in a social group (Knoll & Eisend, 2011).

2.2 Gender stereotypes in advertising

Since the 1960s, researchers have demonstrated an interest in how men and women are portrayed in advertising since it regularly leverages gender roles to promote products (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Eisend et al., 2014). Earlier research has primarily been made on conventional media and adds that readership and viewership for both print and television have steadily declined. Simultaneously, people are spending more time online watching videos, using social media, and using apps (Grau & Zotos 2016).

Most advertisements refer to gender identity and heavily rely on gender stereotypes for their imagery (Schroeder & Zwick, 2007). Male-oriented magazines appeared to promote women in decorative and traditional roles, whereas general audience magazines used female depictions of women shown as equal to men (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009). This is further confirmed by alternative research which suggests that the

key female role stereotypes used in advertising can be identified and categorised as homemaker/housewife, sexual object, professional or career-oriented, and decorative or object of beauty (Middleton et al., 2020). In this way, the logic of market-advertising representations and consumer behaviour seamlessly combines with masculinity and femininity to produce a meaningful system of difference that severely limits the potential of male and female consumer ideologies (Schroeder & Zwick, 2007). Images of women applying makeup, driving a minivan, eating “light”, doing the laundry, and decorating homes are contrasted with images of stereotypical masculine behaviours like shaving the face, driving fast automobiles, having a hearty appetite, smoking cigars, and drinking alcohol (Schroeder & Zwick, 2007). Gender stereotypes in advertising have traditionally focused on women’s reactions to female stereotypes and, to a lesser extent, male reactions to male stereotypes (Åkestam et al., 2021). Eisend (2019) confirms this statement as he expresses how research has been focusing on gender traits such as specific role behaviours (e.g., males being a leader) or occupational statuses (e.g., females being seen as housewives), which stem from the idea that women are disadvantaged while men are unaffected (Eisend, 2019).

Even if the prevalence of these conservative beliefs on gender roles has decreased over time, advertisers still frequently use them (Roth-Cohen et al., 2023). Middleton et al. (2019) describe how advertising creative practitioners view stereotypes as a ‘safe solution’ since they perceive them as general knowledge that most consumers are familiar with. Moreover, by eliminating distraction, they encourage consumers to focus on the brand’s message rather than the scene or social representation, preventing further rational thinking. Consequently, consumers experience heightened emotional reactions, especially because they see the stereotype as their ideal self (Middleton et al., 2019). Aramendia-Muneta et. al (2019) confirms this statement further as she clarifies how information conveyed in digital video advertising has the potential to change people’s perceptions, which could impact not only their decisions but ultimately their behaviour. Consumers choose based on their perceptive understanding and rationalize based on their perceptive exposure. In this way, when consumers are exposed to advertisements with gender stereotypes, they also learn how to normalize stereotyped behaviour (Aramendia-Muneta et. al 2019). During times of social, economic, and political change, consumers are also more likely to stay true to societal expectations regarding gender ideals, such as gender roles, behaviour, and appearance (Zayer et al., 2019).

2.3 Consequences of gender stereotypes and combating strategies

Media exposure affects cognitive development, attitude formation and socialization (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009). Simultaneously, there is a growing concern about stereotypes in advertising and their possibly significant impact on children's sex role

development (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009). The conventional portrayal of females in magazine advertising also may have a negative impact (Ross, 2012). Ross' study outlines the self-confidence of British women but further describes how such depictions have sparked global studies on the impact of advertising on people's self-esteem and self-image, particularly among adolescent females. The research demonstrates that positive gender stereotypes reinforce traditional gender roles by directly undermining both women's and men's performance in negatively stereotyped domains, in addition to providing justification for the current gender system and prescribing stereotype-consistent behaviours (Ross, 2012). Such impacts could have far-reaching consequences in terms of their influence on women's and men's professional choices and pathways because people's occupational choices are greatly impacted by their self-interest (Ross, 2012). These negative effects are increased by the fact that the people who suffer from them the most are the ones who want to succeed in fields that are negatively stereotyped — specifically women who are interested in math-related careers and men who are interested in jobs requiring strong social and emotional competencies (Kahalon et al., 2018).

In contrast to conforming to gender stereotypes, consumers have been observed using three methods to challenge some of the gender norms promoted by advertisers: reframing, using alternative logic, and prioritizing personal norms (Zayer et al., 2019). Plakoyiannaki & Zotos (2009) continue to explain that the negative influence of advertising can be reduced through social institutions (e.g., public education) and individual efforts. These initiatives seek to raise consumer awareness of media manipulation, international standards for journalism and advertising, counter-advertising, and the boycott of products promoted through gender-demeaning imagery (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009).

2.4 User Engagement

For the objectives of this research, engagement is defined as a behavioural response, which refers to users' actions, such as clicking on, liking, sharing, or commenting (Sanne & Wiese, 2018) on an Instagram advertisement. Engagement is also defined as an emotional response, which refers to the positive and negative emotional reactions that users can have to content (e.g. shock or interest) (O'Brien et al., 2018). Prior research (Kappelman, 1995; Chapman, 1997, cited in O'Brien et al., 2008) suggests how engagement consists of users' activities, attitudes, goals, and mental models which show up in the form of attention, intrinsic interest, curiosity, and motivation. Engagement is defined as a phenomenon that captures and maintains our attention and is considered a desired and even necessary human response to computer-mediated activities (Laurel, 1993; Chapman, 1997, cited in O'Brien et al., 2008).

Social media's interactive qualities have transformed users from passive observers to active participants (Dolan et al., 2016). To gain greater knowledge of consumer behaviour on engagement on social media, Dolan et al. (2016) define the social media engagement behaviour construct as consisting of seven distinct types. These types include co-creation, positive contribution, consumption, dormancy, detachment, negative contribution, and co-destruction. While co-creation, positive contribution, negative contribution, and co-destruction are examples of active engagement behaviours that may have an impact on other social media users, consumption, dormancy, and detachment are examples of more passive and/or personalised types of interaction (Dolan et al., 2016).

Marketing professionals are utilizing digital media forums by extensively investing in digital media forums while modifying their advertising to have a positive impact on user interaction, to increase online engagement among consumer groups (Dolan et al., 2019). He continues to explain how the nature of business (business to business vs. business to consumer) affects engagement differently depending on functional versus emotional signals (Dolan et al., 2019). Marketing messages that range from emotional to rational tend to have a more positive effect on consumer involvement than the contrary (Dolan et al., 2019).

2.5 Influences on user engagement

There are two types of online engagement: active engagement and passive participation. Active engagement generally takes the shape of symbolic behaviours like sharing, liking, saving, and commenting (Khan, 2017). Passive engagement, on the other hand, occurs when a user merely consumes the content or plays an active role by participating in various interactions and even repurposing content to fit their needs (Khan, 2017). There has been mixed evidence that user engagement varies because it can be influenced by both demographic variables and gender (Lin & Lu, 2011). For instance, a study on social networking revealed that women were more active in relationship maintenance compared to men, who tended to use the sites more for starting new relationships (Khan, 2017). Nevertheless, to get users to engage with social media content, marketers must first capture their attention.

The attention economy is typically an advertising-based industry, where the consumer of the product or service is not the main source of income (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2022). Instead, the product is the user's attention, which is then sold to advertisers or other buyers (Williams, 2018). Naturally, there have always been businesses that use an advertising-based attention-economy business model. Yet, social media firms like Facebook, Instagram, Snap Inc, and Twitter serve as the most valuable and significant types of attention-economy businesses today (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2022). Consumer

attention is an important resource because studies have discovered that it affects consumer behaviour both directly and indirectly. But, if the focus is diverted, experiences that are insufficient or inaccurate may be retained. As a result, if the audience is not paying adequate attention, marketing stimuli will not (fully) change their attitudes or behaviours (Romaniuk & Nguyen, 2017).

Digital nudging is the use of user-interface design elements to guide people's behaviour in digital choice environments. They proceed to explain that although people must make decisions daily, the results of those decisions are influenced not only by rational consideration of the options at hand but also by the design of the choosing environment, which can have an unconscious impact on the results (Weinmann et al., 2016). Understanding the effects of digital nudges in these environments can assist designers in the practice of guiding users to the most desirable choice, as the design of digital choice environments always (either intentionally or unintentionally) influences people's choices (Weinmann et al., 2016). This approach has been adopted when designing digital content (Ren & Liu, 2022) that can be accessed through social media (Polančič et al., 2011). According to Polančič et al. (2011), social media is a collection of new online information sources created, initiated, shared, and used by consumers who seek to educate one another about products, companies, services, personalities, and concerns. Nudging can impact social media users by providing incentives for sharing or other actions, such as rewards (Weinmann et al., 2016). Partitioning, the process of dividing a set of options, attributes or events into groups or categories based on certain criteria or characteristics, can additionally be utilised to nudge decision-makers, having the most paternalistic effect on individuals who need the most direction and the least influence on those who require the least direction (Johnson et al., 2012). Consequently, designers must understand the behavioural effects of interface design elements to prevent random digital nudging and unintended consequences (Weinmann et al., 2016).

2.6 Male user engagement on gender stereotypes

Advertising has historically depicted gender in more stereotyped gender roles, and the evolution of men's roles has been a trending topic in recent years (Grau & Zotos, 2018). According to Eisend (2019), gender stereotypes have been maintained in the online environment, such as on YouTube, in the form of distorted body image ideals and sexism promotion. Eisend argues that this might be the case because men represent the majority of YouTube viewers worldwide and tend to react more favourably than women to traditional gender roles. The idea that males are more prone to prefer gender stereotypes is demonstrated in a study by Wang et al. (2019), which found variations in the behavioural performance and cognitive grounds of gender stereotypes between male and female individuals. Males performed a higher level of gender stereotyping than

females. This theory is coherent with an idea that explains how the traditional male ideal of "the Marlboro Man" embodies traits of masculinity that come to be associated with the advertised brand (Elliott & Elliott, 2005). Their study outlined how participants rejected or distanced themselves from images that did not fit masculine features to preserve a masculine persona. Consequently, accepting a feminine image puts men at risk of violating socially prescribed gender roles and raising the possibility of homosexuality (Elliot & Elliot, 2005).

In today's society, men are more frequently portrayed in "softer" advertisement roles, which is being well received by consumers (Grau & Zotos, 2018). Research has proven that this portrayal does not significantly challenge the traditional gender role of masculinity, but instead appears to reinforce traditional gender role beliefs (Grau & Zotos, 2018). It is found that men are less likely to view advertisements that portray men in more equitable roles since they are typically not the intended target audience for those advertisements (Fowler & Thomas, 2015).

2.7 Theoretical framework: The Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) assumes that attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control influence behavioural intent. Behavioural intent indicates how much effort an individual is willing to put into performing a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Sanne & Weise, 2018). TPB was created by expanding the Theory of Reasoned Action to better forecast non-voluntary behaviours (Sanne & Weise, 2018) and to, through behavioural intent, predict actual behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The more strongly one intends to engage in a behaviour, the more likely that the behaviour will be performed (Ajzen, 1991).

Sanne & Wiese (2018) explains that the TPB has been successfully utilized within many areas, including social media and online services, to analyze and anticipate human behaviour. Their study outlines how the more favourable one's attitude toward Facebook advertising is, the more peers are perceived to support the behaviour (subjective norms), feel like they have the freedom to engage or not with the advertising (perceived behavioural control), and the stronger the intention becomes to engage with Facebook advertising (behavioural intent) (Sanne & Wiese, 2018). This, in turn, will predict the actual performance of the behavioural engagement to comment, like, or share the advertisement (behaviour) (Sanne & Wiese, 2018). In the context of this study, behavioural intent is defined as intended male engagement towards gender stereotypes in Instagram advertisements and is affected by the following aspects:

Attitudes

Attitudes are an individual's degree of liking or disliking a behaviour object that guides consistent behavioural responses (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, as cited in Ho et al., 2015). Attitude is shaped by an individual's behavioural beliefs, which are the beliefs that performing the behaviour will result in certain outcomes, as well as subjective outcome evaluations, which consider the value an individual assigns to those outcomes (Ajzen, 1991). Attitudes can reflect experiential beliefs (e.g., pleasantness) and instrumental beliefs (e.g., utility) as aspects of behaviour. (Ajzen & Driver, 1992). Consequently, behaviours can be perceived as important due to their usefulness or enjoyment value (Ho et al., 2015). In this study, attitude is defined as men's positive or negative evaluation of engaging with gender stereotypes.

Subjective norms

Subjective norms are the social pressures that an individual perceives to execute a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), according to their beliefs about how frequently the behaviour is performed by others and the approval or disapproval of the behaviour by other people (Ho et al., 2015). These subjective norms emerge from normative views, which are the behavioural expectations of significant referent individuals, and the individual's motivation to meet these expectations is determined by their perception of societal pressure and willingness to cooperate (Ajzen, 1991). Furthermore, subjective norms can be influenced by a variety of factors, including personal referents (such as friends and family) and social referents (such as mass media) (Ho et al., 2015). For this research, subjective norms can be defined as perceived social pressure (personal and societal) men feel to engage with gender-stereotyped advertisements on Instagram.

Perceived behavioural control

Perceived behavioural control refers to an individual's perception of their capacity to perform a specific behaviour, which can vary depending on the situation (Ajzen, 1991). The development of perceived behavioural control is influenced by control beliefs and the perceived power of the influencing factor (Sanne & Wiese, 2018). Control beliefs are the individual's perceptions regarding the extent to which they can control their engaged behaviour in terms of resources, abilities, and obstacles (e.g. males may hold control beliefs that prevent them from performing household chores as they believe such tasks are traditionally regarded as "women's work") (Ajzen, 1991). The perceived power of the influencing factor is the individual's perception of how strongly the factor can influence the

performance of the behaviour, either by facilitating or hindering it (e.g., men may avoid seeking help for mental health issues if they experience societal expectations of being tough and emotionless.) (Ajzen, 1991). In this study, perceived behavioural control is referred to as men's perceived ability to engage with gender-stereotyped Instagram advertisements.

Considering the aforementioned data, the researchers of this study decided to use the Theory of Planned Behaviour to examine men's responses to gender-stereotyped Instagram advertising. A recent study indicated that the Theory of Planned Behaviour significantly could predict intention to engage with Facebook advertising, which in turn could predict actual engagement (Sanne & Wiese, 2018). This theory can help measure the strength of men's intended engagement with gender-stereotyped Instagram advertisements and predict the performance of utilizing engagement interactions. To conclude, this theory can be perceived as extremely relevant and applicable when measuring engagement in a social media setting.

Gender stereotypes are prevalent in advertising and media, and they have a substantial impact on individuals' perceptions and attitudes toward gender stereotypes and behaviours. Instagram is no exception to this phenomenon, and male engagement towards gender stereotypes on this platform can be further explored. Instagram provides a platform where people can express their identity and share content that reflects their interests and values. Nonetheless, social networking sites also provide a venue for users to support or challenge gender norms through the content they publish and engage with.

Gender stereotypes have been widely studied, particularly in advertising. When transitioning into a digital media landscape, there is an increased need to study how these stereotypes are conveyed and perpetuated on social media platforms. Researching male engagement towards gender stereotypes in Instagram advertisements will hopefully contribute to understanding how men engage with gender stereotypes in the context of social media. The study will aid a broader discussion regarding the impact of gender stereotypes on individuals and society, including how they limit life opportunities and reinforce traditional gender norms. The outcomes of this research may apply to individuals and organizations across multiple industries, while it particularly could aid the development of more effective strategies for promoting positive attitudes and behaviours among men, reducing the impact of harmful gender stereotypes. The TPB framework is in this study employed to help clarify the variables that affect male online engagement and hopefully introduce new insights into the field.

3 Method and implementation

Since researchers frequently enter the field without too many preconceived notions to test, but instead let the empirical world decide which specific questions are worth seeking answers to, qualitative research is most frequently described as being inductive (Brinkmann, 2013). Qualitative research begins with one or more broad research questions, which may be updated iteratively as the study is conducted to narrow the research aim or purpose. This strategy results in the broad generalizations that characterize inductive inquiry, which is based on individual findings (Denny & Weckesser, 2022). This research specifically sought to identify how men respond to gender stereotypes in advertisements displayed on Instagram, by understanding their engagement when exposed to such content online.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour constituted the theoretical framework and functioned as the foundation on which the interview questionnaire (see Appendix 1 & 2; Q5-Q8) was based upon. The collected data was further analyzed and coded through thematic analysis in connection to the chosen framework. Since qualitative researchers are interested in accessing experiences and interactions in their natural context (Flick, 2007) and because researchers should embrace and integrate multiple research methods to maintain trustworthiness (Pielke, 2007, cited in Baldassarre et al., 2021), it appeared reasonable to use two methodology approaches: semi-structured interviews and photo elicitation. By combining these two methods, the study's trustworthiness can be increased as the findings and results are verified (Brinkmann, 2013). In conclusion, these methodological approaches complement one another and are utilized to best target this thesis.

3.1 Semi-structured interview

Qualitative interviewing has become a key method in the human and social sciences, as this methodology approach has been spread widely to other parts of the scientific landscape (Brinkmann, 2013). The research question will additionally be addressed through qualitative interviews to gain insight into male engagement towards gender-stereotyped advertisements on Instagram.

The interviews conducted for this research followed a semi-structured design. This design allowed participants to express themselves on their terms rather than having to choose from a pre-written set of responses, providing the possibility to explore any new questions or themes that may emerge (Denny & Weckesser, 2022). This interview design is highly relevant when one wishes to learn about how individuals feel something, think about something, or act in connection to something (Brinkmann, 2013). The semi-structured nature also increases the interviewer's chance of being seen

as a knowledge-producing participant in the process rather than hiding behind a predetermined interview guide (Brinkmann, 2013).

The interview questions were derived from our theoretical framework TPB and its three metrics: attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The theory assumes that these factors influence behavioural intent, which in this study is referred to as male engagement towards gender stereotypes in Instagram advertisements. Together, these metrics shaped questions 5 to 8 in the questionnaire (see Appendix 1 & 2; Q5-Q8). TPB naturally enabled the researchers to measure engagement in a qualitative setting since they, by framing each metric as a question, could compare collected data for each question separately and with one another. Consequently, this structure clarified the various factors that influenced participants' engagement and aided the thematic analysis process when searching for codes and themes.

Additionally, the researchers asked “how”-based interview questions rather than “how much”-based ones (Brinkmann, 2013). Thus, to achieve the research aims, the directions of the interviews were ‘steered’ to ensure that key points or topics are covered. This was covered through using probes, when necessary, which refer to questions or responses used to get interviewees to “feed you more”, which implies expanding on their response or a part of it. Probes have the qualities of staying simple, clear, direct, and potent. They need to be uncomplicated as they require an immediately focusing, direct effect (Gillham, 2000). This is typically demonstrated by asking a participant to clarify things for you (e.g., the interviewer requests the interviewee to give an example to fully understand a certain situation), and by showing appreciation and understanding (Gillham, 2000). Probes allow the researcher to be given more material since this strategy usually results in interviewees expanding on what they are saying (Gillham, 2000).

3.2 Photo elicitation

Photo-elicitation was utilised in addition to the interview guide, since its effectiveness for understanding perceptions, preferences, and responses to physical environments, is well-documented (Clark-Ibáñez, 2004; Collier, 1957; Harper, 2002, as cited in Richards & McLaughlan, 2023). Photo elicitation is defined as “the simple idea of inserting a photograph into a research interview” (Harper, 2002). There are a variety of approaches when using photographs in interviews, with the most common being either using photographs assembled by participants or by the researchers (Matteucci, 2013).

In this instance, the researchers displayed four photos to each participant while conducting the interviews. Each photo displayed a gender-stereotyped advertisement that had been posted to Instagram organically (see all advertisements in Appendix 3; Figures 1-4). Organic advertising content refers to unpaid promotions (still photos,

videos, and reels) that users, usually businesses and brands, share on their feeds (Chawla & Chodak, 2021). The four advertisements were displayed separately in a Word document, and the participant was requested to answer four questions for each advertisement they were observing. These four questions remained the same for all advertisements (see Appendix 1 & 2; Questions 5-8).

The advertisements were selected by the researchers and either originated from Instagram or appeared as examples of reported Instagram ads on websites after being reported and removed from the platform due to their gender-stereotyped nature. All four advertisements were defined as gender-stereotyped Instagram advertisements through the conceptual framework defined by Erving Goffman (Döring et al., 2016).

The potential lack of authenticity in displaying each advertisement within a Word document, as opposed to on the Instagram platform itself, has been considered. This decision was made as most of the advertisements utilized in this study had been removed from and were no longer advertised on the platform. The removal further strengthens the suitability of the selected advertisements utilized for this study. Additionally, this approach effectively reduced distractions during each interview session and enabled a more focused analysis of the specific advertisement currently discussed. The researchers were conscious of this decision throughout all aspects of this study.

3.3 Criteria & analysis of gender-stereotyped advertisements

To guarantee an accurate identification and selection of stereotypical advertisements, the process of selecting gender-stereotyped ads shall be evidence-based. Research shows that gender stereotypes are culturally specific beliefs that influence people's association of specific objects, roles, or behaviours with masculinity or femininity, perpetuating gender-stereotyped portrayals in advertising (Cunningham et al., 2011). According to Åkestam et al. (2021), advertising frequently portrays slim women and athletic, muscular men, shaping ideals of femininity and masculinity (Döring et al., 2016). Women are typically perceived as younger with less authority in assisting roles, whereas men hold executive roles in occupational settings in advertising (Döring et al., 2016).

The most used conceptual framework of gender display in the media is defined by Erving Goffman and includes five categories (Döring et al., 2016). The categories are named [1] relative size, [2] the feminine touch, [3] function ranking, [4] ritualisation of subordination and [5] licensed withdrawal. These categories are referred to as [1] gender differences in height and image posing, with women typically shown as smaller and in lower positions than men, [2] women being pictured using their fingers and hands aesthetically (e.g. to trace an object, one's face/hair) to a larger extent, [3] men having

the executive role and women assisting them, and [4] women being positioned in lower positions (by posture or imbalance) to symbolise men's higher authority, and [5] women withdrawing their gaze or closing their eyes (Döring et al., 2016). Since the publication of Goffman's conceptual framework of gender display, Mee-Eun Kang (Kang, 1997, as cited in Döring et al., 2016) has expanded it by identifying a sixth category; [6] body display. Ads featuring women in revealing, hardly any or no clothing at all, fall under the sixth category, which is frequently linked to the sexualisation of women (Döring et al., 2016).

Traditional gender role stereotypes, and Goffman's conceptual framework with the addition of Kang, underscore the different elements of gender-stereotypical advertisements and how this report consciously will select advertisements as part of our methodological foundation to assess this thesis. To strengthen the researchers' choice of gender-stereotyped advertisements, the advertisements employed in this study are subsequently examined based on the previous criteria (see advertisements in Appendix 3; figure 1-4).

3.3.1 Advertisement I

The first advertisement that was purposefully included in the data collection depicts a scenario of a woman and a man in a sauna (see Appendix 3; Figure 1). The woman is shown in an undressed state, lying in an unusual position with her legs up, while the man's facial expression suggests that he is "pretending" to bite her leg. The advertisement can, due to its apparent gender-stereotyped nature, effectively be analysed through the lens of Goffman's conceptual framework, as it demonstrates numerous characteristics that fall within various categories. Specifically, it includes [1] gender differences in height and image posing, as [4] the woman is being positioned in lower positions by posture or imbalance to symbolise the man's supposed higher authority. Furthermore, the advertisement also falls under the third category as [3] the man seems to have the executive role while the woman is assisting him. Additionally, this advertisement also aligns with the fifth category of Goffman's framework, which refers to [5] the woman withdrawing their gaze. Nonetheless it is also subject to Kang's addition to the previously mentioned categories, which highlights [6] women dressed in revealing, or hardly any clothing at all. There is a definite difference in clothing between the male and female characters. Since this advertisement can be identified with numerous categories within the conceptual framework of gender display, it is considered highly gender stereotyped.

3.3.2 Advertisements 2 & 3

It can be seen as challenging to apply Goffman's framework of gender display to advertisements 2 (see Appendix 3; Figure 2) and 3 (see Appendix 3; Figure 3) since they only feature a single character, either male or female. Most categories included in Goffman's framework compare the male and female gender with each other, making it difficult to analyse the proposed ads in isolation.

On the contrary, there are noticeable differences between advertisement 2 and 3 that distinguishes them from one another. First and foremost, the second advertisement portrays a muscular man in a suit, who sits in a bar drinking whisky. He looks neither sad nor happy, showing no signs of emotion. The third advertisement depicts a woman standing next to a laundry machine as if she were cleaning a rug. She is smiling, indicating that she looks satisfied with her current task.

The gender stereotypes portrayed in each advertisement are nurtured through distinct character scenarios. The male character portrayed is muscular, drinking alcohol, and displays a lack of emotional expression. Contrariwise, the female character is seemingly happy about doing the laundry. These depictions align with traditional beliefs of masculinity and femininity, as stated by previous research (Schroeder & Zwick, 2007; Middleton et al., 2020). The differences between the advertisements and their reinforcement of typically masculine and feminine characteristics make them both highly gender stereotyped.

3.3.3 Advertisement 4

The fourth advertisement (see Appendix 3; Figure 4) portrays a man and a woman in a hotel room. The male character is depicted sitting relaxed on a chair next to the bed. He is dressed in a suit and holds a phone as if making a call. The female character is lying on the bed, wearing only a white towel with red rose leaves spread over her body. She is drinking what appears to be a glass of wine, while her eyes are closed.

The last advertisement was included upon the premises of being a highly gender-stereotyped advertisement. It encompasses all categories included in Goffman's framework of gender display, including Kang's addition. The advertisement indicates gender differences in height and image posing as the woman is depicted in a lower position when lying down. The woman is pictured with closed eyes, using her hand aesthetically while holding the wine glass and wearing minimal clothing, only covered in a towel. The man is having the executive role in the scenario, with the woman assisting him. The addition of red rose leaves further enhances the sensuality of the photo. To conclude, as the fourth advertisement meets all criteria for Goffman's framework of gender display, it is considered highly relevant for this study.

3.4 Criteria and sampling for participants

Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). Purposive sampling strategies move away from any random form of sampling (Campbell et al, 2020). It involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups of individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015). These specific cases shall be likely to be included in the final sample, to ensure that they are represented in the study (Campbell et al, 2020). The reasons for adopting a purposive strategy are based on the assumption that specific kinds of people may hold different and important views about the ideas and issues in question (Campbell et al, 2020).

Consequently, as this study was limited to 15 weeks of research at bachelor level in Sweden and based upon the platform Instagram solely; purposive sampling was applied. The male participants were aged between 20-30 years old. The participants of this study had to be based in Sweden and be Instagram users to be of relevance to this study. They laboured in a variety of occupations, from studying for bachelor's degrees to working in industries like construction, greenkeeping, and finance.

When the tenth male participant was reached in the data collection process, the results implied that the study possessed sufficient data of enriched responses to answer the research question. The researchers gathered data from a total of 10 male participants.

The researchers are aware that younger male Instagram users may possess different perceptions from older male users. This dilemma is covered in Chapter 3.8 as a potential bias.

3.5 Data collection

Each participant attended an individual interview session, which allowed for the collection of data in one single setting. Every meeting occurred using semi-structured interviews, in combination with photo elicitation. Audio recording equipment was utilised to record the interview conversations (with required consent from participants), and the recordings were further transcribed for thematic analysis, where codes and themes evolved from the material.

3.5.1 Conducting interviews

The semi-structured interviews were primarily conducted in a meeting room at Jönköping University. This venue was chosen to provide a safe setting for each participant to express themselves, while it simultaneously was positioned at a location

where participants easily could transport themselves. If a participant was unable to attend the venue, the interview was held elsewhere; at the participant's home or digitally on Zoom.

During the interview sessions, different tasks were divided among the two moderators. One moderator was responsible for asking interview questions and probing for further information when a vague answer was given. The other moderator presented the photos of predetermined advertisements to the participant, while simultaneously recording the audio.

Each interview was initiated by welcoming the participants and by explaining the format. Each participant was asked for permission to take part in the interview and to record their responses. The first and second interviews served as a pre-test of the interview guide to test the order in which the photos of the advertisements should be presented, respectively. Following these two interviews, the first advertisement photo was repositioned and placed in the third position of the order of ads. This decision was made to elicit richer responses from the participants as it was evident that the participants were having difficulty understanding the first advertisement due to its position. The following description outlines the various stages of the interviews that each comprises as a part of the data collection.

Stage 1: Understanding participants' backgrounds

The interview guide consisted of ten questions. The questions that ranged from Q1-Q4 were introductory questions to gain a deeper understanding of each participant's age, background, occupation, Instagram usage, and experience of using the platform (see Appendix 1 & 2; Questions 1-4).

Stage 2: Data collection of advertisements

The questions that ranged from Q5-Q8A in the interview guide focused on creating a discussion concerning the advertisements. These questions were derived based on the metrics that constitute the Theory of Planned Behaviour. During this stage of the interview, the participant was not informed that he was specifically shown gender-stereotyped content, as it potentially could reinforce biases and challenge the trustworthiness of this thesis negatively.

The participant was shown four images that each displayed a gender-stereotyped advertisement that had been posted to Instagram organically (see all advertisements in Appendix 3; figure 1-4). Each advertisement was displayed separately in a Word document, and the participant was requested to answer four questions for each advertisement they were observing. These four questions remained the same for all advertisements (see Appendix 1 & 2; Questions 5-8).

Stage 3: Questions about gender stereotypes in Instagram advertisements

Furthermore, the interview questions ranging from Q9-Q10 probed male engagement on gender stereotypes in Instagram advertisements (see Appendix 1 & 2; Questions 9-10). Each participant was prompted to answer these questions to initiate a further discussion and to facilitate the collection of meaningful data.

3.5.2 Transcribing data

The audio recordings from the interviews were manually transcribed from audio to text in Swedish by the researchers. True verbatim transcription was utilised to present the data, which refers to the word-for-word reproduction of verbal data, where the written words are an exact replication of the audio-recorded word (Halcomb & Davidson, 2006).

3.6 Thematic data analysis

The data gathered and transcribed from the semi-structured interviews of this study were subjected to a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method for identifying, analysing, organising, describing, and reporting themes found within a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). They argue that thematic analysis is a practical method to evaluate the views of various research participants, showing parallels and differences, and producing unexpected findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Since the thematic analysis is flexible, it was important to keep in mind that this flexibility can result in inconsistencies and a lack of coherence when creating themes according to the research results (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Inconsistency can be decreased by using and making explicit an epistemological viewpoint that can coherently support the study's empirical statements and can help to promote consistency and cohesiveness.

The thematic analysis, as described by Nowell et al. (2017), was conducted in six linear phases. The codes emerged from this study's theoretical framework: the Theory of Planned Behaviour, as its metrics defined the questionnaire used for data collection. Phase 2 to 4 was supported through the data analysis tool Delve as it helped to assist with grouping data into codes and themes. Delve is a coding software used to analyse qualitative data. It provides the possibility to find rigorous insights efficiently while helping the researcher stay organized. Although, the main concern of using this type of digital coding software is the potential for loss of meaning and depth in data. On the contrary, being aware of the risks of utilizing a tool like Delve, should help to reduce any risks or negative effects.

Phase 1: Familiarise yourself with your data

The initial step of the thematic analysis was to become familiar with the data. This step entails a sustained engagement with the data, the use of various data-gathering methodologies, the documentation of theoretical and reflective thoughts, and the identification of potential codes and themes. At this stage, it is also critical to retain records of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflexive notebooks in well-organised archives.

Transcribing the audio data into text allowed the researchers to become familiar with it. It was observed that certain patterns occurred frequently, which consequently resulted in the researchers' taking notes of these patterns and any other details that seemed relevant for further investigation.

Phase 2: Generating initial codes

Initial codes were developed in the second phase through peer debriefing, researcher triangulation, reflective journaling, and the usage of a coding system. At this phase, Delve — a thematic analysis tool — was utilised to individually search for codes within the data collection.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour functioned as a basis for identifying relevant codes. The codes were derived from the data collection with ease due to the questionnaire, more particularly questions 5 to 8, which were based on the metrics that constitute TPB. These metrics influence behavioural intent, which aligns with what constitutes engagement. Consequently, by framing each metric as a question, the search for codes within these constructs was enabled, providing the possibility to compare collected data for each question separately and with one another. Subsequently, this structure aided the identification of patterns and variations that influenced participants' engagement and facilitated the process of searching for codes and themes.

On the contrary, the researchers were permissive about letting codes emerge outside of the theoretical framework. It was important to not restrict the results solely to TPB and its metrics (attitudes, perceived behavioural control & subjective norms) as they encountered additional codes relevant to the research question. It was deemed critical to avoid this constraint as it otherwise would have limited the breadth and depth of the research, further resulting in inaccurate conclusions that do not fully reflect the complexity of the gathered data. Consequently, as codes emerged, comparative notes were used to compare the generated codes and facilitate the process of searching for themes.

Phase 3: Searching for themes

The third phase included searching for themes in the data using researcher triangulation, iterative comparison and taking extensive notes on the evolution and hierarchies of concepts and themes. Comprehensive notetaking was employed by writing down various codes on paper, thereafter grouping codes that aligned with each other into themes. In this way, the researchers were able to gain a broad perspective of themes and codes. The continuation of developing the thematic analysis digitally was made using Delve, to make the categorizations tidier. This stage was difficult to comprehend, as the researchers had not realized that the creation of themes could evolve in numerous directions. On the contrary, through a consistent and iterative comparison of codes and concepts, six explicit themes were defined, three of which were rooted in the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

Phase 4: Reviewing themes

The fourth stage was to go over the themes found in the data using researcher triangulation. The researchers individually evaluated themes and subthemes by considering which codes that were to be included in each theme. Thereafter, they compared their thoughts and choices to acknowledge patterns and similarities in their evaluations. Additionally, they tested for referential adequacy by returning to the raw data.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The fifth phase involved the definition and naming of themes through researcher triangulation, peer debriefing, and team agreement on topics. At this phase, themes were identified individually. Thereafter, they were carefully discussed and considered to define and name each theme correctly. Additionally, the final report of thematic analysis was shared with a supervisor for peer debriefing — to ensure the trustworthiness of the results and obtain another perspective on the findings.

Naturally, the final stage was to write the report. This involved peer debriefing as well as describing the coding and analysis process in sufficient depth. Thorough explanations of context, describing the audit trail, and reporting on the reasons for theoretical, methodological, and analytical choices made throughout the study were additional implemented actions. Overall, the six phases of thematic analysis required a thorough and methodical approach with a particular focus on reflection, peer debriefing, and triangulation throughout the whole process (Nowell et al., 2017). The codes and themes derived from this process serve as the foundation for the findings presented in Chapter 4.

3.7 Trustworthiness

In this chapter, trustworthiness is introduced from a qualitative perspective. It explains what strategies and actions have been applied to ensure this study's trustworthiness. Additionally, this chapter discusses the importance of acknowledging social desirability biases by identifying behavioural cues and employing specific approaches. The potential bias resulting from the participant sampling is also described.

3.7.1 Trustworthiness through a qualitative framework

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, multiple actions have been taken. Trustworthiness is recognised as a fundamentally important framework for evaluating qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, as cited in Billups, 2021), and it consists of four components: credibility (truth), dependability (consistency), transferability (applicability), and confirmability (neutrality) (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2012; Krefling, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 1999, as cited in Billups, 2021).

Credibility

Credibility refers to the truth of the data or participant perspectives, as well as the researcher's interpretation and representation of them (Cope, 2013). A qualitative study is considered credible if the descriptions of human experience are immediately recognized by individuals that share the same experience (Cope, 2013). Credibility strategies that have been established in this study include *prolonged engagement*; using persistent observation to thoroughly understand the participant, and *peer debriefing*; getting feedback from another researcher to compare conclusions (Billups, 2021). Credibility was maintained by observing the participants while taking notes of what they were saying, resulting in using comparative notes as a type of peer debriefing. Additionally, *triangulation* of data was applied using multiple methodologies: interviews and photo elicitation. In qualitative studies, this effort is crucial for confirming findings and for creating a more complete picture of the phenomenon (Billups, 2021).

Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree to which findings apply to people in other contexts and has in this research been supported by offering a rich, and detailed description of the context, location, and people (Connelly, 2016) through *thick description* (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Researchers need to provide a vivid picture that will inform and resonate with readers (Connelly, 2016). In this study, the researchers have been transparent in

their analysis approach and provided extensive detail and descriptions when recording conversations during data collection (Billups, 2021).

Dependability

Nonetheless, dependability was applied to enhance the trustworthiness of the data. Dependability refers to replicability and the degree to which a study can be repeated under the same circumstances in another place and time (Guba & Lincoln, 1982). The researchers acknowledged this aspect through an *external audit*, a technique which by utilising an external researcher who examined the data collection, analysis, and result, further could evaluate the validity of this study's findings. This evaluation allowed for better communication of the findings and for receiving insightful information.

Confirmability

At last, confirmability — the degree to which findings are consistent and could be repeated — has been applied to reassure that the data represent the participants' responses and not the researcher's biases or viewpoints (Connelly, 2016). The practice of *reflexivity* has been utilised during the whole process through self-questioning and self-understanding, to ensure that the researchers of this report are conscious of their own biases and assumptions, and how they may affect or compromises what the participants have shared or expressed about their own experience (Billups, 2021). Triangulation, which has been utilised as a credibility strategy, was additionally helpful in the context of confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1982).

In conclusion, multiple methodologies allowed the researchers to witness and capture social interactions and behaviours in real-world settings, yielding rich data that helped increase the credibility and transferability of this study's findings. They were able to ensure dependability and confirmability by taking detailed notes, employing standardised data collection methodologies, and practising data quality checks through external feedback. Improving self-reflection and ensuring consciousness of personal biases through reflexivity has also increased the credibility of this research. All strategies have been applied to aid the overall trustworthiness of this study.

3.7.2 Social desirability bias

Social desirability bias refers to the tendency to present oneself and one's social context in a way that is perceived to be socially acceptable but is not entirely reflective of one's reality (Bergen & Labonté, 2019). It is further explained that bias in research refers to

a mismatch between participants' authentic conception of reality and how that reality is presented to researchers (Bergen and Labonté, 2019). It is triggered by the sensitive nature of an answer, as opposed to sensitivities caused by the intrusiveness of a question or the respondent's perceived risk of disclosure (Krumpal, 2013). In studies, social desirability tendencies emerge in characteristic ways, and they are more common in research on sensitive or controversial matters, as well as in situations where commonly accepted attitudes, behaviours, or standards exist (Grimm, 2010).

Prior research demonstrates that when conducting a qualitative interview, there are behavioural cues to uncover social desirability biases. Denial of any problem, challenge, or shortcomings, providing partial or vague responses, nervous facial expression and body language, and uneven use of vocabulary are all signs of social desirability tendencies (Bergen & Labonté, 2019). These indications assisted the researchers in detecting social desirability biases in the participants' responses.

To reduce social desirability bias and increase the study's trustworthiness, specific approaches were employed for conducting the semi-structured interviews. Bergen and Labonté (2019) describe five approaches for reducing social desirability biases. Indirect questioning (asking indirect questions about the past or the behaviours of others), providing assurances (assuring hesitant participants that their opinions are not wrong and encouraging them to speak freely), probing for more information (asking follow-up questions or prompts), requesting stories or examples (requesting that participants provide a story or example to illustrate their response), prefacing the question (providing context when asking questions, acknowledging that all communities have challenges and that people have diverse experiences).

3.7.3 Sampling bias

In Chapter 3.5, the possibility of bias when sampling participants was discussed. Addressing these biases is critical for maintaining the study's trustworthiness and for ensuring accurate results.

It is important to emphasize that sampling only young male Instagram users may result in perceptions that differ from older male Instagram users - indicating the potential of reinforcing sampling bias. This issue could have been solved by including a more diverse group of people. Given the constrained 15-week timeframe for research, data collection, and writing, the sampling was conducted upon feasibility as well as ensuring completeness within the given time frame.

The honesty of this work is reaffirmed by acknowledging this type of bias and by being transparent about its existence, while simultaneously providing efforts that could have been made to eliminate this issue. Additionally, as mentioned in Chapter 3.7.1; the

practice of reflexivity, peer debriefing, and data triangulation are additional steps taken to ensure this study's trustworthiness.

3.8 Considerations

To ensure ethical considerations in this study, obtained consent from all participants was required to assure them of confidentiality and anonymity. The researchers took precautions to protect the participants' privacy by storing their data in secure, password-protected locations. Furthermore, actions were employed to minimise any harm or negative consequences for the participants, such as avoiding triggering questions. A mixed-method approach was utilized that combined two qualitative methodologies. This approach ensured trustworthiness while yielding rich data. The data collection and analysis process were, through numerous courses of action, assured to stay transparent and replicable. The researchers are aware of the social desirability biases that this study may infer and have actively taken precautions to acknowledge and prevent them.

4 Findings

In this chapter, the outcome of the data collection is described. Additionally, each participant who took part in the study is presented through a participant profile; including age, occupation, and additional information about the interview conducted (see Table 1).

The thematic analysis yielded a total of 26 codes and six themes, three of which were identified and contextualised within the Theory of Planned Behaviour. By arranging the complexity into a well-organised table, the presentation of collected data aims to simplify the complex relationships between the derived themes and codes (see Table 2). This chapter further presents each theme in depth and explains and clarifies its connections and meanings to specified codes. Additionally, quotes from the participants are provided; nonetheless, due to participant responses' tendency to repeat one another, not all participants are quoted in this chapter.

Table 1. Participant profile: Overview of data collection participants.

PARTICIPANT ID	AGE	OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW LENGTH	TRANSCRIBE D PAGES	RECORDED AUDIO
Participant 1 (P1)	21	Student on bachelor level	18 minutes	6	Yes
Participant 2 (P2)	25	Student on bachelor level	16 minutes 41 seconds	6	Yes
Participant 3 (P3)	24	Student on bachelor level	21 minutes 31 seconds	7	Yes
Participant 4 (P4)	24	Student on bachelor level	19 minutes	5	Yes
Participant 5 (P5)	22	Student on bachelor level	19 minutes	7	Yes
Participant 6 (P6)	24	Student on bachelor level	19 minutes 43 seconds	6	Yes
Participant 7 (P1)	23	Student on bachelor level	13 minutes 32 seconds	5	Yes

PARTICIPANT ID	AGE	OCCUPATION	INTERVIEW LENGTH	TRANSCRIBE D PAGES	RECORDED AUDIO
Participant 8 (P8)	27	Construction worker	19 minutes 35 seconds	5	Yes
Participant 9 (P9)	28	Finance	17 minutes 37 seconds	6	Yes
Participant 10 (P10)	27	Greenkeeper	16 minutes 47 seconds	5	Yes

Table 2. Findings from thematic analysis.

THEMES	EXAMPLE	CODES
Strong intention to engage	[P6]: "I myself think that it's quite appealing as an advertisement, maybe because of the stereotypical masculinity behind the photo. I would have looked up the brand on Google or gone to their Instagram page."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Masculinity • Success • Sophisticated • Attracts attention • Interesting content • Recognisable
Weak intention to engage	[P9]: "Nothing special, difficult to tell what kind of ad it is. An older woman standing and doing laundry. She seems very happy, but it doesn't make me feel anything special, I click past it as quickly as possible."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Femininity • Happy and welcoming • Boring • Neutral/no opinion • Engagement is not affected by societal norms • Scrolls past the ad
No intention to engage	[P1]: "I'm not a huge fan of it, I don't know, I get a feeling of, not discomfort, but I don't like it. It has to do with how two genders are represented here anyway, and since I had this feeling that I don't like it, I probably wouldn't engage with it."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative attitude • Provocative • Stereotypical • Sexualised content • No interest • Engagement is affected by societal norms

THEMES	EXAMPLE	CODES
Engagement interactions	[P10]: “If it's this kind of sponsored post, maybe I would have clicked on the ad and checked what it is. Because he wants to sell whiskey here, I assume, then I would have checked what it costs.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Examine advertisement through observation • Press like button • Visit Instagram account or website • Share/show content to friend
Social pressures	[P6]: “I believe that people engage themselves less, or at least for my part. I feel that people have become somewhat afraid of what they involve themselves with as well. There is a rather fine line between what is right and what is wrong. Therefore, it feels like I engage myself less than what I perhaps would have done.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social group/Society shares my attitude/s • Hesitant to engage with sexualized content
Male perceptions of other males' engagement	[P1]: “If you look at typically masculine advertisements, you think ‘damn, this is the kind of person I will become if I do this, that's inspiration for me and this is what I would like to be’, so that's why you engage with it.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to engage with sexualised and gender-stereotyped ads • Idealisation of masculinity

4.1 Theme I: Strong intention to engage

This theme was constituted by a collection of six codes: “Success”, “Sophisticated”, “Interesting content”, “Masculinity”, “Recognisable” and “Attracts attention”. The codes that appeared from this theme align with various components that constitute the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

The first three codes previously mentioned belong to the ‘attitudes’ aspect of TPB. The pairing between these codes and this specific construct of TPB is based on the participants’ evaluation of these codes concerning positive attitudes, which is in line with the ‘attitudes’ aspect of TPB. Additionally, the code “masculinity” is identified as part of ‘subjective norms’, which also constitutes the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Participants expressed both positive and negative thoughts regarding this code but indicated a perceived personal and/or societal pressure to engage with this type of content. The code “recognizable” was categorized into the last aspect of TPB: ‘perceived behavioural control’. This is due to that the code aligns with the construct of the perceived ability to control and direct your behaviour. The participants did not show any uncertainties in their decision to engage with content that was considered

recognisable. Together, these five codes constitute the theme of ‘strong intention to engage’ and are strongly correlated to TPB.

When male participants were asked about their intention to engage with presented content, the participants tended to express how they would be very likely to engage with content that they perceived had specific properties. These properties were expressed as masculine, successful, interesting, and recognizable. One respondent indicated a strong intention to engage with the second advertisement (see Appendix 3; Figure 2), and expressed an interest and attraction towards stereotyped masculinity:

[P6]: *“I myself think that it’s quite appealing as an advertisement, maybe because of the stereotypical masculinity behind the photo. I would have looked up the brand on Google or gone to their Instagram page.”*

Not only was masculinity considered favourable, but male participants also tended to idealise and express a desire for the lifestyle depicted in the fourth advertisement (see Appendix 3; Figure 4), which they described as sophisticated, luxurious, and successful. These reactions were visible when the level of engagement was significant, and was undoubtedly expressed by one of the male participants:

[P9]: *“It certainly feels like a younger couple who are travelling, staying in hotel rooms, have their own business, luxurious life, rich, living well, and have a lifestyle that many strive for. Perhaps it is a goal to have achieved what they seem to have achieved. I would have shown my partner at home, maybe liked it.”*

Consequently, the participants’ responses state that all codes within this theme were distinctively prominent when males indicated a strong intention to engage with gender-stereotyped content.

4.2 Theme 2: Weak intention to engage

This theme was constituted by a collection of six codes: “Happy and welcoming”, “Boring”, “Femininity”, “Neutral/no opinion”, “Scrolls past the ad” and “Engagement is not affected by societal norms”.

The codes “Happy & welcoming” and “Boring” belongs to the ‘attitude’ construct of TPB. These codes describe participants’ attitudes towards the content they tended to claim they would have a weak intention of engaging in. Additionally, the participants tended to express a weak intention to engage with content associated with ‘femininity’ and showed neutral opinions towards it. This code indicates a perceived personal and/or societal pressure of having a weak intention to engage with this type of content and can be categorized into the ‘subjective norms’ aspect of TPB. Nonetheless, the ‘perceived behaviour control’ construct of TPB is connected to the fifth and last code in this theme:

“Engagement is not affected by societal norms”. Since the participants were reassured that their engagement was not being affected by societal norms, this code aligns with the construct of the perceived ability to control and direct their behaviour. To conclude, these codes are strongly correlated to TPB.

When participants were asked about their intention to engage with the presented content, there seemed to be a correlation between weak engagement and gender-stereotyped advertisements perpetuated as feminine, happy, welcoming, and boring. Most participants had either neutral or absent opinions when experiencing these perceptions. One participant specifically emphasised his neutral feelings toward the third advertisement, in which a woman is doing laundry (see Appendix 3, figure 3), and how he intended to interact with it:

[P9]: *“It’s nothing special, it’s difficult to tell what kind of ad it is. An older woman standing and doing laundry. She seems very happy, but it doesn’t make me feel anything special, I click past it as quickly as possible.”*

Not only did participants clarify how they would scroll past the advertisement because of disinterest, but they also tended to believe that their engagement would not be affected by societal norms. A male participant clarifies this matter further, as he outlines:

[P6]: *“I don’t believe any social norms directly play a role in this case. It feels like it would have been an ad that I wouldn’t have noticed, it would have been one that I usually scroll past if it were to come up. It’s welcoming, but that’s all I would say. I don’t see myself engaging with it in any way.”*

Consequently, the responses stated that the codes of this theme were distinctively prominent when male participants indicated a weak intention to engage with gender-stereotyped content.

4.3 Theme 3: No intention to engage

When participants had no intention to engage with the advertisements, six different codes were distinguished: “Negative attitude”, “Provocative”, “Sexualised content”, “Engagement is influenced by societal norms”, “No interest”, and “Stereotypical”.

These codes can be categorized into the aspects of the Theory of Planned Behaviour. The ‘attitude’ aspect consists of the first three codes mentioned above since these codes align with negative attitudes towards the advertisements and the inevitable intention to not engage. Furthermore, the code “Engagement is influenced by societal norms” can be categorized into TPB’s construct ‘subjective norms’. The participants conveyed concerns regarding how their social circle/society would perceive them if they interacted with gender-stereotyped content, indicating a perceived social pressure to not

engage. Consequently, the last two codes within this theme: “No interest” and “Stereotypical” aligns with the ‘perceived behavioural control’ construct of TPB. Due to the participants' disinterest in the stereotypical content, they may have experienced a lack of perceived ability to control and direct their behaviour when engaging with it. Accordingly, the decision to not engage is reinforced. In conclusion, these codes are strongly correlated to the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

The participants' opinions and interpretations of the content were leading factors in their decision to not engage with the advertisement. A lack of interest and repeated difficulty in understanding the message or idea being promoted were additional contributing factors. One participant said they were perplexed by one of the advertisements (see Appendix 3, Figure 1) provocative and sexualizing nature and made the decision not to interact with it as it did not pique their interest:

[P5]: *“It's very provocative, I would say. Is it Kinnaman? It's supposed to represent some sort of., it's a bit contradictory because they're dressed in white but the image itself is very non-innocent. It alludes to sex, you know, and a scantily clad woman with an excited man. It's also interesting because I don't know what this ad is for, whether it's for clothes, perfume, a movie or whatever it may be. So I would probably have to get a better idea of what it is, which in itself would be engaging with it. But just because of the image, because of the context, I don't think I would interact with this ad because it's not something that has caught my interest.”*

Not only did the participants' lack of interest play an essential part in their decision to not engage. Participants were concerned about how their social circle and society would perceive them if they interacted with the advertisement.

[P6]: *“One has a bit of an idea of what one, or people, think is right and wrong. So if you see an ad like this, maybe I wouldn't really have gotten involved because you know how people can react.”*

According to the participants' responses, the six codes previously mentioned were influential in their decision to not engage with the advertisements.

4.4 Theme 4: Engagement interactions

The most common responses to the question of how or what kind of interaction participants would have used to engage with the advertisement were combined into these four codes: “Examine advertisement through observation” “Press like button”, “Visit Instagram account or website”, and “Share/show content to a friend”.

When the participants were asked how they would engage with the advertisements, one participant specifically expressed how they would have stopped scrolling and taken a closer look at it.

[P4]: *“By stopping and looking like ‘what is this?’. Because it’s a lot of skin and society may think it’s showing too much, but it’s a confusing image so I think that’s mostly what made me stop.”*

Another participant responded similarly, saying that he would have stopped and taken a closer look, but when asked if he would engage with the advertisement, his response was as followed:

[P6]: *“No, I wouldn’t say that I would. So, there is something that draws you to it, but it is more that you would have looked at it and then let it go, I think.”*

The responses from the participants in the previous two quotes did not reflect the belief that stopping to look at an advertisement results in engagement. Contrariwise, some participants stated that they would have stopped and looked at the advertisement, but that they also would have interacted with it in other ways, such as pressing the like button.

[P5]: *“Well, yeah, I think so. Um...I probably wouldn’t have commented or shared the post. But I would have stopped and looked at it, maybe even liked it, depending on my exact mindset when I looked at it: if I’m just sitting and scrolling or if I’m looking for something, then I wouldn’t have stopped. But if I were just scrolling, I could have stopped and liked it, for example.”*

Another interaction, to which some participants responded, was to look for more information about the advertisement by going to the brand’s Instagram page or website, or by searching for the brand on Google. One participant stated that they would not have liked or commented on the advertisement, but would rather search for more information on the brand’s Instagram page or Google:

[P6]: *“It’s very possible that I would have done it, maybe, but it would have been more like...look up the brand on Google or something like that, or go to their Instagram. So I still think I could engage, maybe not with likes or comments on the ad itself, but it still sparks an interest.”*

Engagement interactions such as pressing the like button, observing the advertisement, and searching for further information, were not the only interactions used. One participant said they would have shared the content with a friend or shown it to someone in their social circle.

[P9]: *“I would have shown it to my partner here at home, maybe liked it. I wouldn't have commented or shared it since I don't usually do that. But I would have shown it to my inner circle.”*

These four codes, as reasoned by the respondents, reflect how and what kind of interactions the participants would perform if they would engage in a gender-stereotyped Instagram advertisement.

4.5 Theme 5: Social pressures

The fifth theme emerged from two codes: “Social group/Society shares my attitude/s” and “Hesitant to engage with sexualized content”. The theme was named “Social pressures” as the different codes align with the idea that how frequently a behaviour is performed by others, as well as the approval or disapproval of the behaviour by other people, will influence how the male participants perceive executing a certain behaviour (Ajzen, 1991).

It was apparent that the participants tended to believe that their social circle and their immediate surroundings held the same attitudes about the advertisements as themselves. Expressions such as “I would probably say that they share my opinion” and “I think they had thought quite similarly to how I think” were prominent. The hesitancy of engaging with content considered sexualised was also distinct. A majority of the participants explained that they do not dare to interact with sexualised content through metrics that are publicly posted and visible to other users, such as liking or commenting. One male participant highlighted this matter:

[P6]: *“I believe that people engage themselves less, or at least for my part. I feel that people have become somewhat afraid of what they involve themselves with as well. There is a rather fine line between what is right and what is wrong. Therefore, it feels like I engage myself less than what I perhaps would have done.”*

Another participant also raised this subject and explained how social norms may prevent him from engaging with the advertisement.

[P5]: *“We say that if people could see how I interact with ads, then I don't think this is an ad I would want to associate myself with because it's vulgar and plays on sex. In that way, I think social norms would prevent me from engaging with this type of ad.”*

According to the participants’ responses, these two codes were influential in their decision to not engage with the advertisements.

4.6 Theme 6: Male perceptions of other males' engagement

The sixth theme emerged from two codes: "Likely to engage with sexualised and gender-stereotyped ads" and "Idealization of masculinity", as these codes distinctively summarised the male participants' perceptions of other males' engagement.

Meaningful responses emerged when participants were asked to respond to their perceptions of other males' engagement. One participant elaborated on how masculinity is frequently idealized among men and how this influences a man's potential engagement with content:

[P1]: *"If you look at typically masculine advertisements, you think 'damn, this is the kind of person I will become if I do this, that's the inspiration for me and this is what I would like to be', so that's why you engage with it."*

The discussion about the idolization of men is continued by another participant, who also adds that stereotypes serve an integral part, particularly when these beliefs are reinforced by well-known figures considered to be role models:

[P5]: *"I believe that norms and expectations generally influence what we think is cool or a good advertisement. For example, the one you showed with Connor McGregor is very stereotypically a masculine image and for many, a male role model. So using celebrities in a way that plays on norms and expectations can affect how people engage, especially men. I fundamentally believe that men idolize other men to a greater extent than women idolize other women, and so I think it can be a strategy to get men to engage more on social media."*

When discussing this topic, another male participant stated his belief of that other men is more likely to engage with content that objectifies women:

[P2]: *"I think that ads that use women more, especially if they turn them into objects, then I think many men become more interested to engage with it, unfortunately."*

Nonetheless, the responses stated that the codes of this theme were prominent when male participants expressed their beliefs about other males' engagement.

5 Discussion

The outcomes of this research have provided insights into and understanding of male engagement towards gender-stereotyped Instagram advertisements. Nonetheless, the results should be interpreted with caution due to the limitations of the current research. This chapter reflects on the research process, limitations, and potential consequences of the research design. The chapter ends with several recommendations for future research.

5.1 Discussion of findings

The results from this study demonstrate that men's intentional engagement is influenced by traditional gender stereotypes. Masculine content was perceived as successful and sophisticated while simultaneously attracting attention, interest, and recognition. Feminine, non-sexualised content received weaker engagement. These results verify the claims of Elliot & Elliot (2005) that outlined how accepting a feminine image puts men at risk of violating socially prescribed gender roles and raising the possibility of homosexuality. Men reject or distance themselves from images that do not fit masculine features to preserve a masculine persona (Elliot & Elliot, 2005).

Additionally, the results indicate that men had no intention to engage with sexualised and provocative content due to societal norms and the fear of judgement from others. This fear may be connected to feminist movements such as #MeToo which have raised awareness of sexual harassment, gender inequalities, silence culture and objectification of women, leading to young men being cautious about their actions. Interestingly, the male participants believed that other men would be more likely to engage with sexualised, gender-stereotyped content and idealize masculinity to a greater extent than themselves. This data could imply that men experience social pressure to conform to masculine gender norms, which might influence their behaviour on social media.

Furthermore, the findings also demonstrate which engagement interactions men would utilize if they were to engage with gender-stereotyped content. To examine the advertisement through observation, pressing the like button, visiting an Instagram account or website and sharing/show content to a friend were prominent interactions. Pressing the like button tended to be correlated with approval of the content, while the participants stated that they would share the content with a friend to demonstrate their disapproval. Worth noticing is that neither commenting on nor saving the post were mentioned as alternatives for interaction. The exclusion of commenting could stem from the fear of judgement of others, as commenting on a post is a visible and definite action.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour is highly impactful when explaining this study's findings. The outcomes of this study reveal that traditional gender stereotypes and societal pressure to conform to masculine gender norms influence men's engagement with gender-stereotyped content. These traits impacted the participants' behavioural intent, which is a major TPB component that equals the intended engagement. Further contributing to the normative view of what masculinity entails can be found in the male participants' expectations that other men would engage with sexualized, gender-stereotypical content to a greater extent than themselves. Additionally, the participants' reluctance to engage with sexualized content and their concern about receiving criticism from others conversely affect their decision to exclude involvement with this kind of content. This demonstrates how useful TPB is as a theoretical framework for evaluating intentional engagement in an online context and comprehending the factors influencing male engagement.

While previous research has focused on examining gender stereotypes in traditional media (Roth-Cohen et al., 2021), and, to a limited extent, on men's perceptions of gender stereotypes (Wang et al., 2019), this research demonstrates how gender stereotypes are manifested through male recognition in the context of online platforms. This study provides new insights into how men interpret and respond to gender stereotypes in these contexts. The data contribute to a clearer understanding of motivations and mechanisms underlying male engagement with gender-stereotyped content, and how gender stereotypes are reinforced in Instagram advertisements. Nonetheless, can these results contribute to valuable knowledge for designers on how unintended, as well as intended design may result in consequences and impact the user's free will (Weinmann et al., 2016). The positive effects of utilizing gender-stereotyped advertising within marketing drastically contradict the effects it has on the individual, making this matter challenging and important to address. This study provides yet another illustration of how gender stereotypes in advertising impact people, which designers should keep in mind when creating content. Consequently, this research can advance a transparent dialogue and understanding of gender issues.

5.2 Discussion of scope and delimitations

The scope of this study limits the trustworthiness of the findings. This research was restricted to a period of 15 weeks, which was influential in the extensiveness of the data collection. The provided time limited us as researchers to a single social media platform and a narrow sampling of participants. Sampling only young men on Instagram may not reflect the engagement patterns of older men or men on other social media platforms.

Contrariwise, we still consider the results valid as we have taken precautions to ensure this study's trustworthiness through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Comparative notes, data triangulation, reflexivity, external audit, and thick description are only a few of the employed actions.

6 Conclusions

As social media has become increasingly central in young people's everyday lives, it is important to understand male engagement towards gender-stereotyped Instagram advertisements. By measuring male engagement based on the theoretical framework Theory of Planned Behaviour, this study established that gender-stereotyped Instagram advertisements do indeed have a significant effect on men's intended engagement. The study discovered that exposure to masculine content received more attention and recognition compared to feminine, non-sexualized content. Men were hesitant to engage with sexualized and provocative content due to societal norms and fear of being judged by others. Contrariwise, did the male participants believe that other men would engage with sexualised and gender-stereotyped content and idealize masculinity to a greater extent than themselves. This implies a potential social pressure to conform to masculine gender norms, which might influence online behaviour.

The study also identified the most common engagement interactions, such as liking, visiting the account or website, and sharing content with a friend, whereas commenting and saving posts were less common - possibly due to fear of being judged by others. These results confirm earlier assertions that accepting a feminine image puts men at risk of violating gender roles, resulting in preserving a masculine persona by distancing themselves from this type of material. Subsequently, this research also confirmed the relevance and usefulness of TPB when evaluating intentional engagement.

6.1 Further research

Further research is needed to clarify how men engage with gender stereotypes online. Future studies are required to gain more insight into whether gender-stereotyped advertisements on other social media platforms and within other age groups indicate comparable results. Extending the scalability of this research to multiple platforms and a larger sampling of age groups and demographics may result in more trustworthy outcomes. Additionally, it would be of interest to investigate if male engagement towards gender-stereotyped, but non-advertised content on social media platforms indicates comparable results. Contrariwise, this study only considers male gender identities when examining the research question. To gain another crucial perspective, it would be interesting to research how people who do not identify as male or female perceive the current gender-stereotyped online society.

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8 Appendixes

Appendix I

Semi-structured interview questions

Introductory interview questions:

- [Q1] Can you briefly introduce yourself (e.g., age, occupation, etc.)?
- [Q2] Can you tell me about your experience using Instagram?
 - a. How do you usually engage with the platform (e.g., browsing, posting, etc.)?
- [Q3] How frequently do you use Instagram?
- [Q4] How do you feel about advertisements on Instagram?

Each participant is shown four images that display different Instagram advertisements. Each participant is asked related questions based on the Theory of Planned Behavior to measure their engagement.

- [Q5] How do you feel about this advertisement? (attitude)
- [Q6] How do you think your social circle and society perceive this advertisement? (subjective norms)
- [Q7] How do you think social norms and expectations influence the way you engage or not engage with this advertisement? (perceived behavioural control)
- [Q8] If you were to see this ad on Instagram, would you engage with it? Why or why not? (behavioural intent)
 - a. If you choose to engage with the ad, how would you engage with it (e.g., like, comment, share, save)?

Questions about gender stereotypes in Instagram advertisements:

- [Q9] How do you think societal expectations and gender stereotypes influence the way men engage with advertisements on Instagram?
- [Q10] Is there anything else you would like to add about engagement with gender-stereotyped advertisements on Instagram?

Semistrukturerade intervjufrågor*Inledande intervjufrågor:*

- [F1] Kan du kort presentera dig själv (t.ex. ålder, yrke, etc.)?
- [F2] Kan du berätta om din erfarenhet av Instagram?
- a. Hur engagerar du dig vanligtvis med plattformen (t.ex. söker efter saker, publicerar inlägg, etc.)?
- [F3] Hur ofta använder du Instagram?
- [F4] Hur känner du kring annonser på Instagram?

Varje deltagare blir presenterande fyra bilder som visar olika Instagram-annonser och blir ombedd att besvara frågor relaterade till varje bild. Dessa frågor är baserade på Teorin om Planerat Beteende för att mäta varje deltagares engagemang.

- [F5] Vad känner du när du ser den här annonsen? (attityd)
- [F6] Hur tror du att din umgängeskrets och samhället uppfattar denna annons? (subjektiva normer)
- [F7] Hur tror du att sociala normer och förväntningar påverkar hur du engagerar dig eller inte engagerar dig i denna annons? (upplevd beteendekontroll)
- [F8] Om du skulle se den här annonsen på Instagram, skulle du engagera dig i den? Varför eller varför inte? (beteendeavsikt)
- a. Om du väljer att engagera dig i annonsen, på vilket sätt skulle du engagera dig i den (t.ex. gilla, kommentera, dela, spara)?

Frågor om könsstereotyper i Instagram-annonser:

- [F9] Hur tror du att samhällets förväntningar och könsstereotyper påverkar hur män engagerar sig i annonser på Instagram?
- [F10] Finns det något mer du skulle vilja tillägga om engagemang med könsstereotyper annonser på Instagram?



Figure 1.



Figure 2.



Figure 3.



Figure 4.