Persuasive Advertising
Consumers’ views of and responses to the advertising of health-related products

Master’s thesis within Business Administration
Author: Malin Edin
Tutor: Helén Anderson
Jönköping May 2012
Acknowledgements

The author of this thesis would like to thank all people involved in the process of making this thesis. First of all I would like to thank my tutor Hélén Anderson for giving me directions throughout the process and for organizing very rewarding seminars. Accordingly, I would also like to thank my fellow students for great feedback during the seminars. Also, a special thanks to the individuals who made this thesis possible by participating in the focus groups. Finally, I would like to thank my closest friends and my beloved family for always being by my side.

Malin Edin

Jönköping International Business School
May, 2012
Master’s Thesis in Business Administration

Title: Persuasive Advertising – Consumers’ views of and responses to the advertising of health-related products

Author: Malin Edin

Tutor: Helén Anderson

Date: Jönköping, 2012

Subject terms: Persuasion strategies, Message processing and Judgment formation, Consumer involvement, Attitude-behavior consistency, Resistance strategies

Abstract

Problem

The problem that this thesis deals with is that the intense competition and increasing consumer power in the health industry calls for the operating companies to take consumers’ considerations into account when advertising their products. It is further suggested that consumers will be extra careful before buying health-related products due to their direct effect on their personal health. Thus, companies selling health-related products must gain an understanding of how consumers form their judgments of the advertisements for the same in order to be able to create persuasive and thus effective advertisements.

Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to understand consumers’ views of different persuasion strategies used for advertising health-related products and how these affect their willingness to purchase the advertised product. This will be done as a means to provide the concerned companies with a basis for how to create positively perceived, yet effective, advertisements.

Method

In order to fulfill the purpose of this thesis a qualitative study was conducted through the use of focus groups. During the focus groups the participants were, among other things, encouraged to discuss their views of three different advertisements for health-related products. Each advertisement represented one persuasion strategy used in the advertising of health-related products. The gathered data was interpreted and analyzed by comparing it with theories from previous research.

Conclusions

The study shows that consumers require extensive information and strong evidence behind the arguments provided in advertisements for health-related products. Advertisements that communicate consequences that correspond to consumers’ existing beliefs are likely to be positively perceived. Conversely, if the communicated consequences contradict consumers’ beliefs their responses are likely to be negative. Consumers that are more informed in regards to the products are more likely to critically judge the advertisements for the same. The likelihood that consumers’ attitudes will be reflected in their behavior increases along with the strength of their attitudes.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 **Introduction** ................................................................. 1
   1.1 Background ........................................................................ 1
       1.1.1 Existing legislation of the marketing of health-related products ........................................ 2
       1.1.2 Challenges facing the growing health industry ......................................................... 3
   1.2 Problem Discussion .......................................................... 4
   1.3 Purpose and Research questions ......................................... 6

2 **Frame of reference** .......................................................... 7
   2.1 Persuasion ........................................................................ 7
   2.2 Persuasion strategies for HRPs ........................................... 8
       2.2.1 Claims ..................................................................... 8
       2.2.2 Consequences .......................................................... 8
       2.2.3 Celebrities ................................................................. 9
   2.3 Message processing and Judgment formation ........................ 9
       2.3.1 Consumer involvement ............................................... 11
       2.3.2 The attitude-behavior relation .................................... 12
   2.4 Resistance to persuasive messages .................................... 12
   2.5 Framework for understanding consumers’ views .................. 14

3 **Method** ............................................................................. 17
   3.1 Explaining consumers’ views and thesis approach ............... 17
   3.2 Motives behind the choice of qualitative research ................ 17
   3.3 Selection of sample ........................................................... 18
       3.3.1 Group composition ...................................................... 18
       3.3.2 Limitations ............................................................... 19
   3.4 Focus groups .................................................................... 19
       3.4.1 Pilot Study .................................................................. 20
       3.4.2 Execution of the focus groups ..................................... 20
       3.4.3 The advertisements .................................................... 21
       3.4.4 Choice of advertisements .......................................... 22
       3.4.5 Choice of questions .................................................... 22
       3.4.6 Drawbacks with focus groups .................................... 23
   3.5 Ethical considerations ........................................................ 24
   3.6 Data analysis ..................................................................... 24
       3.6.1 Transcribing and presenting ....................................... 24
       3.6.2 Identifying general patterns ....................................... 24
   3.7 Assessing the quality .......................................................... 25
       3.7.1 Integrity of the data ...................................................... 25
       3.7.2 Balance between subjectivity and reflexivity ............... 25
       3.7.3 Clear communication of findings ............................... 26

4 **Findings from the focus groups** ......................................... 27
   4.1 Focus Group 1 .................................................................. 27
       4.1.1 Results from general discussion ................................ 27
       4.1.2 Advertisement 1 (Kan Jang & Chi San) ...................... 28
       4.1.3 Advertisement 2 (Alli) ............................................... 29
       4.1.4 Advertisement 3 (VitaePro) ...................................... 29
   4.2 Focus Group 2 .................................................................. 30
List of Figures

Figure 1. Framework for understanding consumers’ views of advertisements for HRPs .................................................................................................................. 15
Figure 2. Extended framework for understanding consumers’ views of advertisements for HRPs ................................................................................................. 47
I Introduction

In the introductory chapter, the reader is given the background to the subject at hand as a means to explain why the topic is of interest. Subsequently, the specific problem is discussed and the chapter concludes with the thesis’ purpose and research questions.

1.1 Background

Ethical behavior is continuously an important consideration as consumers expect companies to perform their businesses in an ethical way. The importance of justified behavior has further amplified in the latter years alongside the increasing consumer interest for corporate social responsibility (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Ellen, Webb & Mohr, 2006).

Stakeholders’ growing activism, rapid globalization and the negative publicity caused by unethical behavior forces companies to construct and stay true to their ethical codes of conduct (Batra & Klein, 2010). Even though this holds for all parts of the business, generally, ethics in marketing is especially questioned by consumers. Accordingly, there is an increasing need for companies to enhance consumers’ perception of their advertising ethics in order to gain trust and build long-term commitments with the same. (Snyder, 2011).

Additionally, the development of the internet enables consumers to easily interact with each other to exchange information and recommendations regarding products (Jayanti, 2010). This implies that negative publicity can no longer solely be caused by the media but also from the actual consumers of the products. Consumers’ recommendations are, according to research, the foremost trusted form of advertising (The Nielsen Company, 2009). Thus, it is suggested that consumers’ views of companies’ advertising and products constitute a focal point of interest as neglecting consumers’ opinions observably can result in harmful consequences for the responsible company.

Alongside the rising concerns for companies to increase consumers’ perceptions of their advertising, the marketing of some products and services are particularly interesting as they require especially high ethics (Snyder, 2011). The advertising of pharmaceutical related products and services constitute one of these as they directly affect a person’s well-being and overall health. The advertising of these products and services carries great importance as it is expected to inform the consumers about possible dangers to their health, i.e. the possible side effects from using the products. Besides from the consumers’ concerns of the truthfulness of the health claims made in advertising, the nature of the products per se also increases the importance of sincerity in the advertising. (Snyder, 2011).
1.1.1 **Existing legislation of the marketing of health-related products**

In order to protect the consumers against being deceived and to provide companies with a foundation for their marketing, legislation concerning nutritional and health-claims have been developed, which pass for all European countries. A nutrition claim is when groceries are said to have beneficial nutritional-qualities, whereas a health claim is when it is said to exist a relation between a certain type of grocery and health, or that a certain type of grocery reduces the risk for specific diseases. The general rules are that the claims must not; (Konsumentverket, 2011a)

- Be incorrect, ambiguous or misleading
- Create doubt about other products’ safety or qualification
- Encourage to overconsumption
- State that a balanced and diverse diet cannot provide appropriate amounts of nutrients

The rules above pass for all sorts of groceries, including dietary supplements, groceries for specific nutritional-purposes and groceries for specific medical-purposes (Livsmedelsverket, 2012).

In addition to the general rules stated above, there are prohibitions against certain types of health claims in advertising, accordingly it is not allowed to; (Konsumentverket, 2011a)

- State that the health is affected if a certain type of grocery is not consumed
- State how fast or how much one can lose weight by a certain grocery
- Use claims which refer to recommendations by individual doctors and working persons within the health-area

Besides from the legislation of nutritional and health-claims, there are rules aiming at protecting consumers as well as companies in the marketing of products, referred to as the principles of good marketing practices. Marketing that do not conform to these rules can thus be prohibited if it affects consumers’ ability to make a sound purchase. However, this does not hold for trifling breaches of the principles. (Konsumentverket, 2011b). The application of the principles dismisses two issues. Firstly, it is stated that marketing can be prohibited, implying that it not always is. Consequently, companies can get around the principles simply by not being caught. Secondly, as trifling breaches cannot be prohibited, companies can adopt legally accepted marketing strategies yet they do not have to be perfectly fair to the consumers.

---

1 Health-related products will further on be referred to as HRPs. Appetite suppressants, anti stress pills, naturopathic drugs, non-prescription drugs, and dietary supplements exemplify the concept of HRPs used within this thesis.
1.1.2 Challenges facing the growing health industry

The health industry is a wide concept that can be said to involve all operations with business strategies which involve health, i.e. selling or working with products or services related to health. However, for the purpose of this thesis the companies that market and sell HRP and by the means of that operate in the health industry, is of foremost interest. Within this part of the industry, the major part of the consumers is women (Svensk Egenvård, 2011).

The importance of marketing in the health industry can be seen through the marketing’s switching role within the 20’s century. It is evident that the function of marketing has become an essence part of today’s health organizations. Marketers are today considerably closer to the decision-making process as health organizations have become much more market driven. Still, the full potential of marketing is currently being explored and its impact appears to be beyond the founders’ imaginations. (Thomas, 2009).

There is no doubt that internet has become a major source of health information; 79 percent of internet users have searched for health related information online on one or several major health topics. Nutrition, fitness and medicines are some of the topics which have faced the most growth within the last decade. (Fox, 2005). “An increasing percentage of internet users use the internet to receive, process, and share health information in their decision-making processes” (Parker & Thorson, 2009, p.76). Accordingly, it can be stated that consumer involvement appears to be highly present in the contemporary health industry. Consequently, the increased consumer interest and engagement for health information implies that consumers nowadays are much more informed than what they used to be. Companies need to consider this when designing their marketing as an informed and engaged customer is more likely to question the credibility of the product information than the less informed one.

The high consumer involvement, i.e. rise in consumers’ expertise, and the overall growth of the health industry calls for the operating companies to persuade consumers of that their services and products will satisfy their specific needs. As a large proportion of the consumers nowadays turn to the internet for health information, these companies need to market their products and services online in order to fully, and most effectively, reach their target audience. Additionally, it is today becoming more and more common that consumers buy their self care products online, through a web shop or mail order subscription (Svensk Egenvård, 2011).

Marketing strategies must be set accordingly, nonetheless the marketing should be carefully considered to ensure that the suggested marketing strategy meets the requirements set by the consumers. Consumers’ flawed trust in online marketing in conjunction with the personal impact that the marketing of HRP has on the consumers, brings about a complex subject of interest.

To illustrate the subject of interest a parallel can be drawn to an up-to-date real-life example that has carried several discussions. Jack3d is a dietary supplement which contains the doping classified substance DMAA. However, it is not visible through the list of contents...
Introduction

how much DMAA that the package contains. The side effects were severe; one person was
afflicted with a cerebral hemorrhage after using it and cases of cardiac troubles have also
been reported. Even though Jack3d is rigorously criticized by many, it is yet still not illegal
to sell and market the product. (Svt’s website, 2012). The example illustrates that lack of
sincerity in the selling and marketing of HRP's and overall ignored responsibility can have
severe consequences for consumers, while it also is very likely to harm the responsible
company’s reputation. Important to notice is that consumers also should take responsibility
for their own health by making sure that they know what they are consuming. Equally to
the consumption of alcohol, the major danger of HRP's lays in a possible overconsumption
of the products.

Furthermore, dietary supplements which are sold and marketed through the internet are
even harder to control. Accordingly, in 2011 a study was published showing that 41 out of
43 dietary supplements sold on Swedish websites did not fulfill the National food admin-
istration’s requirement of marking. The current legislation works on the supposition that
companies and producers should take a large part of the responsibility themselves. Still, the
penalty for marketing and selling illegal dietary supplements is limited and the risk of being
disclosed afterwards is low. (Riksidrottsförbundet, 2012). Thus, companies are expected to,
and should, take responsibility for the products they are marketing and selling as a neglect-
ed responsibility can have severe consequences.

1.2 Problem Discussion

As consumer involvement grows and competition intensifies in the health industry, online
marketing becomes a criterion for the industry players’ survival. The consumer consider-
ations that come along with the usage of internet as a marketing channel, amplifies when
marketing HRP's online due to their direct effect on the consumers’ well-being. Consumers
who intend to buy products to improve their current health or to prevent illness will care-
fully consider the accuracy of the provided product information before making a purchase.
Therefore, companies that wish to be profitable should aim at creating effective marketing
where consumers’ considerations are taken into account. In other words, companies need
to obtain and maintain consumers’ trust for their marketing in order to successfully en-
courage customers to purchase their products. As up-to-date these companies and organ-
izations are still struggling to find their approach to marketing due to the missing standard-
ization within the area (Thomas, 2009).

Until now, only a brief introduction to ethics and how marketing of HRP's are regulated by
legislation and rules has been given. One may assume that a company can avoid dilemmas
solely by conforming to these principles. However, doing so is far more complex than one
may imagine as individuals differ in their personalities and preferences. Consequently, indi-
viduals are also likely to carry different ethical beliefs (Hunt & Vitell, 1986), implying that
an individual might not see any issues with a company’s marketing while another may per-
ceive the strategies used unjustifiable. Thus, ethics can be spoken about on different levels,
where the “easiest” application might appear in the form of discussions regarding the trustworthiness and use of different persuasion strategies.

According to Smith and Quelch (1993, p.9), companies’ marketing decisions should be taken with “respect and concern for the welfare of those affected by their decisions”. As HRPs are products that can be harmful on consumers’ health and overall well-being if misused, it is especially important that the marketing of such products is conducted in an honest and straightforward way as a means to avoid any possible misunderstandings regarding the products’ effect and usage.

The internet further increases the complexity of marketing HRPs, mainly due to the extensive amount of information available. The major amount of information reduces the trustworthiness as it is a greater chance that the data has been manipulated and consequently that it is incorrect. (Goldman & Hudson, 2000). The many new communication possibilities created by the internet raises the issue of if the internet can be fully regulated (Bush, Venable & Bush, 2000) as it differs from traditional media in its qualities and thus scope of use. Cronin (1994) states that the speed of the internet reduces the time and distance barriers as the marketer can put up information in no time while the consumer is able to selectively obtain the information. Alongside the speed, the internet also differs from traditional media in its many possibilities to display information (Cook & Coupey, 1998). Even if the general legislation for advertising applies to the “online-world”, the properties of the internet reinforce the possibilities for companies to elude these laws by marketing their products in a legal, but unjustified way.

The pressure on the companies to adapt to the contemporary environment by marketing their products online is evident, yet there are no clear guidelines for direction. In order to provide such guidelines, discussion on the different strategies when marketing health related products, must be carried out. Moreover, consumers’ perceptions of the subject could be researched to gain valuable insight of what they perceive as “right” and “wrong” in regards to the employed strategies and to what extent this affects their purchase decision.

Several studies have been carried out on strategies for marketers selling e-health products and prescription-drugs, as a means to guide them through the new media jungle (Chandra, Sikula & Paul, 2004; Lerer & Piper, 2003). However, literature treating consumers’ views of the advertising of HRPs are rare, calling for further research. A natural reason for this may be that direct to consumer (DTC) marketing of prescription-drugs requires even more carefully consideration than other HRPs. Nevertheless, one should not underestimate the importance of carefully selecting the marketing strategies when marketing non-prescription drugs and other HRPs.
1.3 Purpose and Research questions

The purpose of this thesis is to understand consumers’ views of different persuasion strategies used for advertising health-related products and how these affect their willingness to purchase the advertised product. This will be done as a means to provide the concerned companies with a basis for how to create positively perceived, yet effective, advertisements.

Based on the problem discussion and the main purpose of the thesis the below stated research questions will be considered:

1. How do consumers’ perceptions of an advertisement for a HRP affect their willingness to make a purchase?
2. What are the commonly occurring issues for a HRC to consider when advertising HRP online?
3. What influences if a consumer views an advertisement for a HRP negatively or positively?

The issues discussed within this thesis are not exclusively related to the advertising of HRPs or the online advertising. Yet, these issues are especially important for HRCs to consider when advertising their products online, as the combination of advertising HRPs on the internet brings about a consumer sensitive and important subject of interest.

---

2 Advertising is here used instead of marketing, as different advertising strategies will be the main focus of the research conducted in this thesis. Advertising is a part of the marketing and can thus be perceived as a more narrowed and specified topic than the broader concept of marketing.

3 The implication of “health-related companies” (HRCs) are companies marketing and selling HRPs.
2 Frame of reference

The aim of this section is to provide the reader with the existing theories and models relevant to the subject of interest. The chapter starts by giving an explanation to the concept of persuasion and continuing with explaining which factors that determine how consumers may respond to persuasive attempts. Lastly, the main theoretical findings are summarized and presented in a suggested framework, which is further discussed in the analysis.

2.1 Persuasion

The concept of persuasion reaches around a wide range of subjects, however, Perloff, (2010) suggests that persuasion is basically anything that involves shaping or molding attitudes. Therefore, persuasion is concerned with the understanding and subsequently changes of attitudes by influencing other people's minds (Perloff, 2010).

Conversely, Miller (1980) uses “responses” and not “attitudes” in relation to the different persuasive effects, as he argues that persuasive attempts do not necessarily have to affect solely people’s attitudes. Therefore, the application of “responses” allows for other types of possible persuasive outcomes to be included, such as the changing, reinforcing, and shaping of emotions, perceptions, behaviors etc (Miller, 1980). Accordingly, he states that persuasive communication aims at three different persuasive effects; changing, reinforcing, and shaping responses (Miller, 1980). In saying so, Stiff and Mongeau (2003) argue that the definition of persuasive activity then is limited to intentional behavior. They further state that persuasive communication must not always be intentional as it sometimes unintentionally affects others’ responses (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003).

Changing responses, is the most common persuasive effect and probably also the one with the most important persuasive impact (Miller, 1980). In trying to change consumers’ responses, marketers of HRP’s may provide counterarguments for the consumers’ doubtfulness against the product e.g. by claiming that the product will solely do well and by communicating a high degree of satisfaction from the early adopters of the product.

To reinforce responses messages which suit individuals’ existing preferences are created. In reinforcing, the message senders try to create messages which correspond to and reinforce individuals’ attitudes. (Miller, 1980). Consumers may feel that an all-round diet is good for their health although they believe that they lack the time of cooking such. The marketers of nutrition supplies may then market their products with the main argument that they are a perfect supplement to reach an all-round diet.

A common way of shaping responses is to create associations between the advertised product and a positively perceived object or person (Miller, 1980). To relate to the subject of interest, HRP’s are often advertised by the use of a liked celebrity as a spokesperson, i.e. through celebrity endorsement.
To sum up, persuasive communication can be used in order to reach three different persuasive effects; changing, reinforcing, and shaping, responses. For the purpose of this paper, persuasive communication that intentionally tries to reach any of these three effects will be of further focus as it is suggested that these are the persuasive attempts that the consumers react strongest to. In order to understand how the three persuasive effects may occur through advertisements for HRP, examples of persuasion strategies for each one of them will be given in the following section. The intention is that this will help to reach an understanding of how their usage could increase the likelihood of reaching the desired persuasive effect.

2.2 Persuasion strategies for HRP

In order to change consumers’ responses, marketers of HRP can use claims, i.e. provide arguments for why consumers should buy the product. The use of nutrition and health claims is regulated and the “principles of good marketing practices” further directs the implementation of marketing in general (see section 1.1.1). However, drawing the borders for when advertising affects consumers’ ability to make a sound purchase is far from easy and the principles does not include trifling breaches. By creating advertising that conforms to consumers’ already existing beliefs a company can reinforce consumers’ thoughts of buying a certain product, e.g. because it will help them reach a certain outcome. By stating which consequences the usage of a HRP can imply, consumers might realize that they can reach their goals while acting according to their existing beliefs. To shape responses, marketers of HRP can aim at creating associations between the product and a liked person, e.g. a celebrity. If a consumer like a celebrity, and the celebrity functions as a spokesperson for the product, the marketers adapting this strategy believe that consumers’ responses will be positive. A brief explanation of each strategy will now follow in order to understand their respective implication.

2.2.1 Claims

Claims are supposed to function as information sources of the quality of the products. However, especially in the supplement industry the trustworthiness of the information to the consumers is questioned. The discussion arises as it is not clear if the consumers understand the meaning of disclaimers, i.e. a warning of that the claim has not been evaluated. (Mason & Scammon, 2000). Thus, consumers face difficulties in determining the trustworthiness of different claims and its scientific base (Silverglade, 1994).

2.2.2 Consequences

“Consequences represent the reasons why an attribute is important to someone and why it is positively or negatively valenced” (Reynolds, Gengler & Howard, 1995, p. 258). The importance of consequences and their attractiveness or unattractiveness is derived from their perceived ability to satisfy personal values. Consequently, consequences are meaningful as they help individuals to reach values central to the self. (Reynolds et al., 1995).
Consequences of product usage are mainly divided into two subcategories; functional and psychosocial. The functional consequences represent whether the product performs as expected whereas psychosocial consequences are visible through the social and personal outcomes from using the product, e.g. the admiration from friends. In order to increase consumers’ perceptions of the personal relevance and desirability of the product attributes, marketers should aim at creating associations with personal consequences of product usage. (Reynolds et al., 1995). Social consequences may be communicated through peer influence, by showing a slice-of-life of how good life can be if you buy and use an advertised product (Monahan, 1995). Social consequences are further said to be especially effective when advertising to women (Keller & Lehman, 2008).

2.2.3 Celebrities

Celebrities are used in advertising to persuade consumers through credibility (Monahan, 1995). The influencing power of a well-known endorser lays first of all in the celebrity’s ability to attract attention. Furthermore, the general view is that celebrities possess likeable and attractive qualities. (Atkin & Block, 1983). The aim is that through endorsement, the positive meaning connected to the celebrity will transfer to the product and subsequently, to the buying consumer (Amos, Holmes & Strutton, 2008). However, even though consumers seem to have a positive view of celebrities, their credibility and thus effectiveness in advertising have been questioned (Atkin & Block, 1983; Freiden, 1984).

The increasing consumer interest for celebrities and how they act, do, and behave, is a clear indicator of the increasing influence of the famous in today’s society (Choi & Berger, 2010). Consumers aspirations to possess the same skills as certain celebrities raises questions of responsibility and consciousness (Choi & Berger, 2010) and who to hold responsible in a scenario where the influence is a followed by a negative outcome.

In order to understand consumers’ responses to different persuasive attempts one need to know how consumers may process the message and subsequently how their evaluation of the same is formed. Therefore, individuals’ message processing and judgment formation are described in the following section.

2.3 Message processing and Judgment formation

According to some of the foremost researchers within the area there are two different types of approaches that people use to form a judgment; the systematic (central route)- that involves carefully evaluation and discussion, or the heuristic (peripheral route)- which is a less rigorous and demanding approach (Chaiken, 1980; Petty, Cacioppo & Goldman, 1981; Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999) agree with these thoughts, which corresponds to the dual-process model, but they also argue that people can employ an additional processing strategy in response to an advertisement, i.e. the experi-
ential processing strategy. By applying the experiential strategy, people judge the message by the feelings or sensations that emerge from the processing itself, implying that the message content plays a rather insignificant role.

The three processing strategies outlined above are all included in Meyers-Levy’s and Malaviya’s (1999) integrative framework of judgment formation and persuasion. Furthermore, the different strategies possess unique antecedents, unique mediating mechanisms, and unique consequences according to the following:

Unique antecedents: The level of mental resources that an individual allocates to the message processing decides whether the judgment formation occurs through a systematic (substantial use of mental resources), heuristic (moderate), or experiential (minimal) strategy. (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999).

Unique mediating mechanisms: Depending on which strategy an individual employs, different types of information become the elaboration material. When adapting a systematic strategy the ease of identification and elaboration on the strong message claims function as a focal point for the message recipients’ judgment formation. If this elaboration occurs and the unique features are seen positively, favorable judgments are likely to be created. (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999). When a heuristic strategy is applied, a simple judgment is likely to be formed by a contextual cue, e.g. an attractive source, or readily accessible message (Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacippo, 1986). Finally, in the experiential strategy, judgments are mediated by the interpretation of sensations or autonomic responses that are created during the actual process of processing (Strack & Deutsch, 2004).

Unique consequences: The judgments that have emerged from the different strategies are believed to be different mainly in regards to their accuracy. Logically, judgments formed by the systematic processing strategy should possess a higher level of accuracy compared to the ones created by the heuristic and likewise experiential strategy as more effort have been put into the process of producing them. (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999).

In knowing how the different strategies appear, a natural question follows of why an individual employs a certain strategy. Which strategy that is employed depends on the amount of resources that the message recipient is willing and able to put into the processing. The advertising message, (e.g. complexity and inclusion of pictures), the individual’s personal characteristics, (e.g. message involvement and expertise), and the situation in which the message is received, (e.g. editorial and advertising context), constitute the determinants of the allocation of resources. Moreover, the mood of the message receivers has also proven to play an influencing role in the adoption of processing. (Forgas, 1995).

To conclude the findings presented by Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999), people tend to adopt the systematic processing strategy when they put a high value on forming accurate views and are able and motivated to allocate the resources needed to extensively and critically process the message. When adopting a systematic strategy the degree of persuasiveness is dependent upon the perceived strength and the information provided in the adver-
tisement. On the other hand, people are likely to adopt the heuristic strategy when they are interested in producing judgments that are adequate but not necessarily fully accurate. Lastly, the experiential strategy is employed when people have scarce ability and little motivation to process the message. (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999).

Conclusions can be drawn in regards to the processing strategy that consumers of HRP’s are likely to adopt. Referring back to the introduction of this thesis, it was concluded that people nowadays possess a greater knowledge of HRP’s, mostly due to the extensive amount of information available on the internet. Additionally, there is no doubt that the purchase and usage of HRP’s is personally relevant due to its direct effect on the consumers’ health. Therefore, it can be suggested that consumers are likely to adopt a systematic processing of an advertisement for a HRP.

2.3.1 Consumer involvement

It is important to bring in the subject of consumer involvement when discussing persuasion strategies and more specifically, judgment formation. Consumer involvement refers to the extent to which an individual evaluates the brand and the advertisement and can thus restrain the effects of advertisement exposure on response variables and processing (McQuarrie & Mick, 1992). Further, when consumer involvement is high, consumers judge the advertisement more critically by engaging in different resistance strategies (see section 3.3) such as counter argumentation and source derogation (Wright, 1973). Impliedly, when consumer involvement is low, consumers’ motivation to critically evaluate the advertisement will be the same. Consequently, fewer cognitive resources will be used to evaluate the advertisement (Krugman, 1965).

As stated in the introduction of this thesis, consumers of HRP’s are generally more informed today than what they used to be. Accordingly, consumer involvement appears to be high when buying HRP’s, not only due to the fact of the “more informed consumer” but also due to the nature of a HRP itself. Thus, implying that consumers of HRP’s are likely to critically judge the advertisements for the same. The presence of high consumer involvement reinforces the arguments for the use of a more thoroughly performed judgment formation, i.e. the adoption of a systematic processing strategy. These arguments are further strengthened by Chaiken (1980) as well as by Petty and Cacioppo (1983), as their findings show that high involvement are positively related to the application of a systematic processing strategy.

A tactic to use when targeting high involvement consumers is to make them curious about the advertised brand as a means to avoid that they instantly apply their prior impressions (Yang & Smith, 2009). Additionally, marketers should provide strong supporting evidence and argument quality in order to influence attitude change (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003). In accordance with Stiff and Mongeau, Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999) suggest that when a systematic processing is used consumers evaluate and direct their focus towards the pre-
presented unique features and strong message claims and if perceived positively, favorable judgments are created.

### 2.3.2 The attitude-behavior relation

In having discussed the process of judgment formation, it is reasonable to believe that if a consumer possesses a positive or negative attitude towards a certain object, the consumer is likely to act in consistency with that judgment, e.g. by buying or not buying the advertised product. However, people do not always act according to their attitudes (Ajzen, 2000), suggesting that people whom hold a negative attitude towards a product or the advertisement might still make a purchase and the other way around.

According to Glasman and Albarracín (2006) attitudes are more likely to be reflected in the actual behavior if they are memorable, held with confidence, based on direct experience and information relevant to the behavior, and when people generates or receives positive or negative information of the object in focus. Further, attitudes are more easily recalled when personal involvement is high (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006) and held by individuals who are very motivated to consider the attitude object (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006; Cacioppo, Petty, Kao, & Rodriguez, 1986). Consequently implying that the high involvement (see section 2.3.1) and motivation people have to form attitudes towards the advertisements for HRP s would produce rather stable and memorable attitudes and subsequent ly a consistent behavior. Glasman and Abarracín (2006) further emphasize the importance of stable and memorable attitudes in order to predict people’s future behavior.

Besides from the nature of the attitudes themselves, personality has been appointed in past research as a major moderating factor to attitude-behavior consistency. Self-monitoring is a personality moderator which refers to people’s reliance on situational cues opposed to internal cues, e.g. attitudes, to direct their behavior. (Petty, Wegener & Fabrigar, 1997). According to Kraus (1995), the attitude-behavior consistency among high self-monitors (relying on situational cues) are lower compared to the low self-monitors (relying on internal cues).

The attitude-behavior relation is important to explain as although marketers of HRP s may succeed in forming favorable consumer judgments of their advertisements, it does not necessarily imply that consumers’ will act according to these, i.e. by buying the advertised product. Moreover, as consumers tend to rely on different cues, depending upon their self-monitoring, the different cues used in the advertising will affect the behavioral outcomes’ compliance to the formed attitudes.

### 2.4 Resistance to persuasive messages

Although one of the main objectives of persuasion appears to be attitude change (Perloff, 2010) it is not always the outcome of persuasive communication as people sometimes tend to defend themselves by engaging in different resistance strategies. The reasons why people resist persuasive communication and how resistance strategies are enacted are of specific
interest as it is in line with the purpose of this thesis. Accordingly to remind you, “the purpose of this thesis is to understand consumers’ views of different persuasion strategies used for advertising HRP's and how these affect their willingness to purchase the advertised product”.

According to Jenkins and Dragojevic (2011) “resistance to persuasion may be observed as no change in attitude, a boomerang effect (i.e., attitude change in the direction opposite of what is desired by the message source), and derogation of the message source” (Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2011, p. 1). Jenkins and Dragojevic (2011) applied the politeness theory in order to understand the reasons behind people’s resistance to persuasion, which suggests that people have a need for autonomy as well as for acceptance and approval. Therefore, messages that threaten these needs through the employed language will be judged as impolite and consequently exposed to resistance. Further, if the message receivers perceive that the source of the message questions their judgment or competence through the use of a forceful language, they may perceive it as a threat to their need of being liked and accepted. (Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2011). Jacks and Cameron (2010) add an additional explanation by stating that unfavorable thoughts create resistance if they directly disprove message arguments.

The findings by Jenkins and Dragojevic (2011) show that an increase in threat is followed by; greater derogation of the message source, derogation of the message, and lastly negative attitudes towards the message’s posture. Furthermore, they stated that people are likely to act according to the formed attitudes (Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2011), e.g. if negatively formed by engaging in resistance strategies. Thus, it can be concluded that if consumers view an advertisement negatively (as a perceived threat to either of their needs) they are likely to employ a defense action by engaging in resistance strategies.

Jacks and Cameron (2010) argue that resistance can partly be prevented by knowing what resistance strategy an individual is likely to employ in response to a certain persuasive attempt. In knowing that, the sender could construct the message in such a way that makes it difficult for the receiver to employ the intended strategy. Jacks and Cameron (2010, p. 148) identified and categorized seven different resistance strategies based upon consumers’ own thoughts according to the following:

Counter arguing: “must explicitly counter an argument posed by the source of influence or it must be an explicit statement of the intent to counter argue the source’s points”

Attitude bolstering: “reflected a statement of the respondent’s beliefs or a claim that the respondent would think about or express the reasons supporting those beliefs”

Social validation: “reflected desired or perceived social support for the belief or an appeal to support from a ‘higher power’”

Selective exposure: “statements of ignoring, avoiding, or tuning out the threat”

Negative affect: “the respondent indicated a negative emotion (e.g. angry or sad) in response to an attitudinal threat”
**Source derogation:** “included statements that were fault finding or derogatory toward the source of the threat”

**Assertions of confidence:** “asserting that nothing or no one could ever change one’s opinion”

Worth to notice is that Jacks and Cameron’s (2010) findings differ from previous research by including “assertions of confidence” and by excluding “message derogation”, which “involves selectively processing or understanding a persuasive message in a way that favors one’s original attitude” (Jacks & Cameron, 2010, p. 146). Moreover, attitude bolstering and counter arguing are the two most cognitively effortful strategies (Jacks & Cameron, 2010).

Jacks and Cameron (2010) further suggest that when the personal importance of one’s attitude towards a certain object is higher, people are more likely to use; attitude bolstering, negative affect, assertions of confidence, social validation, and counter arguing to resist persuasion. Not surprisingly, the characteristics of the source, e.g. expert or non-expert, and the context in which the message is received, e.g. a commercial or a newscast, are likely to affect the strategies used and the overall created resistance. Moreover, individuals who view themselves as having more knowledge of the object in focus are more likely to question the source’s expertise, i.e. to derogate the source. Consequently, the derogation of the source increases for a non-expert source. (Jacks & Cameron, 2010).

Resistance strategies appear to be commonly occurring when a source tries to persuade an individual to change her or his attitude. As stated in the first section persuasive communication refers to the shaping, reinforcing and changing of responses (Miller, 1980), and thus not solely the change of attitudes. When a marketer of HRP’s tries to persuade consumers into buying HRP’s this may be done in any of the three ways. However, as this thesis foremost deals with the motives behind that an individual find an advertisement for HRP’s unlikeable, the reasons why people resist to change their attitudes become especially interesting. If a marketer could tailor the advertisement so that the consumer won’t perceive any problems in changing her or his attitude (not employing any resistance strategies), the consumer’s attitude could be changed and subsequently the product sold.

### 2.5 Framework for understanding consumers’ views

In order to ease the reader’s process of interpreting the different theories described above the following section will provide a summarizing framework, adapted to the advertising of HRP’s. The framework is created on the basis of the conclusions drawn in the sections above in regards to how consumers are likely to process and respond to the advertising of HRP’s.

The created framework therefore illustrates a simplified suggestion, according to theory, for how consumers form their judgments of advertisements for HRP’s and accordingly how the nature of these affects consumers’ behaviors. Accordingly, the framework provides a sug-
gested answer for the *purpose* of this thesis by suggesting an answer to the *first* and the *third* research question, to remind you;

- How do consumers’ perceptions of an advertisement for a HRP affect their willingness to make a purchase?
- What influences if a consumer views an advertisement for a HRP negatively or positively?

The parts below are taken from the different theory-sections according to their respective numbers. Arrows are used to illustrate how the different steps are connected to each other. An explanatory text follows directly after the framework.

**Figure 1. Framework for understanding consumers’ views of advertisements for HRPs**

According to Miller (1980) persuasive communication aims at reaching three different persuasive effects; changing, reinforcing, and shaping, which are seen in the top of the framework (2.1). These three persuasive effects can be reached by the use of three different persuasion strategies; claims (2.2.1), consequences (2.2.2), and celebrities (2.2.3), which are commonly occurring in advertisements for HRPs. When a consumer views an advertisement for a HRP, the consumer is likely to use the systematic processing strategy to process the message and form her or his judgment (2.3). When a systematic processing is used the judgment is based upon the ease of identification and elaboration on strong message claims
and the perceived unique features and strong message claims (2.3). A positive judgment is formed if a consumer perceives that the message claims are strong, easily identified and elaborated on, and if he or she perceives any appealing unique features (2.3 green). Accordingly, a negative judgment is formed if a consumer perceives the opposite conditions to be true (2.3 red). Due to HRPs direct effect on the personal health, consumers who intend to buy HRPs are likely to carry high personal involvement and motivation to consider the advertisement (2.3.1). The high involvement and motivation consumers have to form attitudes towards advertisements for HRPs imply that rather stable and memorable attitudes are formed (2.3.2), and subsequently that they are reflected through a consistent behavior (2.3.2). Thus, if a negative judgment is formed, consumers of HRPs are likely to follow the red arrows, ending in resistance strategies (2.4). Conversely, if a positive judgment is formed, consumers of HRPs are argued to follow the green arrows, instead ending up in a purchase.
3 Method

This chapter introduces the chosen method and provides arguments for the choice of using focus groups for the gathering of primary data. The entire process of the data collection is described and the chapter finishes with explaining how the data was analyzed.

3.1 Explaining consumers’ views and thesis approach

Since the purpose of this thesis is “to understand consumers’ views of different persuasion strategies used for advertising HRP s and how these affect their willingness to purchase the advertised product”, the implication of “views” in this thesis must be explained. Views are in this case reflected in whether or not consumers find an advertisement appealing, i.e. positive or negative views, which are likely to be based upon if they see any certain issues with the advertisement or not. These issues might emerge due to that consumers may think that the persuasion strategies used are unjustified or misleading. Consumers’ views therefore imply the same as consumers’ thoughts, perceptions and judgments.

Furthermore, to understand consumers’ views refers to the process of understanding what they think of a certain object and how they perceive, judged and respond to the same. In order to do so, the presented theory was tested through the collection of and subsequently comparison with primary data to generate research specifically on the topic of interest. Consequently, the method for gathering the empirical data was based upon the frame of reference, purpose, and research questions, presented in the preceding chapters. According to Burns and Grove (2005) the described process corresponds well to a deductive approach, where data is transformed from being general to specific.

With this in mind a qualitative approach was chosen in order to be able to fulfill the purpose of this thesis. Accordingly, the reasoning behind the choice of a qualitative approach is explained below.

3.2 Motives behind the choice of qualitative research

As stated in the background of this thesis, individuals differ in their perceptions of many things due to e.g. different personalities and preferences. This is especially true in regards to what they view as right and wrong and the motives behind. Qualitative research refers to the description, meanings, characteristics etc. of things whereas quantitative research refers to counts and measures of the same (Berg, 2009). Thus, qualitative research appeared to be more suitable for the purpose of this thesis since the aim was to understand and subsequently describe consumers’ perceptions of things, specifically advertisements for HRP s.

The qualitative research was conducted through the execution of focus groups, consisting of individuals who were encouraged to express their opinions through a discussion with each other.
3.3 Selection of sample

According to Hornig Priest (2010), the intent of doing a qualitative study might be to gain a “window” on a specific worldview. Thus, implying that the sampling does not necessarily have to be an important consideration (Hornig Priest, 2010). Barbour and Kitzinger (2001), argue that a focus group can consist of e.g. professionals, strangers or friends. The choice taken in this research was to compose the groups with people who were somewhat familiar to each other, as it was argued that people who knew each other would be more comfortable in expressing their “true” opinions.

The sample was primarily collected on the basis of the researcher’s circle of acquaintances. Naturally, the majority of these are Swedes. Consequently, in order to stay consistent throughout the research, only Swedes were asked to participate in the study. The process of choosing participants based upon their accessibility is referred to as convenience sampling (Berg, 2009), which is a non-probability (non-random) technique of obtaining a sample (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The main advantages of using convenience sampling are that it is inexpensive and that the process is facilitated by the participants’ willingness to cooperate. Conversely, the technique also entails disadvantages, including that it is not meaningful to generalize when using a convenience sample (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). However, the purpose of this thesis is not to generalize the results to any population, rather to gain insight and understanding of consumers’ attitudes, beliefs and behaviors towards a certain object.

Berg (2009), argues that in order to justify the use of a convenience sample, its suitability for the study at hand must be evaluated. Accordingly, the characteristics of the available participants for this study were evaluated before they became part of the focus groups. The participants were consequently selected on the basis of the researcher’s judgment of their suitability for the given study. The participants selected were all individuals that the researcher believed would be able to contribute to a broad, multiple-perspective discussion, based on their different viewpoints. Moreover, the chosen individuals possessed different demographical characteristics, i.e. in regards to gender and age.

3.3.1 Group composition

Four focus groups were held, with 6 participants in each. Consequently, the total sample consisted of 24 individuals. According to Marshall (1996), the appropriate sample size varies along with the complexity of the questions and the depth of the study. Thus, smaller samples can be very useful when the aim is to conduct an in-depth study of a topic (Marshall, 1996), such as the topic at hand. The focus groups consisted of solely females or a mix of females and males. The researcher argues that females’ interest for HRPs in general is greater than males, implying that they are more likely to carry a rewarding discussion about the topic at hand. An argument that is reinforced by the fact that women during 2011 bought more than three times as much self-care products than men did (Svensk Egenvård, 2011). Therefore, the focus groups predominantly consisted of females, with the addition of some males in order to not exclude them from the research. However, it
should be noticed that the focus of this research is not directed towards the possible differences between females and males.

One of the 4 groups included individuals in the age of 55-62, while the participants’ ages in the other 3 groups were between 20 and 32. The reason for having an older age-group was because the researcher argued that they would be more informed, i.e. possess more expertise of HRP. It has been stated earlier in this thesis that individuals who possess more expertise in the subject of interest are more likely to critically judge the advertisement and derogate its source. Accordingly, having an older age-group allowed for comparisons between the “younger - generally less informed” and the “older - generally more informed” in order to see if any differences could be discovered.

3.3.2 Limitations

The qualitative study was made on a relatively small amount of people to enable in-depth discussions, thus the implication of the empirical research does not allow for generalization of the empirical findings. Further, the focus groups were conducted on younger people (20-32) and older people (55-62). Consequently, the age-group in between were not covered. However, once again, the aim of this study is not to generalize rather to give an indication and understanding of consumers’ views. The study is limited to certain age-groups and participants as the researcher simply did not have the resources needed to find more individuals that had the energy, willingness and time to participate. One should also acknowledge that even though the researcher aimed to reduce the bias by not influencing the participants in any way, this might still have been the case. Lastly, the group composition may also have influenced the results as it is a possibility that the individuals in each group affected each others’ opinions.

3.4 Focus groups

A brief explanation of a focus group is that it takes the form of a group interview, where questions are asked to an assembled group (Hornig Priest, 2010). Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2010, p. 141) further specify the concept by defining a focus group interview as “[...]. an unstructured, free-flowing interview with a small group of people, usually between six and ten.” According to Hamel (2001, p. 343), a focus group is “[...]. intended to identify, analyze and resolve problems through group discussion...[.]”. The aim of the group discussions held for the purpose of this thesis was that they would help; identifying which persuasion strategies that people consider as justified vs. unjustified, analyzing why consumers consider them to be so, and to provide companies with possibilities to resolve these through the generated consumer insight.

The main advantage of a focus group is that broader data can be produced compared to regular interviews, based on the interaction between the participants. The interaction can also create associations in response to others’ comments and consequently bring things into light that would not have been discussed in a one-to-one conversation. Additionally, the
conversations and reactions can be very similar to how they would have been in a real-life setting as the participants in a focus group are more likely to forget that the researcher is present than they are during standard interviews. (Hornig Priest, 2010).

Naturally, the objective of this thesis is to create knowledge that could be applied in reality and accordingly the data should be collected under as normal conditions as possible to create a valid base for the impending analysis. Thus, focus groups were preferred in this study as the closeness to a real-life setting indicated good opportunities that the results would be trustworthy.

Common for all focus group sessions are that they all involve some kind of a collective activity, e.g. examining an advertisement, discussing a set of questions etc. (Barbour & Kitzinger, 2001). The collective activity used in this study is outlined in section 3.4.3.

3.4.1 Pilot Study

Before the focus groups were conducted, a pilot study was made as a means to discover any possible drawbacks in the execution to improve. A smaller group of individuals were gathered and encouraged to discuss the contemplated questions. Through the study it was realized that the participants found it difficult to grasp especially one advertisement. Overall they needed to watch all the advertisements twice in order to be able to reflect upon them afterwards. Additionally, the participants did not know exactly what to discuss in regards to the advertisements and the researcher needed to ask several following-up questions. Thus, two main changes were made in the execution of the focus groups. Firstly, the advertisements were shown twice. Secondly, before the second show the researcher told the participants that they should listen carefully to what was said in the advertisements. The aim was that these changes would lead to an even more rewarding discussion by bringing it closer to the subject of interest.

3.4.2 Execution of the focus groups

In conducting a focus group, the researcher can choose whether to disclose the purpose at the beginning of the session or wait until the discussion moves further ahead (Malhotra & Birks, 2007). The purpose of this research was revealed later on during the session in order to encourage the participants to speak freely without limiting themselves to the specific topic in the beginning. The researcher argued that this approach would be appropriate as the reactions and expressed opinions should be as natural and spontaneous as possible.

The focus groups were held at different places, depending on the included participants in order to create a relaxed atmosphere and to increase the convenience for everyone in each group. Malhotra and Birks (2007) argue that a relaxed and informal atmosphere should be created as a means to make the respondents feel as comfortable as possible and optimally forgetting that they are part of a study. Naturally, the optimal place for a focus group to be held differs according to the selected participants. The focus groups were held in Swedish as all the participants were Swedes and thus very likely to be most comfortable in speaking
their native language. The findings from the focus groups were subsequently translated into English by the researcher.

Each focus group session started with that the moderator, i.e. the researcher herself, explained what would follow and a basic introduction to the discussion topic was given. Thereafter, the participants were asked to individually write down how great knowledge they perceived themselves to have, i.e. their own expertise of HRP's. This was done as a means to see if their degree of expertise affected their opinions, i.e. if they were positively related.

Subsequently, the moderator informed the participants about the ground rules for the type of interaction that was expected to occur within the group, i.e. polite, open, orderly and encouraging, in accordance with the suggestions from Berg (2009). The participants were further informed of how the interviewing process would proceed. In this case that questions would be asked for anyone to answer in conjunction with more specific directed questions, in order to ensure that everyone was invited and encouraged to participate. The actual questions that the moderator proceeded from are listed in App 9.1.

### 3.4.3 The advertisements

As mentioned in section 3.4, Barbour and Kitzinger (2001) state that all focus groups involve some kind of collective activity. The collective activity used in this study consisted of, besides from the discussion questions, discussions specifically around three different advertisements for HRP's. The participants were asked to examine the advertisements in regards to different aspects (App 9.1), as a means to discover consumers’ views of three different persuasion strategies. The three advertisements that were shown to the participants are described below. The internet links to all advertisements can be found in App 9.2.

**Advertisement 1 (Kan Jang & Chi San):**

**Short summary:** A commercial done for Kan Jang (naturopathic drug against cold) and Chi San (naturopathic drug against tiredness). The two products are shown first each at a time and arguments such as “Sweden's most trusted” and “Sweden's most used product against cold/tiredness” are stated next to the products. Subsequently, the products are shown once again and instead presented together with the argument “direct help against cold/tiredness”. A Scanian man’s voice is presenting the products and their respective benefits. The commercial ends with telling the viewers that the products are available in all pharmacies, health shops and grocery stores.

**Advertisement 2 (Alli):**

**Short summary:** The commercial is promoting an appetite suppressant, Alli. The commercial shows four women, sitting in a living
room and talking about losing weight. The women talk about how you need to go about to lose weight and what it makes to you. One of the women says that you need to work out, and that you should not think that you do not have to work. They also tell you that they feel more “more desirable” and “attractive” and that you get “a happy husband”. It is further said that Alli will help you lose another kilo for every two kilos you lose by your own. The commercial ends by encouraging the viewers to ask for Alli at their pharmacy.

Advertisement 3 (Vitae Pro):

Short summary: This is an advertisement for VitaePro (a naturopathic drug containing antioxidants and vitamins for enhancing the body performance), that is displayed on VitaeLab’s website. The advertisement shows Stig Strand, a Swedish, well-known former slalomer, where he tells his story and why he uses VitaePro. Among other things, he argues that it keeps his adaptability and increases his energy.

3.4.4 Choice of advertisements

The three advertisements were used in the study as they all have led to discussions in regards to the persuasion strategies used (Törnmal, 2011; Trotzig, 2011; Lagerkrantz, 2009). Additionally, they can all be connected to at least one of the different persuasive effects (described in section 2.1); changing, reinforcing, and shaping responses. Consequently, they also represent one of the three related persuasion strategies; claims, consequences, and celebrities (section 2.2). Advertisement 1 (Kan Jang & Chi San) was chosen as claims are used as a persuasion strategy in the advertisement, i.e. they try to persuade consumers to buy the products by claiming that the products have great effect. Advertisement 2 (Alli) uses consequences by showing e.g. the belongingness among the women eating Alli, and telling e.g. how good you can look if you eat Alli. Thus, social consequences, belongingness, as well as personal consequences, increased attractiveness, are communicated as possible outcomes from using the product. In Advertisement 3 (VitaePro) the marketers make use of a celebrity, Stig Strand, where he acts as a spokesperson by telling how good the product works for him. It is likely to believe, based upon the theory by Amos et al. (2008) that the advertisement aims at transferring the likeability of Stig Strand to VitaePro. To clarify, it should be acknowledged that the advertisement for VitaePro is not an advertising film as the other two. However, it has been chosen as it clearly represents the use of celebrities in advertising for HRPs.

3.4.5 Choice of questions

The questions for the focus group sessions were set up by the researcher on the basis of the purpose and the research questions. The aim of the general questions (App. 9.1) was to encourage the participants into a broader discussion regarding advertising, especially online, and its believed affect on their purchasing behavior. The first question in the general discussion is closely related to research question no 1; How do consumers’ perceptions of an adver-
Method

tisement for a HRP affect their willingness to make a purchase?, as the participants were asked to discuss advertisements’ effect on their purchasing behavior. However, HRP s were not defined as objects for the advertisements as it can be argued that it could have limited the discussion by initially making the subject too complex.

The last three questions asked in the general discussion (App. 9.1) relate to the online-purchasing of HRPs and consumers’ trust in that companies use fair marketing. These questions were asked as a means to provide an answer to the second research question; what are the commonly occurring issues for a HRC to consider when advertising HRPs online? By knowing which factors consumers consider the most when buying online, and how they would go about when buying HRPs online, directions can be given to where companies should put their focus. Additionally, the extent to which the consumers seem to trust in companies to follow the rules for marketing, gives a further indication for how the selling companies best should design their advertisements.

After the general discussion had been carried out, the participants were as discussed in the section 3.4.3, shown three different advertisements for HRPs. The questions regarding the advertisements (App. 9.1) were created on the basis of all three research questions, with the main focus on the last. To remind you of the third and last research question: What influences if a consumer views an advertisement for a HRP negatively or positively? Even more importantly, this part of the research is closely connected to the purpose of this thesis and thus it aims to fulfill the same. The purpose of this thesis is to: understand consumers’ views of different persuasion strategies used for advertising HRPs and how these affect their willingness to purchase the advertised product. In order to answer the research questions and fulfill the purpose, the participants were asked questions regarding the aspects of the advertisements that they were thought to build their judgment upon. According to the suggested framework in section 2.5, consumers’ judgments of advertisements for HRPs are likely to be based upon perceived unique features, strong message claims, and the ease of identification and elaboration on strong message claims. In other words, if the consumers’ perceive these to be weak they are likely to judge the advertisement negatively and the other way around. Put together, the questions regarding the advertisements aimed at investigating whether the suggested theory corresponded to reality.

3.4.6 Drawbacks with focus groups

In conducting focus groups the researcher needs to be aware of its limitations and drawbacks. One of the main issues involved in executing a focus group is the influence that the researcher may have on the group dynamics (Hamel, 2001; Zikmund, et al., 2010). To reduce possible bias caused by the researcher, the researcher’s activity within the session was minimized, i.e. the participants were given rather long and undisturbed time intervals to keep a dialogue with each other without any distraction throughout the sessions.
Focus groups are argued as being difficult to use when the topic at hand is sensitive (Zikmund et al., 2010). However, the subject of interest for this thesis can be classified as fairly insensitive. Additionally, in order to reduce participants’ possible discomfort in discussing the topic the participants in each group were somewhat known to each other beforehand.

### 3.5 Ethical considerations

During the focus groups a iphone was used as a recorder in order to make sure that all information was captured. All participants were informed beforehand that the session would be recorded and that the recording solely would be used for the purpose of this thesis, by the researcher. According to Malhotra and Birks (2007), the anonymity of the participants should be protected and they should further not be deceived or misled. In order to ensure this, the collected data was fully anonymous and the purpose of the study was revealed to the participants during the focus group session. Due to the anonymity the participants have been given fictional names.

### 3.6 Data analysis

There are several ways for analyzing the gathered data. Malhotra and Birks (2007) suggest that the data should be analyzed according to four steps; assembling, reducing, displaying and verifying. The method chosen for analyzing the data gathered for the purpose of this thesis partly corresponds to the suggestion made by Malhotra and Birks. However, as their literature is written for conducting marketing research in general, a more specified approach has been chosen. Hornig Priest (2010) presents suggestions for how to analyze data when doing media research. Consequently, the method used for analyzing the data partly works from Hornig Priest’s suggestions according to below.

#### 3.6.1 Transcribing and presenting

In order to interpret the data collected through the focus groups, it was first transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. This was done very carefully as it is important that the transcribed material corresponds to the recorded, especially in regards to the precise language used by the participants (Hornig Priest, 2010). The results, notes consisting of bullet points, were consequently written down into a coherent text separately for each one of the four focus groups. Accordingly, the results are presented in chapter 4.

#### 3.6.2 Identifying general patterns

After compiling the data, general patterns were identified in order to search for similarities and differences within and among the groups. The patterns that could be seen during the research occurred both within the focus groups but also among the different groups. Within the groups, patterns of interactions between two or more individuals were seen, e.g. four persons within one group agreed with each other on many occasions. Conversely, on several occasions one group was split in two, according to the participants’ opinions regarding
a certain issue. The patterns among the groups were identified, e.g. if whether the participants were from larger or smaller cities could be related to their respective responses. Another interesting aspect was the difference between the older and the younger focus groups. Additionally, some general conclusions concerning the majority of the 24 participants could also be made as some patterns were identified throughout all the groups.

3.7 Assessing the quality

There are many different ways for assessing the quality of a qualitative study. However, commonly for most of them are that they involve evaluating the trustworthiness. According to Nutt Williams and Morrow (2009), trustworthiness in qualitative research is created by the integrity of the data, the balance between subjectivity and reflexivity, and lastly, clear communication of findings. Accordingly, each of the three aspects is explained below and their respective application throughout this research is illustrated.

3.7.1 Integrity of the data

The integrity of the data is also referred to as the dependability of the data and is, among other aspects, concerned with if the procedure can be replicated (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009). As a means to ease the process of replicating the study at hand, the group interview protocol and the three advertisements are added in the appendix of this thesis. Additionally, the previous section described how the analysis of the gathered data was performed.

Another aspect of the integrity reflects the quality and the quantity of the gathered data. In order to reach rich data different perspectives should be taken into account, e.g. by using a sample consisting of individuals with diverse demographics and viewpoints (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009). The sample collected for this study was mainly collected based on convenience nonetheless it was shaped by the researcher’s judgment. Among the available individuals, participants were selected based on psychological characteristics such as their personalities and preferences in order to create a versatile sample. Moreover, demographic characteristics such as gender and age were also considered and resulted in that both genders were represented in the sample as well as younger and older individuals.

Lastly, Nutt Williams and Morrow (2009) state that the interpretation should fit the data and the proof that it does should be presented. There are different ways for doing this, where one is to use quotes to illustrate the participants’ individual contributions and to describe how these connect to the interpretation of the data (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009). The data collected for the purpose of this thesis is interpreted and linked to the individuals’ own contributions in the analysis, through the use of quotations and the sample’s opinions as a whole.

3.7.2 Balance between subjectivity and reflexivity

In order to make a research trustworthy, there needs to be a balance between the researcher’s interpretation of what the participants say, and what they actually mean. Consequently,
there needs to be a balance between subjectivity and reflexivity, i.e. being able to tell apart what the participants say and what the researcher herself/himself says. To ensure the reflexivity the researcher can ask the participants and other outsiders for feedback during the interpretation process. (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009).

During the focus groups the participants were asked to explain further if it appeared unclear what they meant by saying certain things. By doing so, the likelihood of interpreting the data in a different way than what its true meaning was reduced significantly. To further increase the trustworthiness, some of the participants were asked to look through the interpretation of the findings, to see if it corresponded to their intended meanings. Additionally, individuals who not participated within the study read through the transcribed findings and subsequently the analysis of the same and gave their feedback on possible misinterpretations.

3.7.3 Clear communication of findings

According to Nutt Williams and Morrow (2009) the findings and importance of a conducted study must be clearly communicated in order to be trustworthy. The readers should easily understand the interpretations made and proof should be presented of that the research questions have been answered. In order to ease the process for the readers the researcher should present the context in which the data was collected and link the results of her or his own findings to others’ findings. (Nutt Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Throughout this thesis arguments and linkages have been provided as a means to ease the reader’s understanding and interpretation of the thesis’ content. Moreover, the research questions are discussed in the analysis and subsequently answered in the conclusion. The different circumstances, surroundings, and steps taken in order to conduct the study have been described earlier in this chapter. Finally, linkages and comparisons to existing theories are foremost found in the analysis section but also throughout the thesis.
Findings from the focus groups

In the following chapter the empirical findings from each of the four conducted focus groups are presented. Firstly, the findings from the general discussion are presented, followed by the results from the discussion of the three different advertisements. The results function as a basis for the following analysis.

The groups were all conducted in a very similar manner, firstly, four general questions were asked with subsequent following-up questions in order to initially encourage a broader discussion (App. 9.1). After the general discussion had been carried out, three advertisements (App. 9.2) were shown and the participants were asked to analyze each one of them in regards to certain aspects (App. 9.1). Each advertisement represented one persuasion strategy used for advertising HRPs, i.e. claims, consequences, and celebrities. The results from each focus group are presented in the following sections.\(^4\) \(^5\)

4.1 Focus Group 1

The first focus group, consisting of six females in the age of 22-25, was conducted in the author’s home. All participants were from relatively small cities in Sweden. As they all knew the author it became an appropriate place to conduct the session as they usually spend time there and thus were likely to feel comfortable in the surrounding. When the participants entered the apartment they were all given something to drink and some snacks were provided as a means to encourage them towards a rewarding discussion. The session lasted for 52 minutes.

4.1.1 Results from general discussion

During the general discussion the participants all stated that whether or not they would buy a product after seeing a commercial for it depends upon which kind of product it is, their general interest in the product category, and if they like the advertisement per se. As one of the participants expressed it; “It’s very very depending on which kind of product it is, I would fall for makeup immediately, whereas I’m not interested in a car” – Angelica\(^6\). It was also revealed that if a participant possesses a preconceived view (positive or negative) towards the brand or the product itself before seeing the advertisement, it is likely to affect the participants’ willingness to purchase the advertised product in the corresponding direction. As Emma said: “If it’s a brand or product that I like I become blind, as I have already decided that I like the product/brand before seeing the advertisement”.

Moreover, the participants also stated that the commercial’s impact enhances along with a rising need for the product. One of the participant said that if she perceives an advertise-

---

\(^4\) The results have been translated into English by the researcher, as the focus group sessions were held in Swedish.

\(^5\) Specified information about each one of the participants are presented in Appendix 8.3.

\(^6\) All participant names used in this thesis are fictional for the purpose of keeping the anonymity.
ment as irritating and if it is shown several times this will affect her view of the advertisement negatively and consequently reduce her possible intentions to buy the product. Another participant stated that: “My willingness to purchase is not that influenced by whether or not I like the advertisement, rather it’s more about if I like how the product is presented in it” – Vanja.

When buying a product online, the participants said that they would perform an extensive information search beforehand, mainly by searching for earlier consumers’ opinions of the product. “I read a little bit more and read comments from others” – Danielle. This was done as they view other consumers’ opinions as the foremost reliable source of information. They further argued that if a company has a spot on their website for consumers to post and share their comments, it increases the company’s trustworthiness. As one of the participants put it “honesty lasts the longest” – Elsa. Another way the participants used to ensure the product’s quality was to first search for the product in a physical store to get a glance of it and gain more information and then, if satisfying information, purchase it online or the other way around.

The importance of searching information beforehand became even further enlightened by the participants when discussing the purchase of HRP’s. They argued that this requires carefully investigation before buying as it may directly affect their personal health. As Elsa said: “As it affects your body, you want to do more research”. Besides from the actions taken when buying a product online, as stated in the previous paragraph, the participants said that they would make sure that someone knowledgeable in the area confirms that the product is good. Further, the participants stated that they do not trust an advertisement citing an alleged proficient person in the area. On the other hand they also stated that if they would be in a vulnerable situation, desperate for a change, they would easily be affected by the advertisement and consequently be likely to buy the product.

Lastly, when asked if they trusted that companies’ followed the rules for marketing, one of the participants said: “I think they are on the edge” – Emma. The others also said that they believed that companies are aware of consumers’ increased power, mainly due to the great influence of consumers’ opinions, as discussed above. The participants also argued that the power of the consumers has further augmented along with the internet, as especially negative publicity today disperse in no time.

### 4.1.2 Advertisement 1 (Kan Jang & Chi San)

The participants all agreed that it was a very clear commercial and that the message arguments were easily identified. As Felicia expressed it: “I think it’s a super clear commercial”. However, one of the arguments “Sweden’s most used product for tiredness/cold”, created various reactions. Elsa said: “I would be skeptical against it”, whereas Vanja said: “I could have bought it but not because I think that it works directly but rather since it’s Sweden’s most trusted or used product”. The argument that the products would give the user “direct help..” made Emma want to buy the product, while the others questioned its credibility. Finally, they all agreed that if they would buy the product it would be predominantly due to the strength of the first argument.
They also argued that the repetition of the arguments strengthened its persuasiveness as they then more easily remember the product and its characteristics. Overall, the participants thought that it was an appealing commercial, with easily identified arguments, and that the voice (a dark man’s voice) increased the commercial’s trustworthiness.

4.1.3 Advertisement 2 (Alli)

After watching the second commercial, the participants first expressed that they did not think that it gave them any special impression at all. They further thought that it was hard to identify the arguments and to even know which product it was advertising. However, after watching the commercial a second time, they thought that it was trustworthy as the women talk about that you have to exercise etc. in order to lose weight. As Felicia said: “It makes it more trustworthy as they are not trying to hide that you need to do something more”. However one of the participants clearly counter argued that “the first kilos are the hardest”, as she argued that “that’s a lie, they are the easiest”. They also thought that the argument from one of the women “you get a happy husband” corresponded well to the reality, i.e. that you indeed want to make your husband happy. Vanja said: “I’m sure many want to look good in front of their husbands, so it appeals to them”. Consequently, the participants believed that this argument would appeal to many, including themselves, as it corresponds to their existing beliefs. Moreover, they also believed that having four women talking about the product in a causal setting increased the trustworthiness of the commercial as it was easy to relate to. Additionally, the women’s naturalness further added to the trustworthiness. On the other hand, they argued that if the women would have been younger, closer to the age of the participants, their influencing power would have been even stronger.

In discussing whether or not the participants would buy the product, five out of six said that they could have bought it, but that they would have done some additional research beforehand. As they expressed it: “It could have been a start” – Emma, and “I wouldn’t say no” – Angelica. Conversely, the sixth participant, Vanja, thought that the arguments were too weak, i.e. she would have needed stronger promises in order to be convinced about the product’s effectiveness. She believed that since it was an expensive product, she wanted to be assured strong effects, i.e. a quick weight loss. While so, she also agreed with the others of that the more “weaker arguments” appear more trustworthy. Therefore, she stated that it is a fine brinkmanship between having “strong” and “weak” arguments.

4.1.4 Advertisement 3 (VitaePro)

The first reaction from the participants after being showed the third advertisement was that the celebrity increases its trustworthiness. They further said that this is especially true when the celebrity, spokesperson in the advertisement, carries a close connection to the advertised product. As Angelica expressed it: “I think it’s more trustworthy when a well-known person put his reputation at stake, like in this ad, than if it would have been an unknown person”. As Stig Strand (the celebrity in the advertisement) is a well known former professional skier in
Sweden, the participants thought that it was likely that he possesses the required knowledge about HRP to make statements about them. They also argued that since he is making positive statements about the product he is putting his reputation at risk. If the product would not fulfill these statements, i.e. he would not be telling the truth, his reputation would be likely to be flawed. On the contrary, one of the participants also stated: “I also think one should be well aware of that he gets money for doing it” – Emma, and she further argued that his loyalty could be questioned as it was likely that he had been told exactly what to say. Conversely, Danielle argued: “His moral should be that he can stand up for this product”, and she therefore concluded that she perceived the advertisement as fairly trustworthy.

When asked who to take responsibility for the product, the participants said that the responsibility is both the spokesperson’s and the promoting company’s. The participants were overall positive towards buying the product even if they said that they in general do not trust everything that a celebrity says.

## 4.2 Focus Group 2

Focus group number two was held in Stockholm as the intended participants lived nearby and usually spends time at the appointed place. The participants were offered some cake and coffee before the session started. The group consisted of six participants, two males and four females, in the age of 50-62. All the participants had lived the majority of their lives in Stockholm. The duration of the focus group session was 75 minutes.

### 4.2.1 Results from general discussion

When watching a bad commercial, one of the participants, Annika, argued that two different scenarios may occur, as she expressed it: “Firstly, I may try the product just because I want to find out if the product is as bad as the commercial”. “Secondly, I may feel that I don’t want to try it as the advertisement is so bad”. A necessity for a purchase to occur, according to the participants, was that they had any interest at all in the product category advertised. Furthermore, they also said that if the message in the advertisement corresponds to their own thoughts and experiences they are more likely to be more responsive. Additionally, they also thought that if the advertisement reflects a belongingness, status, meaning, and/or overall concept that appeals to oneself, its influence increases. Conversely, if it was an advertisement that the participants found unappealing or direct upsetting the participants would be discouraged from buying the product. As stated by one of the participants: “If it’s a misleading advertisement it annoys me, for example if it says that the product is scientifically proven and it turns out not to be, then I would found it extremely provoking” – Kristin. However, they also stated that if you like the brand or the product quite much you could disregard the negative associations that the advertisement creates. One of the participants, Marika, stated that the principal of an advertisement is that it is “good and honest”. Finally, the participants argued that the picture, whether it is symbolizing something or the picture per se, must correspond to reality.
Safe payment, easy accessible and true prices appeared to be the most important factors when buying products online, in conjunction with a reliable actor and a well-known website, according to the participants. They also believed that it requires more information search e.g. by looking at customer reviews and by looking the product up in a physical store before buying online. Nevertheless, one of the participants stated: “Someone from within the company could just be sitting there and writing all of those (customer reviews), so I don’t know” – Peter. Overall, the participants felt a general contradiction towards buying online due to lacking trustworthiness. As one of the participant expressed: “I almost never buy anything online, and if I would, I should know that it’s a serious actor and that the payment system is safe. I would never in my life buy something from a website that I never heard of” – Peter. One of the participants told us about when she was online the other day to buy some naturopathic drugs: “…in the end I didn’t dare to buy them online as it’s something that I should eat and I was very unsure about the seriousness of the sellers, even though they were recommendations but I didn’t dare to trust them either” – Marika.

The participants stated that if they would buy HRP’s online, they would be very carefully in their information search beforehand. One of the participants even said: “I would never buy anything eatable online” – Peter. He further stated: “I can’t understand how people can just go into a website and buy some ‘miracle-pills’ without even having a clue of what it’s that they are putting into themselves”. All participants seemed to be surprised that the online-purchasing of HRPs constitutes such a large market as they argued that there are many risks involved in buying these kinds of products on the internet. The participants also argued that people may buy online because they want to buy products that are hard to get on the open Swedish market. However, they also thought that it opened up for the question of if those kinds of products are suitable to consume.

When confronted with the question of if they believed that companies followed the existing legislation for the marketing of products in general, one of the participants, Annika, started to laugh. Subsequently, she said that they keep on going as far as they can and that “they are tripping around in the reed, exactly on the edge”. Another participant stated that he thought that it is impossible to regulate everything, especially online, as companies nowadays can be based in another country while selling to the Swedish market. Accordingly one of the participants stated: “We’re a bit naive in thinking that little Sweden is isolated from everything, because we’re not” – Peter.

4.2.2 Advertisement 1 (Kan Jang & Chi San)

Overall, the participants agreed upon that it was a straight-forward, simple and foremost concrete commercial. As Lars said: “Very clear, simple and objective”. They further believed that it was easy to recognize the message that it aims to communicate even though they did not think that it reinforces the trustworthiness of the commercial. “It’s objective, however it does not reinforce the trustworthiness, I mean cold, tiredness, in that way it really communicated the message” – Peter. Furthermore, they thought that one of the main things that the commercial lacked was further arguments, explaining how the product affects you and subsequently helps you. As one of the participants expressed it: “What does the commercial really say? It says that it’s Swe-
Findings from the focus groups

den’s most used but nothing about how it actually affects you, for me personally it’s uninteresting how many people that uses it, I want to know how it works” – Kristin. The participants also argued that the argument “Direct help…” is vague if it is not scientifically proved that it directly helps against cold etc. The participants were skeptical towards why the products were “Sweden’s most used product” and questioned the trustworthiness of the claim and message. As Peter said: “It might be that it’s Sweden’s most used just because they are pumping out advertising for it all the time”. He further stated: “If I am to buy a health-related product I want some documentation as a proof of that it works”. However, one of the participants said: “If I felt hopelessness and already tried a lot of other things I could have bought the product, since they said that many people had tried it” – Marika.

4.2.3 Advertisement 2 (Alli)

Strong reactions were created when the participants were shown the second commercial and one of the participants expressed it with: “This was the worse commercial I’ve ever seen” – Peter. They stated that it was rehearsed and synthetic and that the trustworthiness was very, very low. “The trustworthiness of this kind of commercial is so low” – Peter. Kristin said: “When the advertised product finally was shown I was so focused and frustrated of what had happened before that so I didn’t even take in what kind of product it was”. Some of the participants argued that it was ridiculous and irritating to state that women should lose weight to make their husbands happier. As one of the participants expressed it: “It’s annoying that they even bring it up, it’s really ridiculous.” – Marika. Another participant added: This is 2012” – Kristin. Overall, the participants said that it was too much going on at the same time, causing confusion, and that the conversation among the ladies were strained and unnatural. The participants thought that the arguments were unclear and that they did not remember them as they were delivered through a synthetic conversation. Discussions were also carried out whether or not the women actually had tried the product themselves. “The women should have said: I lost two kilos when I ate it in and worked out meanwhile…” – Kristin. Some of the participants thought that it sounded like they were just discussing it in general and not speaking about it from their own experiences. Finally, one of the participants concluded the discussion by arguing: “The ‘miracle’, promised weight loss, in those pills is too small to be worth the trouble” – Annika.

4.2.4 Advertisement 3 (VitaePro)

One of the participants stated that she already bought the product before based upon the argument: “It was worth trying, I believed in the advertisement, there’s so many people that had tried it and I probably won’t die by eating it” – Britta. Another participants added that it is also meaningful that the spokesperson is “sound and healthy” – Annika. The others followed the same track by saying that they did not think that he would jeopardize his reputation by putting his own name on a reprehensible product. As Peter said: “I don’t think that Stig Strand would put his trademark on whatever, even though I am sure he gets a lot of money for doing it”. He further argued that he probably gets enough offers so that he can afford turning the “worse” ones down. They further emphasized the importance of having a match between the spokesperson and the product in order to increase the trustworthiness. As Peter expressed it: “The trustworthiness increases as it’s a large possibility that Stig Strand uses VitaePro”. Kristin added:
“When it's something I'm supposed to eat, I require a higher trustworthiness between the product and the spokesperson”.

One of the participants said that she thought that the arguments used in the advertisement were realistic and trustworthy, making her want to try the product. As she expressed it: “They don’t shoot above the clouds, they haven’t promised a lot of things, they say that several people got... they don’t say that everyone gets.” – Annika. She further argued that the message must be achievable. The participants all agreed that if the product may affect your physical condition, the required trustworthiness of the spokesperson increases significantly compared to another product. About 50 percent of the participants did not think that anyone was to be blamed if the product would not work as suggested. As one of the participants expressed it: “Then I only have myself to blame since I went for it” – Annika. Britta agreed by saying: “It cannot fit all”. Conversely, Peter argued: “It should fit someone, and why is that someone never me?”. The participants who agreed with Peter said that they would have been irritated on the marketing and additionally that Stig Strand’s trustworthiness would have been somewhat reduced if the product would not work as suggested.

### 4.3 Focus Group 3

The third focus group was executed in the middle of Stockholm, at a friend’s place in order to make it as convenience as possible for the participants to reach the set location. The group consisted of two males and four females in the age of 24-32, everyone being from Stockholm. All six participants were gathered in the living room and provided with something to drink and snack during the session. The duration of the focus groups session was 41 minutes.

#### 4.3.1 Results from general discussion

Overall, the participants believed that advertising has a major effect on their purchase-decision. As one of the participants said: “I would say that it has a great effect, as if I don’t like an advertisement I become very irritated and would never buy that ugly, irritating product..” – Helen. She further stated that advertising also affects her unconsciously, as she might end up buying a product without directly relating it to an advertisement at first. One of the participants took it further by saying: “I would buy the product just because I’ve seen the advertisement, even though I may hate it, as long as I remember it and as long as there’s a product I can relate to” – Lotta. The other participants all agreed that they usually try to counteract the advertisement as they want to say that it was their own choice, e.g. when buying an advertised product. “I try to convince myself of that the product is not as good as the advertisers want one to think” – Johanna. The participants argued that the importance of a good and reliable advertisement is related to the size of the investment. If they were to buy something relatively expensive they believed that the requirements, e.g. degree of trustworthiness, of the advertisement become higher.

When buying a product online, safe-payment appeared to be the most important factor. Some of the participants did not have any problems at all in buying products from an un-
known website and they also stated that they do not trust customer reviews as they easily could be bought or made up by the selling company itself. As Maria said: “If I’m searching for a HRP and I find it I usually trust the website even though I don’t recognize it” “I don’t trust customer reviews that much as I think that they are easily bought, I don’t trust others I only trust myself. Helen said: “I buy everything online, I’m not afraid at all from buying from unknown websites, I trust my own judgment and usually look for company information before making a purchase”.

Maria and Helen had no problems at all with buying HRPs on the internet, as long as they were able to see the table of contents beforehand. They said that they trust their own knowledge of the product category and therefore believed that they could judge when a product was reliable or not. Maria said: “Trust the information on the website since otherwise one could sue them” – Maria. Further, they did not believe that it was more dangerous to buy a HRP online than e.g. in a health-food store, as the personnel’s’ expertise could be questioned. As Helen said: “I don’t trust the personnel as he or she can be whoever, they may put anyone there”. One of the participants, Lotta, said that she would not buy HRPs through foreign websites as she did not think that they would provide you with accurate and sufficient product information. Subsequently she added: “I would not buy from foreign websites as these websites cannot be controlled by Swedish laws and regulations which make them even more unreliable”. The majority of the participants, Johanna, Lotta, Erik and Fredrik, whose interest and knowledge of HRPs generally were more restricted, stated that they would rather buy HRPs in a physical store in order to get advice from the personnel.

Even though some of the participants did not see any problem with buying products online, they still did not believe that companies operate according to the existing legislation. As Helen said: “It’s just to look what’s on the internet, I mean there’s really no real rules for it”. The participants believed that this was especially true for internet-based companies as they argued that it is even easier to go around the legislation when operating on the internet.

4.3.2 Advertisement 1 (Kan Jang & Chi San)

The participants thought that the commercial would appeal to many people, as they argued that there are a lot of people who want to be livelier and overall feel better. They further thought that the commercial was clear, as stated by Fredrik: “It’s clear as it says that you should take something, e.g. Kan Jang in order to reach a certain state, for example staying away from a cold”. The participants thought that it was product focused, simple and objective and therefore argued that it was hard to say something against it. They also thought that the arguments were trustworthy, as stated by one of the participants: “I trust it as they give you arguments of that it’s sold at the pharmacy, health-food stores and so on, so they’re showing that it’s gumptious people selling it, I trust it” – Helen. Maria added: “I also trust it as they’ve been around for a while, I recognize them, it feels safe, but I’m not sure if I’d buy it”. Another thing that they brought into the discussion was the reliable voice of the Scanian man that spoke in the commercial. They thought that the voice plays an important role as it may help to increase the trustworthiness of the commercial. However, one of the participants also stated: “I always believe that one should take the arguments with a dash of salt” – Maria, explaining that she did not fully trust them but she still be-
lieved that they created a positive feeling for the product. Finally, all participants stated that they could buy the products if they felt the need for them.

4.3.3 Advertisement 2 (Alli)

After seeing commercial number two, one of the participants expressed: “It’s suppose to give you feelings of: ‘oh, it’s so good’, ‘we all tried it’ and ‘we inspire each other and are having such a great time’” – Helen. However, all participants argued that it gave you the opposite; feelings of irritation and doubtfulness towards the content in the commercial. One of the participants argued that she thought that the product could not be that good as you needed to exercise in order for it to help. As she expressed it: “It says that you need to work out, and that it only helps you partly, but I mean how damn good is a product if it only helps you partly?” – Johanna. She further argued that these arguments just were used as a “safe-card” for the selling company, as the consumers then cannot know if the weight loss is due to the pills and/or the exercise. Another participant did not think that the commercial was amusing, yet he thought that the part about the combination of the pills with exercise was reliable. One of the participants reacted strongly to the argument of that “you get a happy husband”, by saying that: “It’s sad and horrible that they even bring it up, if you shall take the pill you should do it for your own sake” – Maria. She further argued: “They are trying to ride on the wave of something that they know is right, in order to sell their own product”.

4.3.4 Advertisement 3 (VitaePro)

The participants did not believe that Stig Strand uses the product himself; rather they thought that he had been given a bunch of money in order to promote the product. As one of them expressed: “I don’t trust celebrities in advertising at all, it could be more trustworthy if Stig Strand was not in the advertisement, I don’t trust that he’s eating VitaePro” – Maria. On the other hand, the participants did not believe that he would do it for any brand, but that he chooses the ones that suit him the most. One of the participants stated: “I don’t think that he would promote any product that could affect his reputation negatively” – Johanna. The participants further stated that they would not blame the spokesperson in the advertisement, i.e. Stig Strand if the product turned out to not work. However, if the product had negative effects on their health they stated that the situation could be different. Lastly, the participant explained that since they do not have any relation to Stig Strand they are not likely to be affected by what he says. However, Helen said: “If I would have been a little bit older and felt the need for the product I probably wouldn’t see it as a bad product”.

4.4 Focus Group 4

The fourth and last focus group consisted of two males and four females, in the age of 20-26. The participants were all from relatively large cities. The session was again held at the researcher’s home and the participants were served something to eat and drink during the discussion. The session lasted for about 50 minutes and all participants were contributing just as much in the discussion.
4.4.1 Results from general discussion

The participants stated that for an advertisement to affect them, it needs to appeal to their interests in some way, i.e. the advertised product per se or by using their sense of humor. They also agreed upon that it should go along with their existing beliefs about the specific brand or product. As one of the participants stated: “If it’s something that reinforces the feelings I already have towards a certain brand or product I am more likely to be affected by it” – Josefin. If they would find an advertisement annoying or unappealing one of the participants stated that whether or not she would buy the product depends on the available substitutes on the market. “If it’s a brand or product that does not have any substitutes I would buy the product even if the advertisement is bad, but if there’s substitutes available I would buy them instead” – Hanna. The participants also stated that if they have strong preferences for a certain product before seeing the advertisement, it would be less likely to affect them negatively, i.e. so that they do not make a purchase. As Hanna put it: “How much an advertisement affects me depends upon the feelings I’ve for the advertised product beforehand”. One of the participants concluded with that he could end up buying a product just because the advertisement was fun, on the premises that the product was relatively cheap.

When discussing online shopping, the participants discussed the importance of an overall clear and easily understood website. A clear description of the product and the ease of returning it were other factors that appeared to stand out from the rest. One of the participants stated that she trust her friends’ recommendations, implying that if they told her about a good and reliable website she would easily buy products from the same. Another participant added: “I’d have done more research before I purchased anything from an unknown website” – Anna. The participants were somewhat shattered when discussing the reliability of customer reviews. Josefin, representing the negative side argued: “If there are several recommendations on a relatively unknown website I would think that the creators or their friends posted them”. One of the participants added: “I’d rather shop on the websites that have recommendations than the ones with the lowest price, however, the recommendations should be placed on a non-related website or forum in order for them to be trustworthy” – Hanna. Finally, one the participants, Josefin, stated that she would rather buy the product in a physical store, if possible, so that she could feel and squeeze it beforehand.

If buying HRPs, one of the participants, Hans, said that he would listen more to customer reviews, as he then would be more curious in hearing the judgment of others. Another of the participants added: “Yeah, cause then you put it into yourself” – Axel. Hans further stated that this was mainly due to his lack of knowledge of these products. All the participants agreed that they would have the same requirement as with other online purchases, just adding to the importance of clearly communicating the possible side-effects. One of the participants, Caroline, also added: “I’d lost faith in recommendations from knowledgeable persons posted on companies’ websites as almost every product is recommended nowadays”.

No direct response was given to the question if the participants believed that the companies stick to the existing legislation for marketing. One of the participants said: “I think that
Findings from the focus groups

The transparency of today’s society, mainly due to the internet, has forced companies to stay more true to the legislation” – Axel.

4.4.2 Advertisement 1 (Kan Jang & Chi San)

The first spontaneous reaction to the commercial was concerned with the Scanian speaker voice, where one participant, Axel, stated: They always use Scanian voices to increase the trustworthiness of commercials for things you eat”. Still, he argued: “It’s bullshit that they say that ‘Chi San is developed by the same researchers and therefore as effective against tiredness as Kan Jang is against cold’”. All participants stated that they would never buy the product yet they could try it if they would get it for free as they were curious to see if it would work. Everyone thought that the arguments were easily identified, one of the participant, Hans, articulated this by saying that: “They are crystal clear”. Half of the group believed that it was Sweden’s most used product, while the other half said that they required more facts behind that argument. As Anna expressed it: “All depends upon how they interpret their facts”. One of the participants, Hans, was confident in that the argument was true: “I take it for granted that it’s true, otherwise I assume they would be caught”. Consequently, he believed that companies follow the existing legislation. One of the participants, Hanna, concluded the discussion by saying that she thought that some arguments, the more blurry ones such as “Sweden’s most trusted”, could be false while she perceived the more straight-forward ones such as “Sweden’s most used”, to be more trustworthy.

4.4.3 Advertisement 2 (Alli)

The participants were overall very negative towards the second advertisement and described it as “tasteless” and “prearranged”. One of the participants, Caroline, further said: “I think the arguments are weak, as the commercial still communicates that you need to work out and eat right to lose weight, so taking the pills isn’t enough”. All participants agreed that they wanted more information of how the pills actually work in order to even consider buying the product. The male participants discussed that maybe women who have tried several things already and are desperate to find something that works would be willing to try it. One of the males further stated that he thought it was distasteful that they said that you should buy the product to make your husband happy. He argued that: “If I had a wife who felt like that I’d have thought, oh, this is bad” – Axel. Additionally, he thought that the arguments were bad, immature and naive. Hanna added: “I’d never buy this product cause then I want to know what it does, how it works..”. Another participant, Hanna, said: “I think they take on a rather humble approach in the commercial as they do not promote that the pills will do the work for you”. However, all participants still agreed upon that the advertising of the product was really bad.

4.4.4 Advertisement 3 (VitaePro)

The participants were all very critical towards the third advertisement, as they thought that it lacked sufficient product information. One of the participants stated that he wanted scientific proof of that it works, as himself explained it: “If it was scientifically proved that they had tried it on 1000 joints and it worked on nearly all, then I would be willing to try it” – Hans. However,
later he changed his mind arguing that if he was in a desperate need for something to heal his joints; he would be willing to try it based on the current advertisement. Another participant brought up Stig Strand’s role in it by saying: “I’d not try it just because he says that it works” – Anna. She questioned his trustworthiness: “I think he does it only because he gets a large amount of money for doing it, his glory days are over and he needs to do something else to earn money, it doesn’t hurt him or his reputation”. The other participants somewhat disagreed with her as they thought that he actually had tried it, as they argued that if he was lying it could severely flaw his reputation. However, Anna further argued that this would only occur if the product turned out to have negative effects on its users. Another participant responded: “If the product would bring negative consequences, it would be pathetic and embarrassing and I would never trust what he says again” – Hanna. Nevertheless, the majority of the group believed that he was eating it and all agreed that the overall trustworthiness increases when it is a famous person that acts as a spokesperson in an advertisement. As Hanna said: “When you know who it is, and you know his background, when it’s just not a random person, it increases the trustworthiness”. Finally, the majority of the participants said that they would be willing to try it, if they someday found themselves in a desperate need for its promised effects.
5 Analysis

In the following analysis the findings from the focus groups are discussed and compared to the theories presented earlier in this thesis. The analysis starts by discussing the data generated from the broader discussion, in order to answer the first two research questions and thereafter analyzes consumers’ views of the three different persuasion strategies: changing, reinforcing and shaping. An extended version of the framework presented in chapter 2 is presented in the end of the chapter. The aim of the analysis is to provide sufficient insight to fulfill the thesis’ purpose.

The analysis’ foundation lays in the three research questions, presented in section 1.3. The framework presented in the end of chapter 2 suggests an answer to two of the research questions and the purpose of this thesis based on earlier theories. Accordingly, the following chapter will also test the framework by comparing the theory to the findings from the focus groups. As the empirical data was conducted in accordance with the research questions, the analysis will mainly follow the same pattern as the data presented in the previous chapter. General patterns have been identified and will be compared to the theories explained in the frame of reference. Lastly, the main findings from the analysis will be outlined in the succeeding conclusion.

5.1 How do consumers’ perceptions of an advertisement for a HRP affect their willingness to make a purchase?

In order to be able to answer the first research question a general understanding of what factors that affect consumers’ willingness to purchase must be reached. Consequently, the following section will interpret the findings from the research by relating them to the earlier presented theories. Subsequently, the relation between consumers’ attitudes and their actual behavior will be discussed.

During the focus groups it was discovered that some factors, influencing the purchase decision, were mutual for all participants. Not surprisingly, an existing interest in the advertised product category was a shared criterion among all. Besides from the basic interest, the participants thought that the advertisement’s message should correspond to their own thoughts in order for it to be effective. The statement corresponds to Miller’s (1980) reasoning of that people can be persuaded by the use of communication that reinforces their existing beliefs. Consequently, if consumers carry a certain perception of a product or brand, and it is reinforced by the advertisement, the outcome is likely to be a positive judgment. In relation to that, the empirical findings also show that if an advertisement reflects something that appeals to a certain consumer, its impact is likely to be larger. As stated by one of the participants: “I’m sure many want to look good in front of their husbands, so it appeals to them”. A way for marketers to create such advertisement is by making advertisements that reflect positive personal and/or social consequences as an occurrence from the usage of the product (Reynolds et al., 1995). In doing so, consumers may feel that if they buy the advertised product they will experience these consequences.
It was concluded in the frame of reference that when a consumer possesses high involvement for a certain product, the marketers should aim at making the consumer curious about the same. Accordingly, one of the participants stated that she could buy a bad advertised product just out of curiosity if the product is as bad as the advertisement. One could guess that no marketer consciously creates a bad advertisement in the hope of stimulating consumer interest. Surprisingly enough, it appeared here that this could be just about the way to go. Nonetheless, it should also be acknowledged that buying a product because of a bad advertisement appears to be the opinion of one rather than of the mass. Additionally, this is most likely not the case when buying HRPs as the research shows that consumers are even more careful when buying products that can have a direct effect on their health.

Continuing with the scenario of a bad, unappealing and/or direct upsetting advertisement, it was very clear among the participants that they would not buy the product. However, an exception could be made if strong preferences for the advertised brand or product were held beforehand. Consequently, negative vibes from the advertisement could be disregarded if the brand or product loyalty was strong enough. Otherwise, when consumers carry strong feelings and opinions towards an advertisement their communicated responses appeared to be in line with these. Accordingly, the possible inconsistency in the attitude-behavior relation explained by Ajzen (2000) appears to be reality only when the hold attitudes are weaker. Glasman and Albarracín (2006) further stated that attitudes are more likely to be reflected in behavior if they are, among other things; memorable, held with confidence and if positive or negative information concerning the object in focus are generated or received. The theory was further reflected in the statements of the focus group participants, where one of the participants stated that she would buy an advertised product as long as the advertisement is memorable and she somehow can relate to it. Additionally, a majority of the participants said that the recommendations or warnings they receive from others have a significant influence on their purchase decision.

Another interesting finding was that some of the participants who were from urban areas expressed that they consciously counteract advertisements in order to avoid external influencers. Accordingly, they automatically engage in resistance strategies, explained by Jenkins and Dragojevic (2011) to resist complying with the advertising message. Consequently, they seem to mostly rely on their own attitudes to direct their behavior. When a person relies on her/his attitudes, internal cues, rather than on other situational factors, the person is referred to as a low-self monitor, implying that her/his attitude-behavior consistency will be relatively high (Kraus, 1995). Hence, it can be concluded that the participants who state that they solely trust themselves are even more likely to act in accordance to their formed attitudes.

An aspect that was illuminated during one of the focus group sessions was that extent of available substitutes affects the importance of a trustworthy and appealing advertisement. More specifically, the importance increases along with the number of available substitutes. If a consumer views an advertisement negatively, he/she is likely to instead choose another
equalistic product. As stated in the introduction of this thesis, the health industry is growing and accordingly so is the supply of HRPs. As a result, the importance of conforming to the high requirements increases as those who do not face the risk of losing potential customers to competitors.

By narrowing the subject down to the advertisement of HRPs, one can see through the empirical findings that consumers are likely to act according to their attitudes and beliefs that they carry towards advertisements for HRPs. However, the advertisement does not seem to drive them all the way to a purchase, as stated by one of the participants: “It could have been a start” – Emma. The statement implies that consumers of HRPs need more information before acting according to their initial feelings. The information can be gained by stronger arguments and more information in the advertisements. According to Glasman and Albarracin (2006), attitudes are more likely to be reflected in the actual behavior if they are held with confidence and if information concerning the product is received. Accordingly, it can be argued that if more information is provided in the advertisement consumers' attitudes will be more stable, implying a higher attitude-behavior consistency.

5.1.1 Resistance strategies

When the participants perceived an advertisement for a HRP unappealing they reacted somewhat differently. However, one main thing appeared to be common for the majority of them; they engaged in different resistance strategies. According to Jenkins and Dragojevic (2011, p. 1) “resistance to persuasion may be observed as no change in attitude, a boomerang effect and/or derogation of the message source”. The suggested theory corresponded well to the reality as three different scenarios seemed to occur when the participants did not like an advertisement. Firstly, they were simply not affected by the advertisement: “I'd not try it just because he says that it works” – Anna. Secondly, the boomerang effect was sometimes a fact, as expressed by one of the participants: “I don't trust celebrities in advertising at all.. it could be more trustworthy if Stig Strand was not in the advertisement, I don’t trust that he’s eating VitaePro” – Maria. Here implying that Maria's attitude towards the product became negative as she questioned the trustworthiness of the spokesperson. Thirdly, within the last focus group one of the participants argued when discussing the third advertisement: “If it was scientifically proved that they had tried it on 1000 joints and it worked on nearly all, then I would be willing to try it” – Hans, implying that he questioned the source of the information provided in the advertisement.

The third focus group was especially interesting in regards to the reasons why they engaged in resistance strategies. Jacks and Cameron (2010) state that individuals who view themselves as having more knowledge of the object in focus are more likely to question the source’s expertise, i.e. to derogate the source. Within the third focus group two of the participants, Maria and Helen, perceived their knowledge of HRPs as the highest among all participants (App. 9.3). The two females also appeared to be the ones who derogated the source the most, mainly by questioning its expertise and claiming that they solely trust their own judgment. As stated by Maria: “I don’t trust customer reviews that much as I think that they are easily bought, I don’t trust others I only trust myself”. Accordingly, the two females mainly resisted
the persuasive attempts by engaging in two resistance strategies: source derogation and assertions of confidence, as explained by Jacks and Cameron (2010).

Another interesting finding from the third group was that the participants said that they consciously counteract an advertisement as they do not want to be persuaded. The will to make their own choices was expressed by one of the participants: “I try to convince myself of that the product is not as good as the advertisers want one to think” – Johanna. Jenkins and Dragojevic (2011) argue that one of the reasons why people engage in resistance strategies is because they view the message as threatening to their need of autonomy. Consequently, consumers may resist persuasive attempts feeling that obeying to the advertising message would imply a threat to their autonomy, i.e. own decisions and/or will. Accordingly, the advertisement can have a negative effect solely based on its persuasive nature per se. In order to overcome the barrier of that persuasion knowledge negatively affects consumers’ willingness to purchase, focus may be shifted towards creating more subtle advertising where consumers’ persuasion knowledge is lower.

5.2 What are the commonly occurring issues for a HRC to consider when advertising HRPs online?

It appeared through the research that buying HRPs online, as expected, increased the complexity for the many. However, it also turned out to be a significant difference depending on age. The results from the older age-group clearly indicated a high skepticism towards buying products, and especially HRPs online. Some of the participants within the same group even stated that they would never buy anything eatable online, while the ones who could, had many requirements to be fulfilled beforehand. The participants also expressed doubts towards customer reviews: “Someone from within the company could just be sitting there and writing all of those, so I don’t know” – Peter. A possible explanation for the resistance among the older is that the existence of the internet has not been a fact for a predominant part of their lives.

In contrast to the older age-group, some of the participants in the third focus group stated that they did not see any problems at all in buying HRPs online, not even from an unknown website. The reasoning behind was that they trusted their own expertise enough to judge themselves whether the website/advertisement was trustworthy or not. Accordingly, the participants stated that they possessed a genuine interest for HRPs. Additionally, they said that they would rather buy HRPs online than in a store as they questioned the sales personnel’s expertise. Hence, a link can be seen between the behavior of the participants and the relationship explained by Jacks and Cameron (2010). As brought up in the previous section, Jacks and Cameron (2010) stated that individuals who view themselves as having more knowledge of the object in focus are more likely to question the source’s expertise, i.e. to derogate the source.

Besides from the two extreme cases described above, the participants argued that when buying HRPs online they had the same requirements as with other products: a safe pay-
ment system, a reliable website etc. However, they also stated that they would search more extensively for information before making a purchase in order to ensure that all aspects had been evaluated. The need for extensive information search corresponds well to Chaiken’s (1980) theory of systematic processing, involving a carefully evaluation and discussion of the object in focus before forming a judgment. The participants further stated that they would search more for earlier consumers’ opinions of the product when buying a HRP online, especially on non-related websites. When trying to change consumers’ responses, Miller (1980) states that marketers may try to do so by communicating a high degree of satisfaction from early adopters of the product. Therefore, it is of great importance that positive opinions from earlier consumers are communicated to potential consumers as it seems to have an important role in increasing consumers’ willingness to purchase. Furthermore, these thoughts are further strengthened by the fact that, as stated in the introduction, consumers’ recommendations is the foremost trusted form of advertising (The Nielsen Company, 2009).

Moreover, during the discussion the majority of the participants stated that they do not trust companies to follow the rules for marketing, especially not when advertising online. Accordingly, one of the participants stated: “They are tripping around in the reed, exactly on the edge” – Annika. The majority of the participants expressed opinions similar to Annika’s, and many argued that the trustworthiness decreases further when advertising online, due to lacking regulations and controls. Consequently, consumers’ doubtfulness towards online advertising in general in conjunction with their high requirements when buying HRPs online brings about a complex issue to solve.

5.3 What influences if a consumer views an advertisement for a HRP negatively or positively?

As a means to understand what influences consumers’ views of advertisements for HRPs, their views of the three different advertisements (section 3.4.3 and App. 9.2) will be analyzed below. The advertisements can all be assumed to aim at reaching one of the three persuasive effects; changing, reinforcing, and shaping -responses. The persuasive effects, explained by Miller (1980) can be achieved by the use of three persuasion strategies: claims, consequences and celebrities. Thus, consumers’ views of advertisements for HRPs using claims, consequences and celebrities will be analyzed in the following sections.

5.3.1 Consumers’ views of claims as a persuasion strategy

Since the advertisement based on claims mostly created positive reactions it can be assumed that consumers of HRPs want clear and straightforward advertisements. The foremost reason for the positive reactions appeared to be the ease of identifying the arguments and their clarity, “they’re crystal clear”, as said by one of the participants. According to Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999), consumers adapting a systematic strategy form their judgments based upon the ease of identification and elaboration on the strong message claims. As the ease of identification overall appeared to be highly present according to the partici-
pants, it can be argued that their formed judgments are likely to be positive. However, some of the participants argued that they required more information behind the message claims; "What does the commercial really say? It says that it’s Sweden’s most used but nothing about how it actual affects you, for me personally it’s uninteresting how many people that uses it, I want to know how it works" – Kristin. The statement clearly indicates that the participant lacked the ease of elaboration and strength of the argument provided in the advertisement. In compliance with the theory by Meyers-Levy and Malaviya (1999) the participants who expressed opinions similar to Kristin’s were fairly negative towards the advertisement and consequently skeptical towards making a purchase.

An issue related to the arguments’ strength that especially the participants in the older age group discussed was that they wanted scientific proof of that the product gives you the promised “direct help”, in order for the argument to be fully trustworthy. In accordance with that, Silverglade (1994) states that it is difficult for consumers to judge the trustworthiness of different claims and their scientific base. Stiff and Mongeau (2003) further argue that if consumer involvement is high, marketers should provide strong supporting evidence and argument quality in order to influence attitude change. Therefore it can be argued that it is of great importance that HRCs provide potential consumers with proof of that their products will work as suggested. It is especially important that this is done in advertisements for HRP’s as consumers of HRP’s are even more likely to question the reliability of the product, due to its direct effect on their personal health.

As stated already in the introductory chapter of this thesis, individuals differ in their personalities and preferences. Hence, their views of advertisement for HRP’s are also likely to be different. The phenomenon was visible in the focus groups as some participants argued that the argument “Sweden’s most used product” lacked sufficient grounds whereas others expressed that it made them want to buy the product. No clear link can be established between the participants’ opinions and their own perceived knowledge of HRP’s in regards to claims as a persuasion strategy. This as the doubtfulness was present among the more informed as well as the less informed.

Lastly, the Scanian, man’s voice was throughout the groups said to increase the trustworthiness of the advertisements. However, the exception occurred in the older age group where no one mentioned the voice as an influencing factor. Whether or not this is a generation question or just a coincidence can be further discussed. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the voice of the speaker appears to influence consumers’ views of advertisements.

5.3.2 Consumers’ views of consequences as a persuasion strategy

The second advertisement created strong reactions among the participants in the last three focus groups. The discussions mainly emerged in response to that one of the women said that you get a “happy husband” when eating the appetite suppressant. One may assume that the aim of the comment is to attract women to buy the product on the basis of that it corresponds to their own thoughts, i.e. that they want to make their husband happy. In the
view of that, Miller (1980) states that in order to persuade consumers marketers may try to create messages which suit individuals existing beliefs. However, in this case the participants were not persuaded to buy the product as the communicated consequences did not correspond to their existing beliefs. Instead of being persuaded the participants expressed opinions such as: “It’s sad and horrible that they even bring it up, if you should take the pill you should do it for your own sake” – Maria. The argument clearly disproves the message argument of eating the pill to make your husband happier. According to Jacks and Cameron (2010), unfavorable thoughts create resistance if they directly disprove message arguments. This appeared to be true as Maria argued that she would never buy the product.

Resistance strategies may, according to Jacks and Cameron (2010), appear in seven different shapes. Some of these were seen through the participants’ responses to the advertisement. As Marika said: “It’s annoying that they even bring it up, it’s really ridiculous.”, indicating negative emotions, moroseness and irritation, towards the woman’s comment of a happy husband. Resistance expressed through moroseness and irritation corresponds to the resistance strategy of “negative affect”, “where the respondent indicates a negative emotion (e.g. angry or sad) in response to an attitudinal threat” (Jacks & Cameron, 2010, p.148). Another parallel can be drawn between the statement: “If I had a wife who felt like that I’d have thought, oh, this is bad” – Axel, and the resistance strategy attitude bolstering. Accordingly, attitude bolstering reflects a statement of the respondent’s thoughts and beliefs (Jacks and Cameron, 2010).

Interestingly, a major difference could be seen between the reactions within the first group, and the other three. The participants in the first group argued that the advertisement was trustworthy as it stated that you also need to work out in order to lose weight, which they knew was true. Additionally, they argued that the comment of a happier husband appeals to many, including themselves as they indeed want to look good in front of their husband. Thus, they viewed the advertisement positively as it corresponded to their existing beliefs. As 5 out of 6 stated that they could buy the product it can be concluded that the findings from the first focus group corresponds well to the theory by Reynolds et al. (1995). Accordingly, Reynolds et al. (1995) suggest that marketers should aim at creating associations with personal consequences of product usage in order to increase product desirability. As the first group solely consisted of individuals from smaller cities, it can be assumed that consumers from similar surroundings are likely to be more humble when forming their judgments.

Conversely, some of the participants stated that the arguments were too weak, as stated by Annika: “The miracle, promised weight loss, in those pills is too small to be worth the trouble”. Reynolds et al. (1995) state that consequences’ attractiveness or unattractiveness is based upon their perceived ability to satisfy personal values. Hence, it seems that some of the participants would not buy the product as they thought the communicated consequences’ ability (losing 1 additional kilo for every 2 you lose on your own) to reach their personal value (a certain weight) was too weak.
5.3.3 Consumers’ views of celebrities as a persuasion strategy

Generally it appeared that the participants thought that the trustworthiness of an advertisement increases when the spokesperson is famous. The main reason for this was that they did not think that a celebrity (Stig Strand in this case) would put his reputation on stake by promoting something that he cannot stand up for. Accordingly, theory suggests that celebrities are used in advertising to persuade consumers through credibility (Monahan, 1995). Furthermore, a clear connection between the celebrity and the product was appointed as an important factor influencing the trustworthiness of the advertisement. As stated by one of the participants: “The trustworthiness increases as it’s a large possibility that Stig Strand uses VitaePro” – Kristin. The statement is closely linked to Miller’s (1980) reasoning of that a persuasive effect of shaping responses can be reached by creating associations between the advertised product and a liked person. Even though these were the thoughts of many of the participants, some derogated the source (Jacks & Cameron, 2010) by questioning Stig Strand’s reliability arguing that he receives money for contributing in the advertisement.

In contrast to the majority, one of the participants said: “I don’t trust celebrities in advertising at all. it could be more trustworthy if Stig Strand was not in the advertisement, I don’t trust that he’s eating VitaePro” – Maria. Important to notice is that her negative view of the advertisement did not have anything to do with Stig Strand, rather she was negative towards celebrities in advertising in general. Maria’s doubt is in line with Atkin’s and Block’s (1983) findings of that consumers may question celebrities’ credibility in advertising even though they generally have a positive view towards them.

In order for the participants to buy the product a few things appeared to be missing. Firstly, the scientific proof was once again requested, i.e. the strong supporting evidence and argument quality needed to influence attitude change (Stiff & Mongeau, 2003). Secondly, some of the participants argued that since they did not have any relation to Stig Strand they were not influenced by him or what he says. The expressed opinions emphasize the importance of matching the chosen celebrity with the target audience. However, the respondents who stated that they were not influenced by Stig Strand are most likely not in the target audience for VitaePro as they all are relatively young (25-32). Lastly, the participants required more product information, again showing their intentions to perform a systematic processing before forming a judgment (Meyers-Levy & Malaviya, 1999).

5.4 Extended framework for understanding consumers’ views

After analyzing the three research questions reflections can be made in regards to the framework presented in chapter 2. As it turned out the empirical findings corresponded the main features of the framework. However, after analyzing the findings from the focus groups the framework can be adjusted to include additional influencing factors. The extended framework are presented below, where the additions are written in bold.
Common for all participants were that they required more information before buying a HRP. Accordingly, they intended to adapt the systematic processing strategy. When individuals form their judgments they, besides from the two earlier stated points which hold for all persuasion strategies used, seem to consider the trustworthiness of the spokesperson’s voice (when claims are used as persuasion strategy), the conformity between communicated consequences and consumers’ existing beliefs (consequences) and the link between the celebrity and product/target audience (celebrities).

The individuals’ personalities also appeared to influence which outcome that emerged from their processing. Overall, participants from smaller cities, referred to as rural areas in this thesis, were more humble than the ones from larger cities, urban areas, in their judging of the advertisements. It is likely to believe that individuals’ personalities, and thus so preferences, are shaped and formed by their surroundings.

Edin (2012)

**Figure 2. Extended framework for understanding consumers’ views of advertisements for HRPs**
The suggestion that individuals’ formed attitudes would be reflected in their behaviors is reinforced by the empirical findings. However, two exceptions were articulated during the research as illustrated by the arrow moving from resistance strategies to purchase. Firstly, when individuals hold strong preferences for the advertised brand or product before watching the advertisement they may still buy the product even though they do not like the advertisement. Secondly, a purchase may also occur under the same conditions if there are no equalistic substitutes available.

The last thing that stood out from the findings was that the participants seem to engage in resistance strategies both unconsciously and consciously. The individuals own knowledge of HRPs, their perceptions of that the message threatens their need for autonomy, and persuasion knowledge were the main three reasons for resisting to comply with the advertisement’s message. Thus, persuasion knowledge can be added to Jenkins’ and Dragojevic’s (2011) reasons of why individuals engage in resistance strategies.
Conclusions

In the following chapter the research questions are answered, based on the main findings from the analysis, as a means to fulfill the purpose of this thesis.

How do consumers’ perceptions of an advertisement for a HRP affect their willingness to make a purchase?

It can be concluded that consumers’ perceptions of advertisements for HRPs affect their willingness to make a purchase. However, to which extent it does depends upon several factors. When consumers hold strong negative attitudes towards an advertisement, they are likely to not buy the product. However, if consumers carry strong preferences for the advertised product or brand before seeing the advertisement they may “forgive” a bad advertisement, implying that they would still buy the product. When the hold attitudes are weaker the attitude-behavior inconsistency increases, i.e. consumers may buy the product even though they do not like the advertisement. It can also be concluded that if consumers do not like an advertisement they consciously or unconsciously engage in resistance strategies. Consumers who are more informed are more likely to consciously judge the advertisement in a critical manner. Thus, more subtle advertising might be preferred as it appears that consumers sometimes resist advertisements consciously as they do not want to be persuaded. Even though consumers view an advertisement for a HRP positively they seem to require more information before making a purchase. By providing more information and stronger arguments in the advertisements for HRPs marketers can help consumers building positive, stable and memorable attitudes. These are desirable as if consumers’ attitudes are held with confidence they are likely to be reflected in their behavior by leading to a purchase of the advertised product.

What are the commonly occurring issues for a HRC to consider when advertising HRPs online?

When advertising online HRCs need to carefully define the target group that they aim to target with the specific advertisement. As it seems that older individuals carry doubtfulness towards buying online, and especially HRPs, they are likely to be more skeptical towards advertisements for the same. Thus, when targeting an older generation focus should be directed towards communicating a high degree of safety and trustworthiness. On the other hand, the research indicated that younger people do not hesitate significantly when buying HRPs online as long as the website appears reliable and the payment method safe. Customer reviews were stated as one of the most used sources to ensure the quality and reliability of the product as well as the website. Accordingly, consumers appear to put great trust in their peers, implying that HRCs should make sure that positive judgments are communicated and spread throughout the online and offline world. An exception should be made for those consumers who carry more knowledge of HRPs, as they mostly seem to trust their own judgments. Mutual for all consumers of HRPs is that they require more information before making an online-purchase, again emphasizing the importance of providing clear information and strong arguments in the advertisements.
What influences if a consumer views an advertisement for a HRP negatively or positively?

If the arguments are clear and easily identified consumers are likely to view the advertisement positively. However, consumers want evidence of that the product they are buying will work as suggested, especially when buying a product that can affect their personal health. Scientific proof behind the arguments presented in the advertisement was stated as an important factor in consumers’ evaluation of an advertisement for a HRP. Thus, the arguments’ strength strongly influences whether a consumer views an advertisement for a HRP negatively or positively. Additionally, consumers want to know not only that the product will have the desired effect but also how it affects them. Moreover, the trustworthiness of the spokesperson’s voice appears to affect consumers’ views in the corresponding direction.

Advertisements that communicate consequences which correspond to consumers’ existing beliefs are likely to positively affect consumers’ views of the same. On the contrary, if the communicated consequences contradict consumers’ beliefs a reversed effect will be likely to occur. However, as argued earlier in the analysis, consumers differ in their preferences. Some view certain arguments as weak, arguing that they could not satisfy their personal values, whereas others rather judge them as plausible and thereby trustworthy. Thus, it can be concluded that it is a tradeoff between making arguments realistic and fantastic.

Overall, celebrities in advertising create positive views as the celebrity’s risk of flawing her/his reputation functions as an assurance to consumers. Nevertheless, the connection between the celebrity and the product as well as between the celebrity and the target audience influences its effectiveness. Accordingly, a strong visible link between these implies a positive effect on consumers’ views of the advertisement.
7 Discussion

The last part of this thesis discusses how the findings from the conducted research can be used by the concerned companies and gives suggestions for further research.

7.1 The relevance of the study

On the basis of this study it has been suggested that consumers want, and require, clear and detailed information in advertisements for HRPs. Companies operating in the health industry should therefore aim at creating such advertisements. It is especially important to do so when advertising online as the study showed that consumers, especially older individuals, then demand even more information before making a purchase. The importance for companies to communicate satisfied customers’ opinions, in order to attract new customers, has also been confirmed. In order to create effective advertisement for HRPs, different aspects should be considered depending on which persuasion strategy that is used. When trying to persuade consumers by claiming the product’s effectiveness, strength behind the arguments is essential. If consequences are used, it is important that they correspond to consumers’ existing beliefs. Lastly, when a celebrity is used to persuade consumers, marketers of HRPs should ensure that the celebrity matches the product and target audience in order to make the advertisement trustworthy and effective.

The findings from the study may be useful directions for other companies that create advertisements for products that carry similar characteristics as HRPs. This as many of the findings presented in this thesis are, as stated in the introduction, not exclusively related to the advertising of HRPs. Additionally, this thesis provides an insight of how consumers form their views and subsequently how their views affect their willingness to purchase. Thus, other companies could gain from the conducted research as an understanding of this enables them to create advertisements that best suit their target audience.

7.2 Suggestions for further research

An interesting aspect that was highlighted during the research was that consumers may counteract an advertisement consciously just because they do not want to be persuaded. Hence, it can be suggested that persuasion knowledge may negatively affect consumers’ views of an advertisement and consequently reduce their willingness to purchase the advertised product. Therefore, it could be of further interest to conduct research that investigates the relation between consumers’ persuasion knowledge and their willingness to purchase.

In the research it was indicated that the few individuals who stated that they possessed a great knowledge of HRPs more critically judged the advertisements for the same. However, as the sample used in this research was rather small, further research reinforcing or denying the arguments of a strong connection between the individuals’ knowledge and their judging approach is needed in order to test the assumption.
8 List of references


9 Appendices

9.1 Draft for focus groups

Main questions for directing the general discussion:

- Do you believe that advertisements have a great effect on your willingness to make a purchase? (If you like them or not/think they are justified or not)
- What is most important for you when buying products online?
- What is most important for you when buying HRPs online? Would you search for more information before the purchase— or would you rely on the advertisement per se?
- Do you rely on companies to follow the existing legislation for marketing?

The basis of discussion for each of the three advertisement:

- Spontaneous impressions/comments
- Like the advertisement or not
- Ease of identifying the message claims
- Perception of the presented unique features and the message claims
- Willingness to purchase the product
- Trustworthiness of the presented information
- Changes leading to a purchase
- Clearness of the product information
- Problems/issues with the advertisement
- Relation between opinion and willingness to purchase
9.2 Links to the advertisements

Advertisement 1 (Kan Jang & Chi San):

Link to watch the advertisement:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXvLw_fM6qs&feature=related

Print Screen of the advertisement:

Advertisement 2 (Alli):

Link to watch the advertisement: http://www.reklamombudsmannen.org/uttalande/alli

Print Screen of the advertisement:
Advertisement 3 (Vitae Pro):

Link to the advertisement:

http://www.vitaelab.se/Vitar-VitaePro/Stri-Strandgclid=CNS7_vu36K4CFetXMAdAQA0LjA

Print Screen of the advertisement:

Slalomåkare Stig Strand äter VitaePro och OmegaPro varje dag!

- Jag är mindre stel sedan jag började äta VitaePro, och har mer energi i vardagen.

Stig Strand är sedan länge en välkänd slalomåkare. Idag hör vi honom kommentera slalom i TV. Till vardags är han däremot egen företagare i Hemavan.

- Idag jobbar jag inom turistbranschen, och även om jag inte belastar kroppen lika mycket längre som när jag tävlade, inkluderar mitt arbete guidade turer i skog och mark.

Det är viktigt att jag kan använda kroppen när jag vill, utan att behöva känna att jag blir stel i musklerna. Dessutom är det viktigt att jag får i mig antioxidanter för att ha en tillräcklig ork i min aktiva vardag.

Stig erbjuder aktiviteter på Trolltunet

Stig Strand har levit ett aktivt liv i många år genom sitt idrottsande och har bland annat vunnit alpina världscupen i slalom. Numeras jobbar han som expert-kommentator på TV under vintersäsongen, och driver turistanläggningen Trolltunet uppe i Hemavan i Lappland.
### 9.3 Participant information

#### FOCUS GROUP 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Own perceived knowledge (1-10 where 10 is top)</th>
<th>Urban/Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angelica</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanja</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsa</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Felicia</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### FOCUS GROUP 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Own perceived knowledge</th>
<th>Urban/Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marika</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kristin</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Britta</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annika</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lars</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### FOCUS GROUP 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Own perceived knowledge</th>
<th>Urban/Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lotta</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Johanna</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erik</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fredrik</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### FOCUS GROUP 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Own perceived knowledge</th>
<th>Urban/Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hanna</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Josefin</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hans</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axel</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>