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Generational attitudes towards sexual advertisement

A comparative study between Sweden and South Korea



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Abstract

To break through the clutter of advertisements, some advertisers use sexual appeal as a technique to increase visibility and sales. The purpose of this study is to examine, from a Swedish and South Korean perspective, how the attitude towards sexual appeal in advertising differs between generations. Culture and age have been proven to be factors affecting attitude towards advertisements, and previous research has found that the attitude towards sexual appeal in advertising between Swedish and South Korean university students only differed slightly. To examine the attitudes, data was collected through a questionnaire. The results suggest that the attitudes of each age group are generally rather similar, regardless of culture. Ages 18 to 30 showed most negativity towards sexual appeal in advertisements.

Key words

Shock advertisement, Hofstede's framework, culture, shock advertising, level of sex appeal, generational theory



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1 Introduction

In this chapter a short explanation of the subject will be presented as well as a problem discussion. Furthermore, the purpose and research question will be presented in this chapter.

1.1 Background

“Am I really your first?”

- was the question asked by the twenty-one-year-old South Korean singer, and the young men in the advertising stumbled on their words looking for a reply for this question. It was a play of words; (*nan k'ul' hae*), “*am I really your first*”, sounds very much alike as the Korean saying for “*I am cool*”, which was deliberate in order to shock the audience in an advertisement for the South Korean liquor brand “Cool”. The media described it as shocking and the singer’s sexualized persona was, according to the makers of the advertising, a critique against the conservative South Korean society and its patriarchal norms (Fedorenko, 2015).

In its essence, the role of advertising is to attract attention, communicate information, induce emotions and encourage consumption (Dahl, Frankenberger & Manchanda, 2003). An effective advertisement is one that is easy to remember and grabs the attention of the consumer. However, only 11% of advertisements consumers come in contact with is remembered resulting in 89% of advertisements having doubtful effect (Trott, 2013; Lee & Mason, 1999). Therefore, to gain attention among the cluster of advertisements, some marketers use shock advertisement (Waller, 1999).

Shock advertisement uses audiences’ norms for societal values and personal ideals and violates these in an attempt to surprise and thus capturing the attention of the audience (Dahl et al., 2003). Generally, advertisement is



assessed by norms, and when these norms are breached, it becomes shocking (Day, 2006). Although, the violation of norms could potentially offend some audiences (Lee, Septianto, Frethey-Bentham & Gao, 2020), resulting in conflicting opinions regarding the commercial value of shock advertisement (De Pelsmacker & Van Den Bergh, 1996; Perry, Jones, Stern & Robinson, 2013; Lawrence, Furnham & McClelland, 2021).

One aspect of shock advertising is sexual advertising (Hyllegard, Ogle & Yan, 2009). In the competition for the attention of the consumers, the use of sexual appeals is a technique used by advertisers to make their ads more memorable (Lawrence et al., 2021). Sexual appeal uses words, images and/or actions by models in order to infuse sexual thoughts, feelings and/or arousal in the consumer (Writz, Sparks & Zimbres, 2017). It is a technique to sell products that increasingly gains popularity, predominantly in image-based products, such as cosmetics, liquor, jewelry and cigarettes (Anabila, Tagoe & Asare, 2015). Wan, Luk & Chow (2014) argues that since the arousal among men are more effortlessly obtained than among women, sexual advertisements focus mostly on female nudity. However, sexual advertisements with female nudity also attract the attention of women, although it is usually through competitive feelings rather than arousal (Ibid). Thus, from a gender perspective, the approach of evaluation of sexual appeal differs significantly (Anabila et al., 2015).

In international marketing, culture is of great importance (Hollensen, 2016). Its influence is seen in all aspects of social behavior and is embedded in our communications (Ibid). Cultural models can be used to define basic problems that affect groups and individuals, such as: relation to authority, conception of ego and identity, and conflict behaviour. These are basic problems which can be recognize in the Hofstede model (de Mooji & Hofstede, 2010). Moreover, Burcu et al. (2019) suggest considering Hofstede's cultural dimensions for the development of national strategies and campaigns. The



understanding of culture is of importance for a successful advertising strategy since it is an important aspect in explaining consumer behaviour (Anabila et al., 2015). Lass & Hart (2004) showed that culture determines how consumers responds to sexual imagery in advertising.

The concept of generations can be used to explain the attitudes and beliefs of different age groups (Persson, 2019). Generations are shaped by the social and political environment in which they grew up, and acquire from their formative years similar sets of values that generally stays the same during the years, although lived in different ways (Scholz & Rennig, 2019). Previous research has found that the attitudes towards advertising differ depending on age (Alwitt & Prabhaker, 1994; Shavitt, Lowrey & Haefner, 1998; Obermiller & Spangenberg, 1998; Smit & Neijens, 2000).

1.2 Problem discussion

Does sex sells? The evidence for the efficiency of advertisement containing explicit sexual appeals is varied and contradictory, yet advertisers continues to promote it (Lawrence et al., 2021). In fact, as previous mentioned, it gets increasingly used for certain products such as image-based ones (Anabila et al., 2015). Furthermore, Anabila et al. (2015) claim that sexual advertising can be perceived as unethical and inappropriate among consumers. Therefore, Black & Morton (2017) argues, it is significant for advertisers to recognise the consumers attitude towards sexual advertisements.

Research has shown that the more corresponding an advertising message is with the targeted population's culture, the more effective the advertising is (Gauthier et al., 2020). Anabila et al. (2015) claims that a successful advertising strategy needs to be connected to an understanding of the culture, since culture can be used to explain consumer behaviour. Previous research on how different cultures views sexual appeals in advertisings has generally focused on a small demographic and has not considered classifying the



findings by generations. Research by Hemmingson & Sjöberg (2020), which used Swedish and South Korean university students as respondents, found that the attitude toward sexual appeal in advertising differed, however not as greatly as expected since it is two rather different cultures. Further research, they argue, should investigate how generations differ in their attitude toward sexual appeal in advertising.

Similar to many other east Asian countries, South Korean culture is greatly influenced by the Confucian doctrine and has strong social traditions (Gauthier et al., 2020). The strong social values in South Korea is contrasting with the more personal values, such as individualism and modernism, that dominates global advertising (Gauthier et al., 2020; Gram, 2007). In contrast to the traditional Confucian society of South Korea, Sweden is seen as liberal country, similar to many Western countries, especially regarding issues of sexuality (Spadaro, Giuilana et al., 2018) It could therefore be of interest to examine these two countries since they are in two distinctive different environments; the traditional Confucian Asia and the liberal West.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to examine the different attitudes of sexual appeal in advertising between generations (age groups 18-30, 31-45, 46-60, 60+) in Sweden and South Korea and see if and how they differ.



2 Literature Review

In this chapter we will cover and discuss previous research that is relevant to the purpose of the thesis. The topics that will be covered are advertising, shock advertising, culture, sexual appeal and generational theory

2.1 Advertising

Lee (2019) describes advertising as “a human activity put together to inform and influence attitudes and behaviours on behalf of brands” (p. 115). For an advertisement to be effective, it needs to have knowledge of the targeted audience, and its production and placement must be based on this knowledge (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2020).

2.2 Shock Advertising

The definition of Shock Advertising is, among others, defined as “the use of intentional, offensive, controversial and attention-grabbing advertising used to sell a particular product or idea” (Urwin & Venter, 2014, p. 204). The intention for using Shock Advertising is to be able to reach consumers in a saturated commercial environment (Parry et al., 2013). It is possibly an effective strategy which could lead to increased brand awareness and an increase in sales, though there is a possibility that the consumers might feel disgust towards the brand instead (Urwin & Venter, 2014).

Dahl et al. (2003) describes seven types of shock appeals used to shock the audience:

- Moral offensiveness, for example depictions of uncalled for violence.
- Gore and disgusting imagery.



- Profanity, for example the use of swear words.
- Vulgarity, distasteful and crude acts.
- Religious taboos.
- Impropriety or indecency.
- Sexual references.

2.3 Sexual Appeal

In the western countries, using sexual appeal as a technique in advertising has been prominent since the 1960's and its increasing global use could possibly be explained through the homogenization of cultures due to globalization (Anabila et al., 2015). Liu, Cheng & Li (2009) claims that sexual appeal in advertising is a widespread and major advertising technique used in most countries. It uses sexual or erotic imagery in advertisements for attracting a target audience in order to sell a product (Anabila et al., 2015). Moreover, it is a potent tool used by advertisers in order to create an appealing attraction between the product and the target audience (Ibid).

Anabila et al. (2015) argues that sexual appeal in advertisements should attempt to create a perfect link between the advertisement and the product, while simultaneously using a reasonable degree of sexual expressions. For the purpose of this study, Nelson and Paek's (2008) description of degrees of nudity will be used. They are described as follows:

- Level 0 (no sexual appeal/ fully clothed)
- Level 1 (subtle sexual nuance – e.g. slightly opened or opened lips with lipstick or sexy male lips)
- Level 2 (suggestively clad – e.g. wearing open shirts/ full-length lingerie/ muscle shirts/ mini-skirts or, for male tight clothing which enhances the figure, hiked pants that expose the thigh)



- Level 3 (partially clad - e.g. show under-apparel/three-quarter length or shorter lingerie/bikinis, body suits, briefs, or male models showing bare backs, muscle shoulders, abs, and/or thighs)
- Level 4 (nudity - e.g. bare bodies/wearing translucent under apparel or lingerie, male models wearing only a towel)

2.4 Generational Theory

The use of generational theory can be used to evaluate consumer behavior of the different generational cohorts (Scott & DiPietro, 2018). Since every generation is different with their own needs and behaviors, marketers cannot treat them alike (Williams & Page, 2011). The shaping of the needs and behaviors of generations starts in their formative years. There are several aspects that influences and shapes a generational cohort – for example, remarkable events and crises such as wars and economic disasters (Scholz & Rennig, 2019). Generally, a generation can be identified through their core values. Values in turn provides cues for behaviors which can be used to explain consumption patterns (Li, Xiangping, Li, Xiang & Hudson, Simon, 2013). Since the behaviors of generations starts in their formative years and are shaped by the environment in which they live, this study will not divide the Swedish and South Korean respondents by defined generations, since the environment in which they live differ. Rather, it will be divided through untitled age groups.

2.5 Frame of reference

The frame of reference can be considered as the guide for the collection of data as well as the analysis of the data that has been gathered.

The frame of reference contains the most relevant of the concepts touched upon in the chapter. Table 1 features the four different subjects and the concepts of those subjects as well the references to the author's whose



literature have been studied. In order to try and best understand the differences between the subjects of the two countries, the focus has primarily been on the most relevant of the six dimensions featured in Hofstede's framework, specifically the concept of masculinity contra femininity as well as uncertainty avoidance as these two concepts are connected to sexual norms, which is a key component of this study. Furthermore, focus will also be on generational theory as that is the other major concept being used.

Subject	Concepts	References / Authors
Cultural differences	masculinity/femininity uncertainty avoidance	Nelson & Paek (2005) Hofstede Insights (2021)
Shock advertisement	norm violation	Urwin & Venter (2014)
Level of sex appeal	degree of nudity	Nelson & Paek (2005)
Generational theory	Consumer behaviour	scott & di pietro (2018)

Figure 1: Frame of Reference



2.6 Culture

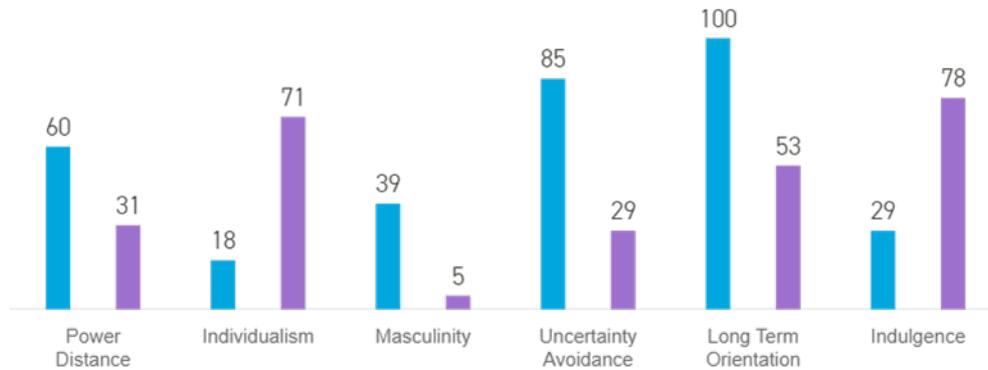


Figure 2- Hofstede insight 2021

Hofstede (1980) states that culture is a collective programming of mind and Mintu (1992) debated that the evolution of this programming stems from social environment and lived experiences. Therefore, culture is unique and specific to the society of a group or people. Culture consists of values, beliefs, norms, stereotypes and ideologies (Alexandra, 2018).

Values are at the core of culture and develop at an early stage. Thus, individual consumers have a response to advertisement messaging that is consistent with the norms and values of their culture (Zhang & Neelankavil, 1997). Two different cultures will therefore respond to the same advertisement in a different way (Hoeken, et al., 2007), which means that it's important for the advertisers to communicate in a way that makes their product and message have a positive connection with the consumer seeing the advertisement and a successful exchange of communication is based on a shared meaning of culture (Lee 2009).

2.7 Hofstede's six dimensions

There are several frameworks available for studying culture, however we have chosen to utilize Hofstede's framework called the six dimensions. The framework of the six dimensions uses a scale that ranges from 1-100,



with a low score being below 50, a high score above 50 where 50 being the mid-level. (Hofstede Insights, 2021)

Though there are some criticisms toward Hofstede's framework.

Beugelsdijk, Maseland and Hoorn (2015) claim that one disadvantage of utilizing the framework is that the data collected was conducted through a survey administered in the 1960s and early 1970s.

As countries develop economically, it predicts that the cultural values of the country will change, which would then likely mean that the scores on the 1-100 scale would change as well. This is important to consider when evaluating if the framework is still of use when applying the tool in the world of today.

New data hints that societies in contemporary times achieve higher scores on individualism and lower scores on the power distance chart.

Research has shown that "cultural change is absolute rather than relative, meaning that countries' scores on the Hofstede dimensions relative to the scores of other countries have not changed very much" (Beugelsdijk et al., 2015, p. 223).

Keegan and Green define power distance as the extent in a society where the less powerful people expect and accept the power to be distributed in an unequal fashion (2017). A high-power distance is when the people in a society are accepting of major differences in power and the respect for authorities is great. Low power distance is defined as when the members of the society are not in acceptance of major power differences. An example of this could be that they are not scared of contradicting their manager (Keegan & Green, 2017)

Pergelova and Angulo-Ruiz (2017) define Individualism/Collectivism as people only looking after themselves and their immediate family versus people who belong to in-groups that loom after each other in exchange for



loyalty (Pergelova & Angulo-Ruiz, 2017, p. 873). Cultures that score high on individualism have people who are “I” conscious, because their identity is linked to their person. As opposed to cultures that are defined as collectivistic where the people define themselves in accordance with the social system they belong to, which makes these people “we” conscious. In individual cultures, they prefer clear communication while a culture that is collectivistic have high context and in-group style of communication (Pergelova & Angulo-Ruiz, 2017).

Cultures can have a long-term orientation versus short-term orientation and this depends on how the members of society maintain their links to the past while facing and addressing the future challenges as well as the present. A society with long-term orientation values thrift and persistence as well as look to the future while a short-term society has higher reverence for the past and stick to traditions (Keegan & Green, 2017)

Indulgence and Constraint is about the amount of free expression that a society allows and to which degree the members of the society control and handle their urges and impulses. Hofstede claims that indulgence is when a society allows for free satisfaction of basic and natural human drives that are related to having fun and the enjoyment of life. The yin to this yang is restraint, which can be defined as when a society suppresses the satisfaction of needs and this is generally regulated by strict social norms (Hofstede insights, 2021)

“Masculinity versus femininity reflects the cultural tendency for differentiating gender roles” (Hoe et al., 2019, p. 972)

Masculinity in this case is defined by Hofstede (Hofstede insights, 2021) by a society filled with competition, where achievement, heroism, self-reliance and material rewards achieved from success are heralded as important. On the other side of this coin we find femininity, which takes form in a society



focused on cooperation, in modesty and taking care of the weak as well as quality of life, it also has greater focus on achieving consensus.

Nelson and Paek (2015) state that differences in equality between genders, femininity and masculinity can provide information on sexual norms. masculine countries tend to have moralistic attitudes about sexuality while feminine countries do not on a cultural level. Feminine countries tend to have less taboos on sexuality than masculine countries according to Hofstede.

The last dimension is uncertainty avoidance

“is a key cultural dimension with high relevance for international marketing” (Messner, 2016, p. 298).

Cultures that have high uncertainty avoidance are characterized by the fact that members of a society believe in safety and find value in strong rules and procedures. Countries with high uncertainty avoidance generally maintain rigid codes of belief and behaviour and are more intolerant of deviations of behaviours and ideas that are opposed to the orthodox rules of the country. On the other hand, countries with a low score of uncertainty avoidance are categorized by the members of the society of the country tend to be more open to new ideas and changes in general.



3 Methodology

This Chapter is dedicated to going through different ways of conducting scientific research as well as explaining and motivating the methods we have used in order to complete the purpose of this study

3.1 Research Purpose

Choosing the right methodology is crucial to the process of research, and one could describe methodology as the component behind understanding the knowledge creation process and all research finds its base in its science and philosophy (Israel, 2007).

Adams, Raeside and Khan (2017) state that research methodology is a tool that explains and helps with understanding the concept of knowledge itself. Furthermore, methodology also helps with explaining the different ways of gathering and obtaining knowledge and this is crucial when it comes to making attempts to understand how knowledge and answers are formed and the potential flaws with said knowledge and answers (Adams et al., 2017).

To achieve different outcomes of a study according to Adams, Raeside and Khan, one could use different types of research studies, such as predictive, explanatory and descriptive research. Based on the purpose we plan to research, we have chosen to proceed with a descriptive explanatory research model. This type of research model is frequently used in fields such as business and management research where the data and phenomenon is described in a clear manner, ultimately followed by an explanation and conclusion of the data in question (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009).



3.2 Research Approach

A scientific problem can be approached with two different research methods, deduction and induction (Molander, 2003). Furthermore, it is necessary as well to make a decision whether to use quantitative or qualitative methods when carrying out the data collection process (David & Sutton, 2011). Induction can be defined as when a conclusion is reached based on multiple observations as opposed to using rational extensions based on pre-existing theory. The inductive method consists of observations, patterns, hypothesis and then finally theory. The deductive method is used to derive a conclusion by using logical conclusion rules through logical premises and can be broken down in order as theory, hypothesis, observations and then confirmation (Molander, 2003). We will be conducting our research by utilizing the deduction methodology since the purpose of our thesis has been created by analysing already existing models and theories which have then been examined in reality. We formed and developed a frame of reference based on previous research on the topic at hand which was then applied to the data collected and analysed by the authors.

3.3 Qualitative or Quantitative

David and Sutton state (2011) that there are two different methods to collecting data when conducting a study. The first method is the quantitative method which can be defined as a descriptive method based on a systematic collection of data. Quantitative methods of research are used at strategic and operational levels and the way of collecting quantitative data is generally through the use of surveys. On the other hand, qualitative methods of research differ from quantitative methods in the way that they generally consist of doing in-depth interviews and case studies (David & Sutton, 2011). This project has utilized quantitative surveys in order to collect data.



The surveys have been conducted through the internet and sent out to people of the relevant demographics we are trying to study.

When utilizing a qualitative research method, it is required that it is qualitative characteristics that are being measured, which refers to questions where the participants reply in a reflective and in-depth manner (Bryman 2011; Larsen 2009). Surveys can be described as a measuring tool with the purpose of measuring data regarding people's characteristics, feelings and opinions regarding a phenomenon. Therefore, we have decided to utilize a survey with closed answers on a 4-point scale that will be measured qualitatively. The reasons for doing this are many. One is that the surveys are of total anonymity when it comes to participation. Another reason is that sex can be a sensitive topic for many and can lead to a sense of embarrassment for participants and could affect their answers to the questions in the survey.

Had we conducted the research by utilizing open-questioned interviews would have needed to be conducted in person, in cases like that with the topic at hand, the participants might be less inclined to give honest answers or might be too uncomfortable to answer at all due to the nature of how the data is being collected. Furthermore, conducting the interviews in person would be difficult due to the linguistic barriers we face due to the fact that one of our demographics are from South Korea.

3.4 Research strategy

The point of research strategy is to answer the purpose of the paper and to reach the objectives. There are many different strategies to employ and choosing the right strategy depends on the research questions and the objectives trying to be reached as well as the amount of time available, the amount of existing knowledge on the topic as well as other available resources (Saunders et al., 2009). Due to the overall purpose of this thesis we



have chosen to focus on a comparative survey strategy by comparing differences between two cultures by use of a survey.

By utilizing a survey, it becomes easier to develop an understanding when analysing the different answers between the two cultures.

Standardized data gathered from a questionnaire allows for easy analysis and comparison which can then be used as a basis for suggesting possible relationships between the variables discovered (Saunders et al., 2009). Since the overall purpose is to compare two different cultures and generations and to understand and explain the differences and using a comparative survey is the best research strategy to conduct the study.

3.5 Data collection

Data collection can generally be divided into two categories; these categories are classified as primary and secondary sources. Primary sources can be defined as original data or first-hand information while secondary sources, in turn, build from the platform formed by the primary sources. They do so by critically examining or analysing the primary sources at hand.

The secondary sources chosen for this research were theories and already existing research found in books and scientific articles.

The primary source was the questionnaire survey administered to our demographics in the chosen countries and age groups. The questionnaire is a data collection tool where people are to answer a select set of questions (Saunders et al., 2009).

Saunders et al. state that:

“The design of a questionnaire differs according to how it is administered and, in particular, the amount of contact you have with the respondents”

(Saunders et al., 2009, p. 362).



Questionnaires come in two different forms; self-administered and interviewer-administered. Self-administered questionnaires have been used to gather data in this thesis since such questionnaires are generally answered by the respondents and take less time and effort to complete and have been conducted online via google forms. The way you design a questionnaire will influence the rate of response and validity and reliability of said questions.

Before sending out the questionnaire, a test was made to determine that the respondents perceived level of sexual appeal in the questionnaire's pictures correlated to the author's view. In no particular order of the pictures, the test group was asked to rate on a scale from 1 to 5 how sexualised the ad seemed to them, 1 being not sexualised and 5 being very sexualised. The test group consisted of 5 South Koreans (aged 24, 29, 33, 49, 54) and five Swedes (aged 25, 30, 53, 59, 74). Moreover, the test group was divided 50% male and 50% female. The results of the test showed that the test group's perceived level of sexual appeal in the questionnaire's pictures correlated to the authors view.

For the Swedish and South Korean respondents, a translation of the questionnaire was made from English to Swedish and Korean. A back-translation was used to minimise linguistic errors and to ensure the original meaning of the source English questionnaire stayed the same in the respective target translated versions. The English version was translated by an independent native speaker of the respective language, who also is fluent in English, and then translated back to English by a native English speaker, who also is fluent in the respective language. Moreover, the translators had no prior knowledge of the source questionnaire. No semantic errors were found in this back-translation.



3.6 Sample Selection

In an ideal world, each person from the population of both Sweden and South Korea would answer the survey, but alas this is impossible. The authors of this paper decided to use two factors which determined if the respondent was qualified for the questionnaire; if their nationality is either Swedish or South Korean, and if their age is 18 or above. As described by Saunders et al. (2009), it is possible to utilize sampling techniques in order to reduce the amount of data needed. One of the two techniques described are probability samples where the probability of each case from a population, the full set of cases from which a sample is taken, is known, and is similar for all cases, generally. The other technique is non-probability answers, where the probability is to the contrary unknown. From this, it is possible to make generalisations about the population unless it is for statistical reasons (ibid). For the purpose of this study, a non-probability sample technique was used to reach desired quota.

To reach the Swedish respondents in this study, a survey was sent out through social media, e-mail and acquaintances. For the South Korean respondents, a specific company and a university was targeted to help in sending out the survey since the geographical and social situation demanded it. To reach the desired age groups, university-, work place-, and family-relations had to be utilized. In total, 46 South Koreans (19 males and 27 females) and 65 Swedes (43 males and 22 females) answered the questionnaire. Age group 18-30 consisted of 27 South Koreans and 38 Swedes, age group 31-45 of 3 South Koreans and 11 Swedes, age group 46-60 of 11 South Koreans and 9 Swedes, and age group 61+ of 5 South Koreans and 7 Swedes.



3.7 Data analysis

Once the data had been gathered, the next step in the process was to analyse the empirical material collected and see if there were any differences in attitudes towards sexual advertisement between the generations in Sweden and South Korea and how they differed between both of the countries selected.

Saunders et al. (2009) state that data that has yet to be analysed or processed is to be considered worthless. Since the data gathered could be measured numerically it is considered to be classified as numerical data and since there are two groups being studied, the authors had to look for frequencies.

The empirical data that has been gathered can be measured in quantities which means that the data itself could be measured by using a measure of different statistics.

The data can be divided between the two groups (Swedes and South Koreans) as well as the 4-point scale of answers provided in the survey, however the distance between the answers chosen by the subjects cannot be determined (Saunders et al., 2009). The way the ranked data was analysed by the authors was to count the number of occurrences in each category of each variable presented in the findings.

To help describe the frequencies and relationships of the variables within the data, the authors utilized graphs, tables, charts and diagrams as a tool. The variables were then divided between the South Korean and Swedish answers to examine if the attitudes between the generations and nations differed.



3.8 Validity & Reliability

3.8.1 Data quality

The definitions and concepts of validity and reliability may differ between scientists, authors and researchers. However, what rings true in each stance on validity and reliability is that it is generally portrayed in a positive light when correlated to research. The higher rate of validity and reliability a paper shows, the likelier it is for the research to be recognized (Denscombe, 2016).

Significant attention has to be devoted towards validity and reliability to reduce the risk of getting the answer wrong (Saunders et al., 2009). This segment will dive into the concepts to greater explain them and their importance

3.8.2 Validity

Validity as a concept is about whether or not the study actually measures what it was originally intended to measure and that the findings of the study are what they are supposed to be about (Saunders et al., 2009). Moreover, the purpose of validity is to access the conclusions that have been drawn from the empirical findings of the study and is a key part of the data collection process with emphasis on the process of data analysis.

While validity can generally be found in every research paper, the degree of validity varies and can have great consequences on the reliability of the paper (Denscombe, 2016). To reach proper levels of validity in this study, proper methods were chosen in order to make sure it suited the overall purpose.

We did this by making sure our questions were simple in their nature and test questions regarding the images of our survey were administered to a sample group, which led to the questions measuring what the study intended to measure. We also utilized back-to-back translation to both Swedish and



Korean on our questionnaires to ensure that no linguistic misconceptions would sully the data.

3.8.3 Reliability

Reliability as a concept is about how precise a study measures what the study is intended to measure and a study with good reliability should deliver the same results regardless of when the study is performed or who performs the study (Saunders et al., 2009).

The reliability tool is crucial in order to conduct a study and is commonly used to evaluate the process of researching. Establishing reliability can be done in different ways depending on which methods are used and what type of research is being conducted.

The questionnaire was conducted anonymously as well as individually to increase the reliability of the study. This however could be interpreted as a double-edged sword for the reliability factor as the cloak of anonymity could lead to the subjects not taking the questions seriously. Before answering the questionnaire, the subjects were informed that the images used in the questionnaire could be interpreted as offensive.



4 Empirical data

This chapter is dedicated to presenting the empirical data that has been gathered with the questionnaire and will be presented along with graphs showcasing the results

4.1 Level 0 Female ad

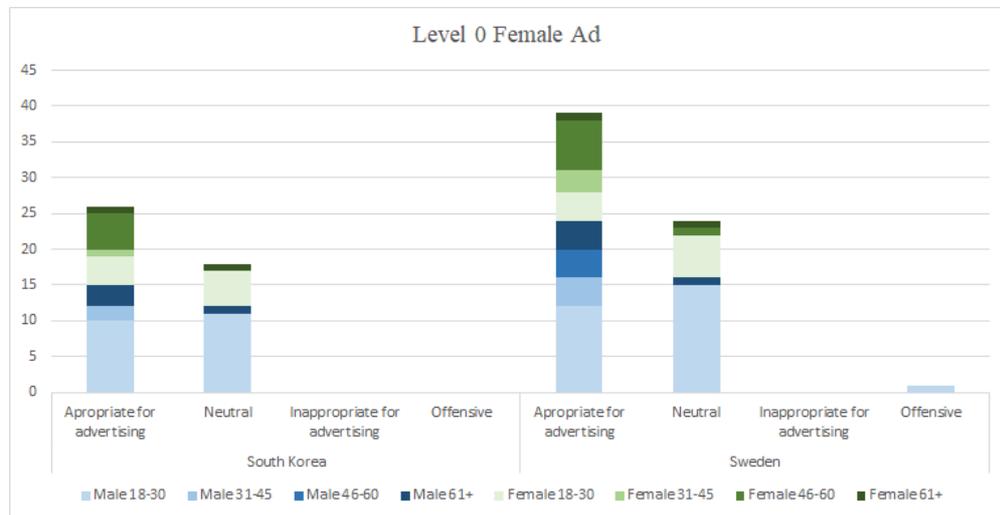


Figure 3: Level 0 Female Ad

The first advertisement the respondents were shown in the interview displayed a female level 0 (no sexual appeal/ fully clothed). The Swedish and South Korean answers were similar with no answers for inappropriate for advertising and no for offensive, except one Swedish male aged 18-30 who answered offensive.



4.2 Level 0 Male Ad

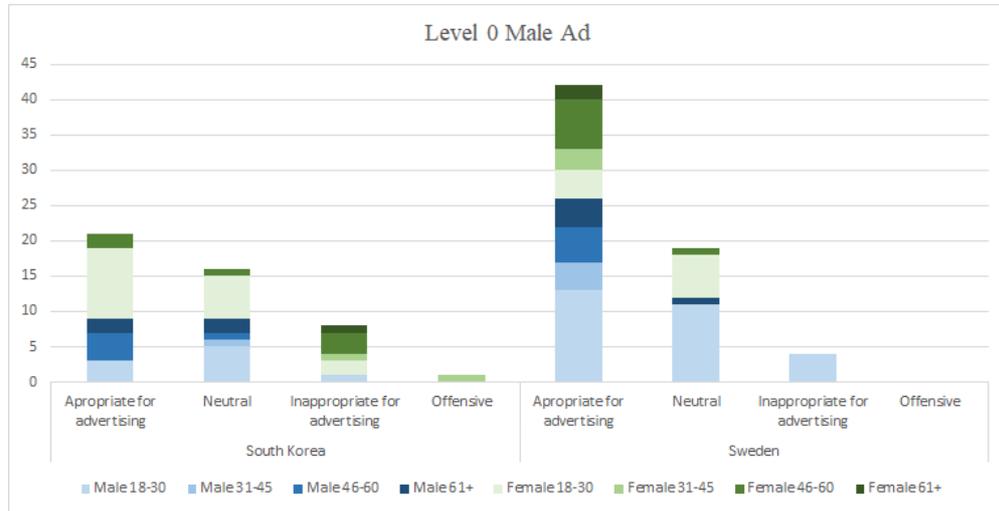


Figure 4: Level 0 Male Ad

The second advertisement displayed a male level 0 (no sexual appeal/ fully clothed). Compared to the first advertisement, more answers were given as inappropriate for advertising and offensive, notably from 30% of South Korean females and only 5% from males. No Swedish females answered inappropriate for advertising or offensive.



4.3 Level 1 Female Ad

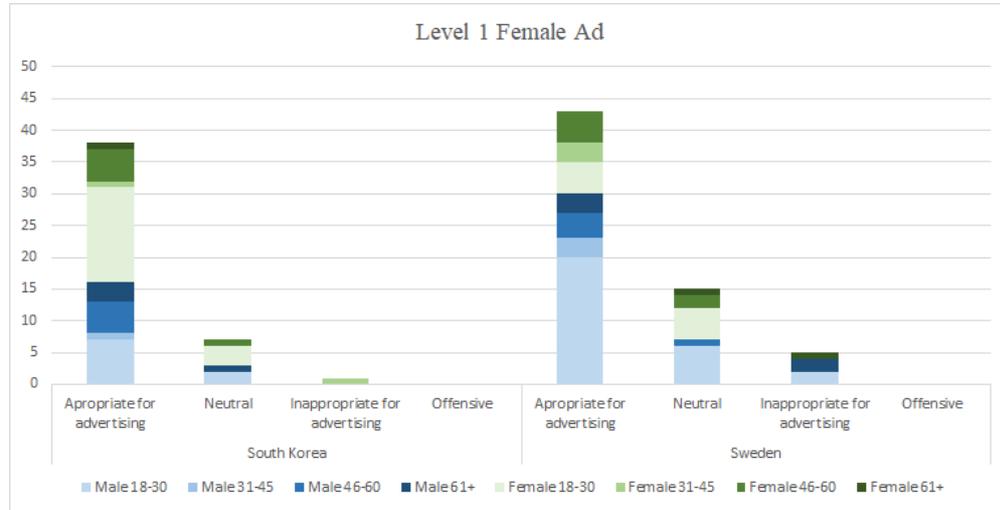


Figure 5: Level 1 Female Ad

The third advertisement displayed a female level 1 (subtle sexual nuance). The Swedish and South Korean answers were similar where the large majority of answers being appropriate for advertising and neutral. Only 5.5% of total answers were not appropriate for advertising.



4.4 Level 1 Male Ad

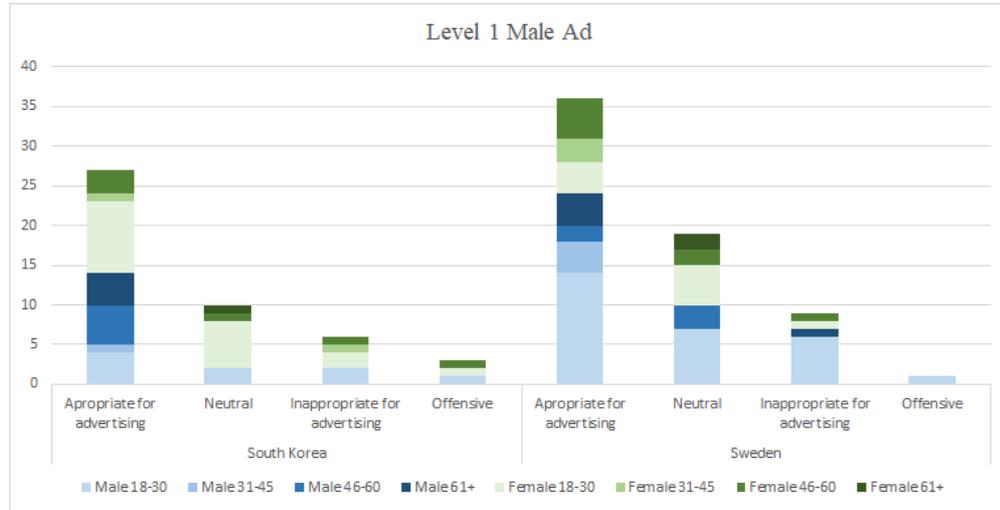


Figure 6: Level 1 Male Ad

The fourth advertisement displayed a male level 1 (subtle sexual nuance). As presented in the diagram, the answers were proportionally similar. However, 25% of Swedish males aged 18-30 and 33% of South Korean males aged 18-30 answered inappropriate for advertising or offensive.

4.5 Level 2 Female Ad

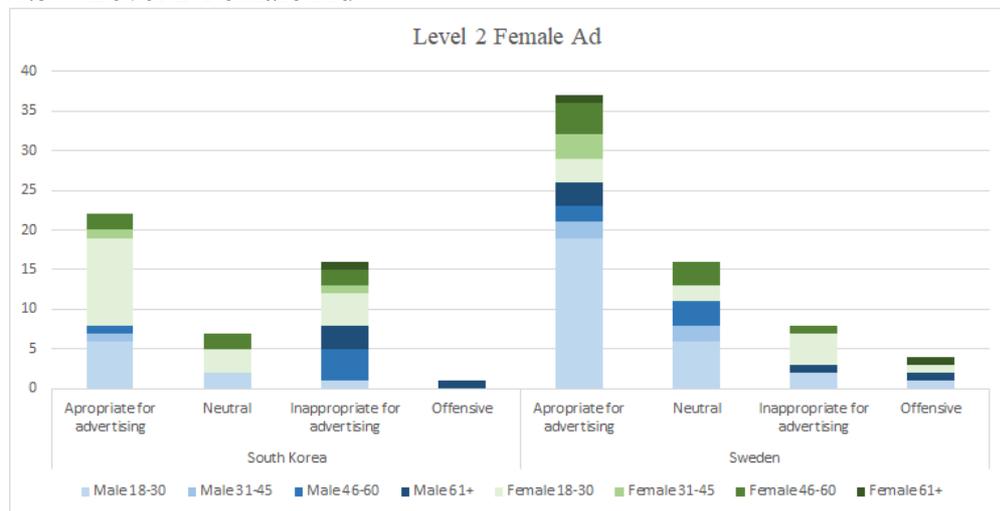


Figure 7: Level 2 Female Ad

The fifth advertisement displayed a female level 2 (suggestively clad). A higher proportion of South Korean respondents, 37%, answered inappropriate for advertising compared to 18% of Swedish respondents.



Notably, 69% of South Koreans aged 46 and older answered inappropriate for advertising and offensive compared to the 20% of Swedish aged 46 and older.

4.6 Level 2 Male Ad

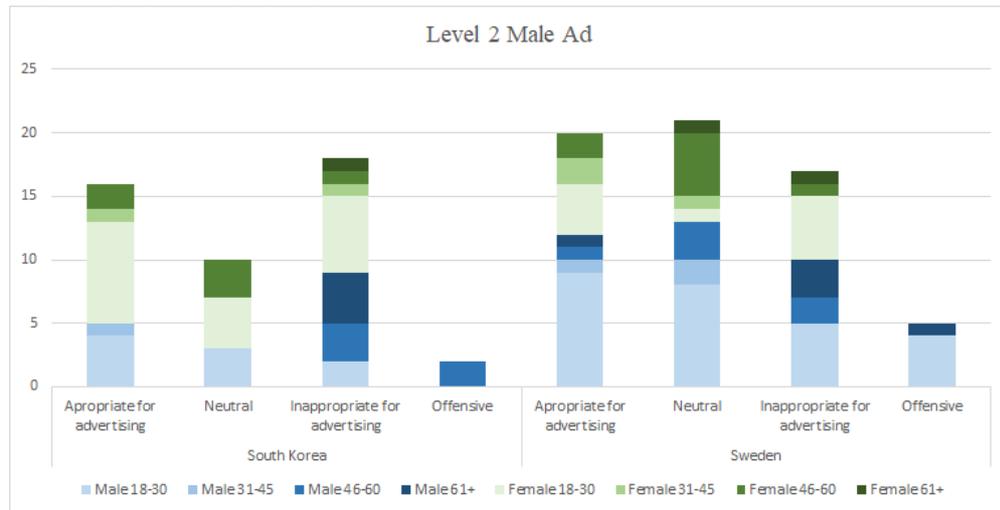


Figure 8: Level 2 Male Ad

The fifth advertisement displayed a male level 2 (suggestively clad). It shows that 33% of Swedish males aged 18-30 found the ad to be appropriate for advertisement, in comparison to their South Korean counterparts, where 44% of the participants answered that they found it appropriate. However, 14% of ages 18-30 of Swedish males found the ad to be offensive while 0 % of the South Koreans did so.

For males aged 45-60, 60% of the South Korean males found it inappropriate while the remaining 40% found it offensive. Comparing with their Swedish counterparts where 33% found it inappropriate, 50% found it neutral and the remaining percentage found it appropriate for advertisement.

When comparing males aged 60+, the diagram shows 100% of South Korean males found it inappropriate, while 60% of Swedish males aged 60+ found it inappropriate, with 20% finding it appropriate and the remaining 20% finding it offensive.



44% of South Korean females aged 18-30 found the ad to be appropriate for advertisement while 40% of Swedish females in the same age group agreed with them. 22% of the South Korean females found the ad to be neutral in comparison to only 10% of the Swedish females. For females aged 45-60, the diagram shows 50% of the South Korean women founding the ad to be neutral. Meanwhile, 62% of their Swedish counterparts found it neutral.

4.7 Level 3 Female Ad

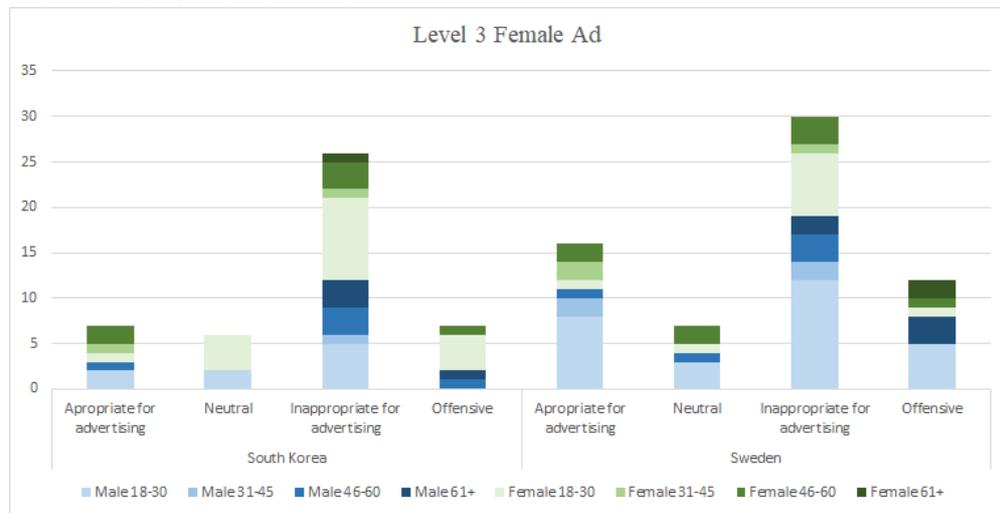


Figure 9: Level 3 Female Ad

The seventh advertisement displayed a female level 3 (partially clad). 55% of Korean Males aged 18-30 found this ad inappropriate for advertisement while 44% of the Swedish males in their demographic counterpart found it inappropriate. 0% of Korean males aged 18-30 found it offensive while 18% of the Swedish males found it offensive.

When comparing the males aged 60+, the diagram shows 75% of the South Korean males found the ad to be inappropriate while the remaining 25% found it to be offensive. However, on the Swedish side of the age group, 40% thought it was inappropriate and the other 60% found it to be offensive.

29% of Swedish males, 18-30, found the ad to be appropriate for advertisement while 22% of the South Korean males aged 18-30 found it



appropriate. 70% of the Swedish females aged 18-30 found the ad to be inappropriate while 47,7% of the South Korean females aged 18-30 found it inappropriate. 10% of Swedish females aged 18-30 found it offensive while 21% of the South Korean females aged 18-30 found it offensive.

33% of South Korean women in age group 45-60 found the ad to be appropriate while 25% of their Swedish counterparts agreed with them. 50% of South Korean women aged 45-60 found the ad to be inappropriate while 37% of Swedish women aged 45-60 found it inappropriate.

4.8 Level 3 Male Ad

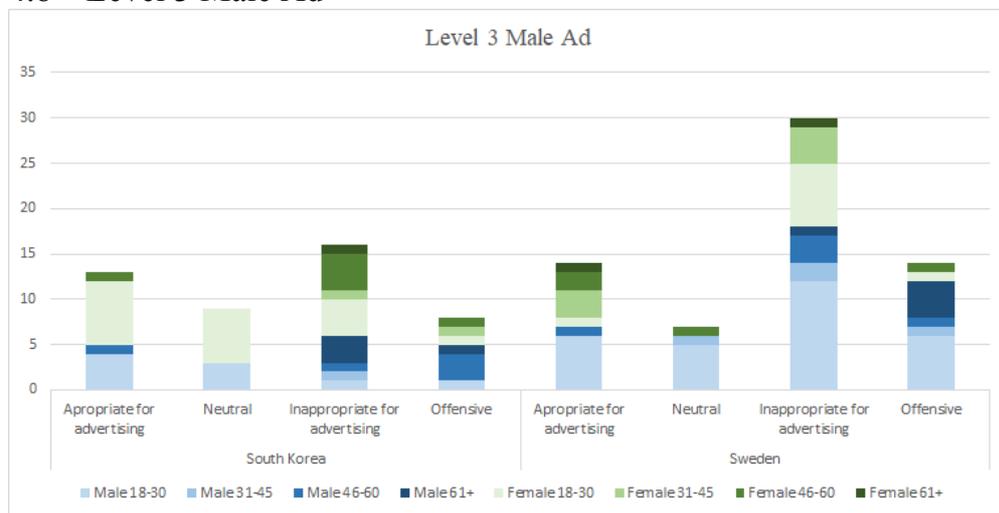


Figure 10: Level 3 Male Ad

The eighth advertisement displayed a male level 3 (partially clad). 21% of males aged 18-30 from Sweden found this ad to be appropriate for advertising while 44,4% of their South Korean counterparts found it to be appropriate.

When it comes to the older generation of men, aged 60+, they were similar to a degree in that they all felt it was more towards the taboo side of the spectrum. However, the level of impropriety is where the difference is visible, with 80% of Swedish males aged 60+ finding it offensive and the



remaining 20% finding it inappropriate, while South Korean males aged 60+ answered 75% inappropriate and 25% finding it offensive.

Looking at answers of the female respondents, the diagram shows 39% of the South Korean females aged 18-30 found the ad to be appropriate while only 11% of their Swedish counterparts answered similarly. In the same category, 22% of the younger South Korean women found the ad inappropriate which differ greatly compared to their Swedish counterparts, with 78% of them founding the ad to be inappropriate.

When looking at the older generations of females, such as the age group 45-60, 66% of South Korean females found it to be inappropriate, 16% found it to be appropriate and 16% found it offensive. Meanwhile, the Swedish females aged 45-60 had a more positive attitude towards the ad, with 50% finding it appropriate, 25% finding it neutral and the remaining 25% finding it offensive.

4.9 Level 4 Female Ad

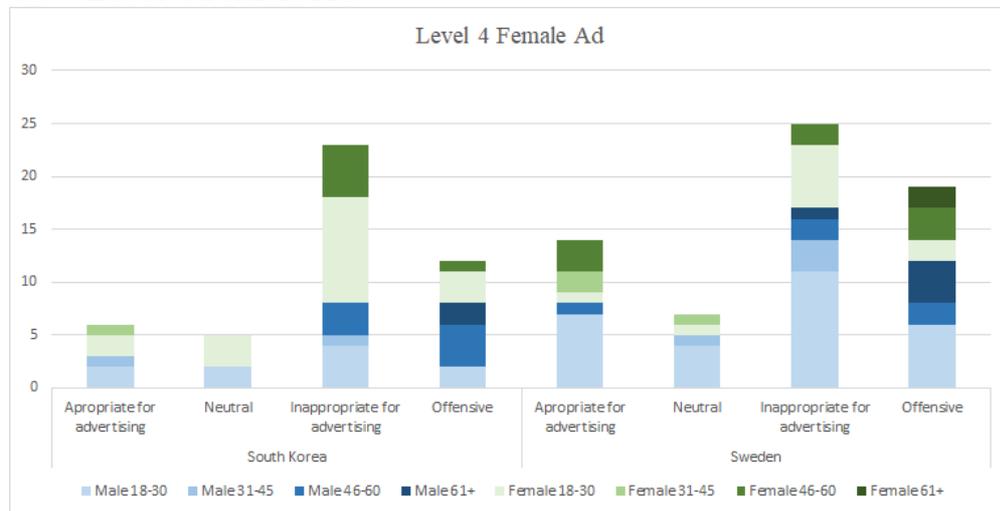


Figure 11: Level 4 Female Ad

The ninth advertisement displayed a female level 4 (nudity). The diagram for this ad shows that most of the participants in the poll found the ad either offensive or inappropriate for advertising, 25% of the youngest age group of



men in each group found it to be appropriate for advertising. Similar results can be found on the female side of the spectrum, with 11% of South Korean women in the age of 18-30 finding it appropriate for advertising compared to 10% of the Swedish women.

4.10 Level 4 Male Ad

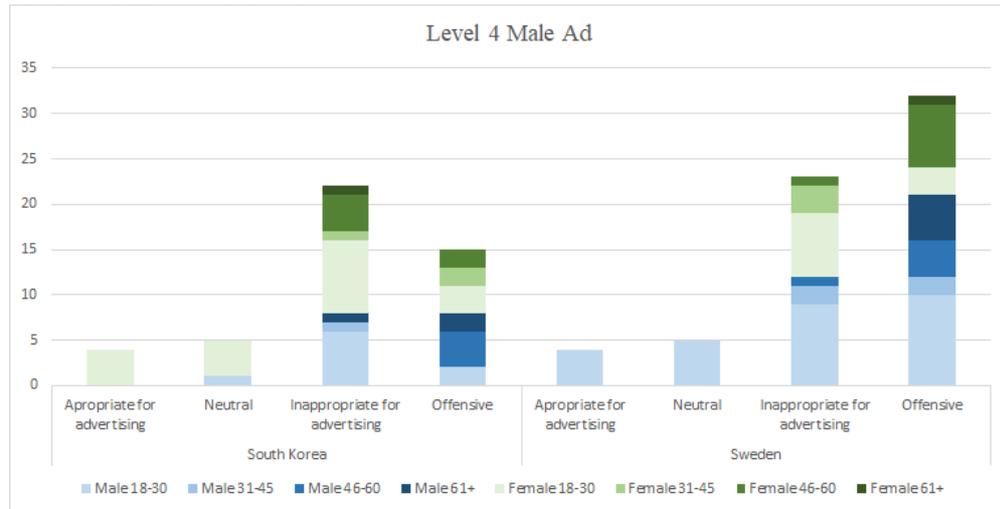


Figure 12: Level 4 Male Ad

The last advertisement displayed a male level 4 (nudity). Here many similarities are shown between the demographics of both nations and each generation, with most respondents finding the ad either inappropriate for advertising or offensive. The few respondents who found it to be either neutral or appropriate for advertising were of the youngest generation for each nation. 21% of South Korean females aged 18-30 found the ad to be appropriate for advertising in comparison to the Swedish females in the same bracket, where 0% of them found the ad to be appropriate. 42% of South Korean females aged 18-30 found it to be inappropriate while 70% of the Swedish females aged 18-30 found it to be inappropriate, with the remaining 30% finding it offensive.



5 Data analysis

This chapter is dedicated to analysing the primary data that has been gathered by using the questionnaire and connect it to the frame of reference. The goal of the analysis is to answer the overall purpose of the thesis questions, with the primary goal to see if and how much they differ between each generation in both nations.

5.1 Degree of nudity

According to Nelson & Paek (2005), the level of sexual appeal is a determining factor of how the advertisement will be perceived by the consumer. It is measured in degrees of nudity ranging from level 0 to level 4, and to ensure the respondents view of the degrees of nudity used in the questionnaire correlated with the description of the degrees of nudity by Anabila et al. (2015), a test group consisting of five Swedes and five South Koreans of different ages and genders were asked to divide the pictures according to their degree of nudity. The results from the questionnaire showed that the respondents generally considered the advertisement more inappropriate for advertising or offensive the higher the degree of nudity was.

5.2 Shock advertisement and norm violation

The use of shock advertising as a technique for increased brand awareness and an increase in sales could potentially be effective. However, it is also possible that the consumers will feel disgusted by the advertising instead. How the advertising will be received is dependent on the consumer's norms, since it is when a norm violation occurs that the advertising become shocking and considered offensive (Urwin & Venter, 2014). The results from the



questionnaire showed that from a degree of nudity of level 3 (partially clad) and level 4 (nudity) presented the largest increase in respondents who considered the advertisement offensive. Generally, more Swedes were offended by the advertisements compared to the South Koreans.

5.3 Generations

Each generation has their own behaviours which come from their core values which they obtain in their formative years. Therefore, it is important recognise the differences between generations, especially for marketers (William & Page, 2011). The results showed that age group 18-30 from both South Korea and Sweden were the age group with the highest percentage that considered the advertisements inappropriate for advertising and offensive. Although, it was also the age group which had the highest percentage of answers in appropriate for advertising and neutral, notably on the advertisements in level 3 and 4 degrees of nudity. Age group 31-45 had a low percentage of answers in inappropriate for advertising or offensive. However, in this age group, South Korean females differed from the rest with more answers in inappropriate for advertising or offensive. In age group 46-60 the South Koreans considered the advertisements generally more to be inappropriate for advertising or offensive compared to their Swedish counterparts. Age group 61+ had relatively similar answers between South Korea and Sweden, with an increase in inappropriate for advertising or offensive the higher the degree of nudity the advertisement had.



5.4 Masculinity vs femininity

Nelson & Paek (2005) states regarding masculinity and femininity that when it comes to the sexual norms, feminine countries tend to have less taboos on sexuality than masculine countries. The results show that there are some minor general differences in the answers between the two major demographics in the survey, mainly when it comes to the advertisements depicting male nudity. Primarily it is the South Koreans who react negatively and perceive the male ads as inappropriate for advertising, this could be a reflection of their masculine culture, as they scored a 39, in comparison to Sweden which scored a 5, which tends to have an emphasis on moralistic attitudes and sexual norms with males not being as sexualized in society as females. Consequently, when the subjects come across a picture of a nude male they react more negatively than the Swedes who come from a more feminized culture, where taboos have less of a grip on the minds of their society than in a masculine country.

What is interesting though is that even though Sweden and South Korea scored vast differences in Masculinity in Hofstede's framework, the results in the survey do not reflect those differences and even has the Swedish answers be more conservative in a masculine definition than what Hofstede's framework indicates. Examples of this disconnect from the framework can be found in the results shown in the pictures of the level 1 male ad, where primarily the younger Swedish males aged 18-30 considered this ad to be inappropriate for advertising compared to the South Koreans.



5.5 Uncertainty avoidance

Countries that have a high certainty avoidance, such as South Korea which scored an 89 on Hofstede's framework, are characterized by members of their society believing in safety and find value in clear procedures and strong rules in an effort to eliminate uncertainty. Meanwhile, Sweden scored a relatively low 29 in comparison to South Korea which on the Hofstede framework can be found on the other end of the spectrum. Cultures who score lower on the uncertainty avoidance scale tend to be more open to new ideas. What is an interesting finding in the data collected is that the answers given to the ads with the highest rating of shock value is that the answers from the respondents of each country were very similar in their outcomes, despite their separation in the uncertainty avoidance scale. With the Swedes even reacting slightly more negatively towards the ads than their South Korean counterparts even though their ratings on Hofstede's framework would indicate otherwise.



6 Final discussion

The final chapter of this paper will include a summary of the most important findings, results and conclusions. The purpose of the thesis was to examine the attitudes towards sexual advertisement between generations in Sweden and South Korea. Furthermore, Limitations and recommendations for further study will end this chapter.

6.1 Findings and Conclusions

The purpose of this thesis was to find out if, and how, attitudes towards sexual advertising and shock advertising would differ between generations in a cross comparison between Sweden and South Korea. Sweden can be defined by its feminine culture and low uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede insight, 2021) and South Korea by its masculine culture with a high grade of uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede insight, 2021).

The research was conducted by gathering data using a questionnaire sent out to the two major demographics in question. What can be interpreted from the data gathered is that the difference in answers between both nations and generations is that the perceived cultural gap in attitudes towards sexual advertising is significantly smaller than one could expect by utilizing the Hofstede framework. The biggest differences found were between the generations themselves, such as 18-30 year olds compared to 60+ year olds, and not the 60+ year old South Koreans compared to the 60+ year old Swedes. To find a possible explanation for these results, one could start to question the relevancy of the Hofstede framework in terms of how accurate it is today. Another factor could be the fact that the small sample size does not



do the demographics justice in terms of answers, with more replies perhaps there would be a different outcome.

Furthermore, as the guise of anonymity perhaps leading the subjects to not give honest answers as the response to some of the ads, notably the male ads were met with much more negativity than expected for an ad of those levels of shock adversity. The answer for this could bias, subconscious or conscious, against a specific ethnicity or perhaps that males being objectified in a sexualized manner is not as common as females being objectified sexually. This logic could explain the negativity from the South Korean answers as they come from a society with stricter taboos and more uncertainty avoidance. The results from the answers given by the subjects in the survey show that the differences between the two nations are more similar than what Hofstede's Framework would indicate.

6.2 Limitations and further research

Due to the time limit set within the scope of the course and the geographical situation, the sample size did not meet satisfactory amounts in order to make a general assessment on the different age groups' attitudes for the entirety of the populations of Sweden and South Korea. A majority of the South Korean sample size came from a multi-national company in which contact with people of different cultures are frequently made, which could potentially have an effect on the attitude of the respondent. Furthermore, the degree of nudity of the advertisements is likely not the only factor determining the attitude. For example, the South Korean female respondents showed high negativity towards the ad displaying a male with no sexual appeal. Therefore, for further research, it is recommended to examine the factors determining the attitudes towards advertisements. Alternatively, a similar study could be conducted using a qualitative method. Lastly, it is recommended to investigate different cultures.



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LINK TO SURVEY -

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1FUbZeOyYZJCJPGsghE0saF9aucPi6g0ul2USgheYk_U/prefill



Appendix: Marketing thesis survey

I consider this ad...



Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral

I consider this ad....



Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral

I consider this ad....



Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral

I consider this ad....



Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral

I consider this ad



Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral

I consider this ad



Linnæus University
Sweden





Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral

I consider this ad



Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral

I consider this ad...



Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral



I consider this ad...



Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral

I consider this ad...



Offending
Inappropriate for advertising
Appropriate for advertising
Neutral

I am from

Sweden
South Korea

I am

Female
Male
Other

My age is