

HUMOR IN ADVERTISING

– A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

Bachelor`s thesis in Business Administration

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Abstract

The growth of globalization has resulted in more organizations entering the competitive international market which has influenced organizations to disseminate their message globally - commonly through the use of advertising. Television commercial is a media channel considered to be highly effective if applied with humor as a communication strategy. The effectiveness of this strategy generates in high awareness according to previous studies. However, there is a need of highlighting the cross-cultural distinctions when promoting across international borders as humor is perceived differently depending on culture, which can negatively affect the results. As the cultural characteristics in this matter tend to be overlooked, this quantitative research is focusing on highlighting the cross-cultural characteristics in humorous advertising, through the use of Hofstede's framework of national culture. The countries Sweden and China were compared with emphasize on culture associated to the reaction toward different humor styles in television commercials linked to perceived emotions. For identifying the humor types, Rod Martin's four humor styles affiliative humor, self-enhancing humor, aggressive humor, and self-defeating humor, were used.

The purpose of this research was to disseminate the importance of cross-cultural aspects in humor advertising with emphasize on culture and how emotions are perceived in Swedish and Chinese culture. The importance relied within how to effectively apply humor in commercials over cross-cultural boundaries. The questionnaires were performed by Swedish and Chinese university students that generated in the collection of the empirical chapter. The research findings indicated that affiliative humor and aggressive humor used in commercial is equally perceived emotionally in both Chinese and Swedish culture and also affects the purchase intention similarly. Whereas self-defeating humor and self-enhancing humor are emotionally equally perceived in both cultures, but the Chinese consumers are more willing to purchase the product.

Keywords: Humor, Culture, Cross-culture, Hofstede, Humor styles, Sweden, China, Television commercial, Advertising, Consumer behavior, Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing humor, Aggressive humor, Self-defeating humor.

Sammanfattning

Den ökade globaliseringen har resulterat i att många organisationer stiger in på den konkurrenskraftiga internationella marknaden. Detta har influerat organisationer att sprida deras budskap globalt – oftast genom marknadsföring. Tv-reklam är en mediekanal som anses effektiv när man tillämpar humor som en kommunikationsstrategi då den enligt tidigare forskning genererar högt medvetande hos konsumenterna. Dock, finns det ett behov av att belysa de kulturella skillnaderna när reklamen riktas internationellt eftersom humor uppfattas olika beroende på kultur, vilken kan generera negativa effekter. Eftersom att de kulturella skillnaderna i humoristisk reklam tenderar att bli bortsedda så fokuserar denna kvantitativa studie på att belysa dessa skillnader med hjälp av Hofstedes kulturdimensionsteori. Denna kvantitativa studie fokuserar därför på att belysa karaktärerna av de kulturella skillnaderna i humoristisk reklam, genom att använda Hofstedes kulturdimensionsteori, eftersom de tenderar att bli översedda. Länderna Sverige och Kina jämfördes genom att betona kulturen mot reaktionerna gentemot de olika humorstilarna i tv-reklam kopplat till uppfattade känslor. För att kunna identifiera humortyperna, användes Rod Martins fyra humorstilar affiliative humor, self-enhancing humor, aggressive humor och self-defeating humor.

Syftet med studien var att upplysa hur viktiga aspekterna av de kulturella skillnaderna är i humoristisk reklam med betoning på kultur och hur känslor mottas i svensk och kinesisk kultur. Detta för att se hur humor kan tillämpas effektivt i reklam över internationella gränser. Enkäten utfördes på svenska och kinesiska universitetsstudenter vilket genererade i det insamlade empiriska materialet. Resultatet visade att affiliative humor och aggressive humor applicerad i reklamfilm tas emot likadant känslomässigt i både kinesisk och svensk kultur och påverkar även köpintentionerna på samma sätt. Medan, self-defeating humor och self-enhancing humor tas känslomässigt emot likadant i båda kulturerna, men de kinesiska konsumenterna är mer villiga att köpa produkten.

Nyckelord: Humor, Kultur, Kulturella skillnader, Hofstede, Humor stilar, Sverige, Kina, TV reklam, Reklam, Konsument beteende, Affiliative humor, Self-enhancing humor, Aggressive humor, Self-defeating humor.

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Our gratitude is further directed toward all the university students who participated in our investigation, in both Sweden and China, without their contribution the aim of this research would not have been achieved. Lastly, thanks to family and friends for the support and patience throughout the research writing.

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Julia Gustafsson, Ida J. Kihl & Mariam Said

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1 Introduction

This chapter will present a background for the relevant subjects of this research. The background will then proceed into a problem discussion which will lay ground for the research question and purpose. The target group of the research will be presented in order to explain the research's' contribution to the field of business administration.

1.1 Background

International business is currently holding a large and growing share of the entire world business (Daniels & Radebaugh 1998) and is a result of a radical development of science, technology, transportation, and communication (Terkan 2014). Companies are typically influenced to engage in international business in order to expand sales, acquire resources, diversify sources of sales and supplies, and minimize competitive risks (Daniels & Radebaugh 1998). The growth of vicious competition between firms with various characteristics has expanded due to the globalization which has driven businesses away from its ordinary limitations (Terkan 2014). Hence, rivalry among products has become universal, as new products are entering the international market and products are produced by pressured companies to meet the demand of a competitive global market (Terkan 2014). The creativity and flexibility of business procedures have grown, as there are numerous media channels to be accessed in order to reach consumers (ibid). One way to reach consumers is through advertising, which is significant when promoting a product or service (Keshari, Jain & Jain 2012) and its role is universal, hence, an influential part of a culture (Douglas & Craig 2007). Moreover, it is an important element of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) that nurtures the image of the product or service in the market (Keshari, Jain & Jain 2012). Its role is therefore not just for the purpose of selling (Keshari, Jain & Jain 2012), but also for creating awareness about ideas, products and services through communication and therefore advertising relies on the media in order to disseminate messages to the public (Terkan 2014). Market communication is considered cost efficient for spreading messages, whether it is by creating and building brand awareness globally or encouraging a certain nation's consumers to consume a particular product or service (Tyagi & Kumar 2004). Television commercial is a form of advertisement that has several benefits (Kotler, Armstrong & Parment 2011), as it stimulates the senses through the combination of sight, sound, and motion, which result in high attention (Tyagi & Kumar 2004). Its limitations mainly concern high costs and lack of opportunity for selecting audience (Kotler, Armstrong & Parment 2011). Around 80% of advertising expenses in China are spent on television (Sinclair 2008) while television commercials in Sweden are firmly controlled (Plogell & Wardman 2009).

Humor is one of the most frequently used communication strategies in advertising (Alden, Hoyer & Lee 1993; Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer 2000; Eisend 2011; Hatzithomas, Zotos & Boutsouki 2011). It is particularly used in television commercials (Weinberger, Spotts, Campbell & Parsons 1995) as the usage is approximated between 11% and 24% (Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer 2000). Researchers and experts are convinced that humor can be an effective tool when creating awareness in advertising (Riecken & Hensel 2012) as well as increasing the recognition of a brand (Evans, Foxall, Jamal, Nilsson & Gylldorff 2008). Humor also controls the possibility of increased liking of the commercial (Gulas & Weinberger 2006) since perceived funniness of a commercial leads to consumer liking (Usunier & Lee 2013) which are driven by emotions (Young 2004). Liking of the commercial is strongly influencing the liking of the product and hence, the purchase intention (Gelb & Pickett 1983). Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen, Grey and Weik (2003) suggest that humor can be

categorized in four different types: affiliative-, self-enhancing-, aggressive- and self-defeating humor. Affiliative humor is defined as the tendency to share a joke (Schermer & Mackie 2008), whereas self-enhancing humor is related to amusement by contradictions in life (Martin et al 2003). Aggressive humor focuses on manipulation by being ridicules and self-defeating humor is when amusement occurs through funny words or actions on one's own expense (Martin et al. 2003). These diverse humor styles exist in humans' daily surroundings as the concept is universal and is a great part of every culture (Howe 2002), which can be found in any country's advertising (Usunier & Lee 2013). However, despite its advantages, humor is also considered problematic to apply as it can be perceived contrarily by different consumers (Riecken & Hensel 2012). The diverse perception partly depends on the belonging culture of the consumer (Howe 2002) which is seen as a clear risk when applying humor as a strategy with a central message (Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer 2000). Consequently, customers' preferences for different types of humor vary across cultures (McCullough & Taylor 1993) and therefore, humor in advertisements require major adaptation in order to be effective (Alden, Hoyer & Lee 1993; Evans et al. 2008). It is indicated that East Asians, primarily Chinese, are using less humor compared to Westerns (Yue, Hao & Goldman 2010).

The interpretation of humor by Swedish consumers have been categorized as laughter, happiness, unforeseen situations, real humor form, jokes, plays on words, situation comedy, and political satire (Olsson, Backe, Sörensen & Kock 2003). In China, on the other hand, humor has rarely been studied (Yue, Hao & Goldman 2010). However, one of few studies implies that Chinese students have a negative attitude toward humor, which matches their cultural traditions and even though they can appreciate humor, they tend to devalue it (Jiang, Yue & Lu 2011). The contrast relies within the Chinese culture, as the appreciation of humor originates from Taoism where humor is viewed as an approach to reach witty, peaceful and harmonious relations (ibid). The devalued view of humor derives from Confucianism where humor symbolizes intellectual shallowness and social informality (ibid). Previous studies have shown that Chinese are more accepting towards affiliative humor and not as much regarding aggressive humor (Yue, Hao & Goldman 2010). The reason might be the current social system of China where social humor is valued in relational communication (ibid). Chinese advertising tend to emphasize on functional demands with focus on conditions where the life is the key, which reflects China's fairly undeveloped condition (Douglas & Craig 2007). The most frequent type of humor used in Swedish television commercial is surprise, but only if the commercial succeeds in surprising its audience (Olsson & Larsson 2005). The reason is that surprise draws more attention that results in people becoming attached to the television (ibid). Silly humor commercials are also well received by the Swedish audience although it only amuses for a short while (ibid). However, this does not mean that Swedish television advertising is dominated by silliness (Olsson & Larsson 2005) although it is the primary humor style used in television commercial globally (Catanescu & Tom 2001). Previous studies have shown that Scandinavians emphasize on qualities of modesty and therefore dislike noticeably successful persons that tend to brag (Shavitt, Johnson & Zhang 2011).

1.2 Problem discussion

The trend of producing and offering products or services globally is becoming more common and the purpose of becoming part of the tremendous globalization is not only to increase sale and profit, but also to create awareness regarding ideas, products and services (Terkan 2014). Hence, there is a need of an effective communication tool in order to reach out to the growing audience (ibid). It is indicated that humor is an effectively well-used tool for this, nevertheless in television commercials (Gulas & Weinberger 2006; Weinberger & Spotts 1989). However, a variety of problems may arise from communications across cultural boundaries

(Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner 1998) as some may not be appropriate and appreciated in every culture because of cultural differences (Daniels & Radebaugh 1998). The creative design of the message usually need to be adapted to the culture of the target group (Engdahl 2006) and in order to accomplish that, the awareness of the cultural differences and what those differences are must be emphasized (Daniels & Radebaugh 1998). Hence, one factor that strongly influences the use of humor in advertising is culture (Howe 2002) and how humor is perceived has shown to vary depending on culture (Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer 2000; Crawford & Gregory 2015). The perception is of importance for companies as the purchase intention of a consumer will be affected by the emotions experienced during the commercial (Young 2004) depending on the perceived funniness (Usunier & Lee 2013). The function of emotions in motivating commercial liking and purchase intent is a complex subject where more research is required as the effectiveness of advertising is dependent of the experience it creates for the consumer in which emotions plays a large role (Young 2004).

In conclusion, the perceived funniness of the commercial will affect the experienced emotions of the consumer which affects the purchase intent (Gelb & Pickett 1983; Usunier & Lee 2013; Young 2004). Thus, when humorous advertising is used abroad, cross-national differences must be considered, otherwise it can result in negative effects (Lee & Lim 2008). Previous studies regarding humor in advertising tend to overlook these cross-cultural aspects (Crawford & Gregory 2015), which is why this research is emphasizing on the cultural differences in humorous advertisements by highlighting the cultural characteristics. Cross-national differences need to be considered, otherwise it can be too critical to apply humor in advertisement, and therefore it is important to study cross-cultural differences (Lee & Lim 2008; Crawford & Gregory 2015). The constant change of media and consumers emphasizes the importance of investigating cultural factors that can be affecting (Storsul & Krumsvik 2013). As most research focus on the comparison of advertising in the US versus Asian countries, the need of research with a wider variety of cultures is demanded (Douglas & Craig 2007). Because the use of European countries in these types of studies are applied to a smaller extent (Douglas & Craig 2007), and the fact that humor studies in China are rare (Yue, Hao & Goldman 2010; Yue & Hui 2015) outlines the reasons for why this study have selected to compare the countries Sweden and China. To the knowledge of the researchers, there are currently no studies with the comparison of the countries Sweden and China with emphasize on their culture and how each culture reacts to humorous television advertisement in relation to perceived emotions and purchase intention.

1.3 Research question

The problem discussion indicates that culture highly impacts how humor should be applied in advertising in order to obtain desired perception. As there is a lack of humor studies investigating Sweden and China, the cultural influences in humorous advertising perception will be emphasized by comparing these two countries. Hence, the research question has been outlined as followed:

How are different humor styles in television commercials received in contrasting cultures in relation to perceived emotions?

The four outlined hypotheses that are derived from the theoretical framework will assist to answer the research question and will be further described and motivated in chapter 3:

- **H1:** Affiliative humor will be equally perceived by both the Chinese and Swedish students.
- **H2:** Self-enhancing humor will be perceived with more positive emotions among the Swedish students compared to the Chinese.
- **H3:** Aggressive humor will be equally perceived by both the Chinese and Swedish students.
- **H4:** Self-defeating humor will be perceived with more positive emotions among the Swedish students compared to the Chinese.

1.4 Research purpose

The purpose of this research is to disseminate the importance of cross-cultural aspects in humor advertising. By emphasizing on the significance of culture, the awareness of appropriate and effective humor advertisements can be spread and therefore applied successfully. This will result in an understanding of how humor is perceived in Swedish and Chinese culture.

1.5 Target audience

As the outcome of the research may include which type of humor that might be considered effective or less effective in Swedish and Chinese culture, the research is targeted towards marketers and advertisers that are planning to either adopt or standardize their humorous television commercials, whether it is in Sweden or China. It is essential for organizations to consider the cultural aspects in order to successfully attract consumers through television commercials. The research could also be of value for business and marketing researchers or students investigating television commercials and humor advertising in a cross-cultural context.

1.6 Delimitations

The research is conducted using university students in respective countries therefore the results may not be applicable on the entire populations in Sweden and China. The research will therefore eliminate non-students, in order to attain a comparative analysis between these two cultures. Another limitation of this research is the exclusion of other types of advertising channels, such as magazines, newspapers, radio, and direct mail, as the research will mainly focus on television advertising. However, similar results may still be found in humorous advertising using other channels as well since the same type of humor styles can be used in various channels.

2 Theoretical Framework

Previous research and the theories presented in this chapter are essential as they will be connected in order to introduce the hypotheses, which aim to assist when answering the research question.

The role of culture in this research is significant as it needs to be acknowledged in order to embrace and understand the dimensions of Hofstede that will be introduced in the upcoming section. In order to highlight and discuss the cultural differences between Sweden and China in chapter 5, Hofstede's framework have been applied on respective country with a thorough description of each dimension. Also, low-and high context communication is necessary in order to understand and analyze how communication is used in respective culture. Humor in advertising generates in the four identified humor styles associated to the main purpose of this study. The purchase intent provides a background about the behavior of consumers related to emotions and advertising, with the role of building a solid linkage between consumer behavior, perceived emotions and purchase intention analyzed in chapter 5.

2.1 Culture

Culture is most certain the broadest concept used in the historical social sciences (Featherstone 1990) and is a set of beliefs, shared by a group of people, which assist individuals in the group to decide what certain things or concepts are, how to feel about them and what to do with them (Goodenough 1971). The Swedish author Selma Lagerlöf explained the term as "what remains when that which has been learned is entirely forgotten" (Usunier & Lee 2013, p.25), which indicates that culture is unconsciously embedded in individual and collective behavior (Chanlat, Davel & Dupuis 2013). Culture may have various meanings in different cultures, which indicates that the word holds more than one explanation (Malpass 1993). In order to understand the concept of culture, despite its complexity, Matsumoto and Juang (2008) define culture as:

...a unique meaning and information system, shared by a group and transmitted across generations, that allows the group to meet basic needs of survival, pursue happiness and well-being, and derive meaning from life.

(Matsumoto & Juang 2008, Page.12)

According to this definition, culture can be described as a mutually shared system influenced by the surrounded settings that is strengthened by value selections, behaviors, opinions and attitudes in order to derive meaning from life (Matsumoto & Juang 2008). However, certain frameworks can be applied in order to investigate the adaptability of commercials in cross-cultural marketing (Usunier & Lee 2013). The most influential cultural classification is Hofstede's framework of national culture (Kirkman, Lowe & Gibson 2006) which mainly is applied within analyzes of differences between countries (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010).

2.1.1 Hofstede's framework of national culture

Professor Geert Hofstede developed his framework of national culture in the 1980's as a result of empirical studies conducted within the multinational company IBM (Hofstede 2001). The findings from the study made it possible for Hofstede to originate four main conceptual dimensions on which national cultures reveal significant variances; power distance index, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty, and avoidance index (Usunier

& Lee 2013). This study will only cover these four original dimensions because of their relevance to the field. The dimensions can be scored from 0-100 and only in relation to the context of other countries, therefore the scores are considered relative as culture can merely be applied meaningfully by comparison (Hofstede 2001). By acknowledging the scores of each dimension, it provides an opportunity to specialize for instance in products, marketing and behavior in a specific culture (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). The four dimensions will be further explained before applied on Sweden and China.

Power distance index (PDI)

Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) describe the power distance dimension as different aspects of how cultures handle equality and inequality by presenting how individuals perceive power. The PDI measures to what extent people with less power in a specific culture expect and accept regarding the power being dispersed unequally. A low power distance culture indicates that the distance between individuals with low power and individuals with more power is short. The degree of PDI in a culture will mutually affect individuals with high power and individuals with less power. In cultures with low PDI, people expect democracy, striving to equalize the distribution of power where rules are the same for every individual. Hence, independency is highly important for a child to learn. These types of cultures are characteristically recognized by their large middle class. On the other hand, individuals in culture with a high degree of PDI, tend to accept authoritarian power relations and a hierarchical order among the people. Superiors are considered to be differently better people than individuals with less power, and respect is the most important thing a child can learn. Large class differences are significant for high PDI cultures. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010)

Individualism/collectivism (IDV)

This dimension measures to what extent individuals are acting together as a group according to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010). Further, if they choose their own associations, which affect individuals' relationships and the expected boundaries between the individual and the group. The low side of the dimension is referred to as collectivism and the high side is referred to as individualism. The self-image of individuals in collectivistic cultures is mainly defined in terms of 'we', whereas in individualistic cultures it is referred to as 'I'. Furthermore, individuals in collectivistic cultures expect their family, or other members of their belonging group, to be loyal and take care of them. Competition is seen between groups rather than between individuals within the group where the communication can be short and does not have to be specified. A very low IDV usually associates with low freedom, poor human rights and low divorce rates, whereas high IDV is associated with wealth and high divorce rates. Moreover, the ties between individuals are looser and the identity of an individual is shaped by a person's inside in individualistic cultures. Individuals in these cultures are expected to take care of themselves and be independent, hence competition remains between individuals rather than between groups. Communication in individualistic cultures should be specified and detailed. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010)

Masculinity/femininity (MAS)

This dimension is by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) referred to as quality of life that implies whether a culture is influenced by traditional masculine or feminine values. Values that are traditionally masculine are ambition, material reward for success, competition, self-confidence, status and wealth. Traditional feminine values are related to caring for others, preference for cooperation, relationships, modesty and life quality. Therefore, this dimension indicates whether people in a culture interact for or with others, and a low score of MAS

represent femininity meanwhile masculinity is represented by a high score. The characteristic of feminine cultures is that they are more consensus-oriented and holds a higher degree of equality between the genders. Individuals tend to attempt to balance life with family and work and they are more open regarding acknowledging problems. In feminine cultures there is a strong belief that fighting should be excluded, and that it is acceptable for both genders to cry and express feelings and emotions openly. These types of cultures correlate with highly developed welfare systems and free education. However, in masculine cultures work is prior over family life and it is in general the mother in the family who handles with the children's feelings while the father manages the factual features. It is considered more important than in feminine cultures, to show off one's wealth and status through luxury brands and products since poverty is blamed on laziness. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010)

Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI)

According to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) the UAI measures how a culture manages that the future is unknown and whether the culture attempts to take control over the unknown or choose a rather ignorant option. A culture that scores high on UAI signifies that there is no interest in any uncertainty in life, and therefore attempts to ignore the factors where it might be included. Meanwhile, a culture that scores low has the ability to manage uncertainty in life, and in some cases even embrace the fact that it might occur. Furthermore, cultures scoring low on UAI usually grasp a more relaxed and dynamic attitude to life, believing that practice counts more than principles. Also, the individuals tend to be innovative and entrepreneurial and are more active in sports. Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance attempt to minimize threat and uncertain situations by applying regulations and formality. Individuals in these societies tend to search for the truth and are more likely to rely on experts while they are less open to innovations and changes, as they prefer purity in products. (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010)

2.1.2 Hofstede's framework applied on Sweden and China

Figure 1 illustrates the national cultural scores of Sweden and China according to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) for identifying the cultural differences between the countries. These scores allow the ability to create conclusions regarding the behavior and characteristics of the people in respective country.

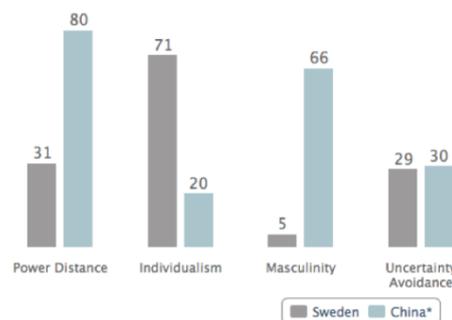


Figure 1: Comparison of Sweden and China's dimensions of national culture (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010)

As illustrated in figure 1, China has a significantly higher PDI than Sweden. The figure indicates that the hierarchy in China is stronger and the top is more centralized with power. It further indicates that the Swedish population consists of a larger middle class whereas China deals with greater differences between the social classes, larger social and economical differences between the upper and lower class (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). The countries also differ largely in individualism, which is a dimension commonly used to clarify

similarities and differences in communication across different cultures (Gudykunst & Mody 2002). China has a low IDV and is therefore considered as a collectivistic culture, meanwhile Sweden is outlined as a strong individualistic culture. This indicates that individuals in China are loyal to their friends and family and require belonging to a group as from which they are motivated by imposed norms and duties (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). Furthermore, it has been indicated that Chinese people have low trust outside the family (Daniels & Radebaugh 1998). The high score of collectivism points out that they are more likely to prioritize their group rather than caring about personal goals (Gudykunst & Mody 2002). Swedish individuals are leaning more towards the 'I'- view of self-image. According to Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010), this high score of individualism indicates that Swedes prefer to receive detailed information, whereas Chinese people are more attracted to short and brief communication.

Regarding masculinity, Sweden scores 5 on the scale, which signifies that it is a very feministic culture. China on the other hand, has a score of 66, which represents a masculine culture. This might indicate that it is more important for Chinese consumers to show off with money and wealth, compared to Swedes (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). Overall, Chinese people show an extreme degree of male preference (Daniels & Radebaugh 1998). The major difference between masculine and feminine cultures is the gender roles and how they are distributed (Gudykunst & Mody 2002) – thus, there is a large difference among the gender roles between Sweden and China. One dimension where the countries score similarly is the uncertainty avoidance, where both countries have a low index. This may signify that both Swedish and Chinese people have a relaxed attitude toward uncertainty and therefore accept that the future is unknown (Gudykunst & Mody 2002). The uncertainty is manageable in both countries, which in some cases can possibly lead to them embracing it (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010).

2.1.3 Low- and high context cultures

Communication is shaped by cultural factors and has a great impact on human beings, as it is considered to be everywhere (Neuliep 1996). One form of communication is mass communication, which can be described as a one-way process received by a large amount of people (Bergström 2007). How different cultures use communication is referred to as high- and low context, which exists in all cultures (Gudykunst & Mody 2002). In low-context cultures, people tend to consider information relevant only if they receive it firsthand and if the information is closely related to the decision that needs to be made (Daniels & Radebaugh 1998). It is further described as a code that is explicitly vested in the mass information (ibid), where it is essential to identify the other person in order to encode and understand the message (Usunier & Lee 2013). These cultures are often associated with individualistic cultures, where people have a direct fashion way of communicating (Gudykunst & Mody 2002). People often have a tendency to emphasize a specific issue straightforwardly whereas in high-context cultures people tend to speak about broader issues that eventually becomes narrowed down (Usunier & Lee 2013). High-context cultures are identified when a conversation is either internalized in the specific person or in physical context and when very little in the message is explicit, coded and transmitted (Gudykunst & Mody 2002). Collectivistic cultures are often associated with high-context cultures, as the maintenance of harmony in the in-group is essential, which is an indirect method of communication (ibid). Sweden is to be considered a low-context culture, since all northern European countries are included in the same category (Daniels & Radebaugh 1998). More detailed information is required in low-context cultures from objective sources, as they tend to use messages that are clearly written and spoken (Tai & Pae 2002). In advertising, low-context cultures are more

comfortable as advertising is informative with realistic content (ibid). China is considered a high-context culture, as they tend to exploit indirect and unclear messages, therefore, indirect communication with more visual nods than informational are implemented in advertising (Tai & Pae 2002).

2.2 Humor in advertising

Advertising is a repeating process with the purpose of shouting out the same message over and over again (Bergström 2007) by promoting a special event, service or product (Oxford Dictionary 2016). Advertising is an applied technique for persuading consumers to adopt the brand (Putrevu, Tan & Lord 2004) and is the most commonly applied channel when persuading consumers (Terkan 2014). Persuasion is the second most important function of advertising, as effective advertising aims to persuade consumers to purchase (Terkan 2014). Its importance relies within its controlling function when penetrating into the subconscious of people's minds (Terkan 2014). Persuasion is known for motivating consumers into action by influencing their beliefs and desires (ibid). When persuasion is resistant it associates with the target audience having other perspectives or set of minds, which are influenced by religious, political or cultural beliefs (ibid).

Humor is considered as a pervasive part of life (Lee & Lim 2008), which is often associated with humorous elements and laughter when communication is interacted between people (Olsson, Backe, Sörensen & Ånestrand 2003). Humor can be provoked by incongruity, rhetorical irony, mere surprise or inconsistency, which relates to the message structure, that is the cognitive mechanism (Riecken & Hansel 2012). Although humor is explained as a complex subject and not yet fully defined, it is described as 'the frequency with which the individual smiles, laughs, and otherwise displays amusement in a variety of situations' (Yue, Hao & Goldman 2010, page 174). Humor is a broad concept, and relates to all factors that result in laughter and amusement (Martin 2010). It is concluded that people joke and laugh more when interacting with other people, in comparison to when they are alone (ibid). In every social situation, humor can occur in many forms such as jokes, spontaneous conversations or as accidental or unintentional humor (ibid). Sense of humor exists in almost every personality (Olsson et al. 2002) and depending on how amusing a joke is, people experience different reactions, which might result in a smile or laughter (Martin 2010).

Humor has lately become well-known and frequently used in advertising when communicating with the target audience, which resolves in the creation of attention and awareness, and increased attitude toward the advertising (Lee & Lim 2008; Gulas & Weinberger 2006). Humor is described as an extremely effective tool in media (Lee & Lim 2008), especially in television advertisement (Gulas & Weinberger 2006). Television commercial is one form of advertisement which is an innovative and essential tool for expressing humor that generates recognition and awareness (Gulas & Weinberger 2006). Humor in television commercial in China and Western countries differ largely because of their cultural differences (Gao 2009). Using humor in advertising can appear amusing to someone, but offensive to someone else and therefore needs to be well considered before offered to the audience (Laroche, Nepomuceno & Richard 2014). Studies with humorous advertisement have indicated that the perceived funniness of a commercial leads to the consumer liking the advertisement and the product while impacting brand awareness (Usunier & Lee 2013; Gulas & Weinberger 2006). Humor creates positive cognitions and reduces negative cognitions (Eisend 2009). Previous research regarding humor clarifies that people in a certain group or culture appreciate a specific humor that will be unappreciated by other groups or cultures (Lee & Lim 2008). Not all humor is perceived well, as the original

intention of the humor can be perceived differently (Gulas & Weinberger 2006), and therefore it is essential to highlight the cultural differences in order to clarify the intention of the humor.

Laughter is described as an outcome of humor, verified within both biological and psychological areas (Olsson et al. 2002), which is highly associated with individual ratings of funniness (Weisfeld 1993). The psychological part can be interconnected to personal behavior since physical systems are stimulated during laughter (ibid). There are different types of processes in the brain of individuals that will affect the experience of humor and laughter (ibid) and humor can together with laughter be an aspect of the human experience, which is accurate in all cultures and for all individuals (Martin 2010). Each culture has its own norms and feelings regarding humor and for what is suitable in different situations, but laughter is indistinguishable between cultures ubiquitous (ibid).

2.2.1 Humor styles and their cultural impact

Martin et al. (2003) illustrate four different styles that humor can be defined into: affiliative, self-enhancing, aggressive and self-defeating humor. These four humor styles will be further described and connected to the hypotheses **H1-H4**.

2.2.1.1 Affiliative humor

It is explained by Martin et al. (2003) that people that tend to use affiliative humor are often making jokes, which includes attending in witty banter with the purpose of amusing others, facilitating relationships and minimizing interpersonal tensions. Meanwhile, Vernon, Martin, Schermer and Mackie (2008) define affiliative humor as the tendency to share a joke, humorous anecdotes, facilitating relationships by using jokes as a tool to amuse others. Kalliny, Cruthirds and Minor (2006) further indicates that this type of humor can bring people together. It has been revealed that affiliative humor has been used to the same extent by different types of cultures independently of the degree in power distance, individualism and masculinity, since the humor style is considered harmless and nonthreatening (Usunier & Lee 2013). Thus, the first hypothesis will be: **H1: *Affiliative humor will be equally perceived by both the Chinese and Swedish students.***

2.2.1.2 Self-enhancing humor

Self-enhancing humor is related to the humorous outlook on life (Martin et al. 2003), where individuals are the primary focus (Kalliny, Cruthirds & Minor 2006). Its description is associated with constantly being amused by contradictions in life, and has the opportunity to maintain the face of adversity and stress in humorous perspectives (Martin et al. 2003). It can also be explained as the closely allied term coping humorous, which means that humor is used as a tool for coping a person's emotional mechanisms (ibid). It is further defined by Vernon et al. (2008) as the tendency to contain a humorous outlook, even during stress, but also that self-enhancing humor can be used as a coping strategy. Studies have outlined that self-enhancing humor is more used in individualistic countries with low power distance than in collectivistic countries with high power distance (Usunier & Lee 2013). Since Sweden has lower power distance than China and is far more individualistic, the second hypothesis will be: **H2: *Self-enhancing humor will be perceived with more positive emotions among the Swedish students compared to the Chinese.***

2.2.1.3 Aggressive humor

Kalliny, Cruthirds and Minor (2006) explain this humor style as when people feel better on someone else's cost. Martin et al. (2003) further explain aggressive humor as a dimension that focuses on sarcasm, derision, teasing, ridicule, 'putting others down' or disparagement humor.

It relates to the humor that is used to manipulate others by being ridicules (Martin et al. 2003). Overall, the humor style can be explained as expressing humor without caring how it will affect others, for instance sexism and racism, which might result in hurting the other person (Martin et al. 2003). Vernon et al. (2008) agree that this type of humor often implies with teasing, sarcasm and ridicule as a tool for the self-expense of one's relationship with others. Previous research has shown that aggressive humor is used equally among countries independent of cultural differences such as power distance and individualism (Usunier & Lee 2013) thus, the third hypothesis will be: **H3:** *Aggressive humor will be equally perceived by both the Chinese and Swedish students.*

2.2.1.4 Self-defeating humor

This humor style represents when amusement among individuals occur through funny words or actions on one's own expense (Martin et al. 2003; Vernon et al. 2008), when integrating into a group and gaining approval (Martin et al. 2003). It can be explained as the 'butt' of the joke while laughing with others (ibid). Self-defeating humor is according to Vernon et al. (2008) what self-defeating humor contains, which is associated with the individual laughing with others while being disparaged and ridiculed. It is referred to by several authors as the behavior of a clown (Kalliny, Cruthirds & Minor 2006). Previous research has proved that self-defeating humor is more used in individualistic countries with low power distance than in collectivistic countries with high power distance (Usunier & Lee 2013). Since Sweden is more individualistic and has less power distance than China, the fourth hypothesis will be: **H4:** *Self-defeating humor will be perceived with more positive emotions among the Swedish students compared to the Chinese.*

2.3 Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior is a central part of customer psychology, which is defined as processes occurring when consumers are selecting, purchasing, using and disposing products, different services and ideas or having the opportunity to satisfy desire and needs (Solomon 2011). Consumer behavior covers all activities related to purchasing, consuming and exchanging information about brands and products (Hansen & Riis Christensen 2007). Furthermore, consumer behavior is seen as an ongoing process throughout the buying situation (Solomon 2011). Recently, desire became an important factor of consumer behavior, mainly because of its way of overlooking satisfaction and instead moving towards the trills of desire as a process, which creates a clearer understanding of consumer's instability that can be offered with wants and needs (ibid).

In a world characterized by social communication where everyone is senders and receivers, there is a purpose of everything that is said or done by humans (Nilsson & Waldemarson 2007). The purpose of the interplay between humans affects the way people send messages and how they interpret others' messages (ibid). The interpretation is based on the individual's own values, expectations and certain needs (Schiffman & Kanuk 2000). Perception is the process where individuals select, organize and provoke a message into a meaningful and rational picture of the world (Schiffman & Kanuk 2000). This might affect the actions of an individual (Nilsson & Waldemarson 2007). Marketers attempt to create this desire among consumers and present the beneficial desire (Solomon, Bamossy, Askegaard & Hogg 2006). The combination of cultural and personal factors creates a want, which can be explained as manifestation of a need (ibid). However, how the message is perceived is later translated to a response in form of action (Evans et al. 2008) thus will result in buying or not buying the product.

It has been shown that humor in advertising increases the likelihood of a positive interpretation of the message which makes it possible for the commercial creating a positive attitude towards the brand (Evans et al. 2008). Regarding how individuals perceive humor in advertising, studies have shown it depends on the culture of the individual (Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer 2000; Crawford & Gregory 2015). Furthermore, when consumers watch television commercials it generates different emotions which influence the perception of the ad (Edell & Burke 1987). Emotions are always present by influencing every stage of the decision-making in a consumer's purchasing process (Consoli 2009). Therefore, advertising should be emotional based when affect is at stake, and according to the Elaboration Likelihood Model, emotional responses derived from advertising will result in ad-liking and buying intention (Hansen & Riis Christensen 2007). Emotions are influencing beliefs of the brand and thus matter in assessing the effectiveness of advertising (Edell & Burke 1987). Perceived emotions are important for television commercials and will be explained further below.

2.3.1 Emotions in advertising

Emotions are temporary, neurophysiological responses towards a stimulus, existing in a coordinated system of components, which inform the person about the relationship to the stimulus and also prepare the person to deal with it (Matsumoto & Juang 2008). Regardless of any culture, a person always has different emotions, however, aspects such as experiences and evaluations can influence the culture (ibid). The emotions will therefore vary depending on the culture and how the emotions are dealt by the individual (ibid). Matsumoto and Juang (2008) demonstrate seven different emotions that affect humans in different ways: *happiness*, *anger*, *sadness*, *disgust*, *fear*, *surprise*, *shame* and *guilt*. *Happiness* can be explained as being happy (Oxford Dictionary 2015) and could be related to an individual accomplishing a goal (Matsumoto & Juang 2008). *Anger* could be the opposite, when a person has not accomplished a goal (ibid). *Sadness*, on the other hand, can arise from that an individual hold away from something desirable (ibid). *Disgust* could be that a person being sickened or maybe repulsed by something (ibid). The feeling of danger caused by something unexpected, different and new is experienced while the feeling of hopelessness strikes the person as there is nothing to do about the situation, is explained as *fear* (ibid). *Fear* is a feeling that is naturally unpleasant (Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer 2000). *Surprise* is meanwhile explained as acknowledging something new (Matsumoto & Juang 2008). This emotion is regarded as a short-lived feeling of uncertainty followed by any abrupt and unforeseen events (Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer 2000). Surprise can result in enjoyable, disagreeable or limited feelings dependent on factors that are correlated (ibid). *Shame* and *guilt* are by Matsumoto and Juang (2008) explained as related to the feeling when having a high responsibility towards an action that conflicts with the person's own standards.

All these emotions can be categorized as positive or negative, where happiness, curiosity, and surprise are positive, and anger, sadness, disgust, fear, and shame are negative (Hansen & Riis Christensen 2007). Curiosity is considered a positive emotion mainly because it can derive from watching a commercial (Aaker, Stayman & Vezina 1988). Studies have shown that consumers might experience both positive and negative emotions during one commercial (Edell & Burke 1987) and positive emotions derived from television programs enhance the liking of it (Murry & Dacin 1996). As positive emotions are experienced by a person will affect the purchase intent positively (Young 2004). When humans are exposed to high stimulating emotions, whether positive or negative, the humor stimuli tend to be rated as much funnier than if the exposure would include low stimulating settings (Martin 2010). This indicates that high emotional feelings contribute to higher satisfaction of humor as the funniness is rated higher (ibid).

3 Research methods

Applied methods and considerations made during the conduction of this research will be presented in this chapter. The research perspective, strategy, approach, and design are included followed by a description of the data collection and the analysis method. The chapter ends with a discussion regarding the evaluation of the research and ethical considerations.

3.1 Research perspective

Investigating cultural differences, as this research aims to do, require using natural science in order to obtain as accurate information as possible, as culture is a complex phenomenon covering several different factors (Usunier & Lee 2013). Hence, the research has been carried out through a positivistic epistemological position which affirms the importance of studying the social world according to the same principles and procedures as the natural science (Robson 2011). This implies that the ‘factual’ knowledge is the only knowledge considered true which creates trustworthy information when investigating cultural differences (Research methodology 2016). Within this perspective, science must be conducted in a true objective way (Bryman & Bell 2015). Thus, statements and observations should not be influenced by feelings nor speculations, rather they should be critically investigated (Thurén 2007). Consequently, collecting information this way ensured value free and accurate findings independent of normative statements (Bryman & Bell 2015). The empirical findings were used to establish knowledge, accordingly, hypotheses derived from theory were confirmed or rejected, which is characteristically for positivism (Payne & Payne 2004). However, applying a positivistic epistemological position when collecting empirical data can also cause issues due to the locking objectivity, as underlying factors of an answer or an action might be overlooked - which naturally could affect the result. Still, the positivism was considered most suitable for the research as the findings in the empirical data did not have to process through the filter of the researchers - which caused pure and accurate results for the conclusion.

3.2 Research strategy

This research was carried out with a deductive research strategy, which indicates that empirical studies were tested with hypotheses derived from pre-existing theoretical ideas in order to answer the research question (Robson 2011). This strategy allowed the theory, and hypotheses built on it, to come first and navigate the data collection (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005) which was necessary because of the complexity of the two key concepts investigated; humor and culture. It was essential to base and compare the empirical data on well-established theory in order to manage such multifaceted phenomena and obtain accurate results. The initial in-depth literature review enabled the possibility of connecting the key concepts by previous theories as the deductive strategy allows testing hypothesized relationships among variables deduced from existing knowledge (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005). By this it was possible to investigate whether the empirical results reflected the same factors and reasons as the already existing theories, and also identifying any possible differences between the two cultures examined. Hence, the theory used for the research was strengthened or weakened by verification by the empirical studies (Holme, Solvang & Nilsson 1997). An inductive approach on the research would have affected not only the process but also the outcome. Perhaps new discoveries not related to previous assumptions, would have been found. However, it would probably have resulted in loss of the envisioned objectivity and a result that would have been “merely descriptive” as mainly based on empirical findings (Laurent, Lilien & Pras 1994). The deductive strategy, on the other hand, assisted with obtaining accurate results based on logical reasoning (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2005) not influenced by the researchers’ own values or assumptions.

3.3 Research approach

The research was conducted with a quantitative approach as this approach can improve the objectivity and generalizability of the research (Robson 2011) as the quantitative data collection methods hold a high degree of standardization (Troost 2012). These opportunities, together with transparency, would not have been obtained with a qualitative approach as the qualitative approach is more subjective and its findings holds problems regarding generalization (Bryman & Bell 2015). Generalizability was essentially important to obtain as the purpose required to identify differences between two samples that could be applied on respective country. That would probably not have been possible with a qualitative approach, whereas the quantitative approach is well suited for when the findings are required to be generalizable to a relevant population (Bryman & Bell 2015). Further, the quantitative approach allows seeking regularities in the human lives by separating the social world into variables possible to explore by comparing the variables using statistical techniques (Payne & Payne 2004), therefore, focus is on behavior (Robson 2011). This suited this research as it investigated and compared emotions resulting in purchase behavior. In conclusion, the main purpose of applying a quantitative approach was to obtain generalizable and accurate results possible to apply on a large population (Bryman & Bell 2015).

3.4 Research design

Since this is a cross-cultural research investigating two different countries' cultures, a comparative design was approached, which means data was collected from two identically sampled cases, at the same time, using the same type of data collection methods (Bryman & Bell 2015). After the data was collected, it was compared and tested against each which resulted in findings that could fulfill the purpose of the research. The comparative design implies that social phenomena can be better understood when they are compared in relation to more meaningfully contrasting cases (Bryman & Bell 2015), which was considered true in this study. This type of comparison between two countries had probably not been possible with a different type of design. A case study design would possibly have resulted in a deeper understanding of the phenomena. However, there would have been a risk that the conditions of the findings would have been too dissimilar, as the investigations in each country had to be identical in order to obtain data that could be equally compared and generate accurate results.

3.5 Data collection

Two types of data were collected during the research; theoretical and empirical. The role these two types played throughout the process was further discussed in section 3.2. How the data was collected and for which purpose will be presented below.

3.5.1 Theoretical data

The theoretical data was collected with an in-depth literature review, which mainly took place in the initial phases of the research, but continued frequently throughout the whole process. The research question was broken down to several keywords relevant to fulfill the purpose. which provided the opportunity to create a steady foundation for the research. Keywords such as *international marketing*, *culture*, *consumer behavior*, *advertising*, *humor*, *emotions*, and *television commercial* were used, one by one and combined, in order to sort out and select relevant literature. Also, two well-known and established theories were selected for maintaining the key concepts of the research. The theoretical data was used not only in order to obtain the researchers, and later the reader, with greater knowledge and understanding of the subject, but also to develop hypotheses.

3.5.2 Empirical data

The empirical data was collected by allowing respondents view four different television commercials and fill out self-completion questionnaires regarding their perception of each commercial. The research purpose required to collect data from a large population offering identical conditions for every respondent. The self-completion questionnaire is very similar to structured interviews, except it allows less open-questions that are usually shorter, and enables covering a larger population for a lower cost (Bryman & Bell 2015). However, this data collection method is barely providing the respondents the opportunity for own comments and descriptions, if the respondents would have other answers than the already offered alternatives (Bryman & Bell 2015). Therefore, 3 questions for each commercial were formulated as half-closed to offer the respondents the ability to write their own alternatives. The research purpose required a large sample of respondents, thus, the questionnaires enabled that for a low cost of resources (Bryman & Bell 2015). Apart from being time- and cost effective (Teorell & Svensson 2007), questions in a questionnaire are more standardized compared to an interview, which provides the exact same questions and answer alternatives to each respondent (Ejlertsson & Axelsson 2014). This strengthened the generalizability and the trustworthiness of the research. Furthermore, a questionnaire respondent will be less influenced by the formulation of the questions than an interviewee (Bryman & Bell 2015; Ejlertsson & Axelsson 2014), which was seen as an important factor due to the purpose of the research. Through minimizing the possibility for the respondents to be influenced, the probability that more respondents answered the questions honestly increased since they were guaranteed anonymity. In order to provide full transparency of the research process, all steps in the data collection procedure will be presented below, covering the sampling of respondents, the sampling of commercials, the data collection process, and the design of the questionnaire.

3.5.2.1 Sampling of respondents

Because of the comparative design of the research, two respondent groups had to be sampled - one from each country. All respondents had to fulfill certain criteria in order to obtain samples that could be equally compared. One of the most important criteria for the samples was that they should be represented by appropriate representatives of each culture. When selecting a cross-cultural sample, it is crucial not to become a cross-city sample, which is impossible to apply for an entire country (Matsumoto & Juang 2008). Therefore, one university class, with students, from each country was selected, as a university class usually consists of a mixture of individuals from various cities of the country which increases the generalizability (Tai & Pae 2002). Also, Matsumoto and Juang (2008) argue that each sample should be equivalent on non-cultural demographic variables. Thus, the criteria for the selected respondents were the following; they should be living in the country for which culture they represent, they should be students belonging to age-group 18-28 years old, and they should be able to understand English. Each sample should consist of 50% women and 50% men. Each sample consisted of 24 Chinese students and 24 Swedish students, equally including both genders. Through adopting another age population and respondents that were not accurate students, different result would probably have been found. An older population that is not students would probably create a larger difference between the countries, since the younger audience is adapting more of other cultures every day at school and in their surrounding environment. However, the respondents with the required criteria were then selected by using a convenience sampling method. A convenience sample is an easily available sample to the researcher, which usually encompasses a good response rate (Bryman & Bell 2015). Through adopting a different method, the same generalizability and similarities would not have been able to be received in order to create a suitable comparison.

3.5.2.2 Sampling of commercials

It was important that each of the television commercials truly represented one of the four humor styles presented by Rod Martin. The first step was to investigate which key word each of the four humor style contained in order to define the commercials. Then, criteria were developed to sample four commercials. The key words were the primary part of the criterion, but also that the commercial was in English, seemed easy to be understood by different individuals, which was possible and suitable to show for a group of students. For the sampling, YouTube was used, as it is a free online video provider offering most of the current available television commercials. After watching and evaluating several commercials on YouTube, four commercials were selected. If other television commercials would have been adopted, or if other key words for the humor types would have been used, different results would probably have been obtained. However, the four commercials were used separately with no connection to each other. The four sampled commercials will be presented below together with an explanation of why each commercial was selected and how the commercial is related to respective humor style.

Commercial 1: ‘Baby & Me’ - Evian water

The first television commercial was called ‘Baby & Me’ and is a commercial made by Evian water (Evian baby&me 2013). The commercial shows people in different ages walking by a mirror where they see themselves as babies and start to dance (ibid). The people are one by one discovering their childish reflection in the mirror, and are being influenced to joyfully start dancing. As Kalliny, Cruthirds and Minor (2006) describe affiliative humor as a humor style that brings people together as it is mostly seen as funny and amusing, the criteria and keywords could be connected to the description of this commercial. Hence, the commercial was in this research connected to the affiliative humor style, mainly because of its simple way of amusing people and as the people in the commercial are acting spontaneously in different relationships. The commercial is not demonstrating any signs of complications as people are simply amused and joyful.

Commercial 2: ‘Pedro’ – Volkswagen

The second commercial was called ‘Pedro’ and is made by Volkswagen (Volkswagen: Pedro 2013). The commercial presents a story about a different type of family containing a husband, a wife, a son and a boyfriend of the wife (ibid). The husband is serving his wife and her boyfriend hot drinks while they are explaining for him that they are having an affair which should have been extremely clear for him since there are obvious signs of their affair (ibid). One of the clear signs was a whole wall of pictures in the living room of them together (ibid). After a short while, the son walks in and looks exactly as the boyfriend (ibid). This commercial represents a difficult situation which is presented in an amusing way. The commercial highlights clear proofs that there is an affair, which the wife is confessing for her husband. Kalliny, Cruthirds and Minor (2006) explain that individuals are the primary focus in self-enhancing humor and it is usually about adding humorous aspects in a difficult situation. Vernon et al. (2008) further explain that self-enhancing humor can be seen as a coping strategy, which is how the humor is used in this commercial.

Commercial 3: ‘Tennis’ –Mars

The third commercial is made by the chocolate brand Mars and is named ‘Tennis’ (Mars Minis: Tennis 2015). The commercial presents a story where two men are standing on a tennis court, when suddenly one of the men starts talking to the other one as if he was a dog. The man starts using the tennis ball as an attempt of making the other man chase after it, but the other man only responds with a confused expression (ibid). After a short while, the man states

the other man has been a good boy and he places a Mars bar in his mouth (ibid). Aggressive humor is described by Martin et al. (2003) as a humor style with focus on ridicule, sarcasm and teasing, it is primarily described as manipulating and humiliating someone, which can be seen in this commercial. Therefore, this commercial was identified as an aggressive humor style, mainly because of the man's behavior when he treated him as a dog. The message in the commercial is clear, when the man is being fed with a Mars bar after attempts of trying to make him fetch the ball, signifies that the other man's confidence is being lowered by treating him as if he was an animal (ibid).

Commercial 4: 'Grocery store'- Doritos

The fourth commercial is created by Doritos and is called 'Grocery store' (Express check out-Funny Doritos super bowl commercial 2013). A middle aged man is standing in a queue at a supermarket when notices that the elder man in front of him is purchasing a package of Doritos placed on the checkout counter (ibid). As he discovers that the man is blind, he decides to move the stick that separates customers' groceries so that the Doritos would be among his groceries for him to purchase (ibid). The woman at the counter reacts and moves the stick back where it was, the man starts flirting with her and moves the stick again (ibid). This is being repeated a few times, when suddenly the man is punched between his legs with the stick by the elderly man (ibid). As Martin et al. (2003) describe self-defeating humor style as making fun of oneself on someone else's expense, which is pretty clear in this commercial. The man in the commercial is utilizing the elder 'blind' man, in order to have the chips while flirting with the female at the counter. This commercial represents a strong aim about how to utilize someone in need, with the purpose of being funny.

3.5.2.3 Data collection process

The data was collected at two occasions. One in Sweden, in a classroom at University of Borås, and one in China, in a classroom at New York University. The questionnaires were conducted in supervised groups where the researcher handed out the material to each participant. That the groups were supervised by one of the researchers, helped ensuring the identities of the respondents and controlled that none of them filled in the questionnaire with help or influence from someone else. Loose of control and influence by others is explained as an issue with self-completion questionnaires that are distributed by mail (Ejlertsson & Axelsson 2014; Trost 2012). The presence and supervision of the researchers during the data collection process allowed the respondents to ask questions regarding information or formulations they did not understand which is usually not possible when sending out questionnaires online (Ejlertsson & Axelsson 2014). It occurred several times during the process, that the respondents thought a question was unclear. Moreover, respondents tend to answer sensitive questions more easily when they are ensured anonymity during the process (Ejlertsson & Axelsson 2014). Hence, the respondents were informed they were guaranteed anonymity both verbally by the researcher before the questionnaires were handed out, and textually on the top of the questionnaire form. They were also informed about the purpose of the study and why they had been selected, which is an important step in order to improve the response rates (Bryman & Bell 2015).

The first occasion was with the Swedish respondents whom had no significant problem with the English language or with understanding the commercials. The questionnaire in Sweden took place in a room at University of Borås where all the respondents were gathered to take part in the research. The questionnaires were handed out and the respondents were asked to read the information and instructions on the first page. The commercials were shown one at a time, and after each commercial the paper with the questions regarding that specific

commercial was handed out. The respondents were given time to answer the questions before the next commercial was shown. The reason for not handing out all the papers at the same time was to ensure that they would not be influenced or distracted by the questions when they saw the commercial. Afterwards, all the questionnaires were handed in and the respondents left the room. The second occasion, with the Chinese respondents took place at NYU Shanghai. The Chinese respondents had a few questions regarding the language, but after receiving the explanation for the words, there was no confusion. The experiment took place in a class room after a lecture was given, which means that the respondents were already gathered. The first page of the questionnaire was handed out, while explaining the purpose of the research. The respondents were given time to read it through carefully and asked to fill in their gender and age. The commercials were shown from a projector, and after each commercial the questions related to the commercial were distributed and the respondents were given the time to answer the questions before the next commercial was shown. After all four commercials were shown and all the questions were answered, the papers were collected. Throughout the whole experiment it can be assured that the questionnaires were filled out during the same circumstances and that all the respondents were offered the same opportunities to answer the questions, regardless of which country.

3.5.2.4 Questionnaire design

A questionnaire should not contain more than 50 questions and should not require more than half an hour to fill out (Ejlertsson & Axelsson 2014). Therefore, the questions were limited to 28 questions, seven per commercial with related answer alternatives. Since short questionnaires tend to achieve better response rates than longer ones (Bryman & Bell 2015), the alternatives were written as easy as possible. Further, written questions should not be too long (Trost 2012), thus the questions were compressed as much as possible without losing the content. It is recommended by Bryman and Bell (2015) to present the alternative answers vertically rather than horizontally, if space allows. Therefore, all questions that included answer alternatives were presented in a vertical layout. A pilot questionnaire was conducted in order to ensure the timeframe and whether a respondent would understand the questions and fulfill the whole form. Since a questionnaire in a cross-culture research has to be identical for both cases (Bryman & Bell 2015), and in order to reach standardization and thereby improve the reliability (Trost 2012), the same questionnaire was used both in Sweden and China. The questionnaire was written in English to provide the same conditions for each respondent. The respondents were given instructions both textually, on the questionnaires, and verbally by the researcher, as clear instructions regarding the questionnaire are essential for the response rate (Bryman & Bell 2015). As Teorell and Svensson (2007) suggest, questions in a questionnaire can be either open or closed. The open questions give the respondents the possibility to reply however they want, whereas closed questions provide the respondents a set of fixed alternative answers to choose from (Teorell & Svensson 2007). Respondents are usually deterred by having to write too much, thus the less open questions the better (Bryman & Bell 2015). Therefore, all questions in the questionnaire were of closed or half-closed character, excluding the age question. The closed questions enhanced the comparability of answers, which made it easier to identify relationships between variables and respondents when analyzing the data (Bryman & Bell 2015). The half-closed questions were developed in order to avoid loss of spontaneity and to allow explanations required to answer the research question.

3.6 Data analysis method

Once the empirical information in a quantitative research is collected, it should be transformed to data (Bryman & Bell 2015). After the self-completion questionnaires were

made in each country they were typed into an Excel-file. By using this file, it provided a clearer overview of the findings, which made it easier to find and compare the results, than looking thru all the questionnaires one by one. Each questionnaire was numbered in order to identify it later and structuring the material. From the Excel-file, the empirical framework was created, with both written text and diagrams with the purpose of illustrating.

Later on the data was transform into SPSS, to prepare for the analysis of relationships and answer the hypotheses. One test was made with the purpose of measuring the the differences of the mean between each county. This was made with a t-test to discover if there was some significant difference between the respondents in each country. The purpose of using SPSS was to investigate if there were some statistic differences between them, if there was a statistical significant difference. The t-test was made on three purpose for each commercial. The first test was between the emotions described by both of the countries respondents. The emotions in the question was conducted to two emotions: positive- and negative emotions, which later on was the variables that was placed in the t-test. The findings of if there was a significate statistical difference played a large part later on the analysis. The next test conducted was also a t-test, but on means on the variable of funniness. This t-test discovered if there was a significant statistical difference between how funny the respondents in China and Sweden consider the specific commercial to be. The last t-test made for each commercial was the purchase intention of the respondents. This could be explained that the respondents would consider buying the product in the television commercial after the viewing. The purchase intention was also conducted with the mean for each country that was compared to investigate if there was at significant statistical difference between the respondents from each country. Based on the empirical findings, the numbers were placed into a SPSS-file, to prepare for correlations. T-tests were made between humor styles, emotions and purchase intention, which enabled the researchers to identify relations between the two cases by testing variables. After that, the empirical findings were connected to the theoretical framework in order to generate conclusions as Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest. The analysis therefore contained a couple of steps, where every step resulted evaluating the collected data, in order to connect the different humor styles with the countries.

3.7 Evaluation method

Reliability means that a research is stable and thereby it should be possible to re-create the study and receive the same result (Troost 2012). To obtain stability, the research had to make sure that the respondents were not influenced by external factors when conducting the survey (ibid). To avoid this possible problem, the surveys were conducted the same way with each respondent group. Troost (2012) argue that reliability in research also is connected to precision, objectivity, and constancy. By using closed questions in the questionnaire, all the collected answers were registered and analyzed the same way which improved these components.

Bryman and Bell (2015) explain that another important criterion when conducting research is validity. What this research has done is concern about the integrity of the resulted conclusion made, as Bryman and Bell (2015) suggest as validity. There are three different types of validity according to Bryman and Bell (2015): *measurement validity*, *internal validity*, *external validity and ecological validity*, which this research has adopted. The *measurement validity* had its role when making sure that the measurement in the research supports the factors it aimed for (Bryman & Bell 2015). This was considered as the research and its question were shaped and expressed as precise as possible, especially when creating and investigating the hypotheses. *Internal validity* concerned the causality of conclusions, where this was ensured by showing that the relationship was supported by analysis in SPSS (Bryman

& Bell 2015). *External validity* was considered when assembling the groups, so that the outcome of the results would be generalized, outside of the research context (Bryman & Bell 2015). This was especially considered when choosing the respondents, including the age and other requirements to be a student of NYU Shanghai or University of Borås. Another factor to illustrate the culture was to make sure that the same amount of respondents participated from each country. *Ecological validity* on the other hand, concerns the fact that the research could be applicable on other people, from the social scientific findings towards the natural social setting (Bryman & Bell 2015). This was ensured when the respondents were chosen to represent their culture, they had to have the lifelong knowledge about how to behave. Indeed, the research can neither generalize the whole Chinese population nor the Swedish population, but the selected groups from each country are chosen to represent their culture. Through adopting two different evaluation methods, the results would be difference. Even if other methods contain of other important factors, these described ones would not be used and probably would create a lack of stability, objectivity and integrity.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Payne and Payne (2004) recommend different elements to consider regarding the informants and research ethic; informants should be enabled freely to decide whether to participate or not, they should be advised that they can terminate their involvement for any reason, and their identities should be protected by making them anonymous – these together make up for the key element; no harm should be done to informants. Hence, the participating respondents for this research were well-informed about the research purpose when being asked to participate. Furthermore, the first page of the questionnaire presented information regarding the respondents' possibility to recant their response and their guarantee of anonymity. The researchers thanked the participating respondents in person after the surveys were conducted as suggested by Trost (2012) in order to fulfill research ethics. There was no occurrence of ethical problems related to the different nationalities, the respondents were given the opportunity to answer the question whether the commercials were appropriate or not. Although some answered negatively, it did not reach to a level where they felt offended or anger. All the commercials included in this research were found on the website YouTube. The collection of the literature was also made with an ethical sense.

4 Empirical Framework

Two identical empirical data collections were conducted in Sweden and China. In total, 24 Swedish students and 24 Chinese students conducted the questionnaire, whereby 50 percent were women and 50 percent men. The emotions have been grouped into positive and negative emotions and the results are being presented commercial by commercial.

4.1 Commercial 1

4.1.1 Perceived humor style

The majority of the Swedish respondents defined this type of humor as charming while 20% of the respondents reported it as clowny. The same with the respondents from China, the majority defined this type of humor as charming, whereas 29% of the respondents believed that the commercial was clowny.

4.1.2 Funniest part of the commercial

The majority of the respondents in Sweden thought when the babies were dancing was the funniest part of the commercial and the second largest respondent group ticked 'other'. Among the ones who ticked 'other' was the explanations 'the weirdness', 'a few of the moves', 'baby with the mustache' and 'that the people were intrigued by their baby version and naturally felt like dancing'. The majority of the Chinese respondents stated that the part when the babies were dancing was the funniest in this commercial. Although, some respondents chose the option 'other' as one of them thought that the grandmother was funniest, meanwhile the second respondent believed the elderly walking with her dog was the funniest. The third respondent answered that there was nothing funny with this commercial.

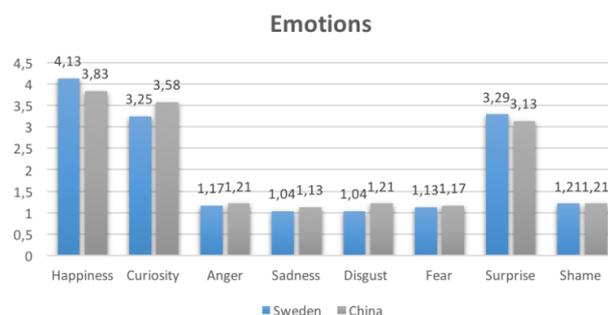
4.1.3 Ratings of funniness and laughter

The next question demonstrates how fun the respondents thought the *commercial 1* was. A mean of the results collected among the Swedes was 6.63 out of 10. Meanwhile, the results among the Chinese respondents gave a mean on 6.13 out of 10. Regarding the question if the respondents laughed or not, 58% of the Swedish respondents answered yes and 42% answered no. Meanwhile the Chinese respondents answered 50% for yes and 50% for no.

4.1.4 Perceived emotions

Below in *table 1*, an illustration of the mean of each emotion is shown for both China and Sweden.

Table 1: Perceived emotions commercial 1



These eight categories of emotions have been characterized and divided into two different types of emotions, positive emotions (*happiness, curiosity & surprise*) and negative emotions (*anger, sadness, disgust, fear & shame*). The two categorizations were created in order to

acquire a more general comparison between the countries Sweden and China. The positive emotions for Sweden had a mean of 3.5556 whereas China had 3.5139. Meanwhile, the negative emotions had a mean of 1.1167 in Sweden and 1.1833 in China.

4.1.5 Appropriateness of the commercial

The majority of the Swedish respondents, 92%, reported that they considered the commercial appropriate, while the remaining 8% that answered no, motivated that the commercial was not connected to the product. The majority of the Chinese respondents, 83%, answered that they considered this commercial appropriate whereas only 17% did not consider the commercial appropriate. 12% of the respondents indicated that they did not think there was any connection between the commercial and the product. Whereas 4,1% of the respondents felt that the whole concept of dancing babies in a mirror was weird.

4.1.6 Purchase intention

50% of the respondents in Sweden said they would consider buying the product and 50% said they would not. The respondents that answered no explained that it was too little information about the bottled water and that the commercial was not associated to the product. The other explanations were more related to personal preferences, which were not based on the commercial such as ethical reasons for not buying bottled water and the price of the product. The majority among the Chinese respondent with 67% said that they would consider buying the product, while 33% answered that they would not. Among those that responded the opposite, reported that the reasons were the lack of linkage between the commercial and the product as they seem to be unrelated, also that the commercial is not highlighting the features of the product and that there is no real advantage of the bottled water. It was reported by one respondent that there is a lack of understanding how the water can make one feel young.

4.2 Commercial 2

4.2.1 Perceived humor style

The majority of the Swedish respondents considered this type of humor as tragicomic while some considered it as teasing or clowny. Tragicomic was the most popular choice among the Chinese respondents with 54,1%, when defining the type of humor in the commercial.

4.2.2 Funniest part of the commercial

29,1% of the Swedish respondents reported they thought the situation was funniest part of the commercial, 25% thought it was the husband's reaction, and 37,5% respondents ticked 'other'. Among the respondents who selected 'other', 29,1% said the funny part of the commercial were the child and that he looked like Pedro. One respondent stated that nothing was funny with the commercial and another respondent reported that the funny part was that it was about a car. The majority of the Chinese respondents chose the option 'other' when describing the funniest part of the commercial. 16,6% respondents reported that they thought that nothing was funny. One respondent did not appreciate the humor and another one only laughed because the commercial was not understood. 16,6% respondents answered that the little boy was the funniest in this commercial, more precisely for what was funny about the boy was his face and shirt according to two of the respondents. 33,3% respondents thought that the husband's reaction was the funniest and five respondents believed it was the situation.

4.2.3 Ratings of funniness and laughter

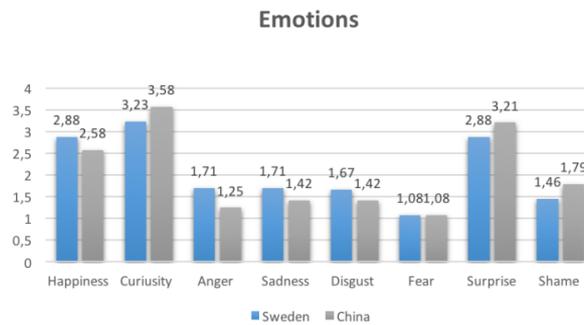
The next question shows how fun the respondents thought Commercial 2 was. A mean of the result collected among the Swedish was 5.75 out of 10. Meanwhile, the results among the

Chinese respondents gave a mean on 5.08 out of 10. 62% of the Swedish respondents reported they laughed at the commercial while 38% reported they did not. 50% of the Chinese respondents reported that they laughed at the commercial, the other 50% reported that they did not.

4.2.4 Perceived emotions

Table 2 shows, an illustration of the mean of each emotion is shown for both China and Sweden.

Table 2: Perceived emotions commercial 2



These eight categories of emotions have been characterized and divided into two different types of emotions, positive emotions (*happiness, curiosity & surprise*) and negative emotions (*anger, sadness, disgust, fear & shame*). The two categorizations were created in order to acquire a more general comparison between the countries Sweden and China. The positive emotions for Sweden had a mean on 3.0000, whereas China had 3.1250. Meanwhile, the negative emotion had a mean of 1.5250 in Sweden and 1.3917 in China.

4.2.5 Appropriateness of the commercial

74% of the Swedish respondents thought the commercial was appropriate, while 26% said they thought it was not. 50 % of the respondents who did not consider the commercial as appropriate mentioned ethical issues related to the fact that the commercial made fun about outside marriage affairs. The other half said they did not consider the commercial as appropriate because they did not think it was not related to the car industry or that it showed the meaning with the car. 63% of the Chinese respondents answered that they did not think this commercial was appropriate, whereas 37% did. 16% of the respondents said that they did not understand the commercial. A few respondents described it as weird, confusing and that nothing can be gained. One respondent explained it as very extreme comparison and another respondent thinks it is a sad situation and do not know why it is funny. 12,5% of the respondents answered that they do not see the connection between the situation in the ad and the product. Lastly, one respondent explained that showing adults discussing an affair is not appropriate for kids.

4.2.6 Purchase intention

17% of the Swedish respondents said they would consider buying the product while the majority with 83 % reported they would not. The reasons for why they would not consider buying it were several but none really related to the humor used in the commercial. Some said the commercial contained too little information about the product and some said they did not see the connection between the commercial story and the products. 12,5% of these 83,3% answers were direct unrelated to the commercial and was about personal car brand preferences. The majority of the Chinese respondents answered that they are not willing to buy the product with 58%, and 42% said yes. The reasons were that nothing is gained from

the commercial and that the ad is not informative enough. 8,3% of the respondents answered that they thought it was weird. 4,1% of the respondents stated that the person is not in a need of a car whereas another respondent stated that Volkswagen is the right type of car. Lastly, 4,1% respondents reported that there was a confusion regarding what type of product is being promoted in the commercial.

4.3 Commercial 3

4.3.1 Perceived humor style

The majority of the Swedish respondents defined this type of humor as clowny, while 25% said it was charming and 20,8% said it was teasing. The majority of China with 41,6% stated that their definition of the humor in the commercial is teasing. 29,1% of the respondents defined the humor as clowny. The remaining saw it as tragicomic and charming.

4.3.2 Funniest part of the commercial

The majority of the Swedish respondents thought the guy's reaction to being treated as a dog was the funniest part of the commercial. Second most selected option was that the guy was treated as a dog, third that he was being fed with a Mars bar, and four respondents selected 'other' where 50% of those 16,6% said they did not think the commercial was funny at all. The majority of the Chinese respondents found that the guy was being fed with a Mars bar was the funniest in this commercial. One of the respondents that agreed with the majority also filled in the 'other' field while adding that the reaction to eating the Mars bar was funny as well. 16,6% respondents reported that there was nothing funny about this commercial. 4,2% of the respondent stated that the ridiculousness of the whole situation was the funniest part of the commercial. That the guy was treated as a dog believed six of the respondents being the funniest, and the guy's reaction to being treated as a dog had the same amount of respondents.

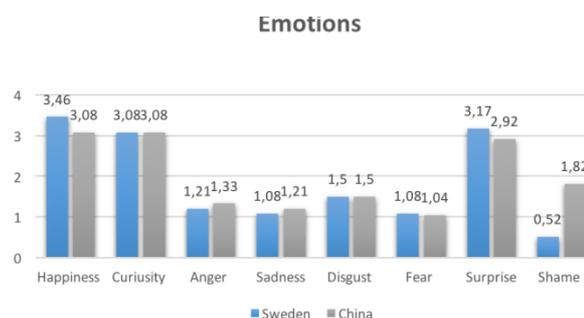
4.3.3 Ratings of funniness and laughter

The next question shows how fun the respondents thought *commercial 3* was. A mean of the result collected among the Swedish respondents was 5.83 out of 10. Meanwhile, the results among the Chinese respondents gave a mean on 4.54 out of 10. 54% of the Swedish respondents reported they laughed at the commercial while 46% said they did not. The majority of the Chinese respondents with 67% reported that they did not laugh at the commercial. While the remaining ones, 33% respondents, reported that they did laugh.

4.3.4 Perceived emotions

Below in *table 3*, an illustration of the mean of each emotion is shown for both China and Sweden.

Table 3: Perceived emotions commercial 3



These eight categories of emotions have been characterized and divided into two different types of emotions, positive emotions (*happiness, curiosity & surprise*) and negative emotions

(*anger, sadness, disgust, fear & shame*). The two categorizations were created in order to acquire a more general comparison between the countries Sweden and China. The positive emotions for Sweden had a mean on 3.2361, whereas China had 3.0278. Meanwhile, the negative emotions had a mean of 1.2833 in Sweden and 1.3833 in China.

4.3.5 Appropriateness of the commercial

The majority of the Swedish respondents with 96% reported that they considered the commercial appropriate, while only 4% of the respondent said no, explaining the commercial were downgrading a person. 50% of the Chinese respondents reported that they considered the commercial being appropriate, and the other half thought the opposite. 12,5% of the opposite half indicated that it was disrespectful, shameful and offensive. 16,6% respondents did not understand why they should buy something that is related to dog food. 4 % of the respondent claimed that there is nothing learned about the product.

4.3.6 Purchase intention

75% of the Swedish respondents said they would consider buying the product, while 25% said they would not. Most of the reasons for why the respondents said no, was because of personal reasons such as allergies and preferences that is not direct related to the commercial, except one who thought the commercial was too silly and one who thought the product did not show enough in the video. The majority of the Chinese respondents replied that they would consider buying the product in the commercial, this included 74% respondents. Meanwhile, 26% answered no. 12,5% of the minority that responded that they did not consider buying the product was because they related it to dog food, in which they do not like. 4,1% respondent thought it was rude while another respondent did not feel convinced enough to choose a Mars bar over a Snickers.

4.4 Commercial 4

4.4.1 Perceived humor style

The majority of the Swedish respondents thought this type of humor would be defined as clowny or teasing. 12,5% thought it was charming and 8,3% that it was tragicomic. The majority of the Chinese respondents with 41,6%, described the type of humor in the commercial as charming. 25% defined it as tragicomic, 20,8% defined it as clowny and 12,5% defined it as teasing.

4.4.2 Funniest part of the commercial

The majority of the Swedish respondents said they thought the old man's reaction in the end was the funniest part of the commercial, while 12,5% respondents selected 'other'. The respondents who selected 'other' said it was the music and that the old man knew, whereby one said it was not funny at all because the commercial was inappropriate. The majority of the Chinese respondents, 70,8% reported that the old man's reaction was the funniest. Two respondents chose the 'other' option, where they explained that there was nothing funny in the commercial.

4.4.3 Ratings of funniness and laughter

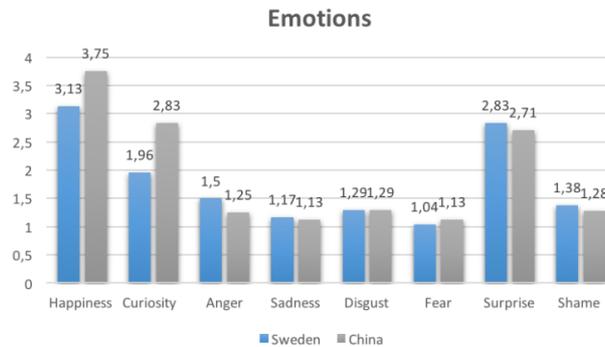
The next question shows how fun the respondents thought Commercial 4 was. A mean of the result collected among the Swedish was 5.96 out of 10. Meanwhile, the results among the Chinese respondents gave a mean on 6.67 out of 10. 50% of the Swedish respondents reported they did laugh at the commercial while 50% reported they did not. The majority of the

Chinese respondents, 61% respondents laughed at the commercial whereas 39% respondents did not laugh.

4.4.4 Perceived emotions

Table 4 shows, an illustration of the mean of each emotion is shown for both China and Sweden.

Table 4: Perceived emotions commercial 4



These eight categories of emotions have been characterized and divided into two different types of emotions, positive emotions (*happiness, curiosity & surprise*) and negative emotions (*anger, sadness, disgust, fear & shame*). The two categorizations were created in order to acquire a more general comparison between the countries Sweden and China. The positive emotions for Sweden had a mean on 2.6389, whereas China had 3.0972. Meanwhile, the negative emotions had a mean of 1.2750 in Sweden and 1.2167 in China.

4.4.5 Appropriateness of the commercial

The majority of the Swedish respondents with 92% said they considered this commercial as appropriate while 8% stated that they did not. The reasons for that were that they believed it ridiculed an old blind man and that it might encourage more people to take advantage of those less fortunate. All the respondents from China with 96%, except 4% responded that they considered the commercial as appropriate. The one respondent that stated the opposite did not provide any further explanations.

4.4.6 Purchase intention

58% of the Swedish respondents said they would consider buying the product while 42% said they would not. The reasons for why they would not varied, 8,3% stated they were annoyed with the guy who made fun of the blind man and 4% said that humor is not the best conviction to buy a product. The rest of the explanations were personal opinions about the product not based on the commercial. The minority of the Chinese respondents would not consider buying the product whereas the majority that included 87% of the respondents would, and 13% said they would not. 4% of the respondents that would not consider buying the product explained that he did not like snacks while the other respondent claimed that the commercial did not make the product desirable. Another respondent did not provide any further explanation explaining why there is no consideration buying the product in the commercial.

5 Analysis

This chapter will present the analytical results of the empirical data. The results will be connected to theories and previous research in order to test the deduced hypotheses. This chapter has a similar lay-out as the empirical framework, where each commercial is being presented one at a time.

Humor is a frequently used communication tool in advertising (Alden, Hoyer & Lee 1993; Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer 2000; Eisend 2011; Hatzithomas, Zotos & Boutsouki 2011) and in order to find out whether different humor styles are being perceived differently in Sweden and China, the empirical data was analyzed by comparing the collected data from each country. By this analysis, the hypotheses derived from the theoretical framework came to be tested against the empirical results and stated supported or not supported. The purpose of testing the hypotheses was to be able to answer the research question.

5.1 Commercial 1: 'Baby & Me' – Evian water

Commercial 1 was through the assist of keywords connected to what Martin (2010) describe as charming. This was confirmed by the empirical investigation as the majority of all respondents thought the commercial was charming, and secondly clowny. The word *charming* is further connected to Martin's (2010) description of the affiliative humor style, which is explained as charming, funny, amusing, and non-threatening. This indicates the commercial is perceived as affiliative humor by both the Chinese and the Swedish respondents. The majority of both respondent groups reported the funniest part of the commercial was when the babies were dancing. Also, a large part of the respondents selected 'other'. As this question was half-closed, the respondents were allowed to suggest an individual part they thought was the funniest. The suggestions were similar among the respondents and included the old lady in the commercial and the fact that one of the babies had a mustache. That the babies were dancing is a part of the commercial that could be seen as amusing and non-harming, which is explained as affiliative humor by Martin (2010). Thus, these results strengthen the argument that the respondents perceived this type of humor as affiliative humor style. How funny the respondents considered *commercial 1* to be, can be seen as one factor of the result as it affects the emotions a person will experience when watching the commercial (Usunier & Lee 2013). Thus, this variable was tested in order to find out whether this factor was or was not dependent on the respondent's belonging culture. As illustrated in *table 5* below, the significant probability showed 0.343, which indicates that there is no statistical significant difference between the two groups. This further implies the funniness is not dependent on the culture of the respondent. As further indicated by the illustrated mean, the Swedish and the Chinese respondents rated the funniness similar.

Table 5: Ratings of funniness commercial 1

	Mean Sweden	Mean China	T-test	Sig.
Funniness	6.63	6.13	0.958	0.343

The rating of funniness continued to influence how the respondents answered regarding their experienced emotions. Both the Swedish and the Chinese respondents reported that happiness, which is part of the grouped positive emotions, was the strongest feeling they felt when watching *commercial 1*. According to the Oxford Dictionary (2015), happiness can be explained as being happy. The emotions curiosity and surprise, also had similar rates among the respondents. There can be numerous reasons for why the respondents felt surprise. Matsumoto and Juang (2008) describe surprise as when a person is acknowledging something new, which can then result in enjoyable feelings (Alden, Mukherjee & Hoyer 2000). Perhaps

the respondents had not seen a similar scenario before - where adults view themselves as babies while dancing, in which they experienced feelings of surprise. The high scores of curiosity may have enhanced the emotion of happiness (Hansen & Riis Christensen 2007). The negative emotions, such as anger, disgust, sadness, and fear, scored low by all respondents. Because of that, and as the positive emotions were equally high among the respondents, it could be implied that *commercial 1* is connected to the affiliative humor style which Martin (2010) explains as ‘just amusing’, not harming, and appreciated by a lot of people. *Table 6*, illustrate the t-test conducted on the positive and negative emotions, and it shows no significant difference in how the emotions were perceived by the two respondent groups. As illustrated, the mean of both their positive and negative emotions were similar. This indicates that there is no significant statistical difference between the respondents in China and Sweden, since the significant probability is over 0.05.

Table 6: Perceived emotions commercial 1

Emotions	Mean Sweden	Mean China	T-test	Sig.
Positive emotions	3.5556	3.5139	0.192	0.848
Negative emotions	1.1167	1.1833	-0.562	0.576

Olsson et al. (2003) describe laughter as an outcome of humor. Despite that, only 58% of the Swedish respondents and 50% of the Chinese respondents reported they did laugh at the commercial while they highly rated the funniness. However, laughter is more complex than that - it depends on who the receiver is, the context, and the personality of the person (Olsson et al. 2003). This could explain the finding that even if the respondents thought *commercial 1* was funny and experienced positive emotions, many of them did not laugh. However, the context of the commercial probably affected the majority of the respondents as most of them reported they laughed. The humor is seen as funny and results in laughter and emotions of happiness. To summarize, *commercial 1* is perceived as affiliative humor and furthermore is affiliative humor well perceived by all respondents. This indicates that affiliative humor can be seen as quite safe to use cross-culturally and therefore **H1: Affiliative humor will be equally perceived by both the Chinese and Swedish students** is supported.

Since the majority of all respondents considered this commercial as appropriate it can be concluded that this type of humor is perceived as neither threatening nor embarrassing by most people. All cultures have their own norms and opinions regarding which humor is funny and the affiliative humor was mostly well-received and also considered as appropriate by the respondents (Martin 2010). However, only 8% of the Swedish respondents thought it was inappropriate, while 17% among the Chinese respondents said they considered the commercial as inappropriate. Martin (2010) explains that people may not accept the same type of humor although they think it is funny. Why more Chinese respondents thought it was inappropriate could depend on the fact that people are influenced by their cultural differences (Goodenough 1971). Since China is a masculine culture with high power distance compared to Sweden, their beliefs about what is appropriate or not could differ from the Swedish beliefs (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). The masculine culture combined with high power distance indicates that individuals of a certain culture is not considering it acceptable to make fun of men and put them in silly contexts as men has higher status than women (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). Some of the people dancing in the commercial are full-grown men acting silly, consequentially, this might be something respondent’s belonging to the Chinese culture perceive as inappropriate.

When asking the respondents if they would consider buying the product presented in *commercial 1*, the majority reported they would. The experienced emotions have an impact on

the decision making of whether to buy the product or not (Consoli 2009) which here can be seen as a rather high rating on positive emotions experienced by the respondents during the commercial. 50% of the Swedish respondents and 67% of the Chinese respondents answered they would consider buying it. Previous research confirms that positive emotions experienced during a commercial will affect the purchase intention positively (Young 2004). However, there were 17% more of the Chinese respondents than the Swedish respondents stating that they would consider buying the product, which in this case were bottled water. One of the reasons for Swedish respondents not wanting to purchase the product is related to ethical and financial considerations regarding bottled water and that the tap water has good quality. In China where the tap water is of less good quality they would probably consider purchasing bottled water more than the Swedes. Hence, the reasons for purchase intention could be related to this as well, even though the respondents were told in the questionnaire not to base their respond on the product but on the commercial, thus, it should still be considered an influencing factor.

5.2 Commercial 2: ‘Pedro’ – Volkswagen

For the second commercial, the majority of all respondents agreed this humor could be defined as *tragicomic*. The keywords *tragicomic* and *making jokes in a bad situation* is related to what Martin (2010) explain as *self-enhancing humor*. Based on this assumption, a humor style was connected to the commercial which indicates that the respondents understood the humor style and the message of the commercial. The majority of all respondents added own alternatives of what they perceived as funny in the commercial instead of the already given options in the questionnaire. Most of the Swedes thought the son and the fact that he was Pedro’s son was the funniest part, while the Chinese respondents believed that the son and his shirt was the funniest part, or that nothing at all was funny. The son was perceived as the funniest part by most respondents. The Swedish respondents also thought the overall situation was funny meanwhile the husband’s reaction was next popular among the Chinese respondents. Humor can be provoked with signs from rhetorical irony (Riecken & Hansel 2012), which this situation could be described as and maybe that is a reason for why respondents still thought it was fun despite the tragic and surreal situation. The results of rating of funniness regarding *commercial 2* were approximately the same as *commercial 1*. The mean, presented in *table 7*, indicates that both Chinese and Swedish respondents answered similar towards the commercial, which is slightly over average (5.74 – 5.08). It could be concluded that both respondent groups perceived the commercial as quite funny. The uncertainty avoidance is low in both Swedish and Chinese culture, which could create the most possible explanation for this - they are not afraid of uncertainty (Hofstede 2010) and could therefore deal with the uncertainty in the commercial. Through the t-test, the significant probability showed that there is no significant statistical difference between the two respondent groups and is not dependent on the nationality.

Table 7: Ratings of funniness commercial 2

	Mean Sweden	Mean China	T-test	Sig.
Funniness	5.75	5.08	0.892	0.377

Despite the t-test, the mean was still slightly higher among the Swedish respondents. This difference could be explained by the respondent's' different cultures as described by Hofstede (2001). Since Sweden has low power distance and equality between sexes, it is more appropriate to joke about men in a down-grading way, as women having an affair outside of marriage are more likely to happen in Sweden than in China (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). China has high power distance and is a masculine culture, where men are more highly ranked and thus should not be humiliated, especially not by women (Hofstede, Hofstede &

Minkov 2010). Since gender equality is a highly important issue in Sweden, where a lot of people fight for women to have the same rights as men, people in Sweden would probably find the commercial less funny or appropriate if it instead had been about a man cheating on a woman. Meanwhile, the Chinese are raised in a collectivistic masculine culture where family is very important and the man in the family has a significant role. Hence they could think it is weird that a woman takes the command in the family, which is the case in this commercial. Also, the Swedes may embrace the situation in the commercial more easily since the divorce rate in Sweden is higher than in China (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). The factors regarding high and low context were probably of importance for what the respondents felt about the commercial. Tai and Pae (2002) explain that in low context cultures, as Sweden, individuals feel more comfortable if the information in a commercial is realistic. Despite that the content in the commercial is humorously angled, it is a real life situation for many Swedes as it is common with divorces and thus mixed families. This could be a large factor for why the respondents from Sweden thought this was funnier.

The experienced emotions had a strong relation to the ratings of funniness of *commercial 2*, as the funniness of a commercial reflect the emotions (Young 2004). *Commercial 2* pictured a complicated and partly sad aspect of a marriage which was reflected in the responses of the respondents as many of them experienced negative emotions. Despite that, the emotions with the highest ranking among the respondents were *surprise* among the Swedish respondents and *curiosity* among the Chinese respondents. Both these are considered positive emotions that probably depends on that the respondents were not prepared for that kind of message and were for a reason not aware of what actually happened, as it was a surreal situation (Hansen & Riis Christensen 2007). Surreal situations are explained as part of the emotion *surprise* (Matsumoto & Juang 2008). Despite the results showed some negative emotions, none of the respondents ranked them significantly high. Perhaps, the negative emotions could have been a natural reaction if the respondents would have had the knowledge of what was happening in beforehand. A natural reaction could have been sadness (Matsumoto & Juang 2008) since the husband holds away from his family. However, since the responses showed no indications of this it can be concluded that they averagely have the same emotions towards this commercial which were *surprise* and *curiosity*. *Table 8* illustrates the positive and negative emotions compared in a t-test. Since the numbers for both emotions is over 0.05, there is no statistical significant difference between how the two groups of respondents perceived the commercial emotionally.

Table 8: Perceived emotions commercial 2

Emotions	Mean Sweden	Mean China	T-test	Sig.
Positive emotions	3.000	3.1250	-0.569	0.572
Negative emotions	1.5250	1.3917	0.849	0.400

Similar results were shown in the question regarding whether the respondents laughed or not. Despite the fact that the positive emotions were not that high, and that some negative emotions were experienced, the majority still reported that they laughed. There were 12% more of the Swedish respondents compared to the Chinese. When an individual perceives something as very funny, it often results in laughter (Olsson et al. 2003), thus, a connection between funniness and laughter showed that the Swedish respondents generally perceived the commercial as funnier than the Chinese. In conclusion, *Commercial 2* is perceived as self-enhancing humor and is more easily embraced by Swedish respondents than Chinese. This probably depends on the fact that Sweden is an individualistic feminine society with low power distance where humor that downgrades a man is more accepted, while China is a collectivistic masculine culture with high power distance, thus it is less appropriate to make

jokes that are humiliating against men (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). The commercial further highlights divorce in a humorous way, which might be more acceptable to joke about in Sweden rather than in China as divorce is commonly acknowledged in Sweden. However, the positive emotions were not statistically dependent on the nationality. Thus, **H2: Self-enhancing humor will be perceived with more positive emotions among the Swedish students compared to the Chinese** is not supported.

Only 37% of the Chinese respondents considered the commercial as appropriate, which could be explained by China being a masculine collectivistic culture where the main focus is in the in-group as the individual care a lot about the family, also that the men are the one with power (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). It could be associated to that China has high power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010), thus it is not appreciated to make fun of someone that holds a higher ranking than oneself, such as the husband and man in the family. This could be a reason for why this commercial is neither perceived as funny nor appropriate by the Chinese respondents. 74% of the Swedish respondents considered the commercial as appropriate, which can be explained by the fact that Sweden is a feminine culture with low power distance. Hence, the people are more free speaking (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010) and therefore accept different types of humor, in this case a commercial highlighting a bad family situation. However, the respondents who did not consider the commercial as appropriate explained that it is wrong to joke about unfaithfulness. Despite that the Chinese respondents did not find the commercial as amusing nor appropriate as the Swedes, 42% of them reported they would consider buying the product in the commercial, whereas, only 17% of the Swedish respondents would. The reasons for why they would not, was mainly related to the lack of connection between the car and the commercial, which participants from both countries indicated. The commercial was unrelated to cars and the logo of the car brand was not revealed until the end of the commercial. Furthermore, a number of Swedish respondents reported that there was a lack of information regarding the product in the commercial, which can be associated to Sweden being a low-context culture and requiring clear messages (Gudykunst & Mody 2002; Tai & Pae 2002), which this commercial reportedly did not as it lacked information about the product. The respondents were not influenced nor persuaded by the commercial which could reflect their different mindsets that are results of their cultural beliefs (Terkan 2014). However, although self-enhancing humor result in more positive emotions among the Swedish respondents, the Chinese are more willing to purchase a product based on a commercial with self-enhancing humor.

5.3 Commercial 3: 'Tennis' – Mars

Only the Chinese respondents identified teasing with the connected humor style that Martin (2010) explain as aggressive humor. Meanwhile, the Swedish respondents considered the commercial as clowny. As Martin (2010) describes aggressive humor, the commercial shows the influences on keywords such as teasing, mockingly, proactive and harming. *Commercial 3* demonstrates clear indicators of sarcasm that perhaps the Swedish respondents did not perceive as teasing, rather more of a clowny and silly way of acting. One reason due to this reaction could depend on the Swedish respondents perceiving the commercial as more humorous, which is why the teasing was not interpreted as threatening. Chinese respondents were not as amused by this commercial and because of that considered the acting as more teasing. Another outlook could depend on Sweden being a feminine culture (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010), where it is more equally right to make these types of jokes. Meanwhile it may be viewed as just an action by the Chinese, in which they cannot embrace. Since China is a collectivistic culture (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010) the in-group is the main focus, and to make fun of your friend is making fun of your in-group, which is not

considered appropriate. The context could have been a factor of how the respondents perceived the humor style (Gudykunst & Mody 2002).

The empirical study further signified that the two respondent groups thought different parts of *commercial 3* were the most amusing. The majority of the Swedish respondents answered that the fact that a man was treated as a dog was most amusing - which is an action of down-grading someone else. Whereas, the Chinese respondents thought that when he was fed with a Mars bar was the funniest. That the reaction regarding what was perceived as funniest in the commercial had two different answers could reflect the essential influence personal feelings and culture have on how each respondent group felt when viewing the commercial. People will be influenced by how communication is made and how it persuades the surroundings (Neuliep 1996), which in this case had a significant role. This could depend on the fact that Sweden is a low-context culture meanwhile China is high. As the Swedish respondents found that he was treated as a dog as the most fun part, it would as Gudykunst and Mody (2002) describe as vested in mass information. Meanwhile, the Chinese respondents believed that when he was fed was the most amusing and is related to the fact that this action was not explicate or coded, was clearly shown in *commercial 3* (Gudykunst & Mody 2002). The rating of funniness regarding *commercial 3* had a larger difference among the respondents, compared to the previous commercials. This is also shown if inspecting the mean of each respondent group, as the Swedish respondents ranked 5.83 and the Chinese were below 5 with 4.54. This is shown in *table 9* which illustrates the created t-test. The t-test displays a significant existing statistical difference between the two respondent groups, since the Swedes perceived *commercial 3* as funnier. Perhaps, the respondents from China, that has a high power distance and is a masculine culture (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010), think this commercial is less fun as it shows one man down-grading another man.

Table 9: Ratings of funniness commercial 3

	Mean Sweden	Mean China	T-test	Sig.
Funniness	5.83	4.54	2.059	0.045

How funny the respondents thought the commercial was affected their emotions as the positive emotions were higher among the Swedish respondents compared to the Chinese. As seen in *table 10*, a t-test has been created in the same way as the previous ones. Even though the Swedish respondents considered the commercial to be funnier, there was no statistical significant difference on the respondent's nationality regarding their experienced positive emotions. This further indicates that the nationality was not of importance for the experienced emotions.

Table 10: Perceived emotions commercial 3

Emotions	Mean Sweden	Mean China	T-test	Sig.
Positive emotions	3.2361	3.0278	0.671	0.506
Negative emotions	1.2833	1.3833	-0.713	0.480

However, there were still some differences among the different types of positive and negative emotions. The Swedish respondents rated curiosity and surprise as the highest and the Chinese respondents rated happiness. Since the commercial showed a man treated as a dog, it is interesting that the Chinese respondents selected happiness as their strongest emotion, since their masculine society signifies the non-appreciation regarding the down-grading of men (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). Perhaps, the high degree of power distance implies the acceptancy of down-grading a man as long as he holds a lower status. The Swedish respondents chose surprise as one of the strongest emotions, which Matsumoto and Juang (2008) explain as acknowledging something new. In this case it might have been when the

man suddenly was fed with a chocolate bar where he for a second actually seemed to enjoy the chocolate given to him.

Only 33% of the Chinese respondents answered that they laughed at the commercial, followed by 54% of the Swedes answering the same. The high rate of laughter indicated that the respondents thought this commercial was funnier than the previously shown commercials. Even if laughter is controlled by reactions it has its own code (Olsson et al. 2003), the respondents may have perceived the context as funny or might have the personality that is more susceptible compared to others. As mentioned by Usunier and Lee (2013) people in high-context cultures tend to firstly speak about general factors followed by more specific subjects, which in this commercial can be described as the main point when the man is being fed in the last scene of the commercial. To summarize, *commercial 3* was intended to be perceived as aggressive humor and the positive emotions did not depend on the nationality. From these assumptions, **H3: Aggressive humor will be equally perceived by both the Chinese and Swedish students** is supported.

On the other hand, 96% of the Swedish respondents answered that they thought the commercial was appropriate and only 50% of the Chinese respondents agreed. Hofstede (2001) explains that in a masculine society, as China, the men often have a great role and, hence, Chinese people would probably not want to embarrass a man in television. This can be the reason for why they were not feeling amused by the commercial and did therefore not consider the commercial as appropriate. Meanwhile, the Swedish respondents that are deriving from a culture that is highly feminine (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010) may enjoy that the man is treated as a dog in television, as they do not consider it wrong. Since the product presented in *commercial 3* is a well-known brand that produce chocolate that likely most people has tasted, the scores if they consider purchasing the product was high and almost identical among both respondent groups. The Swedish respondents rated 75% and the Chinese 74%, which is interesting since the Chinese respondents did not like the commercial as much. This could be influenced by that Mars is a worldwide famous chocolate brand that people would buy despite the level of effectiveness of the commercial. Perhaps motivation, as explained by Solomon et al. (2006), can be created within the individual even if the commercial was disliked, although the Swedish respondents did not quite understand the humor style. Young (2004) explains that when positive emotions take place, it affects the purchase intent, which occurred during this commercial. Although the majority indicated this, the ones that answered no, based their answers on their own feelings toward the product such as they disliking it or are allergic. Despite the description of Evans et. al (2008) explaining that applying humor in advertising will likely resolve in people creating positive attitudes towards the product, which happened to the majority of the respondents. However, according to Matsumoto and Juang (2008) emotions can vary depending on the culture and who the individual is. In this case, some of the respondents could not ignore their personal feelings from earlier when viewing the product.

5.4 Commercial 4: 'Grocery store' - Doritos

Only the Swedish respondents rated *commercial 4* as clowny, which might indicate that they observed the commercial with a glint in their eye, and enjoyed when the 'blind' man was punishing the other man by hitting with the stick. It could cause a reaction as it is not acceptable to make fun of blind people and that it is seen as appropriate, since the elderly man had his revenge. Even though the Chinese respondents were not able to identify the humor style, they still considered the commercial as more fun than the Swedes. The keyword foolish, clowny and silly are closely identified by Martin's (2010) description of self-defeating humor

style. The Swedish respondents were therefore able to identify this humor style, and based on that it can be assumed that they understood the humor of the commercial. Meanwhile, the Chinese respondents did not perceive this type of humor in the same way, as they defined it as charming. Regardless which humor style *commercial 4* had, the Chinese respondents perceived it better. However, both China and Sweden respondents scored highest on the alternative ‘old man’s reaction’ as the funniest part of *commercial 4*. One of the reasons might be that functional disabled people should not be offended and making fun of, therefore it was considered good when the ‘blind’ man had his revenge. The uncertainty avoidance was likely influencing, since both cultures scores high UAI, and therefore tend to embrace uncertainty (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). As the man was hit, uncertainty of what actually happened probably occurred and therefore resulted in the funniest situation and was surprising and unexpected by the respondents. The ratings of funniness among the respondents regarding *commercial 4* did not depend on their nationality. As shown in *table 11*, the t-test illustrates a sig. over 0.05, which further indicates no statistical significant difference between how funny the Chinese and the Swedish respondents thought it was. Despite this, the Chinese respondents ranked slightly higher than the Swedes, but the ranking was however quite similar.

Table 11: Ratings of funniness commercial 4

	Mean Sweden	Mean China	T-test	Sig.
Funniness	5.96	6.67	-1.170	0.248

Why the Swedish respondents perceived the commercial as less funny could depend on the cultural influences. Equality is of great importance in Sweden as a feminine culture (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010) and therefore people tend to become offensive when making fun of someone disabled or less fortunate. The primarily point of *commercial 4* was to include a ‘blind’ man in the amusement and make him part of the joke. China is a collectivistic culture and the group to care about is the in-group (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). The man in the video is unknown, and makes him not part of the in-group, therefore he belongs to another in-group and it may be considered more acceptable to make fun of him (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). China is considered having high power distance, thus, the one that makes the decision has a higher status and could therefore not be as offended by actions like this, because they are seen as lower in power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). By having a high power distance, the differences between social classes are greater, therefore the young man could be seen as belonging to a higher class where it is acceptable to make fun of the ones below him. These factors can reveal why the Chinese respondents thought it was funnier, which is reflected in their experienced positive emotions. The emotions that both respondent groups primarily exposed were *surprise*, *happiness* and *curiosity*. Meanwhile the negative emotions are almost identical, and none of them were scored high. As seen in *table 12*, the means of positive emotions differ between the respondent groups, as the Chinese respondents scored higher. This is also illustrated in the sig. where 0.066 is close to 0.05, but there is still no statistical significant difference between the cultures and their experienced emotions. The mean of the negative emotions was almost identical as well, and as signified by sig. there is no statistical significant difference between how the respondents answered. Therefore, the answers of the respondents were not dependent of their country, the same as the respondent’s rating regarding funniness.

Table 12: Perceived emotions commercial 4

Emotions	Mean Sweden	Mean China	T-test	Sig.
Positive emotions	2.6389	3.0972	-1.882	0.066
Negative emotions	1.2750	1.2167	0.447	0.657

As seen from the mean differences between the groups, the Chinese respondents have averagely higher positive emotions towards this commercial than the Swedish respondents. The reason could be that the China is considered a masculine culture whereas Sweden is feminine (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). The factors described by Hofstede, Hofstede and Minkov (2010) could indicate that the Swedish respondents did not perceive it as funny when exploiting a person because of his disability. The perceived emotions of the Swedish respondents could be affected by the fact that they are of low-context culture, where codes are often explicit in the mass information and therefore further understand the meaning of making fun of a blind man (Gudykunst & Mody 2002). Meanwhile, the Chinese respondents, as a high-context culture, are used to messages that are slightly explicit, coded and transmitted (Gudykunst & Mody 2002), and therefore only understand the joke itself that includes the chips, without any focus on the man that has an underlying role in the commercial. Same factors are shown regarding the laughter of the respondents. The Chinese respondents scored 61%, which is quite high. This could be described as China being a high-context culture (Gudykunst & Mody 2002) with masculine and collectivistic visions with focus on who the person is and if included in the in- group (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). Sweden scored 50% as the respondents considered *commercial 4* less amusing than the Chinese. This could be influenced by the fact that they did not consider it as fun as the Chinese respondents. As Martin (2010) describes, each culture has its own norms and feelings of humor and what is suitable, which many of the Swedish respondents had toward this commercial. Despite this, the majority of the respondents answered that they laughed when viewing *commercial 4*, which could depend on the fact that the old man had his revenge after the bad treatment. Another aspect is that it could depend on the fact that the brain of the respondents was stimulated and therefore affected whether they laughed or not (Martin 2010). Although their positive emotions were not dominating, the reaction of the brain cannot be controlled. However, *commercial 4* was intended to be perceived as self-defeating humor and that this humor style would be perceived with more positive emotions by the Swedish respondents, but what was actually exposed was that positive emotions did not depend on the nationality. Therefore, **H4: Self-defeating humor will be perceived with more positive emotions among the Swedish students compared to the Chinese** is not supported

Although many Swedish respondents reported that the commercial was offensive as the amusement included a functional disabled man, a strong majority of 92% thought it was appropriate. 96% of the Chinese respondents considered the commercial appropriate, which is not surprising as they perceived the commercial as way more hilarious than the Swedes. Since Sweden is low in power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010), it might be unexpected that many respondents actually thought this was appropriate since the commercial is about acting silly when including a 'blind' man in a humorous attempt of taking the bag of chips while flirting. The majority of the Chinese respondents, 78%, said they would consider buying the product in the commercial while only 58% of the Swedish respondents would. Emotions are constantly present in the decision making process (Consoli 2009) and the Chinese emotions were of large influence when it came to the intention of buying. What can be explained is that the emotions experienced by the respondents affected their purchase intention (Young 2004).

6 Discussion & Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter is supported by the analysis, which will lift the investigation up to a scientific level. A conclusion will be presented with the final results by answering the research question. Finally, an evaluation of the research processes will be presented ending with a suggestion for further research within the field.

6.1 Discussion

The analyzed investigation resulted in a few interesting discoveries, in which previous research had not yet revealed. It was found that not all of the tested theories were supported, which may indicate that previous research, in some cases, are not applicable on these cultures and these target groups. One reason could depend on the fact that the only included respondents in this research were students, which are expectedly influenced by the globalization from universities and their surroundings. Other research may have taken on a different focus, on a diverse target group and could be seen as one primarily reason for why not all hypotheses were supported. The analysis concluded following from the testing:

- **H1:** *Affiliative humor will be equally perceived by both the Chinese and Swedish students* was supported.
- **H2:** *Self-enhancing humor will be perceived with more positive emotions among the Swedish students compared to the Chinese* was not supported.
- **H3:** *Aggressive humor will be equally perceived by both the Chinese and Swedish students* was supported.
- **H4:** *Self-defeating humor will be perceived with more positive emotions among the Swedish students compared to the Chinese* was not supported.

In order to answer the hypotheses and research question, there were several aspects that needed to be included, such as funniness and laughter, to strengthen the case for the emotions of the respondents. These aspects were thus primarily used as a supporting tool. Also, some discussions were made regarding the purchase intent which was influenced by the perceived emotions. Some particularly interesting discoveries were that self-enhancing humor was perceived with more positive emotions by Swedish students, whereas the Chinese students were more willing to purchase. Self-defeating humor was equally perceived considering the emotions, but the Chinese students were more willing to purchase the product than the Swedish students. Importantly to highlight was that the Chinese students were not able to recognize the self-defeating humor, which indicates that the results regarding this humor style are seen as weak.

Affiliative humor showed to be well emotionally perceived among both Chinese and Swedish students, probably because it is seen as simply funny and nonthreatening. It was perceived as the funniest humor type and resulted in the highest level of happiness while the level of negative emotions was significantly low. Affiliative humor is therefore seen as a safe humor style to use in most countries to awaken positive emotions and also to increase the purchase intention as both Chinese and Swedish students had a high degree of willingness to purchase. Three of Hofstede's (2001) dimensions indicate that China and Sweden are two very contrasting cultures which further indicates that affiliative humor style can be well perceived by most cultures concerning their emotions and purchase intention, especially in Asian and northern European countries. However, despite that affiliative humor is perceived as funny, it might not be accepted by everyone, nonetheless by the Chinese students. Thus, although affiliative humor is seen as harmless and safe to use, some considerations should still be made

before applying it in cross-cultural advertising in order to avoid harming the sell ratings if it would be perceived as non-appropriate.

Self-enhancing humor was more easily embraced by the Swedish students, which could depend on several reasons such as Sweden being a feminine and low power distance country (Hofstede 2001). Since the Chinese students did not score as high positive emotions during the commercial, it would perhaps be better to avoid applying it in Chinese commercials. This could depend on the fact that Sweden is of low-context communication and further understand underlying messages and it is allowed to make fun of a romance in a different way than in China. As it depends on which type of emotion a commercial wish to provoke, there could be a possibility to apply this humor style if these negative emotions were aimed to be awakened among the Chinese audience. Despite this, the t-test showed no difference between the cultures. The provocation of negative emotions in Chinese commercials might be a good idea since the purchase intention was generally higher among the Chinese respondents, although the t-test was seen as rather weak. The Chinese students may have been affected by the negative emotions that were created during the commercial, which sets the question whether the negative emotions will affect the purchase intention equally as positive emotions tend to when applying self-enhancing humor. Overall, the purchase intention was low among both Swedish and Chinese students, thus, this type of humor should probably be used carefully.

Aggressive humor was perceived equally by Chinese and Swedish students, considering both the emotions and the purchase intention. The hypotheses, based on Hofstede's dimensions (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010), indicated that these two cultures would be dissimilarly attracted to this humor style whereas the investigation indicated the opposite. The uncertainty avoidance, which is scored as quite low in both cultures, might have partly affected the answers. This is since the man in the commercial seemed to feel high uncertainty when he was treated as a dog. There might be many reasons for why this commercial was receiving positive emotions, but one reason could be that the Swedish students were not able to identify the humor style, and therefore did not perceive it as expected. Despite this, both groups had positive emotions and were willing to purchase the product. The self-defeating humor style was equally perceived by the students, even if previous research indicated that the Swedish students would probably be more willing to embrace this humor style. The ratings of funniness and the experienced positive emotions were higher among the Chinese respondents. As China is a collectivistic high power distance culture the Chinese students might perceive it as more acceptable to make fun of someone disabled belonging to an out-group (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). However, the positive emotions indicated that both student groups found this commercial equally funny. Regarding the purchase intent, the Chinese students were more likely to buy the product, despite the fact that they were not able to identify the humor style.

The main purpose of testing these hypotheses was to find an answer for the question "*How are different humor styles in television commercials received in contrasting cultures in relation to perceived emotions?*". The four humor styles presented by Martin (2010) and Hofstede's framework of national culture (2001) assisted in developing the hypotheses that later were tested in the analysis. Through discovering which humor style that was well perceived emotionally and how the humor style in a television commercial affects the purchase intention, the recommendation of how it should be implemented in different situations can be provided. It was found that humor is an effective communication tool that provokes different emotions among the students in both cultures, whether they perceived it as amusing or not. Even though previous research indicates how humor styles should be applied,

only half of the hypotheses were found to be supported and that all humor styles were equally perceived by the Chinese and Swedish students. Maybe it could depend on the fact that cultures are not influencing individuals as much as before. Globalization is another factor that could be of large influence of this assumption, since it constantly changes cultures and as quoted by Selma Lagerlöf “what remains when that which has been learned is entirely forgotten” (Usunier & Lee 2013, p.25). This signifies that culture has to be learned and then forgotten. People from different cultures are constantly introduced to new cultures, which is affecting the original cultures, especially since there are external factors that could influence. Today, many countries consist of mixed cultures and therefore Hofstede’s theories may not be accurate and viewed as an updated framework (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov 2010). There is a large prospect that the scores have changed over time, especially during the last years.

There would be a possibility that Martin’s (2010) humor styles need to be updated as well, since many of the keywords could be interpreted in similar ways, which can result in confusion. What is further contributing to the confusion is that each humor style is perceived differently by different cultures (Gao 2009). It seems that many humorous commercials include more than one humor style. Despite that these humor styles are not as old as Hofstede’s framework (2001), the world is changing more than ever due to globalization and are therefore in need of adjustments in this written field. If a new study was made with intention to be connected to Martin’s (2010) humor styles, these hypotheses may be supported. But this field is in need of further investigation and especially since cultures are starting to adapt to each other.

Individual emotions of the students are of large importance for the ratings of funniness, laughter and their personal feelings toward the pictured situation. Hofstede (2001) was of influence in this study, since it strongly displayed the relationships between culture, emotion and purchase intention. The low-and high context communication influenced the way the students interpreted the message in the commercials. The aspects of humor styles that were found were that, despite previous research, the humor styles were perceived differently by Chinese and Swedish students. The affiliative- and aggressive humor, concerning emotions and purchase intention were equal. Self-enhancing humor was perceived with higher positive emotions by the Swedish students, but with higher purchase intention by the Chinese audience. Whereas the self-defeating humor style was equally perceived by the two cultures regarding the positive emotions, but once again, the Chinese students scored higher than the Swedish regarding the purchase intention.

6.2 Conclusion

6.2.1 Conclusion of the results

From the analysis and discussion regarding the testing of the hypotheses it was possible to answer the research question with the final results. To present the final conclusions, the research question will be answered below:

How are different humor styles in television commercials received in contrasting cultures in relation to perceived emotions?

The results signify that affiliative humor and aggressive humor used in television commercial are equally perceived in both Chinese and Swedish culture. Self-defeating humor and self-enhancing humor are emotionally equally perceived in Swedish and Chinese cultures, but Chinese consumers are more willing to purchase the product. It can be definite that when

creating a television commercial with humorous influences, it is important to consider which culture the commercial is aimed for and which humor style to apply.

Regarding China, if the primary focus is only to convince the consumers buying the offered product, all of the presented humor styles would be accepted to apply. Despite the fact that self-enhancing humor is better perceived when it comes to positive emotions by the Swedes, the Chinese are still more willing to purchase the product. The same conclusion is drawn regarding self-defeating humor style, when both Sweden and China perceive the humor style with equally positive emotions, but they are still more willing to purchase the products as an outcome of seeing the commercial. Chinese consumers are therefore most susceptible toward affiliative and aggressive humor, in which they have positive emotions toward and are willing to buy the products. They are however still considering purchasing the products relating to self-enhancing and self-defeating humor. It differs when applying a humor style in Swedish television commercial, since the affiliative humor style and the aggressive humor style were both well perceived by the Swedes. Therefore, these humor styles might be considered as appropriate choices to apply. Despite that these two humor styles were well perceived, they lacked the willingness to buy the product, although there were positive feelings associated to the self-enhancing humor in the commercials. The suggestion is to focus on the affiliative and aggressive humor styles when applying humor in Swedish television advertisement. As found, the theories about cultural differences and humor styles may need adjustments since globalization constantly impacts cultures.

To tie this research together, it is more essential to consider the humor style in a television commercial aimed for Swedish culture than Chinese culture, as some humor styles were found to be more effective than others. The findings of this research imply which humor style that is effectively perceived in respective culture. It has further been acknowledged that humor styles are differently perceived in various cultures, as one culture perceives a certain humor style differently than in another culture. With this confirmed knowledge and conclusion, it can be stated that television commercials can be created and applied based on the demonstrated results regarding the humor styles in this research. According to these assumptions, it could be defined that globalization has been of large influence and that humor styles are similarly perceived among different cultures, but when it comes to the consumers' purchase intention of a product, it is more important to consider which humor style to apply.

6.2.2 Evaluation

Bryman and Bell (2015) argue that there are issues in achieving equivalence between the samples, variables, and used methods when conducting a cross-cultural research. This was considered through the whole research and some preventive engagements were taken in order to avoid these issues. For instance, the sample was carefully selected by finding respondents who fulfilled certain criteria such as age, occupation, and gender. Also, the questionnaire and belonging commercials were identical as they all were in English, and the respondent groups were given the same conditions when filling out the questionnaire. Since not all humor styles were identified by all respondents, it perhaps would have been a better alternative with other commercials representing the keywords and messages more clearly. Aggressive humor would probably have resulted in other outcomes if keywords such as sexism and racism would have been highlighted instead of teasing and sarcasm. Similarly, with self-defeating humor, which none of the countries managed to identify accurately. Perhaps by focusing on a different message, in a different commercial would have provided the respondents with greater understanding of the humor style and its message. However, some factors were impossible to ensure equality on, such as the respondent's ability to master the English language that would

affect how well the commercial and the questions were understood, which in turn could have impacted the results.

If a qualitative research approach would have been applied instead, further interpretation of the respondent's emotions and thoughts would be possible to collect (Bryman & Bell 2015). Since there is a need of objectivity when researching cultural differences, this would have been minimized by conducting a qualitative study. Positivism was an essential tool to collect as factual answers as possible and with adopting another epistemological perspective this would not be possible without interpretation of the respondents. Since structured interviews in qualitative data collection are rather similar method to self-completion questionnaire they are usually compared by respective advantages and disadvantages they come with (Bryman & Bell 2015). If the empirical data for this research had been collected by structured interviews instead, it would have allowed the researchers to dig deeper into the subject, since the questions in a structured interview can be more complicated and enables supplementary questions (Teorell & Svensson 2007). Meanwhile, through questionnaires respondents tend to answer sensitive questions more easily than if asked the same questions during an interview (Ejlertsson & Axelsson 2014). If the choice of qualitative research had been implemented instead, other deeper results and aspects could have been recognized.

Almost all questions, except three for each commercial, in the questionnaire were of closed character, which might have caused a loss of spontaneity in the respondents' answers since they were forced to choose one of the fixed answers instead of replying freely (Bryman & Bell 2015). A possible response category of 'other' and an 'if no, please explain why' were included in a few questions in an attempt to avoid this possible problem. Reliability and validity was creating a good ground for the research and results in that it was the right choice. By applying different criteria's, they would probably not consist of the same aspects that were necessary for making this research as trustworthy as possible. By applying other countries, different results would have occurred and perhaps more of hypotheses would have been supported, particularly since there is more knowledge related to American and Arabic countries to base the hypotheses on.

The same applies to the sample group, which probably would have resulted differently than by applying students (Tai & Pae 2002). But since previous study has frequently used students in their samples, this research took the same turn to be able to make a comparison to existing theories.

6.2.3 Further research

While gender equality varies greatly among cultures and since humor concerning men and women are common in commercials, it would be interesting to further investigate the feminist aspect of humor with concerns of the cultural characteristics. Further research could also be done with comparison of other countries or even between continents, to investigate how the same humor styles are perceived. Another alternative would be to create a larger research with non-students, for example compare younger and older individuals to find if there is a difference between how different ages perceive humor in television commercials. All of these mentioned research ideas could also be applied to different media channels than television commercials, to find out if there is a difference between how they are perceived.

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8 Appendix 1- Questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

Introduction: This is a questionnaire to investigate how humor should be treated in advertisement. The purpose is to examine how Swedish and Chinese students perceive different types of humor in TV commercials. As a respondent, you will be guaranteed anonymity through the whole process and you will have the possibility to terminate your involvement for any reason before the thesis is published.

Instruction: As a respondent, you will be shown four different TV commercials. After each commercial you will be handed a questionnaire containing seven questions related to each commercial you will view. An instruction of how to respond will be given after each question. If you do not understand a question, please ask the researchers for further explanation.

Before the first commercial, please answer these questions.

1. What is your gender?
 Male
 Female

2. How old are you? _____ (18-27)

Commercial 1:

1. What did you feel when you saw the commercial?

For each emotion, please circle one number on the scale, where 1 is the lowest, 5 is the highest, and 3 is neutral.

a) Happiness

1 2 3 4 5

b) Curiosity

1 2 3 4 5

c) Anger

1 2 3 4 5

d) Sadness

1 2 3 4 5

e) Disgust

1 2 3 4 5

f) Fear

1 2 3 4 5

g) Surprise

1 2 3 4 5

h) Shame

1 2 3 4 5

2. How funny did you think the commercial were?

Please circle one number on the scale, where 1 is *not funny at all* and 10 is *very funny*.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Did you laugh?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
 No

4. What in the commercial did you think was the funniest?

Please tick one alternative that suits you option the most. If other, explain.

- That the babies were dancing
 The dance itself
 That the people were dancing together
 All the alternatives
 Other: _____

5. Would you consider this commercial appropriate?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain why?

6. How would you define this type of humor?

Please tick one alternative that suits your opinion the most.

- Charming (funny, amusing, non-threatening)
- Tragicomic (making jokes in a bad situation)
- Clowny (ridicules, foolish, silly)
- Teasing (mockingly, provocative, harming)

7. Would you consider buying the product based on the shown commercial?

Please tick one alternative, if no- please write an explanation.

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain why.

Commercial 2:

1. What did you feel when you saw the commercial?

For each emotion, please circle one number on the scale, where 1 is the lowest, 5 is the highest, and 3 is neutral.

a) Happiness

1 2 3 4 5

b) Curiosity

1 2 3 4 5

c) Anger

1 2 3 4 5

d) Sadness

1 2 3 4 5

e) Disgust

1 2 3 4 5

f) Fear

1 2 3 4 5

g) Surprise

1 2 3 4 5

h) Shame

1 2 3 4 5

2. How funny did you think the commercial were?

Please circle one number on the scale, where 1 is *not funny at all* and 10 is *very funny*.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Did you laugh?

Please select one alternative

Yes

No

4. What in the commercial did you think was the funniest?

Please tick one alternative that suits you option the most. If other, explain.

That the babies were dancing

The situation

The husband's reaction

The wife's explanation

All the alternatives

Other: _____

5. Would you consider this commercial appropriate?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain why?

6. How would you define this type of humor?

Please select the alternative you think suits best

- Charming
- Tragicomic
- Clowny
- Teasing

7. Would you consider buying the product based on the shown commercial?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain why?

Commercial 3:

1. What did you feel when you saw the commercial?

For each emotion, please circle one number on the scale, where 1 is the lowest, 5 is the highest, and 3 is neutral.

a) Happiness
1 2 3 4 5

b) Curiosity
1 2 3 4 5

c) Anger
1 2 3 4 5

d) Sadness
1 2 3 4 5

e) Disgust
1 2 3 4 5

f) Fear
1 2 3 4 5

g) Surprise
1 2 3 4 5

h) Shame
1 2 3 4 5

2. How funny did you think the commercial were?

Please circle one number on the scale, where 1 is *not funny at all* and 10 is *very funny*.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Did you laugh?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
- No

4. What in the commercial did you think was the funniest?

Please tick one alternative that suits you option the most. If other, explain.

- That he is treated as a dog
- He's reaction
- He is fed with a mars
- All the alternatives
- Other: _____

5. Would you consider this commercial appropriate?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain why?

6. How would you define this type of humor?

Please tick one alternative that suits your opinion the most.

- Charming (funny, amusing, non-threatening)
- Tragicomic (making jokes in a bad situation)
- Clowny (ridicules, foolish, silly)
- Teasing (mockingly, provocative, harming)

7. Would you consider buying the product based on the shown commercial?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain why?

Commercial 4:

1. What did you feel when you saw the commercial?

For each emotion, please circle one number on the scale, where 1 is the lowest, 5 is the highest, and 3 is neutral.

a) Happiness

1 2 3 4 5

b) Curiosity

1 2 3 4 5

c) Anger

1 2 3 4 5

d) Sadness

1 2 3 4 5

e) Disgust

1 2 3 4 5

f) Fear

1 2 3 4 5

g) Surprise

1 2 3 4 5

h) Shame

1 2 3 4 5

2. How funny did you think the commercial were?

Please circle one number on the scale, where 1 is *not funny at all* and 10 is *very funny*.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Did you laugh?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
 No

4. What in the commercial did you think was the funniest?

Please select ONE alternative that you think suits you the best.

- The flirting
 The guy is being silly
 The old man's reaction
 All the alternatives
 Other: _____

5. Would you consider this commercial appropriate?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
- No

If no, please explain why?

6. How would you define this type of humor?

Please tick one alternative that suits your opinion the most.

- Charming (funny, amusing, non-threatening)
- Tragicomic (making jokes in a bad situation)
- Clowny (ridicules, foolish, silly)
- Teasing (mockingly, provocative, harming)

7. Would you consider buying the product based on the shown commercial?

Please select one alternative

- Yes
- No

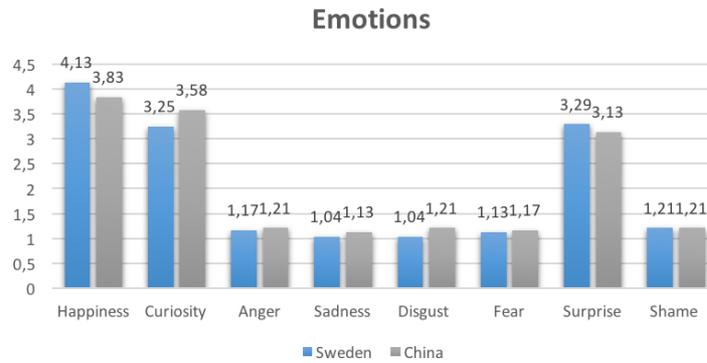
If no, please explain why?

Thank you for taking your time to fill out the questionnaire. Your participation has been of great value for this research!

9 Appendix 2 - Tables based on the empirical data

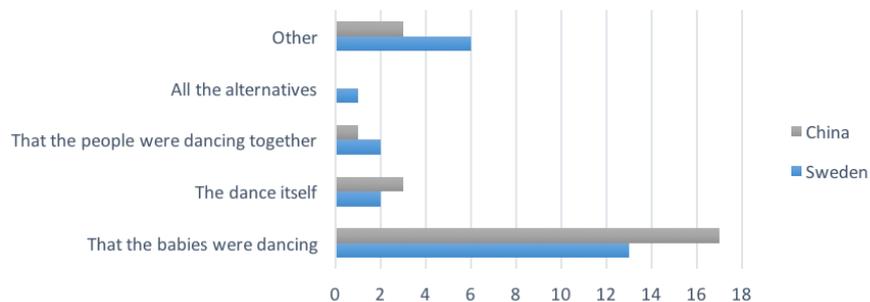
Commercial 1

Perceived Emotions



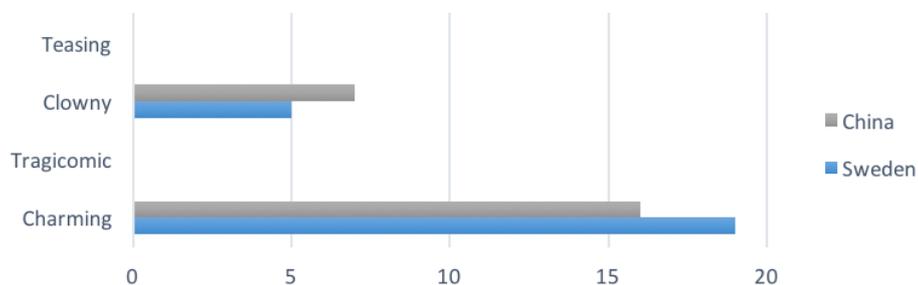
Ratings of Funniness

What in the commercial did you think was the funniest?

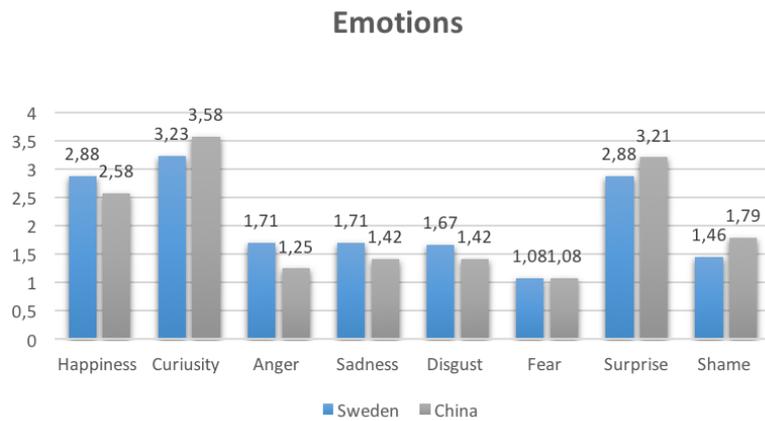


Perceived type of humor

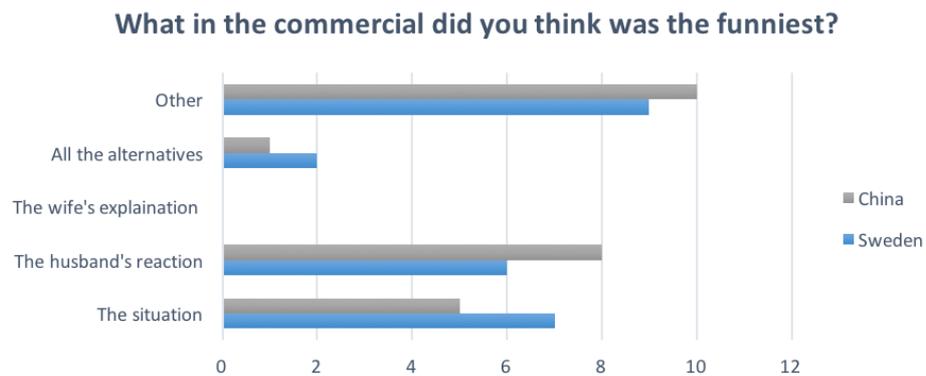
How would you define this type of humor?



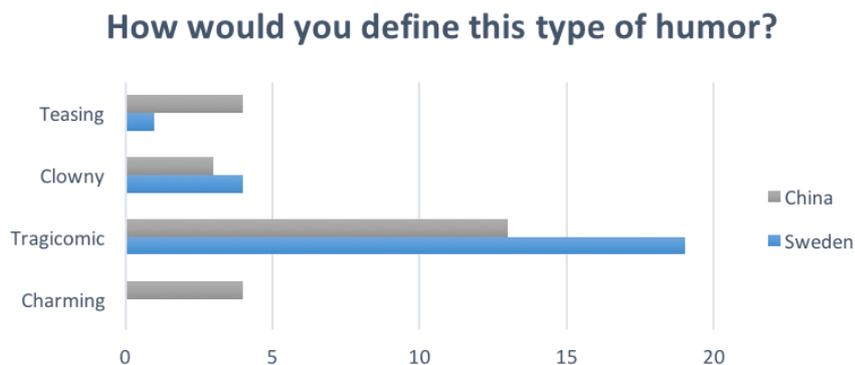
Commercial 2 Perceived Emotions



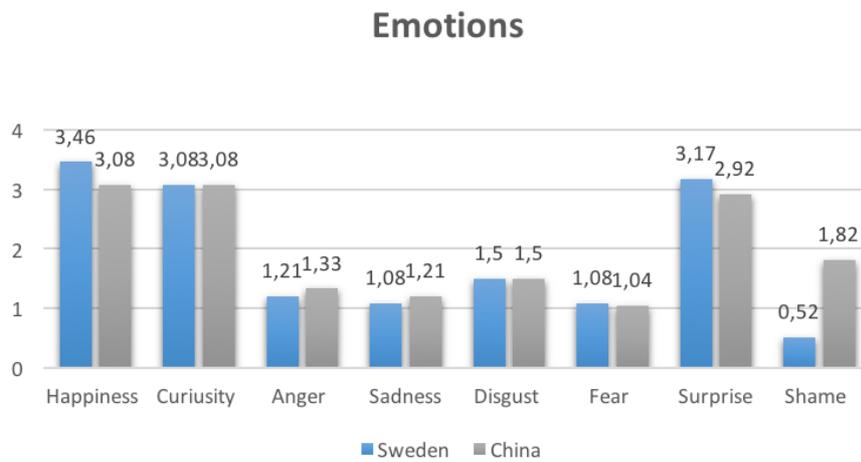
Ratings of Funniness



Perceived type of humor



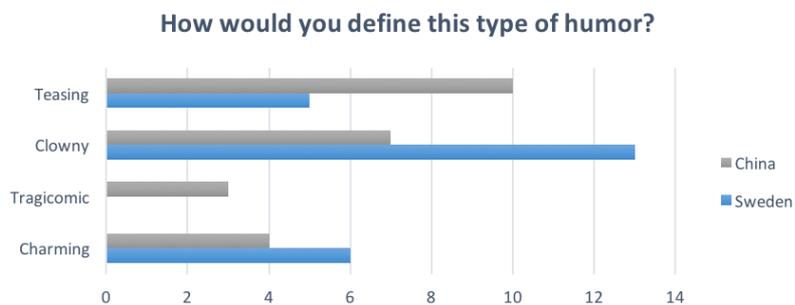
Commercial 3 Perceived Emotions



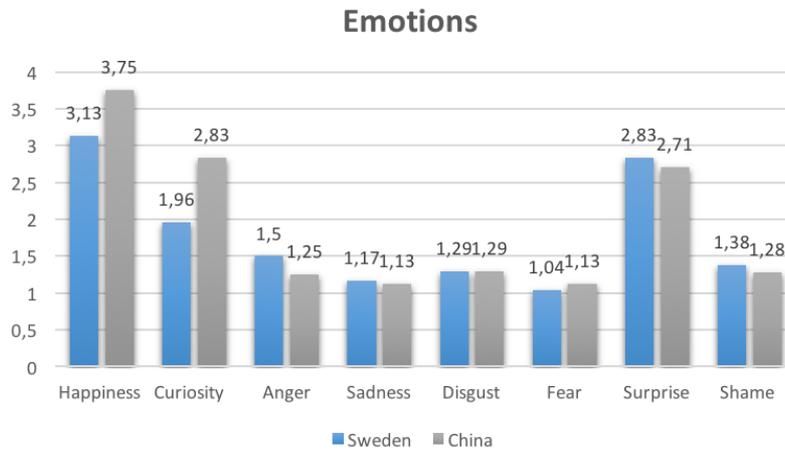
Ratings of Funniness



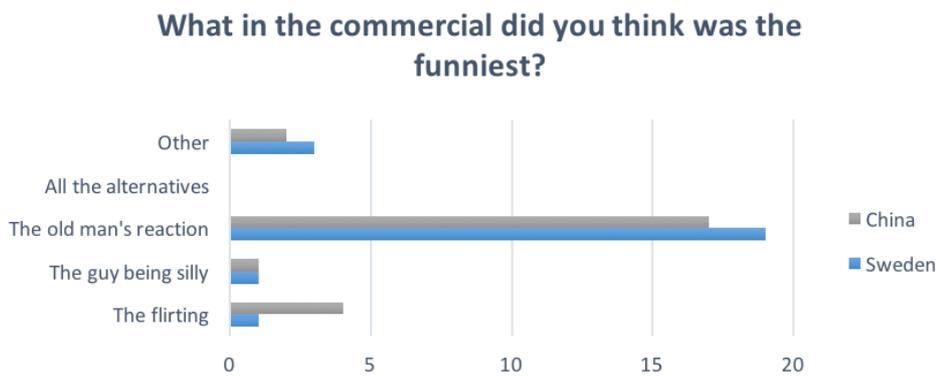
Perceived type of humor



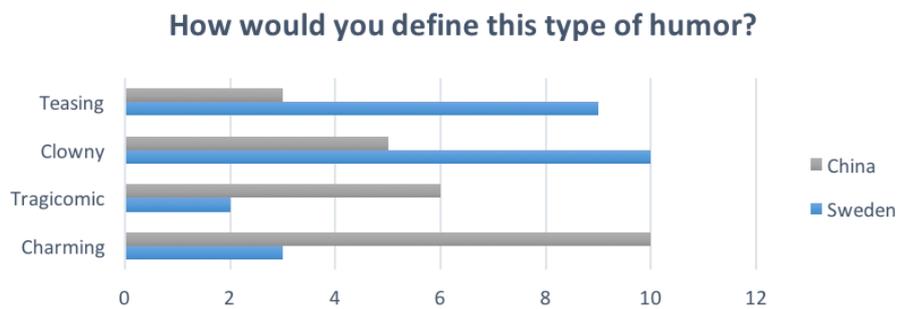
Commercial 4 Perceived Emotions



Ratings of Funniness



Perceived type of humor





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