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***YESTERDAY'S BREADWINNERS
IN TODAY'S MIXED SALAD
Cultural Representations of
Masculinity in Advertising***

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Administration

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

The use of human models is a widely used method of cultural gender representation in advertising. Together with other elements of the ad, human models assist in mediating the advertiser's intended message to the audience. In a way we can say that human models lend their face to the product. According to Chung and Ha (2004, 97; also Kanungo & Pang 1973, 172: cf. Jhally 1995, 81), human models can provide a social setting for the product and evoke more emotional responses from the consumers, creating greater attention towards the product and persuading them about the benefits of the product. The particular version of the social setting, the 'reality' of the ad, is tailored to fit the attitudes and values of the target audience, making the product an expression of that 'reality' (the lifestyle and values) and, eventually, attaching the desired identity to the product (cf. Vestergaard & Schröder 1985, 71–73).

Upon doing this, advertising has been accused of misrepresenting 'ordinary' people and fostering stereotypes of young, unrealistically thin and good-looking people only, and thus providing culturally sanctioned ideal types of the two genders (e.g. Pollay 1986, 28; Kilbourne 1995, 122; Arens 2004, 68). Furthermore, previous research on gender stereotyping indicates that women have been depicted as passive, dreamy, gentle, and likely to be manipulated whereas men have been portrayed as active, constructive, autonomous and achieving (Browne 1998, 84).

Fundamentally, advertising is talk about products and how they can make people happy (cf. Kilbourne 1995, 122; Jhally 1995, 79). However, the locus of people's happiness does not naturally lie in materialistic matters. According to previous studies (e.g. Jhally 1995, 79; Clow & Baack 2004, 67), the things that actually make people happy and the things that they value in life are rather related to, for instance, personal autonomy and accomplishment, inner peace, good health, social acceptance, and relaxed leisure time. As the ultimate goal of advertising is to get the product sold, advertising tries its best in linking the product to these non-materialistic values. This is done by promoting images of what the audience regards as the 'happy life'. And presumably, happiness, success, better looks, and better health lie at the end of a purchase. (Jhally 1995, 79–80.)

In today's society, advertising has been considered as one of the structuring institutions in the transition towards a postmodern consumer society. Along this transition, the influence of family, community, and religion have been said to have waned. (Jhally 1995, 78.) During the postmodern era, consumption has become a social act where the image of a person is increasingly manifested on the basis what s/he consumes and how s/he looks (cf. Firat & Venkatesh 1993, 235). Traditionally, the standards concerning one's appearance have mainly concerned women. However, more and more men are being bombarded with images of ideal face, hair and body, and hence, today's criteria of appearance also apply to men. The growing fascination with appearances, encouraged by advertising, has led to a feminization of culture, increasingly putting men in the classic role of the female (Barthel 1988, 179; cf. Law & Labre 2002, 698). The postmodern consumer society invites both men and women to live in a world of appearances. Today, appearance can even be regarded as a competitive tool, and part of an individual's capital resource, and advertisements are helping legitimate the use of beauty products and interest in fashion also among men, so constructing new masculinities (Barthel 1988, 170, 183; cf. Kinnunen 2001; Crewe 2002, 42–43; Schroeder & Zwick 2004, 22, 44).

According to McCracken (1988, 33), there has been a movement from face-to-face societies, in which the status of each individual was based on common knowledge, to anonymous societies in which status is often inferred from an individual's possessions. This has led to '*We are what we have or what we consume*' kind of thinking (cf. Firat 1994, 217; Jhally 1995, 80). Consequently, narcissism – foregrounding the pleasures associated with dressing and grooming of the body – is growing (Nixon 2000, 294). People learn to see themselves as malleable 'material' that can and should be moulded according to the current trends featured in advertising and other popular media (cf. Berger 2004, 66). In a way, the concern for looks is no wonder: substantial empirical evidence supports the benefits of physical attractiveness; physically attractive [and taller] people are perceived to be stronger, more sociable, more interesting, and more successful; they are considered to have an overall societal advantage in various fields of life – in marriage, getting jobs, and earnings (Singer 1983, 33; Caballero, Lumpkin & Madden 1989, 16). As an example, according to a recent US study (cited by Salter 2005), the average US chief executive officer is 3 inches taller than the average US man (who, on the average, stands 5-foot-9).

1.2 Purpose of the study

This study is about advertising and representations of masculinity in advertising in two cultures, Finland and the United States. As already referred to in the previous subchapter, advertising can easily be seen as an agent that promotes cultural socialization (Franklin 1984, 40). For example, a brand such as Nike is probably teaching its audience(s) about the values of fitness, health, and excellence in sports. As a global brand, Nike is likely to have a global impact on imparting these values to various cultural audiences. Nike is not alone, there are a number of brands that operate globally and, hence, may have an impact on cultural socialization. Interestingly, many of these brands are US in origin. (see e.g. Lane, King & Russell 2005, 679.)

More specifically, advertising also seems to work as an agent of cultural socialization within the area of gender roles. That is, global advertising may impact gender representations across cultures. For example, the US based Gillette may depict certain images and stereotypes of male grooming products that then become accepted by other countries.

The purpose of this study is to examine cultural representations of masculinity in advertising in Finland and the US. It is anticipated that due to the effect of global advertising, Finland and the US will share similar gender representations of masculinity. However, given that gender is deeply rooted in culture, important differences are simultaneously expected to occur between the two countries.

The purpose of the study can be divided into three research questions mentioned below, each – without specifically underlining – embodying the aspect of masculinity:

1. What cross-cultural and culture-specific gender codes can be found, and how have these codings possibly changed during the last three decades?
2. What is the relevance of using human models in advertising?
3. What is the role of advertising in modeling gender stereotypes?

In order to get a deeper understanding of the socializing role of advertising within culture, and in order to find out how people respond to the visual images of men in these two countries, the method to be used is focus group interviewing, i.e. letting Finnish and American people talk. Supposedly, the group arrangement will bring a deeper perspective to the adverts and the discussion of the representations of masculinity (cf. Percy, Rossiter & Elliott 2001, 27; Flynn 1991, 281).

The study is retrospective in the sense that it looks back at potential changes in the representations of masculinity in advertising during the last 30 years, as viewed by the participants in the focus group discussions. The 30-year time

span was chosen due to the presumption that a shorter time period would reveal no significant changes (cf. Royo, Capliure & Miquel 2001). Besides, the amount of studies on [particularly female] role portrayals has been on the rise during the last three decades, and these previous studies have been used as important building blocks of the theoretical framework of this study. Since access to the data from as far back as 30 years was one of the major issues, print media turned out to be the best alternative, of the many media options. Herein, magazine ads are being used as projective stimuli for the upcoming discussion.

The study aims at adding new perspectives to the gender research in advertising by focusing on images of men, by using a qualitative method and by taking a cross-cultural perspective to the issue. Thus, the core of the research is masculinity in advertising, studied in two cultures – Finland and the United States. The following figure delineates the research setting.

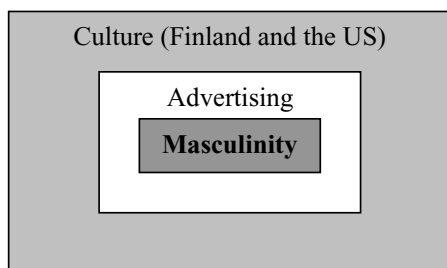


Figure 1. The focus and context of the study.

As countries, the United States and Finland differ in many political, social and cultural aspects; however, they also share similarities: they are both free enterprise market economies, the standard of living is high, and both have considerable experience with advertising. On the contextual continuum of communication, both countries are considered as low-context cultures in reference to the explicitness of messages (see e.g. Pelsmacker, Geuens & Van den Bergh 2001, 473–474). Also, many of the new ideas originating in the US have been easily adopted by Finnish people; Finland has even been called ‘The America of Europe’ or ‘The 51. state of the US’ (Rantanen 2004). Rantanen (2004, 24–26) lists a number of examples of American traditions, brands and phenomena that have been adopted by the Finnish people: Halloween, Saint Valentine’s Day, Mother’s Day, River Dance, basketball, American football, Hollywood, tv series [Friends, 24, The OC, The Simpson’s], hamburgers [McDonald’s], Coca Cola, and many more. Along the easy adoption of cultural issues, there has been, however, a lot of criticism against the American political system and the way international relations have

been dealt with during the last few years. According to an international survey, 56 % of the Finnish people regard the United States with suspicion. (Rantanen 2004, 26.)

The interest in gender research has been on the increase since the 1960s, since the rebirth of the women's movement and changed social conditions in family lives. Parallel to this rise, research on gender in advertising has proliferated at an even pace, the emphasis having been on gender role portrayal research particularly concerning women. The portrayals of men have virtually been ignored, and additional research is obviously needed (cf. Klassen, Jasper & Schwartz 1993, 30; Wolhete & Lammers 1980, 760). In addition, the majority of the gender portrayal research has been conducted in one country, primarily in the United States. Moreover, many of the studies have been quantitative by nature, using content analysis as a method. These studies have been criticised for being too descriptive (e.g. Ford, LaTour & Clarke 2004, 42; Lerman & Callow 2004, 507–508).

Obviously, there has been a deficiency of *qualitative cross-cultural* research on *men* in advertising that uncovers representational implications of gender, using interpretative techniques (e.g. Schroeder & Borgerson 1998, 174; Kolbe & Albanese 1996, 4; Wiles, Wiles & Tjernlund 1995, 41; Skelly & Lundstrom 1981, 52). This study adds to the limited body of such research by examining representations of men, and by using extended focus group discussions as a research method.

The idea is to incorporate consumer interpretation into the cross-cultural advertising studies by using extended focus group discussions as a method, and by doing so, enrich the meanings of masculinity (cf. Lerman & Callow 2004). One has to keep in mind, however, that the research is not designated to determine the impact of advertising on a society's values about appropriate portrayals, but to ascertain cultural insights to masculinity in advertising in Finland and in the United States during 1973–2003 from a retrospective angle. Furthermore, examining the genuine intents of advertisers is beyond the scope of this research.

Each country has unique aspects of history and national character that can affect advertising content (Browne 1998, 84). Besides, due to global advertising, there may be cross-cultural similarities between countries. Consequently, examining representations of men in advertising in and across two cultures over the past thirty years can add to the picture of cultural and cross-cultural gender codings of adverts and their amendments in general (cf. Wernick 1991, 48). Moreover, looking back – as long as thirty years from now – can help us see ahead (cf. Savitt 1989, 326; Brown 1997, 169).

The research proceeds as follows. As the purpose of the study is '*to examine cultural representations of masculinity in advertising*', the first three

chapters (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) provide theoretical background in gender and masculinity, with respect to advertising as well as culture. Chapter 5 describes the methodology; the method to be used in this study – focus group discussions – will be presented. Chapter 6 is devoted to the research findings. Finally, chapter 7 provides a summary and conclusions of the study, theoretical and practical implications, as well as limitations of the study.

1.3 Depiction vs. representation

Before proceeding, a distinction between the concepts of ‘depiction’ and ‘representation’ has to be made. A *depiction* of an object is based on the similarity between the motif and the depiction – it is something that is portrayed in an advert, for instance. On the contrary, an object can *represent* much more than what is depicted in the picture: for example, a man in an advert can represent manhood, humans or even gender¹ in general, i.e. be representative of men or gender in that culture (cf. Rakow 1986, 22). Besides being able to depict objects, a picture can represent something outside the picture (cf. Schroeder & Zwick 2004, 24): it can convey and express feelings, it can symbolize or stand for something, and it can be a specimen of or a substitute for something. Representation emphasises choices made during the meaning making processes: choosing the elements of representation as well as choosing what is left out (Sarpavaara 2004, 32). In order to understand a picture’s message it is necessary to interpret the picture; i.e. what the picture ‘is trying to say’. (Andrén, Ericsson, Ohlsson & Tännjö 1978, 23–32; Hall 2000, 16.)

One particular type of representation is stereotype (Sarpavaara 2004, 33). A stereotype is often a false and not easily altering over-generalization of characteristics of a group of people (Zhou & Chen 1997, 485²; cf. Mosse 1996, 13). Similarly, according to Hall (2005, 192), stereotypes ascribe particular characteristics to an entire group of people, thus, covering up individual differences among the people. These characteristics have mostly to do with outward appearances, and, in turn, the internalized visual image of a person relies upon the perception of the outward appearance. As in other areas, stereotypes are often used in advertising to make the abstract more concrete. (Mosse 1996, 5.) According to Spence and Van Heekeren (cf.) (2005, 54), stereotyping in advertising is inevitable due to time and space constraints: one

¹ According to Lacey (1998, 131), it is often men who do the representing of gender.

² Original sources: Mackie, M. (1973) Arriving at “truth” by definition: the case of stereotype inaccuracy. *Social Problems*, Vol. 20, 431–447. Williams, J. E. – Best, D. L. (1982) *Measuring sex stereotypes: a thirty-nation study*. Sage Publications: Beverly Hills.

has to deliver the message in a limited time (for instance, most tv commercials run for 30 seconds) or in a limited space (most ads in magazines are one page or smaller).

Gender stereotyping involves general beliefs about masculinity or femininity: characteristics and behaviours characterizing men and women as well as gender roles [activities considered appropriate and/or typical for men and/or women] (Browne 1998, 83). Harker, Harker and Svensen (2005, 252–253) list a selection of studies of the last 30 years that have examined gender stereotypes in advertising. As expected, most of them focus on female stereotypes. Because of the power and ubiquity of advertising, gender stereotypes [whether concerning women or men] can produce negative consequences for people, particularly young people (Spence & Van Heekeren 2005, 59; Franklin 1984, 40–42).

2 GENDER

2.1 The concept of gender

According to Connell (2002, 7), the word ‘gender’ originates in Indo-European word-root meaning ‘to produce’ (cf. ‘to generate’). The term has been borrowed from Latin and Greek grammars where ‘gender’ refers to the distinction between classes of nouns: masculine, feminine, and neuter (Hodge & Kress 1988, 98). When talking about gender in Western societies, the third category (neuter) is dropped, and gender is considered as a dichotomy. Different languages engender concepts and words in different ways; however, English and particularly Finnish are relatively un-gendered languages (English makes a distinction between the pronouns ‘he’ and ‘she’ whereas in Finnish a person is always ‘hän’). Moreover, there is a word for both ‘gender’ and ‘sex’ in English language³ whereas in Finnish there is only one word, ‘sukupuoli’. (cf. Connell 2002, 7–8.)

As to the terms ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ in juxtaposition, sex is a classification based on biological factors (people are born male or female), whereas gender is cultural, acquired through interaction and socialization: people learn to be masculine or feminine. As Corrigan (cf.) (1997, 98; see also Rakow 1986, 21) has aptly put it: gender refers to the ways in which sex is transformed into meaningful cultural entities. Furthermore, ‘gender’ embraces the ways boys/men and girls/women are expected to behave (Costa 1994, 5; also Gunter 1995, 1). From infancy on, people are exposed to an assemblage of gender depictions that the society sees fit. Hence, the expected gender-based behaviours vary from one society to another. (e.g. Wood 2003, 21–22; Peoples 2001, 10; Fowles 1996, 201; Costa 1994, 1, 5.) Western societies have typically only two genders; there are, however, societies that have three genders: male, female and berdaches (also called hijras or xaniths⁴) (Lorber 2001, 21).

The issue of gender has arisen and accordingly, the interest in gender and gender roles increased during the last three decades. Scholarly books, articles, and basic research concerning gender issues are appearing (Brannon 1985,

³ The terminological distinction between ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ was made in the 1970s by a number of theorists (Connell 2002, 33).

⁴ Berdaches are biological males who are socially treated as women (Lorber 2001, 21).

298). The Finnish Journal of Business Economics dedicated a special issue on Gender, Organization and Society (3/2000), arguing that research on economy, business, management and organization has been gender-blind, both concerning theoretical frameworks and empirical studies (Katila, Kovalainen, Meriläinen & Tienari 2000, 319). However, according to Katila et al. (2000), researchers are gradually starting to take gender seriously as a constitutional element of social ordering.

2.1.1 Masculinity

Brannon (1985, 298; also Franklin 1984, 4) gives credit for the discovery and development of the concept of masculinity to the Women's Liberation Movement. Conscious women started to challenge the stereotypic constants of women – the blueprints for what a woman was supposed to be and not to be. Most feminist research centered its attention exclusively on women (Fischer & Gainer 1994, 84–85). At some point, some feminist writers began to question the male gender role, the cultural blueprint for men, which would correspond to the female role. In the beginning, masculinity was defined by simple contrast with what was female⁵: if women are passive, men must be active; if women lack confidence, men must be confident (Franklin 1984, 4). However, it soon became evident that men cannot simply be inferred by looking at women; i.e. something more than a mirror image was needed. Hence, the interest in defining masculinity from its own premises gained ground. But what is masculinity? Why do some men appear more masculine than others? What different styles, actions, and forms of activities result in the perception of masculinity? (Brannon 1985, 299; see also Stern 2003, 216.)

Supposedly, defining masculinity can be quite a difficult task. As mentioned, masculinity was first understood as one part of a dualistic gender structure, as an opposite of femininity: what is not feminine is masculine; i.e. masculinity is anything that women are not (see Hirschman 1999, 161). A female must be feminine and a male masculine. According to Connell (2002, 33, 35), gender differences arise from biology, social norms, and differences between men's and women's personalities. For instance, in American society, neatness, nursing, tactfulness, gentleness and talkativeness have been considered as traditional feminine features and correspondingly, activeness, aggressiveness, competitiveness, dominance, independence, and self-

⁵ Depicting masculinity and femininity as opposing extremes is called the *polarization theory* (Stern 2003, 223).

confidence as masculine⁶ (Schiffman & Kanuk 1997, 464; Connell 2002, 40; Gunter 1995, 2, 53; Franklin 1984, 5). Likewise, female models in adverts have been considered to provide direction for what is not masculine (cf. Gunter 1995, 2⁷).

All human beings are biologically of the same species, *Homo sapiens*, and have basically the same blood chemistry and members of the body (Brannon 1985, 302). However, history and culture are considered to have affected the characteristics of what it means to be a woman or a man, and what is considered 'feminine' or 'masculine'. Kimmel (1987, 14), among others, has suggested that masculinity and femininity vary in the course of time and in different contexts. Thus, they are fluid: they are subject to change over time and place; we might expect to find differences, for instance, in the form of masculinity in different cultures at different times⁸ (cf. Strate 1992, 79; Devereux 2003, 131; Sarpavaara 2004, 48; Wood 2004, 282). As an example, the ideal American masculine gender role in the 1970s, as identified by Brannon (1976⁹, cited in Alexander 2003, 537) contained four themes: (1) No Sissy Stuff: a real man never resembles a woman, avoiding the use of cosmetics and giving minimal attention to clothes and hygiene; besides, real men devalue traditional female activities, such as child care and domestic chores. Also according to Barthel (1988, 169), a real man avoids things that could be considered effeminate: for instance, concern about one's appearance and interest in fashion. Male beauty has mainly been associated with homosexuals. (2) The Big Wheel: a man is the one who has the ability to obtain wealth, success, and status. According to this theme, a man is determined by his occupation, or other achievements e.g. in sports¹⁰. (3) The Sturdy Oak: this is the man's man: confident, physically stout, invulnerable, and self-reliant; a sturdy oak is to be relied upon but not to be reliant on others. According to Kimmel and Aronson (2004, 499), John Wayne and the Marlboro Man are the two leading symbols of the 'sturdy oak' form of masculinity. For instance, the Marlboro Man – the rugged cowboy – is worldwide recognized as a symbol of freedom, independence, and adventure

⁶ However, the beliefs of personal differences are now mostly considered myths (Connell 2002, 41).

⁷ Original source: Maccoby, E. E. – Jacklin, C. N. (1974) *The psychology of sex differences*. Stanford University Press: Stanford.

⁸ The accepted, prevailing, patriarchal form of masculinity – "what it means to be a man" – at any given time and location is called 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell 1995, 77; Beynon 2002, 16; Hanke 1992, 190). Hegemony relates to the cultural dominance in the society, for instance the dominance of heterosexual men and the subordination of homosexual men as well as the dominance of the white over the non-white (Connell 1995, 78; Schroeder & Zweick 2004, 28).

⁹ Original source: Brannon, Robert (1976) The male sex role: our culture's blueprint of manhood and what it's done for us lately, in: D. David – R. Brannon (eds) *The forty-nine percent majority: the male sex role*. Random House: New York. 1–14.

¹⁰ Sports is often used as a ground for manly endeavour (see Moore 2003).

(Pickton & Broderick 2005, 49). (4) The Give 'Em Hell: according to this theme, men use aggression and violence to obtain sex from women.

As opposed to Kimmel's (1987) idea, Hofstede (1998, 6) calls 'masculinity' as a set of values typical for men altogether, such as assertiveness, toughness, and material success. This definition neglects the assumption that masculinity can take different forms in different cultures (Wicks & Mills 2000, 338¹¹).

Referring to this, there has been a debate within gender studies and social studies whether a gendered sense of self is ascribed by in-born characteristics (*nature*) or is achieved through social construction and socialization (*nurture*). Regarding this debate, Oakley (1972) has made a foundational distinction between the biological divisions of people into females and males, that is 'sex'¹², and the socially constructed division into femininity and masculinity, that is 'gender'¹³. The latter emphasizes the role of culture in the 'making of men and women': gender is socially constructed and maintained in discourse. (Wicks & Mills 2000, 329, 333; Lacey 1998, 107; Fowles 1996, 199; Rakow 1986, 12–13.) As advertisements influence social constructions and enhance cultural learning (e.g. Schiffman & Kanuk 1997, 408), we can ask a question: "What is the role of advertising in nurturing gender?" (cf. Rakow 1986, 12). It is this specific role of advertising that this study is dealing with.

Gendered subject positions are constituted by images of how a person is expected to look and behave (Wicks & Mills 2000, 333¹⁴). From the social constructionist perspective, masculinity or femininity is an achieved status: you learn to be a man or a woman (e.g. Jokinen 2003, 10). Thus, masculinity is not simply a matter of being male and reaching a certain age. Rather, it is a sustained act. (Moore 2003.) According to Moore (2003), it is as difficult to become a masculine man as it is to become virtuous. By saying so, he (Moore 2003) refers to the origin of the word 'man': the word 'virtue' stems from the Latin word 'virtus' a derivative of 'vir', i.e. 'man': to be masculine is to be virtuous.

Similarly, Brannon (1985, 300–301) refers to being 'masculine' or 'feminine' as a social role that fulfils the norms and expectations of a society and that a person learns to play. Courage, competitiveness, camaraderie, and a sense of fairness are often considered as important manly virtues. Boys are

¹¹ Original source: Woodward A.E. (1996). *Multinational Masculinities and European Bureaucracies*.

¹² In addition to the sex roles of male and female, Brannon (1985, 302–303) lists examples of cultures where there are three or even four roles; for instance, the role of *nadle* (an ambiguous role) among the Navajo of western North America, and the roles of *hwame* (a man but not a warrior) and *alyha* (a male dressed like a woman) in the Mohave culture.

¹³ The majority of marketing gender studies evaluates gender as a binary variable masculinity and femininity – as opposed to sex (Wolin 2003, 112–113).

¹⁴ Original source: Weedon C. (1993). *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralist Theory*. Blackwell: Oxford.

reinforced for strength, independence, competition, and success (Wood 2003, 22; Moore 2003.) Boys are not allowed to cry. Through advertising and other popular cultural elements, maturing individuals – young boys and girls – learn what behaviours and attitudes are gender-appropriate. Repeatedly observed and once learned, the images and ideals are said to be resistant to change later on. (Fowles 1996, 199–201; Zhou & Chen 1997, 485; cf. Dyer 1982, 109.) Media exposure has been found to have a significant impact also on men, for instance on men’s endorsement of personal thinness and dieting (Law & Labre 2002, 699).

But can a uniform masculinity be found? According to Beynon (2002, 1–2), due to its culture-bound nature, masculinity is a diverse, mobile construction, and thus, there are numerous forms of and expressions of ‘being masculine’. Besides, the influence of feminism and the gay movement has affected the concept so that today, instead of speaking of ‘masculinity’, we should rather speak of ‘masculinities’ (Jokinen 2003, 11). Beynon (2002, 4–5) raises interesting questions concerning masculinity that also relate to the basic assumptions of this research:

1. How is ‘masculinity’ normally understood? Is ‘maleness’ the same as ‘masculinity’?
2. What is the relationship between biology, gender, and sex?
3. Can only men be ‘masculine’?
4. Does a man’s sense and expression of masculinity change as he ages? Has masculinity changed throughout history?
5. Are there continuities of masculinity across cultural boundaries? Does a deep-structure of masculinity, an archetype of manliness, exist across different cultures?

2.1.2 Categorizations of masculinity

As already referred to, the definition of masculinity can vary from one country and culture to another, bringing about different categorizations¹⁵ of masculinity. Besides geographical and cultural factors, generational similarities and differences have been found strong in differing images of masculinity (see Rakow 1986, 23). While adult men identify “Be like your father; be a faithful husband; love nature; be a good technician” as expectations for men, a younger generation underlines such ideals as “Be big;

¹⁵ Categorization helps us put things [in here: masculinities] together according to points of similarity (Hall 2005, 192).

be strong; be (hetero)sexual; be young”. (Alexander 2003, 537–538¹⁶). Even long before, wealth, power and status were considered as manly characteristics. As early as in the 1830s, the ideal of manhood was an urban entrepreneur, a businessman who derived his identity from his success in the capitalist marketplace. (Kimmel 1987, 12.)

In spite of the changing role of men and masculinity in societies, there are elements that have traditionally categorized, for instance, the North American men, and still do: namely, business, science and military (Wernick 1991, 50–51). From the social relational perspective, a nuclear, role-divided (he works, she nurtures) family represented the ideal, particularly in the 1950s and 1980s (ibid., 51–52). However, the sexual turmoil of the 1960s and 1970s affected the masculinity ideal, changing men’s promotional imaging in regard to their social environment, and sexuality. According to Wernick (1991, 52), along with the change of familial status in real life, men are shown more often alone – not (yet/anymore) married, single, successful executives. However, there are competing views to this: according to the results of the study by Uusitalo, Martin and Saari (2003, 13, 18), the role of men as child caring fathers is a rather dominant trend in today’s advertising.

As the above mentioned discussion indicates, there is preferably more than one kind of acceptable masculinity; thus, rather than speaking of *a* masculinity we should take a look at the masculine diversity, i.e. multiple masculinities. The study of ‘multiple masculinities’ has produced different categorizations, archetypes of masculinity. Mishkind, Rodin, Silberstein and Striegel-Moore (1987, 46–47) identify five archetypes – soldier, frontiersman, expert, breadwinner, and lord. According to Fuller (1996¹⁷; cited in Wicks & Mills 2000, 336), there are several extant forms of masculinity – Sporting man, Macho man, Business man, Working Class man, Middle Class man, Homosexual man, and New man. Also Brannon (1985, 305) has encountered the fact that there seems to be more than one kind of masculinity. He has categorized the American man into seven images: (1) the football player (emphasis on good shape), (2) the jet-set playboy (featured with fast cars and beautiful women), (3) the blue-collar brawler (a temperamental sport spectator), (4) the dynamic big-shot businessman (a leader with a firm handshake), (5) the Don Juan (sexy, smooth, irresistible to women), (6) the

¹⁶ Original sources: Harris, Ian M. (1995) *Messages men hear: constructing masculinities*. Taylor & Francis: London; Hollander, Jocelyn A. (2001) Doing studs: the performance of gender and sexuality on late-night television, in M. S. Kimmel – M. A. Messner (eds) *Men’s lives*. Allyn & Bacon: Needham Heights. 477–493.

¹⁷ Original source: Fuller, P. (1996) Masculinity, emotion and sexual violence. In: Morris, L. – Lyon, E. S. (eds) *Gender relations in public and private. New research perspectives*. MacMillan: London. 226–243.

working man (strong, simple, sweaty, and honest), and (7) the great leader (a genius, an idol of the masses).

Mort (1996) and Nixon (1996) have also examined the visual representations of a specific manifestation of masculinity and termed it, accordingly with Wicks and Mills (2000), the 'New Man', which became popularized in the 1980s. The New Man is an eroticized remaking of the male body in which certain features (lips, hair, shoulders) are dwelt upon camera in a manner both traditionally masculine and feminine. The 'ideal' type of masculinity is, according to both Mort and Nixon, shifting away from the typically English facial features of thin lips, light skin, and rectangular jaw toward fuller lips, darker hair, darker eyes and skin. Mort and Nixon suggest that the new look may be due to the more open expression of homosexuality. (Mort 1996, 16; Nixon 1996, 183.)

Contrary to this view, Hirschman (1999, 162–163) sees significations of femininity and the female, rather than homosexuality, in the New Man. She goes as far as calling the New Male '*a masked feminine figure*' because traditionally women have been associated with vanity and attractiveness, and now that there is a greater concern of male looks, the New Man is a Female sign. Furthermore, she criticizes Mort's (1996) and Nixon's (1996) definitions of masculinity for being too narrow and tries to construct a wider understanding of the meaning of men and masculinity. The five categories discerned by Hirschman (1999, 163–176) are: (1) the prince, (2) the public warrior, (3) the rogue-adventurer, (4) the father-figure, and (5) the scientist. The following table summarizes the archetypes and their main features (Hirschman 1999, 163–176).

Table 1. Images of masculinity (Hirschman 1999, 163–176).

ARCHETYPE	FEATURES
Prince	A young man of royal or noble birth; handsome; brunette; medium built; square jaw; rectangular face
Rogue-adventurer	Independent; clever; resourceful; selfish; id-driven; manly in appearance; physically robust
Public Warrior	Honourable; courageous; selfless; tall; big; muscular builds; large, prominent jaws
Father Figure	A moral guide; physically not very strong or handsome; older-wiser advisor
Scientist	Valued for their intellect rather than their muscles or looks; brain power (eyeglasses, calculators, computers)

Mort and Nixon are both men and they have done their research in the British culture, whereas Hirschman is a female, representing the American culture. She has examined archetypal images in the most popular American motion pictures and television shows of the past sixty decades and come across recurrent types of male characters. In her research she is trying to construct a more detailed understanding of the meanings of men than Mort and Nixon.

Holt and Thompson (2004, 427) also categorize American men; they have found three models of masculinity – the breadwinner, the rebel, and the man-of-action models – where the first two represent ultimate ends, the first emphasizing respectability, organized achievement, and civic virtues, and the second one emphasizing rebellion, untamed potency, and self-reliance. These two competitive models are resolved in a third model: the man-of-action.

According to Holt and Thompson (2004, 427, 429), the breadwinner masculinity is grounded in the American myth of success: individuals from all backgrounds can achieve anything (and climb the socio-economic ladder to a position of status) if they just work hard enough and devote themselves to their careers. Besides, breadwinning men are represented as paragons of family values, responsibility, and good fatherhood. Rebel masculinity represents the reverse: adventure, anarchism, autonomy, courage, physical skills, and cunning. The rebels are warriors and seducers rather than fathers and husbands, thus, lacking the ability to take responsibility and to work on behalf of others. The rebel is an equivalent of Hirschman's (1999) rogue-adventurer. But according to Holt and Thompson (2004, 428), most American men duel between these two, and consequently, the most potent masculine

model for American men is the synthesis between breadwinning and rebellion: the man-of-action hero. Men-of-action challenge institutions through their rebellious feats, yet maintaining the sense of caring and responsibility. James Bond and Indiana Jones are examples of men-of-action characters who do not always follow the rules, but eventually, turn out to be right. At the root of the man-of-action ideal hero lies the all-American ideal of vision, guts, and a can-do spirit. Theoretically, Holt and Thompson (2004) contribute to the analysis of masculinity and consumption and the postmodern view of constructing also the male identity through consumption. (see also Alexander 2003.)

The consuming role of men is heavily involved in another new image of the man in the 21st century: the ‘metrosexual’¹⁸ which has some resemblance to Hirschman’s (1999) New Man. A metrosexual man has been defined as a straight, sensitive, well-educated, heterosexual urban dweller who has effeminate features and lifestyles: he likes to shop¹⁹, he may wear jewellery, and he is interested in fashion. He is willing to push traditional gender boundaries, still thinking – in spite of the indulgences previously considered solely female – of himself as nothing but a ‘real man’. (Trubo 2003; Koskinen 2003, 83.) Snellman (2003) lists a few examples of famous metrosexuals – Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Robbie Williams – but according to her (Snellman 2003), David Beckham is the king of them all. Beckham is a master at combining different roles: on a soccer field, he is a professional, even aggressive athlete, whereas in his private life he may wear diamonds, polish his finger nails, and even wear a skirt. He has altered the public image of athletes as well as the overall image of masculinity. (Snellman 2003.) According to Cashmore and Parker (2003, 219, 221, 225), he portrays a multi-faceted masculinity: he is a combination of the New Man and new lad (soccer hero, husband, father, consumer), still demonstrating features of old industrial man (dedicated, stoic, breadwinning). His commodified persona represents diverse elements of gender, sexuality, identification, and style.

As to gender-blending, similar views have been ascribed by other scholars as well: men are becoming more woman-like and women more man-like. It has even been argued that masculinity is facing a crisis. Masculinity and the male body are changing, reflecting men’s changing gender relations and self-identities. The breadwinner role of a man is being questioned. In addition, the male body has become subject to a continuous scrutiny – the body is

¹⁸ The word ‘metrosexual’ is a new word in the English language. It was voted as ‘The word of the year’ in 2003 in the US (Turun Sanomat 2004).

¹⁹ Shopping has been considered a feminine activity to an extent that even now when men form a significant portion of shoppers, they are considered ‘feminized’ by participation; shopping is still a feminine matter. (cited by Fischer & Gainer 1994, 101. Original source: Firat, Fuat A. (1991) Consumption and gender: a common history. In: Costa, Janeen Arnold (ed.) *Gender and consumer behavior*. University of Utah Printing Service: Salt Lake City, 378–386.)

objectified, exploited, and monitored. (Boni 2002, 467–468²⁰.) Advertising opens up an ambiguous space for representing men as objects for gazes, as has been the case with women for decades.

In this study, the basic assumption is that *men are not born with masculinity* (cf. Beynon 2002, 2). Instead, masculinity is something into which *men* are enculturated, something acquired through interaction in a social world (Wood 2003, 21). Men *learn* to be masculine. As to the cultural differences, one of the objectives of this study is to investigate if and how masculinities across cultures (read: Finnish and the US) are kindred or differ from each other.

The following figure delineates the connections between the above discussed key concepts. Both masculinity and femininity can have male and female versions; also men and women can represent the masculine and the feminine in different situations and different moments in their lives (Firat 1994, 219). Beynon (2002, 7–8) gives a few examples to illustrate this: a tomboy²¹, transsexual, high-flying female executive, and male nurse.

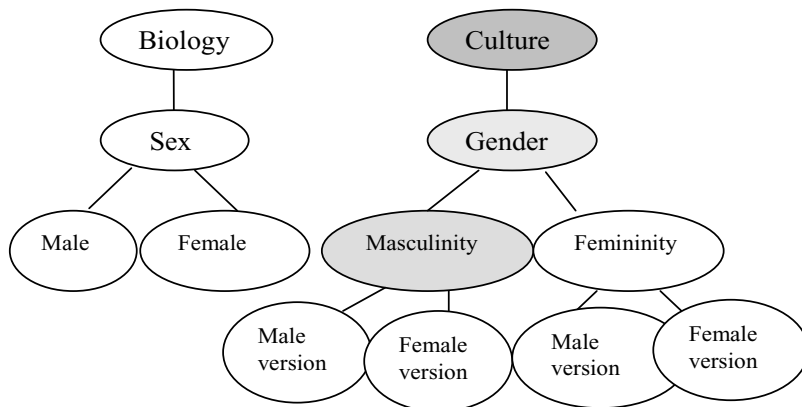


Figure 2. Versions of sex and gender.

Thus, it is possible for a man to be feminine. Also, not only men can or are allowed to be masculine. However in this study, men (or rather: the depictions of men) represent masculinities.

²⁰ Original source: Meyrowitz, Joshua (1985) *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press.

²¹ A masculine identity temporarily adopted by mostly young girls, who favour manly activities (hunting, fishing, hiking, skiing, climbing, backpacking, camping, mountaineering).

What then, are the factors that comprise masculinity? Jokinen²² (2003, 8–27) categorises masculinity on the grounds of: (1) personality and physical features (being active, rational, and competitive, having power); (2) how well a man fulfils the masculine ideals; (3) time and place (masculinity is time and context bound, a result of a social process and discourse); (4) a historical development (over the history, members of a particular culture have ‘labelled’ some act, gestures and phenomena as masculine). We can partially find similar features in Beynon’s (2002, 10) definition of the principal features that shape masculinity: historical location, age and physique, sexual orientation, education, status and lifestyle, geography, ethnicity, religion and beliefs, class and occupation as well as culture and subculture. Referring to Saco (1992, 25) and her theory of masculinity as signs, these can also be seen as symbolic categories ascribing a human being’s gender and social identity. Where sex is an innate characteristic – based on biological differences – gender is socially and culturally constructed (see Figure 3).

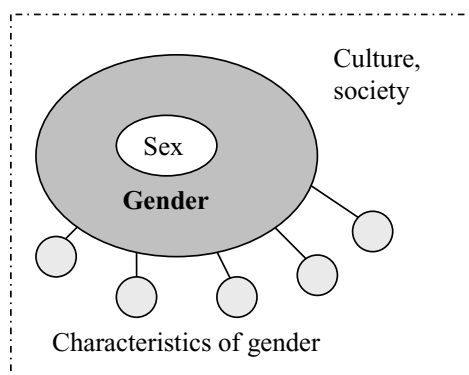


Figure 3. Gender as a social and cultural construct.

Thus, gender is a term used to describe characteristics society ascribes to persons of one sex or the other. From childhood on, boys and girls are acculturated into their gender roles through a learning and adjusting process. (cf. Hall 2005, 270; Fowles 1996, 199–201; Craig 1992, 2.) Media has an important role in the construction of gender by mediating the subjective characteristics (Saco 1992, 25). Franklin (1984, 4) brings supportive evidence to his statement of the socializing role of advertising and popular culture in

²² Jokinen (2003) bases his definitions on the writings of various authors (e.g. Connell 1995) but he (Jokinen 2003) is cited here due to the fact that there are very few other perspectives on masculinity written in Finnish and adapted to the Finnish context.

general: the more adolescents view television, the more stereotyped their gender perceptions tend to be.

In advertising, visual depictions of men act as codes of masculinity: individual men are presented with an idealized form of masculinity, which can either be adopted or rejected. Gendered subjectivities are created and maintained through discursive practices. (Wicks & Mills 2000, 337.) And advertising represents one discourse type, as stated by Cook (1996, 5): “[...] *advertising can tell us a good deal about our own society and our own psychology.*”

2.2 Gender and consumption

A lot can be learned about gender roles by looking back at the history of the relationship between gender and consumption. In order to understand the relationship, we must first look at the distinction between consumption and production which also partly explains the traditional, bipolar conception of gender. According to Firat (1994, 206–209; see also Costa 1994, 6), the division between consumption and production stems from the modern thought: it depends on the meaning of value in classical modern economics and the development of the capitalist system. The value was created by the producer, e.g. the worker in a factory, who also represented the public domain. On the other hand, the private domain, home, was the location of consumption, non-work, play, and other ‘insignificant’ things (cf. Solomon 1990, 110; Corrigan 1997, 97; Firat & Dholakia 2003, 15–16). Due to historical occurrences, women became the representatives of the private domain (‘mothering’) whereas men represented the public (‘working’) (Turner 1997, 66; see also Mosse 1996, 9). And they were the masculine qualities that were positive in the culture that developed. Consequently, categories of gender were built on the meanings that generated from the roles attributed to public and private domains. These kind of bipolar categories were typical of modernism; modernity was keen on establishing norms for an order through poles apart (see Table 2), the other pole representing good and sacred and the other pole regarded as inferior.

Table 2. Significations of gender (based on Firat 1994, 210; cf. Turner 1997, 66).

Feminine	Masculine
Private	Public
Home	Workplace
Consumption	Production
Woman (female)	Man (male)
Consumer	Producer
Passive	Active
Body	Mind
Emotional	Rational
Passion	Reason
Property	Owner
Object	Subject
Profane	Sacred

In a modern society, women's lives were not, however, private at all: women were conducted by men, being the private properties of men. The feminine – the consumer – was consumed, commodified, and objectified by men. Women were bombarded with demands regarding how they should look and behave. (Firat 1994, 212–213; Firat & Dholakia 2003, 18–19.) According to Barthel (1988, 1–2, 6–7), advertising is about creating a relationship between subjects and objects where the subjects (e.g. the creators of advertising) have traditionally been men but the objects (i.e. the targets, the consumers) have been women (see also Gunter 1995, 4–5). Particularly in the American society, the process of [especially household good] consumption was considered as women's work.

Upon entry of women into the workforce, men have become increasingly involved in everyday consumption, and they have also been forced to take greater responsibility for domestic chores. In addition, the number of men living apart from women is increasing due to a number of reasons: the rise in the age of first marriage, the increase in divorce rates, the increasing number of students; overall, the amount of single households is proliferating. Advertisers have, thus, increasingly had to take into consideration also men as potential buyers, as the 'you's' they address to in their adverts. (Wernick 1991, 48–49.)

3 ADVERTISING

3.1 The role of advertising in reflecting culture

Advertising represents one form of communication. The key elements of the communication process are shown in Figure 4. As communication, advertising implies a message (here: an advertisement) that is communicated by the sender (a company) to the receiver (a consumer). In sending the message, the company uses codes (encoding) to convey the intended information. In the other end, the receiver (consumer) decodes the message and makes his/her interpretation of the information (meaning). The more the message and the meaning resemble each other, the better the communication has succeeded (from the company's perspective); that is: the better communis ('common idea') there exists and the more favourable response and feedback (in the form of a more favourable attitude or interest towards the company and its products, preference and buying, even rebuying) the company is likely to get. Thus, ideally, consumers interpret the messages as the advertiser intends (Mick & Politi 1989, 86). This is, however, often not the case: advertisements are polysemic in nature, i.e. they have more than one meaning, and the possible interpretations can vary from a receiver to another (Rose 2003, 92; Mick & Politi 1989, 87).

Advertising, as other persuasive communication, is often considered unwanted communication: people can be uninterested, and they do not actively seek out exposure to advertising (Messaris 1997, 5; Scott 1994a, 254). Similarly, the intent of advertising is to get consumers to buy something they might well do without (cf. Fowles 1996, 11).

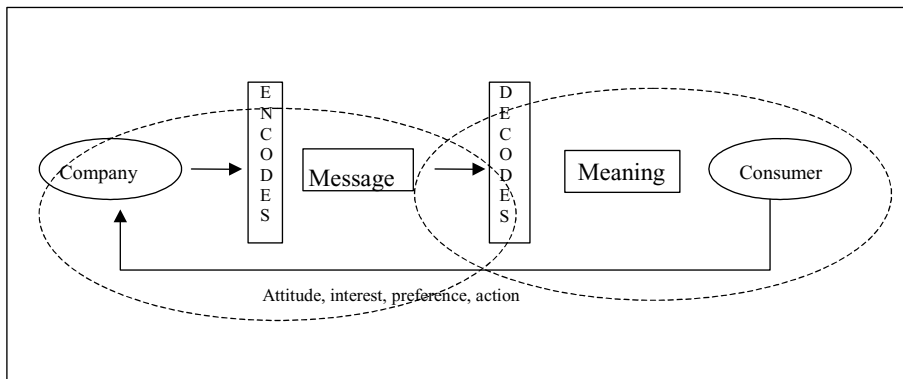


Figure 4. Communications as the production and exchange of messages and meanings.

Representing and being a part of communication, advertising is a valuable source of cultural imagery: advertisements are considered to reflect the culture of their origin and the target market's values and beliefs (Dyer 1982, 76; Kellner 1995, 126; Lerman & Callow 2004, 507). They play a part in creating, modifying and transforming cultural meanings and norms for the consumer (cf. Schroeder & Zwick 2004, 24). On the other hand, advertising takes and represents cultural values and meanings from the consumer's world and invests them into the advertised product. (Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998, 136.) Thus, it has been argued (Wernick 1991, 42; Elliott, Eccles & Hodgson 1993, 314; also Borgerson & Schroeder 2002, 572) that advertising does not only reflect the values it uses, but processes and shapes them. Whether the role is more reflective or more adaptive, depends, according to Michell and Taylor (1990, 48), on the product being advertised²³. Looking back on adverts of different eras and different cultures, we can find signs of that particular time and/or culture. In that sense, time and culture are embedded in individual adverts. (Kellner 1995, 128.)

According to the literature (Sivulka 1999, 316; Danesi & Perron 1999, 268; Fox 1984, 272), the role of advertising as a force of moulding [the US] culture was regarded strong in the 1920s, at the height of the powers of advertising. Interestingly, the 1920s is also considered as an era of progressive integration of people into advertising messages (Jhally 1995, 78). Since the 1920s,

²³ According to Michell and Taylor (1990, 49), clothing ads, for instance, aim at influencing the reality.

advertising has been regarded more as a mirror than a mindbender, responding to surrounding cultures rather than shaping them, generating images that reinforce already-forged lifestyle behaviours. Nevertheless, there are examples of cases where advertisements have helped to legitimate new products and trends; for instance, the use of beauty products and an interest in fashion for men (Barthel 1988, 170). This, however, does not happen overnight; often, it is at first a question of macro level trends and modes of behaviour that are absorbed by the people only little by little.

As with other cultural ‘products’, ads are interpretable at different levels – according to Barthes²⁴, at two levels: a surface and an underlying level. The main intent of advertising is to make an effect on the unconscious, mythic level of the mind (Danesi & Perron 1999, 282; also Hirschman 2003, 9) and, in doing so, invest goods with meaning (Sherry 1987, 446). Upon the transference of meanings, advertising brings the consumer goods and a representation of the culturally constituted world together within the frame of a particular advertisement, in hope of selling the products (McCracken 1988, 77; England, Kuhn & Gardner 1981, 471). Ideally, effective advertising means that the values in the message match the values of the receiver. Besides, advertising mobilises the ideals of what people would prefer to be like; particularly for young people advertisements can represent tokens in their system of social status and self-esteem (Deacon, Pickering, Golding & Murdock 1999, 2; Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998, 137; Leiss, Kline & Jhally 1986, 57, 61).

Hence, we can say that advertising mirrors what people dream – life worth emulating (Richins 1991, 71). This is often different from reality (Leiss et al. 1986, 152; Devereux 2003, 131). For example, “[...] *real women are much more different than their representations in the media [...]. If media images were indeed a reflection of reality, ‘real’ women would be relatively rare in most parts of the real world, and Black, older, disabled, lesbian, fat, poor, or Third World women would be virtually nonexistent.*” (Devereux 2003, 131²⁵.) In the world of advertising, according to Kilbourne (1995, 122), no one is ever ugly, poor, struggling or disabled. [Particularly the female] models in adverts are unrealistically thin; yet, obesity is increasing²⁶ (Fay 2003, 84; Richins 1991, 71). A list of types of men who are largely invisible (for instance, gay or

²⁴ Original source: Barthes, Roland (1957). *Mythologies*.

²⁵ Original source: Van Zoonen, L. - Coster Meijer, I (1998) From Pamela Anderson to Erasmus: women, men and representation. In: A. Briggs - P. Copley (eds) *The Media: An Introduction*. Harlow: Longman.

²⁶ According to Kimmel & Aronson (2004, 573), 59.3 percent of adult males in the United States are overweight.

bisexual men) within mainstream advertising could also be created (Devereux 2003, 131).

Presumably, in the mirror of the ad, the reader often considers himself/herself as the person in the picture. The product is the essence, and by consuming it the person indicates his/her membership in the communion of all those who share the same wants and needs. (Wernick 1991, 34.) As Leiss et al. (1986, 145) have nicely put it: “*through advertising, goods are knitted into the fabric of social life and cultural significance*”. Consequently, it is the culture of the consumer that should be reflected in advertising (de Mooij 1998, 8).

It has been suggested by sociologists that when people engage in consumer goods they principally fathom them as ‘signs’ rather than as ‘things’. Consumption is regarded as an activity in which the symbolic meanings attached to products are regarded as informants of people’s lifestyle and identity. (Campbell 1997, 340; Langholz-Leymore 1988, 230.) Thus, “*people can buy a way of life as they buy goods*”. With the help of symbols, such as brands, people create a feeling for their social surroundings; in this way, brands become a part of people’s self-image and identity (Urde 1999, 128). It is advertising that projects the goals and values consistent with and conducive to the consumer economy and that socialises people into this kind of thinking (e.g. Dyer 1982, 77). Barthes (1957, 1994) calls the incessant craving for new goods ‘neomania’, which he defined as ‘an obsessive desire for new objects of consumption’ (Beasley, Danesi & Perron 2000, 13). Accordingly, advertising can be called as a ‘want-creating’ mechanism, rather than ‘want-satisfying’ mechanism (Varey 2002, 269).

As represented in advertisements, goods are active, potent ingredients in social interactions; they are bearers of powers that can affect us and assist us in affecting others (Leiss et al. 1986, 276). Thus, they also create new meanings (e.g. *ibid.*, 169). Certain values, such as love, friendship, and sexual attraction are often confused with or transferred to the possession of things (Dyer 1982, 78). Often, it is a question of aiming at the ideal self. It has been stated that the larger the gap between the actual self (the way individuals perceive themselves) and the ideal self (how individuals would like to perceive themselves), the greater the impact of advertising. (e.g. Solomon, Bamossy & Askegaard 1999, 177; Schiffman & Kanuk 1997, 647, 651; Richins 1991, 71.) Thus, advertising may play a strong part in creating the standard for physical attractiveness as well as reinforcing concern with one’s own attractiveness among other people (Hogg, Bruce & Hough 1999, 463; Martin & Kennedy 1994, 105).

Over the decades, there has been much discussion as to whether advertising has a beneficial or negative role in society. Those in favour of advertising consider it, among others, as an efficient means of distributing information. In

contrast, critics think that advertising can raise the price of goods and create inefficiency. It has also been claimed that the imagery and symbolism of advertising replaces real people with artificial types²⁷, and transforms people into things, purchasable and exchangeable in the market. (Leiss et al. 1986, 13–14, 24; Kilbourne 1995, 122, 124; Kilbourne 1999, 34.) Andrén et al. (1978, 120; 152) call the idyllic world presented in ads *'the Hollywood set'*: according to them (1978, 64–65, 152; also Pollay 1986, 26; Jhally 1995, 79), advertising conceals the negative aspects of life and the advertised product, addressing people about the ways how to become happy and informing them only about the merits of the product. And supposedly, happiness lies at the end of the purchase (Jhally 1995, 80; Kilbourne 1999, 294). Also Barthel (1988, 5–6) refers to advertising as 'a world of fun and adventure' where every adversity is conquered. Advertising appeals to the child in us, who looks for excitement and pleasure.

Poe (1976, 185) demands discussion of advertising's role²⁸ in society. Today²⁹, advertising is regarded as one of the major structuring institutions of consumer society (see Jhally 1995, 78), and thus, in structuring opinions, attitudes and behaviour advertising can work as an instrument of social control, having an influence parallel to school and church. Yet, advertising lacks social responsibility (Poe 1976, 185). Accordingly, Zhou and Chen (1997, 485; also Borgerson & Schroeder 2002, 572; also Soley & Reid 1988, 965; Singer 1983, 32, 36) refer to the dilemma of advertising as both a selling tool and a means of social communication: advertisers have a social responsibility as corporate citizens in ensuring that the values and images conveyed in advertising can be identified by the potential buyers. However, advertising often hits people when they are at their most vulnerable: for instance, when they are too young to impugn its promises, or when they have problems with their own being or doing (cf. Barthel 1988, 5).

3.2 Visual images in advertising

As visual elements have grown in importance compared to text in advertising, advertising needs to be visually eye-catching in order to capture attention. Nonverbal elements are not only a means of drawing attention to the verbal elements, but they can also be the message itself. (Hecker & Stewart 1988, 3;

²⁷ Boorstin (1962) refers to these as *'pseudo-ideals'*. (Leiss et al. 1986, 27.)

²⁸ In reference to Bauman (1996, 43), we can call this the *'ethic paradox of advertising'*.

²⁹ In the past – in the agrarian-based society – other institutions, such as family, community and religion, were the major institutional mediators and creators of cultural forms and norms (Jhally 1995, 78).

Leiss et al. 1986, 180–181.) According to Schroeder and Borgerson (1998, 178), visual elements used in advertising are the key to understanding how ads create meaning. Messaris (1997) outlines three major roles that visual images can play in an ad:

1. Visual images can *elicit emotions* by simulating the appearance of a real person or object.
2. They can serve as *photographic proof* that something really did happen.
3. And, they can establish an *implicit link* between the product being sold and a certain image.

In reference to these roles, Messaris (1997, xiii) uses three properties of images as starting points for his analysis of the distinctive attributes of visual persuasion: iconity, indexality, and syntactic indeterminacy. These properties are summarised in the following table (based on Messaris 1997, 5–203.)

Table 3. The role of visual images in advertising (Messaris 1997).

Eliciting emotions by simulating the appearance of a real person (ICONITY)	Serving as a proof of something having happened or going to happen (INDEXALITY)	Establishing an implicit link between the product and the signifieds of the ad
<p>Attracting attention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Violating reality Surrealism Visual metaphors Visual parodies Eye gaze Rear views Viewing distance Subjective camera <p>Eliciting emotion by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Camera angle Look of superiority Identification Sexual appearances 	<p>Photographic proof</p> <p>Visual deception</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staging Editing Selectivity Mislabelling <p>Alteration</p>	<p>Causal link (between the product and the outcome)</p> <p>Contrast (product comparisons; before-and-after juxtapositions)</p> <p>Analogy (acting as partial substitute for adjectives and adverbs)</p> <p>Generalization (using a number of images simultaneously to imply success, glamour, prevalence)</p>

Interestingly, these properties have pronounced resemblance to Peirce's terminology (see e.g. Nöth 1995; Cobley & Jansz 1997; Fiske 1990; Nadin & Zakia 1994; Danesi & Perron 1999). In iconity, according to Messaris (1997, 3, 5), it is a question of capturing and conveying the distinctive features of reality, e.g. a picture of a person or a product, to our eyes. However, as one of

the main purposes of advertising is to attract attention, an efficient way to do that is to violate that reality³⁰.

‘Looking’ is a two-way phenomenon in advertising: by ‘the look’ we mean, firstly, the way the ad looks at the viewer (the gaze), and secondly, the way the viewer looks at the the ad. A direct eye gaze of the model in the ad has been considered as a good way of attracting the viewer’s attention. In relation to Messaris’ (1997, 21–24) observation, Kress and Leeuwen (1996, 122, 124, 186) use terms ‘Demand image’ and ‘Offer image’ where the first mentioned refers to a direct eye gaze: represented participants look directly at the viewer’s eyes, as if demanding something from the viewer. On the other hand, in an ‘Offer image’ the participants address the viewers indirectly. In here, the viewer is not the object, but the subject of the look. In an ‘Offer image’, the model looks either off or up. According to Dyer (1993), looking *up* suggests spirituality; the model is there to be looked at but his mind is on higher things, and this upward striving is supposed to please the viewer. Furthermore, when the model is looking *off* the camera, the look suggests an interest in something that the viewer cannot see, not at least interest in the viewer (*ibid.*). According to Messaris (1997, 45), male models have traditionally not looked into the viewer’s eyes in ads targeted at men. For instance, the Marlboro Man has seldom been shown looking into the viewer’s eyes. However, the situation is predicted to change.

We can look at models in an ad either voyeuristically or in a narcissistic way. The first mentioned, voyeurism, means that we look at the person in the ad with an objectifying purpose. The voyeuristic gaze is controlling and subordinating: the person in the ad may be looked at without a fear of getting caught. Traditionally, men have looked at women in this way; according to a traditional sexual myth, women are made to be looked at and men are made to do the looking (Solomon 1990, 50, 198). This implies a psychological relationship of power in which the gazer dominates the object of the gaze (Schroeder & Zwick 2004, 30). Overall, an objectifying look has been quintessential to the western cultures where possession and dominance over others have been considered important, particularly among men. (Norrena 1989, 21; Rose 2003, 110, 115–116; cf. Saco 1992, 28.) Besides, this kind of look is considered to signal activity whereas being looked at signals passivity (Schroeder & Zwick 2004, 33). Examples of a contemporary ritual, still reflecting the cultural belief that women are born to endure the active gaze of men, are Miss America/Miss Finland contests. In spite of the fact that today

³⁰ As an example of visual deception, Messaris (1997, 7) uses the technique of ‘morphing’, i.e. using a computer to bring about a smooth transition between two different images, e.g. the face of a man and a car.

also men compete on equivalent arenas, the interest in female beauty competitions is clearly higher. (cf. Solomon 1990, 198).

A narcissistic look means identification: wanting to identify with the person in the ad. Typically, when a woman looks at a woman in an ad she has a narcissistic look: she wants to become as perfect as the model. (Norrena 1989, 21.) Williamson (1978, 60–64) refers to this as ‘the mirror image technique’: the model in the ad is looking back at the viewer as if it was a mirror, becoming identified with the image of the product: ‘*You can become like this if you use the product.*’ (also Ball & Smith 1992, 52.)

The above mentioned concepts are combined in the following table, presenting four different relationships between the model in the ad and the viewer.

Table 4. Different types of the gaze and the look.

	Demand image	Offer image
Voyeuristic look	Direct eye gaze <i>Possession</i>	No eye-contact <i>Availability</i> <i>Subordination</i>
Narcissistic look	Direct eye gaze <i>Mirror technique</i>	No eye-contact <i>Subjectivism</i>

Firstly, when the look is voyeuristic and the person in the ad is looking directly at the viewer, it is a question of possession: ‘*I want you.*’ ‘*You are mine.*’ Secondly, the mirror technique refers to a situation where the viewer identifies themselves with the model who is looking at them in the eyes, as if saying: ‘*You will be like me if you use the product.*’ Thirdly, a situation where the model is not looking at the viewer but the viewer has an objectifying look, it is a question of subordination: ‘*I am available.*’ Often, women are positioned lying down on beds, as an expression of sexual availability (Leiss et al. 1986, 168; Goffman 1979, 68). Finally, a narcissistic look at the model in the ad with no eye-contact brings about a feeling of subjectivism to the viewer: ‘*This could be me.*’

An ad’s meaning is constructed not only by the discrete signs but by the ordering of events and/or the location. In a way, an ad is a frozen moment, but with a ‘before’ and ‘after’ (Dyer 1982, 129). In here, visual images can function as evidence of something having happened or going to happen in the

ad (cf. indexality in table 3). Messaris (1997, 132–160) lists ways of indicating indexality in advertising. Basically, there are two ways: telling visual ‘truths’ (using photographic images as proofs), and telling visual ‘lies’ (visual deception by the means of staging, alteration, editing, selection, and mislabelling).

Thirdly (in reference to table 3), visual images can establish a link between the product and the signifieds in the ad in four different ways: (a) causal connections; (b) contrasts; (c) analogies; and (d) generalizations. Implying a causal link between the product and a positive outcome by juxtaposing the product and an appealing visual portrayal is a typical example of a causal connection (a). Contrasts (b) are used in product comparisons and before-and-after juxtapositions. Analogical juxtapositions (c), e.g. displaying the product in conjunction with images of lions, tigers, and the like, act as partial substitutes for adjectives and adverbs. Lastly generalizations (d): we can generalize, for instance, the popularity of a product by conveying it in one picture, e.g. a picture of the globe. (Messaris 1997, 5–203.)

According to Kress and Leeuwen (1996, 183–215), visual images have different roles, depending on the composition of the advert: (1) *Information value*: the placement of elements endows the message with specific informational values (left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin). (2) *Salience*: the elements attract viewer’s attention to different degrees, whether they are placed in the foreground or background, whether there is contrast in colour or relative size, etc. (3) *Framing*: the presence or absence of framing devices, e.g. dividing lines, disconnects or connects the elements of the images.

When referring to the *information value* of left and right, Kress and Leeuwen (1996, 186) use the terms ‘Given’ and ‘New’. Usually, according to Kress and Leeuwen (1996, 187), the ‘Given’ elements are positioned in the left, whereas the ‘New’ ones are placed on the right. For something to be ‘Given’ means that it is presented as something the viewer already knows; the ‘New’ is presented as something which is not yet known, and which the viewer must pay special attention to.

The information value can also depend on the vertical structuring, i.e. the ‘Ideal’–‘Real’ structure. According to Kress and Leeuwen (1996, 193–194), the upper part (‘Ideal’) of a page [e.g. an advert] is usually occupied by the ideologically more important elements, whereas the lower part (‘Real’) has a subservient role. For something to be ideal means that it is presented as the essence of the information. The Real, meanwhile, presents more specific information (e.g. details).

Furthermore, visual composition can also be structured along the dimensions ‘Centre’ and ‘Margin’. This has to do with information value of a

message, too. For something to be presented as Centre means that it is presented as the essence of information on which the Margins are dependant and subservient. It is also good to notice that all the mentioned compositional elements (Given–New, Ideal–Real, Centre–Margin) can combine with each other. (Kress & Leeuwen 1996, 206–207.)

Saliency, the hierarchy of importance among elements in an ad, is judged on the basis of visual clues: the greater the weight of an element, the greater its saliency. Saliency is, however, not objectively measurable, but results from relationship between different factors: size of the element, sharpness of focus, tonal contrast (e.g. borders between black and white have high saliency), colour contrasts, placement in the visual field (cf. Given–New, Ideal–Real), perspective (foreground objects tending to seem more salient than background objects), and specific cultural factors (such as the appearance of cultural symbols). (Kress & Leeuwen 1996, 212.)

As already mentioned, the third key element in visual composition is, according to Kress and Leeuwen (1996, 214–215), *framing*. Elements of a composition may be strongly or weakly framed. The stronger the framing, the more an element is presented as a separate unit of information. On the other hand, the absence of framing can stress, e.g., group identity. A technique related to framing is face-ism, a tendency to portray close face shots as opposed to full body shots (Fejes 1992, 11).

According to Schroeder and Borgerson (1998, 177, 180), face is the cornerstone of identity and individuality. Previous studies have indicated that face-ism plays a consistent role in the depictions of gender, and furthermore, that face-ism in advertising rather applies to men than women (Archer, Iritani, Kimes & Barrios 1983; Schwarz & Kurz 1989; Fejes 1992, 11; Lammers & Lammers 1993; Schroeder & Borgerson 1998). The head and face are considered as the centers of mental life – intellect, personality, ambition, and character; the essence of a man is thought to reside in his face and head. Consequently, men have been portrayed in close-ups, by their heads and faces. The essence of a woman, on the other hand, is thought to reside in her body – as locus of heart and emotions; stereotypically, women have been considered more emotional than men (Gunter 1995, 15). Thus, women have often been depicted by their bodies – in full-length – conceptualized in nonintellectual terms like weight, physique, and attractiveness. (Archer et al. 1983, 726; Fejes 1992, 11.)

Parallel to face-ism, this phenomenon reflects body-ism (Archer et al. 1983, 733). Body-ism can sometimes take submissive or demeaning ways by eliminating the [female] head altogether (Schroeder & Borgerson 1998, 177–178). According to the authors (*ibid.*), women who are depicted without heads not only suffer actual violence implied by the decapitation, but also symbolic

violence by erasure of identity and intelligence. She is only a body, and it is the body that serves as an object of male attention (Schroeder & Borgerson 1998, 172, 185). According to some researchers (e.g. Bordo 1997, 124), even the notion of women-as-objects embodies the reduction of women to mere bodies. The same applies to close cropping techniques, i.e. letting any other part – a hand, eye, or leg, for instance – represent a whole person: there is not much more to consider (Massé & Rosenblum 1988, 132; Schroeder & Borgerson 1998, 172). According to Goldman (1992, 121), such advertisements perpetuate a pattern of seeing people as collections of body parts, erasing the person's identity by means of cropping (see also Schroeder & Borgerson 1998, 173).

Dyer (1982, 96–104) provides a checklist of what signs of humans in an ad might symbolize:

1. representation of bodies (age, gender, race, hair, body type, looks)
2. representation of manner (expression, eye contact, pose)
3. representation of activity (touch, body movement, positional communication)
4. props and settings.

Similarly, Fowles (1996, 171–174) reviews guidelines for deciphering adverts. Many of them resemble the above mentioned as discernible in the following table.

Table 5. Guidelines for deciphering adverts (based on Fowles 1996, 171).

Context for the ad

- Product category
- Medium
- Intended audience

Looking at the ad

- Aesthetics of the composition (layout, fonts, colours; shooting distance; focus; foreground/background)
- Symbolic elements and their meanings (regarding status, leisure/work, gender, disposition, attractiveness, responsibility, domesticity, age, vitality, personality, mood) [also in regard to their earlier use]
- Missing elements
- Setting/location in space and in time
- The ad as a narrative (a story ‘behind’ the ad)

Implications of the ad

- The nature of the relationship between people
 - Gender identity
 - Social status
 - Cultural beliefs
-

Due to the ubiquity and socializing nature of advertising, there has been discussion of the importance of visual literacy and the need of creating a common language that would assist the audience in deciphering advertising (see. e.g. Clow & Baack 2004, 200; Bourgerie & Guimaraes 1993). Given the importance of visual images, also Kellner (1995, 126) and Rose (2003, 15–16), obviously being overwhelmed by the persuasiveness and potential negative side-effects of advertising, refer to the need of engaging individuals in reading images critically. Accordingly, Sparks (2002, 176) recommends teaching people critical media consumption. A common language – visual Esperanto as it has been suggested to be called – would also assist advertisers in creating images that convey the intended meaning or message. Particularly international advertisers have to be aware of different connotative meanings that can arise in various countries (Belch & Belch 2004, 664–665).

3.3 Advertising and popular culture

According to Solomon et al. (1999, 16; 442–446), popular culture consists of music, films, sports, books and other forms of entertainment [theatre,

television, and fashion] consumed by the mass market. How does advertising refer to these? Some see advertising as subordinate to popular culture (e.g. Danna 1992, 19), whereas others (e.g. Fowles 1996) consider advertising and popular culture categorically different. In spite of the fact that they share similarities, they have things in contrast. The counterpoints and commonalities will be dealt with in the paragraphs to come.

According to Fowles (1996, 10), popular culture is light entertainment that is produced by the culture industries, delivered through the channels of the mass media, and consumed by the individuals who receive it with pleasure. People pay to go to see a play, a movie, a game. Advertising, however, is often regarded as unwanted communication or interruptions: people do not actively seek out exposure to advertising; often, adverts are seen but not regarded (Messaris 1997, 5; Schudson 1986, 3–4; Pollay 1986, 18). Besides, popular culture is thematically broader than advertising, and actors have more latitude, whereas models in advertising are more likely presented flawless in appearance. Advertising's perfected style leads to an emphasis on surfaces. Anonymity is a character typical to advertising: creative people and models are hardly ever named in an advert. However, popular culture performers and directors are usually always listed, and they are often widely known celebrities. (Fowles 1996, 14–16.) Furthermore, in a play or television series, the actor enacts a particular person, whereas the model in an advert plays a social type or a demographic category of a 'typical' user of the product³¹ (Schudson 1986, 211–212). Lastly, according to Fowles (1996, 17), advertising is paid for by advertisers, thus serving advertisers, whereas popular culture serves members of the audience. However, we should say that, ultimately, advertising is paid for by the consumers who pay for the expenses of advertising in the prices of the products they buy. Additionally, besides serving advertisers, advertising should also serve consumers by providing product information.

The commonalities between advertising and popular culture have been reviewed by Fowles (1996). The following table summarizes the major affinities, based on Fowles (1996, 9–17).

³¹ Excluding testimonial ads where well-known experts, celebrities or sportsmen are speaking for the product.

Table 6. Commonalities between advertising and popular culture.

Products of culture industries
Artistic by nature
People featured often epitomes of gender
Conveyed by mass media
Only partially absorbed
Controlled by the audience
Financially significant industries
Sometimes difficult to understand
Subjects of critical invective

Interestingly, Fowles (1996, 17) poses the issue of artistry, saying that the more artistic advertising or popular culture is, the more successful it is. As to advertising competitions, this can be true; however, an advert with too artistic elements might confuse the ultimate goal of advertising: to persuade people to buy the product. People might remember the ad but not the product (e.g. Pelsmacker et al. 2001, 83–84). The same has to do with elements other than the product: for instance, sexually attractive models can generate high interest among some audience segments but they can divert a viewer from the actual message (Aaker & Myers 1982, 247; Clow & Baack 2004, 201, 208).

There has been an interesting discussion whether popular culture actually is produced by the culture industries or by people, and how the interests of economic institutions and individual consumers parallel (Stevenson 2002, 89). Fiske (1989, 25), emphasizing the interpretive role of consumers, argues that popular culture is made by the people who consume it, and the act of consumption entails the production of meaning.

In this study, advertising is regarded as a part of popular culture. The assumption is that together with films, television, books, sports, and music, advertising acts as an ingredient that men draw upon to construct their masculine identity (cf. Holt & Thompson 2004, 427).

3.4 Advertising in the United States

In order to examine portrayals of gender, herein: masculinities, it is necessary to review the cultures of the countries under research (Gilly 1988). People in the United States are exposed to more advertising than people anywhere else (Berger 2004, 26). In fact, the United States has been considered the

advertising capital of the world (Khairullah & Khairullah 2002, 50). The amount of advertising is the highest per capita in the world³²; the average American may be exposed to 500 to 1000³³ commercial messages a day (Arens 2004, 58, 66). Worldwide, the United States accounts for approximately 55 percent of the total spent on advertising. The United States is still the world's largest single market for advertising, but advertising expenditures by companies of US origin have also increased during the last decades (cf. Lane et al. 2005, 679; Belch & Belch 2004, 660).

As typical to a low-context culture, Americans are known for their directness in speech, and accordingly, Frith and Wesson (1991) have separated rhetorical styles into 'direct speech' and 'indirect speech', where direct speech includes command, information, and label. Consequently, in the United States ads are used also as important sources of information [besides entertainment] (Al-Olayan & Karande 2000, 73). Referring to the directness of speech, Fowles (1976, 73) considers American advertising as 'nonassociative'; in a nonassociative advert, all the elements refer to what is being sold.

Americans are considered to be straightforward, self-assured, and easy-going; they are fast at decision-making and good at executing decisions (Rantanen 2004, 26). In reference to this, American advertising is reputed to try to prove the merits of a product clearly, logically, and reasonably, by directly presenting information, facts and evidence about the product's merits and purchase reasons (Hong, Muderrisoglu & Zinkhan 1987, 56–57; Lannon 1986, 6). This notion has been supported by Biswas, Olsen and Carlet study (1992, 79) on print advertising in the United States and France. Besides, according to Al-Olayan and Karande (2000, 73–74), price information in ads appeals to American buyers.

American ads place more emphasis on individual activity and determinism, which arises from the belief that an individual has control of and is responsible for his or her own life. Along individualism, enjoyment and saving costs are important themes in American advertising. (Alden, Steenkamp & Batra 1999, 76.) Furthermore, competition is encouraged in different spheres of life, which, in advertising, is reflected by using hard-selling tactics: American ads often demonstrate how the sponsor's product differs from that of competitor's (comparative advertising; puffery), provide more informational cues and precise details, as well as focus on tangible product features. (Hong et al. 1987, 56–57; Alden et al. 1999, 78; Al-Olayan & Karande 2000, 72–73; Belch & Belch 2004, 665.)

³² According to Arens (2004, 58), advertising amounts to a spending level of approximately \$ 440 (appr. 340 euros) for every person per year in the country.

³³ According to some other researchers (e.g. Spence & Van Heekeren 2004, 88), even 3000 ads per day.

According to de Mooij (1998, 165), Americans conceive communication from the process school point-of-view: they see communication as a means to persuade others, to change attitudes, and to influence or condition behaviour. Hence, also advertising is regarded as mainly persuasive by nature (Duncan 2005, 158; de Mooij 1998, 165).

3.5 Advertising in Finland

Advertising has a distinctive role in the Finnish economy as well. The spending level of media advertising amounted up to 250 euros (\$ 325) per capita in 2004 (TNS Gallup 2005). However, the history of advertising business is shorter than in the United States. The word for 'advert' in Finnish, i.e. 'mainos', was launched only in the 1920s. Until then, a Swedish-originating word 'reklami' had commonly been used. Other countries, particularly Germany, England and the United States in the early years, have, overall, had a great impact on Finnish advertising: for instance, in the 1920s, adverts were foreign copies that had only been translated into Finnish. During the war time, the amount of advertising declined and the content changed: patriotism, national defence, perseverance, and heroism were commonly repeated themes in the scarce adverts. (Heinonen & Konttinen 2001, 303–304; see also Malmelin 2003, 21; Hovi 1990, 120, 128.)

In the 1960s, many new ideas were again imported from abroad, particularly from the US. However, the activating consumerism and Consumer Protection Act of 1978 affected advertising: according to Heinonen and Konttinen (2001, 307), Finnish ads of the 1970s contained a lot of information. In the 1980s, the amount of information diminished and product image format became a typical format. Moreover, lifestyle ads started getting popular along the economic growth and the arising yuppie culture. As also to advertising, most of the 1990s was an era of recession. However, the situation started getting better towards the end of the decade, and the new millennium manifested itself more optimistic; besides, the media culture had become more international, yet more fragmented than before. (Heinonen & Konttinen 2001, 300–301, 307–309.)

The Finnish culture as such has not affected the strategies of advertising; in principle, many ideas have been adopted from the American advertising. The culture has rather manifested itself in the tactical level – in creative implementation such as the settings (lakesides, Midnight sun, snowy hills), the models ('Finnish' looking people), and the copy.

As to the advertising expenditures by media categories in Finland, the share of print advertising is the highest, amounting up to 71 per cent. Of this

amount, magazines account for approximately 16 per cent. (TNS Gallup 2005.) The percentage is high compared to the United States where network television is the primary advertising tool (51 %), magazines accounting for approximately 11 percent of the media mix (Clow & Baack 2004, 290, 293).

3.6 Gender and advertising

Gender is a frequently used factor in developing marketing strategies via advertising: it is still often used as a segmentation criterion, thanks to the fact that gender is easily identifiable and gender segments are reachable and measurable. Since the 1960s – after the rebirth of women’s movement and changed social conditions in family lives – gender issues have been in flux. Parallel to the rise of practical gender issues, research on gender in advertising has proliferated at an even pace. The gender research can be categorized in five approaches: 1) research on role portrayals; 2) selectivity hypothesis research; 3) spokesperson gender effects research; 4) gender advertising response research, and 5) gender positioning research. (Wolin 2003, 111.) According to a recent oversight by Wolin (2003), the majority of research has been performed on gender roles and role stereotyping, especially using content analysis as a method, and in print advertising³⁴. Besides, particular attention has been given to the depiction of women in advertisements; another body of role portrayal research has examined depictions of men and women together in magazine advertisements (Goffman 1979; Klassen et al. 1993; see also Kolbe & Albanese 1996, 1). Surprisingly, the role portrayal studies have been conducted almost solely in the United States even though there has been criticism about the portrayals of women in most developed countries (e.g. Milner & Collins 2000, 67; Zotos & Lysonski 1994, 28).

According to the findings of selectivity hypotheses research (2), women and men process advertisements differently (e.g. Meyers-Levy & Sternthal 1991). The early feminist critiques considered gender as a major reason for differences in texts selected and reader responses (Stern & Holbrook 1994, 19). Females are considered comprehensive information processors whereas men are thought to be selective information processors (Wolin 2003, 113). Findings of the spokesperson gender effects research (3) suggest that the gender of the spokesperson does affect consumer attitudes towards products, but there are also controversial findings (e.g. Frieden 1984). Research on

³⁴ The majority (76.9 percent) of the studies covered in Wolin (2003) study had been performed in print advertising.

gender differences³⁵ in advertising response (4) suggest that there are differences between men and women in processing advertising; e.g. females are more likely to regard advertisements sexist (Lundstrom & Sciglimpaglia 1977, 75). On the other hand, they are more accepting to male nudity in advertisements than men (Simpson, Horton & Brown 1996). Leigh, Rathans and Whitney (1987) used the cognitive response approach to investigate reactions of traditional and modern women role portrayals of women; women's role portrayals were found to strongly influence advertising effectiveness (Leigh et al. 1987, 59). According to Shani, Sandler and Long (1992, 382), women require less attention-getting devices and more information compared to men's advertising. Overall, it seems important for communication with women that the portrayals of men and women in gender-related advertisements are realistic (Elliott, Eccles & Hodgson 1993, 314; cf. Solomon et al. 1997, 186).

The gender of a brand can be communicated by the use of, for instance, colour, shape, packaging, logos, graphics, sound, and names. The body of gender brand positioning findings (5) suggests that boys/men and girls/women appraise and accept feminine and masculine brands differently (e.g. Whipple & Courtney 1985; Costa 1994, 3). According to this view, many products are sex-typed: they take on masculine and feminine attributes. Hence, consumers, associate them with one sex or another. (Solomon et al. 1999, 185.) Products with masculine images include a pocket knife, tool kit, shaving cream, cuff links, and a briefcase. Accordingly, products with feminine images comprise a scarf, baby oil, hand lotion, bedroom slippers, gloves, and sandals. (Debevec & Iyer 1986, 211.) Females tend to prefer feminine brands and males masculine; however, women are also approving towards masculine products, whereas men do not readily accept feminine brands. (Wolin 2003, 117, 124.)

³⁵ The way women respond to gender representations portrayed in advertising has been extensively studied e.g. in the United Kingdom (Elliott, Eccles & Hodgson 1993 312).

4 CULTURE

4.1 The role of advertising in transferring culture

Although **culture** is as old as human history, the first scientific definition of culture was introduced only in 1871 by a British anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book 'Primitive Culture'. Since then, there have been hundreds of definitions (Hall 2005, 3). Tylor defined culture as "*a complex whole including knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, any other capability or habit acquired by human beings as members of society*". Tylor's definition represented a monolithic perspective of culture. Yet, according to later definitions, culture has been defined as a dynamic multi-level phenomenon (e.g. Schein 1985).

Hofstede (1982) defines culture as the collective mental programming of the people in an environment, which is expressed at different levels: symbols, heroes, rituals and values (Figure 5). *Symbols* represent the most superficial manifestations of culture, consisting of words, gestures, pictures or objects, which carry a particular meaning within that culture. According to Fowles (1996, 21–22), culture is made visible by symbols, and among others, advertising uses the symbolic stock of a culture in order to appeal to the audience. *Heroes* are persons, living or dead, real or imaginary who possess characteristics that are highly prized in a culture. Thus, they work as models for behaviour. In advertising, the endorsers of the products – particularly celebrities – can be referred to as 'heroes'. *Rituals* are collective activities that are considered socially essential: ways of greeting, social and religious ceremonies. Again in advertising, various – often culture-bound – rituals are being used. *Values* lie at the core of a culture; they represent broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others: evil vs. good, ugly vs. beautiful. (de Mooij 1994, 123–124.) In advertising, there is a constant battle between the basic [universal] human values: the good (our product) and the bad (a competitor's product) or the ugly ('before using the product') and the beautiful ('after using the product'), to give some examples. Besides, it is necessary for advertisers to take the culture-specific [American, Finnish etc.] values into account, and make the advertisements consistent with the value system of the concerned culture (Al-Olayan & Karande 2000, 70). Often, cultural values are encoded in the visual imagery of an advertisement (Scott 1994a, 252; Hirschman 2003, 9). For instance, the model in the ad – his/her gender, looks,

clothing etc. – can convey meanings on value, ritualistic, heroic, and symbolic level. David Beckham is an example of a celebrity whose presence in an ad can invest the advertised product with common human core values associated with achievement, success, fitness and health, and material comfort.

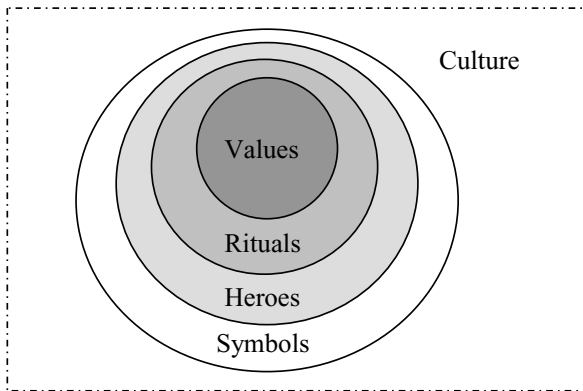


Figure 5. Expressions of culture at different levels (adapted from de Mooij 1994, 123³⁶).

Communication mainly operates at the symbols' level but, simultaneously, reflects the values, rituals and heroes of a culture. According to de Mooij (1994, 131), every culture reflects and manifests its values in its communication. People of a specific culture become committed to that culture's style of transferring values and rituals (cf. Hong et al. 1987, 55). Hence, communication can be regarded as the product of a culture's deeper level. Culture is also regarded as a means to offer order, direction and guidance for its people (Schiffman & Kanuk 1997, 407) and in here, communication works as a guide or mediator of the idealized ways of behaviour. By studying communication we can understand how culture operates (cf. Leeds-Hurwitz 1993, 17; Deacon et al. 1999, 1). And by studying gender – like in this study, masculinity – we can learn about the different levels of culture: the values, the rituals, the heroes and the symbols.

Johnson (Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel 2002, 142³⁷) has developed a model according to which culture is a process or circuit of production, circulation, and consumption. The original model has been reworked by a group of British scholars who emphasize the relationship between culture and meaning.

³⁶ Original source Hofstede (1990)

³⁷ Original source Johnson R. (1986–87). What is cultural studies anyway? *Social Text*, Vol. 16, 38–80.

Meaning is constructed – transferred, produced – through cultural practices. The circuit of culture depicts different moments: representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation. (Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel 2002, 142.) In the circuit of culture, advertising works as a mediator, as a means of meanings transferor (cf. Cronin 2000, 5).

In the model, *representation* refers to the production of meaning through language, connecting the meaning and language to culture. It uses language to say something meaningful about the world to other people. (Hall 2000, 15.) In advertising, the term ‘language’ can be referred to both the written text and the visual elements, even though visual communication lacks some explicit devices compared to verbal language (Messaris 1997, xi, xvii–xviii). Photographs are used in ads as images that shape the worldview (Messaris 1994, 25).

Identity refers to how a cultural product, e.g. an advertisement, can act as a marker to identify a particular group, that is, to create an identity. Identity can be viewed as a dynamic concept based on symbolic characters that attempt to differentiate in order to identify³⁸. The meanings in advertising can be used as symbolic resources in the process of the construction of people’s identities (Cronin 2000, 1). For instance, an advert can tell us how the consumption of the particular product influences our identity. (Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel 2002, 143.) ‘*We are what we consume.*’ The images of a desired self are conveyed through one’s possessions (Thompson & Hirschman 1995, 151).

Hence, besides utilitarian character [use-value], consumer goods have ability to carry and communicate ideological values and cultural meanings [sign-value] (McCracken 1988, 71; Featherstone 1991, 67, 85; Fiske 1989, 27; Baudrillard 1998, 76–77); to put it simply: *a commodity is ideology made material* (Fiske 1989, 14). For instance, a television serves as a home appliance and acts as a signifying element of prestige (cf. Baudrillard 1998, 77). A similar conception is shared by Campbell (1997, 341): consumer goods possess both instrumental and symbolic meanings, framed by advertising. However, the problem is to what extent the symbolic meanings are shared; this sets pressure on communication.

Products are encoded with meanings in their production process, and the encoding processes comprise the instant of *production* in the circuit of culture. *Consumption* looks at what the product means to the consumers. On the other hand, people’s identities are partially constituted by their consumption practices. For instance, a particular subculture can use products to signify their identity. (Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel 2002, 143.) This can be perceived, for

³⁸ This way of thinking represents the so called ‘*Nonessentialist view*’ (see more e.g. in Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel 2002, 143).

instance, among young people who want to create an identity that attempts to be oppositional to the mainstream, e.g. punks and hiphoppers.

Lastly, the circuit of culture suggests the need to examine how a cultural product *regulates* cultural life (Acosta-Alzuru & Kreshel 2002, 143). The regulation can lead into normative assumptions of e.g. people's looks, behaviour, social norms. Advertising can be regarded as one of the regulators; the elements that are explicit in an ad can direct thinking but, as well, the elements that are left out can produce meanings (Panula 1997, 249) and in that sense operate as regulative.

4.2 Postmodernism

It has been claimed (e.g. Firat & Venkatesh 1993, 227; Bouchet 1994, 405; Alexander 2003, 536) that during the last few decades, Western societies have been undergoing a shift from a modernism to a postmodern culture³⁹. Along the shift, other changes have been observed, now considered typical to postmodern era. People no longer produce what they consume but buy goods produced by others; accordingly, production activities historically performed at home – gardening, weaving, knitting, sowing, baking – have diminished (Schroeder 2002, 32; Firat & Dholakia 2003, 17–18). Work, overall, and discipline have lost their status as primary values (Turner 1997, 24). Furthermore, people no longer consume products for their material utilities but for the symbolic meanings derived from the use of the products, as communicators of their selves (Percy et al. 2001, 24; Featherstone 1991, 84). Overall, the urge to consume is, according to Brown (1993, 50), the characteristic symptom of postmodernism.

One of the fundamental differences between modern and postmodern thought is the notion of order: according to postmodernists, reality is unordered, and consequently, reality cannot be understood in a single, absolute way. According to postmodernism, matters can always be challenged and there is no definite social order per se. This thinking relates to people as well: depending on the situation, the same person can be a parent, a child, a spouse, a worker, and a friend. (Wood 2004, 289, 293; Noble & Bestley 2005, 162.) Turner (1997, 23–24; Sarpavaara 2004, 54–56) describes the shift from

³⁹ According to Lewis (2002, 218; also Featherstone 1991, 7), the term 'postmodernism' was introduced by Frederico de Onis in the 1930s to indicate a reaction to modernism. It was first used by a loose collective of musicians, writers and artists in New York in the 1960s. According to Brown (1997, 174–175), however, due to its ambiguous nature, there is no such thing as 'the' postmodern; consequently, there are as many postmoderns as there are postmodernists. Instead of postmodernism, Giddens (see Gauntlett 2002, 95) uses the term *late modernity* of the era that we live in now.

modernism to postmodernism metaphorically by referring to old Greek mythology; the modern – ‘the Apollonian time’ – was characterized by harmony, order, work, discipline, asceticism, and rationality, whereas the postmodern – ‘the Dionysian time’ – is typical of wild action, freedom, disorder, leisure, hedonism, and strong feelings. The Dionysian ideal stresses sensuality, sexuality, and the importance of one’s appearance (Sarpavaara 2004, 56). And advertising has an important role in taking this ideal further.

Upon the rise of postmodernism, advertising has changed toward more versatile and *mixed formats*, i.e. using many different ways of promoting the product. Postmodern advertisements appeal to the consumers by a jigsaw collage of multiple representations of selves, hence, being more tolerant towards different ways of being: instead of one ideal type, there can be multiple ideals. However, tolerance⁴⁰ can be created at the cost of clarity: it has been argued that postmodern advertising is abstruse, ambiguous, and difficult to grasp; there are implicit messages without a clear structure, and form is more important than the content. (Vuokko 1997, 696.) Besides, postmodern advertisements present little information about the product or about the use of it; instead, a mood or atmosphere is created and the product associated with that mood. This can cause confusion in the minds of the consumers. (Proctor, Proctor & Papisolomou-Doukakis 2002, 33; Boutlis 2000, 14, 16.)

Along the ambiguous nature of advertising, there are some *ethical concerns* that have been under discussion (Cohan 2001, 324–325): advertising is accused of making people believe that happiness depends on the possession of material things (see Pollay 1986, 21); advertising is accused of playing on physical appetites, the body, and the pursuit of pleasure; advertising is accused of giving people more of illusions than telling the ‘truth’; advertising is accused of presenting an unrealistic or idealized picture of people⁴¹, leading to negative social comparison and body dissatisfaction – particularly among women – as well as contributing to psychological distress and eating disorders (see Richins 1991, 71, 75–76; also Law & Labre 2002, 698, 700; Clow & Baack 2004, 211; Ängeslevä 2004). One of the main issues under discussion has been and still is the role of pornography and sex in advertising; particularly [young, good-looking, semi-clad] women have been used as a means of attracting attention and boosting sales (cf. Pollay 1986, 28). Typified

⁴⁰ Tolerance can also mean that people seek validation of self through consumption, trying to construct their identities adopting brands as symbols of self. However, the proliferation of ‘permitted’ styles does not necessarily mean that people would feel more confident inside. (cf. Boutlis 2000, 18; Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998, 131).

⁴¹ In a way, advertising can be related to genetic engineering: it creates the kind of people it prefers, neglecting the unwanted characteristics (cf. Pollay 1986, 27).

representations undermine people's dignity and cast a demeaning light upon their physical and intellectual characteristics (Borgerson & Schroeder 2002, 578). According to Cohan (2001, 327–330), ethics in advertising using women is becoming a popular topic, and standards concerning the portrayals should be set higher: a shift in standards would let room for inner beauty as well. When speaking of the ethical concerns, Cohan (2001) mainly relates to the use of women in adverts; however, the question also has to do with men in advertising. There is a danger that if nothing is done against the increasing objectification of the male body and sexploitation, men will encounter the same underestimation and submission as women.

According to postmodernism, advertising is no longer considered as subordinate to production; instead, it is a mirror to the consumers' world (Boutlis 2000, 11). It, consequently, focuses on the social meanings of consumption: how well the product in the ad can improve one's physical attractiveness or enhance one's social success (cf. Schroeder 2002, 28, 33; Firat & Dholakia 2003, 75). The following table lists some of the differences between modern and postmodern views.

Table 7. Differences between modernism and postmodernism (cf. Bouchet 1994, 406).

Modernity	Postmodernity
Tomorrow	Today, yesterday (“retro”)
Laws	Changing norms
Written word	Visual images
Discipline	Seduction
Labour	Leisure
Demonstration	Persuasion
The adults	The young
The citizen	The consumer
Good-market	Symbol-market

According to Brown (1993, 53), postmodernism prefers disorder to order, ambiguity to certainty, surface to depth, heterogeneity to homogeneity, differences to similarities, individuality to universality, consumption to production, past to present, and present to future. Interestingly, many postmodernists seem to be more concerned with the past than the present, and further, more concerned with the present than the future: with retrospect instead of prospect. In reference to this, postmodern marketing is characterized by a ‘retro’ orientation: by nostalgically styled retro products and

advertisements. (Brown 1997, 167, 169; also Boutlis 2000, 13.) The social order in modern societies was based on traditions, providing people with clearly defined roles, including gender roles. However, according to postmodern thinking, identities are fluid and flexible; a person's identity can be seen as a performance and a production: in postmodern societies individuals have to work out roles for themselves. (cf. Gauntlett 2002, 96–97; Wood 2004, 294.)

4.3 Culture and consumption

As stated earlier, goods are said to be able to carry and communicate cultural meaning. This meaning is in constant transit – there is a flow to and from its locations in the social world. (McCracken 1988, 71.) According to McCracken (1988, 71–72), there are three locations of meaning: the culturally constituted world, the consumer good, and the individual consumer. Besides, there are two moments of transfer of meaning: world-to-good and good-to-individual. The following figure explains this trajectory.

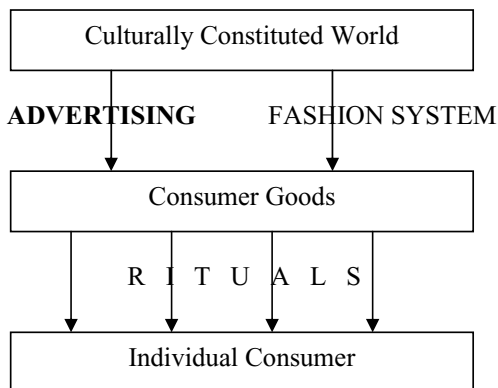


Figure 6. The movement of meaning (cf. McCracken 1988, 72).

Culture is the lens through which phenomena are seen. It determines how these phenomena will be apprehended and assimilated. As a lens, culture determines how the world is seen. (McCracken 1988, 73.) Thus, culture is *learned*; people are not born with it (Hall 2005, 12). Secondly, according to McCracken (1988, 73–74), culture is the blueprint of human activity: it determines how the world is fashioned by human effort. Thus, culture both constitutes the world by supplying it with meaning, and, members of a culture

construct the world in which they live. Following the same logic, goods are both creations and creators of the culturally constituted world (ibid., 77). They are an opportunity to make culture material and categorize people according to age, sex, class, and occupation (ibid., 75).

In the process of movement of meaning, advertising operates as a way of bringing consumer goods and representations of the culturally constituted world together. It can be said to be a conduit through which meaning is transferred from the world to consumer goods. Among its audience, advertising is one of the ‘teachers’ of culture, and by studying advertising we can learn something about that specific culture. In a particular advertisement, there are pieces of the culturally constituted world that can be evoked in an ad: place (a fantasy or a naturalistic setting), cultivated vs. untamed environment, time, people (their age, sex, class, status, occupation, clothing, body postures, affective states). Through advertising, we are kept informed of the present state and stock of cultural meanings that exist in consumer goods. As McCracken (1988, 79) has nicely put it: “*Advertising serves us as a lexicon of [...] cultural meanings.*” (ibid., 77–79.)

Meanings from goods to individuals are transferred through rituals. According to Rook (1985, 252: cf. Hall 2005, 85, 87), a ritual is a type of symbolic activity consisting of a series of steps occurring in a fixed sequence and repeated over time; for instance, singing or listening to the national anthem in a sports event. Besides, rituals tend to be related to ritual artefacts that are associated with the performance of the ritual, like Christmas celebration and the Christmas tree with ornaments, various food items, candles, elves, etc. (Schiffman & Kanuk 1997, 412). McCracken (1986, 78–80; 1988, 83–88) lists four types of rituals:

1. *Exchange rituals* are concerned with gift giving: the gift-giver chooses a specific gift because it possesses the meaningful properties s/he wishes to transfer to the gift-taker. Thus, the recipient of the gift is also the recipient of the symbolic properties that the gift contains.
2. *Possession rituals* have to do with personalizing the object: possessing a good speaks for a person. According to the possession ritual, goods are used as symbolic resources for the construction and maintenance of identity (Elliott & Wattanasuwan 1998, 132).
3. *Grooming rituals* refer to the “going-out” rituals: advertisements describe how confidence, better looks, and social attractiveness can be obtained from certain make-up, hair styling goods, fragrance etc. Grooming rituals help draw the meaning out of these products and invest it in the consumer.
4. *Divestment rituals* concern goods that a person has previously owned or with goods that have been owned by someone else before. In

divestment rituals, it is a question of emptying the good of meaning before passing it along or erasing the meaning associated with the previous owner. This can be the case for instance when buying a house: cleaning and redecorating work as efforts to remove the meaning created by the previous owner.

Rituals serve a cohesive function: they reveal the values that people share and that hold them together as a people (see Hall 2005, 94). In a way, rituals represent patterned behaviour, thus, helping make people feel safe and secure. By using and referring to rituals, advertising appeals to these common values and feelings of familiarity. Like rituals, sequences in advertising mark moments of change and transition: from unsuccessful to successful, from grey-haired to a brunette, from obese to slim etc. Rituals show the worth people place on, for instance, appearance, its care and cultivation, and on the social approval resulting from it. (cf. Barthel 1988, 151, 154.) It has been argued (e.g. McCracken 1986, 74–76; Otnes & Scott 1996, 33) that advertising influences consumption during rituals. On the other hand, used in advertising, ritual symbolism creates messages about products and services, thus, helping transfer meanings from goods to individuals.

In advertising, rituals take on several forms. Of the three above-mentioned rituals, advertising mostly has to do with exchange (1), possession (2) and grooming (3) rituals. As already mentioned, gift exchange (1) allows the gift-giver to pass certain symbolic properties on to the gift-receiver via the symbolic properties of the product (McCracken 1986, 78). A typical example of an exchange ritual is a man giving a diamond ring to his woman. Through the bestowal of a ring, the giver [traditionally a man] demonstrates his superior position toward the recipient, at the same, tying her more closely to him. Thus, the ring becomes a representative of a power contract and a reward for feminine virtue. Often, jewellery has been considered as a gift from the more powerful to the less powerful. (Barthel 1988, 161.)

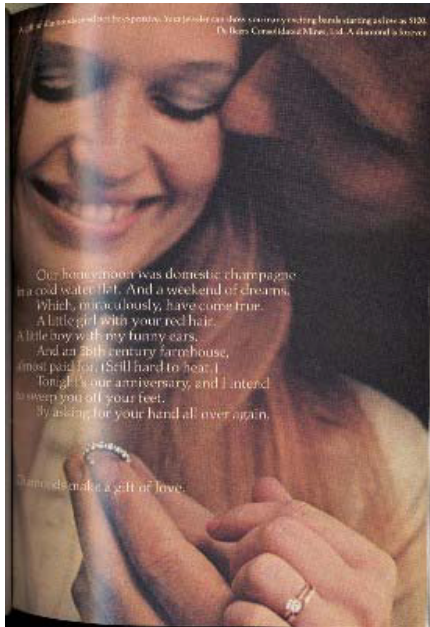


Figure 7. Examples of exchange rituals (Reader's Digest and Valitut Palat 1973)

An example of a possession ritual (2) is a car ad. Besides their function as a means of transportation, cars have been regarded as extensions of people's identities and as symbols of their owner's social standing (cf. Wernick 1991, 70). Cars, motorcycles and other vehicles have been said to be the man's domain; they are considered to serve as status symbols of male success, and they are regarded as a part of the masculine appearance (Alexander 2003, 550; see also Wood 2003, 137). According to Barthel (1988, 171–172, 182), cars allow the man to demonstrate his taste and his affluence, to extend his control: a car enables him to overpower other men and make an impression on women (see Figure 8.). It has even been claimed that men can equate their first car owned as a young man with the onset of their sexual freedom. (Solomon et al. 1999, 114). Besides being a necessity for Americans⁴², a car can certainly be considered as an extension of freedom and individualism (Hirschman 2003, 17). A sports car has even been considered a substitute for sexual gratification

⁴² Thanks to the public transportation system, a car has not been considered a necessity in Finland. For Finnish people, having a car for moving from A to B has become more relevant since the 1980–1990s, due to the deterioration of public services.

for men. Some men spend hours washing and polishing their cars. (Solomon et al. 1999, 113.)

**Jos olet lempeähuonteinen mies,
voit yhtä hyvin kääntää sivua**

1973 Javelin
FI AMERICAN MOTORS

Figure 8. A Finnish ad based on a possession ritual (Valitut Palat 1973)

The grooming rituals (3) can be perceived in the foregrounding of physical characteristics and emphasis on looks in advertising. They aid in the transition from the private self to the public self and back again. Traditionally, women have spent a lot of time ‘putting on their faces’ and getting ready to bear the watchful eyes of other people. (Solomon et al. 1999, 386.) However, partially due to advertising, grooming the body has become legitimate for men as well; advertising has aided in the dissemination of new customs among men (cf. Schiffman & Kanuk 1997, 414). Markets in menswear as well as men’s grooming products and toiletries have increased, especially in the US (Nixon 2000, 294; Ora 2004, 15; Ridder 2005). Ridder (2005) uses spa industry as an example of the fast-growing male grooming market: more and more male-oriented spas are opening around the United States to offer hair-cuts, massages, facials, pedicures and waxing. In the US, sales of male-specific cosmetics and toiletries went up 37.3 percent between 1998 and 2003 (Ridder 2005). In Finland, particularly young men of age 18–30 are more concerned of their appearances than the age segment before (Kähkönen 2004). The growth potential for the stagnating cosmetic industry can lie in the men’s increasing use of facial washes, hair products and personal grooming kits (Ridder 2005).



Figure 9. Referring to a grooming ritual (USA 2004)

As mentioned, advertising modifies and transforms cultural values and meanings for the consumer. Consequently, it can be regarded as one of factors in the process of learning the norms and values endorsed by one's culture, known as *enculturation*. Among producers of other cultural products, advertisers have a strong influence in this process. (Solomon et al. 1999, 106, 381.)

4.4 A short note on American culture

An interesting question is: what is the American culture? As a continent, 'America' is a diverse whole of nations, each consisting of disparate subcultures. Thus, America is lot more than the United States. However, in literature, 'America' is often referred to as 'the United States'. For instance, while discussing the American core values, Schiffman and Kanuk (1997, 422) automatically identify them with the US core values. Also, as Berger (2004, 1–23) enlarges upon 'advertising in American society', the in-built context is the US advertising. In the foreword of their content analytic study of

American advertising, Andrén et al. (1978) specify one of the purposes of the study: What kind of ideological content is found in advertising in the USA? Furthermore, Wood (2003) touches upon communication, gender and communication issues in America, i.e. the United States. Accordingly, also in this study, American is referred to the US, yet, keeping in mind the built-in controversy over the issue.

However, when we talk about the American (i.e. here: the US) culture we have to remember that even the United States is culturally not one coherent nation. In the past, it has been referred to as a melting pot of cultures which emphasized the idea of people from different cultures melding together, newcomers adapting the US values and lifestyle. Today, on the contrary, culturalists suggest the use of the term 'mixed salad' which means cultural pluralism rather than homogeneity. (MacDonald 1991; Rubin 1995.) This notion coincides with the postmodernist idea of fluidity and flexibility in cultures in general.

5 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN FOR THE STUDY

5.1 Focus group discussions as a research method

Focus groups⁴³ represent qualitative methods; in most cases, the generic goal of qualitative research is to develop insight into how people think and feel; thus, to understand the world of lived experience from the perspective of those who live in it (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 12; Flynn 1991, 280; Calder 1977, 355). This refers to *a holistic view* which is considered as one of the fundamental features of qualitative methods: seeking understanding of the phenomenon in its entirety in order to develop a complete understanding of the situation. Besides, according to [e.g.] Rudestam and Newton (1992, 32; cf. Ruddock 2001, 24), qualitative methods generally apply *an inductive approach*, starting out with specific, accurate observations and moving toward the development of general patterns. However, Daymon and Holloway (2002, 232) as well as Rossman and Rallis (1998, 19) criticize this view, arguing that eventually all inquiry proceeds through a nonlinear process of induction, deduction, inspiration, and hard thinking and working. Due to the constant interplay – moving back and forth between the analysis and data collection – qualitative research is often described as iterative (ibid.).

In the study at hand, the aim of the focus group discussions is to develop insight into masculinity in print advertising, assessed by the participants, and ultimately, enrich the meanings of masculinity in two cultures. In here, magazine ads are used as projective stimuli to elicit and draw out the feelings and reactions of the participants. The study is iterative in the sense that topics of the written elicitation stage as well as the discussion topics were partly drawn from a previous content analytic phase (Hakala 2004) and partly from previous literature on gender and advertising.

In his article, Calder (1977) looks at focus groups from a philosophy of science perspective, pointing to three different approaches: the *exploratory* approach, the *clinical* approach, and the *phenomenological* approach. Of the three approaches (Calder 1977), this study represents the phenomenological

⁴³ Originally called *focussed interviews* (Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, 9).

approach⁴⁴, i.e. the idea is to understand the everyday experiences of the consumers (see also Rudestam & Newton 1992, 33–34; Patton 2002, 104). Supposedly, the group arrangement will bring a deeper perspective to the adverts and the discussion of the representations of masculinity because often, adverts are not consumed alone, but depend on interactions with other people, thus creating socially shared meanings (cf. Percy et al. 2001, 27; Flynn 1991, 281); moreover, in order to clarify their own opinions, people often need to listen to others (Rossman & Rallis 1998, 135).

As the name tells, focus groups are a research technique that collects data through *group* interaction and group dynamics: answers and ideas are produced by members of the group themselves, inspired by the group setting – the ultimate goal being to see the topic from the participants' point of view. It is the group dynamics and interaction that are considered as the main attractions of focus groups over e.g. individual interviews (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold 1998, 261–262; Carey 1994, 225; Morgan 1988, 18). Besides, the moderator – often the researcher – has an active role in creating and conducting the discussion as well as using the group as a device for eliciting information. (Morgan 1996, 130; Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, 10.)

Also, the topic under discussion is determined by the researcher. According to Daymon and Holloway (2002, 186–187; also Deacon et al. 1999, 65; Calder 1977, 362), it is preferable to concentrate on one or two clear issues and discuss them in depth. In fact, as the name implies, focus groups are designed to focus; a focus group is not freewheeling, haphazard discussion – there has to be a clearly identifiable agenda for the sessions. (Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, 18, 51.) Not all topics are as such suitable for group discussions; sometimes groups can inhibit discussion when they deal with private matters (cf. Morgan 1988, 20). In this study, the focus of the study (masculinity) is a social construct; hence, supposedly, the group arrangement will lead to a collective generation of ideas.

The basic issue in specifying research designs for focus groups is to ensure that the research procedure delivers the desired data. Daymon and Holloway (2002, 190), among others⁴⁵, provide a list of the stages in focus group research: (i) planning, (ii) recruiting, (iii) moderating, (iv) analyzing, and (v) reporting.

⁴⁴ Phenomenology stems from the Greek word 'phenomenon', i.e. to put into light something that can become visible in itself (Ray 1994, 118). According to Patton (2002, 104), the foundational question of phenomenology is what the meaning, structure, and essence of a lived experience is for a person or a group of people.

⁴⁵ According to Hansen, Cottle, Negrine and Newbold (1998, 265–265), one of the clearest expositions has been offered by Stewart, D. W. and Shamdasani, P. N. (1990) *Focus groups: theory and practice*. Sage Publications: Newbury Park.

5.2 Stages of focus group discussions

5.2.1 Planning

The interviews should be planned carefully; an important issue to be decided is the level of standardization with regard to the questions. The decision whether to use fixed questions (standardization) or open topics (emergence) should be based on the goals of the research. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990, 75), the amount of data increases with the openness of the questions. In this study, the questions were semi-open and open: before the actual focus group interview, the participants were first asked to comment on 2 + 2 + 2 (1973, 1988, 2003) ads in writing. Thus, the starting place was at the individual level of analysis (see Elliott, Eccles & Hodgson 1993, 315–316).

The advertisements were chosen⁴⁶ as stimulus material so as to allow the examination of responses to different advertisements during a 30-year period of time. In order to be congruent with the cultural theme, the ads for the discussions in the US were selected from a US general-interest magazine Reader's Digest⁴⁷, and likewise, the ads for the discussions in Finland were chosen from Finnish general-interest magazines Valitut Palat⁴⁸ and Seura. These magazines were chosen based on the similarity of their content and demographic profile (cf. Lerman & Callow 2004, 513). The stimulus material was presented to the discussants as A 4-sized colour transparencies one at a time, and they verbalized their responses in a one-page information sheet. Participants in the US focus group sessions interpreted American (Reader's Digest) ads, and participants in the Finnish sessions interpreted Finnish (Valitut Palat and Seura) ads. Every stimulus advertisement contained at least one man (for the advertisements, see attachments).

The procedure of using a questionnaire prior to the group session is called *extended focus group*. The information from the questionnaire assists the actual focus group discussion; by using the questionnaire, the moderator is able to diminish the group effect and draw out minority opinions as well. (Gunter 2000, 43–44.) Every session commenced with a short introduction by the researcher, covering some background to the research, the purpose of the research, the role of the discussants, and the progress of the session.

⁴⁶ The ads were purposefully chosen as stimulus material, not as representative samples of advertising during the particular era. Each ad contained a portrayal of at least one man.

⁴⁷ In the United States, Reader's Digest has the third highest circulation of any magazine: 12.2 million (Belch & Belch 2004, 402).

⁴⁸ Valitut Palat is the Finnish edition of Reader's Digest, with its culturally adapted editorial content and national advertisements. A number of US based consumer-oriented magazines have international editions (Belch & Belch 2004, 687).

Each participant was asked to answer the following questions in writing:

1. What are the observable features of the ad that stand out?
2. What does each one suggest?
3. What overall impression does the ad suggest?
4. What do you think the advertiser is trying to communicate with this ad?

A similar method and similar questions have earlier been used by Mick and Politi (1989) as well as by Lerman and Callow (2004). According to Scott (1994b, 464), advertising can be read in various ways (e.g. as artworks or as ideology) but when we read ads as ads, we must incorporate the intention to sell. Thus, reading ads as consumers means understanding the ad as an effort to sell. Of the four above-mentioned questions, the first question was intended to uncover the denotations, the second one entering into the connotative meanings of the ad. Question three combined these two levels, whereas the fourth one related to the economic value of the ad and the potential intention of the advertiser.

Following this elicitation stage, the groups were led into an extensive discussion on masculinity in advertising in general, drawing out the participants' perceptions of masculinity in print advertising in Finland and in the US. The discussions covered following issues:

1. What aspects of masculinity do the ad elements highlight? What aspects of masculinity do they ignore?
2. How have the representations of masculinity in advertising possibly changed over time?
3. What is the role of advertising in moulding gender stereotypes? Does it mirror reality or does it create it?
4. Some say that the use of human models in advertising may link the product too heavily on particular gender or particular features of the person. How do you feel about this?
5. It has been said that effective role portrayals are a function of an appropriate match between the gender of the depicted model and the gender image of the product, the setting of the portrayal, and realism of the portrayal. What do you say about that?

In order to break the ice and relax the discussants, each interview began with a couple of general questions "What defines a man [in general]?" and "What particularly defines a man in your own culture?" The following table delineates the way each topic was related to the research questions of this study.

Table 8. The focus group discussion topics in relation to the research questions.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	DISCUSSION TOPICS
<p>1. <i>What cross-cultural and culture-specific gender codes can be found, and how have these codings possibly changed during the last three decades?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What defines a man [in general]? What particularly defines a man in your own culture? • What aspects of masculinity do the ad elements highlight? What aspects of masculinity do they ignore? • How have the representations of masculinity in advertising possibly changed over time?
<p>2. <i>What is the relevance of using human models in advertising?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some say that the use of human models in advertising may link the product too heavily on particular gender or particular features of the person. How do you feel about this? • It has been said that effective role portrayals are a function of an appropriate match between the gender of the depicted model and the gender image of the product, the setting of the portrayal, and realism of the portrayal. What do you say about that?
<p>3. <i>What is the role of advertising in modeling gender stereotypes?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the role of advertising in moulding gender stereotypes? Does it mirror reality or does it create it?

The preparatory topics served as a practical structure for organising each group's discussion around the same set of topics and reviewing the discussions. Later on, they also helped at organising the analysis of the discussions. (see Morgan 1988, 56, 66.) However, the topics were formulated not to form too rigid a framework (cf. the emergent nature of qualitative research; Rossman & Rallis 1998, 9–10). Furthermore, questions were necessarily not asked in the same order in each group but rather depending on the flow of the discussion. Each discussion proceeded in its unique way and thus, some groups were also asked additional questions. However, throughout the discussions, questions that call for a direct, one- or two-word response were avoided as the objective of focus group sessions is to stimulate discussion. (Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, 63, 65.)

Stewart and Shamdasani (1990, 66), among others, recommend pretesting, i.e. trying out the questions on a few individuals before the actual focus group discussions. Pretesting provides an opportunity to determine whether the questions have been pertinently formulated and can be easily understood, and whether they elicit discussion. For this study, the pretesting was done two weeks prior to the first focus group session among three individuals in Turku, Finland .

5.2.2 Recruiting the discussants

The composition, size and number of the groups conducted have to be decided. The choice of the participants should be based on well-defined criteria which are determined by the aims of the research. As to composing the focus groups, Daymon and Holloway (2002, 190–191; also Deacon et al. 1999, 56) name two possibilities: preconstituted groups (social or professional groups that already exist) and researcher-constituted groups (created by the researcher for his or her own purposes) [convenience samples; Stewart & Shamdsani 1990, 53]. For this study, the groups were created by the researcher.

Once this decision has been made, the next choice is between homogeneous or heterogeneous groups. The former are characterized by people with similar interests or experiences, positions or roles, ages or gender. The kind of homogeneity that Byers and Wilcox (1991, 65⁴⁹; also Krueger 1988, 18) refer to, should be included in any focus groups: namely, homogeneity in relation to the topic under discussion. Heterogeneous groups comprise people with different social, cultural, political, and economic characteristics. If the group is too heterogeneous, there can be members who will feel inferior and not contribute fully (Carey 1994, 229). Besides, according to Lunt and Livingstone (1996, 92), groups consistent in composition are easier to conduct.

As to the group composition, gender and age are factors that need to be considered carefully since they can affect the quality and level of interaction in the groups, and consequently, the data. According to Stern and Holbrook (1994, 16), gender influences interpretation and interaction in a group on many levels. Previous research (e.g. Smith-Lovin & Brody 1989, 432; Deacon et al. 1999, 56) suggests, for instance, that men interrupt women more than other men, and hence tend to dominate cross-gender conversations. Besides,

⁴⁹ Original source: Axelrod, M. (1975) 10 essentials for good qualitative research. *Marketing News*, Vol. 8, 10–11.

both genders have a tendency to perform for each other (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 191). According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990, 37), stereotypical gender differences in aggressiveness (men being considered more aggressive), dependency (women conforming more to the group pressure), social orientation, and emotionality (women being more sensitive and better able to interpret emotions than men) can influence the discussions. Thus, according to Morgan (1996, 143), especially when gender issues are of interest, it is advisable to conduct separate groups of men and women.

To minimize gender influence, separate groups of men and women were used in this study. In addition, groups were homogenous in the sense that all the participants have been exposed to the topic of the study (cf. Byers & Wilcox 1991, 65). On the other hand, to assure the widest possible age distribution⁵⁰, the participants were invited from three different age segments: young (18–35), mid (36–50) and older adults (50+). In each group, there were two representatives of each segment. According to Krueger (1988, 28), focus groups are ideally composed of complete strangers; in this study, most members were unfamiliar with each other before the sessions. As to social, political and economic characteristics, the groups might also have been quite heterogeneous among themselves but these features were not of interest in this study.

The size of the group has a direct effect on the group dynamics: the larger the group the more formalized its structure needs to be (Chrzanowska 2002, 47). Lunt and Livingstone (1996, 82) consider a group of six to ten participants the best. In line with this, according to Imms and Ereaut (2002, 17, 81–82; see also Daymon & Holloway 2002, 192; Deacon et al. 1999, 57; Hansen et al. 1998, 270), a ‘standard’ focus group consists of six to nine respondents. Furthermore, according to Quible (1998, 29; also Byers & Wilcox 1991, 65), the common size of a focus group is 8 to 12 individuals. However, according to Forsyth (1990⁵¹), even two people can be considered ‘a group’. Thus, the size is variable, and according to Morgan (1996, 146), clearly under the researcher’s control. Smaller groups have been regarded more appropriate with emotionally charged topics, while larger groups can possibly work better with more neutral topics. Besides, smaller groups make it easier for the moderator⁵² to manage the discussions, and for each participant

⁵⁰ Responses to gender in advertising may differ between age groups (cf. Elliott, Jones, Benfield & Barlow 1995, 194). For instance, there may be differences between attitudes towards semi-clad men in advertising depending on age.

⁵¹ as cited in Chrzanowska 2002, 47. Original source: Forsyth D. R. (1990) *Group dynamics*. Book/Cole: Pacific Grove, CA.

⁵² The interviewer is described as a ‘moderator’ when in the context of a group (Chrzanowska 2002, 9). The moderator (also sometimes called a facilitator) can be an outside person or the researcher herself/himself (cf. Daymon & Holloway 2002, 187; Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold

to fully express their feelings. (Morgan 1996, 146; Richins 1991, 74.) However, if there are only a few participants, group dynamics might not possibly work as well. On the other hand, large groups can get too noisy, making it hard for the moderator to distinguish the voices. (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 192; Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, 10.) According to Daymon and Holloway (2002, 192), six members is appropriate for most focus group research purposes; it is large enough to provide a variety of perspectives but small enough not to become disorderly.

For this study, four focus groups were put together, each consisting of six members. The first two were conducted in Finland in November 2004 and the other two in California, US in February 2005. The subjects were a convenient sample of 6 Finnish and 6 American men, as well as 6 Finnish and 6 American women. The ages of the respondents varied from 20 to 61 years. As the US is racially a very diverse country, it would have been practically impossible to form representative groups in that sense. The respondents were a purposive sample of white Americans born in the United States; thus, the group did not constitute a significant racial mix.

Individuals were contacted by phone and asked if they would be willing to participate in the discussions. Practically all those contacted expressed enthusiasm in regard to participating in the study. (cf. Thompson 1996, 392). A demographic profile of the participants is presented in the following tables (see Tables 9 and 10). Each participant was assured of full anonymity. The sessions, including the written protocols, ranged from 2 to 2 hours and 30 minutes, each session generating verbatim written transcripts from 15 to 25 pages. The written protocols and the transcripts served as the primary data on which the research findings are based.

1998, 273). Besides, there can be more than just one moderator in a group discussion (cf. Imms & Ereaut 2002, 80).

Table 9. Demographic profile of the focus group participants in Finland.

Female	Age	Education	Occupation	Male	Age	Education	Occupation
A	24	M. Sc.	Assistant	A	26	USS graduate*	Student
B	27	M. Sc.	Research ass.	B	26	USS graduate*	Student
C	37	M. Sc.	Researcher	C	38	M. Sc.	Project manager
D	44	M. Sc.	Researcher	D	42	B. Sc.	Advisor
E	55	USS graduate*	Entrepreneur	E	56	B. Sc.	
F	59	B. Sc.	Controller	F	61	B. Sc.	Controller

*Upper Secondary School Graduate

Table 10. Demographic profile of the focus group participants in the US.

Female	Age	Education	Occupation	Male	Age	Education	Occupation
A	20	Undergraduate	Not employed	A	20	HS graduate*	Musician
B	30	AA Degree	Coordinator	B	21	Undergraduate	Relay operator
C	42	B. A.	Substitute	C	44	Some college	Carpenter
D	47	B. Sc.	Consultant	D	47	Paramedic	Paramedic
E	52	M. A.	Library assistant	E	53	B. Sc.	Sales person
F	53	B. A.	Retired teacher	F	56	M. A.	Administrator

* High school graduate

When recruiting participants, also the aspect of using incentives has to be covered. Commercial research organizations usually pay focus group participants. In this study, the respondents were offered a small incentive for participation. As Christmas was forthcoming at the time of the Finnish discussions and since all discussants were above 18 years of age⁵³, a bottle of red wine was given to each participant. In the US, the legal drinking age is 21, and because there were minor members in both US groups, every participant was instead given a gift card to a Starbucks coffee shop. During the sessions, coffee and cake were served in order to relax the participants. (cf. Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, 55.)

5.2.3 Moderating

The presence of the moderator is one of the key features of focus groups (Morgan 1996, 144–145; Quible 1998, 30). The higher degree of control the

⁵³ In Finland, the legal drinking age is 18.

moderator exercises, the more structured the discussion is. The moderator can control the group with regard to asking questions (e.g. directing attention to the important issues) or with regard to managing group dynamics (e.g. trying to get everybody to participate equally in the discussion). The moderator's ability to develop trust and rapport, as well as to establish relationships with the discussants, is of utmost importance for collecting valuable data. However, in a cross-cultural research like this one, the researcher's language skills can affect the balance of power and the dynamics of the discussions. Cross-cultural interviews involve data collection in different national, cultural and linguistic environments. (Marschan-Piekkari & Reis 2004, 224–225, 240.) For this study, the interview data was collected in two countries, Finland and the United States. During the focus group discussions in Finland, the language being used was Finnish. After the sessions, the written analyses of the ads as well as the transcriptions of the interviews were translated into English by the researcher. In the US, the discussions were naturally conducted in English which is a second language to the researcher. However, over the time of the US focus group discussions, the researcher spent five months in California which gave her a linguistic advantage.

Upon asking questions researchers often follow a 'funnel-approach', i.e. proceed from the more general questions to the specific (Hansen et al. 1998, 274; Daymon & Holloway 2002, 196; see also Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, 11, 76). Also in this study, the funnel-approach was adapted.

The facilities should be planned carefully. A neutral, comfortable environment for the focus groups is important. The room should be big enough for everybody to be seated. The first two focus group sessions of this study were held in a university setting: at Turku School of Economics and Business Administration in Finland (autumn 2004). The other two focus groups were conducted in a business office in Escalon, California (spring 2005).

5.2.4 Data analysis

According to Carey (1994, 233), the analysis and interpretation of focus group data is similar to other qualitative data analysis, only added with the dimension of the group context. The analysis is concerned with data reduction (summarizing the data into simplified patterns and categories) and interpretation (bringing meaning and insight into the words of the interviewees). Finding patterns in the data enables the researcher to relate the findings to concepts and themes in the existing literature. On the other hand, theoretical concepts serve to arrange data and to understand them in a new

way (Gunter 2000, 91). This, furthermore, helps to generate theory, new models or theory-based generalizations. (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 232–240.) In this study, the purpose of using focus groups was not to generate new theory, but to make theory-based inferences.

In this study [like in Elliott, Eccles & Hodgson (1993) and Elliott & Elliott (2005) studies], the analysis was conducted in two phases as the data consisted of both written protocols and focus group discussions. Firstly, the written protocols were examined for emergent themes and relationships with the previous literature. Then, the focus group transcriptions were used to locate the gender representations and to derive categories of shared as well as differing beliefs, opinions and attitudes. Also Fischer and Gainer (1994) conducted an extended focus group study; however, the written protocols were used *after* the focus group sessions: each participant was asked to write a report on what s/he thought the session had been about and whether the moderator had missed anything relevant to the topic.

After collecting and analyzing the data, the research is reported. Reporting is an act of synthesising and summarizing what has been said, and drawing inferences from the discussions (Calder 1977, 353). Besides, it is an act of relating the data to the research problems (Hansen et al. 1998, 281).

In summary, the use of focus groups makes it possible to investigate how interpretations are collectively constructed through social interaction, and consequently, the research interest is rather in socially expressed opinions and discourses than in individual attitudes toward the ads. Whether the respondents like the ad or not was not the issue. Rather, the interviews attempted to examine consumer perceptions of masculinity and the role of advertising in reflecting it. Moreover, like by Lunt and Livingstone (1996, 88), either diversity or consensus was allowed to emerge⁵⁴ during the discussions.

5.3 Strengths and weaknesses of focus groups

As a method, focus groups have a number of practical advantages: (i) synergy, (ii) snowballing, (iii) stimulation, and (iv) speed. Firstly, as to synergy, focus groups provide the researcher with evidence from different people on the same subject; the group effect will produce a wider range of ideas and opinions than the sum of responses obtained from an equivalent number interviewed individually. Secondly, snowballing means that a comment from one respondent can stimulate responses from others in the group, and also cause

⁵⁴ Some researchers require group members to work collaboratively towards a consensual product (Lunt & Livingstone 1996, 88).

other respondents to view things differently. Thirdly, the interactive nature of focus groups can stimulate greater depth of discussion. As the discussion and excitement over the topic increase, respondents become eager to express their opinions. Besides, focus groups allow the researcher to interact directly with the respondents. Fourthly, the combined discussions make it possible to collect data from a range of people at the same time, in a relatively short space of time. Hence, focus groups are quicker and cheaper to conduct than individual interviews with the same number of participants. (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 186–188; Imms & Ereaut 2002, 79–81; Morgan 1996, 139; Patton 2002, 386; Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, 16, 19; Silverman 2001, 160, 268.)

In terms of weaknesses, the most commonly identified in group dynamics include: polarization (the group decision can be more extreme than the mean of its individuals due to the pressure from the majority or more powerful individuals); compliance (responding in ways believed to be expected by the researcher, or rejecting the evidence of one's own eyes in order to conform⁵⁵ to the group); and groupthink (making decisions that individual members know to be poor). Furthermore, the responses are not independent of one another which restricts the generalizability of the results. The convenience nature of most focus group recruiting practices also limits generalization to a larger population. It is the moderator's task to control the effects of these disadvantages by emphasizing the contributing role of every member in the group and by improving the interpersonal relations within the group; to avoid polarization, he/she should control dominating participants while simultaneously encouraging passive ones (Gunter 2000, 43). However, the moderator should avoid reacting to participants' comments and leading the group in terms of the findings. (Imms & Ereaut 2002, 81; Chrzanowska 2002, 54–55; Lunt & Livingstone 1996, 82; Daymon & Holloway 2002, 199; Patton 2002, 386–388; Quible 1998, 29; Hansen et al. 1998, 263; Stewart & Shamdasani 1990, 17, 19.)

5.4 The quality of the empirical research

How will one (i.e. the researcher himself/herself and the audience) know how good the research findings and conclusions of the study are or whether the research stands up to outside scrutiny? There are a number of criteria or tactics that help in assessing the quality of the research. (Miles & Huberman 1994,

⁵⁵ Carey (1994, 236–237) discusses two ways of adjusting to the other members of the group: *conforming*, i.e. a person tailors his/her contributions in compliance with others' views; and *censoring*, i.e. a person withholds his/her potential contributions.

277.) Within positivist science and in quantitative research, the predominant criteria include assessment of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (e.g. Hirschman 1986, 244). However, there has been a lot of discussion whether these criteria can be regarded as effective ways of evaluating the quality of qualitative research. Some researchers (see Daymon & Holloway 2002, 88–89) think they are, whereas others (e.g. Hirschman 1986, 244; Leininger 1994, 95) regard them as inappropriate and confusing. Besides, there are some who suggest (see discussion in Miles & Huberman 1994, 277) that it is not overall possible to specify criteria for the goodness of qualitative work.

It is not an issue of this study to enter into this discussion more deeply; however, the basic assumption is that the quality of the research has to be determined according to some universally applicable criteria. According to Leininger (1994, 99), without the use of explicit criteria, the findings are subject to doubt, questioning, and nonconfirmability. In the following paragraphs, some of the mostly used tactics will be covered; many of them overlap which makes the reciprocal comparison quite difficult. The topics and groupings are based on Miles and Huberman's (1994, 277–280) discussion: (i) the objectivity or confirmability of qualitative work; (ii) reliability, dependability, auditability; (iii) internal validity, credibility, authenticity; (iv) external validity, transferability, fittingness; and (v) utilization, application, action orientation.

(i) Since *objectivity* in an absolute form is considered practically impossible to achieve (see e.g. Daymon & Holloway 2002, 89; Deacon et al. 1999, 132), *confirmability* has been suggested to be more suitable to qualitative research. In qualitative research, the researcher is not presumed to be emotionally neutral or personally distant from the phenomenon of interest. Thus, the interpretations generated by the researcher are not assumed to be value-free, as in the positivist approach. (Hirschman 1986, 246.) However, the moderator should avoid bias and refrain from contributing to the discussion as much as possible (Byers & Wilcox 1991, 69). Furthermore, for a qualitative study to be confirmable, the researcher must show how the data are linked to their sources, and that the findings and conclusions are not based on the researcher's prior assumptions and preconceptions. (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 94; cf. Leininger 1994, 105.) A good way to improve the confirmability of a study is to have outside auditors review the documentation, field notes, and other supportive evidence to confirm that the conclusions do flow from the information collected (Hirschman 1986, 246).

(ii) *Reliability* is an epistemic criterion (originally developed for quantitative methods) thought to be necessary for establishing the truth of an account or interpretation of a social phenomenon (Schwandt 1997, 137; see

also Lunt & Livingstone 1996, 92). In quantitative research it is the extent to which a research instrument⁵⁶, independent of variations in the extraneous circumstances of its application, will yield the same results or answers (Krippendorff 1991, 125; Ruddock 2001, 18). And as with other ‘quantitative’ criteria for evaluating the accuracy of a qualitative research, opinion is also divided over whether reliability is an applicable criterion for this purpose (Schwandt 1997, 137). In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the main research instrument, and consequently, a qualitative research can never be wholly consistent and replicable; the background and characteristics of the researcher influence the emphasis and results (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 90; Hirschman 1986, 245). In order to enhance the dependability of humanistic inquiry, Hirschman (1986, 245) suggests the use of multiple human investigators. According to Daymon and Holloway (2002, 90), one way of achieving dependability is to record the data, methods and decisions made during the research process. In reference to this, Healy and Perry (2000, 125) use the term *methodological trustworthiness*: i.e. the extent to which a research can be audited by providing detailed information on the procedures of the study. Also Daymon and Holloway (2002, 93–94) adduce trustworthiness as a characteristic of a good qualitative research. For the findings to be dependable, they must be consistent and accurate. One way of achieving dependability is to demonstrate an audit trail: a detailed record of the decisions made before and during the research and a description of the research process. (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 94, 100.)

(iii) Validity, at its broadest, is concerned with the degree to which the findings of a study are true and certain: ‘true’ meaning that the findings accurately represent the phenomena to which they refer, and ‘certain’ in the sense that the findings are backed by evidence. (Seale & Filmer 1998, 134; Schwandt 1997, 168; Ruddock 2001, 18). There are several different stances of validity of which internal and external validity are the most common ones in quantitative research. The corresponding term for internal validity in qualitative research is *credibility* or authenticity (cf. Rudestam & Newton 1992, 38) since there is no assumption of one true value and discrete causal inferences; rather, there is the possibility of multiple constructed realities (Hirschman 1986, 244; Miles & Huberman 1994, 278). Leininger (1994, 105, 110) regards credibility as the known, experienced, or deeply felt truth by the people being studied. According to Daymon and Holloway (2002, 92–93), a study is credible or authentic when the participants’ views and ideas have been reported truthfully, and when the study is fair. In a research, both

⁵⁶ The traditional assessment of reliability examines the temporal stability and internal consistency of measurements (Hirschman 1986, 245).

trustworthiness and authenticity are shown by careful documentation of the research procedures (Daymon & Holloway 2002, 93). Besides, to determine the credibility, the researcher can use peer debriefing (e.g. giving one's colleagues a draft copy of the report to read) or clarify tentative findings with the participants, i.e. member checking (Rudestam & Newton 1992, 39; see also Daymon & Holloway 2002, 93, 95–98; Silverman 2001, 233; Leininger 1994, 108).

(iv) The fourth criterion of the goodness of qualitative research is *transferability* which is analogous to external validity in quantitative research. External validity refers to the generalizability of the research findings across populations, time or conditions (e.g. Rudestam & Newton 1992, 39; Hirschman 1986, 245). The findings are usually considered generalizable when they can be applied to other, similar settings and populations. However, the kind of generalizability that has to do with quantitative research (e.g. using random sampling in order to draw representative results) is difficult to achieve in qualitative research. (Tonkiss 1998, 259.) This applies to focus groups as well: from a statistical point of view, the feedback from the subjects cannot be generalized beyond the members of the population from which they were drawn (Byers & Wilcox 1991, 67). Qualitative studies usually involve only small samples or single case studies, and thus, the researcher is rather concerned with the transferability of one manifestation of a phenomenon to a second manifestation of the phenomenon, acknowledging that no two social contexts are ever identical. Similarities to another similar situation can contribute to extending knowledge. However, one must always construct an interpretation of the specifics of the second context on a post hoc basis. (Hirschman 1986, 245; Daymon & Holloway 2002, 93; Leininger 1994, 107.)

(v) The last criterion – *utilization* or *application* – has to do with the contributive role of the study: how usable and applicable is the knowledge provided? Do the findings lead to specific actions? (Miles & Huberman 1994, 280.) In reference to this, utilization has to do with the usefulness of the research findings: how do they develop, refine or enhance existing knowledge? (Ereaut 2002, 154.)

There are ways in which a researcher can check and demonstrate the quality of the research. A number of them are adduced by Daymon and Holloway (2002, 95–101; see also Leininger 1994, 108–112). In the study at hand the following strategies are being used: (i) longitudinal research design (a study is more likely to be valid or trustworthy when the issue is traced over a longer period of time); (ii) member checking (checking the understanding of the data and confirming the findings with the participants in the focus groups); (iii) audit trail (providing a detailed record of the decisions made before and after the research and a description of the research process). Overall reflexivity –

adopting a self-critical stance to one's research, personal assumptions and preconceptions as well as to one's own role in research – is an important procedure for improving the quality of the research since a qualitative researcher is not an uninvolved bystander in the research process (e.g. Schwandt 1997, 135–136; Daymon & Holloway 2002, 240–241; Bendl 2000, 386).

The above mentioned criteria and their features are summed up in the following table. Besides, the way they will be accomplished in this study is also presented.

Table 11. Criteria concerning the quality of the research.

Criterion	Features	What is done in order to fulfill the criteria in this study
<i>Confirmability</i> (cf. objectivity)	Data linked to their sources, conclusions arising from them	A self-critical account of each research step will be provided. Citations illustrating the major themes are presented.
<i>Dependability</i> (cf. reliability)	Consistent and accurate findings	Audit trail
<i>Credibility</i> (cf. internal validity)	Truthful findings	Careful documentation of the use of the research methods; peer debriefing and member checking
<i>Transferability</i> (cf. external validity)	Transferable findings	Comparisons with other studies
<i>Utilization</i>	Usable and applicable findings	Evaluation of the pragmatic value of the research

Documentation in all phases of the research is critical to the quality of the study. The final report should, then, enable the reader to understand the whole process of the research: what was done, how it was done, who the participants were, and where the research was done (Hansen et al. 1998, 282). Being consistent (in the use of the terms) and systematic (in the way the criteria are demonstrated in the study) throughout the process are key factors in improving the quality of the research (cf. Daymon & Holloway 2002, 88).

6 CULTURAL MEANINGS OF MASCULINITY

6.1 Emergent themes from the written part

As adduced by Mick and Politi (1989, 87, 89), it is in the interests of advertisers to create one ‘preferred’ reading of an advertisement’s message; however, in reality, and based on the theory of reader response (Scott 1994b), there is no one reading: advertisements vary even in their surface structure so dramatically that the range of possible interpretations is practically limitless. This came out quite clearly in the written protocols of the participants. In the following, emergent themes from the interpretations of the focus group participants will be reviewed. The idea is to capture the discussants’ interpretations of 6 + 6 pictorial print ads. The original interpretations are attached as tables at the end of the study (see appendix 3). The stimulus material (the Finnish and the US ads) is also presented in the attachments (appendices 1 and 2).

6.1.1 Finnish ads

Ad 1: Vuorivilla 1973

The Finnish female discussants regarded the 1973 mineral wool (Vuorivilla) ad as a product ad. In spite of the man in the picture, focus was on the product. According to the interpretations, the ad was a typical Finnish ad in the sense that there was a Finnish man doing something (= constructing). Besides, the product was very culturally oriented: mineral wool is needed in the cold Nordic climate.

Interestingly, Finnish men were more detailed in their interpretations. For instance, they paid attention to the fact that the man in the ad was actually carrying the product. This can connote, according to the interpretations, to two different things: either the product is not dangerous or the man in the ad is not a professional.

Ad 2: North State 1973

According to the Finnish women, the man and the activity (arm wrestling) in this ad produced a clear causal link between the product (cigarettes) and manly

features (power, toughness). In this sense, this ad is an example of a causal connection: *“If you smoke North State, you are a tough guy!”*

The power element was emphasized in the Finnish men’s interpretations as well. *“Strong men smoke strong cigarettes. If you don’t smoke, you are not a real man!”* Besides, the setting of the ad seemed to support the image of the product: smoking is a social habit.

Ad 3: Philips 1988

According to the female subjects, this ad was too full of elements, and overall, it was considered dull and old-fashioned; old-fashioned in the sense that there is an inbuilt assumption of a manly expertise and secondly, that men need technical information in order to be able to make a buying decision. On the other hand, the ad can speak to both men and women: *“The left side refers to product development and quality of the product. The right side refers to the benefits of the product. The left side speaks to men, the right side to women.”*

On the contrary, according to the Finnish male subjects, this ad was targeted at men: *“The elements refer to the functionality and technical values of the product.”* Interestingly, the serious look on the man’s face was considered to prove: *“This is true.”* This ad was also considered a product ad due to the reason that the product was starring [cf. salience]: *“The dishwasher in front and the man in the background.”*

Ad 4: Ahlström 1988

The other mineral wool ad seemed to consist of many connotative meanings. According to the Finnish women, the ad consisted of many symbolic meanings: the joyful grin on the man’s face, the yellow colour of the man’s suit, and the product. Besides, the age of the man (approximately 30 years) had reference to the 30-year anniversary of the company. Interestingly, there were no references to the 1980s yuppie era.

The men in the Finnish group also paid attention to the symbolic link between the age of the male model and the anniversary of the company. Again, however, men marked a practical detail embedded in the setting: the suit refers to the easiness and tidiness of the use and installation of the product.

Ad 5: Sloggi 2003

The codings of the Sloggi underwear ad were very similar between the men and women. The emergent themes of the ad were sportiness, toughness and masculinity as well as decisiveness and courage. The use of English language brought about an image of youthfulness. The foreign language and the overall setting of the ad gave some subjects a feeling that the underwear is meant for

well-trained, handsome, young men only: *“Puts too much pressure on ordinary users.”* One of the male subjects found that this ad objectifies men: *“Sloggies make men exotic sex objects.”* Interestingly, no one commented on the strong Americanism in the ad.

Ad 6: HK 2003

This ad advertising sausage and other barbeque products for summer caused the most confusion of all the ads. A naked man in barbeque servers wearing a cowboy hat just did not seem to make sense. However, the general impressions of the ad were quite consistent: *the ad is funny, and the atmosphere is relaxed.* Overall, the ad seemed to bring out the basic summer elements of a Finnish man: *“In summer, the manly world is filled with barbequing.”* The men in particular highlighted the ‘naturalness, healthiness, and lightness’ of meat as food.

6.1.2 US ads

Ad 1: Man-Power 1973

Strength and power were themes that emerged from this US deodorant ad. Interestingly, the strength dimension elicited different connotations. Firstly, strong men use Man-Power. Secondly, if you are not strong already, Man-Power makes you strong. Thirdly, men have stronger body odor and it takes a stronger deodorant to control it. However, according to both male and female subjects, by overemphasizing the power aspect, the advertiser might have disclosed some consumers outside the ad: *“You wouldn’t see a skinny man buying this.”*

Ad 2: AC spark plugs 1973

Similarly to the previous ad, there was one clear theme that emerged from the AC spark plug ad: *toughness.* *“Tough guys use these spark plugs.”* This ad again, was considered risky in the sense that it can debar some consumers. However, this interpretation was not generally shared. An interesting point was raised by one of the young male subjects: *“I feel advertisers are using male insecurities to push the product.”* Obviously, he did not like the quite commonly used appeal to refer to people’s weaknesses in advertising.

Ad 3: Chevy Truck 1988

The Chevy truck ad of 1988 used comparison as a strategy and according to the subjects, it made it successfully. The subjects found a number of different ways of eliciting the claimed superiority of Chevy: the look on the man’s face,

his posture (leaning against the ‘winner’), the use of colours and light (red Chevy well-lit on the left, grey Ford in the shade on the right). However, among both men and women there was antipathy against comparative advertising in general and putting other brands down: *“Ads that put down other companies to make themselves look better are unoriginal and not creative.”* In the US, the legislation concerning puffery is not as strict as in Finland (cf. Clow & Baack 2004, 416–417).

Ad 4: Beltone 1988

The Beltone hearing ad seemed to be very straightforward: there is an older celebrity promoting the product. According to both male and female subjects, the ‘familiarity’ (*“We’ve seen him on tv.”*) of the spokesperson made the product approachable. However, none of the respondents considered the product targeted at them personally: *“I’d think about the ad more if I was closer to the age of the man or if hearing loss was affecting me.”*

Ad 5: OxiMagic 2003

The OxiMagic ad of 2003 caused similar confusion among the male and female subjects. One of the mostly used comments was *“weird”*. Whether there actually was a man in the ad or a tub of the product with arms and legs was unclear to the subjects. Furthermore, there was confusion about the product and its use: *“Not sure what is being advertised.”*

Ad 6: Nicoderm 2003

The emergent theme from this 2003 seemed to be quite clear: *“Quit smoking for your family.”* or *“Life is precious. Don’t throw it away.”* The importance of life and the link between the advertised product and the better quality of life were highlighted by both men and women. The overall impression of the ad was positive; however, according to one male subject, the knives and pots in the background made the environment dangerous. The female subjects paid attention to the fact that the man was in the kitchen: *“He’s in the kitchen – so he must be a super-dad!”* Obviously, the kitchen is still considered a woman’s territory: *“Setting (kitchen) is clean – usually a woman’s place but this man is now allowed in because he no longer smokes.”*

As expected, the interpretations varied from one subject to another. However, there were some emergent themes that were shared by all/most subjects. An interesting finding was that the interpretations were quite similar between the US men and women. On the contrary, similar cultural coherence was not found between Finnish men and women. However, the subject’s age did not turn out to be a decisive factor in the interpretations.

For this study, the value of the written protocols lay rather in the activation and motivation of the group toward the upcoming discussion than in the writings of the individual participants.

6.2 Inferences from the discussions

The questions in the actual discussion part were formulated not to form too rigid a framework. Therefore, some groups were asked the questions in a different order. Besides, depending on the flow of the discussions, additional questions may have been asked, and additional stimulus material may have been presented. In the following, major inferences of each discussion are reviewed question by question, reflecting them upon the theoretical background. The issues that are being raised were shared by the majority of the group, if not specifically otherwise mentioned.

6.2.1 Representations of masculinity among Finnish women

Of the altogether four focus group discussions, the first one was conducted among six Finnish women on the 16th of November in 2004. In the following, the discussion is reviewed according to its major themes.

Q: “What defines a man? What characteristics are typical of masculinity?”

The foremost comment on this question was a ‘backbone’: a manly man has a moral fibre, i.e. he is trustworthy and follows through his decisions. As to the looks, according to the discussants, a real man is rugged, whereas pretty men are just boys. Obviously, in spite of the growing grooming trend among men (Kähkönen 2004; Ridder 2005), Finnish women still prefer the rough type. In ads, you can tell a real man by the way he stands: a man with guts has an assertive pose and a serious look on his face. In this sense, a man according to the Finnish women is a ‘Sturdy Oak’: confident, physically stout, invulnerable, and self-reliant (cf. Alexander 2003, 537).

Q: “In your own words, please, define a typical Finnish man.”

According to the discussants, the man in the 1973 mineral wool (Vuorivilla) ad still represents a typical Finnish man: a serious, decisive look on his face, and importantly: doing something. On the contrary, the man in the 1988 mineral wool ad was considered irritating. Action and being active were considered very important. In Finnish there is a word ‘äijä’ that, according to the discussants, best describes what a typical Finnish man is like: a hard

worker, a man of action. This coincides with the earlier definitions of men in general: according to Browne (1998, 84), men have traditionally been portrayed as active, constructive, autonomous and achieving. Furthermore, this definition has resemblance to Holt and Thompson's (2004, 428–429) 'Man-of-action hero': men with a can-do spirit conquer obstructions, or Brannon's (1995, 305) Working man: strong and honest. However, a more descriptive name for the Finnish version, on the grounds of the women's comments, could be a 'Do-it-yourself man'.

Metrosexuals were not favoured among the Finnish women: men who use make-up and die their hair were not considered real men. In fact, men who are overwhelmingly concerned about their looks can, according to the discussants, take something away from their own womanhood. *"In order to feel like a real woman, I need a real man beside me."* (Discussant A) *"I cannot consider a man who uses make-up a real man. A stylish man who takes care of his looks is ok but one that uses make-up – that's too much!"* (Discussant E) *"I think it's even scary if a man starts openly discussing about new clothes and trends, make-up and hair stuff. I consider these kinds of men more like my girl friends."* (Discussant A)

Next, two underwear ads (see figure below) were shown to the group, the one on the left (Matinique) as an example of cropping, i.e. letting a part represent a whole person. This kind of visual manipulation leads, according to the discussants, the reader away from the manly trustworthiness and backbone. Furthermore, it makes no effect on emotional level: *"It is only a male body, physically attractive perhaps, but not emotionally appealing."* (Discussants A, B and C) The other underwear (Calvin Klein) ad was considered, due to the head and look on the model's face, more charismatic. The demanding⁵⁷, *"challenging"* (Discussant A), and *"provocative"* (Discussant D) gaze is interesting in the sense that, as stated earlier (in reference to Messaris 1997, 45), male models have traditionally not looked into the viewer's eyes. This led the group to a discussion on gender differences of a gaze in ads. According to the discussants, women look at the viewer voyeuristically whereas men have a more determined gaze. *"Yes, it is clear he wants something; he knows it and he doesn't want to resign himself."* (Discussant A)

⁵⁷ Cf. Demand image (Kress & Leeuwen 1996, 126–127).

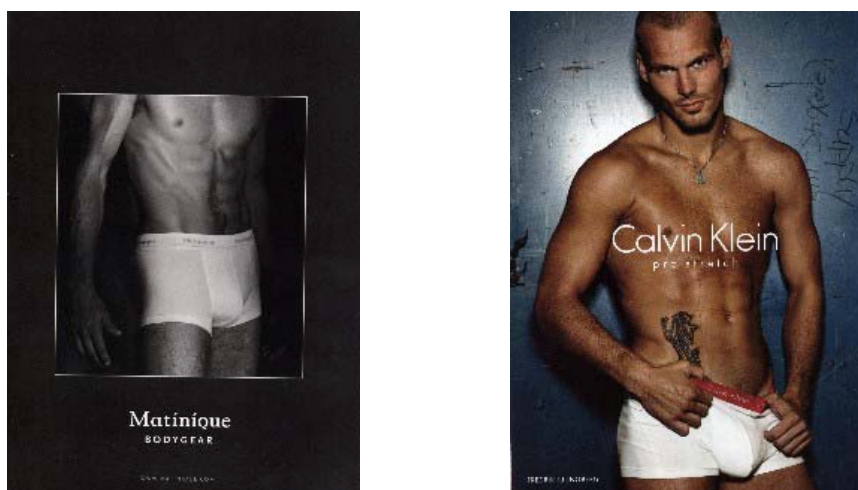


Figure 10. Advertising men's underwear in Finland in 2004.

An interesting perspective was raised by one of the discussants whether men 'not wearing make-up or jewellery' is actually an in-built characteristic, or whether media has created an image according to which men are not supposed to use make-up and wear necklaces and like. *"In fact, hundreds of years ago, it was men that powdered their noses"*. (Discussant C) So, up till now, the media has given an image according to which it is not appropriate for a real man to use make up. *"It seems that cleansing products and peeling creams have just recently entered the men's market [in Finland]. I guess we are witnessing an era when it's becoming appropriate for men to use them."* (Discussant A)

Q: "Has the image of a typical Finnish man changed during the last 30 years? How?"

According to the discussants, it is easier for a man to be different from the mainstream today. *"A man can be traditional if he wants to; he can be a metrosexual – anything he wants to."* (Discussant A) This coincides with the findings of recent studies (e.g. Holt & Thompson 2004; Alexander 2003; Boni 2002): along postmodernity, the role of men is changing and becoming more versatile.

According to earlier research (cf. Law & Labre 2002, 697; Simpson et al. 1996, 257), the use of men in sexual or provocative roles in advertising has increased in recent years. Also according to the Finnish female discussants, it seems to be more common to see men semi-clad in today's adverts. Furthermore, according to the group, contemporary men are more likely portrayed with feminine features. Overall, the discussants considered the gap

between men and women having narrowed. *“You can’t clearly say what are women’s products and women’s duties, or men’s; it’s quite ambiguous – anything can be found.”* (Discussant C) This coincides with earlier notions (cf. Law & Labre 2002, 698; Hirschman 1999, 162–163; Barthel 1988, 179) of the overall feminization of culture.

Q: “What is the role of advertising in moulding gender stereotypes?”

According to the discussants, today’s advertising is smart and effective; and the worse the programmes, the better the adverts: *“Sometimes you want to switch the channel when the programme starts.”* (Discussant C) Advertising can easily affect people, particularly in their most vulnerable areas, by telling people how to hide their own weaknesses and achieve a better image among other people. Besides, advertising affects the ways people think of other people: *“Objectifying men in advertising induces me as a woman to start thinking of men as sexual objects, too.”* (Discussant D) *“Seeing good looking men in adverts makes me expect more of men also in real life. Looks do count.”* (Discussant B) Furthermore, the way advertising depicts men may make women want to change according to that image: *“If he has 30 jars of face cream, I have to have more!”* (Discussant A) Commonly (see e.g. Elliott & Elliott 2005, 3), idealized images of women in advertising have been known to raise comparison standards for attractiveness among women and lower satisfaction with their own attractiveness. Now, according to the findings of this study, images of *men* in advertising can raise comparison standards for *women*.

One of the discussants raised up a question of how dangerous and false it can be to objectify people: *“We commodify people – both men and women – and make them into objects. This kind of life is dangerous and superficial. I think advertising should transmit a greater message than that.”* (Discussant F) *“Especially when young people are in concern.”* (Discussant E) *“I think advertising would be a lot more credible if companies used ordinary people in the ads. By doing that, companies could also differentiate themselves from the others. In Sweden, they use 40+ women in their advertising. I like that.”* (Discussant D) Interestingly, according to Clow and Baack (2004, 247), the use of real people – typical persons – as endorsers is becoming more common. One reason for this is that consumers have become saturated with celebrity endorsers.

Q: “What elements of masculinity have been or are ignored?”

In spite of the strong physical presence in most of the adverts shown during the discussion, the interviewees still longed for manly strength from the male models. Especially the men in 1988 Ahlström (mineral wool) and 2003 HK

(food) ad were regarded as ‘chaps’, not real men. Another aspect that was discussed was the lack of sexual allusion. This, according to the discussants has possibly to do with the nature of the magazines under investigation (i.e. general-interest magazines). Naturally, the media context (the editorial climate and the target segment of the magazine) creates its own atmosphere which also has an effect on advertising (cf. Pickton & Broderick 2005, 119–120). For this study, the stimuli ads for the discussions were drawn from general-interest magazines.

Q: “It has been said that the models in ads relate the products too closely to the specific gender or characteristics of a particular kind of person. What do you say about that? How do you feel about using an American man to promote a product in Finland?”

At this point, a Marlboro cigarette ad of 1973 (published in Seura magazine) was shown to the group (see figure below).



Figure 11. A Finnish cigarette ad (Seura 1973).

An American man, particularly a cowboy (since “*Finnish men watch western films, too*” (Discussant D)), advertising a product in a Finnish magazine was considered applicable in the 1970s. Besides, the Marlboro Man was considered to represent broader cultural values, not just American; “*He is a lonely rider, a man who wants to go his own way*”. (Discussant D) Accordingly, according to Pickton and Broderick (2005, 49), the Marlboro Man image is universally accepted.

Furthermore, according to the discussants, the Marlboro Man can appeal to the masculine features of women, too. *“After all, we all have both masculine and feminine features.”* (Discussant A) Even though the overall attitude towards using an archetype like the Marlboro Man was positive among the group, it would now, after what has happened since 9/11, be considered *“a joke”*. (Discussant A) Also, the value of using specific gender portrayals has diminished along the increase of individualism: *“Everybody can be what they want. [...] I think the best adverts are the ones where there is intelligent humour. It doesn’t really matter if there is a man or a woman.”* (Discussant A) *“Because the barriers between men and women in real life have diminished, a company or a product should not profile itself as ‘a man’s/woman’s only’. By doing so, they lose half of their customers.”* (Discussant B)

Q: “According to previous studies (Whipple & Courtney 1985, 4), effective role portrayals are a function of an appropriate match between the gender of the depicted model and the gender image of the product, the setting of the portrayal, and realism of the portrayal. How do you feel about this?”

Today, according to the group, this rule does not apply any more. An ad that would try to make ‘a perfect match’ between the above mentioned elements would be considered *“dull”*. (Discussant C) Rather, today it is important to *“somehow break the rule”* (Discussant D). Even a dull advertisement can gain more attention if the ordinary is broken in some way. Besides, *“nowadays you can’t really tell if an ad is targeted at men or women. Women look at a man in an ad differently than men do. [...] The conception of masculinity is different among men and women.”* (Discussant C)

Sex as a promoting tool did not appeal to any of the women in the group; *“It’s too overwhelming.”* (Discussant F) *“I don’t miss naked men in ads.”* (Discussant A) Actually, a portrayal of a man does seemingly not represent the same as a portrayal of a female would to a man: *“A man as a picture is not important to me.”* (Discussants B and D) *“Rarely can you see a calendar with men in offices whereas women calendars and calendar girls ... you can see them on the wall of any tiny workshop even!”* (Discussant E) This coincides with MacDannel’s (1987, 530) notion of sexual imagery being mostly masculine oriented. According to a traditional sexual myth, women are made to be looked at, and men are made to do the looking (Solomon 1990, 50, 198). This implies a psychological relationship of power in which the gazer dominates the object of the gaze (Schroeder & Zwick 2004, 30).

6.2.2 Representations of masculinity among Finnish men

The second focus group discussion was conducted among six Finnish men, representing three different age groups, on the 23rd of November in 2004.

Q: “In your own words, please, define a typical Finnish man.”

According to the discussants, naturalness and work – together with action and activeness – are descriptive of a typical Finnish man. Naturalness refers to being himself, not caring so much about his looks or about comments from others. Working hard with his bare hands is considered important; building a house is the most valued project. According to the group, the man in 1973 ‘Vuorivilla’ ad represents the manly ideal at its best. Besides, the idea and ideal of individualism – the man not needing any help from others – was highlighted in the comments. These characters refer to the features of American rugged individualism and solo performance (see Hirschman 2003, 13): tasks should be accomplished alone, dangers met alone, and victory earned alone.

On the other hand, the comradeship that was expressed in the North State ad was considered manly. However, even there the group was not considered that important; in the end, work has to be done alone by oneself. Besides, the number of men is related to the product type: some products just are more social in nature (besides cigarettes, for instance, beer). Typical comments included: [A Finnish man is typically] “... *doing something, with his bare hands.*” (Discussant F) The views coincide with the Finnish women’s perceptions: a typical Finnish man is a working man (see Brannon 1995, 305) or a man of action (see Holt & Thompson 2004, 428–429), or rather a do-it-yourself man. However, the discussants found some changes along the time-span concerning the features in real life and in advertising. These changes will be dealt with next.

Q: “Has the image of a typical Finnish man changed during the last 30 years?”

In the adverts, the men found a move towards other qualities than just those which are related to doing something with bare hands. The man in the 1988 mineral wool ad seemed to represent a slight shift towards more functionary Finland: other qualities than just the capabilities related to physical work started coming up. However, the men did not see this as a linear trend: the men in the Sloggi ad were closer to the ‘original’ mineral wool model of 1973 in their physicality. This coincides with the statement by Elliott and Elliott (2005, 4) of muscularity still being perceived as a cultural symbol of masculinity. Traditional masculine roles having eroded, men have become

more preoccupied with muscularity. Today, as jobs have become less physical, muscles are developed by training in a gym and doing sports.

The man in the yellow suit (Ahlström 1988) represented an ‘official’ – somebody who is alienated from physical work. On the other hand, the yellow suit was seen to represent the easiness of installing the product: anybody can do it, without tarnishing one’s clothes.

As already inferred to during the Finnish women’s discussion, according to previous studies (Simpson et al. 1996, 257), men are increasingly being used as [sexual] objects. Interestingly, the Finnish men shared similar views: [In the Sloggi ad,] *“The men are more objectified, just like women have long been.”* (Discussant C) Besides, an international atmosphere in Finnish advertising was recognized: *“The power element is still there but the Finnish man has become more ‘Swedish’.”* (Discussant D) *“More international.”* (Discussant E)

Overall, the impact of other cultures was underlined. According to the discussants, it is even more rare to see a real Finnish man than a foreigner in ads. *“The Dressman men are the same in other countries as well.”* (Discussant B) Furthermore, according to the discussants, the image of masculinity has become more fragmented through the years: in the 1970s, the image was more homogeneous whereas now it is more diverse; there are different types of men – not just one – advertising different products. This was seen to have to do with the overall fragmentation of society (e.g. Wood 2004, 295–296). *“[...] Due to fragmentation, I’m more responsive to some ads over others. On the other hand, there are a number of ads that just don’t seem to be meant for me. [...] I don’t even watch programs where they advertise products that are not meant for me.”* (Discussant A) The fragmentation of markets and media create a challenge to the effectiveness of the traditional mass media; for instance print media have undergone major changes – presumably at the expense of general-interest magazines – and new magazines are being launched, each targeted at a special audience. On the other hand, thanks to fragmentation, companies can target their marketing communications better and supposedly reach their audiences more effectively. (Pickton & Broderick 2005, 155, 637.)

Q: “What is the role of advertising in moulding gender stereotypes?”

According to the discussants, advertising may – in the long run – strengthen the male stereotypes rather than mould them, but it always has some effect, whether positive or a counter reaction. For instance, one may want to be something exactly opposite to the type in the ad and tries to fight against it. The counter reaction came up when the group discussed a Calvin Klein ad featuring a Swedish soccer player Freddie Ljungberg (see below).

The role media plays in the construction of gender among children and adolescents has generally been considered important (see Saco 1992, 25). However, in the Finnish men's group, fatherhood was seen as a more salient source of role modelling than advertising. *"I've two sons and haven't realized that advertising would be a competitor to me in this sense."* (Discussant C) On the other hand, some of the discussants found it hard to specify the impact of advertising among other media of popular culture: advertising, together with MTV and music videos as well as movies, has an effect – often at an unconscious level. Besides, the effects cannot be discerned on a short-term basis.

Q: "What elements of masculinity have been or are ignored?"

The discussants could hardly mention any such elements. The only raised up issue was the withdrawal of the breadwinner role. *"If we think traditionally, men had to take care of the financial issues and be the shelter ... you don't see that so often [in ads] any more. On the other hand, it is not like that any more in real life either."* (Discussant B) As already earlier in this study referred to (e.g. Boni 2002, 467), the breadwinner role is being complemented by the diversification of masculinity.

Q: "Some say that the models in ads relate the products too closely to the specific gender or characteristics. How do you feel about that?"

[At this point, a Marlboro ad of 1973 (published in Seura magazine) was shown to the group.] When the targeted consumer segment is large enough (like in the Marlboro example), the discussants found this kind of stereotyping worthwhile. And the stereotyping has had some effect: according to the interviewees, a 'lad' (äijä) smokes Marlboro. This, however does not seem to edge out women: *"Women smoke Marlboro Light"*. (Discussant B) A pure American cowboy in an ad in a Finnish magazine did not evoke negative feelings among the group; however, the situation was considered slightly different in the 1970s compared to now. The setting and elements of the ad were found quite appealing to Finnish men as well: nature, huntsman, gold panning, Lapland.

[Next, two underwear ads (see figures above) were shown to the group, the first one as an example of cropping.] Quite surprisingly, the opinions between these two ads varied very little. On the grounds of the comments, the headless torso ad [Matinique] would, as such, not make the men go and buy the underwear. The men did not see the fact that only the body was shown – without the head – as subordination of men. In fact, the headlessness seemed unfamiliar to the men in the focus group. *"I don't even remember to have seen*

that kind of ad in the magazines that I read." (Discussant B) [The ad was published in Exclusive 2004].

The group was not struck by the other underwear ad [Calvin Klein] either. Besides, the men saw little difference between the two underwear ads. *"This one has a head. So what?"* (Discussant B) At first, one discussant saw a homoerotic message in the model's look but when it turned out who the model was (a Swedish soccer player Fredrik Ljungberg), the group categorized him as a metrosexual and a role model for young people, like David Beckham. *"He is a target for identification. That's different from being an object."* (Discussant C) *"I don't see him as an object or a victim. He doesn't look acquiescent."* (Discussant A) Obviously in the case of underwear, there is congruence between the semi-cladness and the product, but if the product was different, the situation would be dissimilar: *"If he was standing there with an ice-cream stick, he could be an object."* (Discussant C)

Furthermore, using a celebrity may not always be as effective as the advertiser anticipates: *"There might be a danger that if Freddie uses the brand, I don't want to use it – I don't want to reveal that I can be manipulated by advertising."* (Discussant B) This may relate to 'homosexual panic' as well: according to Elliott, Jones, Benfield and Barlow (1995, 207; see also Alexander 2003, 538), antipathy towards male portrayals may protect men from any suspicion of homosexuality by other men. Accordingly, according to Simpson et al. (1996, 261), creating sexual allusion by using male nudity should be avoided in ads targeting [heterosexual] males. The embedded sexuality of heterosexual men is usually approached by using women as [sexual] objects, not using men.

Q: "It has been said that effective role portrayals are a function of an appropriate match between the gender of the depicted model and the gender image of the product, the setting of the portrayal, and realism of the portrayal. How do you see this?"

An overall idea seemed to be that it is more important to somehow break the appropriate match, and in that way try to attract attention. However, *"Advertising men's underwear on women is possibly not a very good idea."* (Discussant F) Furthermore, the effectiveness of an ad and the way the above mentioned factors affect, depends on the product: when it is a question of a brand, the more ideal the picture can be and the bigger hero there may be in the picture. And the more generic the product, the more 'typical' the model in the picture may be. In fact, many products may have little significance of their own, but they can be invested with values that for instance a celebrity in the ad

himself represents, and that the audience considers important (Shields 1997, 85).

Whether there is a man in the ad or not, did not seem to make a difference among the men in the focus group. At least no one in the group admitted that the model as such would make them buy the product. On the contrary, if the model in the picture looks really irritating, the product will not be purchased. Ads, overall, seemed to represent a platform of entertainment rather than a source of information to the men in the group. Interestingly, practitioners of persuasion have long believed that humour makes ads more persuasive because humour tends to attract attention, creates a more favourable attitude toward the source and the product, and may produce a less critical general orientation toward the message. Besides, laughing helps individuals escape from reality. However, humour can prevent people from taking the product seriously (Sparks 2002, 145; see also Clow & Baack 2004, 204).

In spite of the view (see Ora 2004) that men in general value technical details in advertising, the discussants considered technical information, quite surprisingly, sometimes even irritating. *“It makes no difference to me whether a shaver spins 4000 or 5000 times per minute.”* (Discussant A) *The diagram in the dishwasher [Philips 1988] ad didn’t actually describe anything. But it gave a scientific image.*” (Discussant F)

Whether actually being honest or not, all the members of the group seemed to think that advertising does not affect them, i.e. does not make them buy products. The claim of non-existent influence of advertising, interestingly, coincides with the findings of Phillip Zimbardo, a psychologist who studied persuasion in the context of cult groups. Zimbardo named his finding as the *‘illusion of personal invulnerability’*⁵⁸, i.e. the tendency to think that media influence is stronger for other people than it is for oneself. (Sparks 2002⁵⁹, 140.) However, the men admitted that in situations where one has to choose between different brand names, the most advertised brand is usually chosen, obviously unconsciously. *“If I’ve seen a Tupla [chocolate bar] ad many times enough, I presumably choose Tupla over Mars, for instance.”* (Discussant C) This refers to the assumption that consistent exposure to advertising gradually creates attitudes and beliefs that ultimately have an impact on buying behaviour (Wright-Isak, Faber & Horner 1997, 7–8); these impacts are not always “seen” or accepted because the absorption happens little by little and often subconsciously.

⁵⁸ The phenomenon is also called *‘the third-person effect’* (Sparks 2002, 140).

⁵⁹ Original source: Zimbardo, P. G. – Ebbesen, E. B. – Maslach, C. (1977) *Influencing attitudes and changing behavior*. Addison-Weasley: Reading.

6.2.3 Representations of masculinity among US women

Focus group discussion number three was conducted among six US women on the 7th of February, 2005 in Escalon, California.

Q: “What defines a man? What characteristics are typical of masculinity?”

Interestingly, the US women’s definitions of masculinity had to do with outer appearance, the first immediate comment being “hair”: “... *nice, clean cut hair*” (Discussant E). Another feature, more age-related, was a touch of conservativeness in the man’s clothing and overall appearance: “*Attractive is somebody who looks my age. [...] I’m not all that attracted by piercing and things like that. A little more conservative still.*” (Discussant D) Furthermore, a certain appearance of intellectual was considered important: “*To me masculine is a man who appears strong. Leadership-wise. Intellectual-wise. When he is confident.*” (Discussant D) “*Masculine includes a certain appearance of confidence, intelligence as opposed to simply a tough guy or a lumberjack.*” (Discussant D) What was interesting in the US women’s comments was that the provider role did not come up. Practically all comments were related to appearances.

Q: “What particularly defines an American man?”

Versatility is a definition that the female discussants gave to the American man. According to the group, American men have to be versatile in order fulfill the expectations of women and the society. “*There are so many demands on men nowadays. I mean you have to be sensitive. You have to be, you know, tough. You have to be smart. You have to be fun. You have to fit into the workplace. You have to fit in on the football field.*” (Discussant B)

Clothing is an element that can feature American men: however, the opinions varied in regard to what kind of clothing was considered ‘American’. For some, casual clothing represented something that other cultures would not have to the same extent. “*An American man is more relaxed in his attire.*” (Discussant E) However, there was also the Wall Street stockbroker stereotype wearing a three-piece suit, and an agricultural businessman. “*There are so many men who still are involved in agriculture and getting out there and providing the bottom line of this country and yet there are so many who are just absolutely at the high end of business, too, you know.*” (Discussant D) Here, again, the versatility came along: “*Sometimes they go from one to the other. That’s a man who can get out there and plow the field and then go in and change into his three-piece suit.*” (Discussant D) On the grounds of the US women’s comments it is difficult to categorize American men under earlier mentioned categories (see subchapter 2.1.2). In the comments, features

of Brannon's (1995, 305) 'football player' and 'the dynamic big-shot businessman' as well as Hirschman's (1999, 170) 'father figure' could be found. A characteristic that came out during the discussion, but is not actually included in any of the a-priori categorizations, is the emotional side of a man. The coming up of emotional life may have something to do with the feminization of culture in general.

Q: "What features of masculinity did the ads you just saw bring about masculinity?"

Overall, the discussants saw that the ads covered all other aspects of masculinity except the business type; "*Eddie Albert really didn't look like a businessman.*" (Discussant C) According to the discussants, there was the muscular type with a sex appeal – the tight shirt and V neck (ManPower) – the casual and confident type (Ford), the trustful authority figure (Eddie Albert endorsing the hearing aid), the daddy role (Nicoderm). However, the man in the OxiMagic ad caused confusion and was not considered masculine at all: "*I don't know what was in that last one. It wasn't intellect. It wasn't masculine. It was that the guy was just laying there.*" (Discussant E) In general, the men in the ads looked ordinary which was considered an advantage: "*There were more regular looking people. [...] And people want to see regular people.*" (Discussant A)

The discussants also raised the issue that sex was not used in the ads. This was, again, considered a benefit: "*Even though some of these men were wearing like a T-shirt and maybe their muscles showed [...], I did not sense any of these ads just outwardly selling sex.*" (Discussant D) A reason for this was considered to be that "*... sex in men make other men nervous, and men don't need sex to buy stuff.*" (Discussant B) Furthermore, it seems that women do not long for sex appeal either: "*I certainly think that women are more attracted by a sense of a man's competency and comfortness and sort of stability as opposed to just wanting, you know, a masculine image to be physically attractive.*" (Discussant D) In reference to this, one of the discussants used Brawny paper towel ads (see below) as an example of unsuccessful use of sex appeal: "*They are horrifying. That's what I mean. They're horrifying. Paper towels are not sexy, you know. I don't want anyone to tell me that they are.*" (Discussant B) "[He being on his knees and looking handsome] *is not selling anything really. It doesn't draw me to the product.*" (Discussant D)

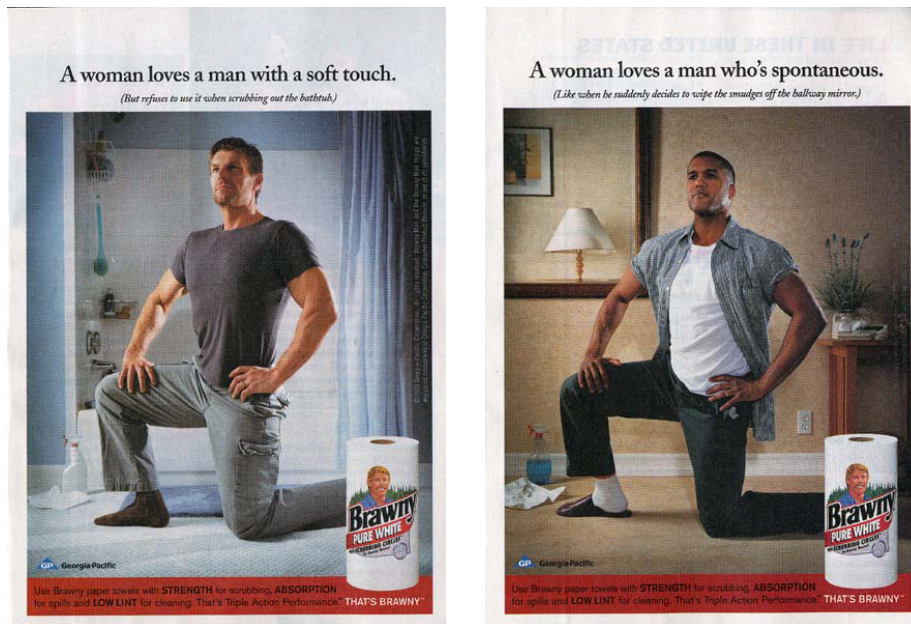


Figure 12. US ads by Brawny using male human models (Reader's Digest 2003)

Overall, the discussants seemed not to care whether there was a person in the ad or what gender the model represented. *"It would be the same to me."* (Discussant F) This has to do with the diversity of the United States as a nation and the kind of product advertised: *"It's so hard to find a typical American. How diverse is this country? You can't just pick an age group any more. You have to pick this kind of person in this age group."* (Discussant B) *"Some products are more personal by nature. [...] To me paper towels are not personal product. It has nothing to do with a person. You know, as opposed to deodorant."* (Discussant D) *"As long as you're authoritative on the subject, I don't think it matters what your sex is."* (Discussant B) Eddie Albert (selling the hearing aid) was considered an authority figure that could appeal to both men and women because *"... it's the right age group and the right product for the age group."* (Discussant D) The fact that he is [or rather was in the 1980s] a celebrity was a benefit in the sense that *"A celebrity definitely gets your attention. [...]"* (Discussant C) This has to do with a feeling of familiarity of the person; to the women in the group, a celebrity can work like friend: they are more apt to listen to spokespersons they are familiar with (cf. Clow & Baack 2004, 247). *"It's people we are familiar with rather than just some strange bozo guy, you know"*. (Discussant B) This, however, was in contradiction with the earlier mentioned preference to "ordinary" people.

The general belief that price would be an important decision factor for American consumers was shared among the group. “[...] *it would be nice if they had the price in there.*” (Discussant A) However, the fact that prices are not fixed from one store to another or from one state to another, was considered as a mitigating factor concerning the ‘pricelessness’. *“Every store is different. [...] And what it costs here and what it costs in the Midwest or the east coast is so different.”* (Discussant F) *“We expect the businesses to compete. And usually it’s the price. And so I would never want this to be a fixed price that couldn’t change.”* (Discussant D) A price-related tool is also the use of coupons – and the discussants seemed to be in favor of them: *“Every week the Proctor & Gamble coupons come out. And there’s always something in there that I need that I use all the time. I’m happy to find a coupon for that particular brand.”* (Discussant B)

Q: “How do you think the representations of masculinity have changed during the last three decades?”

Quite interestingly, the discussants found that appearance was more emphasized in advertising 30 years ago and that the ads were more sexist in the past, whereas lately, masculinity was seen to have shifted to be more subtle: *“They don’t want to offend anyone in their ads [today]”*. (Discussant D) This view coincides with Gauntlett’s (2002, 75) presumption of advertisers taking their social role rather seriously. They are also aware of the consumers’ purchasing power and thus, do not obviously want to risk offending them (cf. Vranica 2003). However, the discussants did raise up today’s beer and cigarette ads as examples of ads that sell sex, but there were no such ads in the data since beer or cigarettes are not being advertised in Reader’s Digest; actually, they have not been advertised in it during the thirty-year study period at all.

In general, the women saw a shift and change in priorities – from being a sexy boyfriend or lover to being a good and caring father: *“Years ago having your woman by your side was a priority. More recently or currently having your baby is a priority.”* (Discussant E) *“I think that many of us were grateful for the husband that would get in there and hold the baby and do the carpets or whatever. [...] It is definitely a change. But it is more an improvement, you know. It’s more a sense of contributing to the family in a better way.”* (Discussant D) A factor that may have affected the situation is that expectations towards men have changed. The fact that men were mostly by themselves in the ads did not arouse many feelings among the group: *“Maybe they are just free.”* (Discussant D) However, the discussants shared a view that ads have been and are targeted mostly at women (Discussant F: *“Before, the man was always working and the woman was at home. And she was the*

one who saw the commercials.”), and thus, “Maybe seeing a man with a woman isn’t particularly attractive to women.” (Discussant D)

Q: “It has been claimed that the use of human models in advertising may link the product to particular gender or particular features of the person. How do you feel about that?”

Even though it was not considered important whether there is a man or a woman in an ad, the discussants still raised up some products that they considered gender related (such as detergents or feminine hygiene products). In such cases, the gender of the model in the ad has a lot to do with the trustworthiness of the ad. Besides, an overall opinion was that women trust a woman’s – rather than a man’s – advice on, for instance, female oriented products “... that are home related or caring for the family or cooking”. (Discussant D) “I don’t think I’d listen to a man tell about a detergent.” (Discussant B)

Q: “How do you see the role of advertising in moulding gender stereotypes? Does advertising mirror reality to you or does it create it?”

In here, the views of the discussants polarized quite clearly: “I’d say it creates it.” (Discussant F) “I was thinking it mirrors it. [...] Because if you look at what’s out there, I don’t see a lot earrings. I don’t see a lot of tattoos in advertisements and that’s reality if you look around⁶⁰.” (Discussants B and C) However, a commonly shared view seemed to be that the relationship between ‘reality’ and advertising depends on the product. “I think entirely it just depends on the product. If the product is one that needs to be used realistically, scrub those floors or whatever, they are really trying in reality, they want to sell it. [...] If the product indicates to more fantasy, you know, makes you feel more attractive, then I think it does its best to create reality.” (Discussant D) Beer and wine ads were raised as examples of ‘unrealistic’ advertisements, where the advertisers are trying to create a link between the spirits and sports, for instance.

The common finding (see e.g. Kilbourne 1995, 122) that advertising uses stereotypes of slim, young, good-looking people seemed not to bother the participants in the group: “It’s so weird that we feel like we have to be like those people even though we know that that’s not – those aren’t real people. But I don’t know, at 40 I don’t think I have to be like that.” (Discussant C) Similar views have been shared by Schroeder and Zwick (2004, 30):

⁶⁰ At this point it has to be reminded that the US discussions were conducted in a small town in California. Hence, the discussants’ ‘reality’ may differ from the ‘reality’ of bigger Californian cities, such as San Francisco or Los Angeles.

advertising images are not reality as such but artfully arranged manipulations of visual elements; likewise, the models in ads are posed. What is shown in ads has not really happened, and there is usually always the commercial purpose – to sell something – in the background.

Q: “It has been said that effective role portrayals are a function of an appropriate match between the gender of the depicted model and the gender image of the product, the setting of the portrayal, and realism of the portrayal. What do you say about that?”

The participants underlined the importance of linking all these elements together. If one factor is missing, the audience may be destroyed: “[...] *if they don’t match all those things together, I think you really could alienate half of your market.*” (Discussant D) In accordance with Courtney and Whipple (1985, 8), the group underlined the importance of overall realism of an ad.

An example of an ad where the match had been pulled well together was considered to be the Nicoderm ad: *“The difference between smoking – nonsmoking is you are clean. You are able to hold that baby. You don’t have smoker’s breath. There’s that sense that you are pure. And to me kitchen is one of the places that we seek to have clean and, you know, that one of the most important areas of the home. And it also was, again, that changing role – there’s something appropriate about the model in that case, the image that he was portraying, the product that [...] was being sold.”* (Discussant D) *“And today men are comfortable in the kitchen.”* (Discussant E)

6.2.4 Representations of masculinity among US men

The fourth focus group discussion was conducted among six US men on the 8th of February, 2005 in Escalon, California.

Q: “What defines a [US, an American] man? What characteristics are typical of masculinity? How has the image possibly changed during the last few decades?”

Like among the US female discussants, ‘hair’ was the first feature that the men in the US focus group also brought up as being ‘manly’. Besides, strength and confidence, a macho image, as well as physical differences were mentioned. However, the discussants found a number of changes in today’s definition of a ‘manly’ man compared to the one 20–30 years ago: *“When I was growing up, the definition of a man was somebody who generally was quiet, reserved, had integrity, was strong, led the family. A provider. He worked to support the family.”* (Discussant D) The breadwinner role was fast: what the man did for

living was considered essential, the core of the manhood, for an American man in the past: *“Often the American man was defined by what he did. [...] for a long period that what you did was who you are. And you weren’t necessarily a dad or a family member. You were whatever your job was.”* (Discussant F) Changes in these matters have partially led to confusion: *“I think men are more confused today about what a man is supposed to be. Masculinity is less defined.”* (Discussant D) The participants considered the role of an American man more blurred than in some other cultures *“... because there are still the cultures where it’s definite that the man is the provider.”* (Discussant B) *“[In the past], men did certain things. Women did certain things. [...] Equal sharing as far as the provider role is now shared.”* (Discussant F)

In spite of the fact that men are increasingly taking part in domestic chores and child care, the importance of what he does for living seems still to be there. *“The man is still defined by his work where a woman might be defined by her work but also how good a mother she is. I think in today’s society, women have a much harder burden because they have to be a good mother just as well as a provider whereas a man, if he is a good provider, there is some slack given on the other part.”* (Discussant F) The discussants felt that, along the years, men have improved at how they deal with women, and in that sense also, have approached women: *“Societally we are much more tuned in to how we’re supposed to treat women.”* (Discussant D) *“I think the American man understands [...] the equality, whether it’s a job or whether it’s a family or whatever, be more successful with a partnership.”* (Discussant F) One of the discussants expressed the narrowing gap between men and women as follows: *“I think that like if this is the woman’s role and this is the man’s role and they are firmly defined; nowadays, I think the man is kind of past the midpoint and they kind of meet a little, you know, a little off center.”* (Discussant A)

Q: “How do you see the role of advertising in regard to moulding gender stereotypes? Does advertising mirror reality or does it create it?”

The general view of the group was that advertising both mirrors and creates reality, making people lean on it by creating perceptions of ‘reality’. Often, these perceptions may not be true. *“All you got to do is buy our product and you’re going to be handsome, happy and have no problem.”* (Discussant F) *“Advertising always pushes the limits. They don’t sell the past. They sell the future. If you need to be in the future, you need to buy this product.”* (Discussant C) Besides, the way advertising operates was considered partly subliminal. *“A lot of it is subtle. The way they portray it. The colors. The marching order of elements in the ad.”* (Discussant F)

Among the US men, there seemed to be a portion of similar illusion of personal invulnerability as among the Finnish men: none of them admitted that advertising would have an effect on them personally: *“I’m not influenced. [...] I’m not a creature of habit. Not a perception.”* (Discussant C) *“Ads for me, it’s like information. It tells me there is a product out there. [...] But if I choose, it has either been recommended to me or I’ve tried different ones.”* (Discussant F) *“They [ads] don’t influence me. I enjoy watching the exposure. However, it’s not going to improve my decision of buying the product.”* (Discussant E) One reason for ignoring the ads was considered to be the abundance and ubiquitous nature of advertising: *“I think we get so many ads everywhere. [...] I don’t look at ads in the newspaper because I’m looking for the articles, and they totally bypass me. Same thing on the Internet. [...] I might be less influenced by advertising than a lot of people because I’m not looking for particular things except when I’m looking for something, and then I’m going to places that I think I can get that information.”* (Discussant F)

In reference to this, the participants did not feel any pressure from the ads on how they should portray themselves as men or what kind of products they should use. For the men in the group, it seemed that their wives and girlfriends affect their product usage more than advertising: *“If your wife brings something into this home, you know, that’s the product we’re using, well, then, you know, I’m affected.”* (Discussant F) Accordingly, a study by Goldhaber Research Agency found that women have a significant impact on the spending habits of men (Clow & Baack 2004, 139). Therefore, to boost the sales of men’s products, advertisers should, and often do, market the products to women. Even today, men are obviously not always very selective in regard to their brand choices: *“I could use any old deodorant, as long as it works.”* (Discussant D)

In spite of the gradual changes in men’s consumption patterns, statistics show men still do not shop to the extent businesses would like them to shop; for instance, in 2004 the sales of men’s pants decreased by 2.1 percent from 2003 in the US. Even today, men seem to buy pants mainly because they wear out or old ones do not fit. The challenge for pant makers is to try to make men buy another pair of pants for some other reasons. (Halkias 2005.) Supposedly, the situation can be alike for other products, and companies are faced with a similar marketing challenge.

Q: “Some say that the use of human models in advertising may link the product to particular gender or particular features of the person. How do you feel about this?”

Generally, the participants agreed with the statement. *“You don’t see men too often doing ads for like kitchen products or bath-type products. It’s the mom*

bringing in the groceries. So that's stereotypical even though you know there could be men doing those types of things." (Discussant F) As to gender representation, observable elements and their relations, as well as hidden meanings and the overall layout, the Nicoderm ad was considered successful: *"I thought it was the best because what they were promising you was better life with your family. [...] That there was a connotation there that if you give up smoking, you're going to have a longer life and you're going to be able to enjoy – do those things. And it was very subtle. You have that image of the man with his child. And then you have that little picture of the Nicoderm that you can solve that problem. [...] Ultimately, you know, what an ad is trying to do is get you to look at the product."* (Discussant F) *"Some things are a lot more important than your habits. It was like the children in your life. A young guy in the kitchen holding the baby."* (Discussant D) *"Which is a normal female role if you want to think of it that way."* (Discussant F)

Q: "What features of masculinity did those ads that you just saw bring about masculinity? What features of masculinity were ignored or left out?"

"Overall, [...] you've got the strong, muscular man type. You have the caring type man. You have the man who is not afraid to deal with his hearing loss." (Discussant F) Besides, there was 'the cool, smart guy' [Ford ad]: *"I'm cool. I figured it out and I'm cool."* (Discussant F) Besides, the discussants brought up the strong, macho type: *"Cowboy hats. Beard, fast truck, everything. There's an image of a man. That's your stereo. Just in case you missed it. The man is tough, the truck is tough, and the spark plug is tough. They all go together."* [AC Spark plugs] (Discussant F) However, also among men, the OxiMagic ad caused confusion: *"I didn't even know what they were advertising."* (Discussant C) *"It reminded me not of US ads."* (Discussant F) *"My first impression was that a guy got smashed by a big old tub of detergent or something."* (Discussant A) *"A man being crushed by the society."* (Discussant F) The scarcity of elements may have been a reason for the confusion among the group. *"There's a lot missing [in that ad]."* (Discussant A) This coincides with a paradox in advertising design: on one hand, an ad should provide as much information as possible, but with too many elements and too much clutter the message may easily be lost. On the other hand, too few elements can be too little, i.e. if too much is left out (and too many elements are missing), the audience does not understand the message⁶¹. And people do not want to spend time on trying to figure out what an ad is trying to say.

⁶¹ This has been considered typical to postmodern advertising.

Q: “It has been said that effective role portrayals are a function of an appropriate match between the gender of the depicted model and the gender image of the product as well as the setting and realism of the portrayal. What do you think about that?”

Overall, the men in the group agreed with the statement. *“If it’s saying that whether or not you’re going to believe the ad depends on how, you know, whether it’s a realistic image to it, I would agree with that. [...] I have to be able to believe what’s going on in the ad. Otherwise I go, what a stupid ad, you know, which I’ll often say.”* (Discussant F) *“All those things. [...] You don’t see the old guy with the deodorant or the woman arm wrestling a woman. Or a teenager with a hearing aid.”* (Discussants A and C) Interestingly, the ‘setting’ was related to the ‘market’, and the market was considered a key factor in making advertising work. *“Nowadays ads are aimed at particular groups of people and different ages. [...] The reason you don’t get the ads is because they’re not aimed at you [...].”* (Discussant F) However, the men brought up examples of successful ads where the boundary lines have been crossed, for instance ads where, instead of segmenting the market by traditional demographic variables such as age or gender, they have used psychographics as a segmentation criterion. *“Those kinds of ads I think cross the gender/age barriers and can also appeal to people with certain adventures.”* (Discussant D)

7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Conclusions and summary of the study

The purpose of this study was *to examine cultural representations of masculinity in advertising in Finland and the United States*. It was anticipated that due to the effect of global advertising, Finland and the US would share similar gender representations of masculinity. However, given that gender is deeply rooted in culture, important differences between the two countries were also expected. In order to get a deeper understanding of the role of advertising within culture, and in order to find out how people respond to the depictions of masculinity in advertising, the method used was focus group interviewing. The group arrangement brought a deeper perspective to the adverts and the discussion of the representations of masculinity because often, adverts are not consumed alone, but depend on interactions with other people, thus creating socially shared meanings (cf. Percy et al. 2001, 27; Flynn 1991, 281).

Altogether four focus group sessions, two in each country, were conducted. In each group, which were separate for men and women, there were representatives of three different age categories: young adults (20–35), mid adults (36–50) and older adults (50 +). The focus group discussions were extended in the sense that before the actual discussions, six magazine ads – representing a 30-year time span – were used as projective stimuli for the upcoming discussion. However, one has to note that it would have been practically impossible to demarcate the discussions to print advertising only. This was evidenced in the views of the participants as well: in their comments, they often referred to advertising in general, not in a particular media.

The purpose of the study was divided into three research questions:

1. What cross-cultural and culture-specific gender codes can be found, and how have these codings possibly changed during the last three decades?
2. What is the relevance of using human models in advertising?
3. What is the role of advertising in modeling gender stereotypes?

In the following, the research results will be concluded according to the order of the research questions.

RQ 1: What cross-cultural and culture-specific gender codes can be found, and how have these codings possibly changed during the last three decades?

In spite of the strong media influence across borders, the definition of masculinity had more resemblance within the countries than across them, i.e. there were more similarities between the ways men and women in both countries defined ‘a typical man’ representing their own culture. On the grounds of the focus group discussions, a Finnish man was defined by his doings whereas the American man was defined by his status and looks.

Obviously, in the American culture, hair is important since both US men and women mentioned ‘hair’ first when defining features of a typical US man. Hair seems to be important for an American man; the respect to a full head of hair came out in the US men’s comments in regard to Eddie Alberts and his portrayal in a 1988 Reader’s Digest ad: *“I may be old but look at me: I still got all my hair, I look good.”* (US man, 47)

Interestingly, hair has been considered as one of the image factors in US presidential elections, leading to a victory. In fact, the last elected bald president was also the last "non-television" president – President Eisenhower (in 1952 and 1956). Since then, in every case except George H. W. Bush vs. Michael Dukakis (in 1988) and George W. Bush vs. John Kerry (in 2004) the candidate with the fullest head of hair has won. In the American culture, a good head of hair is associated with power and virility, whereas baldness is often thought of as a sign of weakness. (Walton 2004.)

And according to the findings of this study, giving a strong and confident image is important for a US man. Both US women and men used the terms ‘strength’ and ‘confidence’ to define a typical US man. In general, however, the groups found it difficult to define a typical US man since there are so many versatile roles and expectations concerning men. Besides, the United States as a country is very heterogeneous. Both US groups did highlight the importance of work: *“The man is still defined by his job, by what he does for living.”* (US man, 56)

Work was considered important in the Finnish culture as well but in a slightly different aspect. Where the US discussants emphasized ‘work’ from the occupational and status perspective, Finnish men and women looked at it from its physical side: a typical Finnish man is a hard worker, always doing something with his bare hands. Besides, according to both Finnish men and women, a typical Finnish man has a serious, decisive look on his face. Maybe the fact that Finnish people still remember the tough times and the reconstruction after the Second World War has to do with this connotation. Finland would not have survived without the hard working men (and women).

As to the changes in representations of masculinity, according to the discussants in all four groups, today’s men have versatile roles whereas still in

the 1970s, men were mostly considered as breadwinners and providers. Besides, there has been a change in priorities; nowadays men can be depicted as fathers: “*Years ago, having your woman by your side was a priority. More recently or currently, having your baby is a priority.*” (US woman, 52) However, even though in the depictions, the breadwinner type may have been substituted by the new more sensitive, children centered type, the values that they are both based on are the same. There still seems to be a portion of warriorism in the definition of masculinity: it is a man’s duty to take care of his ‘troops’. (Mosse 1996, 181, 192; cf. Holt & Thompson 2004, 428.) However, not everybody has to conform to that role. Today, it is permissible for a man to look after his appearance without a fear of being considered homosexual.

The versatility in today’s roles can be considered as a disadvantage: men themselves feel lost. “*I think men are more confused today about what a man is supposed to be. Masculinity is less defined.*” (US man, 47) In both countries, the discussants saw the gap between men and women having narrowed. Advertising and popular culture may have their fingerprint in this change. However, according to Moore (2003), radical feminism – by undermining the relations between the genders – is to blame. Furthermore, where the social order in modern societies was based on traditions – providing people with clearly defined roles – in today’s postmodern world, identities are fluid and flexible. (cf. Gauntlett 2002, 96–97; Wood 2004, 294.)

RQ 2: What is the relevance of using human models in advertising?

In general, whether there is a human model in the ad or not, seemed not to be of interest to any of the discussants in either country. In the United States, this was partly considered to be due to the fact that it is difficult to find a typical ‘American’ – and stereotyped images can sometimes isolate customers who cannot identify themselves with the model. “*It’s so hard to find a typical American. How diverse is this country?*” (US woman, 30) Presenting a mere product in the ad can be deliberate in the sense that an advertiser does not want to identify the product with a particular market segment, gender or race (Schudson 1986, 213–214). Using a particular representation of the member(s) of the target group can demarcate some consumer groups and affect the image of the product. This came out quite clearly in the written comments, particularly in the cases of Man-Power 1973 ad (US) and Sloggi 2003 ad (Finland). In both cases, the subjects found it difficult to relate to the models in the ads. This may have had to do with the overt masculinity embedded in the models and the settings, and even the name of the other product (Man-Power).

According to the US female discussants, whether there ‘needs’ to be a human model in the ad or not has to do with the nature of the product: the less personal the product is, the less likely there should be a human model. *“Some products are more personal by nature. [...] To me paper towels are not a personal product. It has nothing to do with a person. You know, as opposed to deodorant.”* (US woman, 47)

From ads, the Finnish groups claimed for entertainment, and smart humour was considered more important than having a person in the ad. *“I think the best adverts are the ones where there is intelligent humour. It doesn’t really matter if there is a man or woman.”* (Finnish woman, 24) In fact, humour has been considered one of the best techniques of getting attention and keeping it. In recall tests, people most often remember humorous ads. However, the fact that the ad is remembered does necessarily not mean that people would remember the product; a humorous situation can distract people from the product and its attributes. (e.g. Clow & Baack 2004, 205; Belch & Belch 2004, 186.) Furthermore, there may be a danger that humour is produced at someone’s expense. For instance, the US ‘OxiMagic’ 2003 ad as well as the Finnish ‘HK’ 2003 ad were making fun of manhood in general.

It has been said that effective role portrayals are a function of an appropriate match between the gender of the depicted model and the gender image of the product, the setting of the portrayal, and realism of the portrayal. The US groups were more coherent about the statement and underlined the importance of linking all these elements. According to both men and women’s groups, all the elements are needed in order to keep the ad together and gain attention from the targeted customers. *“All those things. [...] You don’t see an old guy with the deodorant or a woman arm wrestling another woman. Or a teenager with a hearing aid.”* (US men, 20 and 44) However, it has been claimed (Bellizzi & Milner 1991, 72) that gender-identification of products is waning, and advertisers have begun to target previously gender-specific products at both genders (dual gender positioning⁶²). This finding was supported by both Finnish groups. *“Because the barriers between men and women in real life have diminished, a company or a product should not profile itself as a ‘man’s or a woman’s only’. By doing so, they would lose half of their customers.”* (Finnish woman, 27) However, according to a Finnish male discussant (61): *“Advertising men’s underwear on women is possibly not a very good idea.”*

One way of eliminating the gender specificity in advertising is to use artificial endorsers. Artificial endorsers are constructed characters; the most

⁶² For example, repositioning traditionally female-dominant products, such as household cleaning products, towards men (cf. Elliott, Eccles & Hodgson 1993, 313).

common type is an animated character, such as Muppets which Pizza Hut has recently started using in their advertising in the US. (Sutel 2005b; cf. Spence & Van Heekeren 2004, 75). Another example of an animated character that has been used universally for a number of years is Mr. Clean. Some of these characters are more human-like in the sense that they may have human parts (such as the body) but they are partly artificial. For example, Jack [Jack in the Box] has a human body but his head is a physical manifestation of a cartoon. Moreover, people can be substituted by animals. For instance during Super Bowl 2005⁶³, a number of ads featured animals – such as chimpanzees running the office (CareerBuilder.com) – doing things that would normally be done by people (Sutel 2005a). Often, it may be easier for the audience to identify and recall the ads and brands when a company uses an artificial endorser. Besides, artificial endorsers are not likely to be scarred by negative publicity (which can happen in the case of celebrities, for instance), and their longevity is a little more guaranteed. (Spence & Van Heekeren 2004, 75; Belch & Belch 2004, 153.) Furthermore, artificial endorsers do not mark off either gender.

RQ 3: What is the role of advertising in modeling gender stereotypes?

In the literature, there seems to be an ongoing controversy over the influence of advertising on people and society as a whole. Critics say that advertising, among other means of popular media, shapes how we live, suggesting lifestyles and forms of self-presentation, and thus, also affecting gender identities. (e.g. Duncan 2005, 636–637; Gauntlett 2002, 99.) It seemed more likely to the US discussants to see the forcing role of advertising. According to both US women and US men, advertising both mirrors and creates reality; the role, however, depends on the product: *“I think it just depends on the product. If the product is one that needs to be used realistically, they are really trying to reflect it in reality, they want to sell it. [...] If the product indicates to more fantasy, you know, makes you feel more attractive, then I think it does its best to create reality.”* (US woman, 47) *“Advertising always pushes the limits. They don’t sell the past. They sell the future. If you need to be in the future, you need to buy this product.”* (US man, 44)

However, the illusion of personal invulnerability seemed to be quite high among men in the focus group discussions: male discussants of both countries neglected the fact that advertising would have an effect on their purchasing behaviour or their expectations of their own masculinity. They evidently did

⁶³ In the US, Super Bowl is considered the showcase for advertising. However, due to the high costs [in 2005 a 30-second commercial during the Super Bowl football game cost \$ 2.4 million] of Super Bowl advertising, advertisers use alternative events. One such alternative is the Academy Awards show, which has been labeled as ‘Super Bowl for women’. (Belch & Belch 2004, 354; see also Kilbourne 1999, 34.)

not want to give an impression that they could be manipulated by advertising. Can the men's rejection towards advertising, thus, be seen as a sign of self-defense? (cf. Elliott & Elliott 2005, 16). Furthermore, if advertising has no influence on men, why do companies spend more and more on advertising targeted at men? For instance in the United States, companies spent \$ 80 000 per second to broadcast their commercials during Super Bowl 2005 (Sutel 2005b). And the Super Bowl is mainly targeted at male audiences. Besides, it has been suggested that the Super Bowl is more about advertising than football. (Kilbourne 1999, 33–34.)

Based on the findings of this study, it would be too prompt to make conclusions of distinct gender differences in regard to the illusion of personal invulnerability and consumption patterns. However, an interesting finding was that women, particularly in Finland, openly admitted that they actually enjoy advertising: *"Often, the commercials are better than the programmes!"* (Finnish woman, 44). And when advertising is smart, it is likely to be effective.

Furthermore, the men in the Finnish group considered that rather than moulding gender stereotypes, advertising strengthens them. According to the Finnish women, advertising affects their expectations of men and besides, has an effect on their own expectations as to being a woman: *"If he has 30 jars of face cream, I have to have more!"* (Finnish woman, 24)

In conclusion, in spite of the a-priori proposition of this study that Finland and the United States would share similar representations of masculinity, there were actually more similarities within the countries than across them. In this sense, the statement that gender is culturally defined (cf. Tissier-Desbordes & Kimmel 1998) proved out to be tenable. Furthermore, there were more similarities in the opinions within cultures than between genders. Particularly the definition of a 'typical' American/Finnish man was more culture-bound than gender-bound. However, there were some cross-gender similarities in the responses; both US and Finnish men denied the influence of advertising on them as individuals. In general, all the groups elicited a shift from traditional 'breadwinner' masculinity to more diversified roles; the definition of masculinity seems to be in transition in both countries. On the basis of the discussions, advertising seems to have a role in moulding gender roles; however, this was considered to vary between different product categories.

The findings of this research run parallel to some of the findings of a recent study by Elliott and Elliott (2005). An interesting and contradictory finding among women in Finland was that the ways masculinity is represented in advertising seemed to create, besides expectations of men and masculine ideals, expectations concerning their own femininity.

Interestingly, the traditional ideal of masculinity – the breadwinner type – was still quite strong among the discussants. And if we are to believe Mosse (1996, 181), it will never totally vanish.

7.2 Theoretical and practical implications

As distinct from the earlier mainstream gender research in advertising, this research used a qualitative research method in order to discuss masculinity in advertising in two different cultures, Finland and the United States. The need for cross-cultural research that focuses on target audience's interpretations and conceptions of advertising has been abundantly acknowledged in a number of recent studies (e.g. Elliott & Elliott 2005, 5; Lerman & Callow 2004, 508). Besides, up till now, research on representations of masculinity has been extremely limited (e.g. Elliott & Elliott 2005, 4). The study at hand has, consequently, added to the scarce area of cross-cultural gender research concerning masculinity in advertising.

This study provides support to earlier findings that advertising is particularly reflective of culture (Chung & Ha 2004, 99). However, it would be premature to conclude that the findings recorded in this study would be typical to the cross-cultural reception of ads. On the basis of the findings of the four focus group discussions, advertising seems to reflect a society's views and values. However, there are cross-cultural similarities between Finland and the US that seem to be gender-related (cf. illusion of personal invulnerability). Furthermore, all four groups underlined the change in representations of masculinity during the last few decades: today, as opposed to a more restricted role in the past, men are portrayed in versatile roles in advertising. This coheres with the 'reality' of the postmodern society; the roles of men [and women] are evolving and, in a way, becoming more diverse.

How can, then, the findings of this research be put into practice and what advice can be offered to advertisers? Whether there is a human model in the ad or not seemed not to be of interest to any of the discussants in neither country. However, when people are present in ads, 'real' images – average people – are preferred. It is easier for a consumer to identify with a "typical user" rather than a perfect-looking model. And the more generic the product, the more typical the model in the picture may be. Seeing ordinary looking people in ads can help consumers think that the product is right for them as they are (cf. Elliott & Elliott 2005, 14). Recently, in fact, it seems to have become fashionable for some companies (e.g. Dove) to use lay endorsers to promote their products. According to the findings of this study, the use of this strategy seems to be worthwhile.

The findings of the written protocols suggest that if the message strategy is too complicated (as often may be the case if we think of postmodern advertising), the recipient will not pay attention to the ad. This came out particularly in the cases of two of the 2003 ads (HK, Finland and OxiMagic, US). As cited earlier (see e.g. page 29), advertising, as other persuasive communication, is often regarded as unwanted communication: people do not actively seek out exposure to advertising, and obviously, they do not want to put too much time and effort in trying to understand it.

More attention needs to be paid on how audiences use the gender images in advertising in construction and maintenance of their own notions of masculinity and femininity. This would be an interesting area of further research.

7.3 Limitations

Finally, limitations of this study must be acknowledged. Firstly, it should be noted that the results of the study are suggestive, not definitive, as often is the case when using qualitative methods. Secondly, even though the emphasis in the written protocols was on the visual imagery, some subjects might have paid more attention to the linguistic information than others, thus, gaining insights to their visual analysis (cf. Mick & Politi 1989, 89). Thirdly, it is likely that there were some instances of socially desirable responding in the groups; however, measuring the amount of distortion between expressed attitudes and actual behavior was beyond the scope of this research (cf. Elliott & Elliott 2005, 17).

Obviously, there was a danger of polarization during the discussions, particularly within the US groups: both among US women and men there were individuals who spoke out more. On the other hand, there seemed to be no pressure from the more dominating individuals towards the more passive ones. After each question, and after discussion related to it, the researcher made sure that no one had anything to add to the issue. Moreover, thanks to the written protocols, every participant was able to contribute evenly. As to the cross-cultural nature of the study, the fact that the empirical phase was conducted in two countries and in two different languages created a challenge for the researcher and the outcome (cf. Marschan-Piekkari & Reis 2004, 225).

The study provided proof to the earlier findings which have suggested that advertising has a role in constructing conceptions of gender. However, on the basis of this study alone it is not possible to distinguish what the *exact* role of advertising – as distinct from other popular media – is in moulding masculine ideologies (cf. Holt & Thompson 2004, 427; Gauntlett 2002, 250–251).

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Appendix 1 Finnish ads



Ad 1: Vuorivilla 1973



Ad 2: North State 1973



Ad 3: Philips 1988



Ad 4: Ahlström 1988



Ad 5: Sloggi 2003



Ad 6: HK 2003

Appendix 2 US ads



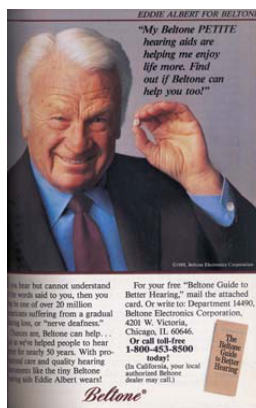
Ad 1: Man-Power 1973



Ad 2: AC Spark Plugs 1973



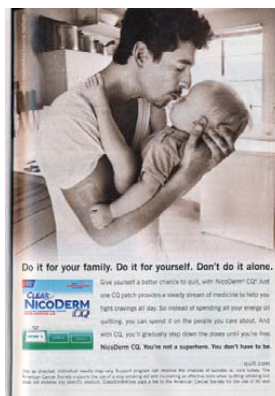
Ad 3: Chevy Trucks 1988



Ad 4: Belhone 1988



Ad 5: OxiMagic 2003



Ad 6: Nicoderm 2003

Appendix 3 Focus group results from the written part Finnish women

VUORI-VILLA 1973	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 24	Mineral wool A man Working situation	Safety, building own home, power, will, guts, securing happiness	Reliable	An ordinary, responsible man chooses this product
B, 27	Mineral wool, text, man, logo, the name of the company	Building (a man is building a house and putting in the mineral wool)	Action; an energetic Finnish man doing it himself	Mineral wool is easy to use, domestic, good for Finnish homes
C, 37	A man carrying mineral wool, looking up, working clothes on; logo	The product (=mineral wool) The man is responsible for the work	A product ad; the man is there to bring professional impression	A contradiction between the text and the picture (cosiness vs. professionalism)
D, 44	A man, building, the company, information	Building; reliability	Pertinent (no non-sense)	Good construction; reliable products
E, 55	Mineral wool, logo, company	Building by manly power	Mineral wool in focus; a men's job!	A heat insulator; information on heat
F, 59	A man in working clothes; mineral wool; name of the company	Mineral wool in focus; the thickness of the wool tells about the heat values	Honest, clean, pertinent; no yuppism	The importance of using mineral wool in the Finnish conditions

NORTH STATE 1973	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 24	A manly twist; a battle of wills	'Laddism'; a manly look into manhood	North State is a Men's Thing	A man who smokes NS doesn't have to be ashamed in front of any other man.
B, 27	Biceps; rough and tumble; young men; NS; price; slogan	Man; power; roughness; competition; victory	Young men competing; smoking NS is a part of their lifestyle	If you smoke NS, you are a 'tough guy'
C, 37	Men; rough and tumble; in the background other men spurring	Men = [NS] smokers; by smoking NS you can be part of the gang	A dynamic ad; good looking young men; users young/youthful	By smoking NS you can become 'a tough guy' like the ones in the ad. A manly cigarette, not too sophisticated.
D, 44	Men; cigarettes; rough and tumble; a men's gang	Power; manliness	'A man of men' is strong; cigarettes are part of it	'A real man' smokes NS
E, 55	A pack of cigarettes; powerful men; slogan; price	Cigarettes give you power and a good feeling and create togetherness.	The ad is made alluring	Only real men use this product.
F, 59	A pack of cigarettes; a group of men of different age categories	Manliness and strong cigarettes go together; real men smoke NS	Adult men playing together: who is the strongest?	Linking power and North State

PHILIPS 1988	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 24	A sturdy washing machine; student in technology; clean glasses with flowers	Trustworthiness, scientifically tested; development; security; cleanness	Self-confident; successful; reliable	Philips' product development is based on reliable, modern scientific research; thanks to that, Philips has been able to develop best possible products for people
B, 27	Washing machine; engineer; bright glasses with flowers; text; brand name; patent/DPC	The left side refers to product development and to the quality of the product (a good machine, respected by engineers). The right side refers to the benefits (bright glasses) of the product. The left side speaks to men, the right side to women.	Philips' machine is of good quality and functional.	Philips' dishwashers are of high technical quality, and the benefit of using the product is obvious.
C, 37	A dishwasher and an engineer; glasses with flowers; text featuring the technical details.	Good quality and high technical characteristics.	A dull, static advert; the way of thinking is very old-fashioned: a man = expert (when speaking of tech)	A traditionally female-dominant product; now – via the man in the ad – promoted as a new technical device.
D, 44	A successful man; washing result; certificates; product itself; information; name of the company	Reliability; high standard; cleanness; reference to an intellectual high-flyer; a man (not a woman) is the buyer of this product; emphasizes engineer culture	Dull	An assumption that men need technical information in order to be able to make a buying decision.
E, 55	A washing machine, clean glasses, innovator of the machine, flowers, producer	A new dishwasher which washes the dishes so clean that it makes the flowers seem bare (not in the glasses).	Too many elements and text in a small ad.	A successful product, presented by a successful and educated man.
F, 59	Trade mark; engineer; dishwasher; information; clean glasses	Might refer to the assumption that an engineer has invented the product	A clear advert; the machine well exhibited; the glasses show the washing result.	New technology, which is a guarantee to the end result.

AHLSTRÖM 1988	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 24	Cheerfulness, mineral wool, a man	Easiness, simplicity, ease of use	Clear	Besides being good (long living), the product is easy to use. An infallible choice.

B, 27	Mineral wool, a marketing man, logo, text	Mineral wool and its qualities	Ahlström is a big company which can produce and market mineral wool	You can easily buy mw from Ahlström's or any construction materials selling company.
C, 37	A man in a formal suit lifting mw; many packets of mw, set in the middle of the picture; underneath there is text and more mw	The man in a formal suit → an anniversary of the product/company. On the other hand, the suit might refer to the easy use of the product.	Not very sensational. Maybe a little odd way to advertise construction materials in a suit.	Anniversary and a reborn product, belongs to the manly world.
D, 44	A man (not a constructor but a 'suit man'); mw; action (throwing the wool); name of company; development (text)	Construction has to do with men. The mw is the company's perennial product that's being improved. The movement refers to the development.	Dull. A manly business, targeted at men.	Quality; development (of the product); durability; product loyalty; an assumption of men needing information-based ads.
E, 55	Mw; a joyful man; producer; logo; 30-year anniversary	Insulation; construction	The colors of the man's suit and the wool are too much alike. The reader is not inspired.	To stay in the mind of the constructors.
F, 59	A man; mw; name of the company; information on the product.	The man's suit does not refer to building. Maybe the purpose is to promote the 30-year anniversary.	The yellow suit and wool gain attention. In general, a yellow suit is an odd choice – not a working outfit nor a safety overall.	Mineral wool is so tidy to use that one can wear a suit and a bow tie.

SLOGGI 2003	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 24	Well-trained male bodies, an intensive look; underwear	Sportiness; taking care of oneself.	Tough, masculine.	Even if bare skin is shown to the readers (women?) and the men are in underwear, there is no reason for a man to become nervous or feel himself 'less man'.
B, 27	Three men in Sloggi underwear; helmets; logo; the good/bare body of the man in the middle emphasised; slogan (Stay cool men).	Sports, good looks, sexiness.	Sporty handsome men use Sloggies.	It's cool and sexy to use Sloggi underwear.

C, 37	Three men, one in the front. Men like soldiers, holding helmets (Am. football). Men in underwear; a little text; trained bodies; sportsmen in question.	It is clear that the question is of men's underwear. Looks on the soldiers' faces tell that the product endures even hard use.	Pleasant and trendy. However, the combination of underwear and American football is quite surprising.	Professionals use these. Trendiness.
D, 44	Semi-clad men; sportsmen; name of the product; helmets; the word 'cool'.	A real man is a sportsman. A real man is an athlete. A real man uses Sloggi underwear. A real man is 'cool'.	A (artistically) good layout. Nice as a picture. The word Sloggi comes out well since there is hardly any other text.	To keep the word Sloggi in mind. To combine Sloggi with a sporty athlete who is 'cool'. An assumption that all men know English; thus, targeted at young men.
E, 55	Men; underwear; helmets; logo; product brand	Only handsome, active men use this kind of underwear.	The underwear suit for well-trained men only. Puts too much pressure on the ordinary users. Good colors; almost like music to the ears. Good combination.	Underwear for young, athletic men.
F, 59	Three men in underwear holding helmets.	Tough men use Sloggies. Maybe also that Sloggies are good underwear for vigorous sports.	Quite ordinary of football players.	Sloggies – for tough guys.

HK 2003	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 24	Summer, nakedness, raffish atmosphere.	Carelessness; numerous barbeque parties of the summer.	Relaxed; a little drunken; funny.	In the summer, when people are taking it easy, HK products are easy.
B, 27	Barbeque servers; a man looking like a paper doll; a red barbeque; logo; text/slogan.	Summer; barbeque food (sausage); a Finnish man who is pale in the beginning of the summer and who possibly, in the warmth, becomes brown and delicious.	Funny, relaxed summer feeling.	Summery barbeque things are nice. HK sausages are part of the nice atmosphere. HK products are domestic.
C, 37	A naked man in barbeque servers wearing a cowboy hat. In the left corner there is a barbeque with steaks and sausages, on the right there is HK brand.	Barbequing is summery stuff, and particularly men like sausages.	An odd way to advertise barbeque products. Difficult to say if the ad is targeted to men or women. Maybe to women: by buying HK sausages (you woman) can hold your man in your servers.	The way to a man's heart goes through HK sausages.

D, 44	A man; servers; the man in the servers. Barbeque. HK. Slogans.	The woman makes decisions on food. HK is a manufacturer of barbeque food. The man is a little mouse who is held in servers. The man can symbolize the penis.	Funny; clear; retro colours and feeling in the lay out.	Targeted at men. The way to a man's heart –thinking. I think the idea of holding a man in the servers does not relate to food. The message is confusing. Maybe the aim is to confuse.
E, 55	Barbeque servers, a man, logo, barbeque, sausages.	The man caught in HK sausage servers. The barbeque brings summer in mind.	Sausage brings a good mood.	To sell sausage.
F, 59	A man caught in servers. A barbeque where products are being cooked. Name of the producing company.	Men take often care of barbequing. They also love barbeque food, i.e. HK products. Casualness as to dressing, eating, cooking and maybe some other things, too. (The man is good to keep in servers.)	A good-humoured and even funny.	HK products help you cook easily. Even a man can do it.

Appendix 4 Focus group results from the written part Finnish men

VUORI-VILLA 1973	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 26	Easiness of installation	Product features	Energy saving properties (due to energy crisis); technical features	The fit between the product and purpose of use
B, 26	Mineral wool, text, man with a contemplative, satisfied look	The man is holding the mw in his arms (← mw is not harmful or dangerous)	Mw is cheap and good insulation material. The company holds a low profile.	By using mw your home is warmer and obviously cosier; mw is durable (→ economical)
D, 42	Mw, bare arms, chequered shirt, red shades; a look in the distance	Work, basic man, industrious professional	Building is a considerate whole.	Trust (in expertise)
E, 56	A man, building his own house part-time	Not a professional	Security, far-sightedness	Energy saving; safety (no safety procedures needed); easiness of installation (even a non-professional can do it)
F, 55	A Finnish man, mineral wool, logo, company	Warmth; safety; determination	Honest, not extravagant	Easiness of installation; proper insulation; energy saving; economical

NORTH STATE 1973	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 26	Power; esprit de corps; competition; product	The product has a unifying power; a tough product	Masculine; competitive; supportive	The product vs. 'a real manliness'; only tough guys smoke NS
B, 26	Rough and tumble; audience, pack of cigarettes	Cigarettes are smoked only by tough, real men.	Natural, relaxed image of men spending time together	Strong, virile men smoke cigarettes.
C, 38	Being together without women; competition; cigarettes	Manliness; power; spirit of comradeship	Men's game → men's cigarette	Cigarettes vs. manly group identity
D, 42	Hands/arms, pack of cigarettes, audience, price, slogan, muscles	Power, manliness; admiration; persistence	Cigarettes are meant for real men; smoking is a social habit	Smoking is good for manliness; smoking is not bad for your health.
E, 56	A group of men (colleagues?) off duty	Spirit of comradeship; we-spirit; who is the strongest in the group?	Men's (not women's) strong cigarette; trustworthiness; price is important	(Real) men's cigarette
F, 61	Manliness; power; cigarettes	Strong men smoke strong cigarettes. If you don't smoke, you are not a real man!	Machismo; this doesn't sell if you don't appreciate things like this	Smoking is part of strong, manly life.

PHILIPS 1988	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 26	The product, result and authority (engineer)	The ad is clearly targeted to men. The elements refer to the functionality and technical values of the product.	Emphasises triumph of technology; an atmosphere of the beginning of a new age	The superiority of the product (which is emphasised by the engineer)
B, 26	A dishwasher; engineer; Philips tm; text; clean glasses	The dishwasher tells how stylish the product is. The engineer represents high technology, the clean glasses functionality, word 'high-flier' superiority vs. competitors. Philips is tried to be connected to all of these.	A dishwasher is a good buy.	Philips dishwasher represents the top of its field both by looks and contents.
C, 38	A dishwasher, clean glasses with flowers, an engineer, product name, product features, price.	Clean glasses → good washing results. Engineer recommending → an expert's choice. 'Diplomimachine' → academic, high quality. These kind of machines typically targeted at men.	Targeted at men. 'You can buy a dishwasher as if you were buying a chain saw.'	In a dishwasher, there are many interesting elements that interest 'the little engineer' that is embedded in every man.
D, 42	Engineer, dishwasher, test result, glasses, flowers, white surface, details and technology.	Cleanness, naturalness, rationality, research	Buying a dishwasher is a rational choice; environmentally friendly, useful	The dishwasher represents new, tested technology which washes in an environmentally friendly way; everyone's rational choice to washing dishes.
E, 56	Dishwasher, engineer, clean dishes, price, end results (graphics)	A low price, good end result, little flowers refer to women.	The look on the man's face: 'This is true.' The dishwasher in front and the man in the background.	Trustfulness, high education, end result.
F, 61	Glasses, dishwasher, engineer	Good washing results, brightness and cleanness	A dishwasher with clean results. The product is developed by top technicians.	Superiority against competing brands. The engineer brings in credibility.

AHLSTRÖM 1988	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 26	A man, wool and easiness.	Reference to the convenience of using the product and the easiness of the installation.	Emphasises the power of money; by using this wool you don't only save but get good quality. The man in the picture does not install the wool himself but buys the service.	To communicate the product features (easiness and functionality); whoever can buy the product but no image is separately made in reference to the installation.
B, 26	Mw; a man in a yellow suit; text	The yellow suit (or suit in general) refers to the easiness of the use and installation. The packets refer to easy transportation and storage. The man touches the product with his bare hands which refers to safety.	The use of Karhuntalja is easy; anybody can use it without getting dirty.	Karhuntalja is low-priced, durable and easy to install.
C, 38	A man, suit and bow tie (30 something); packets of mw; slogan; selling text; logos	Reference is made between the age of the man and Karhuntalja. Easiness (can be installed in a suit); the colors of the suit and wool (→ wool in fashion)	Even an unused can rely on the easy installation and insulation ability.	The wool is easy to use, suits for people who are at the age of building, is fashionable and reliable.
D, 42	Mw; a tidy man; tidy packets; movement	Building is tidy and easy. Building is pre-planned, 'ready to be installed'.	Anybody can take care of insulation matters. Things have been thought for you. Insulation is a 'cool' thing.	You can trust the product. Professionals have done the work for you.
E, 56	A gentleman in a suit; the product in a tidy packet.	The work (installation) is easy, tidy; doesn't need protective clothing or device.	Savings in energy costs; the product has been in the market for 30 years; perseverance.	You can do the work even in a suit; easy to do; even laymen can do it.
F, 61	Softness; gentility; superiority (novelty)	The new wool is softer and better at installation. It is flexible and easy to handle. Besides, it is hygienic.	Cosiness (in the middle of the text there is a couch made out of the wool).	Insulation is easier and the wool is better than before.

SLOGGI 2003	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 26	Athletes and basic equipment.	Rock-solid and efficient as well sporty modern man.	The ad brings in an image of the mineral wool man of the 1970s. The overall setup emphasises masculinity.	Tells about the functionality of the product even in tough situations, and the fitness of the product to real men of today.
B, 26	Sporty looking men (Am. football players). Underwear. Texts. More information: www.sloggi.com	Masculine and also sporty men can invest in underwear. In fact, it's 'cool'.	Sloggi underwear makes you more stylish and sporty.	It's not 'sissy' to use Sloggi underwear since tough American football players use them, too.
C, 38	Product name, slogan (in English); underwear; men holding helmets; www address	Objectification of men. Exoticism (a foreign sport).	Sloggies make men exotic sex objects. Targeted at women.	Woman, buy Sloggies to your man! He will become a well-bodied 'boar'!
D, 42	Bodies, underwear, helmets, dark background, intensive looks, bare skin, muscles.	Power, primitiveness, masculinity, decisiveness, courage.	The underwear are fashionable and modern, gaze-resistant.	The looks of underwear do count; real men use them.
E, 56	Three young athletes, American football players, coming from the practice or a game; helmets	Youth; sportiness; aggressiveness; masculinity	Youthful; sporty; decisive. Sloggies are easy to wear. The English language emphasises internationality.	Sloggy refers to youth and stylishness.
F, 61	Masculinity; decisiveness; sportiness	An active man must have proper outfit.	Rough, aggressive, rebellious.	An active and trimmed man uses proper underwear that fit well and don't make sweat.

HK 2003	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 26	A summer man, barbeque and servers. The basic summer elements of a Finnish man.	Holiday, freedom and buoyancy of life. The lightness of the products is not emphasised even though you get that idea from the ad.	The general impression is carefree, free and easy.	Being free and relaxed and barbequing are parts of a Finnish summer. HK creates the summer – atmosphere.
B, 26	A (naked) man (not very sexy though?). HK products grilled. Barbeque servers. HK logo and texts.	You can keep your man in a good shape if you feed him with good HK products. Obviously, nothing else is needed.	HK products are good and easy to cook.	HK products are of good quality and they are easy to use. Maybe the aim is the old adage: The way to a man's heart goes through his stomach.
C, 38	A naked summer man. Barbeque servers. A barbeque with steaks. Texts.	Freedom, holiday. Barbequing, eating. Keeping your spouse in a good mood.	The summer is spoiled if a man cannot relax and barbeque enough. In summer, the manly world is filled with barbequing.	Targeted at women. Buy more food for barbequing than you need; otherwise your man can get in a bad mood and will do something that pleases you even less.
D, 42	A light background, barbeque servers, barbeque and meat; red colour; bare skin; smile.	Lightness, naturalness, healthiness, optimism.	Meat is a natural, healthy, light ingredient. Meat is a joyful thing.	By eating meat you stay healthy and in trim. Meat is a pure raw material.
E, 56	A barbeque; barbeque servers; a barbeque full of steaks; a naked man wearing a cowboy hat.	Vacation. The barbeque refers to an old coal grill. A barbeque that can be found in the summer cottage. Freedom, cheerfulness.	Unreservedness; the man spending free time during his holiday; atmosphere similar to old ages' summer cottage atmosphere.	The ad fits in summer-time Finland. Season's ad.
F, 61	Facilities for barbequing. Summer man (on vacation?).	You have to eat well in summer. The food is easy to cook.	A little contradictory. Is it a man that's put in the barbeque? Doesn't really arouse appetite.	The naked man in the servers obviously catches the looks and gets attention. After that, one pays attention to the brand.

Appendix 5 Focus group results from the written part US women

Man-Power 1973	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	A man and a woman arm-wrestling next to a can of deodorant.	If you are strong, you need a strong deodorant. It shows that a man needs a man's deodorant.	I like how they used a regular sized man instead of a man with huge muscles. This shows that any man can use the deodorant. If you're a man, then you've man-power. This will make it appeal to more men.	That a strong man needs a strong deodorant. Men need deodorant strong enough for a man.
B, 30	An attractive couple holding hands and smiling at each other behind a can of deodorant. The photo is in b/w except for the bright red can of deodorant. The words are in red in back.	I think that the idea is to show that if you use this product you will be attractive to the opposite sex.	This ad feels silly. The idea that something as mundane as deodorant requires the approval of two people is strange.	If you use this product, you'll be beautiful and attract beautiful people to you.
C, 42	A man, a woman, a can, red+black colors and words.	The strength of the man and his attraction from the woman.	The ad would not be received well in today's market. First, because it is not believable that a "strong man" would need a different kind of deodorant than a "weak" man. And last, the name and picture seem to suggest an inequality which is not seen in most ads today.	To communicate the attractiveness of a strong man to the opposite sex and that he, therefore, needs the more powerful protection of a strong deodorant.
D, 47	A man with very muscular arms – smiling at a woman (also attractive). They're holding hands – like an "arm-wrestling" posture. The red can (product) stands out because the picture is otherwise in b/w. Words of ad obviously imply that "strength" is key to product.	Male/female attraction; man is masculine with visible muscles – so this refers to "strength" of the product. The woman is apparently pleased with the muscular physique of the man.	Certainly somewhat "old fashioned": very direct and not especially sensual (like most ads today). The product appears to be very "basic" – not needing to be subtle about who should use it (<u>manly</u> men!).	That this is a product for a very "manly" man – not trying to attract the less masculine type. Also that women like that type of men.

E, 52	A man and woman smiling at each other, holding hands, a can of deodorant in color, all else in b/w.	A man feels good when he smells good. A woman likes when a man smells good. The product is strong.	It takes more than a deodorant to draw two people close but a pleasant smell is not a repellent. The two people are attractive – probably more so than the average “couple”. The man is somewhat muscular or strong and not afraid to admit he needs “help”.	People prefer when people of the opposite gender mask their natural scents with pleasant artificial scents. The strength of the deodorant is depicted by the use of color in the product and suits other aspects (i.e. people, relationship) in the background.
F, 53	A man and a woman arm-wrestling. A can of Man-Power in front of them.	The man needs to have deodorant protection to deal with a woman.	It seems a little silly. It implies men are strong, women weaker. He’s wearing a tight shirt with open v-neck. He’s supposed to be very sexy. It’s stereotypical – a bit sexist.	My deodorant will help you be a strong, sexy guy – buy me!

AC Spark Plugs 1973	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	A truck and a man in a cowboy hat. The truck looks like it is smoking. It has TOUGH! in big letters. There is a sparkplug at the bottom.	It looks like the truck is going through a tough time.	I didn’t really understand this ad. It doesn’t make sense unless you read the part that goes with it.	That when everything else is going bad, the sparkplugs will still be good.
B, 30	An SUV driving in the desert. Dust is being kicked up and there is an inset of a bearded, plump guy wearing a cowboy hat. The colors remind me of army fatigues. In very large letters is the word TOUGH!	Man vs. nature. The equipment has got to always work or you’re out of luck. Tough men pick these sparkplugs, so you’ll be tough if you use them.	It makes me wish that I knew more about sparkplugs.	Tough guys use this. You’ll be tough if you use them, too.

C, 42	Bronco or Blazer, a man with a beard and cowboy hat.	The ruggedness of the truck in relation to the rugged, agricultural nature of the man. The man seems to depict an outdoorsman with standards that include a vehicle that can withstand his lifestyle.	In just looking at the advertisement, I'd not guess it to be an ad for sparkplugs. After reading the lines under the man's photo, I agree that he must live or work in the open and would probably need a vehicle like the one shown that is dependable and able to withstand lots of abuse.	The reliability and strength of the vehicle and its ability to stand up to the rigors of hard work.
D, 47	A very worn, obviously well-used truck/jeep in an off-road wilderness area. A picture of a man's face – cowboy hat – looks like the "rugged" type. Large word "TOUGH". And a section of "testimony" as to why "George Service" depends on product.	These are meant to show that this individual (celebrity?) uses the product – depends on the product – in the toughest circumstances.	Since I don't know who George Service is, I'm not particularly sold by his testimony. But, overall, I get the feeling that this sparkplug is supposed to be able to handle difficult driving conditions.	That we can trust the product because "George Service" does; however, the pictures also communicate the "off road" rugged man who needs a tough product like this.
E, 52	A truck going over rough terrain in inclement weather – the operator of said GM truck in close-up.	The product aids the vehicle and driver when driving is difficult. Sparkplug in upright position speaks to toughness more so than if it were on its side.	So many things affect driving, only one of which is sparkplugs. Anything can go wrong, anything can go right. Interesting choice of last name (Service) – aids in recommending the product.	Tough vehicles, tough men, tough drivers need this product. Appeals to self-concept of toughness.
F, 53	A Ford Bronco type of vehicle pulling a trailer. There's a man w/a cowboy hat. His face is interposed on the picture.	AC sparkplugs are tough. You can use them to drive off-road.	What does the cowboy hat guy have to do with anything? Am I supposed to know George Service? There's too much writing; who would read it all? I never buy sparkplugs.	AC sparkplugs are tough. You should use them, too.

Chevy Trucks 1988	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	A Chevy truck next to a Ford truck. A man is leaning against the Chevy truck.	This shows that the man owns the Chevy.	I think that the Chevy in the picture looks better than the Ford. I don't really care about trucks, but if I did, it'd be by the looks of one. If it was a good-looking truck with a hot guy it makes the truck look that much better.	This shows that Chevy's win with the man. This is supposed to mean that Chevys are better.
B, 30	This double truck ad shows a man leaning on a red Chevy truck with his arms crossed & his legs in the classic "cool guy" position. The other vehicle is a Ford & is a dark color; part of it is not even in the picture.	You can relax and enjoy your Chevy vehicle because they break down less than Ford. You can be any guy & own this vehicle because the man in the photo is just an average guy.	I like this one. There are facts and figures that I could go check and compare to other things.	Chevy is better than Ford.
C, 42	A red truck with a Chevy emblem and part of a dark truck with a Ford emblem. Also, a man casually leaning against the red truck.	The preference and superiority of the red Chevy as opposed to Ford. It's visually more appealing than the darker Ford and the man seems to prefer it.	My overall feeling is of the aesthetic superiority of the Chevy. Also, my opinion would be that it is the preferred brand by the middle-aged and working class. This is a very effective ad.	I feel that the advertiser is trying to communicate the preference of their vehicle vs. the competitor.
D, 47	A man standing in between two pickup trucks: a red Chevy & a dark-colored Ford. He is leaning against the Chevy. He is not a real "tough" type of guy, more "thoughtful"; the print ads suggest Chevy beats Ford on tests.	That Chevrolet is the <u>intelligent</u> choice, that it isn't just more "manly". Also, the red truck is more attractive, brighter, visibly the best choice. Also, the look on the man's face suggests he is calmly confident.	Appealing to me – this man is more "my type" (not just a rough, rugged mountain-man type). I find the Chevy appeals to my intellect.	That Chevy is the "smart person's" choice.
E, 52	A Chevy truck next to a Ford truck with a man leaning against the Chevy. The text claiming that Chevy beats Ford in certain tests.	The winning Chevy is in a bright red color, well-lit. The losing Ford is dark in color and in poor light. The man favors the winner.	Heartbeat red, truck red: the life blood of every man – use of color & light, instrumental in making point. All of Chevy & only part of Ford – Chevy eclipses Ford – whole product deserved over half a product. Useful techniques.	Chevy trucks keeping the country alive; keeping the man alive.

F, 53	A Chevy truck and a Ford truck. A guy is leaning against the Chevy.	The guy leaning against the Chevy means that it is the one. It beats Ford.	There is too much writing. Just because a guy is leaning against one truck, I'm supposed to think it's better? Give me a break! I don't like negative ads – saying you're better than something else.	The test proves it. Pick me – I'm American.
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Beltone 1988	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	An older man holding a really small hearing aid. He is smiling.	This shows that the man is happy with his hearing aid.	I didn't know what he was holding at first. When I read it, it made sense. Hearing aids shouldn't have to be big to make you hear better. I was confused.	If this man is happy with the hearing aid, you might be, too. Hearing aids don't have to be big to be a big help.
B, 30	A distinguished, white-haired gentleman holding up a small hearing aid & smiling. The copy states that the aids are helping him enjoy life more. The model is a small time celebrity.	Distinguished, well-off people use this product. You can trust this guy because we've seen him on tv.	Nothing too memorable here. I think that I'd think about the ad more if I was closer to the age of the man or if hearing loss was affecting me.	Try this hearing aid.
C, 42	An elderly gentleman holding a small hearing aid in his hand. The hearing aid seems to look like an ad for a pill.	My guess is that the observable elements refer to the small size of the device.	The ad's visual components don't give the consumer much information about the product. However, the gentleman seems to be happy about the product and his celebrity adds to the product's overall image.	I feel that the advertiser is trying to communicate the small size of the product.
D, 47	Celebrity (Eddie Albert) holding a very small item, smiling. Print mentions "petit" hearing aid & quotes him as using the product & being satisfied. Dark suit, blue shirt! Company logo large at bottom.	That someone we "know" has been very satisfied with this product. Also, that the product really is very small.	For me, this product is not yet a necessity in my life so I'm not drawn to it, yet! Probably the smile on EA's face would catch my eye – because he was well-known on tv.	Trust EA to steer you in the right direction. Also, that needing a hearing aid is a good thing if you can be as happy as Mr. Albert.

E, 52	EA holding a Beltone hearing aid & espousing via a quote a recommendation to use/purchase same.	Using a known person shows that hearing loss can strike anyone, even a successful actor. Also having a real person holding the petite instrument shows its appealing small size.	I'd stop to scan the ad seeing a familiar face more probably than if it were a "stranger/nobody". Use of color shows person in good health in spite of macady (hearing loss).	Even you can suffer hearing loss and it's no disgrace. The remedy can be something that's barely detectable. Life can still be lived fully.
F, 53	EA is holding his Beltone hearing aid.	He's famous, well-known. He must know what he's talking about. It's a good hearing aid.	Again too much writing. I'm not in the market for a hearing aid so I wouldn't read it. Just because some actor says a product is good doesn't mean much to me.	Trust Eddie – try our Beltone aid.

Oxi-Magic 2003	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	A man laying on the ground making an angel behind a Clorox tub. The bottom says share the magic.	Where the Clorox goes, the carpet is clean.	Weird. But it makes sense I guess. It's magic (cleaning the stain) like it's magic making a snow angel.	This product will get your rug clean.
B, 30	A man has been flattened by a giant vat of OxiMagic and his arms & legs have cleaned the carpet in their path. It looks like the clean spot is a snow angel. It looks like the stains on the floor could be dirt & wine.	Cleaning carpets is fun and easy like playing in the snow. Children could do it. This product makes it fun & easy.	This ad is just weird. I can't tell if he is dressed as the product or if he's been flattened by it.	Even a man can clean with this stuff.
C, 42	A chair, a rug, a tub of cleaner and a man lying on a dirty carpet making a snow angel. Also a red stain on the carpet close to the man. Where the man is making the snow angel, the carpet is clean.	The product's ability as a carpet cleaner to clean even the toughest stains with minimal effort by the man.	I feel that this ad insights a thoughtful mind. In fact, <u>too much thought</u> for an advertisement. I don't feel that the overall message is clear enough with minimal effort from the consumer in the first few seconds of observing the ad.	To communicate the overall cleaning ability of the product.

D, 47	A tub of the product, with arms and legs! laying on a stained & dirty carpet. (A chair nearby proves that this is a carpet) The “product” is making a “snow angel” on the carpet – by cleaning it!?	This product cleans dirty carpets – but why they gave it arms & legs is beyond me! I suppose it just shows the contrast between dirty & clean.	Silly – though I admit that it caught my attention as I tried to figure out whether the product fell on the man! And from the beginning, it’s obviously a man – and do men clean rugs?! Ha! I’d buy it!	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cleans “white as snow” – cleans tough stains. 2. Applies masculine power to dirty carpets.
E, 52	A container of Clorox having flattened someone on the carpet – the person making “carpet angels” & cleaning up a spill.	OxiMagic cleans up a spill with very little effort & is good at it.	No person shown using product. Product not really shown in relationship to user. Bogus effectiveness of product.	Spills aren’t permanent. People using OxiMagic clean carpet. Cleans like magic.
F, 53	A chair, a stain on the floor, a guy with an Oximagic container doing a snow angel to clean the floor.	That OxiMagic cleans the stain and color off the floor.	It’s pretty silly. What guy cleans the floor? Saying that the OxiMagic angel is magical seems like a stretch.	We are a really good cleaner. Try us.

Nicoderm 2003	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	A man kissing a baby in the kitchen. The man is wearing a patch on his arm. There are knives in the background.	The man loves the baby so he wants to stop smoking. Just how you can barely notice the knives, you can barely see the patch.	If the Nicoderm box wasn’t in the ad, then you wouldn’t know what the patch was for.	Stop smoking for yourself and your family and do it with Nicoderm. You can stop smoking and do it with help people won’t see.
B, 30	A man holding a small child in his arms & bending to kiss him on his nose. The man is probably a young first time father. This is a warm kitchen, homey scene. Hair is rumpled & the clothes are casual.	Warm loving scenes come around more and last longer when you’re healthy. If you were going to quit this would be a great reason. It’s ok to need help.	This is the kind of man I’d like my child to know or be raised by. He’s true, he’s getting healthy.	Life is precious. Don’t throw it away.
C, 42	A man holding a baby, kitchen cabinets with pots above and knives hanging on the wall, a large window and a washing machine.	I think the observable elements refer to the man in his home holding his child.	From the words on the page I’m able to understand that the ad has to do with a non-smoking product. However, I see no reference to that in the artwork. I feel that the visual aspects of this ad aren’t enough to properly explain the product.	The product can help smokers to stop smoking, to enhance their lives and that of their family. Visually, I don’t feel that this ad depicts the product’s message.

D, 47	Man, muscular, holding/kissing baby (mostly naked), patch on arm (product to stop smoking). Large product with logo. Large writing saying to “do it” (stop smoking) for family & yourself. Promise to be with you. Background: washing machine, kitchen, knives, pots, window.	Cuddling/kissing baby is good if a non-smoker. Otherwise, smoking is dirty; breath, smell etc. Baby is “clean”, man needs to also be “clean”. Setting (kitchen?) is also clean, usually a woman’s place but this man is now allowed in because no longer smokes.	This makes me think that non-smokers can contribute more to their families.	That smoking is a dirty, nasty thing that would prevent these types of positive interactions.
E, 52	A young man holding a baby, kissing it, in a kitchen – knives are hanging; pots are on a shelf; a stove is evident.	A man involved in the caring for and upbringing of his child. A man can be at home even in the kitchen.	Very touching to see a man being tender with a baby. B/w allows product to stand out on page.	Life is lived more fully with the absence of smoking. Men (real men) can care for family & stop smoking.
F, 53	A man holding a baby. He has a Nicoderm patch. He’s in the kitchen.	You can get help to be a great husband and father if you stop smoking.	It seems like a good idea to stop smoking. He’s in the kitchen – so he must be super-Dad. Too much writing.	You can be a better guy, too, if you let us help you stop smoking.

Appendix 6 Focus group results from the written part US men

Man-Power 1973	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	A man and a woman along with the product. Man and woman's hands are clasped and the man's muscles are emphasized. The product is brightly colored while everything else is b/w.	The man with a beautiful woman is in obviously good shape. The name of the deodorant relates directly to the man in the picture. Being a powerful man requires a powerful deodorant.	This ad is way before my time. I can fully understand the message trying to be sent but the ad is also directed at a certain type of men, muscular men. You wouldn't see a skinny man buying this. The company cut their market in half with just their name.	The ad is trying to say that if you're a strong man then you need a deodorant that can keep up. The woman in the picture gives emphasis on wanting to smell good. Wouldn't want to disappoint her.
B, 21	A man & woman clearly happy and enjoying being together. There's a bright red can just below the man. The writing uses the word "man" continuously.	Our eyes are drawn towards the product first off, then we'll notice the figures and writing in the ad. When observing the pair you're supposed to be almost in envy of this man because of the woman.	I feel that it's trying to push me a product by playing on insecurities men may have and using sex to sell as do most ads. I actually find it funny because there's very little about the product and a lot of emphasis on it making you a man by using it.	It seems they're trying to use a sexual aspect to the product: "If you wear our deodorant, you'll attract women". The ad is in most ways directed towards women, to encourage them to buy it for their "man".
C, 44	Man & woman in physical contact, eye contact. B/w background, product in red (stands out), man flexing arm, shirt unbuttoned, can is a phallic symbol.	Couple in a possible relationship. Product in color vs. b/w background for product emphasis. Man shown masculinity & confidence, woman leaning into man showing receptiveness. Can=symbol of manhood.	Ad shows that using this product will give you a sense of confidence.	If you use this product you can imagine yourself a handsome, fit, sexual, male, able to have relationship with a woman while smelling inoffensive.
D, 47	Strong man flexing. Nice looking female. Red can. B/w picture. Some words in red, some in black.	Strength of product, stronger than similar female product.	Men have stronger body odor and it takes something more than what women use to control it. The woman looks like she is saying "Well ok, you're gonna need a little extra help".	Those men have stronger body odor than women and need to have a special product to deal with it.

E, 53	A couple arm wrestling. Can of deodorant. Coupon for 12 c.	Trying to refer to deodorant as “man-power” protection. Promoting with a coupon.	Directed toward women to influence man’s buying decision. Could not influence my decision to buy.	That “Man-power” deodorant will provide protection that satisfies women.
F, 56	Woman on left, man on right, looking at each other, holding hands in arm wrestling position, man’s shirt open to show chest. Can (red) of d. in front	Shows man as both desirable and strong. Real men use this deodorant and are either admired by women or this is how a man attracts a pretty woman; women like men who are strong and who smell good.	States its message without being overbearing awkward; pose of hands + two people looking at each other detracts from product. However, color of can+ red color in verbal message eventually get viewer’s attention. Almost too much in ad to be understood without spending a lot of time viewing it.	Usual message of personal care products = use my product and your life will be better, you will get the girl.

AC Spark Plugs 1973	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	There’s a picture of a truck doing some towing. There’s also a picture of a man. He apparently owns the truck and uses this product.	The truck doing heavy work and the ad for spark plugs makes me think that these spark plugs can handle a lot of torture on the road. And they even give a user’s testimonial say that he uses the product and it works. If you use this product it will not fail and it’s for heavy application.	The text in the ad tells about the torture that “George” puts the spark plugs through. The ad is well put together. The two pictures and the testimonial work well and get the advertiser’s point across.	If you have a vehicle that does a hard job this product is a necessity. “George” uses it and his trucks do <u>really</u> hard work.
B, 21	The use of the word “tough” seems to be the highlight. The background is a darker green and tough is in vivid white. There’s a large truck and a picture of George Service apparently.	It seems to me that this ad is directed towards trying to make you feel tougher if you use the product. There’s a large truck and a picture of a larger man with a cowboy hat and beard. It’s showing all these extremely masculine images: desert, truck, cowboy.	I feel the advertisers are using male insecurities to push a product. They use words and pictures to sell it than really informing about the product.	That only a real “tough” man would use this product and that if you used it, you’d be one, too.

C, 44	Chevy blazer driven in harsh conditions. Picture of consumer GS. "Tough". Name of man.	The spark plugs will perform in harsh conditions. GS>personal testimony. "Tough" refers to consumer & spark plug. Name of service implies spark plug will provide good service.	I can count on A/C spark plugs to perform under harsh conditions.	When the going gets tough you can count on A/C spark plugs because tough guy GS does. Manly man doing manly things.
D,47	4x4 "off road vehicle". Bad weather, desert like terrain, guy with cowboy hat, spark plugs, logos.	Dependable in harsh conditions. Testimonial picture.	My opinion is that they are trying market this to mechanics or those who would repair their own vehicles.	AC spark plugs are tough and dependable in harsh conditions.
E, 53	4-wheel drive truck. Picture of possible owner GS. AC spark plug. No symbols.	AC spark plugs provide the service needed when the going gets tough. Customer satisfaction with AC plugs.	Knowing products involved, my opinion is positive. I think the ad is promoting a proven product.	Trying to tell that AC plugs will provide service when the going gets tough. If you want a solid, dependable product, use AC.
F, 56	Word TOUGH in bold white letters at top of page, a truck racing across open ground, a man with a cowboy hat, red AC plug, white/blue GM square.	Cowboy needs his truck to carry out the things he needs to do. The driver puts a lot of strain on his vehicle and needs his truck to stand up daily pressures. AC plugs keep his truck running & allow him to do what he needs to do.	Good parts allow your truck to operate "tough" or adverse conditions; therefore those products are dependable. All the verbiage detracts from the overall view; who would read all that information about a spark plug?	Buy my product and you won't have to worry about your truck breaking down under tough conditions. AC spark plugs are tough so you can deal with tough conditions.

Chevy 1988	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	Two trucks: one has light on it and is visible, the other is dark and not recognizable. A man is in between the two, leaning on the left more lit truck.	I interpreted the man's expression to be prideful; he's leaning on the "better" truck.	I don't like ads that are negative. Ads that put down other companies to make themselves look better are unoriginal and not creative. Theoretically they could both be bad products and the ad would still apply. This ad doesn't say anything about the actual quality of the products.	To change the people who drive Fords to Chevy drivers. This ad is aimed mainly at Ford drivers. (?)

B, 21	Two trucks, one Ford, one Chevy, and a man leaning up against the Chevy. The Chevy is prominent in the picture and red, the Ford is darker and cut off. The heading gives statistics.	This shows a heading that cuts statistics as to why the Chevy is better than the Ford. The viewer is given a better look at the Chevy and torn away from the Ford. It's a use of light and color to show off one and not the other. The man pictured is leaning on the chosen truck with a straight face and folded arms: very masculine.	I feel my eyes drawn towards brighter truck – as if it's in a better light. Better.	They use both statistics and a view of why their truck is better. Almost using envy of this man if the statistics fail.
C, 44	Red Chevy truck, dark Ford truck, man in white shirt leaning on Chevy, red undershirt, red truck, red lettering for heartbeat.	Red truck stands out, dark truck not worthy of color or promotion. Man leaning on the winning truck. Red colors tie product, man & catch word together.	Ad shows consumer Chevy is a proven winner and by owning one you also can be associated with a winner.	I proven test results, Chevy is a better truck than Ford.
D,47	Red truck/black truck. Man leaning to red, logo, slogan, outdoors (non-urban setting).	Red is right/dark is bad. Leans to Chevy red truck. Average looking guy.	Looks like a satisfied white male! Chevy is trying to sell middle class average white guy that still has an outdoor bent and likes to back his decisions up with "data".	USAC? proves that Chevy is a superior product.
E, 53	2 trucks side by side facing out, man standing between them leaning on Chevy. Chevy logo "heartbeat" and emblem. Text.	Chevy truck is dominant in ad, Ford cut in half by ad. Man is leaning on Chevy. Text refers to tests which prove it beats Ford. Focus on Chevy.	Positive, since I like Chevy. Ad conveys positive note with colors and posture of man.	That Chevy is a better truck than Ford and test data proves it.
F, 56	Man standing between 2 trucks & leaning on red one. Farmland (wheat or grain of some type), man nicely dressed (slacks & white shirt), slogan "The heartbeat of America" + Chevy logo in bottom left corner.	In comparison of Ford + Chevy, results show that the average buyer should "lean" towards Chevy. It also appears that Chevy is a little bit more forward in ad, showing that although 2 trucks are similar, Chevy is a little better & shown completely.	This seems to be an ad which would work better as a tv ad where you could show how Chevy is better than Ford; the visual image is very subtle and merely implies that Chevy is better.	Chevy is a better buy & better truck than Ford – sophisticated people, once presented with the facts, will buy Chevy.

Beltone 1988	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	A man with a hearing aid in his hand. I don't know who EA is. He's the man in the picture. He was probably a celebrity from the 80's. He's very happy to have the product.	Eddie is representing this company to communicate the company's message. People know him so the ad will catch more eyes. Household manes sell products.	Celebrities have been selling products for a long time. It's proven that it works. I'm sure this ad isn't any different. This product is targeting older people because of the subject used to represent them.	The ad is communicating to older people who generally use more hearing aids than any other age group. Maybe older people know more about EA and that's why he was used.
B, 21	A celebrity, older age, holding up the product, dressed in a very nice suit.	That everyone can have this product if they need it, even celebrities. Also a celebrity uses this, why not you...	They are using the person celebrity status to authenticate and push the product. Trying to get me to feel "Well, if he uses ...". I don't think this works on me because I don't need it and I can see their attempts.	That you should use this product because "he" does. So that makes it a good product because a celebrity is in the ad. It's mainly directed at older adults and the words push it towards people who may feel low/depressed about their condition.
C, 44	Small hearing aid. Smiling senior citizen. Bright blue shirt.	Hearing aid will not be noticeable but also comfortable. Spokesman is happy & feels good about wearing aid. Blue color is pleasing to the eye & catches attention away from hearing aid.	If an older parent or friend or relative is hard of hearing, I'd mention this product.	If you or someone you know is old and can't hear this hearing aid will help them enjoy life more.
D,47	Smiling happy old guy (nice shirt), holding tiny product that you have to stick in your ear. Booklet. Old actor that still has his hair.	Small hearing aids, made for happy old guys.	You gotta be a rich old guy to get the tiny aids (due to the nice formal clothes). I also believe that they are targeting folks in their 70 and 80s.	Smaller than average hearing aid, made for happier life. Trusted well-known older actor to help others in his generation to feel comfortable.
E, 53	White haired man (EA) holding something up in his left hand. Text. Picture of brochure about Beltone.	Hard to tell. I had to look closely just to find out what was being promoted. Turns out to be hearing aids.	Not impressed. I had to look to determine what was being promoted. EA doesn't help me to understand what product will do and why I should buy.	Trying to use name to promote product.

F, 56	Picture of EA, dressed in suit, blue shirt&tie, holding a Beltone hearing aid between his thumb&forefinger of left hand, white hair=older person. Verbiage with picture of pamphlet in right corner + word Beltone across the bottom.	This ad uses a known star that people will recognize to show that it's ok if you've lost your hearing because there is a way to solve that problem & improve your quality of life + information is readily available there is how to get it.	Gets its point across – catches your eye. Visual picture leads you to read more about hearing aid & where to get information.	Hearing loss can hit anyone. Do what a big star does and check into Beltone or tell a friend.
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Oxi Magic 2003	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	A bucket on top of a man that is making a snow angel in filth.	I think that the man and the OxiMagic are one subject and the filth is being “snow-anged” away. This ad could have been released in the winter months.	Kind of confusing. A little weird. I can definitely see the difference in the time periods. My first impression was that the man was being crushed by OxiMagic.	There's no text and the picture is vague. The OxiMagic is unclear. It's obvious that they are showing that it cleans surfaces. I guess the “filth-angel” is a seasonal thing.
B, 21	A very dirty carpet with a man/container of the product making a snow angel on the carpet because it cleans.	It's showing how well the product cleans and using a funny or strange way of showing that. Trying to show how amazing the product is.	I find the ad funny and weird. I don't think I'd go out and buy the product but just having seen the ad I know it made an impact because it was so weird and unusual.	It shows the abilities of the product and uses an unusual image so that it will stick in your mind above the rest.
C, 44	Tan carpet. Red stain. White where man/product in touch with carpet. Product is in middle of a white angel (snow angel).	This product is sent from heaven to clean soiled & stained carpets & make things pure as snow.	Might buy product to see if it could make carpet/fabric this clean.	This is a heavenly product that will make fabric/carpets unbelievably clean.
D,47	Dirty carpet, product, snow angel, chair, product containers.	Product cleans well.	Man is knocked flat by product. They're trying to say: ok, guys, clean your carpet with our stuff it works with good old Oz. It may be a little unbecoming for a guy to be lying there flapping around like an idiot on his carpet.	Men should clean their carpets with this – look how easy – all he has to do is roll around in it and then roll around on his floor and presto: your carpet is clean.

E, 53	Man underneath container of OxiMagic. Chair in upper right corner. Dirty carpet clean where man appears to have moved his arms/legs back and forth.	Something to do with carpet cleaner. Not sure what is being advertised.	No real opinion. Not a very good ad. Still not sure what is being promoted. Some kind of cleaner.	?OxiMagic cleans carpets?
F, 56	Brown chair in upper right corner, container of OxiMagic covering man doing snow angel on carpet or container has arms&legs. Stains of some type on carpet (lipstick looking but that doesn't make sense). Other Clorox products in bottom right corner.	This is a product that can help you clean up stains on a carpet.	Poor ad – looks like a man has been engulfed by the product, what should be clean rug appears to be rug with different type of stain. Gives feeling that container has crushed the man.	Product that helps you keep house clean.

Nico-Derm 2003	Denotative level	Connotative level	General impression	Objective(s) of the advertiser
A, 20	A man holding a child in a home. He's wearing a short T-shirt and it is visible that he's wearing the patch on his arm.	This ad is for an anti-smoking product. The man with child is a strong message to send. You don't want to smoke around people that age. It's obvious that it's his child and that he loves him/her very much and that's why he's quitting smoking.	The colors and the overall feeling of the ad are very relaxing. The message is very clear. There are no negative connotations in this ad which I like. The fact that I don't smoke allows me to support and relate to this ad also.	If you have a child or any loved one for that matter, and don't want to hurt them by smoking around them, quit [smoking by] using their product.
B, 21	A man holding a baby, his. He's kissing the baby's nose. He has one of the patches on his arm. It looks like a kitchen in his home.	It's showing family, home, and love. Everything got a white and clean feel to it.	You can feel the love the man may have for his child and I feel that I'm directed towards a way to quit smoking (if I did) for the sake of family and love and my child.	It's like they are using these images to get people to stop smoking for good reasons and use this product for the sake of their families.
C, 44	B/w picture, colored product, knives and large pots in background, man holding/kissing baby.	Product stands out in ad. Dangerous environment. Man comforting & protecting baby, showing love & concern.	Pleasant picture of a man's love & devotion to his child/family.	Use this product to quit smoking so you'll be around your children lifetime to comfort & protect from harm.

D,47	Young dad & baby. Kitchen. Knives, window, pots on top cabinets. Packaging.	Caring, importance of life.	Young dads that smoke need to think about the future and stop smoking. Dads at home in kitchen show involvement in life at level other than work.	Life is important, use our product to kick the habit – Packaging helps you to know what to look for in the store.
E, 53	Man holding baby in kitchen. Nicoderm box. Text.	That using Nicoderm will help you quit [smoking]. This will be good for both you and your family.	Again, I had to dig to find out what was being promoted. Positive image with man and baby and do it for yourself and your family message.	That Nicoderm will help you stop smoking, which will be positive for both you and your family.
F, 56	B/w man standing in kitchen in T-shirt holding a baby in his hands & looking as though he's going to kiss baby, baby cradled in arms with feet raised so they are touching man's shoulders. In color (green) package of Nicoderm in bottom left corner.	Quit smoking and it will improve your life or allow you to see the better things in life. If you're not smoking you'll have more time to spend with your child & you are more likely to be around to share happy moments.	Verbiage & picture & packaging convey the same message = quit smoking for your family → share in positive experience. Good ad – simple but message delivered.	That there is a way to quit smoking & that there is help for you. You don't have to do it alone.

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