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SEXUALIZED PERFUME ADVERTISEMENTS ON SOCIAL MEDIA - EFFECTS ON  
BRAND ASSOCIATIONS

Bachelor Thesis

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This paper conforms to the requirements for a Bachelor Thesis

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(Signature of supervisor)

Admitted for defence ..... (Date)

I have written this paper independently. Any ideas or data taken from the authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

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(Signature of the author and date)

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## **Introduction**

In 2017, the British Advertising Standards Authority pulled out the new perfume starring actress Dakota Fanning's collaboration with Marc Jacobs; Oh Lola!, for sexualizing children as presented in the complaints received from consumers (Misener, 2017). The usage of unvarnished images to describe a perfume is rarely used on social media now before perfumes were advertised more traditionally using a standard symbol to deliver the idea such as a flower for floral fragrances, deer for musk and so on.

Social media nowadays markets perfume using nudity, stereotypical elegant female and masculine male (Phinta, 2019). Fragrance commercials have evolved over the past two decades significantly and visibly, previously the advertisements were more direct and the bottle was the main object of the ad. This research will be focusing on exploring further about the advertisements fragrance companies create and post on social media.

On social media, it is quite common for various brands to sponsor famous influencers or celebrities to deliver the brand's campaign message through their posts. Sexual branding works across different media platforms and with the help of social media it grew even wider (Reichert & Lambiase, 2013). Before social media existed, sexualisation was occurring on other platforms such as; magazines, movies, and sports programmes. The main issue with sexualizing ads on social media is that it shows unrealistic figures or objects that encourage viewers to achieve the same body or buy the same object that was presented in the advert.

Researching social media marketing methods is vital for the author as it has a huge impact on social media users, being exposed to various platforms creates self-objectification among individuals and sets unrealistic goals for adolescents. The importance of this research is to investigate the influence of the sexualized advertisements of fragrance advertisement products on people, whether it changes or does not change the association a consumer has with the brand.

Moving from traditional media, such as magazines, movies, and music clips, to new media (social media), is one of the main reasons why sexualizing social media marketing is considered mainstream and often used nowadays. The percentage between sexualized ads varies between 17% on new sites and 23% on entertainment sites; such as Facebook and Instagram (Reichert & Lambiase, 2013, p.7). The production of sexual advertisement content is exclusively directed towards internet users.

The aim of this thesis is to find out how perfume brands sexualized social media advertisements on social media, influence brand associations. To fulfil this aim by the end of this research; the research tasks are going to be:

- Defining sexualized advertisements and social media marketing,
- Bringing out the importance of sexualized advertisements,
- Defining and explaining brand associations,
- Explaining brand associations in the context of sexualized advertisements,
- Overview of previous research done on social media marketing, sexualizing perfume products, and brand associations,
- Conducting an online survey to test sexualized adverts effects on consumers,
- Analysing and comparing the data collected with previous empirical studies,
- Review the results of the online survey data and report results.

This study fits by combining aspects found separately in various works of literature, there are multiple studies on social media marketing but few studies are focused on the effects the social media adverts have on brand association and if it affects the consumers concerning the ad of the perfume. Most researchers studied the effects of sexual ads on adolescences (Collins & Lenz, 2011) and some studies focused on one gender (Phinta, 2019). The results of this paper should encourage and persuade more the realistic and less objectified social media marketing campaigns.

As for the rest of the paper, the first section will be focused on the key theoretical concepts; different data methods used in other studies, the definitions of the terms and their relevance to social media marketing. Finishing the theoretical part with an overview of the literature in the area of sexual marketing of perfume brands and its effectiveness of the changes it associates with social media users.

Following the theoretical chapters will be the empirical chapter where an online survey will be used as a method of data collection; the author explicitly picked this technique as it can exceptionally profit the collection of the quantitative data without making participants uncomfortable. Different perfume ads of various brands will be presented one at a time for the participants to rate. Following the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected, the author will proceed with comparisons, justification of the methods selected and the effects of other methods used in previously conducted studies will be thoroughly analysed.

One way to define and assess these problems is by collecting and analysing the data of the advertisements using an online survey and using the data collected effectively and analytically to promote non-objectified and persuasive marketing campaigns.

**Key Words:** sexualized marketing, social media marketing, products communication and brand association.

## **1. Sexualized Advertisements on Social Media and Effects on Brand Associations**

### **1.1. Defining Sexualized Advertisements and Social Media Marketing**

In this chapter, the author will be defining the term; Sexualized marketing, as well as explaining the concept of this term with the usage of literature. The topic is covered in this paper is relatively unsaturated compared to previously done works. Therefore, the author will be explaining the concept of various terms with the usage of literature. The focal social media

platform that is going to be used in this paper is mainly Facebook, as it has higher percentages of users compared to other platforms.

Products are created based on numerous studies of the market needs and wants; once the product launches on social media markets it's different. Furthermore, advertisements have substantial effects on the idea of gender-roles and advertisements in the eye of the public (Naisbayeva, 2018). It is widely known that industries are allowed using the user's accounts to assemble cumulative data based on what users like and follow on Facebook; this is all in the terms and conditions of any social media application. Agreeing to the terms and conditions of the social media platforms, (Kumar, V., Bhaskaran, V., Mirchandani, R., & Shah, M., 2013), a user registers to, permits different industries to use different software to trace the accounts to be able to gather information and it comes down to social connection and collects user-level information.

Tracking what brand pages that user follows, who are they connected with and where their likes are usually directed towards, to be able to gather information and create an ad or sponsor a certain influencer to use the product in online posts to attract their followers to use that branded product as well. Solomon (2017) argued that social media puts the users and their families privacy at risk of breaches and unnecessary exposure. User-level data is private information the software's gather, such as the text messages, the topics the users discuss with each other and what posts are shared privately and criticized between groups of friends (Kumar, Bhaskaran, Mirchandani, & Shah, 2013). What products users discuss privately and gather the slang language the users use while texting to be able to use the same slang in commercials and attract more customers for a particular product.

There are different genres of visual materials on social media that could be much more sexually objectified. Utilizing these genres with perfume industries tend to be more sexual, typical genre case for sexualized perfume ads is where couples are heading to an

event or travelling (Wang 2016). Numerous main genres are excessively used in perfume advertisements; relationships, travel, selfies, humour, events, political, food, anti-mainstream and commercial (Wong, Mcclelland & Furnham, 2019). There are a wide range of themed posts online that could be sexualized to promote a product. According to Valkenburg & Piotrowski, (2017) enterprises advertise using genres to create social-emotional effects between two sides the recipients of the ad and the sender of the ad.

When it comes to previously done studies on the topic of sexualized marketing and brand associations, it appeared to be a challenge to be able to gather conducted studies that are of great similarity to this research topic as well as find research that is aligning with this topic. The various academic pieces of literature that were found have different methods, definitions and ideas of what sexualizing or gender role is.

Table 1:

*Definitions of sexualized marketing according to similar kinds of literature:*

Author(s)	Year	Definition
Miller et al	2016	“The socially and culturally constructed differences between femininity and masculinity, shaped by countless factors including the use of technology and digital media.” p.114
Robertson & Davidson	2013	“A gender role is a set of societal norms dictating the types of behaviours which are generally considered acceptable, appropriate, or desirable for people based on their actual or perceived sex or sexuality.”
Borau & Bonnefon,	2019	“Gendered marketing, in which male consumers are targeted with one variant of the product, whereas female consumers are targeted with another.”
Liu & Suh,	2017	"A set of practices, a mindset, and/or a way of remaking the self as a salable commodity to attract attention and acquire cultural and monetary value through social media platforms" p.13
Nickel, Orth & Kumar	2020	“Marketers often design their offers to visually appeal to either female or male audiences”

Source: Compiled by the author based on Miller et al, Robertson & Davidson, Borau & Bonnefon, Liu & Suh and Nickel, Orth & Kumar

Miller et al (2016) were about examining the social media influences and its different forms on genders and how it shapes the various factors with the usage of media and advanced

technology. This study's focal point is technology and media and how it affects genders and their relations and identities that lead to the discussion of having a 2nd free-floating identity online. There is no certain product mentioned in this study but it's more concentrated on gender relations and norms online. The study is focused on different countries while this prospectus is more focused on worldwide social media platform; Facebook. This research and (Miller et al, 2016) study are similarly focused on the same consumer group, millennials, who are the highest percentage of social media users (Viens, 2019).

Robertson and Davidson (2013) defined sexualized marketing in the form of different behavioural forms resulted from societal norms of what is acceptable and appropriate. The study discusses the variety of behaviours the social marketers focus on when constructing their advertisement according to societal desires. This study was mostly focused on examining the public response towards ISMC (Integrated Social Marketing Commination) behaviours that are related to stereotypical beliefs, not a certain product or consumer group, unlike this paper. Within research, the author focuses less on the responses of the public and more on the brand associations the sexual adverts create.

Borau and Bonnefon (2019) conducted an internal meta-analysis between three various studies and compared them to present the idea that consumers and the owners of sexualized products are socially pictured as highly attractive and would be approached for more business interactions. Having extra sexualized ads leads social media users to be discouraged as these ads usually present an unnatural and unrealistic body type, hairstyles and not many people afford what the ad shows of clothes, cars or mansions; therefore it motivates the viewer to look up to these sort of externalities as what is "Normal"; two main reasons presented in the study about the reason gendered products are bought are due to social pressure or influences from the marketing method itself.

Liu & Suh (2017) argued that due to the increasing growth of different new digital media, motivated individuals, specifically females to market themselves as brands. This research analysed a big number of posts to indicate whether brands adhere to traditional unsexualized beauty or sexualized beauty as it attracts a bigger audience. How to establish branded selves on social media to attract more consumers, therefore the definition of objectified commercials was described as a practice of reshaping a brand into a self, for the brand itself to achieve a leveraging effect specifically on online media.

Focusing on the sexualized marketing concept from the design of the advert itself, (Nickel, Orth & Kumar, 2020) stated that various elements should be combined to make an advert sexual and favourable to look at. Focusing more on the consumer, this research found that the biological gender has a visual influence on the individual preference and could extend the viewer's response to the advertisement. Males assess visually by relying on specific elements within the advert, while females aggregate elements into one full picture.

The definition of sexualized marketing for this thesis, after carefully reviewing the previously cited studies is; usage of female or male body exposure in various forms, poses, objects, situations, and dialogues of an advertisement to promote a brand and visually attract more consumers. Where an ad uses a male's features and masculine elements to attract female consumers and vice versa. Giving an impression to the consumer that this is how it will appear to the public if you (the consumer) start using that certain product the brand is promoting to sell.

To be able to evaluate the topic of this research further and to be conducted properly, the term social media marketing should be properly defined and analysed. The author will base the definition of social media marketing after reviewing multiple different works of literature. According to the studies that the author came across, social media marketing is defined by multiple pieces of literature as follows:

Table 2:

*Definitions of social media marketing based on different elements:*

Author(s)	Year	Definition
Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch	2017	“Social media marketing is an interdisciplinary and cross-functional concept that uses social media to achieve organizational goals by creating value for stakeholders.”
Chen & Lin	2019	“Social media marketing is defined as commercial marketing events or processes that use social media in an attempt to positively influence consumers' purchase behaviour.”
Kannan & Li	2017	“an adaptive, technology-enabled process by which firms collaborate with customers and partners to jointly create, communicate, deliver, and sustain value for all stakeholders” (p. 23)
Tuten & Solomon	2020	“the utilization of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, deliver, and exchange offerings that have value for an organization's stakeholders” (p. 18)
John & Devilliers	2020	“An active relationship with a brand as personified by the website or other online media designed to communicate brand value”

Source: Compiled by the author based on Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, Chen & Lin,

Kannan & Li, Tuten & Solomon and John & Devilliers

As stated in Table 2, definitions are quite similar; however, the study (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017) mentioned the stakeholders behind the firms that advertise their products, and how the social media marketing satisfies the goals set by the firms' stakeholders. Therefore the practice of taking care of the customer stratification is not a priority for the brand; therefore no brand association could be obtained. Sheng, Amankwah-Amoah & Wang (2019) focused on functions of using social media data for marketing by extracting insights and communication with new and existing consumers.

Marketers utilize publicly available information from social media platforms for three main reasons: directed promoting, supposition mining, and client relations. Digital and social media marketing centres on the utilization of innovation (Kannan and Li, 2017). Furthermore, the utilization of internet-based life in promoting has added to the individualization of showcasing whereby associations can impart, gather information, and give customized

reactions and answers for clients (Royle and Laing, 2014). Therefore advertisers and advertising companies leverage digital media to create personalized messages and offers to the target consumers.

This research is targeting millennials as statically 34% of Facebook's advertisement audience are below the age of 25 and 13% are above the age of 50; while Instagram advertisement audiences are 39% below 25 and 9% above 50 (Global Digital Insights, n.d.). As claimed by (Miller et al, 2016) online a user can adopt a whole different persona that gets easily affected by what it encounters while scrolling through the various applications; this study was based on Euro-American context which is highly influential on the internet.

From the author's point of view within this thesis; and after reviewing works of literature, the social media marketing term could be defined as; the usage of social media and social networking websites as a form of internet marketing, as it's faster and cheaper to reach the consumers, compared to traditional marketing strategies. Social media marketing facilitates and brings the consumer closer to information about the product or the brand in advertisements. Therefore the (Chen & Lin, 2019) definition is what the author is going to use as the definition of social media marketing as it is closer and fits more with the aim of this research.

Facebook recently has the highest number of users around the world (Global Digital Insights, n.d.). Narrowing the research further and being able to get a definite answer to the research aim, using one platform within one country will be more convenient to gather and analyse the data statically, rather than using multiple different platforms. By March 2020, the percentage of Facebook users only within Estonia is 52.73% ("Social Media Stats Estonia"). The total statistical number of monthly active social network users within Estonia is estimated to reach 0.89 (in million users) by the end of 2020 (Johnson, 2020). The social

media channel that will be used is mainly Facebook due to the increase of active percentages of active users compared to other platforms.

In perfume advertisements, the brand association is highly used through sexual stimuli, in various researches that were reviewed it was stated that nudity was perceived as highly offensive when it comes to other products advertisements (Grazer & Kessling, 2011). However, when it comes to perfume adverts, the statement “sex sells” is the definitive word to describe the adverts. To associate a product to the audience the usage of sexualized images of females is the method often used, which associates the product to both males and females but the primary target would be heterosexual men (Bongiorno, Bain, & Haslam, 2013). Therefore the author is continuing this thesis with one further definition of one of the key terms that are associated with social media and sexualized marketing.

## **1.2. Brand Associations in Context of Sexualisation and Definitions**

After defining the terms needed to proceed with these theoretical chapters of the bachelor thesis; in this subchapter, the author will be associating the definitions together to get a narrower objective. Featuring the point that sexualised adverts of certain products could affect consumers’ viewpoint of brands, it is imperative to have an understanding of what they are and how these affects fit into marketing.

Usually, brand association specifically on social media are formed from two main sources. The first type is the brand trial, a form of direct personal experience assessed by the consumer usage duration and the second type is indirect exposure which is the type of brand association used in this paper; such as advertisements and recommendations (Moorman, 2017). In the following table, brand associations will be defined according to numerous independent studies.

Table 3:

*Definitions of brand associations created by indirect exposure or direct experience:*

Author(s)	Year	Definitions
Pourazad, Stocchi, & Pare	2019	“E-CBR (emotional consumer-brand relationships) as emotional connection consumers develops over time with their favourite brands.”
Yasin, Liébana-Cabanillas, Porcu, & Kayed,	2020	“A set of variables that collectively shape the attitude of customers toward a product, a service or a firm.”
Mcclure & Seock	2020	“The factors influencing consumers to engage with a brand on social media platforms and the effects of involvement on social media.”
Ranfagni, Guercini & Camicittoli	2014	“The relations between brands and consumers in new market spaces, ”

Source: Compiled by the author based on Pourazad, Stocchi, & Pare, Yasin, Liébana-Cabanillas, Porcu, & Kayed, Mcclure & Seock and Ranfagni, Guercini & Camicittoli

The first literature in the table defines brand association as an emotional connection; the goal to sell a brand is essentially controlled by the degree to which a customer sees how the relation (need and wants) 'fits' with the brand. Therefore it is vital to generate emotional links between the consumer and the brand, for example, the brand association that purchasers hold in memory (Pourazad, Stocchi, & Pare, 2019).

The second research (Yasin, Liébana-Cabanillas, Porcu, & Kayed, 2020) was focused on attitude changes of the consumer have towards what a company produces; however this study does not closely relate to this research aim as they have a focus on online banking systems within a certain country, it did help to understand and analyse the impact of what a brand experience could do.

The third study (Mcclure & Seock, 2020) was focused on the factors that are more related to social media that would attract consumers and help build a good relationship with the consumer through online marketing. Mcclure and Seock (2020) defined and analysed

brand association, where the study examines consumers familiarity with a brand and the information the brand provides on its social media content.

Ranfagni, Guercini & Camicittoli (2014) this study referenced brand associations with the enhancements techniques of quantitative approaches to be able to get a closer insight about interactions between communities online. The methodologies presented were aimed at gaining brand knowledge while exploring consumer associations. This study believed the fundamental source of data is through digitalized consumer's interactions with the brands on social networks and blogs.

All in a nutshell from the author's point of view, and after reviewing studies, the brand association is defined as an emotional impression the brand is trying to leave on the consumer and build on it a relationship. In other words, as stated by McClure & Seock (2020), closely defined as in the study it's the relationship between the customer and the product, the feelings the brand delivers to the consumer and therefore makes the product unique and desired.

As of recent years attracting consumer's visual attention is far more exasperating, keeping in mind the variety of genres, designs and efforts placed in the adverts. Various brands put in use strategies, like sexual appeal or attractiveness in forms of messages or sexual information, to persuade the end consumers and attract their attention towards the brand (Fidelis, Oliveira, Giraldi, & Santos, 2017). Leading the consumer to be more aware of a brand, which is defined as brand awareness, creates more brand equity, therefore associates the consumers with the brand and their adverts even if their adverts are considered sexual or non-sexual.

Recently, sexualised brand associations methods and approaches are gaining more attention from market researches with the help of the on-going development and updates of Facebook. Towards body appearances there is an extraordinary visual consideration directed,

that affects objectified marketing and impacts the brand image (McLean et al., 2019). It is necessary for market researches of any brand to be able to distinct types of sexual associations related to the brand, to gather findings related to the impact it has on the consumer behaviour (Azar, 2015). Along these lines, despite the fact that market analysts recognize the difference of the meanings between gender and sex, they utilize these words conversely when applied to mark brands and their recognition.

To conclude this subchapter, brand identity can be a powerful driver for attention and actions, a customer's recollecting the brand image is not related to how sexually intriguing the brand's ads are (Zoghaib, 2017). Brands have at last understood the capability of utilizing internet-based networks to impact clients by incorporating social media strategies (Moro, Rita & Vala, 2016). Therefore the consumer's attitude and Behavior towards the brand advertisements on Facebook can differ from a product to another depending on different multiple factors other than sexualisation, on the other side the more sexual the adverts of a certain brand the more it attracts the consumers visually.

### **1.3. Previously Conducted Empirical Research on Sexualized Adverts and Social Media**

#### **– Methodological Approaches and Results**

Each of the previously mentioned studies had a different empirical approach to conduct and collect effective data to be able to come up with conclusions about sexualized marketing methods and norms on social media, but not all of the papers are directly related to this research. The studies used different methods and had various targets other than what this paper is trying to research.

Miller et al. (2016) had a more country-wise focal where all their data were conducted and gathered around one country, however, this thesis is focused on a certain platform of social media within the scope of Estonia. The second study (Robertson & Davidson, 2013) was examining the influence objectified ads have on international social marketing

communications; the method this study used was a survey, by inviting participants through an announcement, directed towards freshmen university students. The research divided the students into groups of 30 and exposed them to six counterbalanced stimuli to measure the attitudes towards the advertisements.

The study presented by Mitra and Jenamani (2020), examined brand associations favorability, strength and uniqueness from the consumer's point of view, using Online Brand Image (OBIM). Implementing a primary survey to conduct consumers reviews and measure consumer perceptions, the authors of this literature proposed the OBIM score to include three major scores combined; uniqueness, favourability and strength. The estimation of "Favourability" was measured using sentiment analysis, the study utilized two approaches; extracting vital aspects from online reviews and detecting the polarity of each aspect (Mitra & Jenamani, 2020). This research is similar to the works of Mitra and Jenamani (2020), where the author will be measuring brand associations, however, it will use solely online survey. Comparing this literature with Mitra and Jenamani (2020), the author will not be using OBIM is the methodology to collect consumer reviews.

One more study (Kumar & Bezawada, 2016) examines the effects of FGC on social media and other forms of online networking; the aspect of this paper is that it presents the effects of firm generated content on customer behaviour. Furthermore, one literature that will be analysed examines brand associations with presenting multiple hypotheses, a questionnaire and software SPSS to analyse the data gathered (Mcclure & Seock, 2020).

Following will be a table, where the author collected multiple works of literature and the methodologies that were utilized in each study for data collection and analysis. The table will be followed by similarities and differences these works of literature have compared to this bachelor thesis.

Table 4:

*Methods of data collection that various studies used:*

Author(s)	Year	Method of collecting and analysing data
Miller et al	2016	Researching various specimens and comparing them
Robertson & Davidson	2013	Surveys of 175 participants on Gender-Role Theory and the Stereotype Content; following T-tests, MANOVA, univariate analysis of the data collected.
Borau & Bonnefon,	2019	A meta-analysis of 3 different studies with 398 participants and 199 were males. And the data was collected over gender-typical vs. atypical vehicles.
Kumar, & Bezawada	2016	Usage of PSM (propensity score matching) method and sample size of 412 customers.
Mcclure & Seock	2020	Questionnaire of 159 participants with specific stimuli of female college students age 18-25. A 7-point scale was used to assess the participants' attentiveness with the brand's social media presence
Stankiewicz & Rosselli,	2008	Examined 58 magazines of both men and women.
Shcheglov & Vitalii	2018	Chain Referral Sampling
Vargas-Bianchi & Mensa	2020	Correlation design; between two studies with various groups of subjects: an assessment of perceived female sexual objectification levels in a set of ads and a quasi-experimental study.
Osei-Frimpong & Mclean	2018	Applied quantitative survey design using an online questionnaire with criteria of involving only participants with social media brand engagement experiences.
Fleming-Milici & Harris.	2020	A cross-sectional survey to examine the effectiveness of a variety of brands and their associations on social media and multivariate logistic regression to examine the effectiveness of these brands.

Source: Compiled by the author based on Miller et al, Robertson & Davidson, Borau &

Bonnefon Kumar, & Bezawada, Mcclure & Seock, Vargas-Bianchi & Mensa, Osei-Frimpong & Mclean and Fleming-Milici & Harris.

Miller et al (2016) put in an ethnographic specimen to research ways in which digital media has fortified existing sexual orientation relations and dominant standards of what masculinity and femininity are. This study has put into consideration regional, religious, class, urban or rural, and ethnic variations. This study did not present data or a collection method or any experiment or examination to be able to analysis their empirical research, this study aimed to answer the question of whether media and technology affect the identities and

gender of individual on social media compared to real life. The results were that social media simply just shifted the systems of gender relations.

Robertson and Davidson (2013) surveyed 175 participants who were exposed to six visual stimuli. The results were concluded over a paired t-test of both dominant genders. This study used MANOVA to examine the gender roles influence on ad behavioural congruencies. Univariate tests review that attitudes varied and that in ads that female characters appear in are higher compared to when the character is a male. The univariate analysis between stereotype content and the participants' gender revealed that male and female members' intellectual frames of mind towards the two commercials uncovered guys' and females' subjective attitudes were more positive towards the paternalistic than the contemptuous conduct.

Borau & Bonnefon (2019) empirical research study conducted was based on the results of three various studies that will utilize a meta-analysis across those three studies the overall influence of stereotypical products on body appeal. To add further to the study the ownership of typical versus atypical car was included in the test as it will increase the femininity or masculinity; body, sex and partner appeal. 398 participants (199 were males) included and randomly exposed to a feminine or a masculine vehicle, and the participants using a 7-point scale rated the imaginary owner of each car on display.

The fourth study's objective was FGC on social media (Firm generated content) which is similar to this study based on social media and different than this research based on the objective of the study. The study examines other forms of online marketing rather than just social media applications, for example, e-mail marketing. This study examines three FGC characteristics and whether they have a positive impact, as well as the insights about social media and how to leverage it is for marketing methods (Kumar, & Bezawada, 2016).

This study does not talk about the sexualisation of adverts however it does talk about brand associations and whether it affects the consumers' behaviours.

The fifth literature in Table 4 had five different hypotheses to be examined to reach an answer of whether the consumers are affected by the brand's social media presence. The study used stimuli of 159 female college students and used a questionnaire to gather information from these students about familiarity and involvement with a certain brand of their choosing and social media accounts; the data gathered was then analysed using the SPSS program and the results showed that a brand's online account does significantly change the consumer involvement with the brand. McClure and Seock (2020) have a somewhat of a similarity to this research paper, however, the study examined only female college students, while this research will focus on both genders when experimenting using a measured stimulus.

Stankiewicz and Rosselli, (2008) were examining the image of a female in present adverts; were three dimensions; portrayed as a sexual object, as a victim and both simultaneously, were set to assess the extents where adverts could reach to sexualize a female. The primary goal was to analyse the extent and explore how routinely females are sexualized in distinct forms and dimensions. The methodology was based on 58 of the top 100 gross selling magazines. This research divided the data on a 1-7 judgement scale of how objectification is recognized in magazines; Assessing magazine types by using ANOVA and following it up by Tukey tests. The results showed that in total on average females were portrayed as a 'decorative role' in one of every two published adverts within each magazine; this ratio of sexual to non-sexual ads affected the gross revenue of the magazine company.

The usage of a Chain Referral Sampling Technique was not provided in any of the previously mentioned studies and this method was used to pick participants to measure brand association (Shcheglov & Vitalii, 2018). The study aimed to find subjective feedbacks

towards characteristic influences of certain advertisements. One further literature used meta-analysis to evaluate and assess gender stereotypes; however, Eisend (2019) study focused on TV platform and radio channels; while this research paper is more focused on social media. Naisbayeva (2018) examined modern print advertising focusing on magazines published in the Russian language in different countries; analysing gender stereotypes and male representations in magazines.

The most recent study that seems of great similarity to this paper, is mainly focused on examining the effects advertisements affect the brand name, however, this study is more focused on female sexual objectification among young millennials while this study is focused on social media users in general, gender is not a factor. Concentrated on whether the brand association could change and vary with the degree of objectification content provided in the advertisements (Vargas-Bianchi & Mensa, 2020). Using non-probability samples of females from western cultures; the results concluded that sexualized adverts have a restricted amount of influence on the brand name itself and that females show higher percentages of recalling a brand name from its advert compared to males.

Osei-Frimpong and Mclean (2018) did not limit their research to only social networking website or focus on a certain brand, like within this research. This study is quite similar to the research the author am currently conducting, as they began with interviewing participants through an online questionnaire, which has inclusive and exclusive inquiries. The respondents were chosen based on the length of time they engaged with online brands; 775 out of 1250 questionnaire participants had used social media brand for over 6 months and they were selected. Social presence was measured using an 8-items scale by modifying the original 7-point scale, and a 4-item scale adapted to measure Brand Usage Intent. To void misleading results, this study conducted several tests to ensure that the methods were not biased. Osei-Frimpong and Mclean (2018) research is closely related to this paper.

Utilizing a cross-sectional survey to examines the effectiveness of a variety of brands of food and beverages, and their associations on social media; followed by a multivariate logistic regression to examine the effect the brands have on adolescents. Fleming-Milici and Harris (2020) research concluded that one-third of adolescents' survey reported that they are engaging on social media with at least 2 brands of food and beverages – 48 brands named in this research. Associating with this number of brands was closely related to the time spent using screens, like TVs and other types of screens.

In this paper, the methodology used to collect the data will be through online resources, such as an online survey, to be able to gather counterbalanced data and base the analysis upon them. In conclusion, each of the previously stated studies aimed towards different objectives compared to this paper, as well as these previously mentioned researches used diversified methodologies to test their hypothesis. Each of the previously mentioned studies has some information that could be taken into account and these works of literature are closely related to this research.

Concluding this subchapter, various studies reviewed were presenting a hypothesis to measure different elements of the sexualized advertisements topic and brand associations on social media networks. Most of the studies reviewed had some few missing points, however, these still could be used. After reviewing these studies carefully the author will then move on to the empirical analysis chapters, where the data methodology and analysis are conducted and compared to various pieces of literature, to be able to reach and fulfil the research aim. It will be interesting to assess whether this paper is going to fulfil the research gap.

## 2. Empirical Study of Brand Associations on Facebook

### 2.1. Testing advertisement effects on brand associations

The empirical overview is set out to provide an overview of the empirical analysis that is taking place in the bachelor thesis; it is set out providing a plan to measure sexualized advertisements effects on brand associations on the Facebook platform within Estonia. With millennials having a higher percentage of social media users (Clement, 2020), the author will focus on surveying this age range. To demonstrate furthermore the author will proceed with a descriptive and analytic chapter to define the methodology and measure brand associations.

Table 5:

*Empirical stage plan for the bachelor thesis research:*

I: Preparation	II: Experiment	III: Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collect stimuli pictures</li> <li>▪ Conduct an online survey to assess the sexualized level of different adverts</li> <li>▪ Show the participants the adverts one by one</li> <li>▪ Creating the survey</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Photoshop adverts for bogus brands that the author created</li> <li>▪ brand associations are measured by placing the adverts on a Facebook template</li> <li>▪ Posting the survey on Facebook</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Analysis of the data collected and draw conclusions</li> </ul>

Source: Compiled by the author

The empirical chapters are going to be divided into three different stages, preparation stage where the sample and the methodology will be analysed and reasoned; the second stage is the actual experiment, and it will be focused on an online survey that measures brand associations on Facebook, and finally will be the analysis of the data results and comparison of outcomes with previously analysed empirical researches.

The author has collected 12 perfume brands, some of these brands are well known, therefore they have established brand associations and they are divided into; 8 branded advertisements, which are going to be photo-shopped on Facebook templates; the other 4 will be assessed on how they make participants feel. These 8 brands are: Tom Ford, Chanel,

Rogue, Calvin Klein, Sean John, Abercrombie & Fitch, Gucci and Dior; the other 4 will be divided into two more subgroups; 2 adverts created by the author, therefore are non-existent brands and another 2 adverts that are unknown; therefore no established brand associations.

The adverts that were inserted on the Facebook templates using Facebook Ads Preview tool, where all the measures were taken to make sure that the advertisements are realistic. The author chooses the specific number of likes, shares and comments on every advert, the adverts with already established brand associations had higher numbers of likes, shares and comments compared to the ones that were unknown or created by the author.

Furthermore, the author had to edit the logo of the brands and the picture of the logo, as well as write a full realistic post above each advert. To make the adverts seem even more realistic to the participants the author added a real weblink of the brand to the post. The self-created brands, the author had to create a logo for them using Fonts Tool and a fake clickable website. Lastly, writing a post above the edited advertisement photo, the author added a link to the perfume brand website for some of the adverts and changed the advert review form between PC post View, Phone View and finally Ads View.

Specifically, those brands' advertisements have been chosen because one or two were reported in multiple different studies for creating controversial and sexualized advertisements (Reichert, LaTour, & Ford, 2011). The adverts that are going to be created by the author will be edited on a real Facebook page template using Photoshop to be able to assess the social media effects as well as posted only on Facebook Platform.

Furthermore, after collecting counterbalanced advertisements, the author will proceed using a quantitative and qualitative survey design, using an online questionnaire on Facebook to collect survey responses. Establishing the survey's sampling procedures, the method within this research is a non-probability convenience sampling method. The first couple of questions will be about the partakers and their engagement level with social media, together

with a scale from 1 to 4 to assess how often they make use of social networks; however, the survey will be posted on Facebook, therefore, the assumption that the participants will have engaged with various advertisements across the platform is established. This study did not focus on any particular nationality as it will be posted on Facebook; however, it is limited to only one social media network which is Facebook and within Estonia.

The next part of the survey where participants get to evaluate 8 adverts of every brand at a time, on a Likert 1-5 scale from sexual (5) to non-sexual (1) and will measure the brand associations as the adverts will be edited on a Facebook page template. 4 of these adverts were of an established brand and the other 4 were divided as follows; 2 adverts of made-up brands by the author and the other two were of foreign unknown brands. This is the part of the survey where quantitative data is collected.

The final part of the survey participants will have to choose of a list of words how the adverts make them feel on a 1-6 scale; Trustworthy, Stylish, Expensive, Aesthetic, Youthful and Other, so they can write a descriptive word of the sexualized advert. Mitra and Jenamani (2020) used OBIM score to test three brand associations, which are uniqueness, favourability and strength. From that same idea, the author chooses adjectives that could be expressive enough and neutral for the adverts displayed in the survey.

Followed by the last category are basic generic questions about the age and gender of the participants. The data collected from these set of questions of the survey are qualitative as these questions are open text questions. Every advertisement and the responses it received under the "Other" option are going to be stated in Appendix B.

Moving on to the next step, initial screening will follow up the completed surveys, by removing surveys which have 2 or more missing values and followed with the initial screening will be the percentages of males and females that completed the survey and their brand associations. The scales used within the survey are drawn from previously analysed

literature however they are slightly modified to fit this study. Primary data will be collected from that survey to be able to get first-hand insight on how consumers perceive the brands' advertisements displayed. Following up this preparation stage will be the experiment stage where the survey will take place.

## **2.2. Conducting and Reporting Data of the Online Survey**

As stated previously, the second stage following the preparation stage is the experiment stage where the survey takes place. The survey was divided into three categories that could help separate the respondent's answers accordingly and make the analysis of the results more coherent (See Appendix A). The survey aimed to measure the brand associations that are initiated when participants come across sexualized advertisements of various fragrances. According to that, the author mixed quantitative and qualitative data survey questions to be able to gather more in-depth info and fulfil the research aim.

Establishing how the survey is going to be divided and created, the author decided to use the Google Forms platform to create the survey. The main reason the author choose this platform is that it only requires a Google account and it does not require a certain price for the survey, as most of the highly qualified survey forms require a certain amount of payments. The data collection is quite facilitated, as well as it is not time-consuming. The existing literature did not cover much on what various platforms was used while conducting the researches.

The questions within the survey were implemented and modified from the study of Osei-Frimpong and Mclean (2018), where they employed Liker scales within their research. The first scale used was to measure how often the participants use social media, based on the Likert scale used in the study of Osei-Frimpong and Mclean (2018), the author slightly modified the scale from 1-4; were two scales asses the duration based on a day and two scales asses the duration based on the week (See Appendix A). The second scale employed the same

Likert scale, however, modified on a scale of sexual (5) to non-sexual (1), unlike Osei-Frimpong and Mclean (2018), where the scale ranged 1(strongly disagree) to 5(strongly agree).

Another scale of 1-6 was used; set of expressive adjectives to describe a photo; it was implemented from the study of Mitra and Jenamani (2020), where they measured the favorability score of the association on a scale of -1 to +1. The author employed this scale and instead of numerical scale five descriptive words were used, and the 6<sup>th</sup> option of the “Other...” on the scale, was employed to allow the participants to be more expressive towards the adverts. Lastly, the final scale used to measure the age of participants was based on the generations’ age ranges, as the age range of millennials is between the 18 and the 38 (Debczak, 2019).

Table 6:

*Survey questions and sequence based on literature:*

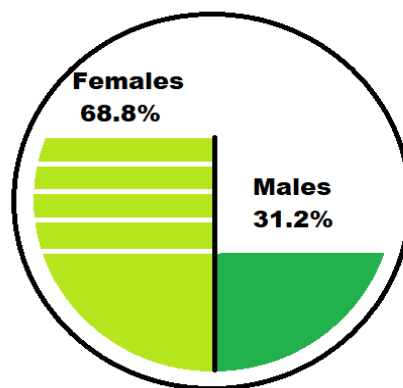
Categories:	Questions:
General Info about Social Media	Focused on the social media platforms the participants use, the duration they spent scrolling through platforms and how often they encounter adverts while scrolling through social media.
Rating Advertisements	1 <sup>st</sup> set of questions; 1-5 scale to rate 8 adverts from sexual(5) to non-sexual(1). Likert Scale implemented from Osei-Frimpong and Mclean (2018).
Describing advertisements	2 <sup>nd</sup> set of questions; Participants are a list of expressions to describe how the advert seems, from the participant’s point of view. Participants get the option of choosing “Other” as an option and describe, with their own words, the advert. Favourability scale; modified and implemented from Mitra and Jenamani (2020).
General Info about the participants:	Gender and the age range of participant. Modified Likert Scale was used.

Source: Compiled by the author.

Categorizing the survey was effective while analysing the results, the first and final category was focused on the general social media usage duration, platforms and encountering advertisements on Facebook. Furthermore, the second category, where 8 adverts were displayed and a scale of sexual to non-sexual were used for participants to rate how sexual

they think the adverts were. Following this category, the author placed a question in the survey to be able to get an idea of whether participants were paying enough attention to the brands in the display. The question was whether the participants have encountered any of the displayed advertisements on social media.

The third category was focused on how the participants feel towards fragrance brands advertisements, and to express how the adverts make them feel using one of the following expressive words; Trustworthy, Aesthetic, Youthful, Expensive, Stylish and Other. Final category followed was with a general question to assess the number of participants that participated and to assess the gender of the participants. Following this category were basic questions for the participants to get to know more the age range of the participants to assess whether they fit under the millennials age range, as this study is focused on millennials.



*Figure 1:* The percentages of females to males taking the survey (%)

Source: Compiled by the author on the data obtained from the survey

The sample was selected based on one social media platform; Facebook; as the survey was posted on multiple different Facebook groups. In total, the survey gathered 64 participants between the ages of 18 till 30. As shown in *Figure 1*, the percentages of females to males who participated in this survey were 68.8% females to 31.2% males, which indicates that there are more female participants than male.

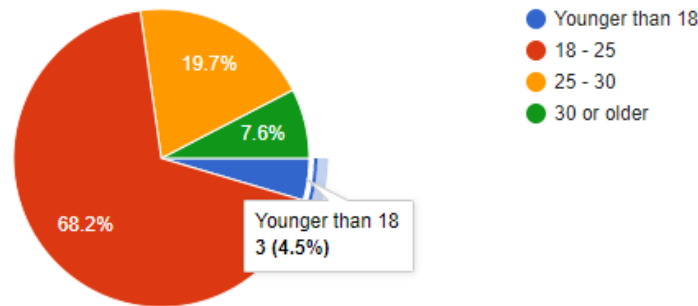


Figure 2: Age structure of the sample (%)

Source: Compiled by the author based on the data obtained from the survey

As for the age range of the partakers, presented in *Figure 2*, the majority of the data obtained were between the ages of 18-25 at 68.2% and second, to that 19.7% were between the ages of 25-30. While the smallest percentages of participants were 7.6% for 30 or older, and at last 4.5% to participants below the age of 18. These numbers conclude and support the idea that the majority of active social media users are millennials (Clement, 2020), the author divided the age ranges accordingly.

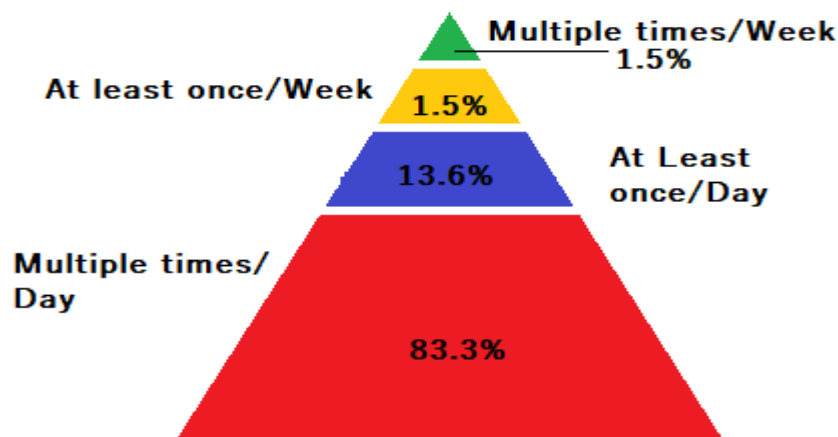


Figure 3: Social media usage durations (%)

Source: Compiled by the author based on the data obtained from the survey

To understand how much time the participants spent on social media, the question of how often they use social media was presented and which social media platform they use the most, to be able to gather ingredients for the analysis, 84.3% of the respondents use social

media multiple times per day. Conclusively, 13.6% of the participants use social media at least once per day and 1.5% of the participants use social media at least once per week, and the last percentage at 1.5% use social media multiple times per week.

This question of social media duration was aimed to make sure that the survey participants were active social media users. According to the data obtained from the survey, the participants above 30 were mostly the ones who used social media less as in their choice was, “Multiple times per week”, this supports the percentages obtained from the data; that millennials usually use the social media platforms multiple time per day (Mohsin, 2020), and the older participants do not use the social platforms as much.

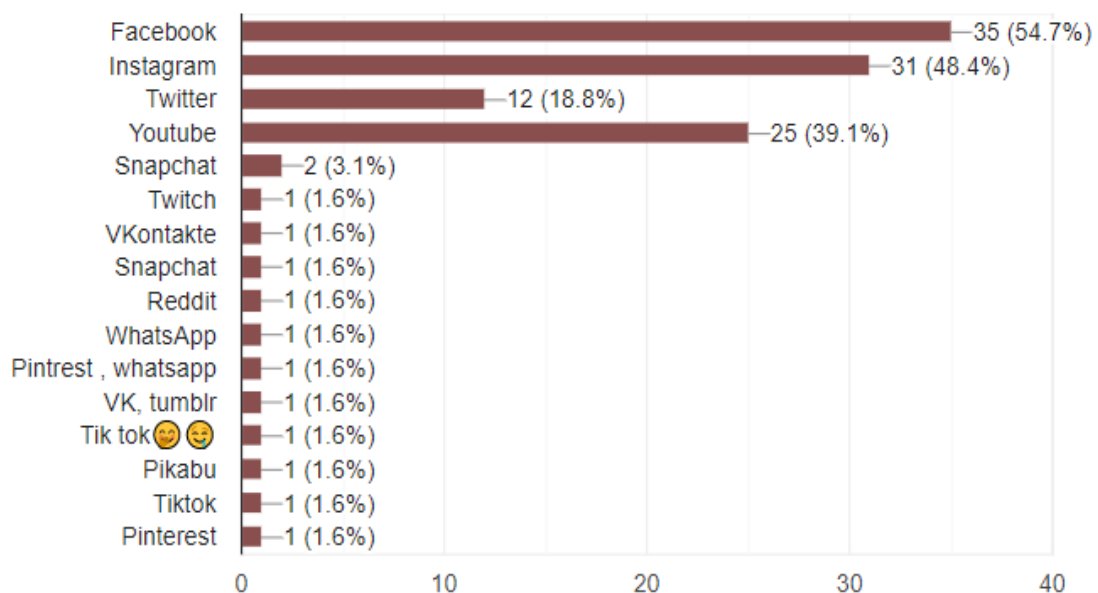


Figure 4: Most used social media platform according to the participants (%)

Source: The data obtained from the survey

One vital question was the most used social media platform, this question had the option of “Others” to allow the participants to state other social media platforms, Facebook was the highest social media platform, as in figure 4, between the participants by 54.7%, the second in Line was Instagram by 48.4%, and finally followed by YouTube at 39.1%. The

participants provided an even wider range of social media platforms they utilize on a daily bases, such as represented in figure 4.

Following this category within the survey participants were asked whether they encounter advertisements on social media, with the idea that “Yes”, would be the obvious answer, 9.1% of the participants answered with “No”. Following the analysis of the previously mentioned questions of the survey, furthermore into the analysis, the percentages on the scale of sexual to non-sexual of the 8 rated Advertisements were as follows:

Table 7:

*Rated Advertisement on 1-5 scale from sexual to non-sexual (%)*

Advert/Rate	Sexual	Slightly Sexual	Neither Sexual or Non- Sexual	Slightly Non-Sexual	Non-Sexual
1. Abercrombie & Fitch	31.7%	42.9%	12.7%	4.8%	4.8%
2. Tom Ford	76.6%	20.3%	-	-	3.1%
3. Chanel	39.3%	44.3%	11.5%	1.6%	3.3%
4. Dior	59%	31.1%	8.2%	-	1.6%
5. Made up (1)	52.5%	18%	16.4%	3.3%	9.8%
6. JOOP!	82%	13.1%	1.6%	3.3%	-
7. Made up (2)	44.3%	29.5%	11.5%	6.6%	8.2%
8. Lynx	59%	29.5%	8.2%	-	3.3%

Source: Compiled by the author based on raw data from conducted survey

The adverts were numbered according to their appearance sequence in the survey, and the author colour coded the percentage rates for every advert. The 1<sup>st</sup> set of questions of the survey has the purpose of detecting how the adverts are viewed by the participants.

From the table above, advertisement six, unknown brand, is considered the highest sexualized advert among the others, with the percentage of 82% “Sexual” and none of the participants rated it as non-sexual. The first advertisement for Abercrombie & Fitch was rated the highest by 42.9% as “Slightly sexual”. In the first and third advertisements, the percentages are highest amongst all the other rates, which identified these two adverts as “Slightly Sexual”. In advertisement number 5 and 7, created by the author, shows the highest

percentage of participants rating “Non-sexual” at 9.8% and 8.2%, in blue. Despite the adverts being fake they still received higher feedback rates on “Sexual” compared to other rates.

To conclude the data obtained, the author placed 4 adverts without established brand associations and 4 adverts with established brand associations, to create a counter balanced data. Despite the assumption that the unknown brands would be rated less sexual compared to the well-known brand advertisements, all the adverts within this category were rated as "Sexual" in red or "Slightly sexual" in green, compared to percentages of the other three rates. Therefore the results mean that the adverts were perceived as mostly “Sexual” by the participants.

Finalizing this category of the survey was followed by a Yes or No question to be able to detect whether participants were paying attention and could identify the brand names and advertisements or not, 68.2% of the participants have encountered at least one of the adverts they rated throughout the survey. Almost all of the adverts were not seen previously by the participants and only 31.8% which is a minority; this limits the effects of previously established brand associations.

The last category of the survey was based on the participant’s evaluation of the fragrance sexualized advertisements, the question contained 5 various adjectives to describe the advertisement displayed, and the option of “Other” was added to allow the participants to describe the advertisement according to the vibe they felt when they came across the advertisement. The 5 adjectives were Trustworthy, Aesthetic, Youthful, Expensive, Stylish; the author chose those adjectives by employing and modifying them from existing literature of a favourability scale. The last set of questions in the survey were mainly focused on gathering qualitative data for the research.

Table 8:

*Data obtained of the respondents' descriptive adjectives percentages of the survey:*

Advert/ Adjective	1. Calvin Klein		2. GUCCI		3. Rogue		4. Sean John	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Trustworthy	2	3.1	4	6.3	1	1.6	6	9.4
Aesthetic	23	35.9	12	18.8	10	15.6	5	7.8
Youthful	2	3.1	16	25	16	25	8	12.5
Expensive	17	26.6	16	25	7	10.9	10	15.6
Stylish	5	7.8	5	7.8	14	21.9	10	15.6
Others	15	23.4	11	17.2	16	25	25	39.1

Source: Compiled by the author based on data obtained from the online survey

This second set of questions were set and aimed at measuring the brand associations by checking how the participants describe the adverts, using the given adjectives and adding expressions of their own. Clarification of the column “Other” in the table, participants choose this option and then added a descriptive expression of their choice to describe the displayed adverts. The adverts displayed in the table are numbered according to their appearance in the survey and colour coded.

The highest percentages of the term “Aesthetic” 35.9% and “Expensive” 26.6%, in red, were used for the Calvin Klein advert and on the “Others” choice it had similar descriptive expressions used by 23.4%, in blue, of the respondents such as; Disgusting, Tasteless and Déjà vu. For the term “Youthful”. Gucci and Rogue advertisements had 25%, in red, each compared to the other adverts, and several participants repeated the word “Confusing” to describe the adverts under the choice “Others”(Appendix B). While the term “Stylish” had the highest percentages 21.9% in red when it comes to the Rogue fragrance advertisement. Lastly, the Sean John had a variety of expressions, 39.1% of participants chose “Other”, where respondents used illustrative expressions like “Abusing, Infuriating and Disgusting” that are more relatable than the ones provided in the survey.

Under the "Others" choice; the term "Sexual" was applied to every advert, participants who did not find the perfect term within the list to describe the adverts used this term (Appendix B). Other forms of the same word were used in the other advertisements as well, like "Objectifying, Discriminating". According to the table above the forth advert for Sean Jean was highly devalued by the participants, terms like "Problematic" were used in a negative form. These terms will be thoroughly discussed in the analysis of this set of questions.

Nevertheless, Sean John advert still received some positive expressive terms such as; Passionate, while the other brand names were not employed in a positive expression at all. Therefore the highly sexualized adverts within the survey got the highest negative results is the Sean John advert. In Appendix B, the participants'expressions for every advert is stated. It is concluded that Sean John advert was the most affected advert of the 4 as a majority of partakers choose to describe it thoroughly; therefore they wouldn't be engaging with that brand due to the emotional uneasiness they obtained while encountering the advertisement.

To conclude the data in table 8, other descriptive words were used for each of the displayed advertisements (Appendix B), the results conducted so far meant that the participants of the survey are affected by the adverts and therefore possible brand associations may rise. Every advert intrigued some of the participants to express descriptively the adverts. The author will be using these results in the following subchapter, where the analysis of the dataset will take place. Followed by comparisons of the results the author reached with the results of the reviewed empirical studies in the theoretical chapters.

### **2.3. Analysing and Comparing Results of the Online Survey data**

Within this subchapter, the data collected from the survey will be analyzed and compared to obtain results and fulfil the research aim. There are two types of data collected from the survey, quantitative data from the rated 8 advertisements on the Likert scale and qualitative data gathered from the final set of questions of describing the adverts. Analyzing the quantitative data will be done through SPSS software, typically using descriptive statistics and Frequencies to summarize the data and the patterns; such as the Mean, Median, Mode, Range and Standard Deviation.

Mcclure and Seock (2020) used IBM SPSS software to analyse the data they gathered from a questionnaire and the author is going to use the same software for the dataset of this research. The Author chooses SPSS software specifically as it allows the data deeply analyzed, as well as the author is familiar with the software (Roni, Merga, & Morris, 2019). Due to having a non-parametric sample, the author will use; descriptive statistical tables to analyse the data and fulfil the aim.

The qualitative data analysis will be conducted through various steps, starting with the "Others" option within the second set questions in the survey. The data collected is mostly nominal. This type of qualitative data is challenging to measure and analyse on SPSS, therefore the author will create initial codes and identify recurring themes using spreadsheet programs such as Microsoft Office programs - MSEXcel, to analyse the data. The results' tables will be interpreted to conclude and compare with the exciting literature.

The author will proceed with the description of the data and then follow up with analysis for each type of data, therefore, rely on descriptive statistics of every advertisement rated in the survey. Followed up with frequencies of the data. Starting with the mean; the arithmetic average of the values, therefore, will assess which advert was assessed as sexual or non-sexual compared to the others. The median will result in the middle values of the rating,

which indicates the value that centres the data set; the author does not consider the median as a highly valued analysis technique within this research.

For SPSS to be able to create the mean mode and median, the author had to represent the variables data in a different form, where the rates were represented in a numeric form; as from (1-5) were 5 – Sexual, 4 – Slightly sexual, 3 – Neither sexual nor non-sexual, 2 – Slightly non-sexual and 1 - Non-sexual. The variables of the adverts were entered on SPSS software under the labels of Rate1, Rate2 as in for advertisement 1, 2 and so on according to the order they appeared in the survey.

For the data obtained from descriptive expressions, the variables were named Descriptive1, Descriptive2 and so on, and the author indicated the brand names that were displayed in every question, as well the appearance of the adverts in the questions influenced the numerical order.

The author chose these following descriptive; Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Variance and Range, as these measures focus on measuring the spread of the data and the centre of the data, therefore easier to analyse where the data is centred and how its spread. The table following is conducted based on the data entered in the SPSS from the survey to analyse the qualitative data-set gathered from the survey.

Table 9:

*Descriptive statistics of each rated advert:*

	Rate1	Rate2	Rate3	Rate4	Rate5	Rate6	Rate7	Rate8
N (Valid)	64	64	64	64	64	64	64	64
Mean	3.97	4.67	4.14	4.47	4.00	4.73	3.97	4.41
Median	4.00	5.00	4.00	5.00	4.50	5.00	4.00	5.00
Mode	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	5
Std. Deviation	1.038	0.778	0.924	0.776	1.285	0.648	1.247	0.886
Variance	1.078	0.605	0.853	0.602	1.651	0.420	1.555	0.785
Range	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4
Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1
Maximum	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

Source: Compiled by the author on bases of SPSS Frequencies and Descriptive statistics table

The data had no missing values, therefore the author decided to group the data to facilitate the analysis and base conclusions. To begin with, the Range, Minimum and Maximum values indicate the data order, the range shows the difference between the minimum and the maximum values of the variables, however, its only generic data and cannot be utilized to base assumptions on.

Adverts 1(Rate1) and 7(Rate7) have similar Mean; balancing point of the data; of 3.97, these are the lowest Mean among the 8 adverts. Therefore the central tendency of the data of Rate1 and Rate7 is leaning towards the rate "Slightly Sexual" for both these adverts. At exactly a mean of 4.00, Rate5 has the highest frequency of the participants settling on the rate "Slightly Sexual". The adverts number 2 and 6 noted as Rate2 and Rate6, had the highest means of 4.73 and 4.67; indicating that the data's most common statistical number of rates is towards the term " Sexual".

The Median; the physical middle point of the data; and Mode, most commonly used variables, range between 4.00 to 5.00, which indicates that the adverts are centred around the rates of 5-Sexual and 4-Slightly sexual, therefore. Comparing the mean and the median together the author can indicate that the data is not evenly distributed values, as the mean and the median is not the same, however, if the approximations of the mean are used it will equal the median. Similarities between the Median and the Mode are apparent, except for adverts Rate5 and Rate7, the median is lower than the mode.

Furthermore, the standard deviation and the variance compared to the mean concludes how far the data is spread around the mean. Rate5 has the highest Std. Deviation of 1.285, in red, which indicated high variation, therefore the data is not as close to the mean as the other rates, as well as Rate1 and Rate7 with Std. Deviation of 1.038 and 1.247. While Rate6 has the lowest Std. Deviation of 0.648, which is interpreted as the data is closest to the mean compared to all the other adverts.

These results analysis, support the results obtained from Table 7. From the analysis above the author can conclude that according to the results of the rated adverts' mean, median, mode and std. deviation, all were rated mostly "sexual and non-sexual". The rating scale was a cognitive scale to assess the participants' ratings, and this means that the adverts did affect the brand associations in this set of questions as the participants did evaluate the adverts as sexual after viewing the adverts and rating them separately.

Following this conclusion will be the descriptive statistics of the quantitative data of the second set of the questions. This set of questions include both qualitative and quantitative data. For this, the author had to create numerical variables for the data to enter into SPSS as well. The values were entered as; 1 - Trustworthy, 2 -Aesthetic, 3 - Youthful, 4 - Expensive, 5 - Stylish and 6 - Other; and for the Other's option the author created a separate variable for each question in this survey category, as Other\_descriptive1 and so on; this variable was changed to String. The author will proceed with gathering similar statistical frequencies to the new set of variables in the table below, followed by the analysis of results.

Table 10

*Frequencies of each descriptive words adverts and the "other; Mean Mode and Median*

		Descriptive1	Descriptive2	Descriptive3	Descriptive4
		Calvin Klien	Gucci		
N	Valid	64	64	64	64
Mean		3.70	3.61	4.11	4.38
Median		4.00	3.50	4.00	5.00
Std. Deviation		1.649	1.487	1.503	1.704

Source: Compiled by the author on basis of SPSS Frequencies statistics table

The mean and median values are analysed as follows, Descriptive1 and 2; Calvin Klien and Gucci; were described as "Youthful" or "Expensive" as balancing point of the data of settled between 3- Youthful and 4-Expensive, the Means were 3.70 and 3.61. Comparing Mean and Median; Descriptive2 and Descriptive3 were similar; which indicates that those two adverts are more symmetrical. Lastly, Descriptive4 for Sean John had a mean of 4.38

and median of 5.00. The standard deviation of Descriptive2, Gucci, has the lowest value at 1.487, in green, which means that data is closely spread around the mean. Meaning that the adverts did affect the brand associations; Gucci, an expensive well-known brand was still rated as expensive although the advert was on a highly rated as a “sexualized” advert.

To conclude the analysis of the data obtained from the second set of questions, the advertisements did influence the participants' association. This is based on the comparison of the mean, median and standard deviation. As presented in (Appendix B), the participants evaluated the adverts using negative expressions and rarely positively. The term "Trustworthy" was the least used term of choice and the most used terms were "Aesthetic" and "Expensive". For each advert, the participants used several terms to describe the adverts and the advert that received negative feedback the most was Sean John - Descriptive4; therefore this means that brand associations are affected by the advert.

The final part of the analysis will be analysing the qualitative data obtained from the second set of questions. The method of analysis the author chose is a narrative analysis; the author chose this method based on the dataset and the fact that it fixates on analysing content to answer the research aim (Dzwigol, 2020). There are several steps the author took to fulfil the process of analysing the data and reaching a conclusive aim. The first step in the process analysing the data is organising the responses obtained for the category of questions and reviewing the data to observe patterns. Proceeding with analysing every advert alone and bring out the expressions that were used by the participants.

From the dataset, the author observed, initial codes were created and grouped to identify themes, meanings and opinions. The following table presents the codes and the categories every advert collected underneath. The vocab used by participants were all recorded according to various codes; several were removed as they contained inappropriate language usage, however in Appendix B, the author included all the terms.

Table 11:

*Initial codes of the data set:*

Codes/	Descriptive1	Descriptive2	Descriptive3	Descriptive4
	Calvin Klein	GUCCI	Rogue	Sean John
Sexual (Synonyms)	<b>Sexual</b> (3) Discriminating Objectifying	<b>Sexual</b> (2)	<b>Sexual</b> (2)	<b>Sexual</b> (5) Abusive Objectifying
Negative	Tasteless Bad taste Disgusting (2)	Weird (3) Provocatory Confused (2) Irritable	Perverse Boring Vulgar (2) Provocative Uncomfortable Angry	Violent (2) Infuriating Problematic REALLY uncomfortable Too much Rapist Disgusting Disturbing
Positive	<b>Erotic</b> Feminine <b>Alluring</b>	<b>Erotic</b>	<b>Erotic</b>	<b>Erotic</b> Attraction passionate
Unknown	Déjà vu (2)	Are they cheating? A poly relationship?	I don't know (2)	Sleeping Looks a little bit vulgar and inexpensive Is this assault in progress?

Source: Compiled by the author based on raw data on MS Excel

Using MS excel the author used colour codes to group the data. The unknow code is for participants who responded with questions or used neutral terms that do not identify as negative or positive. Brackets indicate the number of times this term was reoccurring. The terms Erotic and Alluring, in blue, identified as both negative and positive. The author checked the participants' answers to identify the pattern of expressions they used throughout the survey, and based on it the category that fits. The data included one response describes Sean John as "REALLY Uncomfortable", the author made sure to add it capitalized in the initial coding, as it shows that the respondent was affected by the sexualized advert.

Moving forward with the narrative analysis, according to Table 11, all the adverts were perceived as sexual, at least twice by the participants, highlighted in red. Some partakers used synonyms to the word Sexual to describe the adverts. According to Table 11,

the adverts received a big number of Negative descriptive words, compared to the number of positive terms.

According to the author's data analysis, the brand associations are not as affected positively as they are affected negatively, mostly Sean John's Advertisement was perceived negatively, as the higher percentage of participants 39.1% of the survey contributors chose "Other" from the scale. This research aims to find out how sexualized advertisements affect brand associations, therefore using the results of the conducted analysis, the author concludes that sexual advertisements which represent sexuality in various forms, do affect the brand associations both negatively and positively.

To finalize this subchapter, the author will proceed with summarizing the analysed qualitative and quantitative data of the first and second set of questions in the survey. In the table below, the author summarizes the conclusions obtained from every analysis process.

Table 12:

Summarizing conclusions based on analysis of datasets:

Types of data	Results
Quantitative; 1 <sup>st</sup> set	Using SPSS. Adverts did affect the brand associations, as the participants rated the adverts as sexual
Quantitative; 2 <sup>nd</sup> set	Using SPSS. Adverts influenced the participants' association as terms were "Aesthetic" was chosen by 35.9% of the participants, "Expensive" at 26.6%, "Youthful" at 25%, and the choice of "Other" by 39.1%; engagement level of the participants increased with the advert by describing it more expressively, creating associations.
Qualitative; 2 <sup>nd</sup> set	Using MS Excel. Adverts perceived as sexual in negative and positive perceptions, which creates effects on brand associations both negatively and positively.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the analysis conducted within this research

The first analysis concluded that the adverts were highly rated as Sexual compared to Non-sexual. Tables provided, showed the percentages and the values of the Mean, median and mode to balance out the data and gather relevant values. The mean and Std. Deviation compared to conclude the spreads of the data and the closeness of the Std. and the Mean.

Variance, ranges, minimum and maximum values were used to gather generalized patterns of the data set to be analysed.

The second set of analysis performed on the second set of questions concluded that according to the mean and standard deviation, the terms listed and the terms the participants offered, were based on associations perceived from the brand advertisements. Finally the qualitative analysis of the terms provided by the survey partakers, and after coding the results, the author concluded that the advertisements sexuality level did affect the respondents and therefore did affect the brand associations.

To answer the question of how sexualized fragrance advertisements on Facebook affect brand associations. The objectification of perfume advertisements affects brand associations negatively more than positively. These findings suggest that the brands' usage of sexualized varnishes in adverts could help could create a more positive association.

The results of this research are compared with closely similar works of literature that are identified in the theoretical approach, some consistencies and some contradictions could be seen. The author will provide comparisons of the closely related studies reviewed in the theoretical chapters and their results. The first study of Kumar and Bezawada (2016) resulted in finding that FGC and social media marketing are positively associated for two out of three consumer metrics. Compared to the findings of this research, brand familiarity and information quality of a brand's social media content did significantly influence consumer's involvement with the brand (Kumar, & Bezawada 2020).

Mcclure and Seock (2020) used a bigger sample in comparison, as the data type is quantitative, the bigger the sample the better, to be able to create better-generalized conclusions. This work of literature is of great similarity to this bachelor thesis; as it utilized the same data collection and analysis method SPSS, however, this study did not limit themselves to only descriptive statistics, they used multiple other analysis techniques within

SPSS. McClure and Seock (2020) results are similar to the findings of this research; however, this thesis is focused on sexualized fragrance advertisements associations.

The study of Fleming-Milici and Harris (2020) focused on a different product on social media than the fragrance products adverts used in this research. Conducting an online survey similarly to this research paper, the sample size of 1564 valid responses was much bigger than the sample size used in this paper, and the analysis was through Qualtrics online software. The results of Fleming-Milici and Harris (2020) demonstrated a widespread engagement with the product examined and adolescents (13-17). Contrastingly, this thesis work focused more on millennials of 18 years old and above.

In line with the study investigated by John and Devilliers (2020), the study focused on visual communications on two major social media platforms, Facebook and Instagram; consistently with this thesis. The results of John and Devilliers (2020) concluded that destination brand associations are a high factor in influencing students through visual media. One last piece of literature by Osei-Frimpong and Mclean (2018), aimed at understanding the influence of social media presence on brand engagement. The findings of this research indicated that SBE (social brand engagement) encourages consumers to increase their association levels with the brand. In line with Osei-Frimpong and Mclean (2018).

With these results, the author can answer the question of how sexualized fragrance advertisements on Facebook affect brand associations. The author could statistically support that the adverts were highly rated as Sexual by the participants. Furthermore, three adverts did affect the brand associations of the brands, while only one advert affected the association extremely negatively. There were positive effects on the brand association generated from three adverts which are the Gucci, Calvin Klien and Rogue, while the negative association was created for Sean John advertisement.

### **Conclusion**

Concisely, this paper is divided over three big topics; advertisements on social media, sexualized advertisements, brand associations. Sexualized products are currently the trend of marketing agencies to satisfy the market needs of exposure, despite the cultural and social controversies, it creates all across the internet and in different cultures (Choi, Yoo, Reichert, & Northup, 2020). Advertisements have a big influence on the associations between the brand and the consumers. Engagement with sexualized advertisements while scrolling through Facebook is common among all intern users. The aim of this research is based on multiple different tasks to be able to find out how sexual adverts of perfume brands on Facebook have influences on brand associations.

This study fulfils the research gap, as it combines brand association, social media and sexualized marketing together; few studies are focusing on the effects the adverts displayed on social media creates concerning the brand associations. A great number of the works of literature the author came across had one of the two aspects this paper combines. Studies reviewed are aiming towards various aspects compared to the combined aspects within this research; which are sexualized advertisements of fragrances and the effects of brand associations.

The main results of the thesis work depended on both theoretical and empirical charters. In the theoretical chapters, various works of literature were conducted and analysed for the author to synthesise and compare the results. Three main tasks were fulfilled in the theoretical chapter. In this chapter, the methodology used to collect the data was based off works of literatures to base the analysis upon them. These literatures used in the research contributed into fulfilling the research aim.

Followed by the definition of the terms needed within this research, the author recounted the studies that were of great significance to this research, to be able to assess and

compare the results and analysis of this research with previous database journals and researches. The author came across various studies and various data collection methods and they are all stated in Table 4 in the paper, where the author based the rest of the paper on.

In the empirical chapters, the author based the methodology used to conduct and analyse from the empirical overview. An online survey analysis was conducted of a sample size 64 participants; primary data was collected and analysed using statistical software program such as SPSS. The data obtained from the survey concluded that the participants perceived the adverts as sexual.

Two types of data were analysed in this paper that lead to the fulfilment of the research aim. Quantitative data results concluded that the participants did engage with the adverts and therefore possible brand associations may occur. The second set of quantitative data conducted how the brand associations were affected. Two different ways the data showed brand association effects through the sexualized advertisements; it was either positive or negative.

The analysis of the qualitative data analysis concluded that the sexualized perfume fragrances affected the brand associations negatively and positively. The author mixed both qualitative and quantitative data in this research, the data gathered from analysing both sets of data separately lead to the fulfilment of the aim, by assessing and drawing conclusions based on the data analysed from the survey conducted. Due to the limitations of the sample size the author could have stated further findings about the brand association and how sexualized adverts affected them effects. With further statistical analysis and research, more accurate conclusions concerning the brand associations could be made.

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## Appendix A

## Survey Questions

## Objectified Fragrance Advertisements on Facebook

This survey is aimed to collect data for academic research about sexualized perfume advertisements on Facebook, and we would like to hear from you about your opinion and evaluation of some of the advertisements we came across. This survey will take 5 -10 minutes and your responses are completely anonymous.

Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) are required.

Your input and cooperation are highly appreciated!

\* Required

How often do you use social media? \*

- ☐ At least once per day
- ☐ Multiple times per day
- ☐ At least once per week
- ☐ Multiple times per week

What is your most used social media platform? \*

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Instagram
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Youtube
- ☐ Other:

Have you encountered advertisements on social media? \*

☐ Yes

☐ No

Rate this advertisement (1) on a scale of sexual to non-sexual: \*

☐ Sexual

☐ Slightly Sexual

☐ Neither sexual or non-sexual

☐ Slightly non-sexual

☐ Non-sexual

Advertisement 1:



Rate this advertisement (2) on a scale of sexual to non-sexual: \*

- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Slightly Sexual
- ☐ Neither sexual or non-sexual
- ☐ Slightly non-sexual
- ☐ Non-sexual

Advertisement 2:



Rate this advertisement (3) on a scale of sexual to non-sexual: \*

- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Slightly Sexual
- ☐ Neither sexual or non-sexual
- ☐ Slightly non-sexual
- ☐ Non-sexual

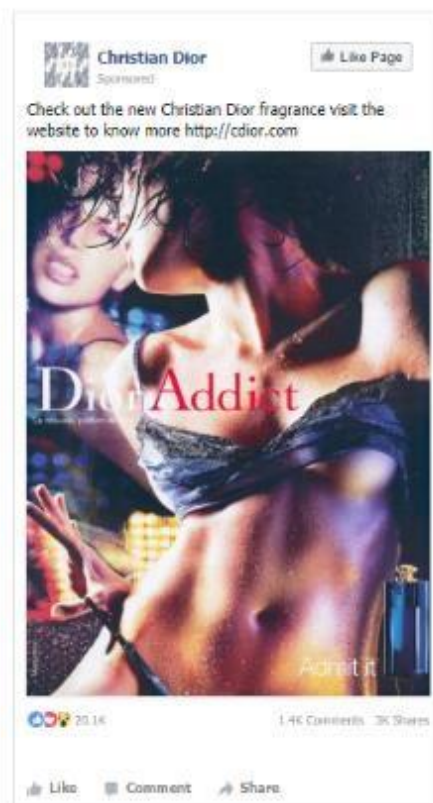
Advertisement 3:



Rate this advertisement (4) on a scale of sexual to non-sexual: \*

- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Slightly Sexual
- ☐ Neither sexual or non-sexual
- ☐ Slightly non-sexual
- ☐ Non-sexual

Advertisement 4:



Rate this advertisement (5) on a scale of sexual to non-sexual: \*

- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Slightly Sexual
- ☐ Neither sexual or non-sexual
- ☐ Slightly non-sexual
- ☐ Non-sexual

Advertisement 5:


**Ensemble**  
Sponsored

Like Page

Check out the new fragrance collection, and visit our website for further discounts! <http://www.ensemble.com>



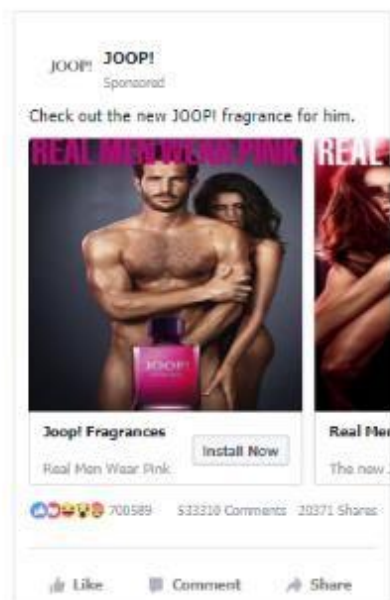
 4.5K
 2.3K Comments · 700 Shares

 Like
  Comment
  Share

Rate this advertisement (6) on a scale of sexual to non-sexual: \*

- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Slightly Sexual
- ☐ Neither sexual or non-sexual
- ☐ Slightly non-sexual
- ☐ Non-sexual

Advertisement 6:



Rate this advertisement (7) on a scale of sexual to non-sexual: \*

- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Slightly Sexual
- ☐ Neither sexual or non-sexual
- ☐ Slightly non-sexual
- ☐ Non-sexual

Advertisement 7:



**B.G.**  
Sponsored

Like Page

Check out the new fragrance collection:




*Fragrance for Her*  
*By Bellamy Griffin*

 52.2K
 2.3K Comments
737 Shares

 Like
  Comment
  Share

Rate this advertisement (8) on a scale of sexual to non-sexual: \*

- ☐ Sexual
- ☐ Slightly Sexual
- ☐ Neither sexual or non-sexual
- ☐ Slightly non-sexual
- ☐ Non-sexual

Advertisement 8:



**LYNX**  
 Sponsored

Like Page

Check out the new LYNX antiperspirant for him.



CAN SHE MAKE YOU LOSE CONTROL?



**NEW LYNX DRY FULL CONTROL**  
 48HR ANTIPERSPIRANT

WATCH THE VIDEO

76.5K

5.3K Comments

2.4K Shares

Like

Comment

Share

Have you encountered any of the previously displayed advertisements or brands on social media? \*

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

From the list, please choose a word to better describe the advertisement 1 (below) : \*

☐ Trustworthy

☐ Aesthetic

☐ Youthful

☐ Expensive

☐ Stylish

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Advertisement 1:



From the list, please choose a word to better describe the advertisement 2 (below): \*

☐ Trustworthy

☐ Aesthetic

☐ Youthful

☐ Expensive

☐ Stylish

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Advertisement 2 (below):



From the list, please choose a word to better describe the advertisement 3 (below): \*

☐ Trustworthy

☐ Aesthetic

☐ Youthful

☐ Expensive

☐ Stylish

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Advertisement 3:



From the list, please choose a word to better describe the advertisement 4 (below): \*

- ☐ Trustworthy
- ☐ Aesthetic
- ☐ Youthful
- ☐ Expensive
- ☐ Stylish
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Advertisement 4:



Your Gender? \*

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Other

Your age? \*

- ☐ Younger than 18
- ☐ 18 - 25
- ☐ 25 - 30
- ☐ 30 or older

Appendix B

The list of descriptive words the participants used to describe each brand advertisement

Calvin Klein	GUCCI	Rogue	Sean John
Objectifying	Weird	Sexual	Sexual
Déjà vu	Weird	Sexual	Sexual
Sexual	Irritable	boring	Sexual
Sexual	Confused	erotic	Sexual
Sexual	Provocatory	Bitchy	Attraction
Bad taste	Sexual	Provocative	Abusive
Feminine	Sexual	perverse	wtf
erotic	erotic	Uncomfortable	Violent
	has no connected with		Infuriating
tasteless	perfume	Meh	
Alluring	Confusing. Are they cheating? Bisexual? A poly relationship??	I don't know	Is this assault in progress?
Disgusting		Nonsense	Problematic
disgusting		Angry	Disturbing
Discriminating		Vulgar	erotic
		vulgar	passionate
			Is he raping her?? Wtf
			Rapist
			Sleeping
			disgusting
			violent
			REALLY
			uncomfortable
			uncomfortable
			Objectifying
			Too much

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