Jeans for all

The change of portrayal of female and male models in the advertisements by Levi’s Jeans from 1960s until 2000s

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ABSTRACT

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Reading through fashion magazines we are greeted by advertisements from various fashion brands advertising for both genders. The reader is, however, not always aware of all the messages being communicated through various signs in advertisement pictures. The purpose of our study is to examine closer whether changes occurred from a gender perspective between 1960s and 2000s in print ads by Levi’s Jeans, and how the print ads differ between the genders. We chose to examine this in a clothing company Levi’s Jeans, considered as it is the first original jeans brand, that has advertisements for both genders and has been around for long enough in order to satisfy the criteria of our study. The primary research question of the study is therefore "How has the image of female and male models in Levi’s Jeans’ advertising changed from the 1960s up to the 2000s?"

To carry out our analysis of advertisements we chose to use a qualitative method and conduct a semiotic analysis of five advertisements from 1960s until 2000s. Our theoretical framework is the basis for our study and includes semiotics, with the various concepts included in the analysis (sign and its three aspects (index, icon, symbol), connotation/denotation, codes and connection to advertisement), gender stereotypes and body ideal development.

We concluded that a change was to be observed both generally in the ads and on a gender specific level. The progress of the models in the Levi’s Jeans’ ads from the analyzed time-period followed the general ideal body development also observed in other studies. The advertisements by Levi's Jeans have grown more serious and rough, with models expressing less joy and playfulness and to play more on the sexual tension, but less nakedness than expected.

Key terms: gender, gender stereotypes, gender advertising, body idea development, semiotics
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I Introduction

This first chapter describes the purpose of this essay and gives a background for the reader to get a basic understanding, which then lets the readers to put themselves in the problem and discussion we will investigate. As our investigation aims to take a closer look at print advertisements of a clothing company Levi's Jeans from a gender perspective, we start with a bit of groundwork around the analyzed topic.

1.1 Background

“Nowhere is the potency of advertising more evident than in the arena of selling clothing and appearance-related commodities” (Thompson, 2000, pp. 178). This sentence served at foundation for our study. For that reason a clothing company served as a good basis for evaluating advertisements' approach to gender and stereotypes, and if and how the approach changed from the 1960s to 2000s.

Up until now with regards to gender, researchers talk about gender stereotypes, which are certain thoughts and attitudes considered as characteristics of either women or men; a set of concepts related to a social category and behaviors that differentiate the genders (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1986). Deaux and Lewis (1984) suggest that there are four various components to distinguish in the gender stereotype area: trait descriptors (e.g., concern for others), physical characteristics (e.g., hair, height), role behaviors (e.g., taking care of children), and occupational status (e.g., housewife, physical worker). Gender characterizes stereotypical gender roles and displays something that can be “communicated at a glance”. Previous studies claim therefore, that the relationship between masculinity and femininity, which the advertisers focus on, is simplifying their work (Jhally, 2009).

Bell and Milic (2002) refer to Franzwas who analyzed the women's magazine fiction from 1940s to 1970s and discovered a pattern that showed the female ideal was to be a mother, a nanny and a housewife, and that the women's main characteristics were passivity and dependence. Even newspapers, which at the time were considered to be more “progressive”, established the female role as caring, and in constant search for a man.

Working Woman, Working Mother and Savvy were some of the journals that released publications with women entering the labor market from around the 1940s until 1970s. These magazines portrayed women as workers outside of home, often in non-traditional occupations, that put
women in an increasingly positive light, with power and influence at their disposal (Belknap and Leonard II, 1991). Modern researchers claim, that even though this is valid mostly for years 1940s to 1970s, advertising today still uses stereotypical imagery as a method to create a way of identification for the consumers. The researchers mean that contemporary advertising stereotypes are sexist and give an incorrect portrayal of woman. Even though this regards predominantly women, it does also occur with men. The researchers say that the image gives a picture of “inaccurate, outdated and demeaning roles” (Wiles & Wiles et al., 1995, pp. 35--49). They argue that advertising stereotypes do not represent the modern woman, that advertising ignores the modern woman's life, and does not reflect the significant progress women have made in the labor market in many cultures. They note that because advertising's role is to sell, rather than to portray the reality of life, it is constantly misleading advertising that affects the receivers negatively with its visual images (Wiles & Wiles et al., 1995).

Some researchers state, that women are being portrayed in a negative and stereotypical way, and that this kind of stereotyping increases over time (Eisend, 2010). On the contrary, another study claims that the current ads of women have advanced from the negative stereotypes and are becoming equal to those of men, such as a study on gender-role portrayals in ads from 1980s and forward by Gunter (1995) saying, that gender-role stereotyping has declined in general. This point of view is also shared by other researchers who argue that advertising is moving towards becoming less and less stereotypical, mainly in the Western societies (Furnham & Mak, 1999).

Thompson (2000) completed a study, which included an analysis of fashion ads published in Vogue and Gentlemen's Quarterly (GQ) between 1964 and 1994, with 1964 being claimed to be more or less the beginning of the sexual revolution, and 1994 being about 10 years after the sexual revolution can be claimed to have ended (Thompson, 2000). The study focused on the changes in the sexual attire and nudity, as well as sexual objectification. “I was interested in examining the extent to which skin exposure, whether on male or female models, changed over this forty-year period.” Thompson writes (2000, pp. 178). Her method of choice was a content analysis with charting and coding procedures. As a result she came to a clear and focused conclusion with a message stating that "sex sells". However, her findings were that not only did sex appeal well in case of female advertisements, but also on men’s bodies.

As Thompson (2000) claims, the capability of advertising is clear and indisputable within the fashion and appearance-related industry. Since these industries use human bodies to display many
of their products, the question of gender related advertisement study is of high relevance within the subject.

1.2 Problem discussion

The different perspectives on the matter are of interest to us and serve as basis for this study. Due to the different results we found in previous research, we aim to study how the image of female and male models in the advertisements of Levi's Jeans differs and has changed from the 1960s to 2000s. Is it that women are portrayed in a different way than men are, or is the difference non-existent?

Based on Milner and Higgs (2004) we believe that overall the portrayal of females in advertising has changed more over the studied decades than the male one. However, we assume that the male model image has changed much in the matter of physicality, which is in line with Rohlinger, (2002). The assumption of the study is that the industry has become more daring in print ads however that this is shown more through the female character. Also, that the gap between the gender portrayal has widened over time, and that earlier women, and man were shown as more equal, opposite to todays submissive sexist form of interaction between males and females in commercials.

Our idea for the study is similar to that of Thompson (2000), though we want to see if our results will turn out similar if a different method of choice is used. The previous study has used the quantitative method with content analysis charting and coding procedures, whilst this study sets to establish the result with the help of a qualitative semiotic analysis. Hence the objective of this study is to strengthen an already existing theory with a divergent method approach.

1.3 Research Questions

1.3.1 Primary question:
How has the image of female and male models in the Levi's Jeans advertisements changed from 1960s until 2000s?

1.3.2 Secondary question:
Is there a difference between how the female and male models are portrayed in the Levi's Jeans advertisements from 1960s until 2000s?
1.4 Purpose
The purpose of this study is to elaborate further on how the printed advertisements differ between genders and how it has developed over five analyzed decades in the fashion advertisements for Levi’s Jeans. The study can contribute to deeper understanding of approach to human bodies considered from gender perspectives. It has been proven that the entertainment media has a high impact on the sexual experiences and expectations of the public (Ward, 2003). This study can contribute to the discussion whether this influence is solely based on the entertainment media or also on the advertisement industry, as well as serve as basis in the questions of gender equality.

Since the advertisement industry has changed over the second half of the 20th century (Furnham & Mak, 1999), the study might as well contribute to further research on perception of advertisers’ uses of stereotypes in relation to time development within the clothing industry.

1.5 Delimitations
We chose to limit our study to semiotic analysis of five pictures. We picked one picture from every decade, portraying at least one woman and one man, starting in the 1960s going onto the 2000s. The limitation of the timeline of our study is not random. Since the 1960s researchers have shown particular interest in studying the portrayal of sexes in the advertisements as the industry increasingly started using gender roles in order to promote products (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Hawkins & Coney, 1976). We decided also to not include advertisements from year 2010 and on, as the decade we are currently in is not over yet, and we cannot definitely predict which turn the company and the advertising industry might take on within the nearest years.

Semiotics is a very wide field of studies therefore we needed to limit our analysis. We decided to apply the theories from semiotics we found relevant based on the previous research we came in contact with. Therefore our analysis method includes connotation/denotation, codes and two approaches to signs from Saussure’s and Pierce’s perspective (Bell & Milic, 2002). These particular concepts are further discussed in the chapter regarding the theoretical frames.

1.6 Disposition
1.6.1 Chapter 1 - Introduction
In this chapter we outline the background and purpose of our essay. We are discussing and defining our research and boundaries, and account for the previous research we have found about semiotics, gender, and advertising. Also, we discuss its relevance for our study and how we can contribute to the current research.
1.6.2 Chapter 2 - Theoretical Framework
In the chapter about theories we present our frames of references, which are based on our earlier research, and what kind of theories we will refer to in our empirical data and analysis. The theories that we find most useful for our study and want to gain a deeper understanding of are semiotics, gender advertisement, stereotypes and body ideal development.

1.6.3 Chapter 3 - Methodology
In Chapter 3 we explain the research method we found most relevant to our study. We also describe our approach and why we have chosen the method used. We explain the pros and cons of our choices and clarify our method of selection for our analysis.

1.6.4 Chapter 4 - Analysis
In this chapter, we link together the theoretical parts with our empirical data in order to interpret and analyze the chosen advertisements.

1.6.5 Chapter 5 - Result and discussion
Chapter 5 is a discussion of our analysis, what results we derived from the study as well as how we contribute to the research subject. We motivate and further examine the outcomes of the investigation.

1.6.6 Chapter 6 - Conclusion
In our last chapter we discuss and summarizing our whole study. We answer our primary question, secondary question, and provide suggestions for further research.
2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 Semiotics

Semiotics is a valuable tool for understanding how people find meaning. The two pioneers in the subject area were Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure and American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (Fiske, 2006). To explain semiotics in an easy way you can say it is the science of signs and symbols and how they are interpreted, as well as how it identifies the message in visual communication (Fiske, 2006). Therefore, when aiming to analyze the content and meaning of a picture or another visual sign, semiotics with all its below mentioned parts is a highly applicable theory for the analysis.

2.1.1 Key terms in semiotics

2.1.1.1 Sign (signified/signifier)

Saussure defined a sign as an inseparable combination of concept and a sound-image but took this definition a step further and proposed the theory of signifier and signified. In this sense the concept is a signifier and the sound-image is signified. To explain this, an example of a tree can be used: the signifier is the word tree while the signified concept is that of a large stemmed plant. Berger’s (2013) interpretation of Saussure is that not only words, but also other things can be referred to as signs. What we wear, what hairstyle we have, our body language etc. In semiotics everything could be taken as a sign, therefore the name “imperialist science” is often associated with it (Berger, 2013). However, what creates a problem is that signs can be used for lies. Berger exemplifies this in following words: "The beautiful blonde woman you see sitting at the bar turns out to be neither a woman nor a blonde but a man, a transvestite who is lying with signs" (Berger, 2013, pp. 57).

2.1.1.2 Three aspects of signs (index, icon, symbol)

As claimed by Fiske (2006), Pierce focused his studies on the three aspects of signs: their iconic, indexical, and symbolic extent. In his view icons signify by resemblance, indexes signify by cause and effect, and symbols signify on the representation. In that sense an icon represents the object directly; it looks and sounds as the object itself. With the index there is an immediate connection between the object and the sign, they are related in reality in a way that lets us figure out the connection. A symbol has no connection with the object itself. It does not look or sound like it, but is perceived because of the meanings people agreed on. A symbol can however have different meanings in different cultures (Fiske, 2006).
2.1.1.3 Connotation/denotation

When analyzing texts we can apply a theory by Roland Barthes, as mentioned by Fiske (2006) about denotation and connotation. Denotation is the literal meaning, the most basic and descriptive expression of the word or phenomena. For instance a red lipstick can have a certain number of grams, centimeters and a shade of color.

Connotation on the other hand reads the texts deeper figurative meaning. The connotative meaning of the lipstick is what the certain shade or looks of it can represent in a culture, for instance sex or innocence. Below comes a table summarizing the basic concepts of differences between denotation and connotation (Berger, 2012).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denotation</th>
<th>Connotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literal</td>
<td>Figurative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signifier</td>
<td>Signified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evident</td>
<td>Inferred</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describes</td>
<td>Suggests meaning</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: The basic concepts of differences between denotation and connotation as stated by Berger (2012)

2.1.1.4 Codes

Codes are patterns of associations established by a society or a culture. These codes are “secret structures” that help people interpret the signs, society and human behavior. These codes can differ in various cultures and need to be learned. They are a set of unspoken rules and a kind of general code people with something in common as location, ethnicity, social class etc. follow, and translate to various meanings (Fiske, 2006).

Many studies have been completed considering the subject of meaning of different codes. The meanings have been, and still are, derived from both qualitative and quantitative scientific researches such as Kuzinas (2013), as well as from cultural studies reaching out as far as ancient
dream interpretations. The meanings of signs are often brought together in form of encyclopedias or semiotic dictionaries (Vries, 2004; O’Connell & Airey et al., 2007) very useful, when performing a semiotic analysis. Books, such as the one written by Smith (2010), are collections of meanings derived from different studies, with meaning based on symbolic and iconic representations, and human associations. To exemplify, different studies have derived the meaning of color red as signifying sex, love and attractiveness (Elliot & Tracy et al., 2012), or strength and vitality (Smith, 2010). Another example can be that of a body position suggesting power, such as the "expansive-feet-on-desk pose" studied by Park and Streamer (2013). This and many more social behaviors, symbols and attributes all have meanings assigned by different cultures.

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Figure 1:** The "expansive-feet-on-desk pose"

### 2.1.2 Semiotics and advertisement

Semiotics and signs are closely connected to advertising. Displays, words, images and more are used in various ways to describe, persuade, and define nature of businesses. For instance, all the signs, icons, colors, forms and more contribute to establishing a kind of “identity”. Semiotics are beloved by marketers since it helps them understand the way their clients think and can be used to create future marketing strategies. Even though consumers are aware of the fact, that they are being pitched a product to while they are watching a commercial or a printed ad, recognition is

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1 Figure 1: The "expansive-feet-on-desk pose" is taken from Flickr, uploaded by Starmanseries, and is subject to Creative Commons licensing.
not equal with immunity to it. This shows the significance of semiotics to brands, since the better the brand manages to use semiotics in its campaign, the better the outcome may turn out to be (Berger, 2012).

2.2 Gender stereotypes

2.2.1 What are gender stereotypes?
This study focused on analyzing the visual signs in the advertisements through semiotics from a gender perspective. The gender perspective can be understood in various ways, as it is a rather wide subject. However, when talking about advertising and genders, a theory often brought up is the one regarding gender stereotypes, which we also decided to use in the following analysis.

Stereotyping is a generic term that is assigned to a specific social category (Vinacke, 1957). Gender stereotypes are predetermined properties assigned to the different genders and differ between men and women (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). A study from 1972 (Broverman & Vogel et al., 1972) identified the two main clusters of gender stereotypes as warmth and expressiveness, which is generally associated with women; and competence and rationality, believed to be a subject more characteristic of men. A way to best describe gender stereotypes is to put them in terms of a set of components. Research suggests that there are four diverse components: trait descriptors (e.g., concern for others), physical characteristics (e.g., hair length, body type), role behaviors (e.g., taking care of children, precursor), and occupational status (e.g., truck driver, stay-at-home mother) (Deaux & Lewis, 1984).

2.2.2 Gender stereotypes and the media
Around the 1980s most of the media and mass communication with gender perspective research focused on the portrayal of the women in the media. However, as the twentieth century loomed towards the end, an increasing amount of researchers started to direct their investigations towards the portrayal of males and the male sex roles in the media (Carter, 2012).

Gender stereotyping is today still used in advertising (Thompson, 2000). The use of it can be seen from two different opposite perspectives: from a positive and negative angle. The optimists claim that women are quickly catching up their male counterparts and that the negative stereotypes occur with a lesser recurrence. The images of females in advertisements are now equal to that of males and women shown in the commercials are contemporary and modern. Pessimists on the other hand believe that advertising industry does not mirror the advanced social development in
the equality movement. They say that women are still portrayed through negative stereotypes with men gaining on them and that the stereotyping is becoming even worse (Eisend, 2010).

2.3 Body ideal development

Body ideal has not always been the same; the fashion industry, which among other things includes model images in fashion magazines, has influenced the body ideal and society more than may be assumed (Sypeck & Gray et al., 2004). Researchers have studied how the increase of eating disorders among young women in America has grown in relation to how the body ideal of the fashion industry has progressed onto the thinner exemplary. The study was conducted to explore how fashion magazines have portrayed female beauty ideals during the last 40 year and as a result, the research of the various fashion magazines saw clearly, that the quest for perfection among young women has gotten a significantly slimmer goal with time. The study also showed in its post-hoc comparison that women wore more revealing outfits in the late 90s than in the beginning of the 60s (Sypeck & Gray et al., 2004).

In their studies Leit, Pope and Gray (2001) have come to conclusion that the cultural norms of the ideal male body have become and are still growing increasingly muscular, with a significant development during the 1990s. The outcomes seem agreeable with other observations of trends in the ideal male body image in our society, which can also be observed as reflected in magazines, action toys, as well as in other media and products (Karazsia & Crowther, 2010). Something that also influenced the development of men in advertising is the movement of the 1960s gay liberation, which had implications for masculinity (Rohlinger, 2002). Body movements and expressions, and a so-called undisciplined release of emotions showed joy, which was the opposite of the characteristics that were associated with the masculine stereotype. This was also shown on the visual mode of expression by a more natural look of the men such as long hair and oversized clothing which was also a contributing factor challenging the gender distinctions (Rohlinger, 2002).
3 Methodology

Method is necessary for the reader to be able to follow the essay and be able to take part of our result. The method chapter describes the scientific approaches and how the analysis was performed. This section should answer the questions as to what methods were used to collect and select materials, and the methods underlying the interpretation, and analysis of the material.

3.1 Research approach

In research, the main goal is to provide a complete view of reality as much as possible, including by proving theories. In method-related literature there is usually a distinction between inductive, deductive and abductive approach. Deductive methods are analyzed based on issues that were defined using various hypotheses, which then must be confirmed. Inductive approach, on the other hand, means that assumptions and insights are made to relate to issues, that in the meantime will hopefully provide the basis for new issues (Esaiasson, 2007). Our analysis is therefore a procedural method characterized as abductive reasoning. This implies a method that alternates between working with empirical observations, and at the same time identifying, and developing existing theoretical concepts (Ostbye & Larsen, 2004). The researcher alternates between theory, analytical concepts, understanding, and empirical observations (Ostbye & Larsen, 2004). For that reason is our research characterized as a hermeneutic process with an abductive method.

3.2 Qualitative method

The concepts of quantitative and qualitative methods aim primarily at the characteristics of the collected data, and the manner by which it is later analyzed. They stand in a complementary relation to each other, not competing, but rather completing each other (Ostbye & Larsen, 2004). Quantitative analysis is based on finding relationships between variables, and demonstrates that these correspond with what reality demonstrates. It also involves analyzing the material, usually in the form of numbers that can be counted. The goal of quantitative analysis is to find correlations and structures in the research material or to test hypotheses determined previously (Esaiasson, 2007). The opposite, the qualitative analysis, serves as a method to capture or understand the underlying meaning of the research data. The observations around people’s perceptions, sensations and experiences in a particular phenomenon are in the center of this research method (Ostbye & Larsen, 2004). Since we are not searching for any correlations and structures, but rather a deeper understanding of a subject, a qualitative method is more appropriate for our study, than the quantitative one. The qualitative method helps us to get a grasp of the subject and, as opposite to quantitative method, it does not lead to generalizing.
3.3 Semiotic analysis

“Semiotic analysis has the advantage of enabling a richer analysis of texts by focusing on the objective formal relationships, which to some degree account for differences in what, and how, images mean” (Bell & Milic, 2002, pp. 203). Using a semiotic analysis allows us to gain a richer analysis and also get as much as possible from our analysis objects. This qualitative method is appropriate for identifying and "decoding" what the visual communication is trying to disclose (Berger, 2012). A part of semiotic analysis explains why people read signs in a certain way and the feelings that the images may evoke. To understand this way of interpretation, a closer look at the norms and values of the culture the pictures are presented in is necessary. In a semiotic analysis you have to identify the signs and what they indicate in a certain culture, as every sign carries a different message, based on colors, forms, structures and more. They are interpreted through a coding system. Codes can be characterized as both cultural and historical phenomena evolving in our social interaction with the outside world. The semiotic analysis works therefore for identifying and "decoding" the values expressed by the communicating objects in our analyzed pictures (Fiske, 2006).

Semiotic analysis has faced its share of criticism. It is sometimes being seen as ignorant to the quality of the work as opposite to focusing on interpreting its meaning. The relationship between the elements and the final product can be ignored and actual value of the text lost within translation. The quality of the work may sometimes deviate when focusing on the interpretation of the meaning.

The semiotic analysis used in this study aimed to answer the following questions, which we composed inspired on the propositions for semiotic analysis in media analysis techniques literature (Berger, 2013):

- What do the pictures denote?
- What do the pictures connotate?
- How are the lightning, color, camera angle etc. used affecting the meaning of the signs?
- What are the important signs in the text (icon, index, symbol)?
- What are some important signifiers and what do they signify?
- What codes can be found?
- What ideological and sociological matters are involved?
- What gender perspective theories can be applied?
The analyses do not follow the order of the questions exactly and answer those questions that are applicable in the considered cases to avoid any forced answers and bias approaches. Every question was applied to all the analyzed pictures and the summary of the answers is reported in the analysis chapter of the study.

### 3.3.1 Selection
Since our study is spanning over five decades, we decided to analyze 5 pictures, one from every decade from the 1960s until the 2000s. The selection of the decades was based on the previous research, which implied that the sexual revolution, which had an effect on advertising, started around 1964 carried on for about 40 years (Thompson, 2000). The decades after the sexual revolution were included in order to keep the study more up to date and to investigate the further changes. We focus on both the female and male audience as the pictures show both a man and female in the same image. The company we targeted for our research is Levi’s Jeans. The choice was motivated by various reasons. The most important of them being that the company includes products and advertisements for both genders and that the company has been around long enough (Levi, 2013) to match our criteria and our timeline of the chosen decades. Since the company has produced a large number of printed ads over the decades we agreed on selecting the particular pictures by hand without following a specific pattern, as long as they follow our two basic criteria, that being time of production and a presence of both genders in the advert.

### 3.3.2 Levi’s Jeans
In the study we chose to limit ourselves to one company we believe fits a profile allowing us to answer our research and therefore we picked the jeans producing company Levi. The reasons for choosing Levi’s Jeans as the analyzed company are complex. Levi Strauss is considered the first and original jeans brand (Alex & Er, 2009). Within the clothing industry, Levi’s Jeans is a strong brand and was named number one jeans brand by GoodGuide (Rating & Company, 2013). Therefore when considering jeans ads, this was a reasonable choice. Also, since our study has a determined timeline that we aim to analyze, the company of choice must have been around for a long time or at least during the chosen time-period. Another company we considered for the study was Abercrombie & Fitch. However, the corporation has undergone a rebranding process in the late 1980s, which we felt could influence and change the result of the study (Fundinguniverse.com, 2013).

Levi Strauss & Co. was founded in 1853 by Bavarian-born Levi Strauss who moved to San Francisco during the Gold Rush era to open a small retail store. Almost 20 years later he teamed up
with Jacob Davis, a tailor from Nevada, and created patented work wear made out of brown cotton duck and true blue denim that later became know as the original blue jeans. They became popular as the brand of clothing with products that “can’t be ripped” and a logo of two horses representing that value. When in 1902 Levi Strauss passed away, his four nephews took over the business thereafter making it into an international trademark brand (Levi, 2013).

Levi’s Jeans, which originally only produced for men, later also introduced lines for women. Ever since 1935 Levi’s Jeans has produced printed advertisements featuring both genders (Cellania & Friedman, 2010). As a company with a target group within both the male and the female part of the society, it was a highly relevant choice.

Levi’s Jeans has “previously research” about various fields such as brand equity and consumer satisfaction (Levi, 2013) however, we did not find a purely gender-advertisement related analysis of the brand.

3.3.3 Critical review of selection
The original idea was to analyze fashion advertisements aimed specifically for women and those specifically for men and later compare them with each other. However, later we found that analyzing fashion advertisements, which are aimed for both genders at the same time, will be a more interesting analysis, since it allows the option to investigate the interaction between the male and female characters in the pictures.

The easiest method to obtain the pictures for the analysis would be by contacting the company Levi’s Jeans directly. However, the timeline and economical resources of this study made it difficult to complete this task, as the company points out they can answer the requests earliest after the period of two weeks and at a cost of $15 per picture. We therefore started browsing the Internet to find our five images that suited the template for our thesis. Through a defined search on Google, we found an advertising archives’ collection. The archive is called “The Advertising Archives” and was established in 1990 by Larry and Suzanne Viner. It is considered to be the largest and most comprehensive resource of its kind in Europe (The Advertising Archives, 2013). The collection includes images from the mid-19th Century to the present, which suits our analysis, as the images we analyze must originate from the 1960s until today.

The archive gives the option to purchase the full-resolution pictures for a fee, however they also offer a free low-resolution preview. Each preview contains a watermark logo of “The Advertising Archives”. All the pictures used in the analysis, together with the watermark logo, can be seen in
the appendix of this study. In this analysis we chose to disregard the presence of this watermark logo of “The Advertising Archives” and only analyze the advertisement below it. The analysis could have been influenced by this choice, but only in a minor way. The text was never an issue, however a full-resolution picture could have been a better option.

Another issue with the selection was the poor population of available pictures on the archive. The archive features altogether over 200 adverts for Levi’s Jeans, but in some cases of certain decades the archive only offered us one to two options fulfilling our criteria to choose from.

### 3.4 Reliability and validity

Regarding the analysis results and its reliability, there are two different directions. The quantitative method often mentions validity and reliability while qualitative method uses often rather terms: credibility, dependent, and if the study is transferable (Ostbye & Larsen, 2004). In quantitative method there is a high degree of reliability because other researchers can easily recreate the result if they have the same research tools (Esaiasson, 2012). In our analysis on the other hand, which is a semiotic analysis and therefore a qualitative study, it is difficult to create a high degree of reliability, as our results will be difficult to accurately recreate.

Validity distinguishes between “concept validity” and "research validity”. If you have a high degree of “concept validity” together with high degree of reliability, your study will have a high level of result reliability (Esaiasson, 2012). To ensure the concept of validity in our study, we strive to stay on topic in the matter of measuring what we are supposed to measure (Esaiasson, 2012) and keep to our research problems when deriving answers in our conclusion.

### 3.5 Critical review of references

To maintain a high level of credibility, the resources used in this study were critically reviewed before being used as a reference. When referring to previous research in terms of the theories and background for the paper, mostly peer reviewed journals and scientific books were used ensuring high quality information.

When obtaining information about the company Levi’s Jeans, predominantly their official website was used to provide information from the primary source. Since acquiring the pictures for the analysis from the company was not an option in the case of this research, another reliable resource archive was used. As this particular archive is recognized to be the largest of its kind in Europe (The Advertising Archives, 2013), it was considered as a fairly dependable source of the material for the analysis.
4 Analysis

4.1 Picture one – 1960s

The first advertisement, featured in appendix one, was originally published year 1969 (The Advertising Archives, 2013) and focuses predominantly on Levi’s Canvas Jeans and Jackets. The picture features a male and a female model wearing an iconic image of the sold product. The couple is standing in an outside scenario in front of a large tree with blue sky in the background. It is a natural and not unimaginable situation to which the reader can easily relate.

The picture is taken from a low angle, which results in a focus on the iconic image of the product itself, that being the jeans, and not on the couple. The low angle on the couple, with the highlight on clothes, portrays them as role models and characters to be looked up to, and imitated. It also allows us to interpret the picture as a clothing advertisement, particularly a jeans advertisement, even if it was displayed on its own without the brand logo or the adjacent text. As a side note, it can be mentioned that the lightning in the picture plays with the identification of the races of the models. Their faces and exposed body parts are in the presumptuous shadow of the tree and they could be classified as either black, Latino, or tanned Caucasians. This is an unexpected observation, but as the picture was first published in 1969, right after the end of the African-American Civil Rights Movement (Finkelman, 2009) with the race question being still very relevant and contemporary, it could be the explanation for the game of shadows used.

The advert uses bold, contrasting colors with focus on red and white, that being the main colors of the company itself, also used in their logo. The colors are also signifiers for courage and standing out. Red color can signify sex, strength, vitality and power, and white color is often used to signify purity and innocence (Smith, 2010). The colors interplay with the slogan featured on the advertisement “Cool under canvas”. The slogan is not only an index for the product of canvas jeans and jackets but also figures out the intended essence of the picture as “being cool”. The relation between the “signifiers” and the “signified” is not only expressed visually through the various signs and codes of the picture but also linguistically within the slogan. The picture could be translated as “being cool” on its own as well, but the statement featured makes the message, and in its turn the strong relation between the “signifier” and the “signified”, obvious.

The word “cool” was first used in a “fashionable, hip” sense in mid-20th-century (Ayto & Ayto, 2005). When it was used in this sense in this advert in the end of the 1960s it was still relatively new. Thus, the use of the word alone, adds to the “cool” and hip spirit the advertisement is aim-
ing to convey. Other signs intensifying the signified are provided by the couple and its environments. They are outside and touching, breaking the conventional orthodox social conducts and showing freedom. They channel liberty and the modern free spirit through their happy and comfortable pose, which puts them at ease.

The relation between the genders in the picture is positive, as is the entire essence of the picture. The men and woman are both careless and smiling, enjoying the situation and the closeness. The company is creating the association of jeans and contact between genders, making its product into something unisex, that both characters can enjoy, as well as something that brings them closer together. The man in the picture is hugging the woman, however it is not in a possessive way, indicating protection and strength. The woman has her hand on his knee, putting her partially in control of the situation, which adds to the liberate, signified message of the image (Deaux & Lewis, 1984). However, she is leaning into him and looking down suggesting trust, femininity, and willingness to surrender, which on the other hand, even with woman partially in control, plays on the stereotype of a predominant male.

4.2 Picture two – 1970s

The second advert features three men and one woman, as seen in appendix two. The four figures are standing in a sandy area with a sandy-colored mountain in the background that suggests a desert. The text is displayed on the area of the picture, which is occupied by the blue, cloudless sky. The picture features a fair share of signifiers, for instance the colors dominating the picture are blue and yellow. Blue signifies freedom and stands for the true blue loyalty (Smith, 2010) referring to true blue denim jeans, which are an iconic sign in this picture. Yellow may reflect the warmth of the desert (Smith, 2010). The lightning utilized shows long shadows suggesting the time of day.

The first figure is a male with short, brown hair wearing dark blue long denim pants and a dark blue denim long-sleeve shirt. The shirt has rolled up sleeves and is open in the front displaying the man’s slightly hairy and tanned chest. He is barefoot and standing with legs wide spread and looking forward to the left side of the picture. The man’s hairy chest is the code of a the manly standard of the decade (Leit, Pope & Gray, 2001). His pose with wide spread legs and chin looking up signifies confidence and role of a leader (Park & Streamer et al., 2013). He is also wearing most denim pieces, which can cause the reader to want to follow this example. The second figure is also male with wavy brown hair wearing white sneakers, dark blue long denim pants and a dark t-shirt with red and yellow elements. He is laughing and looking down. The third figure is a fe-
male with mid-long wind-blown blonde hair. She is barefoot and wearing long, dark blue denim pants and a short, pink tank. She is laughing, looking down and resting her arms around the two men, who are lifting her up in the air. Since the two men lift the woman it is suggested that she is dependent on the men and, in a way, vulnerable (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1986). Her toes are pointed down to the ground in a way similar to a ballerina, which works towards enhancing her femininity (Vries, 2004). The fourth individual is a bare-chested male with brown curly hair wearing a thin golden necklace and brown-grey long denim pants significantly widened at the bottom. The widened pants represent the element of fashion of the decade from which the advert comes. His left hand is placed on the woman’s bottom and lifting her up. This again shows how the company uses the advertisements to associate their denim products with touch and close, comfortable relations between both genders. The characters are laughing, also associating the company with positive emotions.

Since the ad features both genders it shows the unisex variety of the company’s products. However an element of male domination is still present, as the males outnumber the females three to one and portray the woman in a role slightly dependent on males (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1986).

The advert uses wordplay on the word generation and changes it into "jeaneration", creating a linguistic icon of the product. The word and logo are somewhat tilted, generating a playful aspect. This creates a relation between the signified and the signifiers and a unified message with both lingual and visual components.

Four people in a desert sun wearing long denim pieces can be interpreted as an unusual situation, but the fact that the picture is an advertisement brings in an element of acceptability.

4.3 Picture three – 1980s

The advertisement from the 1980s decade seen in appendix three is composed of two pictures of the same couple. The left picture denotates the woman leaned against a fridge with her leg up and looking straight at the man, who is leaning over her. The situation is staged in a way reminding of a predator going after a prey, which creates a lot of sexual tension in the picture and points out the male domination (Park & Streamer et al., 2013). The second picture shows the couple in a more equal light. They are both facing the camera, with the woman sitting backwards on a chair and the man close to her, leaning against a jukebox.

Both pictures feature the iconic representation of the product with both models wearing denim pants. The advertisement uses a variety of signifiers (Fiske, 2006), which reflects on both the
identity of the brand, and an image of the ideology Levi’s Jeans is aiming for, that being young and sophisticated (Levi, 2013). Since the models are not wearing that many denim pieces, the picture on its own is not as obvious as an ad for jeans, but the composition of two pictures can aim to tell a story or work on the idea of contrasts.

The lightning used gives the picture a certain serious atmosphere. With the game of lights, the female model looks very pale, suggesting a Caucasian race. The male, however, is slightly darker, which could indicate either a Caucasian or Latino race. The color scheme is a blue shade of gray with dominating elements in black and white pattern. The gray tone scale creates a sophisticated aura, and the black and white are usually used to symbolize contrasts (Smith, 2010).

In the top right corner of the picture we see a Levi’s Jeans logo and a number 501. It is an indexical representation of the product, as it stands for the classic model of the Levi’s denim pants. By only writing the model number, the company believes the brand is established well enough for it to rely on customer brand recognition.

Contradictory to the approach used in the previous decades, this advertisement does not play on and connotate the positive associations with laughter and carelessness. Instead, the authors’ work with the body language and the clean sexual tension it creates (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1986). The models are fully dressed, but they are using the tension rather than the more visual naked bodies (Thompson, 2000), to create the atmosphere and sell the product. The sexual tension is used as a signifier and helps to associate the Levi’s denim pieces with touch and closeness, but in a more aggressive way.

4.4 Picture four – 1990s

The advertisement from the 1990s decade, featured in appendix four, portrays a man and a woman wearing wedding clothes, that being a tuxedo and a wedding dress with a veil. The camera uses a portrait perspective, showing the models from the chest up and looking to the left of the frame of the picture, however their slightly hunched poses suggests that they are sitting down, even if the lower parts of their bodies are not shown.

The picture includes a lot of signs signifying contrasts. The colors used are black and white. This technique is used to signal specific moods and to imply a possible place in time (Smith 2010). The colors are also shown on the couple, with the man wearing a black tuxedo and the woman a white dress. The white bride dress generally refers to purity and innocence of the bride on her wedding day, as is suggested by a dictionary of symbols (Vries, 2004). Even though the advert
was published in the 1990s, the picture is styled to look old. To underline this contrast even more, a fairly modern font is used and the copywriter uses the word “till”, considered in the Western culture a more modern version of the word “until”.

The picture does not contain an iconic sign in form of a single denim piece and without the logo of the company it could not be identified as jeans advert. It is not obvious and forces therefore the reader to think further. The only element in a different color is the Levi’s Jeans logo. It is an indexical sign of the product and is the only signifier in the picture suggesting that this is a commercial for jeans. However, even the logo is very subtle and small. The advert uses a form of the logo that is used on the actual product with a vertical presentation of the company name in white on a red tag attached to the back pocket of the pants (Levi, 2013).

The slogan “until death do us part” works as a symbolic sign and is a linguistic signifier for Levi’s Jeans quality. It implies that Levi’s Jeans are as strong as a marriage, something often considered unbreakable until the very end and a symbolic act of love and two halves becoming one, associating the company’s product as a natural match for humans (O’Connell & Airey et al., 2007).

The relationship between the two models is also contrasting. The two are a couple just or about to be married, which would suggest eternal love. However, the couple is simply sitting next to each other, barely touching or recognizing each other’s presence. Their facial expressions do not suggest love or happiness, rather boredom, impatience or indifference and almost anger.

All the contrasts present in the picture are further signifiers of Levi’s Jeans brand identity and emphasize the idea of standing out in the crowd and being different (Levi, 2013).

4.5 Picture five – 2000s

The advert in appendix five from the 2000s was first published in 2003; it portrays one male and one female model. The male is standing straight on and the woman sideways towards the camera in a way that makes it look as if the pants they are each wearing were just one pair of jeans. The girl is wrapping her arms around the guy and it seems like she is the person in control, which indicates the drop of the dominant male stereotype (Broverman & Vogel et al., 1972). However, the way the male is standing, straight on, with wide spread legs and showing of confidence, keeps the idea of the man being strong and masculine (Park & Streamer et al., 2013). He is in a way dominant, but he is not overpowering the female. Since he has no chest hair and is rather fairly smooth and muscular, a new understanding and approach to what is “manly” is being introduced (Leit, Pope & Gray, 2001). The way the woman is holding the man can though be seen from dif-
ferent approaches. She is either dominating the male or hugging him in a way suggesting she wants and needs him, adding onto the already existing sexual tension between them (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1986).

The advertisement is aimed at both male and female target groups, as both iconic signs of the product are present in the picture. Also, an indexical sign is present in form of the small version of the company’s logo in the top right corner of the ad. The text relies fractionally on the customer brand recognition of the 501 model of Levi’s Jeans and the fact that until this moment the model was unisex for both genders. However as the linguistic sign in form of text shows, the aim of the advert is to introduce a new product, the classical model of Levi’s Jeans, recut for the female body form.

The advert is very simple in its design, but small signs such as fairly pink colored background caused by the lightning or a fluffy carpet emphasize the predominant target group (Vries, 2004). Even so, the company still wanted to keep the association of their product to closeness, touch and being a halfway between genders; something that brings them together. Another association introduced here is sex. Some signifiers are the naked skin that is shown (Thompson, 2000), the fact that models are barefoot on a soft carpet, and the pose in which they are portrayed and signify the sexual tension between them; the idea that when wearing Levi’s 501 model jeans, two halves become one. The serious atmosphere in the picture accentuates the tension. The characters are not laughing; the male model is long-faced, the female is not displaying any particular signs of femininity (Sypeck & Gray et al., 2004). The picture altogether has a roughness to it and yet plays on the contrast created by the signifiers such as the soft colors or background elements.
5 Discussion

In the following chapter we are linking the analyzed pictures together with the theories discussed in chapter two about the theoretical framework and our own observations. In order to answer the primary and secondary research questions of this study, the result discussion's structure is three-way: the first part discusses how female portrayal has changed in the Levi's Jeans advertisements from 1960s until 2000s, the second part discusses how the male portrayal has changed in the Levi's Jeans advertisements from 1960s until 2000s, and the third part discusses the development and changes of the relationship portrayal between males and females in the analyzed advertisements.

5.1 Females 1960s until 2000s

What can be observed in the pictures is that as time goes by females in the ads have, in a certain way, lost their femininity. In the first two pictures the women are laughing, are careless, and delicate. They show their feminine side through subtle signs such as pointed toes or half-closed eyes looking down. As the century progress, the female characters become more serious and rough. They are portrayed in a more aggressive and sexual way, rather than delicate and subtle.

In three of the five photos the female models are wearing white garments on the upper body, which reflects light, goodness, virginity and purity. In the two other pictures the female models wear a little bit more daring clothing with a floral tank top in one of the images and the shirt rolled up and tied around the waist in the other. This however does not match the models attitude in the last picture from the 2000s, where the female character is portrayed, as we reflected before, as more serious, rough, and somewhat more sexually suggestive, than the female models in the other pictures. In this case her wearing a white t-shirt creates mixed signals in the advertisement.

5.2 Males 1960s until 2000s

In two of the five pictures the male models are wearing an unbuttoned shirt and are naked underneath, which alludes to self-confidence and masculinity. Another picture portrays the male wearing a t-shirt underneath the open jacket, and another with the male model's bare chest. With the exception of the picture from the 1990s, which is divergent, as it does not have the iconic sign of the product present, the male portrayal follows a certain pattern. The male models are increasingly exposing their upper body, with the male wearing a t-shirt underneath the jacket on the advertisement from the 1960, going onto completely bare-chested in the most recent analyzed ad.
The general image of men in the adverts follows the generic development of the ideal male body. As what was considered to be 'manly' advanced from the rough, natural male to a more clean cut ideal, as influenced by the 1960s gay movements, the male models and their portrayal adopted the consecutive changes.

### 5.3 Females versus males

Looking at the male poses in advertisements, they follow a pattern, with the guy repeating consistently the shape in which he stands straight up with his legs wide apart. The female pose evolves, however it always arranged in a way, which generates interaction and synergy with the male character. It is rather the female character that adjusts to the male, and not the other way around.

It is only in the first picture where Levi's Jeans' logo colors are used in the image of the models' clothes. This can be explained by Levi's Jeans' endeavor to develop customer brand recognition in the mid-twentieth century while the company was still establishing its position on the market, but cannot be verified as certain.

Altogether, the pictures from the later decades are a subject to more sexual tension and less happiness and carelessness. The general message that Levi's Jeans is signifying through various signs changes from liberation and freedom to sexual attraction and dangerous intensity. However, even with the changed signified signs, the company still aims for the same association and signifiers; it persistently intends to plant a connection within the reader’s mind of the product and relationship between genders. Even if the means and intensity by which this is communicated change, the association to closeness, touch and sex remains. Based on the previous research regarding the ideal body image, we expected a higher degree of change of the female body type. Instead however, it is the male body that has changed considerably, growing more muscular, than the female body getting thinner.

Nonetheless, considering the studies that showed in its post-hoc comparison that women wore more revealing outfits in the late 90s than in the beginning of the 60s century, our analysis both proved and added to the earlier statements on the subject, as the females in the advertisements showed to be wearing more revealing outfits just as much as males.

The advertisements' design changes and shifts into simpler composition with focus of the adverts altering towards the models and their form, as opposite to the iconic sign of the product. The
arrangements gradually reduce distractions such as a colorful background and play with lighting in order to lean towards mono-coloristic form of simplicity and roughness.

We were also expecting pictures that were more cutting edge and controversial. Yet, this could still be true for other adverts from Levi’s Jeans, since we were only able to choose from a rather slim selection of pictures available in the online archives we were using. This was also influencing the analysis of the picture from the 1990s, as the advert without the iconic image of the product was the only one containing both genders that we could choose from.

Altogether, regarding the relations between genders in the pictures, we were expecting more male domination and more negative gender stereotypes towards females than our analysis has shown. For instance, the adverts did not use anticipated female housewife stereotype. Eisend (2010) said that woman are still portrayed through negative stereotypes with men gaining on them and that the stereotyping is becoming even worse (Eisend, 2010, pp. 418--440). Our analysis suggests however, that this statement is not entirely corresponding with Levi's Jeans. The company has shown to lean more towards the unisex feeling of the products, which they clearly tried to disclose through the advertisements.
6 Conclusion

The following, last chapter answers the research questions, as they were stated in the first chapter of the study. Later we critically discuss the study outcomes and propose ideas for further research.

6.1 Conclusion discussion

The purpose of this study was to elaborate further on how the printed advertisements differ between genders and what, if any, development has occurred in the clothing industry Levi's Jeans ads. We primarily aimed to answer the question as to how the image of female and male models in the Levi's Jeans advertisements has changed during the decades. Secondarily, we wanted to know whether there is a difference between how the female and male models are portrayed.

We came to the conclusion that the image of female and male models in the fashion advertisements for Levi's Jeans has changed considerably over the analyzed decades. The progress follows the generic ideal body developments agreed upon in the western culture. The advertisements in Levi's Jeans have grown more serious and rough, with models expressing less joy and playfulness. Instead, a big increase of sexual tension between genders can be observed in the atmosphere of the ads. This is partially caused by an escalation of the use of naked skin in the pictures, and partially by changing use of stereotypes from a considerable gap between genders, and use of more feminine and manly models contributing to a more unisex view of the clean cut male and a rougher female.

Generally, there is a noticeable difference between the portrayal of males and females. The males are most often portrayed in a certain positions, for instance with wide spread legs, in a way that suggests dominance and power. They are also more often portrayed as serious and humorless as opposite to females who sometimes were portrayed as helpless, flaky, dependent on males and needy. Females communicate though more joy and carelessness in the advertisements and express more positive energy.

In her studies Thompson (2000) came to the conclusion that "sex sells" on both male and female bodies, and that gender stereotyping and objectification of female body are not decreasing. In comparison, our study showed that Levi's Jeans adverts are not necessarily using less or more gender stereotypes, rather different ones than they relied upon earlier. We noticed that the models in the analyzed advertisements are following the general body ideal development and to con-
clude, we can state that a change can be observed both generally in the ads and on a gender specific level.

6.2 Limitations and further research

Overall, we consider the study successful. The analysis performed on the pictures was sufficient in order to answer the questions of the research. Looking back, however, we acknowledge that some changes could have resulted in a better outcome.

For one, if more pictures were analyzed, the outcome could have possibly resulted in different or more thorough answers. As this was a study on a bachelor thesis level, the extent, time period, and possibility to investigate the topic were limited.

A big limitation of the study, as is the case with semiotic analyses, is that it is hard to bypass a bias result. The pictures were analyzed from the perspective of a western culture, the one of the authors of the study. The result could have been distinctive if analyzed by someone with experience of a culture distant to the one of the authors, or even by someone in the same culture, but with different opinions and background.

This particular study does not mirror the overall development within the gender advertisement subject. It is limited to the company Levi's Jeans, but could serve as basis to further research with similar questioning. We believe that the future change in the advertisements by Levi's Jeans will follow the same development patterns established in this study, however this is a subject to be further investigated in the future.

The same analysis could be performed with the use of a different company or different advertisements from the same company. Also, another approach to a semiotic analysis could be used. The same pictures could be analyzed using yet a different method, both qualitative, such as focus groups discussing the pictures, and quantitative, as for instance a content analysis using coding schemes. Further studies could even include a clearer focus on either of the discussed subjects, such as gender advertising from a fashion perspective or an analysis of the distinction between clothing made by Levi's Jeans meant for men, respectively women. And as the topics of gender and advertisement studies are very wide in general, the ideas for further studies are endless, as are limitations of the possibilities.
7 References

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8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix I

Levi's Canvas Jeans and Jackets

Cool in 100% pure cotton, Levi's Canvas are real get-in-and-go gear! Full of style and beautifully cut, they hug your body like a second skin. Colours are just great too—lots of light, bright Levi's jeaneration shades to pick from: White, Sand, Yellow, Light Blue and Red!

So look for the famous Levi's back-pocket tag, and get under canvas like soon!

LEVI'S jeaneration

Send coupon now for FREE colour brochure and address of nearest stockist

For Levi Strauss (U.K.) Ltd., Sales House, Dept. w6
Alfred Industrial Estate, Wembley Way, London, W.L.
Please add for the copy of the new coll colour
Levi's jeaneration week

NAME
ADDRESS

30523712
8.2 Appendix 2

[Image of a Levi's advertisement featuring people wearing jeans on a beach.]
8.3 Appendix 3

8.4 Appendix 4
8.5 Appendix 5

The Advertising Archives

THE CLASSIC MEN'S 501® NOW RE-CUT FOR WOMEN

30534975