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Swedes' Understanding of Printed Ads in English

A Study of How Well Swedish Adults Understand the Message of Printed Ads in English

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ABSTRACT

Advertising in English is becoming more and more common in Sweden, as well as in other non-Anglophone countries, and not all previous studies agree on how well these ads are understood by the local population. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to achieve a broader understanding as to how well the message of printed ads in English are understood by the Swedish adult population. Moreover, this study aims to establish whether there are any common tendencies or patterns in the levels of understanding between the five ads chosen for this study, and how these relate to the personal and demographic characteristics present within my sample.

The findings of this study indicate that 60% of the printed ads in English are properly understood by most people. Moreover, this study found that the reason for not understanding an ad in English most often is that the ad is drawing on a myth that could not be recognized as something natural by the reader.

However, as only 12 subjects were included in this study, no generalizations could be made for the whole Swedish population, and a more extensive research study is thus encouraged.

Key Words: Advertising, Pragmatics, Semiotics

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Introduction chapter provides a brief background which explains why this study is undertaken. Furthermore, this chapter will address the aim and thesis questions of this study.

1.1 Background

English is today the language most frequently used in global advertising (De Mooij, 1994), and several previous research studies has pointed out that English in advertisements in non-Anglophone countries is becoming more and more commonplace (see e.g. Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al. 2007).

In fact, previous research indicates that the use of English in ads is increasing with rapid speed in countries where English is not an official language (Ovesdotter Alm, 2003; Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2007; Ruellot, 2011), and thus, an increase of ads in English could be assumed to also occur in Sweden.

According to Vestergaard and Schröder, “the ultimate aim of all advertising is to sell the commodity” and, in order to do so, the advertisers need to construct their ads “in such a way that as much as possible of its message will get across . . . to the reader” (1985, p. 49).

As it seems as though a significant number of printed ads in Sweden today are in English, it would be interesting to investigate whether or not the advertisers succeed, to a satisfactory degree, in delivering the message of ads in English to their Swedish readers.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this study is to achieve a broader understanding as to how well the message of printed ads in English are understood by the Swedish adult population. This will be accomplished through interviews with 12 subjects of different sex, age and level of education, whose answers will be subjected to qualitative analysis.

As suggested above, much research has already been conducted on the understanding of English ads in non-English-speaking countries but, to the best of my knowledge, not much research has been carried out in Sweden. Therefore, this essay might serve to contribute with some additional insight on this topic.

1.3 Thesis Questions

The aim will be reached through answering the research questions, which are as follows:

- How well do Swedish adults in general understand the message of printed ads in English?
- Are there any comprehension divergences between any subjects and my analysis, and how can such divergences be accounted for?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The Literature Review chapter will discuss a few linguistic features, common in advertising. Furthermore, it will provide some background information on the subject of English in global advertising, as well as theories as to why English is so widely used, and how well it is understood.

2.1 Common Pragmatic and Semiotic Features in Advertising

2.1.1 The Cooperative Principle

According to Grice, participants of a conversation are always expected to adhere to what he refers to as the “cooperative principle”, which means that you “make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999, p. 78). This principle is upheld by following four so called maxims (developed by Grice), which are as follows:

1. **The maxim of quantity**, meaning that one does not say more or less than is required for the particular conversation in which one is engaged.
2. **The maxim of quality**, meaning that one only says what one believes to be true and that one has adequate evidence for such belief.
3. **The maxim of relation**, meaning that one only talks about subjects relevant to the present conversation.
4. **The maxim of manner**, meaning that one is being perspicuous, and not obscure or ambiguous. (Jaworski and Coupland, 1999).

As most advertising seeks to mimic the conversational style in order to create closeness, solidarity and even intimacy with the reader (Myers, 1994), it would be assumed to adhere to

the four maxims depicted above. However, in order to stand out among the vast number of advertisements, and to attract the attention of potential customers, ads often flout at least one of these maxims. Often, this is done through the use of a technique known as *foregrounding* which, according to Myers, “can be achieved either by unexpected regularity or unexpected irregularity” (1994, p. 31).

An example of an unexpected regularity could be a slogan with a rhyme, which would stand out since we, in normal speech or writing, do not usually express ourselves in rhyme. An example of an unexpected irregularity would be a word or brand that is not spelled in accordance to the normal rules of the language, and is in that manner standing out in the text (Myers, 1994). Thus, foregrounding can be described as making something particular prominent in an ad, in order to make the ad more memorable for the receiver.

For instance, many ads use some kind of headline, which often (if seen on its own) has no natural connection to the advertised product, and is thereby flouting the maxim of relation, but may well serve to attract the reader’s attention. A clear example could be found in the Swedish glossy magazine *Chic*, where an ad for Essie nail polish had a headline saying: “if you ask me, all signs point to a bikini so teeny”. This headline makes the ad stand out in two respects: 1. it is flouting the maxim of relation, as it seems to have no connection to the product it is meant to advertise, and 2. it flouts the maxim of manner, since it rhymes.

2.1.2 Myth

Myth in advertising could be explained as drawing on a culturally determined idea of, for example, what the ‘perfect’ beer or the ‘ideal’ woman should be like, and Bignell explains that Barthes suggests “the function of myth is to make particular ideas . . . seem natural” (2002, p. 23). Thus, if an advertiser succeeds in making the myths in an ad seem natural, the reader will not contest these myths, but simply accept them as truth (Bignell, 2002).

Ads use myth to a wide extent, as “the signs in ads very rarely just denote something” (Bignell, 2002, p. 32), but they also convey cultural meanings that the reader is expected to accept as natural. For instance, an ad using a picture of a beautiful woman to advertise a perfume does not only denote a woman in a photograph but, according to Bignell, “it can work as the signifier for the mythic signified ‘feminine beauty’” (2002, p. 32), since it carries several positive connotations, such as “youth, slimness, health etc.” (Bignell, 2002, p. 32).

As an ad of this kind might serve to support the culturally determined idea of ‘feminine beauty’ with all the positive connotations of the picture, it wants the reader to also connote the name of the perfume (which normally would be printed next to the picture) with beauty. Thus, by buying the product, the customer would feel like s/he is in possession of “some of its social value” (Bignell, 2002, p. 34), and even if an ad does not explicitly tell the reader that, by using their product, one will look as beautiful as the model in the ad, this is the message such an ad usually is attempting to convey (Bignell, 2002).

2.1.3 The Imperative Speech Act

Although many ads might seem to simply interact in a casual conversation with their readers, Myers claims: “all ads are urging us to some action” (1994, p. 47), and therefore ads use the imperative speech act to a wide extent. This idea is supported by Vestergaard and Schröder (1985), who argue that directive language is employed by the majority of ads, in order to encourage action.

This extensive use of imperatives, Myers continues, does not occur because advertisers believe that people will do whatever the ad is telling them to do, but rather: “because it will create a personal effect, a sense of one person talking to another” (1994, p. 47).

However, there is a clear difference between imperatives in everyday conversation and imperatives in advertising: in everyday conversation, the imperative usually is for the benefit of the speaker, whereas imperatives in ads usually imply that the reader will benefit by doing what the ad is suggesting (Myers, 1994). This feeling is often reached by omitting what Myers refers to as “the politeness devices” (1994, p. 48), which are words such as *please* and commands through questions (e.g. *could you please close the window?*). For example, sportswear retailer Stadium has an advertising slogan which is *Join the Movement*, and not *Could You Please Join the Movement?*, since that would sound as if they were begging the reader to go to Stadium, while a command like *Join the Movement* would be assumed to in some way benefit the reader.

Even though ads do not normally use questions as the ones exemplified above, they do use interrogatives to a wide extent, since, according to Myers, “[q]uestions, like commands, imply a direct address to the reader” (1994, p. 49). Often, these questions are rhetorical, as “they assume only one possible answer” (Myers, 1994, p. 49).

Interrogative speech acts in ads are, according to Vestergaard and Schröder, often: “indirect ways of calling to action” (1985, p. 68). An example, provided by Vestergaard and Schröder (1985, p. 68), is an ad for Dr White’s sanitary towels, which asks the reader: “[i]sn’t it time you came back to Dr White’s?”. The locutionary force of this question is, of course, interrogative, but as it assumes that the answer will be ‘yes’, and therefore serves to generate action, the illocutionary force is imperative.

2.1.4 Pronouns

The pronoun ‘you’ is, arguably, the most common way to address the reader of an ad (Goddard, 2002). Myers states that ‘you’ “is used in ads just because the advertisers cannot know whom they are reaching” (1994, p. 79), and would therefore be directed to whomever is reading the ad, while Goddard argues that ads are aimed at readers who are “likely to identify themselves with the profile in the text” (2002, p. 27).

Considering an ad for GK HAIR, found in the glossy magazine *Cosmopolitan*, it is likely that the advertiser does know whom they are addressing, as the ad says: “How tamed are you? Experience the only hair taming system”. In this case, ‘you’ can be assumed to refer to people who can relate to having uncontrollable hair, which might be why the ad is assuming that there is only one answer to their question. Had there not, however, been a suggestion to “experience the only hair taming system”, it would not have been obvious what the ad was advertising, and the ‘you’ would have seemed to address whomever was reading.

Another very common pronoun used in ads is ‘we’, which either includes or excludes the reader, depending on what feeling the ad is attempting to achieve (Myers, 1994; Goddard, 2002). For instance, McDonald’s used to have a slogan which said: “At McDonald’s, we do it all for you” (Myers, 1994, p. 82), where ‘we’ obviously refers to McDonald’s. According to Myers (1994), huge corporations, such as McDonald’s, use the pronoun ‘we’ in this manner in order to create a personal feeling, so that each customer feels like s/he is the one towards whom they are directing their ad.

If the reader is, on the other hand, included in ‘we’, the ad would serve to create “a sense of solidarity with the customer” (Myers, 2002, p. 81), as it seems as though the reader and the advertised company are part of the same group.

2.1.5 Presupposition

One of the most common linguistic features found in advertising (as well as in all conversations) is what is known, in linguistics, as *presupposition*. Presuppositions can be explained as being what is indicated without it being actually said (Goddard, 2002), and one good reason for ads to use presuppositions to a great extent is that it is rather difficult to deny them (Vestergaard and Schröder, 1985).

For instance, as exemplified by Gonzalez and Sells, an ad for Apple Computers presupposes that Windows does not work properly by saying “I used to think it was my fault that Windows didn’t work properly” (2002). This also contains a presupposition that the speaker (i.e. the advertiser) has since changed her mind, implying that she has realized that it was not her fault, but Microsoft’s¹. The speaker has, by uttering this sentence, taken for granted that the reader accepts these presuppositions as truth and, as the implied ‘fact’ that Windows did not work properly would still remain had it actually been the speaker’s fault, these presuppositions are not easily denied by the reader (Vestergaard and Schröder, 1985; Gonzalez and Sells, 2002).

2.2 English in Global Advertising

English has, as a consequence of USA’s dominance in worldwide advertising, become the language most frequently used in product advertisement worldwide, aside from the local language (Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2007).

Not only is English the most common ‘foreign’ language in advertising, but several studies seem to have found that the use of English is steadily increasing in advertising in non-Anglophone countries (Ovesdotter Alm, 2003; Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2007; Ruellot, 2011). For instance, Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al. (2007) compared the results from their study on ads with English words, targeted towards young females in Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands and Spain, to previous research, and found that the use of English had, in little over a decade, increased by nearly 40% in these countries. Moreover, they point out that “the further we go back, the greater the differences are when compared to our findings” (Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2007).

With regard to ads in English on the Swedish market, Ovesdotter Alm (who studied English advertising in Ecuador) refers to Riutort’s research study from 2002 on magazine advertisements in English in Sweden, which showed that 59% of the 383 magazine

¹ Windows © is a computer operating system produced by the Microsoft Corporation.

advertisements studied contained English words, while 8% were exclusively in English (2003²). These numbers can, however, be assumed to have risen significantly in the last decade and, based on the previous findings discussed above, it is possible that nearly 100% of all magazine ads in Sweden today contain English elements, and possibly up to 50% could be completely in English.

2.3 Why English is Used in Product Ads in Non-Anglophone Countries

2.3.1 Positive Connotations?

Although English is the most frequently used ‘foreign’ language in global advertising, there are a few other languages that are often used to advertise certain kinds of products. For instance, German is often used in ads for cars, French for perfume and Italian for pasta, in order to draw on “the ethnocultural stereotypes of the speakers of those languages” (Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2010). This kind of stereotyping would serve to suggest exclusivity and sound knowledge of how to create the highest quality products, as it alludes to the *myth* (as described above) of what that country and culture is known for (Myers, 1994; Kelly-Holmes, 2005).

Similarly, it could be argued that English, too, is used in this sense (although to a wider extent), as it seems to be more common “in advertisements in magazines related to the Internet and technology or fashion and beauty” than in ads for products used in domestic life (Ovesdotter Alm, 2003).

However, Kelly-Holmes argues that the use of English in global advertising is different from the use of German, French and Italian, as she claims that using English is “not motivated by a desire to allude to the perceived stereotypical characteristics of countries with which the language is associated” (2005, p. 67). It is rather an attempt to make the reader associate the advertised product with modernity and urbanity, and not with the culture of an English-speaking country. Furthermore, Kelly-Holmes continues, the extensive use of English in these particular fields is: “evidence of the technical lexicon, the *Fachsprache*, leaking through to mainstream texts such as advertisements” (2005, p. 70).

Planken, van Meurs and Radlinska (2010) argue, however, “[e]ven though various scholars have assumed that the use of English in international advertising will bring about certain (positive) connotations in (non-native) target groups and will thus lead to positive attitudes

² A secondary reference is used as the original study could not be accessed.

and behaviours”, the use of English instead of the local language does not seem to generate a more positive attitude towards a certain brand or product.

2.3.2 English is a Global Language?

Another possible reason for advertising in English could be the fact that English is, in general, viewed as a global language (Crystal, 2003) and, even though not everyone in the world understands English, this could nevertheless be a valid reason for advertising in English in Sweden, since the Swedish population seems to have such proficiency in English that perhaps no translation is required to convey the message to a satisfactory degree.

For instance, in her comparison of her own and Riutort’s research, Ovesdotter Alm (2003) states that the frequency of whole sentences in English is far higher in ads in Sweden than in Ecuador, and concludes that the reason for this is that the English proficiency is much higher among the Swedish population than in the Ecuadorian.

Swedes’ English proficiency could be supported by later research, which points to statistics from the Eurobarometer where, in 2005, 89% of the Swedish population stated that they were able to hold a conversation in English (Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2007).

2.4 Understanding the Message of English Ads

Much research has been conducted on the subject of understanding English ads in countries where English is not an official language, but they do not seem to agree on how well the addressees understand the message of these ads.

Planken, van Meurs and Radlinska (2010), on the one hand, found, in their comparative study of English vs. Polish in product advertisements in Poland, that the comprehension differences between an ad in English and an ad in the local language were not significant. As it could be assumed that the respondents correctly comprehended the ads in Polish, this study would indicate that the respondents also correctly comprehended most ads in English.

On the other hand, according to Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft *et al.*’s research (2010) on the comprehension of English in ads in non-English-speaking countries in Western Europe, only 60% correctly understand the message of an ad, which would indicate that there is in fact a significant difference in comprehension between ads in English and ads in the local language.

Although the above discussed research may give an indication as to how much of the advertisements in English in non-Anglophone countries are correctly comprehended by the local population, little research on the comprehension of ads in English has been carried out in Sweden. However, as stated earlier, the Eurobarometer of 2005 indicated that 89% of the Swedish population felt able to hold a conversation in English; this is the highest percentage of the surveyed countries (Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2007). Based on that notion, it could be assumed that the Swedish population in general would have little difficulty in comprehending the message of an ad in English, which is what this study intends to investigate.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Methodology chapter provides a brief description of how a qualitative research approach may function, as well as explanations as to why and how this approach will be used in this particular study. Moreover, a brief presentation of the ads, as well as an insight into how the collected data will be analyzed is provided.

3.1 The Qualitative Approach

The qualitative approach to research is, according to Maykut and Morehouse, an approach which “is initially broad and open-ended” (1994, p.43). This means that the questions asked in the study normally are rather open for any kind of answer, even though the questions “will always to some degree determine the answers we find” (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.43).

While a quantitative study would generally include more subjects than a qualitative study, and thus enable the researcher to make more reliable generalizations, it normally does not generate as extensive answers as a qualitative study (Wray and Bloomer, 2006). Thus, when investigating people’s comprehension of something, for example an ad, the qualitative approach is generally the better choice, as it gives the subject the freedom to express how s/he understands the text.

3.2 The Present Research

In order to investigate whether or not Swedish adults understand the intended message of printed ads in English, this study will consist of conducting face-to-face interviews, chiefly collecting qualitative data. However, the questionnaire employed in the interview will include a few quantitative elements as well.

These interviews will be held with 12 individuals, who are meant to be a somewhat fair representation of the Swedish adult population in terms of sex, age and level of education. All subjects in this study have Swedish as their first language, and none of the subjects have studied English at university level.

As it is not certain that the reader needs to understand the semantics of every single phrase or word of an ad to grasp its meaning or message, investigating the subjects' vocabulary and translation abilities will be excluded from this study. In other words, the interviews in this study will instead focus on the subjects' perception of what message, as well as how this message is being conveyed in the ads, and is thus aimed at investigating the subjects' understanding of the pragmatics and semiotics of advertising.

3.3 Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire will be divided into two parts: one part with multiple choice answers and one part where the subject will be asked to study five ads, and answer a few open questions about them. (The questionnaire is provided, both in English and Swedish, in Appendix 1).

The first part consists of five questions regarding the subject's sex, age, level of education, their thoughts on what percentage of advertisement in Sweden is in English, and how they would rank their own ability to read English.

Upon responding to these initial questions, the subject will be handed one ad at a time, and asked to study it for 20 seconds. This time limit has been set due to the fact that a printed ad has a very limited space to make itself noticed, normally no more than a page or two, and Cook suggests "[t]hey . . . are passed by quickly, flicked or clicked into oblivion" (2001, p. 230). The subject will then be asked a set of questions regarding the message and persuasive strategy of the ad. This procedure will be repeated with all the five ads chosen for this study.

For the subjects of this study to be able to answer the questions comfortably, and not having to struggle to find the right words, the interviews will be held in Swedish. They will be recorded and later transcribed and translated into English by me.

3.4 The Ads

The five ads chosen for this study were selected in order to present the subjects with a range of different styles of advertisement as well as with ads of varying levels of complexity, sophistication and potential difficulty. (All five ads are provided in Appendix 2).

Ad 1: The first ad was found in the interior design magazine *Residence*, and is an ad for Carlsberg beer. It consists of a headline and a sub header, as well as a picture of a Carlsberg non-alcoholic beer. This ad was chosen because it could be assumed to be quite easily understood by most subjects, since it consists of a very short text along with a prominent picture.

Ad 2: The second ad was taken from the glossy magazine *Cosmopolitan*, and is advertising Maybelline's One by One Volum' Express mascara. It contains a picture of a woman's face and a magnified mascara bottle, as well as some text describing the qualities of this mascara. This ad was chosen because it has a longer text than Ad 1, but still uses rather short sentences. Moreover, also this ad has a very prominent picture, which might aid the subject in deciphering the message of the ad.

Ad 3: Ad 3 was found in the glossy magazine *Style By*, and is an ad for Levi's Curve ID jeans. The ad consists of white, plain text on a black background, which seems to depict a fitting room. It was chosen since it could be assumed to be more difficult to comprehend than the first two, as this ad has no picture of the product it is advertising. Furthermore, the advertising text is rather long and seems to be more formal in its tone than the two preceding ads.

Ad 4: The fourth ad was taken from *Residence*, and is an ad for Lexington, which "is a global manufacturer and marketer of distinctive home furnishings" (Lexington Home Brands, 2011). It contains four pictures (all depicting summer activities), and a rather long text which is describing Lexington's summer dream. This ad was chosen because, although the text is written in a very casual manner, the message of this ad might be difficult to comprehend, as this is, in contrast to the other four ads, advertising a brand, rather than a particular product. Thus, the Lexington ad is what Vestergaard and Schröder refers to as "prestige or good-will advertising, where firms advertise not a commodity or a service, but rather a name or an image" (1985, p. 1).

Ad 5: Ad 5 was found in *Cosmopolitan*, and advertises the Aussie 3 Minute Miracle conditioner. It consists of a long text, with varied font sizes and colors, on a background depicting dandelions flying through the air. Furthermore, there is a small picture of the advertised product. This ad was chosen simply because the text is long and employs a range of colloquial expressions, which might prove to be an obstacle for some subjects.

3.5 Data Analysis

Chapter 4 (Analysis, Results & Discussion) will provide a pragmatic/semiotic analysis of the five ads. This will be performed by me initially, and my own analysis will be based upon my understanding of the ads as a higher-level student of English and as someone who has studied linguistic analysis. The results of the interviews with my subjects will then be compared to, and contrasted with, my own analysis, in order to reveal what differences exist. I will attempt to make an objective assessment as to how much of the ads in question has been understood by my subjects and what I perceive to have been misunderstood by them.

I will also attempt to establish whether there are any common tendencies or patterns in the levels of understanding between the ads, and how these relate to the personal and demographic characteristics present within my sample.

3.6 Expected Results and Obstacles

As discussed in Chapter 2, previous research indicates that the Swedish population, in general, possesses relatively high English proficiency (Ovesdotter Alm, 2003; Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2007). Therefore, the results of this study could be expected to indicate that the majority of all printed ads in English are fully understood (from a linguistic perspective) by adult Swedish readers.

On the other hand, as later research on the comprehension of English in ads in non-English-speaking countries in Western Europe concluded that only 60% correctly understands the message of an ad (Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2010), a similar result could be expected from this survey.

Further possible indications might be that it is more difficult to understand the message of English prestige ads than consumer ads.

Moreover, the results of this study might reveal that there is a difference in the comprehension of printed ads in English between people of different sex, age, level of education or of different reported English proficiency.

As a qualitative research study is being undertaken, and there are clear time constraints of a Bachelor's thesis, only 12 people will be interviewed. This means that, even though this survey might generate an interesting result, the result will not be reliable enough to make generalizations for the whole population of Sweden, but merely provide an indication of adult Swedes' comprehension of printed ads in English.

4. ANALYSIS, RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This chapter will provide a pragmatic/semiotic analysis, through which possible messages and persuasive strategies of the five ads used in this survey might be revealed. In addition, this chapter will provide the results of the interviews, and discuss these in comparison to my analysis in order to uncover how well the ads were understood. All quotes are based on my translation of the interview transcriptions.

4.1 Q1-Q5

The table below shows the results of the first five questions of the questionnaire, stating each subject's sex, age and level of education, as well as their idea of what percentage of today's advertisement in Sweden is in English, and their perceived ability to read English.

Subject	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q5
1	Male	50-59	Upper Secondary School	0-20%	Average
2	Male	18-29	University	81-100%	Very Good
3	Male	18-29	Elementary School	61-80%	Excellent
4	Female	50-59	Upper Secondary School	0-20%	Average
5	Male	50-59	Upper Secondary School	21-40%	Good
6	Male	30-39	University	21-40%	Good
7	Male	60+	University	0-20%	Fair
8	Female	18-29	Other	21-40%	Average
9	Female	18-29	Other	41-60%	Good
10	Male	18-29	Other	0-20%	Good
11	Female	30-39	University	41-60%	Very Good
12	Female	40-49	University	21-40%	Average

4.2 Carlsberg

4.2.1 Analysis

The Carlsberg ad is, in my perspective, a rather clear case of a collaboration of the linguistic sign “perfection” and the iconic sign of a cold, wet bottle of Carlsberg beer, to imply that Carlsberg makes perfect beer. It could, however, mean that it is only Carlsberg’s non-alcoholic beer that is perfect and not all Carlsberg beer, as the label on the depicted bottle indicates that the bottle contains non-alcoholic beer.

In any case, the ad seems to be flouting the maxim of quantity, as the headline (“perfection is never easy”) does not provide sufficient information, but the implicature that Carlsberg makes perfect beer has to be resolved by the reader by connecting the text to the picture of the Carlsberg bottle. This could be linked to Myers’ suggestion that ads attempt to be memorable by the use of foregrounding as described in Chapter 2 (Myers, 1994, p. 31).

Moreover, the ad implies that Carlsberg has been brewing beer for over 160 years, through the statement: “after more than 160 years you get the hang of it”. Although this sentence does not explicitly tell the reader that Carlsberg has been brewing beer for over 160 years, it is implying just that, as that is what is most likely to be recovered by the reader when connecting the sentence to the rest of the ad.

This statement, in collaboration with the implicature that Carlsberg makes perfect beer, further implies that such vast experience has made Carlsberg so proficient at brewing beer that the company now possesses the knowhow to brew perfect beer. This implicature could probably be assumed to be accepted as true by most readers, since the fact that the company has survived for over 160 years suggests that its brewers are actually successful at what they are doing, and could thus be trusted.

The ad could be assumed to be attempting to persuade the reader to purchase Carlsberg beer, and one of the main persuasive strategies is, as mentioned above, the drawing on the mythic ‘perfect beer’ which is, in our culture, chilled. That the beer on the picture is chilled could be realised through the presence of water droplets on the bottle’s exterior, which indicates condensation which, in turn, is a sign that the bottle is chilled, rather than at room temperature.

In addition, the very last sentence of the ad (“that calls for a Carlsberg”) could well be interpreted as a directive speech act, albeit an indirect one, advising the reader to try the

Carlsberg (non-alcoholic) beer, since it supposedly tastes perfect (Vestergaard and Schröder, 1985 p. 67).

This sentence further contains alliteration (*calls – Carls...*), which, according to Myers, is “[t]he simplest and by far most common technique” of making a slogan prominent (1994, p. 32).

Moreover, “that calls for a Carlsberg” presupposes that somehow, some situation requires a specific beer to be consumed, as though it was a natural consequence of that situation.

4.2.2 Results & Discussion

The majority of the subjects in this study seem to have resolved the implicatures in the Carlsberg ad in a similar way to my analysis, as nine subjects indicated that it delivers the message that Carlsberg produces a (non-alcoholic) beer of perfect or high quality. For example, subject 10’s response was as follows: “quality maybe. They want to get me to buy beer, but first and foremost they want to convey quality.”

A noteworthy observation is that only subject 3 perceived the message to be that Carlsberg makes perfect, rather than merely high quality, beer.

On the other hand, subjects 1 and 7 pointed out that it is only Carlsberg’s non-alcoholic beer that the ad is implying to be good, which is also a plausible interpretation.

The fact that so many of the subjects made similar interpretations as I did is, arguably, because the mythic ‘perfect beer’ has been properly depicted in the ad. Indeed, at least half of the subjects seemed to accept that the bottle on the picture is a fair depiction of a perfect beer, which could be linked to Bignell’s suggestion that myths in ads convey cultural meanings that the reader is expected to accept as natural (2002, p. 32).

The fact that only one subject pointed out that the message is that the beer is *perfect* then seems to be because most subjects were already familiar with Carlsberg, and simply did not accept that their beer is perfect, even though they did understand that that is what the ad wishes to convey. Indeed, subject 10 pointed out that he is familiar with Carlsberg, but does not think of it as perfect, but rather as “quite ok”, beer.

No subjects mentioned the directive speech act (“that calls for a Carlsberg”), but still ten subjects felt urged to purchase beer, six of whom pointed out that it is specifically Carlsberg beer that the ad is persuading them to buy.

This seems partly to have been arrived at through the headline and the picture, as three of the subjects agreed on that the ad conveys its message solely through the picture of a chilled, tempting bottle of Carlsberg beer, while an additional three subjects felt that it was the collaboration between picture and text that delivered the message. For example, subject 9 felt that it was Carlsberg’s implication of being “close to ‘perfection’” as well as “a picture of a cold beer that looks good” that was conveying the message to her.

The most popular response, however, was that the ad points to the ‘fact’ that Carlsberg has been brewing beer for a very long time, as eight subjects mentioned this. Subject 1, for instance, states that the ad is urging the reader to buy Carlsberg’s non-alcoholic beer: “by saying that they have 160 years’ experience, and that long experience must surely be good.”

In contrast, subjects 2 and 6 believed that the ad was urging them to buy any non-alcoholic beer, rather than specifically Carlsberg beer, which is not very surprising, as the label on the bottle in the picture says *non-alcoholic*.

In conclusion, 11 out of the 12 subjects felt urged into some action, which Myers claims that all ads do (1994, p. 47).

Only three of the twelve subjects seem to have interpreted the ad in a significantly different way to my analysis. Interestingly, two of these three subjects ranked their own ability to read English as ‘very good’, which might indicate that their perceived ability to read English does not necessarily match their actual ability.

4.3 Maybelline

4.3.2 Analysis

In my analysis, the Maybelline ad clearly draws on the myth of ‘feminine beauty’ (as exemplified in chapter 2), implying that one might look as beautiful and flirty as the model, would one choose to buy their mascara. This implication could be drawn from the picture of a woman whose look “might connote flirtatiousness” (Bignell, 2002, p. 48) and who, in our culture, generally is viewed as beautiful next to a picture of the product.

Moreover, the Maybelline ad seems to want to stress the suggestion that this mascara is in fact completely clump-free, as the wording *one by one* is repeated several times in the ad. It occurs twice in the main text, once on the mascara bottle in the picture, and once in the smaller informational text at the bottom of the ad.

In addition, the picture of what seems to be part of a clock could also be argued to imply that this mascara is clump-free, likening the seconds and minutes on a clock that, rather than being lumped together, are separated from each other into individual units (one by one). The implication here is that this is similar to how one's eye-lashes presumably will look after using the One by One Volum' Express mascara.

Lastly, the Maybelline ad seems to be attempting to stand out with the aid of repetition and alliteration in their slogan ("Maybe she's born with it. Maybe it's Maybelline"), which could be viewed as a case of foregrounding (Myers, 1994, p. 31). However, as the slogan is written in black letters on a dark background, it is not very likely to stand out in my view. Perhaps Maybelline assumes that its brand is so well-known that most people (at least people in their target group) are familiar with their slogan already, and thus they do not have to put much emphasis on it, but focus on promoting this particular product instead.

This ad is, in my view, attempting to persuade the reader to purchase this particular mascara through the claim that this product generates "eye catching volume without the clumps", which implicates that other mascaras are in fact clumpy, and that clumps are undesirable. This would suggest that the One by One Volum' Express mascara is superior to other mascaras, which might indeed be quite persuasive.

4.3.2 Results & Discussion

The majority of the subjects seem to have made similar interpretations to my analysis, as ten of them have recognized either the implicature that one will become more beautiful by using this mascara, and/or that this mascara will make one's eye-lashes clump-free and that the Maybelline mascara is superior to other mascaras due to its supposed clump-freeness. For example, subjects 2 and 9 both argued that the ad implied that one might become as beautiful as the model in the picture by using this mascara, and subject 4 felt that the ad implied that this mascara is "better than other mascaras".

The message of the Maybelline ad seems to have been predominantly extracted from the picture of the woman, since all but three subjects agreed that the picture of the woman helps

deliver the message. Three of these suggested that it does so in collaboration with the text, while the remainder of these nine subjects argued that it is the picture alone that conveys the message. For instance, subject 9 felt that it was “the flashy picture of a beautiful woman together with descriptions saying that this mascara is not like other mascaras” that delivered the message, while subject 5 stated: “since the picture is so much bigger than the text, it’s the picture that conveys the message”.

As such, a majority of the subjects perceived the picture in the Maybelline ad to depict a beautiful woman with, as pointed out by subjects 4 and 5, “perfect eye-lashes”, this is probably, similar to the Carlsberg ad, a case of the myth that the ad is drawing on being accepted as natural by most readers.

Although the message seems to have been mediated to a satisfactory degree there was, however, a case of misunderstanding as to what product the ad actually promotes, as subject 1 interpreted the ad as trying to sell eyeliner. Probably, this misunderstanding arose from the fact that the word *mascara* in fact only occurs twice in the ad: once in the picture of the mascara bottle, and once in the small informational text at the bottom, which could be assumed to not have been read as there was a time limit of only 20 seconds.

Half of the subjects recognized the suggestion that this mascara is clump-free, but no subjects perceived that expression as standing out in the text. This might suggest that the expression *clump-free* is very easily understood by Swedish readers, which seems fair, as the Swedish word for *clump-free* is *klumpfri* (Google Translate, 2013). Interestingly, none of the subjects in the age group 18-29 mentioned that the mascara is supposed to be clump-free, which might indicate that this particular suggestion actually is more easily recognized by people over 30.

The fact that only one subject (subject 3) seemed to remember the Maybelline slogan from previous Maybelline ads is most likely (as stated in my analysis) explainable because it was printed in black on a dark background and has, therefore, not been successfully foregrounded.

The reason for subjects 8 and 12 finding it difficult to extract any particular message from this ad could be their common denominator of having only a perceived ‘average’ ability to read English, and thus the ad might have employed a too difficult language for them. This does not, however, seem very likely, since there were three subjects in the group of ten who also ranked themselves as ‘average’ or lower, which would nullify the idea that the text was too complicated.

According to the subjects themselves, the reason for being unable to extract any clear message was that the ad was too cluttered and confusing. This seems more plausible, since the ad is very colorful, and includes text of different sizes and colors as well as two pictures. This seems to have meant that these two subjects have only remembered the picture of the mascara bottle and not the text or the picture of the woman, and so I have deduced that that is the reason for them not connecting the advertised mascara with beauty or superiority.

4.4 Levi's

4.4.1 Analysis

In my view, the message of the Levi's ad is that their new jeans will fit any woman, no matter what her body shape. This message is conveyed through the implicature that not all manufacturers have realized that women come in different shapes and sizes, but Levi's have and can therefore make jeans that fit all women.

This could be resolved from the presupposition that it was not possible for all women to find their ideal fit based on their body shape before these jeans were created, which could be extracted from the statement: "now every woman can find their ideal fit based on body shape". This presupposition might further imply that many women have difficulties in finding clothes that fit properly but, since Levi's now designs jeans that fit any body shape, these difficulties need not arise. As described in Chapter 2, a presupposition is what is indicated without it being actually said (Goddard, 2002), and is difficult to deny as a presupposition assumes that the reader accepts it as being true (Vestergaard and Schröder, 1985).

The ad could be assumed to attempt to persuade the reader to purchase these new Levi's jeans, but does not do so through a picture of the product looking perfect like the two previous ads. Instead, it assumes that the reader will accept the presupposition described above as true. Furthermore, the ad appears to be designed to convey authority and trustworthiness by pointing to scientific research (Vestergaard and Schröder, 1985, p. 66).

This authoritative atmosphere is further accentuated through plain white text in an ordinary font, printed on a black background. Furthermore, the text is grammatically correct, and does not include any explicit imperative speech acts or rhetorical questions. Moreover, the black background seems to depict a fitting room in which the reader might draw an inference that these jeans are, at the moment of viewing the ad, being tried on by a woman. Thus, the black

background might conceal the secret the ad is talking about and, if a customer looks for these jeans, she might access this secret.

4.4.2 Results & Discussion

The Levi's ad was interpreted in several different ways. For example, subject 8 felt it was telling its readers: "now you can get curves even if you don't have them with these new jeans", while subjects 2 and 6 interpreted it as Levi's designs jeans that will fit anyone.

The most common interpretation was, however, that Levi's has developed jeans that are specifically tailored to fit the female shape, which was indicated by four subjects. This 'female shape' has not been properly explained but, if one assumes that they have accepted the presupposition described in my analysis, this is the shape of women who normally have difficulties in finding clothes that fit.

Similarly, subject 9 felt the Levi's ad was trying to tell its readers: "they fit all women, no matter what you look like or how you are shaped" and also pointed out that she found the background being a fitting room was a fun idea that suggests that one does not have to feel disappointed in the fitting room anymore, since Levi's can help. This is, more or less, identical to my analysis of the Levi's ad. As she further mentions that she was familiar with this particular product prior to the interview that seems to be the most likely reason for deciphering the message of the ad so precise.

All subjects, aside from subject 12, seemed to agree that the ad is attempting to persuade its readers to buy jeans and, as stated above, most of these subjects recognized that the jeans they are urged to purchase are only for women. Therefore, it could be argued that a total of nine subjects made similar interpretations of the Levi's ad as I did, and thus it seems as though the presupposition described in my analysis was accepted as true by most subjects, which proves that it is indeed difficult to deny presuppositions (Vestergaard and Schröder, 1985).

The three remaining subjects all shared the opinion that the Levi's ad used too much text with too complicated language for them to properly understand it. Indeed, two of these three subjects ranked their own ability as being 'average', while six of the other nine subjects ranked themselves as 'good' or higher, which might explain the different interpretations of this ad.

4.5 Lexington

4.5.1 Analysis

The Lexington ad is different from the other four ads in the sense that it is “prestige or goodwill advertising” (Vestergaard and Schröder, 1985, p. 1), meaning that it is attempting to advertise the brand name and image rather than a commodity.

The image that this ad seems to attempt to convey is very relaxed and casual, as things like towels, pillows, bags, coffee cups and Coca-Cola cans are lying around in a rather casual manner. At the same time, it conveys that Lexington is an upmarket brand, since a beach house such as the one in the pictures is certainly not something that everyone can afford.

Moreover, the pictures in this ad attempt to be appealing both to those who wish to relax, and those who enjoy activities on their holidays. This could be concluded from the upper two pictures displaying comfortable chairs (with Lexington pillows) as well as barbequing and beer, while the lower two pictures display a surfboard, a bikini and the ocean.

All these pictures might serve to draw on the myth of a very specific ‘holiday dream’, which fits in with the Lexington brand image, and serves to deliver the message that, by buying Lexington products, one is also buying into that specific lifestyle. One could, as stated earlier, assume that an ad urges the reader to some course of action (Myers, 1994, p. 47) and thus one might be urged to purchase Lexington products in order to, as stated in chapter 2, feel like one is in possession of “some of its social value” (Bignell, 2002, p. 34).

To further accentuate the idea of a care-free holiday, where one does not have to worry about rules and boundaries of everyday life, the ad includes a text written in an extremely casual manner which, at times, does not seem to make any sense. For instance, the sentence “enjoying endless hours on the beach or seaside porch” does not include any subject, and does not seem to convey any information about the brand or its products to the reader.

The very first thing to stand out in the ad is, however, in my view, the headline (“Lexington Really into the Blue!”), since it quite clearly is ambiguous, and thus flouts the maxim of manner.

Firstly, the color blue might represent many different meanings. According to Smith (2013) “[b]lue is seen as trustworthy, dependable, and committed” which, of course, are all qualities with which Lexington would wish the reader to associate their brand. Smith also states that

the color blue “has equal appeal to both men and women”, which may work in Lexington’s favor.

Secondly, it could refer to the ocean or the sky, which are both depicted in the pictures and are part of this mythic ‘holiday dream’ upon which the ad draws.

A third possible interpretation is that it could refer to being *up in the blue*, meaning that one is away from reality, which might also fit in to the holiday dream. This interpretation would possibly be the one most appropriate for Swedish readers, as the expression *up in the blue* could also be found in Swedish (*uppe i det blå*). However, the Swedish expression *uppe i det blå* is usually translated to the English expression *head in the clouds*, which could be defined “to daydream and not think about real life” (One World of English, 2013). This might even more successfully serve to convey Lexington’s image.

4.5.2 Results & Discussion

Only two subjects could point out a specific message in the Lexington ad. Subject 1 claimed that Lexington’s products are suitable for both indoor- and outdoor use, while subject 9 argued the message to be that one might access the dream world of Lexington, if one were to purchase their products.

Eight subjects felt that the Lexington ad was simply conveying a relaxed feeling of summer or vacation, while two subjects did not find any message at all in the ad.

A noteworthy comment was that the ad was advertising a brand rather than a particular product; this was pointed out by subject 8 who continued: “they convey ‘beach-time’ in this specific ad, and thus Lexington is a summer brand”. This was agreed by subject 10, who did not think that the ad is trying to promote a particular product, but “wants one to get a good feeling for the brand”.

The results from the interviews further shows that seven subjects were unsure of what the ad was attempting to persuade them to do, or felt that the ad was not trying to persuade them to do anything particular, while five subjects felt urged to purchase Lexington products.

The general feeling among the subjects was that this ad was conveying its message, and attempted to persuade the reader through the pictures rather than the text, as was argued by seven subjects.

A further three subjects were unaware of what the persuasive strategy was in the ad, and were thus unable to give an answer to this question.

Subject 9 stated that the text was written in a casual manner, similar to how she usually writes. She continued to argue that it was this text, in juxtaposition with the pictures that was urging the reader to buy Lexington products, while subject 7 argued that it was the text propounding “how much easier life is when outdoors and indoors mixes together” that lured him into a purchasing mood. Furthermore, he explains that this was due to the positive connotations he has with summer, and that the ad made him think of his old summer home.

Even though two subjects pointed out the fact that the Lexington ad does not promote a specific product, but rather the brand name and image, and an additional eight subjects recognized the holiday dream produced by the pictures, nearly all subjects seem to have had difficulties with extracting a clear message of this ad.

This might indicate that most subjects did not identify themselves with the very specific ‘holiday dream’ that the ad draws on, and thus that myth did not seem natural to them. The reason for this might be that they were not familiar with the brand Lexington beforehand and therefore did not fully understand what was being advertised. Indeed, only two subjects (subjects 9 and 10) seemed to be familiar with the brand prior to the interview, which may well suggest that the majority of the subjects were not, in fact, part of the intended target group of this ad.

Considering that this ad was taken from the interior design magazine *Residence*, it is indeed not very likely that any subject who participated in this survey fully met the characteristics of *Residence*’s intended target group. The intended target group of *Residence* is namely men and women in the age of 30-55 years, who reside in medium sized or large cities, and have a higher income than average (Sveriges Tidskrifter, 2013).

Five of the subjects were in the right age group but, as all interviews in this survey were conducted in Halmstad, which is considered a small city, these subjects might also be argued as not meeting the above described requirements. However, it has not been investigated whether the subjects come from, or live in, Halmstad or if they reside elsewhere and thus this suggestion cannot be proved.

Moreover, the subjects’ income has not been investigated but, since so few subjects seem to have made a similar interpretation as I have of the Lexington ad, I believe that it is a fair

assumption that no subjects fulfill the requirements of the intended target group of *Residence*, and, in turn, nor do they fulfill the requirements of the target group of Lexington.

4.6 Aussie

4.6.1 Analysis

The ad for Aussie 3 Minute Miracle deep conditioner begins with a rhetorical question (“Carrying a wee bit too much weight?”) which supposes that the reader’s answer will be ‘yes’, since it subsequently describes factors that might cause this weight. Thus, this ad is most likely targeted only towards people who, as described in Chapter 2, are “likely to identify themselves with the profile in the text” (Goddard, 2002, p. 27), and therefore will answer ‘yes’ to that question.

However, the question is ambiguous, as it could be interpreted in a number of different ways, and is thus flouting the maxim of manner. For instance, it might refer to the reader’s body weight. It could also refer to something the reader is carrying, which seems to be more likely when continuing to read the text, as it lists factors such as “bulging handbag” and “mobile phone”. However, it also states that “emotional baggage” is a factor of this supposed overweight, which would imply that the reader is suffering from some kind of psychological burden.

Further on in the ad, it becomes clear that it is not an ad either for weight loss pills or diets, psychological aids or some smart backpack or handbag, but for a hair conditioner, which is implied to make one’s hair lighter than other conditioners. To help this message get through to the reader, the ad seems to employ foregrounding to a significant extent, as it quite clearly flouts the maxim of manner in order to stand out.

For instance, the reader is bombarded with words in different sizes and colors, as well as with sentences with varied line justification. This is a typical example of what Myers refers to as “unexpected irregularity” (1994, p. 31).

Moreover, the ad uses poetic expressions in the form of alliterations like *luscious lightness*, *follicle flatness* and *3 minute miracle*, which is a case of what Myers calls “unexpected regularity” (1994, p. 31), and also employs informal expressions, such as *schlep* and *wee bit*.

All this, together with the fact that the product is shown on its side, adds up towards giving an impression of a care-free, anarchic atmosphere, which is probably what the advertiser wishes

to convey. Thus, the ad could be argued to draw on a cultural myth of the qualities of Australians (or “Aussies”), who have supposedly invented this product, being care-free and life-affirming.

To further the idea of being care-free and taking life lightly, the background picture of dandelions flying through the air might symbolize the lightness that the conditioner is argued to achieve. However, it is not very likely to succeed in conveying that to the Swedish audience as, in Swedish culture, dandelions are seen as unwanted weeds. Thus, the meaning of this ad might be somewhat confusing for Swedish readers.

4.6.2 Results & Discussion

Three subjects (subjects 3, 8 and 9) perceived the message to be that this product will make one’s hair lighter. Similarly, subject 10 argued the message to be that the advertised product will help control frizzy hair. This may suggest that these subjects have interpreted the rhetorical question in the opening line as being about the weight of one’s hair.

In contrast, three other subjects perceived the message of the Aussie ad to be that the advertised product will make their lives easier or less stressful, rather than making their hair lighter. Subject 7, for instance, claimed the message to be that all worries in life will sort themselves out just by using the Aussie conditioner. Thus, these subjects seem to have interpreted the opening question as being about burdens of life, rather than about heavy hair.

Another reason might be that they have interpreted the English word *light* (which is repeated three times in the ad) as meaning *easy*, since the Swedish word *lätt* means both *light* and *easy* (Google Translate, 2013) and therefore made the connection to having an easier life rather than lighter hair.

Five subjects were unable to extract any particular message from this ad, and were confused about what kind of product it was advertising. For example, subject 4 stated that she was incapable of finding a message in the ad, since she was uncertain if it was advertising a shampoo for traveling or a weight loss diet. Subjects 1 and 5 had similar issues, as they thought the ad was trying to sell hand cream or shampoo that they could easily bring with them anywhere.

Furthermore, the background picture of dandelions did not, as predicted, seem to deliver its intended message, as two subjects indicated that it caused confusion. For instance, subject 2 initially thought that the ad was for some kind of lice agent, due to the background picture.

These results may suggest that the reason for only three subjects recognizing that the ad implies that one's hair would be lighter if they would use the advertised product is that the majority of the subjects found it difficult to understand what product was actually being advertised.

This confusion seems to have arisen from the fact that the rhetorical, ambiguous question in the opening line of the ad was misinterpreted by many subjects.

In addition, the short time limit could be assumed to have made it even more difficult for them to comprehend the intended message of this ad, as many subjects were, already from the first line, under the impression that the ad was advertising something other than a conditioner.

Interestingly, four of the five subjects who were unable to decipher any particular message were over 40 years old and seemed to think that the ad was too long and used too complicated text. This might indicate that the language employed in the Aussie ad is youthful and thus difficult to comprehend for older generations. As the ad was found in the glossy magazine *Cosmopolitan*, it is indeed likely to be targeted towards young females, which might explain why the advertiser employs a youthful language.

The fact that people over 40 seemed to have greater difficulties in deciphering the intended message of the Aussie ad might also derive from them being less exposed to ads in English, as all subjects over 40 reported that they believe that only 0-20% or 21-40% of all advertisement in Sweden is in English, while the younger generations' answers ranged from 0-20% to 81-100%.

However, the majority of the subjects who did extract a coherent message from the Aussie ad also found the text to be difficult. For example, subjects 8 and 10 felt that the words *bulging* and *schlep* stood out since they did not understand them.

Thus, there might not be a comprehension divergence between people of different ages after all, but the different interpretations might instead depend on how the reader interprets the initial question in the ad. As explained earlier, Goddard argues that ads are aimed at readers who are "likely to identify themselves with the profile in the text" (2002, p. 27), and thus the

different interpretations of this ad might depend on what they are most likely to identify themselves with: heavy hair, overweight or emotional burdens.

Lastly, the myth of Australians being a care-free, life-affirming people (as described in my analysis) does not seem to be shared by Swedish culture, since no subjects pointed out that the ad might wish to convey an 'Australian' feeling. This might well be a reason for having difficulties with deciphering the message of this ad.

4.7 Further Discussion

The findings of this survey revealed no indications that the differences between the subjects' interpretations depended on the subject's sex or level of education.

However, indications that it might depend on age were found (see 4.3.2 and 4.6.2) but, as they were not properly proved or consistent throughout the survey, no such conclusion can be drawn.

Furthermore, the results of this survey indicated that people's perceived ability to read English might determine who understands and who does not understand the message of an ad written in English (see 4.4.2). This was, however, not consistent throughout the survey, and no such conclusion can therefore be drawn.

This survey also found signs suggesting that people's perceived ability to read English does not match their true ability (see 4.2.2). These indications were not, however, consistent, and no such conclusion can be drawn.

Additionally, the results of this survey indicate that prestige ads might be more difficult to comprehend than consumer ads, as the Lexington ad was the least understood. As this study only included one prestige ad, this cannot, however, be properly proved. Moreover, as explained in 4.5.2, the reason for the Lexington ad being the least understood is, most likely, that no subjects were part of the intended target group of that ad, and did therefore not recognize the myth drawn on as natural or familiar.

Similarly, Swedish culture might not share the myth of Australians being care-free and life-affirming, as it was not recognized by the subjects in this study. Thus, it seems as though culturally determined myths play an important role in the comprehension of ads, and might, in fact, be the factor that creates most misunderstandings of ads in English for Swedish people.

Lastly, the intended message of 60% of the ads used in this survey could be argued to have been properly deciphered by the majority of the subjects, which might be an indication as to how well the Swedish adult population understands printed ads in English.

5. CONCLUSION

The Conclusion chapter will briefly summarize this study, and explain how it was performed and what indications were revealed. In addition, suggestions for further research will be provided.

Previous research indicates that there is a significant number of ads in non-Anglophone countries that are written in English, and that this number is steadily increasing (Ovesdotter Alm, 2003; Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2007; Ruellot, 2011). However, not all studies concur on how well these ads are understood by the local population. They do, nevertheless, seem to agree that the Swedish population possesses high English proficiency (Ovesdotter Alm, 2003; Gerritsen, Nickerson, van Hooft et al., 2007), which might indicate that ads in English will, in general, be properly understood by Swedish people.

Since little research on this topic has been carried out in Sweden, it has been the aim of this study to investigate how well the Swedish adult population understands the message of printed ads in English. This aim was reached through answering the following research questions:

- How well do Swedish adults in general understand the message of printed ads in English?
- Are there any comprehension divergences between any subjects and my analysis, and how can such divergences be accounted for?

In order to answer these questions, 12 interviews were carried out with people of different sex, age and level of education. The subjects were asked to study five ads, each ad for a time of 20 seconds. Subsequently, they were asked a set of questions regarding the message and persuasive techniques of each ad.

This survey has chiefly employed a qualitative approach, which means that the subjects have, to an extent, been free to give any kind of answer, rather than simply choose a predetermined answer, as would be the case in a quantitative study. These answers have then been

interpreted by the author, and been compared to a careful pragmatic/semiotic analysis of the ads that was conducted in advance.

The results indicated that three of the five ads (60%) used in this survey were similarly interpreted in the analysis and by the majority of the subjects, and they could thus be argued to have been understood as expected and, perhaps, intended by the advertiser. Two ads, on the other hand, were interpreted significantly differently, and thus it is apparent that the subjects' understanding is at variance with that of the detailed linguistic analyses. The reason for this seems to the author to be that most subjects did not recognize the myths identified and upon which these ads rely, as something natural. This invited the author to conclude that the subjects in question had not entirely understood what the ad was attempting to convey.

As this study only included 12 subjects, no generalizations could be made as to how well the message of printed ads in English are understood by the Swedish adult population, but merely supply indications. Thus, a more extensive research study on this topic would possibly provide more reliable results. This study indicated that prestige ads³ might be more difficult to understand than consumer ads. However, as this study only included one prestige ad, future research on whether or not prestige ads are, in fact, more difficult to understand than consumer ads would be of interest.

³ A prestige ad is an ad that advertises a brand name or image, rather than a specific product (Vestergaard and Schröder, 1985).

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APPENDIX 1 – THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire

Good morning/ afternoon / evening. I'm Mattias from Halmstad University

Could you spare me around 15 minutes to participate in this survey?

Your support would be greatly appreciated. Thank you!

.....

1. Sex

- Male Female

2. Age

- 18-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

3. Education level

- Elementary school Upper secondary school
 University Other (Specify.....)

4. What percentage of today's advertisements in Sweden do you think are in English?

- 0-20% 21-40% 41-60%
 61-80% 81-100%

5. How would you rate your own ability to read English?

Excellent Very Good Good Average Fair Poor Non-existent

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. (Show ad 1)

7. (Show ad 2)

8. (Show ad 3)

9. (Show ad 4)

10. (Show ad 5)

Questions

What message do you think the ad is trying to convey or urging readers to do?

If you think the ad is trying to persuade readers to do something, how is it trying to achieve that? What strategies is it employing?

Did any word(s) or phrase(s) stand out? In what way?

Frågeformulär

God morgon/ middag / kväll. Jag heter Mattias och kommer från Halmstad Högskola

Skulle du kunna ge mig ca 15 min för att delta i en undersökning?

Din medverkan hade uppskattats. Tack!

.....

1. Kön

- Man Kvinna

2. Ålder

- 18-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

3. Utbildningsnivå

- Grundskola Gymnasie
 Högskola Annat (Specificera.....)

4. Hur många procent av dagens reklam i Sverige tror du är på Engelska?

- 0-20% 21-40% 41-60%
 61-80% 81-100%

5. Hur skulle du ranka din egen förmåga att läsa engelska?

Utmärkt Mycket God God Medel OK Dålig Obefintlig

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. (Visa annons 1)

7. (Visa annons 2)

8. (Visa annons 3)

9. (Visa annons 4)

10. (Visa annons 5)

Frågor

Vilket budskap tror du att annonsen försöker förmedla eller uppmana läsaren att göra?

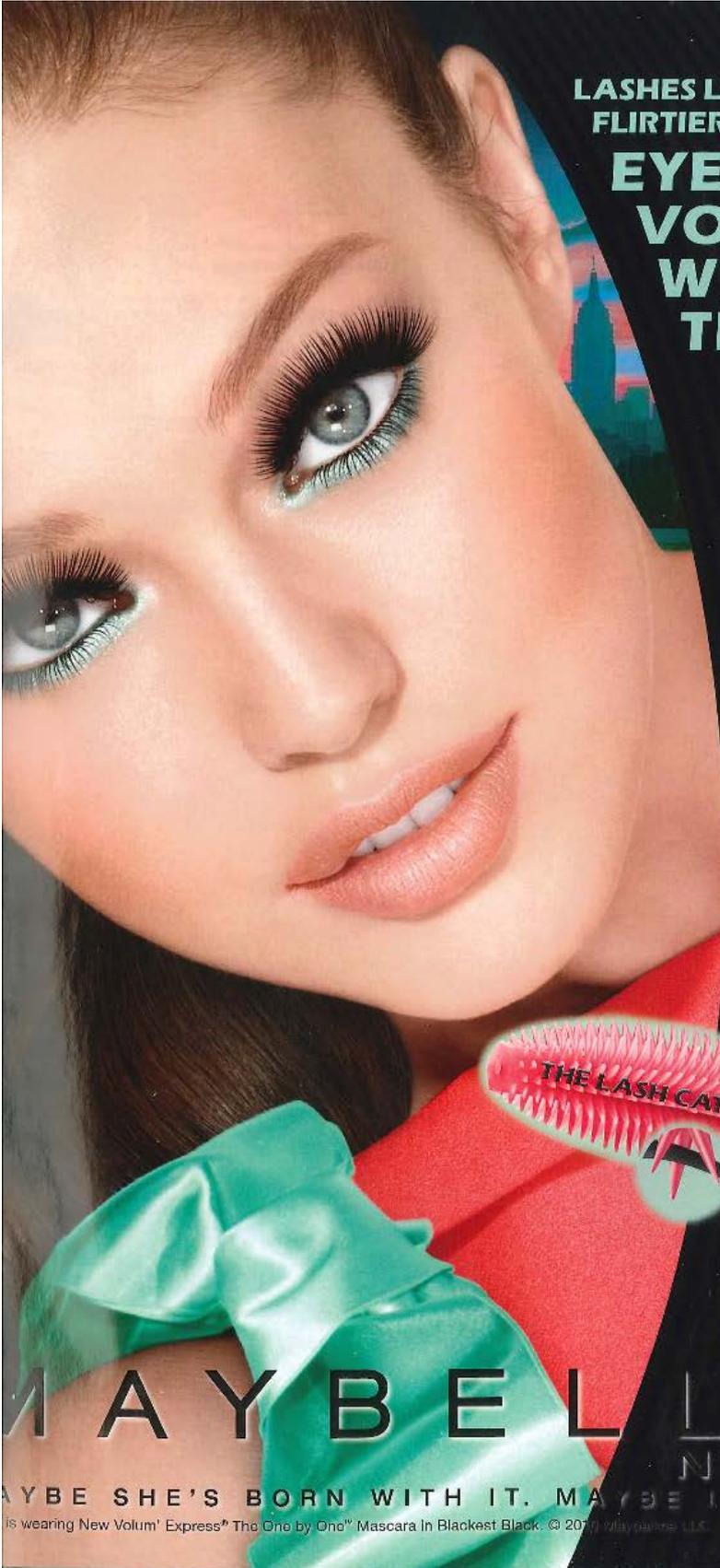
Om du tror att annonsen försöker övertyga dig att göra någonting, hur försöker den uppnå det? Vilka strategier använder den?

Stack något/några ord eller fraser ut? På vilket vis?

Perfection is never easy
(But after more than 160 years you get the hang of it)



That calls for a **Carlsberg**



LASHES LOOK BIGGER,
FLIRTIER, ONE BY ONE.

EYE CATCHING VOLUME WITHOUT THE CLUMPS!

NEW
**VOLUM'
EXPRESS[®]**
the **ONE BY ONE[™]**

MAKES 'EM
ALL BOLDER,
FLIRTIER.



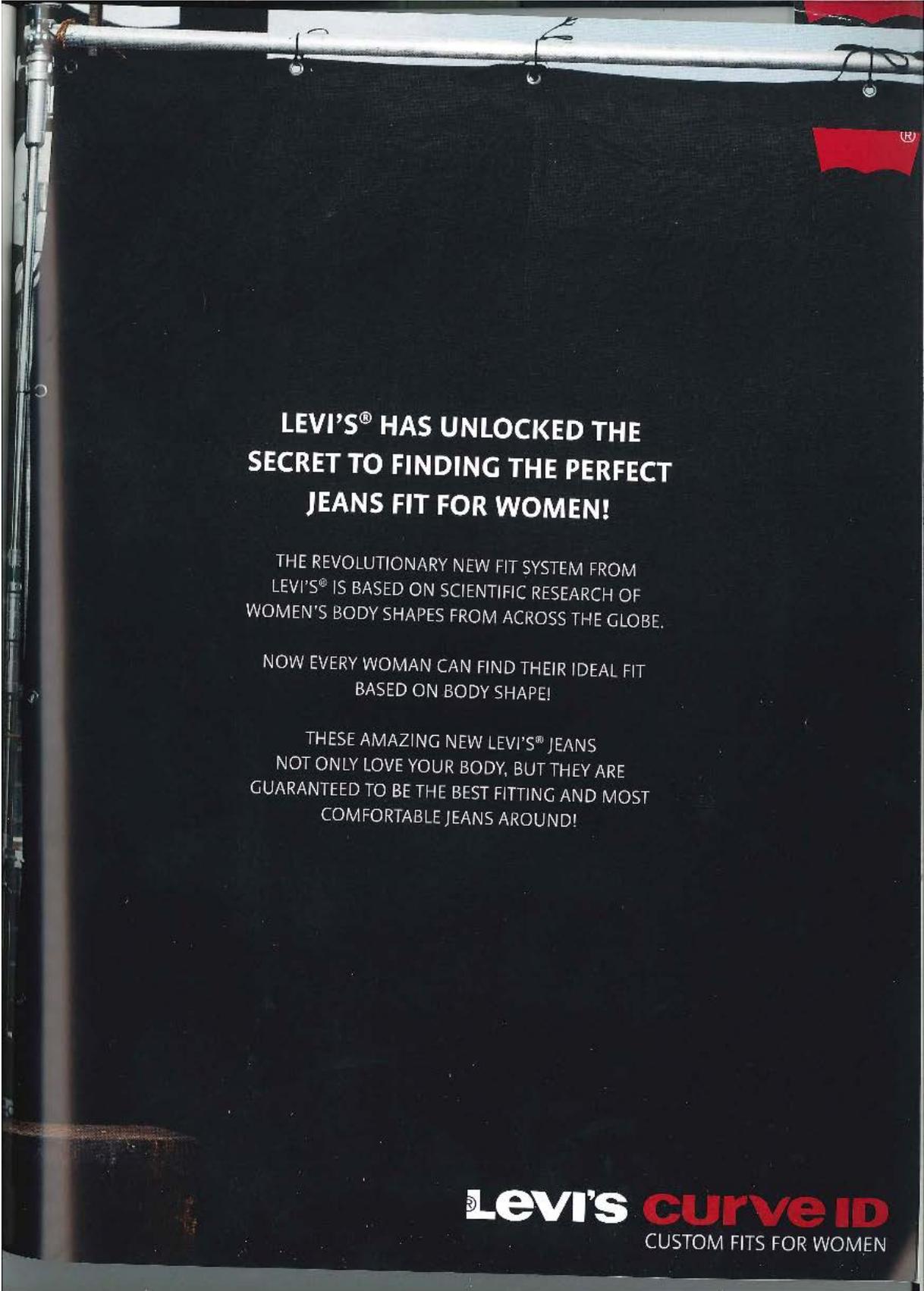
UP TO
**3 BRISTLES
PER LASH:**
**1 CATCHES
2 COATS
3 DE-CLUMPS**



MAYBELLINE[®]

NEW YORK

MAYBE SHE'S BORN WITH IT. MAYBE IT'S MAYBELLINE[®]
is wearing New Volum' Express[®] The One by One[™] Mascara In Blackest Black. © 2017 Maybelline LLC



**LEVI'S® HAS UNLOCKED THE
SECRET TO FINDING THE PERFECT
JEANS FIT FOR WOMEN!**

THE REVOLUTIONARY NEW FIT SYSTEM FROM
LEVI'S® IS BASED ON SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH OF
WOMEN'S BODY SHAPES FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE.

NOW EVERY WOMAN CAN FIND THEIR IDEAL FIT
BASED ON BODY SHAPE!

THESE AMAZING NEW LEVI'S® JEANS
NOT ONLY LOVE YOUR BODY, BUT THEY ARE
GUARANTEED TO BE THE BEST FITTING AND MOST
COMFORTABLE JEANS AROUND!

Levi's **curve ID**
CUSTOM FITS FOR WOMEN



LEXINGTON

Really into the Blue!

Summer is all about the sky, the breeze, the sun and the ocean.
 Enjoying endless hours on the beach or seaside porch.
 It's a time when outdoors comes indoors and indoors goes outdoors.
 Yes, life is easy now and there is really no need to make plans.
 Everyday comes with pleasant surprises.
 One thing is for sure – you never really know how many friends you have
 until you own a beach house.
 Welcome to our world, welcome to our dream.





Carrying a wee bit
too much **weight?**
Bulging handbag. Mobile phone.
Emotional baggage.

That's quite enough to schlep around, without
a heavy conditioner adding the
extra burden of follicle flatness.

But hark! Who's this tripping lightly into view?
Enter **Aussie 3 Minute Miracle**
deep conditioners.

Rich, bouncy, post-shampoo
pick-me-ups that leave you
buzzing with what we call
Luscious Light-ness.

With just one not-unpleasant side-effect:
light-headedness.

"There's more to life than hair but it's a good place to start."
[facebook.com/aussie](https://www.facebook.com/aussie)

