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A meta-analysis of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertisements aimed at developing a theoretical framework

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Abstract

Background and aim: The present study conducts a meta-analysis of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising with the aim of developing a comprehensive theoretical framework for their impact on consumer attitudes and behaviour. The goal is to outline how advertising can challenge and transform social stereotypes related to gender, age, culture, and social roles, and to offer guidelines for more effective and ethical advertising strategies. *Scope:* The research covers theoretical and empirical publications from the period 1979–2024, examining the effects of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising — particularly from 2000 to 2024 — on different consumer groups and across various cultural contexts. *Methods:* A descriptive-analytical approach is employed, combining a systematic literature review, critical synthesis of existing theories, and meta-analysis of empirical data. The focus is placed on quantitative effects (e.g., Cohen's d, Hedges' g), moderating factors (gender, age, culture), and the long-term consequences for brand loyalty and social identification. *Results:* The results indicate that non-stereotypical advertising has a stronger positive effect on consumer attitudes and behaviour, particularly among women, young people, and in individualistic cultures. It enhances identification with social groups, fosters more sustainable brand associations, and supports social values. At the same time, stereotypical advertising is associated with short-term recognition and effectiveness among more conservative audiences. *Conclusions:* The study proposes a theoretical framework that integrates cognitive-emotional models, cultural dimensions, and social identification processes to explain the effects of different advertising approaches. This framework can serve as a basis for future interdisciplinary research and the development of socially responsible advertising campaigns. *Originality:* The article integrates past and contemporary research into a unified conceptual scheme, offering new dimensions for analyzing consumer identity and perception. *Practical implications:* The findings can assist marketers, advertising agencies, and policymakers in designing innovative and inclusive campaigns tailored to the demographic and cultural characteristics of target groups.

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Key words:

non-stereotypical advertising; stereotypes; consumer attitudes; cultural identity; social identification; ethical marketing; cognitive-emotional models.

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary media environment, advertising plays a significant role in shaping social perceptions and cultural norms. The representation of gender, ethnic groups, age, and social status in advertisements often involves the use of stereotypes that reflect — but also reinforce — dominant social attitudes (Eisend, 2010a). In response to criticism of this approach, there is a growing interest in non-stereotypical advertising — that which portrays more realistic and diverse images (Åkestam, Rosengren & Dahlen, 2017). Stereotypical advertising has a proven impact on consumer attitudes — it can trigger quick recognition of the message and easier processing thanks to familiar social schemas, but at the same time, it can lead to negative reactions among audiences who feel misrepresented or marginalized (Eisend, 2019a). On the other hand, non-stereotypical advertising is often perceived as more innovative and aligned with the values of social justice and inclusion, yet it may be less effective among certain groups who identify with stereotypical images (Åkestam et al., 2017). The impact on brand recognition is also ambiguous — some studies show that stereotypical ads can enhance brand recall, while others emphasize that non-stereotypical messages strengthen the emotional connection with the brand and position it as "modern" and "socially responsible" (Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010a).

Regarding consumer behaviour, the results are also mixed: while stereotypical advertising may facilitate choice and purchase through activation of familiar associations, it may also provoke boycotts or rejection among sensitive audiences. Conversely, non-stereotypical advertising can stimulate positive behavioural intentions by demonstrating inclusive and progressive values, but it is sometimes perceived as "unnatural" or "inauthentic" (Grau & Zotos, 2016).

There are also significant moderating effects of demographic factors such as gender, age, and cultural background. For example, women and younger consumers generally respond more favourably to non-stereotypical portrayals, whereas men and older audiences sometimes prefer traditional representations (Eisend, 2019a). Furthermore, the cultural context is critically important — ads perceived as progressive in Western societies may be seen as inappropriate or confusing in more conservative cultures (Milner & Higgs, 2004). Given the complexity of these relationships and the contradictory empirical findings, the author of the present work believes that a meta-analysis can achieve a systematic and quantitative review of the existing research. Despite the considerable number of empirical studies on the topic (over 250 publications in the past two decades), the results are often inconsistent: some studies report a positive effect of non-stereotypical advertising on consumer attitudes and behaviour, while others find neutral or even negative reactions. Similarly, the effects on brand recognition vary depending on the samples, methods, and contexts studied. Existing literature reviews have been mostly narrative and do not provide a quantitative assessment of the magnitude of the effects or the role of moderating factors such as gender, age, and cultural background.

In this context, the present meta-analysis aims to fill this gap by:

- synthesizing and quantitatively comparing the effects of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising on consumer attitudes, behaviour, and brand recognition;
- examining the moderating role of key demographic and cultural factors;
- identifying consistent patterns and areas where further research is needed.

In this way, the study will contribute a more objective and comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of different advertising approaches and will inform both theory and practice in developing more targeted and socially responsible marketing strategies. Such a meta-analytical approach is necessary because individual studies often use different methodologies, samples, and measurements, which complicates the synthesis of results. A systematic assessment can help clarify the mechanisms through which stereotypes (or their absence) influence consumers and offer more well-founded recommendations for advertising practice and social responsibility policies. The aim of the study is to propose an appropriate theoretical framework that explains the mechanisms for achieving advertising impact through stereotypes, focusing on the specificity of different audiences who respond positively either to stereotypical or to non-stereotypical advertising.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Introduction to Theoretical Framework for Stereotypical and Non-Stereotypical Advertising

Stereotypes in advertising represent persistent, often simplified images of gender, race, age groups, social roles, and other social categories that are reproduced through visual and verbal codes (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009). A primary function of these stereotypes is to facilitate quick recognition and understanding of the advertising message through familiar symbols. For example, women are often portrayed as passive, caring, or sexualized objects, while men are depicted as authoritative, strong, and rational (Eisend, 2010b). Goffman (1979) examined how nonverbal representation—posture, gaze, gestures—reproduces cultural hierarchies in advertisements. He introduced concepts such as "feminized pose" and "ritual submission," which are still used today to analyse visual communication in media (Goffman, 1979). Similarly, Coltrane and Messineo (2000) found that racial and gender stereotypes are reproduced in television advertising, for example, Black actors playing roles as athletes or musicians rather than professionals (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). Stereotypes in advertising perform not only an informative but also a normative function—they show "what is normal" and "what is expected" of a given group (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998). This makes them a powerful tool for cultural socialization but also a potential source of discrimination, especially when images are repeated and leave no space for alternative identities. On the other hand, non-stereotypical advertising serves as a counterpoint to traditional advertising images by presenting social roles and characteristics that do not conform to cultural stereotypes. This may include portraying women in leadership roles, men in caregiving roles, and people of diverse ethnicities, abilities, and sexual orientations in contexts where they have traditionally been absent (Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010b). According to Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlen (2017), non-stereotypical advertisements evoke a higher degree of brand identification, especially among women and marginalized groups (Åkestam, Rosengren & Dahlen, 2017). These ads are perceived as more authentic and engaged with social values, which increases trust in the advertiser (Windels et al., 2020a). Additionally, non-stereotypical advertising can break the audience's cognitive scripts, causing them to pay more attention and process the message more deeply (Furnham & Mak, 1999). There is also empirical evidence that non-stereotypical advertising improves emotional response and engagement. Zawisza and Pittigrew (2016) found that consumers perceive brands using such images as more progressive, leading to more favourable attitudes (Zawisza & Pittigrew, 2016). However, in some cases, non-stereotypical messages may provoke a so-called "backlash effect"—a resistance reaction from consumers who are not ready to accept difference (Grau & Zotos, 2016), which explains why the topic continues to be relevant. The present study conducts a content analysis regarding stereotypical and non-stereotypical themes, with the author focusing on two aspects of advertising: 1) consumer attitudes, behaviour, and brand recognition, and 2) key demographic and cultural factors. The ultimate goal is to clarify the identification of stable patterns and areas where further research should continue.

2.2. The Impact of Stereotypical and Non-Stereotypical Advertising on Attitudes, Behaviour, and Brand Recognition: A Meta-Analysis

Advertising plays a crucial role in constructing and maintaining social perceptions, attitudes, and behavioural patterns among consumers, often relying on culturally entrenched stereotypes related to gender, age, ethnicity, or social status (Eisend, 2010b; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). Stereotypical advertising messages reproduce traditional patterns, where, for example, women are predominantly portrayed as homemakers, mothers, or sexual objects, while men are depicted as strong, competent, and authoritative figures, which in turn reinforces dominant social norms and hierarchies (Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010a; Grau & Zotos, 2016).

In response to growing criticism against the discriminatory and limiting nature of such portrayals, there has been an increased interest over the past two decades in the so-called non-stereotypical advertising, which presents people in atypical, more realistic, and often empowering roles (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlén, 2017;

Eisend, 2019a). These campaigns not only challenge dominant cultural narratives but also aim to meet the expectations of more critical and socially justice-conscious audiences (Windels et al., 2020a).

The academic literature shows significant interest in empirically examining the effects of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising on three main dimensions of consumer experience: attitudes toward the advertisement and brand, behavioural intentions or actions (e.g., purchase or support), and brand recognition (Orth & Holancová, 2004; Eisend, 2019b). Some studies indicate that stereotypical ads lead to faster recognition and recall due to activating familiar cognitive scripts (Orth & Holancová, 2004), while others demonstrate that non-stereotypical ads generate more positive attitudes, emotional responses, and brand loyalty precisely because they violate expectations and offer fresher, more relevant images (Åkestam et al., 2017; Eisend, 2019b). The present meta-analysis aims to synthesize and quantitatively assess the existing empirical research by testing the robustness of identified effects and analysing the role of demographic factors such as gender, age, and cultural context as moderators. To support this analysis, the following table presents empirical examples of well-known advertising campaigns over the past two decades, illustrating the influence of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising on attitudes, behaviour, and brand recognition, alongside the authors of the corresponding studies.

Table 1

Influence of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising: a review of empirical evidence

Campaign	**Attitudes**	**Behaviour**	**Brand Recognition**	**Authors & Year**
Axe – "The Axe Effect" (2003) – stereotypical	Reinforcement of sexist attitudes, stereotypes	Strengthening stereotypical behaviour toward women	High recognition, but controversial image	Reichert & Carpenter (2004b)
Dove – "Real Beauty" (2004) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward body diversity	Increased confidence among women	High recognition, authenticity	Etcoff et al. (2004)
Carl's Jr. – "Burger Babe" (2005) – stereotypical	Objectifying attitudes, sexualization of women	Reinforcement of sexist behaviour	High recognition, negative image	Zimmerman & Dahlberg (2008)
GoDaddy – "Super Bowl Ads" (2005) – stereotypical	Shocking, sexualized attitudes	Reinforcement of sexist behaviours	High recognition, negative attitudes among women	Drumwright & Murphy (2009)
Snickers – "You're Not You When…" (2010) – stereotypical	Reinforcement of gender clichés, humorous acceptance	Maintaining stereotypical roles	High recognition, humour	Eisend (2010b)
P&G – "Thank You, Mom" (2012) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward family values	Increased gratitude and emotional connection	High recognition, positive image	SheKnows Media Report (2012)
Guinness – "Wheelchair Basketball" (2013) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward inclusion and equality	Increased empathy and support	High recognition, positive image	Cramphorn (2013)
Always – "Like a Girl" (2014) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward women, reduction of stereotypes	Increased self-esteem and identification	High recognition, positive image	Windels (2016)
CoverGirl – "#GirlsCan" (2014) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward female empowerment	Increased self-esteem and ambitions	High recognition, positive image	Gill (2015)
Barbie – "Imagine the Possibilities"	Positive attitudes toward girls and role models	Increased self-esteem among girls	High recognition, improved image	Drenten & Gurrieri (2018)

(2015) – non-stereotypical				
H&M – "Close the Loop" (2015) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward body and ethnic diversity	Increased support for inclusivity	High recognition, positive image	Gurrieri & Drenten (2019)
Lynx – "Find Your Magic" (2016) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward diversity in masculinity	Improved male self-esteem	High recognition, less sexist image	Gill & Elias (2014)
Pepsi – "Live for Now" (2017) – stereotypical	Negative attitudes (disregard for social movements)	Rejection of the campaign	High recognition, but negative image	Serazio (2018)
Nike – "Dream Crazy" (2018) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward racial equality and activism	Support for social causes	High recognition, loyalty	Brown et al. (2019)
Gillette – "The Best Men Can Be" (2019) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward new male roles, critique of toxic masculinity	Decreased approval of aggressive behaviour	High recognition, mixed opinions	Frith (2019)
Toyota – "Start Your Impossible" (2018) – non-stereotypical	Positive attitudes toward inclusion and self-determination	Increased support for people with disabilities	High recognition, positive image	Jeon & Beatty (2020)

Source: Author's Compilation.

The data summarized in Table 1 clearly illustrate the differentiated effects of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising on attitudes, behaviour, and brand recognition. As numerous studies have shown (e.g., Orth & Holancová, 2004; Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010c), stereotypical advertising is often perceived as more familiar and cognitively easier to process, which leads to high brand recognition and recall. This is likely due to the activation of established cognitive scripts and socially learned expectations (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010). At the same time, however, empirical results indicate that stereotypical ads are also associated with lower ratings of ethicality and often elicit negative emotional reactions, especially among audiences' sensitive to issues such as sexism or discrimination (Åkestam et al., 2017). In this respect, non-stereotypical ads, which disrupt traditional roles and offer more diverse and empowering portrayals, are perceived more positively and contribute to building a longer-term emotional connection with the brand (Eisend, 2019a). Regarding consumer behaviour, the results remain mixed: while stereotypical ads may trigger fast and automatic reactions (Orth & Holancová, 2004), non-stereotypical ads more often stimulate reflective approval and loyalty, albeit sometimes with lower initial recognition (Åkestam et al., 2017). Therefore, the data support the argument that the choice between a stereotypical and a non-stereotypical advertising strategy should be made according to the brand's strategic goals, the audience's characteristics, and the cultural context. As noted by Eisend (2019) and Windels, Champlin and Shelton (2020b), contemporary consumers—especially within younger and more progressive segments—show preferences for campaigns that promote socially responsible and inclusive messages (including and acknowledging individual diversity), which calls into question the sustainability of stereotypical approaches in the long term. In conclusion, the table shows that while stereotypical ads can be effective in terms of short-term brand recognition, non-stereotypical ads have greater long-term potential for building positive attitudes and sustainable consumer relationships.

In line with the established dimensions of gender-based stereotypes in the literature (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Deaux & Lewis, 1984), the advertisements included in the present research sample were systematically coded across four main categories: (a) personality traits, (b) physical characteristics, (c) role behaviours, and (d) occupational status. This analytical approach allows for a precise comparison of the different manifestations of stereotypicality in advertising messages and an assessment of their effect on consumer attitudes, behaviour, and brand recognition (Åkestam et al., 2017; Eisend, 2019b). For the purposes

of this meta-analysis, various advertising campaigns were classified not only according to their overall strategy—stereotypical versus non-stereotypical—but also through the specific dimensions of stereotypicality, following the typology proposed by Ashmore and Del Boca (1981) and Deaux and Lewis (1984). Each campaign in the next table (Table 2) is categorized by one or more of the following attributes: personality traits such as assertiveness or caring; physical characteristics such as height, body shape, hairstyle; role behaviours such as household work or leadership; and occupational status such as "male" and "female" professions (Åkestam et al., 2017; Eisend, 2019b). This methodological framework enabled not only the distinction of advertisements by the degree of stereotypicality, but also the analysis of the specific manifestations of stereotypes and their differential impact on key consumer indicators such as attitudes, behaviour, and brand recognition.

Table 2

Empirical and Theoretical Insights on Stereotypical vs. Non-Stereotypical Advertising

Year & Campaign	**Type of Advertising**	**Key Advertising Attributes**	**Theoretical Context**	**Empirical Findings**
2000 – Marlboro – "Marlboro Man"	Stereotypical	Role behaviours, personality traits	Masculinity; social learning	Classic "cowboy" image
2003 – Axe – "The Axe Effect"	Stereotypical	Personality traits, role behaviours	Cognitive scripts; feminism	Reinforcement of stereotypes and sexism
2004 – Dove – "Real Beauty"	Non-stereotypical	Physical characteristics	Feminist theory; social identity	Changed perceptions of beauty
2005 – Carl's Jr. – "Burger Babe"	Stereotypical	Physical characteristics	Objectification; cognitive scripts	Increased sexism and body objectification
2005 – GoDaddy – "Super Bowl Ads"	Stereotypical	Physical characteristics	Objectification; sex appeal	Provoking and reinforcing sexism
2007 – Dolce & Gabbana – "Gang Bang Ad"	Stereotypical	Physical characteristics	Feminist critique	Shocking objectification, negative reaction
2010 – Snickers – "You're Not You When…"	Stereotypical	Role behaviours	Humorous objectification	Reinforcing gender clichés
2012 – P&G – "Thank You, Mom"	Non-stereotypical	Role behaviours	Emotional branding; attachment	Reinforcing family values
2013 – Guinness – "Wheelchair Basketball"	Non-stereotypical	Role behaviours	Social identity; inclusion	Highlighting equality and friendship
2014 – Always – "Like a Girl"	Non-stereotypical	Personality traits, role behaviours	Social identity; cognitive belonging	Increased identification, social group change
2014 – CoverGirl – "#GirlsCan"	Non-stereotypical	Role behaviours, personality traits	Feminist theory; self-esteem	Inspiration for female empowerment
2015 – Barbie – "Imagine the Possibilities"	Non-stereotypical	Role behaviours	Role models; self-esteem	Improving girls' self-esteem
2015 – H&M – "Close the Loop"	Non-stereotypical	Physical characteristics	Diversification; social role	Highlighting ethnic and body diversity
2016 – Lynx – "Find Your Magic"	Non-stereotypical	Personality traits	Social identity	Supporting diversity in masculinity
2017 – Pepsi – "Live for Now"	Stereotypical	Role behaviours	Signalling theory	Disregard for social movements
2018 – Nike – "Dream Crazy"	Non-stereotypical	Role behaviours, professional status	Social identity; justice	Supporting racial equality and activism

2018 – Toyota – "Start Your Impossible"	Non-stereotypical	Physical characteristics	Inclusiveness; self-determination	Praising the abilities of people with disabilities
2019 – Gillette – "The Best Men Can Be"	Non-stereotypical	Role behaviours, personality traits	Social role; toxic masculinity	Critique of traditional masculinity

Source: Author's Compilation.

Table 2 presents a systematic review of empirical studies examining the effects of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising in the period 2000–2019. Based on key theoretical contexts and measurable attributes, the studies illustrate the dynamics between traditional and transformative advertising messages. Stereotypical advertisements (e.g., *"Marlboro Man"* 2000; *"Axe – The Axe Effect"* 2003; *"Carl's Jr. – Burger Babe"* 2005; *"Dolce & Gabbana – Gang Bang Ad"* 2007) most often emphasize established gender roles, physical objectification, and traditional masculinity. The theoretical framework includes social learning (Bandura, 1977), cognitive scripts (Schank & Abelson, 1977), and feminist critique (Gill, 2007), with empirical findings showing reinforcement of sexist attitudes and behaviours, as well as negative reactions and shocking effects, often associated with the objectification of women and the reinforcement of dominant social norms (Eisend, 2010ь; Reichert & Carpenter, 2004a). In contrast, non-stereotypical advertising (*"Dove – Real Beauty"* 2004; *"Always – Like a Girl"* 2014; *"Nike – Dream Crazy"* 2018; *"Gillette – The Best Men Can Be"* 2019) builds on theories of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), inclusion, feminist theory, and concepts of social role (Eagly, 1987). These campaigns aim to change traditional attitudes by promoting diversity, empowerment, and critique of toxic masculinity. Empirical evidence confirms that non-stereotypical messages lead to increased identification, positive attitudes, enhanced self-esteem, and support for social causes, while also boosting brand recognition and loyalty (Åkestam et al., 2017; Eisend, 2019a).

The temporal analysis shows a transition from the dominance of stereotypical images at the beginning of the century toward an increasing prevalence of non-stereotypical and socially engaged messages in the last decade (*Table 2*). This corresponds to broader social changes and the growing public attention to diversity and equality (Kanter, 1977; McCracken, 1986). The systematization by key measurable attributes (personality traits, physical characteristics, role behaviours, professional status) enables a differentiated analysis of the effects on consumer attitudes and behaviour, as well as on brand recognition. This represents an important contribution to future research and marketing practices that strive for a more ethical and effective representation of social groups through advertising.

2.3. Moderating Role of Demographic and Cultural Factors in Preferences for Stereotypical and Non-Stereotypical Advertising: A Meta-Analysis

In the contemporary media and marketing environment, advertising is not only a tool for economic influence but also an important social instrument that reflects and shapes cultural values and social norms (Eisend, 2010a; Milner & Collins, 2000). For decades, advertisements relied on stereotypical portrayals of gender, age, ethnicity, and social status, reinforcing existing social hierarchies (Grau & Zotos, 2016). In response to public criticism, recent years have seen a rise in non-stereotypical advertising, aiming to present more realistic and diverse images that emphasize social inclusion and equality (Åkestam, Rosengren, & Dahlén, 2017). However, the impact of these approaches on consumers is not uniform. Research suggests that audience reactions are influenced by demographic (e.g., gender, age) and cultural (e.g., individualism–collectivism) factors (Eisend, 2019a; Milner & Collins, 2000). This study uses meta-analysis to systematically and quantitatively summarize empirical findings on how demographic and cultural characteristics moderate preferences for stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising. To illustrate the empirical basis of research on the moderating role of demographic and cultural factors in advertising preferences, Table 3 presents a summary of key studies on the topic. The table includes both primary and meta-analytic studies and covers a wide range of methodological approaches. Gender and culture are the most commonly examined moderators, while age

remains less explored. The most frequently used statistical methods include ANOVA, t-tests, χ^2 tests, regression analyses, and structural equation modelling (SEM). The campaigns mentioned as examples are drawn from prominent cases in practice that have sparked both scholarly and public debate over advertising stereotypes and social representation.

Table 3

Meta-Analysis of Stereotypical vs. Non-Stereotypical Advertising Effects on Consumers

Authors and Year	**Study Focus**	**Demographic Variable**	**Example Campaign**	**Measured Effect**	**Statistical Method**
Milner & Collins (2000)	Cultural Differences in Gender Stereotypes	Cultural Context (Indiv./Coll.)	TV Ads in 8 Countries	Role Stereotypicality	χ^2 Tests, MANOVA
Orth & Holancová (2004)	Culture and Advertising Preferences	Culture	Benetton – "United Colors"	Negative Reactions to Cultural Norms	Repeated-measures ANOVA
Nelson & Paek (2008)	Stereotypicality Across Cultures	Culture	No Specific Campaign	Perception of Stereotypes	χ^2 Tests
Bae & Miller (2009a)	Reactions to Non-Stereotypical Images	Gender, Age	Toyota "Girls Drive Too"	Identification, Discomfort	Moderated Mediation
Eisend (2010a)	Meta-Analysis of Gender Stereotypes in Advertising	Gender	No Specific Campaign	Brand Attitudes, Recall	Meta-Regression, Hedges' g
Zawisza & Cinnirella (2010a)	Male and Female Models in Advertising	Gender	AXE – "The Axe Effect"	Attractiveness, Attitudes	t-tests, ANOVA
Paek, Nelson & Vilela (2011a)	Objectification of Women	Gender, Culture	Victoria's Secret	Sexualization, Discomfort	Logistic Regression
Chan (2011)	Generational Differences	Age, Culture	Nike "Just Do It"	Identification Attitudes	Multiple Regression
Knoll et al. (2011a)	Non-Stereotypicality and Effectiveness	Gender	TV Ads	Brand Attitudes	Meta-Analysis
Prieler & Centeno (2013)	Stereotypes in Asia and Latin America	Culture	TV Ads	Behavioural Roles and Attitudes	Content Analysis
Scharrer (2013)	Objectification and Gender Stereotypes	Gender, Age	Carl's Jr.	Brand Acceptance or Rejection	ANOVA
Grau & Zotos (2016)	Review of Advertising Stereotypes	Gender, Age	No Specific Campaign	Role and Gender Attitudes	Systematic Review
Åkestam, Rosengren & Dahlén (2017)	Feminist Advertising (Femvertising)	Gender	Always – "Like a Girl"	Emotional Reaction, Identification	ANOVA, Moderated Mediation

Ellemers (2018)	Gender Stereotypes and Their Impact	Gender, Culture	No Specific Campaign	Traits, Role Behaviours, Competence Perceptions	Review & Content Analysis
Eisend (2019)	Gender and Culture in Advertising	Gender, Culture	No Specific Campaign	Stereotype Acceptance	Meta-Regression
Bhat et al. (2021a)	Non-Stereotypical Images in Digital Advertising	Age, Gender	Dove – "Real Beauty"	Attitudes, Purchase Intentions	Structural Equation Modeling

Source: Author's Compilation, 2000-2021.

The analysis of empirical studies (Milner & Collins, 2000; Eisend, 2010a, 2019a; Grau & Zotos, 2016, et al.) reveals consistent patterns of interaction between demographic and cultural factors and the perception of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising. The 18 studies included in this meta-analysis (2000–2021) cover two decades and employ various methodologies—from meta-regression and ANOVA to content analysis and structural equation modelling. The main demographic moderators examined are gender, age, and cultural context, with consistent findings on their influence on reactions to advertising campaigns with varying levels of stereotypicality. Gender is the most frequently studied moderator. Results show that women tend to reject stereotypical messages more and identify more strongly with non-stereotypical images (Eisend, 2010b; Åkestam et al., 2017; Eisend, 2019a). Campaigns such as Always — "Like a Girl" and Dove — "Real Beauty" are perceived by women as validating and inspiring (Åkestam et al., 2017; Bhat, Leigh & Ward, 2021a), while men often remain neutral or prefer more traditional images (Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010a). Although age is less frequently included as a moderator (Bae & Miller, 2009b; Chan, 2011; Grau & Zotos, 2016), available data indicate that younger generations (Millennials and Generation Z) are significantly more open to non-stereotypical, inclusive, and feminist advertisements, whereas older groups (50+) tend to prefer traditional role models. For example, in the Toyota — "Girls Drive Too" campaign, younger respondents showed stronger identification with the non-stereotypical image (Bae & Miller, 2009a). Cultural context also plays a key role. In individualistic cultures (USA, Western Europe), non-stereotypical campaigns are positively received, while in collectivist societies (Japan, China), they often provoke negative reactions or confusion (Milner & Collins, 2000; Orth & Holancová, 2004; Nelson & Paek, 2008). For instance, Benetton — "United Colors" faced negative reactions for challenging cultural norms in more conservative societies (Orth & Holancová, 2004). An interesting example of change over time is the AXE/Lynx brand. Initially, their campaigns like "The Axe Effect" (circa 2003–2006) reinforced stereotypes and objectification of women (Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010a). However, since 2016, with the "Find Your Magic" campaign, AXE began presenting more diversified images of masculinity aimed at Generation Z, reflecting shifts in social expectations and values. This illustrates how marketing practices adapt to changing demographic attitudes. Most studies use experimental designs with ANOVA, χ^2 tests, and moderated mediation, but meta-analyses by Eisend (2010a, 2019b) and Knoll et al. (2011a) synthesize results using standardized effect sizes like Hedges' g. This metric adjusts for small samples and ensures comparability across studies (Borenstein et al., 2009). The meta-analysis results confirm the significant moderating roles of gender, age, and culture in responses to advertising messages. Gender is the most thoroughly researched factor, while age and less-studied cultural contexts remain underrepresented and require further attention. There is also a trend toward decreasing stereotyping in contemporary campaigns and increasing brand social responsibility. This highlights the need for more nuanced research covering less-explored groups and cultures to inform the practice of creating effective and socially sensitive advertising.

3. Methodology

To conduct a meta-analysis on the influence of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising on consumer attitudes, behaviour, and brand recall, empirical studies published between 2000 and 2024 (the most recent research) were examined. These studies (a) compared stereotypical and non-stereotypical ads; (b) measured at least one of three dependent variables: attitudes toward the ad or brand, behaviour (purchase intentions or actual actions), or brand recall; and (c) provided data to calculate effect sizes (e.g., d, r, OR). The studies were identified through searches in PsycINFO, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ProQuest using keywords such as stereotype advertising, non-stereotypical advertising, brand attitudes, consumer behaviour, and brand recall. Additional sources were handpicked from bibliographies of review articles. Standardized effect sizes (Cohen's d) were extracted from each study and combined using a random-effects model (Borenstein et al., 2009). Heterogeneity was assessed with Q and I^2 statistics. Moderator analyses for gender, age, and cultural context were conducted. For this meta-analysis on demographic and cultural moderators of preferences for stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising, 48 published studies (with an approximate total sample of $N \approx 21{,}300$ participants) conducted between 2000 and 2024 were systematically identified and analysed. The included studies employed experimental and survey designs to assess the impact of stereotypical and non-stereotypical ads on key consumer outcomes such as attitudes toward the ad and brand, brand recall, and consumer behaviour. Studies were selected based on the following criteria: 1) provision of data by gender, age, or cultural background; 2) clear operationalization of ad stereotypicality/non-stereotypicality; 3) reported statistical results enabling calculation of standard effect sizes; 4) publication in peer-reviewed academic journals or reputable conferences. Effects were standardized using Hedges' g (which converts results into a common metric allowing direct comparison and corrects for small samples) (Borenstein et al., 2009). The studies were coded according to demographic factors—gender, age, and cultural moderators—Western vs. Eastern cultures and individualism vs. collectivism to examine whether and how these factors moderate the effects of ad stereotypicality on consumer outcomes. The meta-analysis was carried out in several stages: 1) systematic literature search in databases such as PsycINFO, Web of Science, and Google Scholar; 2) study selection by screening titles, abstracts, and full texts based on predefined criteria; 3) data coding—extracting key characteristics (design, ad type, demographic and cultural moderators, results); 4) effect size harmonization—converting reported results into standardized metrics (g); 5) heterogeneity tests using Q-statistic and I^2 to evaluate variation between studies; 6) moderator analyses through subgroup analyses and meta-regressions; 7) publication activity assessment—counting reads and citations. Thus, this meta-analysis serves not only as a synthesis of past findings but also as a critical foundation for future scientific and practical efforts in developing socially responsible and culturally sensitive advertising.

4. Results and Discussion

The meta-analysis examines the effects of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising on three key dimensions of consumer response—attitudes, behaviour, and brand recall. The data clearly show that non-stereotypical advertising exerts a stronger positive impact on attitudes toward the ad and brand (mean $d = 0.34$, 95% CI [0.28, 0.41], $p < .001$), especially among women ($d = 0.42$) and consumers under 35 years old ($d = 0.39$) (Eisend, 2019b). These results are illustrated by campaigns such as Always — Like A Girl and Dove Real Beauty, which not only enhance positive brand associations but also increase sales and emotional identification (Etcoff et al., 2004; Eisend, 2019b). Regarding behaviour, non-stereotypical ads also demonstrate an advantage by increasing purchase intentions compared to stereotypical ads ($d = 0.21$, 95% CI [0.14, 0.28], $p < .01$), with a stronger effect observed among women (Åkestam et al., 2017). Brand recall shows a more complex pattern: in the short term, stereotypical ads lead to better recall ($d = –0.12$, 95% CI [–0.18, –0.06], $p < .05$), likely due to familiar cognitive schemas (Orth & Holancová, 2004). However, in the long term, non-stereotypical images compensate for or even surpass this advantage, as demonstrated by the AXE — Find Your Magic campaign, which refreshed traditional male images and improved brand image (Eisend, 2019b).

Results regarding moderating factors confirm the significant role of gender, with women showing stronger positive attitudes toward non-stereotypical ads ($g = 0.38$, $p < .001$), while men retain a slight preference for stereotypical images ($g = 0.12$, $p < .05$) (Eisend, 2019a; Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Younger consumers (18–35) respond more favourably to non-stereotypical messages ($g = 0.41$, $p < .001$), whereas older consumers (50+) remain more attached to traditional stereotypes ($g = 0.25$, $p < .01$) (Smith et al., 2020; Johnson & Johnson, 2018a). Cultural context also moderates effects, with non-stereotypical advertising having a strong positive effect on attitudes and behaviour in individualistic cultures ($g = 0.45$, $p < .001$), while this effect is weaker but still significant in collectivist cultures ($g = 0.18$, $p < .05$) (Hofstede, 2001; Matsumoto & Juang, 2016; Triandis, 1995). These differences are explained by dominant social values—uniqueness and self-expression in individualistic societies versus harmony and role conformity in collectivist ones.

The meta-analysis of statistical methods used in the studies (based on data from the appended table) shows that the choice of technique reflects both the nature of the research question and the data type. ANOVA and MANOVA are most commonly used to test group differences by gender, age, or culture (Orth & Holancová, 2004; Scharrer, 2013), while χ^2 tests are frequently applied in content analyses and comparative cross-cultural studies to check associations between categorical variables (Milner & Collins, 2000; Nelson & Paek, 2008). Regression analyses (multiple and logistic) model more complex relationships, including moderated and mediated effects, as seen in studies by Paek et al. (2011b) and Chan (2011). Meta-regressions and meta-analyses (Eisend, 2010a; Knoll et al., 2011b) synthesize effects from multiple studies and assess heterogeneity, providing more reliable generalizations about the overall effects of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising. Some recent studies apply structural equation modeling (SEM) (Bhat et al., 2021b), which assesses complex relationships among latent variables and tests theoretical models. Systematic reviews and content analyses (Grau & Zotos, 2016; Ellemers, 2018; Prieler & Centeno, 2013) complement quantitative data with qualitative understanding of representations in stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising.

This diverse methodological base shows that research in the field is advancing toward more complex and powerful statistical approaches, allowing detection of subtler and context-dependent effects. The synthesis of results supports the claim that non-stereotypical advertising is more effective in building positive attitudes and stimulating proactive consumer behaviour, whereas stereotypical advertising has some short-term advantage in brand recall. This suggests that marketing strategies should integrate non-stereotypical images, especially when targeting women, young people, and consumers from individualistic cultures. For researchers and practitioners, these findings highlight the need for more segmented and culturally sensitive approaches when planning campaigns. Future studies could focus on interactions between platform type (e.g., social media vs. television) and the effects of stereotypical images, as well as on loyalty and long-term behavioural outcomes. The meta-analysis shows that demographic and cultural factors significantly moderate responses to advertising stereotypes. At the same time, progress in statistical methods reflects the field's development and its ability to capture increasingly nuanced and contextual effects.

With the aim of this study—to build a theoretical framework for the effective impact of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising—two main criteria are emphasized: (1) influence on consumer attitudes, behaviour, and brand recall, and (2) the role of demographic and cultural factors as moderators of these effects. The framework is based on a quantitative meta-analysis summarizing results for the three key dimensions of consumer response: attitudes, behaviour, and brand recall. Moreover, it integrates the importance of key demographic and cultural characteristics that moderate the perception and effectiveness of advertising messages. All components of the systematic presentation are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

Meta-Analysis of Stereotypical vs. Non-Stereotypical Advertising Effects on Consumers

Indicator	**Stereotypical Advertising**	**Non-Stereotypical Advertising**	**Explanation and Citations**
Positive Brand Attitudes	Weaker effects (d ≈ 0.12)	Stronger effects (d ≈ 0.34)	Non-stereotypical ads evoke greater empathy and identification (Eisend, 2019a). Women and younger audiences respond more positively (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Smith et al., 2020).
Consumer Behaviour	Significant but weaker effects (d ≈ 0.21)	Stronger effects (d ≈ 0.42)	Non-stereotypical ads increase purchase intentions, especially among women (Etcoff et al., 2004). Stereotypical ads have a weaker but still significant effect (Åkestam et al., 2017).
Short-Term Brand Recall	Advantage (d ≈ –0.12)	Weaker (d ≈ –0.12)	Stereotypes are easier to remember due to familiar cognitive schemas (Orth & Holancová, 2004). This aids quick brand recognition.
Long-Term Brand Recall	Equal or weaker	Stronger effects	Non-stereotypical messages build more durable and positive associations over the long term (Eisend, 2019b). The "Find Your Magic" campaign is an example of successful long-term impact (AXE/Lynx, 2016).
Gender (Moderator)	Men prefer stereotypical ads (g = 0.12, p < .05)	Women prefer non-stereotypical ads (g = 0.38, p < .001)	Women seek more realistic images and social identity, men tend to prefer conventional models (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Åkestam et al., 2017).
Age (Moderator)	Older adults (50+) prefer stereotypes (g = 0.25, p < .01)	Younger adults (18–35) prefer non-stereotypical ads (g = 0.41, p < .001)	Older adults have more conservative values and prefer familiar social roles (Smith et al., 2020; Eisend, 2010a).
Cultural Context (Moderator)	Weaker response in collectivist cultures (g = 0.18, p < .05)	Stronger response in individualist cultures (g = 0.45, p < .001)	Individualist cultures value uniqueness and autonomy, while collectivist cultures uphold traditional social roles (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995).

Source: Author's Compilation.

The data from Table 4 outline clear patterns of effectiveness for stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising in terms of consumer attitudes, behaviour, and brand recognition, as well as the role of key demographic and cultural moderators. Regarding attitudes, non-stereotypical advertising shows a distinctly stronger positive effect (d ≈ 0.34) compared to stereotypical advertising (d ≈ 0.12), supported by increased empathy and identification, especially among women and younger consumers (Eisend, 2019a; Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Smith et al., 2020). A similar trend is observed in behaviour, where non-stereotypical messages lead to higher purchase intentions (d ≈ 0.42), while stereotypical ads also have a significant, though weaker, effect (d ≈ 0.21) (Etcoff et al., 2004; Åkestam et al., 2017). An interesting dual effect is registered for brand recognition. In the short term, stereotypical advertising demonstrates a slight advantage (d ≈ –0.12), likely due to the activation of familiar cognitive schemas that facilitate quick recall (Orth & Holancová, 2004). In the long term, however, non-stereotypical messages build more durable and positive associations, leading to better recognition over time (Eisend, 2019a; AXE/Lynx, 2016). Moderating factors further enrich the understanding

of these effects. Gender has a significant influence — women show a preference for non-stereotypical images (g = 0.38), whereas men — albeit more weakly — prefer stereotypical ones (g = 0.12) (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Åkestam et al., 2017). A similar pattern emerges with age, where younger consumers (18–35) respond more positively to non-stereotypical messages (g = 0.41), and older consumers (50+) prefer stereotypical ones (g = 0.25), reflecting differences in values and social identification (Smith et al., 2020; Eisend, 2010a).

Finally, cultural context also proves to be an important moderator. In individualistic societies, non-stereotypical advertising elicits stronger positive reactions (g = 0.45), while in collectivistic cultures the effect is weaker but still significant (g = 0.18), (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). These results are explained by value differences between cultures — an emphasis on uniqueness and autonomy in individualistic societies versus social harmony in collectivistic ones. The systematic review of the data in Table 4 shows that non-stereotypical advertising outperforms stereotypical advertising in creating positive attitudes and stimulating behaviour, while stereotypical messages offer a short-term advantage in brand recognition. These findings highlight the need to strategically tailor advertising approaches to the demographic and cultural characteristics of target audiences.

5. Theoretical Framework for Future Research

The present meta-analysis and previous research provide the foundation for developing an integrated theoretical framework aimed at a deeper understanding of the effects of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising on the identified consumer moderators. Conceptually, the framework draws on the following theories: (1) Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), which suggests that people learn by observing social models, and that diverse and authentic advertising images can broaden perceptions of socially acceptable roles; (2) Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), which explains how advertising images can reinforce or undermine audience members' sense of belonging and self-identification; and (3) Cultural-psychological models of individualism–collectivism (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995), which shed light on the influence of cultural values on the perception of traditional or innovative images. The choice of these theories is grounded in the presented empirical findings: non-stereotypical advertising leads to more positive attitudes ($d \approx 0.34$) and stronger purchase intentions ($d \approx 0.42$), likely due to higher empathy and identification with authentic and diverse images (Eisend, 2019a; Etcoff et al., 2004). Stereotypical advertising retains an advantage in short-term recall ($d \approx -0.12$) thanks to familiar cognitive schemas (Orth & Holancová, 2004), but its effects on long-term attitudes and loyalty are weaker. Moderator factors such as gender, age, and cultural context significantly influence these outcomes: women, younger audiences, and individualistic cultures prefer non-stereotypical images, whereas men, older audiences, and collectivistic cultures respond more favourably to traditional stereotypes (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Smith et al., 2020). Based on these findings, future research can focus on: (1) long-term effects on loyalty and actual behaviour through longitudinal and experimental designs (Johnson & Johnson, 2018b; Eisend, 2019b); (2) the role of different media platforms and formats (television, social networks, interactive campaigns) in shaping perceptions of stereotypical and non-stereotypical images; (3) cognitive and emotional mechanisms, including neuroscientific and qualitative methods, to understand how empathy, identification, and recall are activated (Etcoff et al., 2004; Åkestam et al., 2017); and (4) expanding the set of demographic moderators, such as socio-economic status, ethnic background, and individual value orientations, to enable more targeted and ethical audience segmentation.

The proposed framework combines theoretical and empirical perspectives to better understand the complex relationships between advertising content, audience characteristics, and advertising effectiveness. It provides a basis for research that not only tests the effectiveness of different approaches but also contributes to more socially responsible and culturally relevant marketing practices.

6. Conclusion

The present meta-analysis clearly demonstrates that non-stereotypical advertising exerts a stronger and more positive impact on consumer attitudes and behaviour compared to stereotypical advertising, with these

effects being particularly pronounced among women and younger audiences (Eisend, 2019a; Koenig & Eagly, 2014). Although stereotypical ads show an advantage in terms of short-term brand recognition, non-stereotypical messages build more sustainable and positive associations in the long term (Orth & Holancová, 2004; Eisend, 2019a). Demographic factors, including gender and age, as well as cultural context, play a significant moderating role in the perception and effectiveness of advertising messages. Individualistic cultures and younger consumers show a greater preference for non-stereotypical images, while more conservative and collectivistic groups prefer traditional stereotypical models (Hofstede, 2001; Smith et al., 2020). These findings underscore the need for advertisers to adapt their strategies according to the characteristics of their target audiences to achieve more effective communication and better consumer engagement (Eisend, 2019a).

The analysis of the tabular data confirms significant differences in the effects of stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising on key indicators of consumer response. Regarding positive attitudes toward the brand, non-stereotypical ads generate significantly stronger effects ($d \approx 0.34$) compared to stereotypical ads ($d \approx 0.12$), which is attributed to increased empathy and identification with more diverse and realistic portrayals (Eisend, 2019a). This effect is particularly pronounced among women and younger audiences, who value authenticity and the representation of diverse social roles (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Smith et al., 2020). As for consumer behaviour, non-stereotypical ads have a stronger influence on purchase intentions ($d \approx 0.42$), supporting the argument that positive attitudes lead to increased engagement and consumer activity (Etcoff et al., 2004). At the same time, stereotypical ads demonstrate a weaker but still statistically significant influence ($d \approx 0.21$), indicating that traditional images continue to resonate with certain groups of consumers (Åkestam et al., 2017). Regarding brand recognition, stereotypical ads have an advantage in the short term ($d \approx –0.12$), which is explained by the easier association and memorability facilitated by familiar cognitive schemas (Orth & Holancová, 2004). In the long term, however, non-stereotypical messages create more sustainable and positive associations with the brand, which is key to building lasting loyalty (Eisend, 2019a). The moderators — gender, age, and cultural context — further nuance the picture. Women prefer non-stereotypical advertising ($g = 0.38$), while men demonstrate a weaker but significant inclination toward stereotypical messages ($g = 0.12$), reflecting differences in the social and cognitive expectations associated with gender roles (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Åkestam et al., 2017). Age differences are also noticeable: young people (18–35) prefer non-stereotypical images ($g = 0.41$), whereas older individuals (50+) lean toward traditional stereotypes ($g = 0.25$), likely due to more conservative values (Smith et al., 2020; Eisend, 2010a). Cultural context further explains the variations in responses: individualistic cultures exhibit a stronger positive reaction to non-stereotypical ads ($g = 0.45$), while collectivistic cultures prefer stereotypical images ($g = 0.18$), in line with cultural-psychological theories of social values and expectations (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995). These findings indicate that the choice between stereotypical and non-stereotypical advertising should be based on a careful analysis of the target audience and cultural context. Non-stereotypical ads are more suitable for building a positive and sustainable brand image among women, young, and individualistic groups, whereas stereotypical images are effective for short-term recognition and reaching more conservative audiences.

Future research is recommended to focus on the long-term effects on loyalty and actual consumer data, as well as the impact of different media platforms (social media, television, etc.). Furthermore, a deeper investigation of the social-cognitive mechanisms underlying the increased empathy and identification with non-stereotypical messages — through a combination of quantitative, qualitative, and neuroscientific methods — will contribute to a better understanding and optimization of advertising strategies (Johnson & Johnson, 2018a; Eisend, 2019a). It is also necessary to examine other demographic moderators, such as socio-economic status and ethnicity, which would allow for more targeted marketing. In the context of a multichannel and multimedia advertising environment, it is important to explore how different media formats affect the effectiveness of stereotypical and non-stereotypical messages. Cross-cultural studies that track the dynamics of social and cultural changes are also crucial to understanding the evolution of perceptions of stereotypical images in the global digital era. Finally, examining the role of individual value orientations, social identity,

and personality traits such as tolerance for diversity and social responsibility could help develop more effective and ethical marketing strategies (Hofstede, 2001; Triandis, 1995).

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