Out of the Closet into Public Invisibility

An Analysis of the Portrayal of 'Lesbianism' in Advertising

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Abstract

Previous studies have shown that lesbian women are frequently under- as well as misrepresented in the media. As a socialising agent, the media plays an important role in the construction of sexual identities and can influence the public perception of lesbian women. Thus, the media can not only impact how lesbian women see themselves but also how they are seen by others. Also, not only the media but also academia has paid the sexual minority group little attention. The present study aimed to address this marginalisation and discrimination, as well as the gap in current research by exploring the contemporary presentation of 'lesbianism' in advertisements released between 2010 and 2020. A qualitative research approach was chosen which included the thematic analysis of 40 video advertisements produced in various 'Western' countries by 40 different consumer brands from 15 sectors. Four themes were identified as they were frequently discussed in the advertisements. The themes include that one phenotype of lesbian women that is feminine, Caucasian, slim and middle-aged was primarily featured in the advertisements. Furthermore, many advertisements discussed negative responses from society or family members to 'lesbianism'. However, most of the analysed advertisements ended on a positive note as they presented an emotional shift from a lack of acceptance of homosexuality to acceptance. The third theme addresses the explicitness with which the advertisements communicated homosexuality. Most lesbian women were presented in committed relationships and few advertisements presented homosexuality with ambiguity. Lastly, a focus on love was found which was communicated through the advertisements' slogans and title songs. The influence of heteronormativity on- and companies' economic motivation for the presentation of 'lesbianism' in advertising were evaluated throughout the analysis. Overall, the present study critically engaged with the portrayal of 'lesbianism' in advertising and found that the promotion of inclusiveness and diversity was often part of strategic corporate social responsibility campaigns. Furthermore, it can be argued that heterosexism and other social biases influenced the production of the analysed advertisements. Portrayals of 'lesbianism' often aligned with general trends in 'Western' advertising which means that lesbian women were in many regards presented like women in advertising more generally.

Keywords: Queer Studies, Feminist Studies, Gender, Advertising, Heteronormativity, CSR

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction

Visibility of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other sexual identities (LGBTQ+) community has significantly increased in 'Western' societies as activists' voices have become louder and social rights movements calling for equality have gained a growing amount of support over the last two decades (Ghaziani, Taylor, & Stone, 2016). Not only have LGBTQ+ minority groups been the centre of political debates, but they have also received a rising amount of media attention and advertisers have started to approach them as a target audience (Ginder & Byun, 2015). One reason for these marketing efforts is the buying power of the LGBTQ+ community which is estimated to be at $1 trillion in the U.S. alone (Schneider & Auten, 2018). However, despite a greater focus on targeting LGBTQ+ consumers, advertisers have been found to be selective in their portrayal of sexual minority groups as previous studies have shown that gay men are presented disproportionally often in comparison to other sexual minority groups (Baxter, 2010; Nölke, 2018). This overrepresentation can be explained by marketers' assumptions that gay men have a high discretionary income, a vast amount of free time, and that they are brand- and style consciousness which is why they are frequently referred to as the 'dream market' (Baxter, 2010). The dominant portrayal of gay men in advertising leaves little space for the portrayal of lesbian women. This group has been found to be under- as well as misrepresented in advertising (Descubes, McNamara, & Bryson, 2018; Nölke, 2018). A study that reflects this issue has been conducted among lesbian women in the UK and found that only 21% of the participants believed that they are accurately represented by advertising (Roderick, 2017). Research has pointed out that a reason for the lack of lesbian women in advertising could be that this group is frequently thought to have a low discretionary income and is critical of capitalism which makes them less attractive to marketers (Nölke, 2018). Furthermore, not only the small number of lesbians that is featured in advertising but also a marginalised portrayal of this small number of lesbian women presents an issue. The marginalised portrayal is related to the finding by previous research that the sexual minority group is often presented in stereotypical ways and that there is little diversity within these stereotypes (Levitt & Hiestand, 2004; Nölke, 2018). Further contributing to the problem of a limited and distorted portrayal is the finding by Tsai (2012) that advertisers often prefer portraying homosexuality implicitly and ambiguously as they leave the sexuality of the featured models open for interpretation. Tsai (2012) explains that advertisers perceive ambiguity to be the least 'risky' way to attract the LGBTQ+ community as ambiguous portrayals might also be appealing to other consumers.

Even though societal acceptance of homosexuality in 'Western' countries has increased over the past years, homosexuals are still frequently confronted with discrimination, for instance when it comes to marriage equality or their professional career (OECD, 2019; The Williams Institute, 2019). As a socialising agent, the media, and advertising specifically, can shape public perception as well as the self-perception of sexual minority groups (Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015; Reddy-Best & Jones, 2020). Thus, advertising can contribute to more public acceptance of homosexuals and thereby contribute to their equality. However, this requires a diverse and non-stereotypical presentation of homosexuality that addresses the discrimination that homosexuals are confronted with.

This research aims to address the under- and misrepresentation of lesbian women in advertisements by exploring the following research question *'How has 'lesbianism' been portrayed in advertising published between 2010 and 2020?'*. The time frame was set to ensure that the analysed advertisements reflect the contemporary presentation of 'lesbianism'.

The research was conducted from a social constructionist perspective as it explores the construction of 'lesbianism' in advertising. This approach includes that the data was interpreted to identify underlying meanings and patterns related to the concept of 'lesbianism'. The described characteristics are typical for qualitative research (Babbie, 2014). The qualitative method that was chosen is thematic analysis which aims to identify and interpret key features of data and which is characterised by its flexibility and openness (Clarke & Braun, 2017). In thematic analysis, data is explored through the creation of themes and codes which aim to categorise the data (Clarke & Braun, 2017). This research method was found to be the best approach to look into the topic of 'lesbianism' in advertising as it gives the researcher the necessary freedom to explore various linked concepts (see Methodology chapter).

1.1. Scientific and Societal Relevance

The following section will explain the scientific- as well as the societal relevance of the research. Sexual minorities in advertising have received little academic attention thus far which explains the scientific relevance of the topic. A majority of research that exists on this group investigates sexual minorities as a whole and does not distinguish between different sexualities (Nölke, 2018). This generalisation has been subject to academic critique as sexual minorities include a variety of subgroups with different characteristics. Therefore, LGBTQ+ individuals should not be viewed as a homogenous whole but the various sexual identities

this term incorporates require to be explored independently from another (Savin-Williams, 2001). This current research will not explore the LGBTQ+ community as a homogenous group but will focus exclusively on lesbian women and thus allow for a detailed and differentiated analysis of the portrayal of this group and address a gap in current research.

With an increasing amount of public attention on and interest in the LGBTQ+ community, this research addresses a timely and relevant issue. The previously discussed emergence of the LGBTQ+ community as a consumer market or the growing public awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusiveness present examples of the rising public attention. The limited depiction of homosexuality, especially of lesbian women, in advertising and the exclusion and marginalisation that is related to this, presents the societal relevance of the topic (Descubes et al., 2018; Nölke, 2018). The previously discussed role of the media as a socialising agent is linked to this issue. The media plays a significant role in the "construction, negotiation and reinforcement of identity categories" and the media has been referred to as a cultural institution that informs identities (Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015, p. 30; Tsai, 2012). A study by Bond (2014) found that the media's role in identity construction is also a crucial factor when it comes to sexuality; the media influences sexual socialisation and sexual minorities turn to the media for guidance when questions or insecurities regarding their sexuality arise. Thus, it is important to research the portrayal of 'lesbianism' to explore whether advertising heightens public acceptance and inclusiveness and supports equal treatment of LGBTQ+ individuals.

1.2. Chapter Outline

The following thesis consists of four chapters which include a Theoretical Framework, a Methodology, a Results and Discussion section as well as a Conclusion. A short overview of each chapter will be given in the following section.

The thesis will begin with a discussion of current literature on the topic of 'lesbianism'. The Theoretical Framework will define concepts linked to 'lesbianism' by focussing on terms related to sexual identity and give an overview of the production and reception side of advertising featuring lesbian women. Furthermore, research on the current presentation of LGBTQ+ individuals and lesbian women in particular in advertising will be looked into.

Following the Theoretical Framework, the Methodology chapter will explain the dataset that was used for the analysis as well as the sampling method and the

operationalisation of the concepts addressed in the analysis. An overview of the chosen research method, thematic analysis, will be given by outlining the methodological decision that had to be made before starting the analysis and by describing the steps that were taken within thematic analysis.

The next chapter will present the findings of the research and discuss them by linking them to their theoretical and societal context. Examples from the dataset will be given as well as background information on the companies and advertising campaigns. A total of four overarching themes – namely 'Homogenous Physical Characteristics', 'Negative Interpersonal and Societal Responses to 'Lesbianism'', 'Explicit Romantic Relationships', and 'Brands Emphasising Love' -were created under which a variety of related sub-categories fall.

Lastly, a Conclusion presents the end of the thesis. This chapter includes a summary and an evaluation of the main findings. Furthermore, the limitations of the study will be outlined and recommendations for future research will be given. The Conclusion ends with a short paragraph on reflexivity to discuss the researcher's role in the study.

2. Theoretical Framework

The following section will explore literature on topics related to the concept of 'lesbianism' in advertising. First, terminology on sexuality will be explained and connected to theories on the media's role in the construction of sexuality. Following this, the focus will be on literature related to the production and reception of advertisements displaying homosexuality and 'lesbianism' in particular. The concepts corporate social responsibility (CSR) and 'pink money' will be addressed in the section on the production side. The reception side section will explore the congruence framework and the social identity theory to establish a framework for findings on the reception of homosexual imagery in advertising. Lastly, the portrayal of 'lesbianism' in advertising will be looked into to explore the findings of previous studies and to create a frame of reference for the present study. This includes a review of different stereotypes of lesbian women that the media represents and reinforces as well as a short reflection upon further physical characteristics of lesbian women that the media has been found to emphasise.

2.1. Sexuality, Sexual Orientation and Sexual Identity

Sexuality is an umbrella term that refers to "being sexual" and is related to a variety of other concepts such as sex, gender, sexual orientation, and sexual identity (Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015, p. 6). Each of these concepts will be explored in the following section.

Even though the concepts of sex and gender are often used interchangeably they do not mean the same; sex describes the biological differences between men and women, whereas "gender is created through social interaction and is inherently contextual" (Wharton, 2012, p. 16). This means that gender refers to the values and norms that a society attaches to being a man or a woman. Diamond (2002) explains the difference between sex and gender as follows: "It can be said that one *is* a sex and one *does* gender". In their paper 'Doing Gender', West and Zimmerman (1987) explain that, in contrast to the suggestions of the previously discussed scholars, 'Western' societies often perceive sex and gender to be corresponding. A widely accepted perspective on gender is that it directly correlates with sex which forms the base for the division of gender into two binary categories, namely men and women. The division into men and women is based on their reproductive functions and thus rooted in biology and perceived to be natural; a perspective which is referred to as 'biological determinism' (West & Fenstermaker, 1995). 'Biological determinism' has shaped a variety of 'Western' societal norms and values which can for instance be observed in the division of

most public bathrooms in 'Western' countries into women's and men's bathrooms (West & Fenstermaker, 1995). However, West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that this biological view ignores the societal influences on gender. Similar to the scholars mentioned earlier, West and Zimmerman (1987) explain that gender should rather be seen as created gender identities that are constantly practiced by members of a society (West & Zimmermann, 1987). In this view, society shapes what is female and what is male, not biology.

When looking into the remaining concepts outlined at the beginning of this section, it should be noted that sexual orientation and sexual identity are related but do not mean the same. Whereas sexual orientation describes whether an individual is sexually attracted to the same, another, or multiple sexes (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2007), sexual identity refers to an individual's self-concept of their sexual attraction; the 'label' that an individual gives their sexual orientation (Diamond, 2000). The following study will refer to sexual identity rather than sexual orientation. In 'Western' societies, sexual identity is often divided into three categories which are heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality (Diamond, 2000; Hilton-Morrow, & Battles, 2015). However, it has been argued that sexual identity is a continuum rather than a category as it has been described as fluid and dynamic (Epstein, McKinney, Fox, & Garcia, 2012). Fluidity in sexual identity refers to shifts in different aspects of sexuality, which can include sexual attraction, sexual fantasies, and sexual behaviour (Manley, Diamond, & Van, 2015). Based on this fluidity, it has been suggested by Manley et al. (2015) to establish more than the three discussed categories of sexual identity to be inclusive of all variations within sexual identity. Furthermore, within sexual identities one can distinguish between private sexual identity and public sexual identity (Bailey, 2009). Private sexual identity means how people perceive their own sexual identity, whereas public sexual identity refers to how people would like their sexuality to be perceived by others (Bailey, 2009). It should be noted that public- and private sexual identity do not have to align which means that one might consider oneself as homosexual but be part of a heterosexual relationship (Bailey, 2009).

The previously discussed theory is applied to the present research by focussing specifically on lesbian women in the following section. The sexual identity of lesbian women is homosexual. Savin-Williams (2005) underlines that homosexuality can manifest itself in erotic and romantic arousal, feelings, fantasies, and behaviour one has about someone from the same sex. Rust (1992, p. 368) defines being homosexual as "fantasizing about, feeling attracted to, and becoming sexually involved only with members of the own sex". When exploring the sexual identity development of lesbian women the process of 'coming out'

plays an important role. LGBTQ+ individuals are perceived to be in 'the closet' if they have not socially disclosed their sexual identity and as having 'come out of the closet' if they have socially disclosed their sexual identity (Rasmussen, 2004; Rosenberg, 2018). In the past, various scholars have described the process of sexual identity development as a linear model that consists of multiple stages through which an LGBTQ+ individual goes (Cass, 1984; Plummer, 1975). For instance, Cass (1984, p. 147) suggests a six-stage model that she describes as a "developmental continuum" that conceptualises homosexual identity development. However, linear and uniform models have been challenged in more contemporary articles by multiple scholars as they suggest that the process of sexual identity development and 'coming out' is a highly individual, unique and fluid experience that cannot be conceptualised in a model (Guittar & Rayburn, 2015; Klein, Holtby, Cook, & Travers, 2015; Rosenberg, 2018). Thus, sexual identity development is not a goal-oriented process but constantly ongoing and perceived differently from individual to individual. Other criticism in academia concerns the term 'coming out'. In 'Western' societies feelings of self-empowerment and self-affirmation are often connected to 'coming out' which suggests that sexual identity acceptance can only be achieved through the social disclosure of one's sexual identity (Rosenberg, 2018). However, Rosenberg (2018) and Guittar (2013) argue that an individual's internal journey is often overlooked and that self-acceptance is a highly important part of 'coming out'. Therefore, Rosenberg (2018) developed the term 'coming in' and Guittar (2013) the term 'coming out to oneself' as they suggest a shift in focus from a social 'coming out' to an internal 'coming out'.

Even though the themes related to sexuality as suggested by the literature have been discussed in the previous sections, another concept that is often discussed in relation to societal assumptions and presentations of the LGBTQ+ community is explored. This concept considers the marginalisation of homosexuality and allows for a critical engagement with sexuality. At the beginning of this section the paper 'Doing Gender' by West and Zimmermann (1987) was discussed and in 2009 Schilt and Westbrook followed upon this paper by releasing 'Doing Gender, Doing Heteronormativity' which links gender and sexuality. It is explained that the as natural perceived division into two binary genders, which is based on genitalia and biology, goes hand in hand with an as naturally perceived heterosexuality. Schilt and Westbrook (2009) argue that this normalisation of heterosexuality is based on the assumption that only opposite-sex attraction is 'natural'. The term heteronormativity aims to describe how society constructs gender hierarchies as heterosexuality is perceived to be the dominant sexual identity in 'Western' cultures and to

foster the exclusion of homosexuality (Herz & Johansson, 2015; Marchia & Sommer, 2019). Heterosexuality and homosexuality are dependent on another as their meaning is rooted in the socially constructed contrast between the two. Heterosexuality can only maintain its normative status when homosexuality is established as a "threatening other" (Seidman, 2009, p. 25). Furthermore, it is argued that heteronormativity does not only contribute to gender binarism and heterosexual privilege but also to male dominance (Seidman, 2009). In this view, heterosexuality binds women to men and contributes to a dependency of women on men. Even though societal views on the roles of men and women in 'Western' heteronormative societies are changing, traditionally, women were associated with motherhood and the domestic sphere. Nowadays women who are working are regarded as normal in 'Western' societies (Pickens & Braun, 2018). However, male dominance can still be observed as for instance a gendered pay gap still exists in most 'Western' countries and women are confronted with various barriers that hinder them from reaching management positions (Sharma & Kaur, 2019).

Related to the concept of heteronormativity, the term homonormativity has emerged in recent years. Homonormativity describes the phenomenon of homosexual politics that have been assimilated into- and contribute to heteronormativity (Brown, 2009; Denike, 2010; Duggan, 2002). LGBTQ+ individuals who conform with heteronormative institutions can achieve greater acceptance in dominantly heterosexual societies; this conforming behaviour of LGBTQ+ people is described as acting within a homonormative frame (Mathers, Sumerau, & Cragun, 2018). Thus, sexual minorities who fulfil certain heteronormative ideals are privileged in heteronormative societies whereas other sexual minorities who neglect these ideals are marginalised and disadvantaged (Robinson, 2012). For instance, LGBTQ+ individuals who are perceived as gender conform are argued to act in a homonormative frame and thus they are said to be privileged in heteronormative societies in comparison to LGBTQ+ individuals who are not perceived as gender conform (Robinson, 2012). Gender conformity will be discussed in the Lesbian Stereotypes section towards the end of the Theoretical Framework.

2.1.1. Sexual Identity and the Media

Two approaches on the development of sexuality have been dominant in academia, namely the essentialist perspective and the social constructionist perspective (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998; Jagose, 1996). The former claims that sexuality is biologically determined,

objective, and inevitable, whereas the latter is based on the belief that sexuality is subject to social construction. Even though the social constructionist perspective does not deny the influence of biology and hormones, it accounts for the influence of cultural factors on sexuality (Hilton-Morrow, & Battles, 2015). A constructionist view on sexuality takes aspects of "biology, individual characteristics, and social influences" into account (Baber & Murray, 2001). It is argued that the context in which sexuality is viewed has to be considered and that the meaning that is given to sexuality is shaped by language (DeLamater & Hyde, 1998). Consequently, social reality is constructed by public discourse (Hackley, 1998). The media plays a significant role in the construction of public discourse, also in regard to sexuality. It is believed that the media contributes to the formation of sexual identities as the meaning that the media attaches to identity categories and communicates to its audiences influences their self-perception and public-perception (Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015). Thus, the media has been described as having a public function as the representation of a particular group can affect the audience's views of this group (Reddy-Best & Jones, 2020). Especially the presentation of sexual minority identities in mainstream media can positively contribute not only to the self-image of sexual minority groups but also to the societal view on them (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011). With regard to the media's influence on the self-perception of sexual minorities; a study among lesbian women by Gomillion, and Giuliano (2011) found that having lesbian role models in the media can lead to higher self-esteem among lesbian individuals and positively influence their process of identity development and 'coming out'. Role models can provide pride, inspiration, as well as comfort for the LGBTQ+ community (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011). Moreover, Hilton-Morrow and Battles (2015) came to a similar conclusion as they argue that sexual minority role models in the media can be an aid for people with sexual minority identities to feel more comfortable with- and open about their own sexuality. When it comes to the effects of the presentation of sexual minorities in the media on people who do not belong to a sexual minority group, it should be noted that especially heterosexuals often have their first contact with sexual minority identities through the media (Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015). Therefore, an accurate representation of this group is essential to contribute to public acknowledgment and visibility. When analysing lesbian women in the media, Beirne (2017) suggests that 'lesbianism' in moving-image media is often established through dialogue or performance where 'dialogue' refers to a statement about one's homosexual identity and 'performance' means the display of lesbian desire.

2.2. The Production and Reception of Homosexual Imagery in Advertising

The following part will explore the production and reception of advertising featuring homosexual-, and more specifically lesbian, imagery in advertising. Thus, a marketing perspective as well as a consumer perspective will be considered.

2.2.1. The Production of Homosexual Imagery in Advertising

Two main reasons for the increasing inclusion of homosexuals in advertising can be observed which are centred around Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the perceived buying power of homosexuals. It should be noted that CSR and the LGBTQ+ community's buying power are linked as marketers might decide to include sexual minorities in their advertisements for economic and social reasons. Various scholars found a link between CSR initiatives and consumer's purchase intentions as well as firm value (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Mulyadi & Anwar, 2012). Thus, marketers might perceive CSR initiatives as an efficient way to address social issues and contribute to their bottom line at the same time.

CSR is defined as organisational practices that go beyond a company's legal and economic commitments and that address the company's ethical and voluntary responsibilities (Maier & Ravazzani, 2019). These extended responsibilities also become clear when looking at the 'triple bottom line' which is often associated with CSR practices. The 'triple bottom line' includes that a company has to consider the interest of three different parties namely shareholders, the community, and the environment (Lueg, Lueg, Andersen, & Dancianu, 2016). One target of CSR initiatives can be to address the discriminations that LGBTQ+ individuals are confronted with and to promote sexual equality and diversity; these initiatives fall into the category of 'social justice' work (Colgan, 2011). Even though societal attitudes towards sexual minorities have become more positive, LGBTQ+ friendly policies are still seen as controversial as companies have to fear negative feedback from shareholders or from ultra-conservative consumers (Szyndlar & Wąsikiewicz-Firlej, 2019). However, generally CSR initiatives have been found to elicit mostly positive consumer responses as a firm's image can be improved and companies that act socially responsibly often enjoy high consumer loyalty (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Groza, Pronschinske & Walker, 2011). Furthermore, consumers are more willing to overlook negative information about a company that they perceive to be socially responsible (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Nonetheless, while CSR initiatives can be highly successful among consumers, they can also lead to a negative backlash if the initiative is perceived to be inauthentic. Alhouti, Johnson and Holloway

(2016) found that two factors influencing the perceived authenticity of CSR initiatives are a company's perceived motives for- and the impact of, the CSR initiative. If the motives are perceived to be social and serving the public rather than economic and if the initiative is perceived to make a meaningful difference consumers respond more positively (Alhouti et al., 2016). In the context of advertising addressing sexual minorities, many companies have been criticised by consumers for lacking authenticity in their concern for LGBTQ+ individuals. These companies have been said to focus solely on 'pink money', which refers to the purchasing power of the LGBTQ+ community, and that the company does not genuinely care for the rights of sexual minorities (BBC, 2018; Spary, 2019).

Apart from the discussed social impact, this 'pink money' is another reason why marketers started to address the LGBTQ+ community in advertising with the US and Europe presenting the biggest LGBTQ+ markets (Jennings, 2017). Homosexual consumers are frequently referred to as the 'Dream Market' by marketers as they are associated with a high discretionary income and a great amount of leisure time because they are believed to have no children (Baxter, 2010). However, when talking about this 'Dream Market', research has found that advertisers are often not referring to the whole LGBTQ+ community but to one specific consumer identity, which is homosexual, well-educated, Caucasian, and male (Ginder & Byun, 2015). Gay men are stereotypically believed to be wealthy, trendsetters, brand- and style-conscious (Sender, 2004). This consumer group is perceived to be the most lucrative and thus, gay, Caucasian men are the most frequently presented in advertising when homosexual characters are displayed. As mentioned in the Introduction, lesbian women on the other hand are often ignored by advertisers; Oakenfull (2013) suggests two explanations for the exclusion of lesbian women in advertising. The first explanation is aligned with the previously discussed findings and suggests that marketers consciously choose to focus solely on gay male consumers as they are perceived to be more attractive consumers. The second explanation stands in opposition to the first explanation and the previously discussed findings and states that marketers assume that the homosexual market is one homogenous whole and by targeting gay male consumers, lesbian female consumers will also feel attracted to the brand. The second explanation implies that marketers generalise the LGBTQ+ community and do not differentiate between different sexual identities. Nölke (2018) supports the former explanation as she explains that lesbian women are frequently associated with a variety of negative stereotypes; they are often perceived to be critical of capitalism and have a lower discretionary income than gay men or women in heterosexual relationships (Nölke, 2018). Furthermore, in contrast to gay men, it is often assumed that lesbian women are less

interested in style and fashion and that they do not like to dress up or wear make-up (Descubes et al., 2018). Additionally, marketers believe that lesbian consumers are difficult to reach as they do not like to socialise as much as gay men; they have been described as 'insular' by marketers (Sender, 2004). Due to these negative stereotypes, lesbian women are frequently seen as an uninteresting target audience which is why marketers make little effort to attract them.

Other findings suggest that advertisers often purposefully play with ambiguity when displaying same-sex couples. Ambiguity in advertising means that an advertisement is open to interpretation (Tsai, 2012). When applying this definition to the presentation of homosexuality, an example would be the portrayal of two people of the same sex being in close proximity e.g. hugging each other but not engaging in any exclusively romantic behaviour; the portrayed individuals could be lovers but also friends. Advertisements featuring ambiguous portrayals of homosexuality are also referred to as 'implicit', whereas advertisements featuring unambiguous portrayals of homosexuality are referred to as 'explicit' (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). Ambiguity in advertisements fosters polysemy which means that a text allows for a variety of possible readings. Consequently, members of an audience read a text in different ways (Puntoni, Vanhamme, & Visscher, 2011; Tsai, 2012). One reason for marketers to use ambiguous cues in advertising is the aim to target multiple customer segments; by allowing for different consumer groups to interpret an advertisement in various ways more people might be able to identify with it and feel attracted to the advertisement (Puntoni et al., 2011). Furthermore, advertisers perceive an implicit portrayal of homosexuality as less 'risky' than an explicit portrayal. One reason for this is that they do not have to fear negative feedback from consumers who are sexually prejudiced against the LGBTQ+ community (Oakenfull, McCarthy, & Greenlee, 2008). Advertisements that feature ambiguous cues that 'implicitly' present homosexuality have been referred to as 'gay/lesbian window advertising' (Gong, 2019; Tsai, 2012; Puntoni et al., 2011). Puntoni et al. (2011) define 'gay window advertising' as a lack of cues that are explicitly heterosexual and that could be interpreted as homosexual. Examples are the portrayal of individuals as gender neutral or the use of gay/lesbian iconography and symbolism such as rainbows, freedom rings, and the pink triangle (Borgerson, Schroeder, Blomberg, & Thorssén, 2006; Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). Gender neutral means that the advertisement only shows parts of a person that do not explicitly 'reveal' the gender of that person. Gong (2019) criticises the use of 'gay/lesbian window advertising' as he explains that this practice can lead to the reinforcement of stereotypes and suggests that homosexuality should be hidden.

2.2.2. The Reception of Homosexual Imagery in Advertising

The focus of the current study is on the portrayal of 'lesbianism' in advertising and thus rather on the production than the reception side. However, it is important to acknowledge the reception of advertising presenting lesbian women as brands have to consider the consumers they are creating the advertisements for and consumer responses can shape the production of advertisements. Therefore, the following section will explore the reception of homosexual imagery in advertising.

As discussed earlier, many brands avoid featuring explicit homosexual imagery in their advertisements as they fear that it will be perceived negatively by heterosexual consumers (Angelini & Bradley, 2010). Previous research has identified a variety of factors that influence how consumers perceive homosexual imagery in advertising. Eisend and Hermann (2019) address the congruence framework in this context, which suggests that a situation or an object is evaluated based on its congruence with an individual's existing frame of reference. For instance, if the values, schemas, and expectations of an advertisement displaying homosexuality are similar to the values, schemas, and expectations the viewer holds it is perceived more favourably. The frame of reference differs from society to society and changes over time (Eisend, & Hermann, 2019). The congruence framework is linked to the social identity theory which states that individuals classify themselves and others into social groups based on demographics, including sexual identity. Social group formation based on sexual identity is underlined by Savin Williams (2005, p. 34) who refers to sexual identity as a "socially recognized label". The categorisation of oneself and others into social groups contributes to the construction of one's self-concept and to one's sense of belonging (Dunne, 2018). Various scholars have studied ingroup bias in relation to the social identity theory which refers to the over-evaluation of the own group, which is also referred to as the 'ingroup', and the under-evaluation of other groups, which is also referred to as the 'outgroup' (Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006; Hester, & Gibson, 2007). Scheepers et al. (2006) argue that ingroup bias stems from an individual's opposing needs for inclusion and for differentiation. Both needs foster the development of a distinct (social) identity. When relating the congruence framework and the social identity theory to the perception of homosexual imagery in advertising it can be argued that various consumers with different sexual identities might perceive these images differently. It is possible that models in the advertisements with the same sexual identity as the viewer might be perceived more favourably than models with a different sexual identity as the model might be considered to be part of the ingroup. The level of alignment between the viewer's frame of

reference and the content portrayed in the advertisement could influence the viewer's perception of the advertisement. However, it should be noted that there are a variety of other factors that influence the likeability of an advertisement and that it can be difficult to view sexual identity as separate from these other factors. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the broader context of an advertisement. The following section will explore studies on the perception of homosexuality in advertising among groups of varying sexual identities and discuss them in light of the congruence framework and social identity theory.

A study by Oakenfull and Greenlee (2005) supports the social identity theory and the congruence framework as they found that heterosexual consumers responded more negatively to advertisements containing explicit portrayals of homosexuality than portrayals of heterosexuality. The study also found that heterosexual consumers preferred implicit over explicit imagery of homosexuality (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). In a similar vein, Um (2016) found that heterosexual consumers perceived brands with implicit homosexual-themed advertisements as more favourable than brands with explicit homosexual-themed advertising. However, more recent studies show different findings. Eisend and Hermanns (2019) found that heterosexual consumers responded positively to both explicit homosexual and heterosexual imagery in advertisements. A study by Gong (2019) came to a similar conclusion as they observed that heterosexual consumers noted the positive impact of explicit homosexual-themed advertising on open-mindedness and acceptance of homosexual communities. Possible explanations for these positive reactions are that heterosexual consumers feel socially connected, empathetic, and appreciate that advertising promotes diversity (Eisend & Hermanns, 2019). The discussed explanations are linked to findings by Åkestam, Rosengren, and Dahlen (2017) who argue that advertising has social priming effects that constitute the described feelings of connectedness. By portraying sexual minorities, advertisers prime heterosexual consumers to think about others rather than themselves. As a consequence, viewers build a social connection with the portrayed minorities which results in a positive reception of these advertisements (Åkestam et al., 2017). Additionally, advertisements featuring homosexual imagery are better recognised and recalled by heterosexual consumers than advertisements featuring heterosexual imagery (Angelini & Bradley, 2010). Research has shown that humans process atypical and unfamiliar items differently than items that fit into an individual's usual schema which leads to easier recognition and recall. As a vast amount of advertisements portrays heterosexual imagery, homosexual imagery is rather unusual which is why consumers require more time to process those images (Angelini & Bradley, 2010). Advertisements featuring homosexual

imagery is therefore better recognised and remembered. High brand recall can positively influence brand choice which means that consumers might be prone to buy brands that they remember well from advertising (Nedungadi, Chattopadhyay, & Muthukrishnan, 2001). Thus, the presentation of homosexuality in advertising might lead to increased purchasing behaviour.

Within advertisements displaying homosexuality, it was found that heterosexual consumers responded differently to the portrayal of lesbian women and the portrayal of gay men (Eisend & Hermanns, 2019; Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2004; Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2005). Portraying lesbian women in advertising has led to more favourable reactions among heterosexual consumers, especially among heterosexual men, than gay men. It is argued that a reason for this might be that especially heterosexual male viewers prefer lesbian imagery over gay imagery as it has 'erotic value' which means that men perceive these images as sexual (Oakenfull & Greenlee, 2004); 'lesbianism' is frequently viewed as an "emotionally sensitive, sensual and erotic experience" by heterosexual men (Descubes et al., 2016, p. 643). The eroticism connected to 'lesbianism' is underlined by statistics from the pornography website Pornhub which show that the category 'lesbian' has been among the top three most searched categories worldwide for several years in a row (Pornhub, 2019). The notion of eroticised 'lesbianism' will be further explored in section 2.3.1.4..

Most studies thus far explored the perception of homosexual imagery among heterosexual consumers, there is comparatively little research on the perception of homosexual imagery among homosexual consumers. However, the following paragraph will reflect upon the studies that included homosexual consumers in their research. Similar to the findings among heterosexual consumers and the implications of the social identity theory and the congruence framework, Oakenfull and Greenlee (2005) found that homosexual consumers preferred advertisements featuring homosexuals over advertisements displaying heterosexuals as they can better relate to these portrayals. Moreover, Tuten (2005) compared the reception of homosexual imagery in advertising among heterosexuals and homosexuals and found that homosexual consumers responded positively to advertisements featuring homosexuals. Other studies have compared the perception of explicit versus implicit homosexual imagery in advertisements. Gong (2019, p. 16) explains that homosexual consumers prefer advertising explicitly targeted at homosexuals over implicit advertising as they perceive the latter as "inauthentic" and "lacking commitment". A few studies have also exclusively focussed on the perception of advertising among lesbian women. Oakenfull (2013) conducted a study that explored whether lesbian women respond differently to

advertising featuring gay male themed imagery, non-gendered, homosexual-oriented imagery, and lesbian imagery. Non-gendered advertisements refer to content featuring LGBTQ+ symbolism and iconography such as rainbows (Oakenfull, 2013). It was found that lesbian women's attitudes towards these advertisements depend on whether they perceive homosexuals to be one homogenous group; lesbian women who perceive gay males and lesbian females to be part of one homogenous group are defined as 'outgroup lesbians', whereas lesbian women who perceive lesbian females and gay males to be separate groups are referred to as 'ingroup lesbians' (Oakenfull, 2013). Reflecting the congruence framework and social identity theory, all lesbian women responded positively to advertising featuring non-gendered and lesbian imagery. However, 'ingroup' lesbian women responded more negatively to gay male themed advertisements than 'outgroup' lesbians (Oakenfull, 2013). Based on these findings, Oakenfull (2013) underlines the importance of differentiation within the homosexual consumer market. She explains that advertisers disenfranchise lesbian women by using only gay males in their advertisements. Descubes et al. (2016) replicated the study by Oakenfull (2013) and arrived at a similar conclusion as they found that ingroup lesbians reacted more positively to advertisements featuring lesbian and non-gendered imagery than to gay imagery.

2.3. Portrayals of 'Lesbianism' in Advertising

The following section will explore how 'lesbianism' is portrayed in advertising. First, stereotypes in general and stereotypes of lesbian women that are reproduced in advertising will be discussed. This section will end with an overview of current literature on diversity in regard to race and social class in advertisements featuring lesbian women.

2.3.1. Stereotypes of Lesbian Women

As previously mentioned, lesbian women are underrepresented in advertising (Descubes et al., 2016; Nölke, 2018; Oakenfull, 2013). However, this underrepresentation does not present the only issue in the context of lesbian women in advertising; when featured in advertising, stereotypes of lesbians are often reproduced and reinforced. The most common stereotypes include 'the butch'-, 'the femme'- and 'the lipstick' lesbian. These stereotypes are based on lesbian women's preference for more stereotypically 'masculine' or 'feminine' gender expressions (Lehavot, King, & Simoni, 2011). A variety of measures have been defined to explore gender expression. However, various scholars suggest that

appearance is the main indicator for gender expressions as it is believed that appearance is frequently used to communicate one's social identity and group affiliation (Eves, 2004; Huxley, Clarke, & Halliwell, 2014). Appearance is related to aesthetics including fashion, style and beauty (Eves, 2004).

A study by Rothblum (2010) among lesbian women found different attitudes towards the concepts of 'butch' and 'femme' lesbians. Not all participants attached the same meanings and importance to these concepts and it should be noted that there is a vast amount of diversity among lesbian women which can hardly be captured by the concepts 'butch' and 'femme' (Rothblum, 2010). It is important to mention that stereotypes "transmit a fixed untruth about a group of people" and that they are "distortions of reality" which means that stereotypes fail to give an accurate representation of a group of people (Cover, 2004, p. 83). The image that stereotypes convey of a group is often limited in the sense that it fails to capture all characteristics of a group of people. The stereotypes that will be discussed in the following paragraphs are consequently only a reflection of what is presented in advertising but they do not fully reflect reality.

2.3.1.1. 'Butch' Lesbians

'Butch' lesbians are often associated with 'female masculinity' as they exhibit stereotypically male physical characteristics such as short hair, no make-up, and masculine dress (Levitt & Hiestand, 2004). 'Butch' lesbians in the media often wear loose clothing to hide their physical feminine features such as their breasts (Vänskä, 2005). A variety of studies in 'Western' countries found that 'butch' lesbians reflect the stereotypical image that many people hold of lesbians as lesbians are often perceived to be more 'masculine' than heterosexual women (Blashil & Powlishta, 2009; Salvati, Piumatti, Giacomantonio, & Baiocco, 2019; Clarke & Arnold, 2017). These findings can be explained by Cover (2004) who states that it is often believed that homosexuals do not conform with heteronormative gender performances. A heteronormative society assumes men to exhibit masculinity and women to exhibit femininity. However, by being homosexual, individuals are not assumed to live up to this norm and exhibit features contrary to their sex which is why lesbian women are often expected to be more masculine (Cover, 2004). Furthermore, in a heteronormative society it is argued that 'butches' challenge the conventional link between sex and gender but their sexual orientation is perceived to be conventional if they are attracted to feminine women (Eves, 2004). Due to their more masculine appearance and behaviour 'butch' lesbians

are often perceived to be the 'male part' in a relationship with a feminine woman (Eves, 2004). However, the perception that 'butch' lesbians represent the male part in a relationship reinforces the belief that lesbian couples try to imitate heterosexual couples which has been criticised by a variety of scholars as it further contributes to the normalisation of heterosexuality (Vänska, 2005; Brightwell & Taylor, 2019).

As 'butch' lesbians conform less with stereotypical feminine values connected to being a woman than 'femme' lesbians, they have greater public visibility. This higher visibility due to non-conformity can lead to social stigmatisation and discrimination (Levitt et al., 2003; Eves, 2004). However, even though butch lesbians publicly 'stand out' more, they are rarely presented in the media (Nölke, 2018). Research has suggested that a reason for the underrepresentation of 'butch' lesbians in the media might be that they threaten masculinity and patriarchal authority (Fenwick, 2011). Masculinity is regarded as central to the power of men and to the patriarchy. However, 'butch' lesbians show that masculinity is not reserved for men and that the link between male biology and masculinity it is not compulsory (Nguyen, 2008). By linking female biology and masculinity, 'butch' lesbians challenge the link between being male and masculinity and consequently male dominance.

2.3.1.2. 'Femme' Lesbians

'Femmes' can be identified based on their stereotypically feminine features such as longer hair - shoulder length and longer-, "light make-up, and smart, form-fitting clothes" (Nölke, 2018, p. 239). Eves (2004) argues that 'femmes' link sex and gender in a way that is conventional in a heteronormative society but challenge the link between gender and sexual orientation. As discussed at the beginning of the Theoretical Framework, heteronormative societies favour the idea of the existence of two binary genders based on two binary sexes which are complementary with regard to their reproductive functions (West & Fenstermaker, 1995; West & Zimmermann, 1987). This binary system also assumes a link between femininity and being a woman (Huxley et al., 2014). In this view, femininity is seen as "doing girl or woman" which is related to West and Zimmermann's (1987) argumentation that 'doing gender' is an ongoing activity that is integrated into people's everyday lives (Paechter, 2006, p. 255). As 'femmes' appear more feminine, they are associated with a binary gender system and heterosexuality and appear to be gender conform (Everett, Steele, Matthews, & Hughes, 2019). On one hand, this gender conformity is said to put 'femme' lesbians in a privileged position in comparison to more stereotypically masculine lesbians as

they are perceived to act in a homonormative frame. As discussed at the beginning of the Theoretical Framework, gender conformity is favoured in heteronormative societies (Robinson, 2012). On the other hand, 'femmes' perceived gender conformity has led to conflicts as 'femme' lesbians were confronted with societal and internalised assumptions that only 'butch' lesbians were 'real lesbians' (Levitt et al., 2003). 'Femme' women often 'come out' as lesbian later than 'butch' lesbians and they often struggle to accept their sexual orientation (Levitt et al., 2003). One explanation for this could be that 'femme' lesbians score higher on internalised sexual prejudice measures (Levitt et al., 2003). This suggests that their fear of being discriminated due to their sexual orientation might refrain them from 'coming out'. Even though 'femme' lesbians are confronted with discrimination for not matching the societal image of a lesbian, it was found that advertising dominantly displays 'femmes' when featuring lesbian women (Nölke, 2018). This finding again links to heteronormativity as advertising presents and reinforces normative heterosexuality and 'femmes' resemble an image associated with normative heterosexuality as explained at the beginning of this section (Eves, 2004). Kates (1999) describes advertising featuring homosexual identities that reflect and reinforce heterosexual norms and values as 'heteronormative gayness', whereas Duggan (2002) would refer to this presentation of homosexuality as homonormativity. A finding by Nölke contradicts the argument by Kates (1999) and Eves (2004) as she found that lesbian couples presented in advertising mostly consist of two 'femmes'. This finding is surprising as heteronormativity in advertising would suggest that lesbian couples would consist of a 'butch' and a 'femme' lesbian.

2.3.1.3. 'Lipstick' Lesbians

Another stereotype of lesbian women that is represented in advertising has been described as 'lipstick lesbians' (Nölke, 2018). This stereotype displays similar physical attributes as 'femmes' but are hypersexualised as they wear revealing clothes and bold make-up (Nölke, 2018). Gill (2009) refers to this figure as a 'hot lesbian' and explains that this character is never displayed alone but always in close physical proximity to another woman. 'Lipstick/Hot lesbians' are mostly featured in advertisements targeted at heterosexual men as they invoke associations of 'femme-femme sexuality' in pornography aimed at heterosexuals (Nölke, 2018). Consequently, 'lipstick/hot lesbians' are primarily constructed to appeal to the heterosexual male gaze (Gill, 2009). Reichert (2001, p. 9) refers to the concept of voyeurism in this context which he defines as "men viewing women for pleasure". Two phenomena that

are closely related to this are 'heteroflexibility' and 'lesbian chic' advertisements. The former primarily refers to women who are experimenting with someone of the same sex (Diamond, 2005); women who are 'heteroflexible' often seek an alternative to heterosexuality and do not want to commit to being heterosexual (Ambrose, 2009). 'Experimenting' with another woman is often portrayed as exciting and fun but never as an actual 'threat' to heterosexuality (Gill, 2009). It has been argued that one of the main reasons for depictions of 'heteroflexibility' in the media is of an economic nature as this portrayal aims to attract young male viewers (Diamond, 2005). The women that are portrayed experimenting with same-sex sexuality are often physically similar to the described 'hot/lipstick' lesbians. The second related phenomenon, so-called 'lesbian chic' advertisements, combine the ambiguity that can often be found in advertisements featuring homosexual imagery (see section 2.2.1.) and heteroflexibility. These advertisements portray 'homoeroticism' which describes a visible erotic tension, based on desire and affection, between two people of the same sex (Reichert, 2001). However, there is no actual sexual behaviour portrayed in these advertisements. Reichert (2001) explains that this phenomenon can often be observed in advertisements by haute couture brands that want to differentiate themselves from other brands by portraying 'lesbian chic' imagery. Based on the findings on 'heteroflexibility', Diamond (2005) suggests that the most socially accepted form of same-sex-sexuality is the one that attracts the straight male gaze. McKenna (2002) argues that a heteroflexible presentation of 'lesbianism' contributes to the perception that being lesbian is a sexual style or a fashion statement that everyone is free to choose. This perception might lead to people viewing homosexuality as a 'phase' that someone is going through rather than a part of someone's identity which undermines the importance of a person's sexual identity.

2.3.2. Race and Social Class within Portrayals of Lesbian Women

When exploring sexual identity in relation to social class and race, the term intersectionality can be applied. Intersectionality describes that a person's social identity consists of a combination of various social status locations. Social status locations include race, sex, sexual identity, and social class; however, they cannot be viewed independently from another but each social status location has to be considered when evaluating a person's social identity (Bowleg, 2008). Thus, social status locations mutually influence another and determine social hierarchies as certain social status locations are disadvantaged (Everett et al., 2019). For instance, lesbian women of colour are said to be in 'triple jeopardy' as they

have a minority status in the categories race, sexual identity and gender as 'Western' societies are argued to be racist, sexist and heterosexist (Bridges, Selvidge, & Matthews, 2003). The beginning of the Theoretical Framework explored heterosexism in the context of heteronormativity. Various studies have explored the representation of the LGBTQ+ community and lesbian women in particular in relation to other social status locations which are discussed in the following paragraph.

Reichert (2001) argues that lesbian women in the media fail to represent the diversity among lesbians as mainly Caucasian, young, and wealthy lesbians are depicted. Nölke (2018) conducted a longitudinal, cross-cultural study into the portrayal of LGBTQ+ individuals in advertising and found that 82% of all LGBTQ+ models featured in advertising are Caucasian and 85% are from the middle class. Social class was determined based on the occupation of the depicted individuals. Furthermore, the study found that the least represented group were Hispanic, working-class individuals. Nölke (2018) also found that especially 'butch' lesbians are more racially diverse than other stereotypes. In a similar vein, Fenwick (2011) explains that 'butch' lesbians in the media are often Afro-American. The dominant portrayal of 'butch' lesbians as Afro-American can be explained by the previously discussed finding that masculine, Caucasian females threaten the as naturally perceived male dominance (see section 2.3.1.1). As Afro-American women in 'Western' societies are not only discriminated against for their gender but also their race they are less likely than Caucasian women to threaten the patriarchy (Fenwick, 2011). Their social status locations disadvantage them in comparison to Caucasian women. Furthermore, Fenwick (2011) found that Afro-American 'butch' lesbians are often coupled with 'femme' Caucasian women. Gill (2008) states that in a scenario where two 'lipstick/hot lesbians' are presented together, one of them is often Afro-American. As these stereotypes are argued to be mainly constructed to appeal to the straight male gaze, coupling these two physically different types aims to ensure that men can choose their preferred type (Gill, 2008).

2.4. Conclusion

The present research focusses on the portrayal of lesbian women in the media and contemporary literature on this topic was reviewed. It was found that the media, and advertising in particular, can have a significant impact on the development of an individual's sexual identity. Lesbian women's self-perception and the societal perception of them can be influenced by the media. Literature on the production of advertisements showed that

marketers often include sexual minorities in their advertisements both as part of their CSR actions and for economic reasons. On one hand, CSR initiatives can raise societal awareness and contribute to the LGBTQ+ community's visibility and equality. On the other hand, the LGBTQ+ community is perceived to be an attractive target audience as it is associated with high spending power. Apart from the LGBTQ+ community, other consumers can also feel attracted to companies that promote sexual diversity and inclusiveness through their CSR campaigns. Advertising communicating CSR initiatives needs to be perceived as authentic among consumers to be considered honest and to be effective. However, literature found that the current presentation of LGBTQ+ individuals in advertising is often not perceived to be authentic as it shows a variety of issues that include a narrow and ambiguous representation of LGBTQ+ consumers. This marginalised portrayal is mainly led by economic motivations as only one specific subgroup of sexual minorities, namely Caucasian males, is associated with high spending power. Literature on the reception of LGBTQ+ advertisements showed that heterosexual- as well as homosexual viewers often prefer seeing people of their 'own sexual identity group' meaning people that have a similar sexual identity as themselves. However, as 'Western' societies have become more liberal and open towards homosexuality, heterosexual consumers' perception of LGBTQ+ individuals in advertising has become more positive. Furthermore, literature on the presentation of 'lesbianism' in advertising was reviewed. It was found that advertising reinforces stereotypes by dominantly featuring three types of lesbians which include 'butch', 'femme', and 'lipstick' lesbians. These types range from representing stereotypically masculine attributes to representing hypersexualised, stereotypically feminine attributes. Additionally, it was found that there is little diversity in race and social class among lesbians presented in advertising.

3. Research Design

The following section will describe the research design which has been applied to answer the research question. First, the materials that were analysed will be described and the sampling method that was used will be explained. Second, the concepts that the research question and sub-questions address will be operationalised. Following on this, the method that was chosen for the analysis will be outlined. Furthermore, the methodology of the chosen method will be laid out and a step-by-step approach on how the chosen method was self-perception implemented will be given.

3.1. Materials, Sampling and Operationalisation

The following paragraph includes a description of the dataset and the sampling method that was used to identify the advertisements included in the analysis. Furthermore, the concept of 'lesbianism' as well as related concepts that were used in the analysis will be operationalised.

3.1.1. Dataset and Sampling Method

The dataset consisted of 40 video advertisements, which lasted between 15 seconds and nine minutes. The average time of all 40 advertisements was 1.52 minutes. It was decided to analyse video advertisements instead of images as they allow for more time and depth to portray characters. The motivation behind this choice is that homosexual cues are frequently portrayed with ambiguity in advertising (see section 2.2.1.). Video advertisements allow for more time to portray lesbian women and lesbian relationships than visuals. Consequently, the researcher was able to get a more detailed view which aimed to ensure that only advertisements that reflected the operationalisation of the concept 'lesbianism' were included in the analysis (see section 3.1.2).

The sampling method that was used to identify advertisements was purposive sampling. This method is a form of non-probability sampling since materials are selected based on the researcher's judgement as to which materials are the most representative or useful (Babbie, 2014). As the amount of time that was available to the research to carry out the study was limited, not all advertisements that had the described characteristics were considered. The data was selected based on the following criteria. First, the women in the advertisements must be identifiable as 'lesbian' based on the operationalisation discussed in the Operationalisation (see section 3.1.2). Second, the advertisements must have been

released in the last ten years, meaning between 2010 and 2020. This criterion aims to guarantee that the advertisements reflect the current societal representations of 'lesbianism'. Third, to ensure that the analysis reflects the portrayal of 'lesbianism' in advertising more generally, advertisements from a variety of sectors were chosen. *Figure 1* gives an overview of the various sectors which were included, e.g. the fashion-, food and beverages-, automotive-, and tourism industry. All brands that were included in the research are consumer brands. Fourth, all advertisements must have been produced in 'Western' countries. 'Western' is often defined in relation to geography, meaning countries in the Western part of the world which often refers to North America and Western European countries (Cambridge Dictionary, 2020). However, the characteristic of being 'Western' is also often connected to culture, religion, and economy. In this view, countries that are shaped by Christianity, countries that originated from Europe through Colonialism or economically developed 'first world countries' are perceived to be 'Western' (Dougherty, 2000). The analysis also included two advertisements from Norway and Sweden which could be considered non-'Western' due to their geography as they are Scandinavian countries. However, this research followed the economic definition of 'Western' as it explores advertising which is part of a country's economy. Norway and Sweden are both considered 'Western' as they are 'first world countries' that have a high economic performance (Tiemer, 2018). It is acknowledged that the term 'Western' should be viewed critically as it generalises many distinct cultures and reinforces the supremacy of 'Western' cultures over other cultures. The term 'Western' assumes a synchronisation of norms and values within 'Western' countries including North America and Western Europe (McQuail, 2000). Furthermore, 'Western' is frequently associated with the notion of 'the West and the Rest' which is rooted in the colonialisation and exploitation of other cultures through Europeans and therefore reinforces unequal power relations (Hall, 1992). A table that gives an overview of all advertisements that were included in the research can be found in the Appendices (Appendix A).
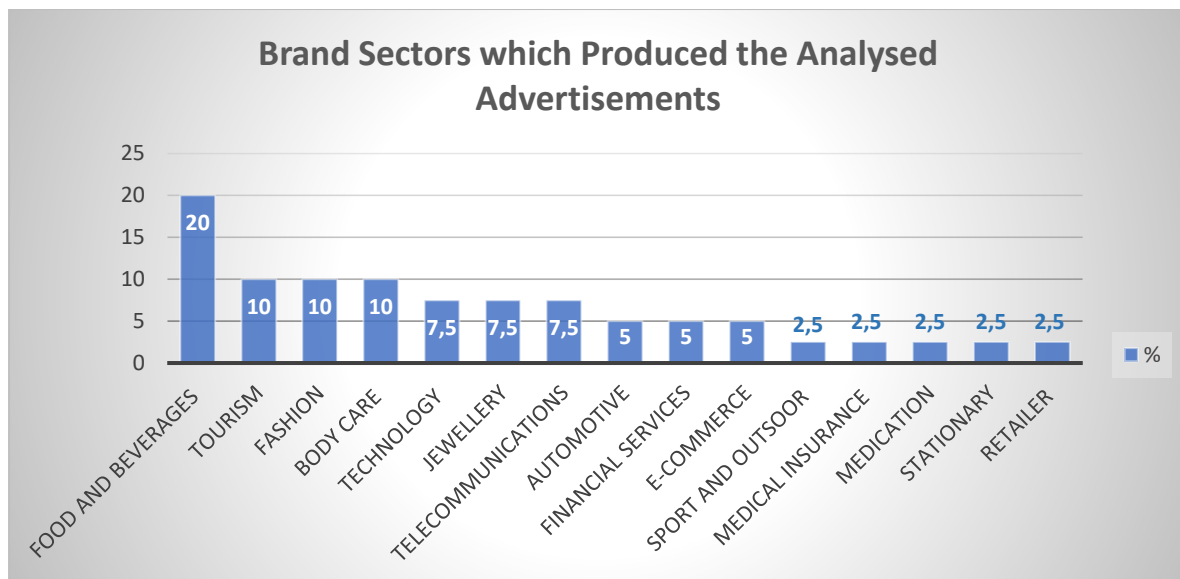
Figure 1. Brand sectors which produced the advertisements included in the analysis in %

The advertisements were found and retrieved from online platforms, namely YouTube and AdRespect which are both public and free of charge. YouTube is one of the biggest social media platforms worldwide and is mainly focussed on video sharing (YouTube, n.d.). AdRespect is a website featuring LGBTQ+ advertisements. The website has an integrated rating system; points are assigned to each advertisement based on the "representations and inclusiveness of the LGBTQ+ community" (AdRespect, 2020, para. 1). The ratings are assigned by the editorial staff of AdRespect as well as website visitors. The rating categories are 'positive', 'equal', 'caution/stereotypes', and 'negative'. Details on the characteristics of each category can be seen in *Figure 2*. Even though AdRespect tries to guarantee transparency through the established grading criteria, it should be noted that the ratings are subjective. Advertisements with a variety of ratings were featured in the research to ensure diversity and to avoid a biased sample. It should be noted that not all advertisements that were included in the analysis have received a rating on AdRespect.

Themes
(also see detailed theme definitions)

Positive	Equal
Same-Sex Affection	GLBT inclusion
Same-Sex Couples/Families	Gay Tease
Gay Pride	Camp/Gay Drag
GLBT Empowerment	Straight Left Out
Trans Beauty	Family Acceptance
Stereotype Twist	Gay Vague
Consciousness Raising	GLBT Punchline (laughing with)
Multiple Gender Expressions	

Caution/Stereotypes	Negative
Male-Fantasy Lesbian	Homophobia/Transphobia
Butch Lesbian	Problematic Language
Leatherman	GLBT Punch Line (laughing at)
Sissies	Deceptive/Scary Trans
Insufficient Masculinity/Femininity	Sexual Predator/practice
Coupled Cheater	Violence
Dude Looks Like a Lady	Ex-GLBT
Walking Fine Line/Mixed Reception	

Figure 2. AdRespect. (n.d.). *Themes*. Retrieved from
http://www.adrespect.org/common/news/reports/detail.cfm?Classification=report&QID=4588&clientID=11064&topicID=0&subnav=about&subsection=about

3.1.2. Operationalisation

The research question addresses the concept of 'lesbianism' which was operationalised based on the suggestions by Beirne (2017) who argues that 'lesbianism' in moving-image media is established through dialogue and/or performance (see section 2.1.1.). Women who displayed or discussed their desire, attraction, and/or sexual behaviour towards other women were considered to be lesbian. However, based on the limitations of traditional sexual identity categories discussed in the Theoretical Framework (see section 2.1.), it is possible that the women featured in the analysis were not intended to be presented as exclusively homosexual. Women whose sexual identity is presented as bisexual or other are included in the research if the advertisements are only presenting the women displaying or discussing their sexual desire, attraction, or behaviour towards other women. Yet, a presentation of the models in the advertisements as homosexual does not mean that the women's actual sexual identity aligns with the sexual identity presented in the advertisements. It is possible that the models in the analysed advertisements do not identify as LGBTQ+ in 'real life'.

The analysis included an evaluation of the women's appearance which explored their hair, make-up, clothing, body type, age, and race. Studying the women's appearance was useful to reflect on the literature discussed in the Theoretical Framework and to compare the portrayal of lesbian women in advertising to the depiction of women in advertising more

generally. These physical characteristics were each operationalised into different categories. Scalp hair was divided into shaved, partly shaved, short, mid-long, and long. For hair length to be mid-long, the women's hair had to be between chin and shoulder length. Hair that was longer than the shoulder of the model was identified as long and hair that was shorter than the chin was identified as short. Make-up was either non-existent, subtle, or strong. Subtle-make up was defined as a woman visibly wearing make-up but less dominant colours such as rosé or earth tones, whereas strong make-up meant that the women had to visibly wear make-up with more dominant colour such as red lipstick or smokey eyes. Clothing was divided into categories such as shirts, pants, dresses etc. and more detailed definitions within each category such as long dress or jeans were created. The women's body types were analysed based on The Figure Rating Scale (FRS) by Stunkard, Sorenson, and Schlusinger (1983) which can be seen in *Figure 3*. A variety of studies have tested whether participants were able to assign women to one of the nine figures by looking at them and found a high accuracy between the figure the participants assigned the women to and the women's BMI (Cardinal, Kaciroti, & Lumeng, 2006; Sherman, Iacono, & Donnelly, 1995). However, the FRS also has some limitations which include that a restricted number of figures is represented which are not reflective of the actual diversity of body types in women (Gardner, Stark, Jackson, & Friedman, 1999). Thus, the FRS fails to capture all possible body types and might therefore not be able to fully describe the figures of the women presented in the analysed advertisements. Nevertheless, the FRS provides a guide that has been successfully implemented by previous studies and that allows to get a broad overview of the body types featured in the advertisements.
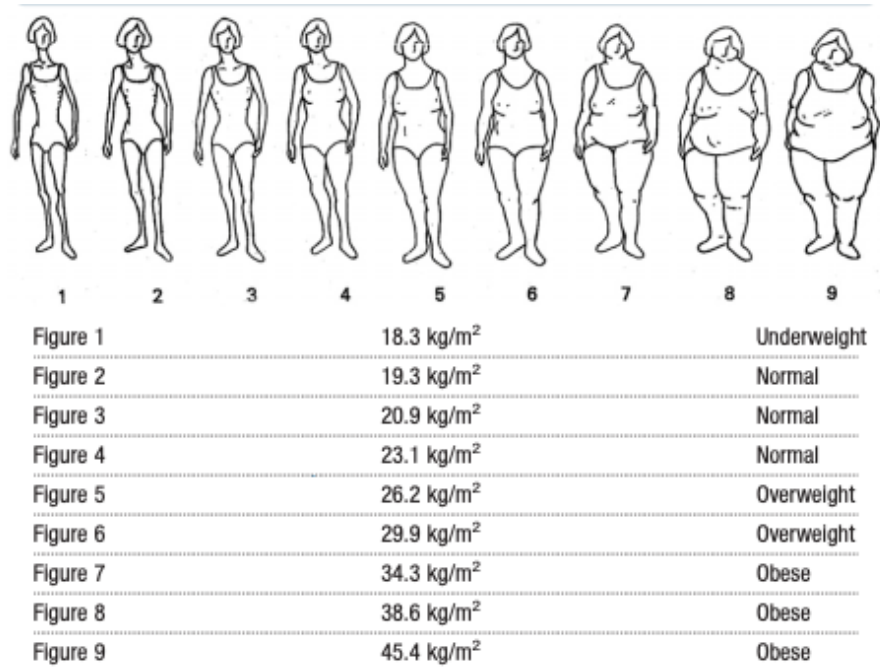
Figure 1	18.3 kg/m²	Underweight
Figure 2	19.3 kg/m²	Normal
Figure 3	20.9 kg/m²	Normal
Figure 4	23.1 kg/m²	Normal
Figure 5	26.2 kg/m²	Overweight
Figure 6	29.9 kg/m²	Overweight
Figure 7	34.3 kg/m²	Obese
Figure 8	38.6 kg/m²	Obese
Figure 9	45.4 kg/m²	Obese

Figure 3. Female images of the figure rating scale and established conversion to BMI. Reprinted from *The genetics of neurological and psychiatric disorders* (pp.115-129), by Stunkard, Sorenson, and Schlusinger, 1983, New York: Raven Press.

The analysis also explored the age of the portrayed women which was divided into the age categories children, teenagers, young adults, adults, and seniors. Age was determined based on the existence or non-existence of physical characteristics such as wrinkles or grey hair. Women were defined as children when they appeared to be below the age of 13, teenagers had to appear to be between 13 and 18 years of age, young adults had to appear to be in their twenties or early thirties. Women who appeared to be in their late thirties up to sixties were defined as adults and seniors were defined as older than sixty. It should be acknowledged that the definition of a women's age based on her appearance can be difficult as people's appearance and their actual age can differ. However, by creating age groups that include a broad range of different ages the researcher tried to prevent this issue. Lastly, the women's race was determined based on their skin colour and was grouped into Caucasian, Afro-American, Hispanic, and Asian. Similar to age, race can be challenging to identify based on someone's skin colour which is why the category race ambiguous was created. If a woman's race was unclear it was coded as ambiguous.

Based on the discussed physical characteristics of the women, they were assigned to one of the prevalent stereotypes of lesbian women that were reviewed in the Theoretical Framework (see section 2.3.1.) which include the 'femme', the 'butch' and the 'lipstick' lesbian. If women showed physical characteristics that were assigned to multiple stereotypes

they were defined as a combination of those stereotypes, for instance, a combination of 'butch' and 'femme'. The definitions of each stereotype followed Nölke (2018) who studied the portrayal of LGBTQ+ individuals in advertising (see section 2.3.1.). The definition of 'femme' lesbians included that a woman had to wear subtle make-up, have mid-length to long hair, and wear stereotypically feminine and form-fitting clothing such as dresses or skirts. A 'butch' lesbian was characterised by short, shaved or partly shaved hair, no make-up and stereotypically masculine, and loose clothing such as a black suit. 'Lipstick' lesbians were defined based on a woman wearing lingerie or being naked, strong make-up, high heels and having long hair.

3.2. Method

The following section will explain the method that was used for the analysis. First, thematic analysis will be explained followed by a description of the methodological decisions that were made before the analysis was conducted. Lastly, the implementation of the method will be explained step by step.

3.2.1. Thematic Analysis

The research that was conducted is of a qualitative nature. In comparison to quantitative research, qualitative research has been defined as 'less structured' with regard to its data collection which is often more flexible, and inductive (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). Qualitative research does not aim to quantify data but to interpret meaningful relationships. Brennen (2017) suggests that qualitative research assumes that social reality is constructed through language and therefore the exploration of language plays an important role in qualitative research. This research aimed to explore the social construction of 'lesbianism' in advertising which is why this research was defined as qualitative. Based on the qualitative nature of the research question and sub-questions, a qualitative method was applied to explore the concepts addressed by the research question and sub-questions.

The method that was found to be the most suitable to answer the research question is thematic analysis as it does not only describe but also interpret data. Especially when exploring data from a social constructionist perspective, thematic analysis has been found to be an insightful method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is described as a "method for identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning" which is done by generating codes and themes from the data (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p.297). The researcher analyses the

data by assigning codes to each data item which are then grouped into broader themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, thematic analysis also has some limitations which are linked to one of its most prevalent characteristics, namely its flexibility. It has been argued that due to its flexibility, thematic analysis lacks clear and concise guidelines (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The proposed research addressed this critique by developing a clear methodological frame that explains in-depth the approach that the researcher decided to take for the analysis. Furthermore, a thematic map was created which can be found in the Appendices (Appendix B).

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that there are a variety of methodological decisions that need to be made before starting the analysis. These will be presented and applied to the proposed research. First, the researcher has to define the characteristics of a theme with regard to its size. For this research, it was decided that a theme emerges when at least two codes can be grouped together under one overarching theme that describes both.

Also, it needs to be determined whether the analysis should be a rich description of the entire dataset or a more detailed account of a particular phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This means that the researcher has to decide whether to do a more general and less detailed analysis of all information that a dataset provides or to analyse the data in light of a particular aspect. The research question for the proposed research addresses the concept of 'lesbianism' which is why the analysis specifically focussed on the representation of this concept within the advertisements. A general analysis of the materials would have failed to address the research question with the necessary depth. Therefore, this research was a detailed account of a particular phenomenon.

Furthermore, it had to be decided whether the research was inductive or deductive which means that the research is either more data-driven or more theory-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The proposed research used a combination of an inductive and deductive approach; the analysis of the dataset was informed by the theory discussed in the Theoretical Framework but was flexible in regard to the emergence of new codes and themes throughout the analysis.

Additionally, the researcher had to establish whether the themes are identified on a semantic or latent level. On a semantic level, themes are described but not interpreted whereas identification of themes on a latent level aims to explore the meanings and implications that guide the portrayed content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research aimed to identify themes on a latent level as themes were not only described but also interpreted and related to their broader societal context.

3.2.2. Thematic Analysis Step-by-Step

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest a six-step approach that was used for this research. First, the researcher had to familiarise oneself with the data. Within this step, the materials chosen for the analysis were viewed and reviewed multiple times and initial ideas were noted. Second, after familiarisation, initial codes of features within the data relevant for the research question were created. All features that addressed the concept of 'lesbianism' were considered to be relevant for the research. Codes are more detailed than themes and allowed to organise the initial dataset. Third, the created codes were sorted into overarching themes. Similar codes were grouped into themes and sub-themes. Fourth, the themes were reviewed considering individual data items and the dataset as a whole. Within this step, all data items were re-evaluated individually. Fifth, the themes were refined and characteristics of each theme were determined by ensuring that the themes captured the essence of the data. A definition of each theme was written to ensure transparency. This definition also included information on how the theme related to the overall dataset. This information can be found in the thematic map (Appendix B). Lastly, the analysis was structured into a report format that allowed the researcher to present the findings of the analysis in an academic manner which can be seen in the Findings and Discussion section (see chapter 5).

The coding program Atlas.ti was used to assist with the coding of the data. The program encourages and enables a structured analysis of the dataset. Codes as well as themes and sub-themes can be created within the program. Atlas.ti allows to create an overview of the analysis which includes a transparent outline of the results (Lewis, 1998).

3.3. Conclusion

This chapter outlined the materials as well as the method that was used to answer the research question. After a description of the dataset and the sampling method, the concept of 'lesbianism' as well as related concepts that were included in the analysis were operationalised. Purposive sampling was used to select the data which consisted of a variety of advertisements that discuss 'lesbianism'. The concept 'lesbianism' was operationalised as homosexual women who signify their sexuality through dialogue or performance. Furthermore, physical characteristics of the women were operationalised and linked to the three dominant lesbian stereotypes 'femme', 'butch', and 'lipstick'. To analyse the chosen material thematic analysis was used. A variety of methodological decision were made which included that the analysis would be conducted from a social constructionist perspective and

that the analysis would be a detailed account of the phenomenon of 'lesbianism' in advertising. Also, it was decided that the research would be a combination of an inductive and deductive approach and that the analysis would take place on a latent level. Within thematic analysis, the dataset was coded and the codes that emerged were grouped into broader themes that aimed to summarise the more detailed codes. The themes were reviewed, tested, and defined. Finally, the results of the analysis were structured into a coherent report which is presented here.

4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of the selected advertisements yielded a variety of results. Based on the six-step approach by Braun and Clarke (2006) codes were created and divided into themes and sub-themes. Within the analysis four themes stood out, as all (N=40) of the analysed advertisements featured codes which were assigned to at least one of the four dominant themes. These four themes are 'Homogenous Physical Characteristics', 'Negative Interpersonal and Societal Responses to 'Lesbianism'', 'Explicit Romantic Relationships' and 'Brands Emphasising Love'. The following sections will discuss the four themes by outlining the findings of the analysis and elaborating on these with regard to existing theory. Furthermore, examples from the dataset will be given between the presentation of the findings and their discussion to visualise the results. For some of the advertisements, detailed information on the advertising campaigns will be included. This background information is discussed when the advertisement of the company is part of a larger LGBTQ+ support initiative or when the company's advertising campaign has received public recognition for example in the form of media attention or consumer responses. At the end of this chapter, a conclusion will sum up the most important points.

The analysis included 40 advertisements which featured a total of 96 lesbian women. For the first theme 'Homogenous Physical Characteristics' the findings are discussed in relation to the number of lesbian women featured in the advertisements and not in relation to the total number of advertisements analysed. Consequently, the numbers that will be presented under the theme 'Homogenous Physical Characteristics' are discussed with 100% being 96 lesbian women. The three remaining themes are elaborated on in relation to the total number of advertisements. Thus, 100% are 40 when discussing the findings under 'Negative Interpersonal and Societal Responses to 'Lesbianism'', 'Explicit Romantic Relationships' and 'Brands Emphasising Love'.

4.1. Homogenous Physical Characteristics

The first section discusses the findings and theory on characteristics related to the appearances of the lesbian women portrayed in the advertisements. These characteristics include lesbian stereotypes, race, age and body type. All findings under this section were determined based on physical features that the women displayed. The following section does not present a theme but gives an overview of the dominant portrayals of lesbian women in advertising. It is useful to consider the women featured in the advertisements as the results

can be discussed and compared to trends in advertising and to previous studies on lesbian women in advertising. First, the results of the analysis will be outlined and examples from the advertisements will be given. Following this, the findings will be discussed in a broader theoretical context. The physical characteristics will be presented and elaborated on beginning with lesbian stereotypes as discussed in the Theoretical Framework, followed by race and age and body type.

It became apparent that the stereotype that was dominantly featured in the analysed advertisements is 'femme' (63.54%, N=61) (Overview in *Figure 10*). An example for a lesbian woman who was coded as 'femme' is featured in the 'Easy Wedding Planning' advertisement by Zola (2020) (*Figure 4*). The e-commerce company Zola is specialised in weddings and their advertisement presents the wedding of two women in which they are saying their vows while advertising a product. The woman is wearing a long, white, lacey wedding dress as well as a hair wreath and subtle make-up. Even though she wears her hair in an updo it can be seen that she has long hair.
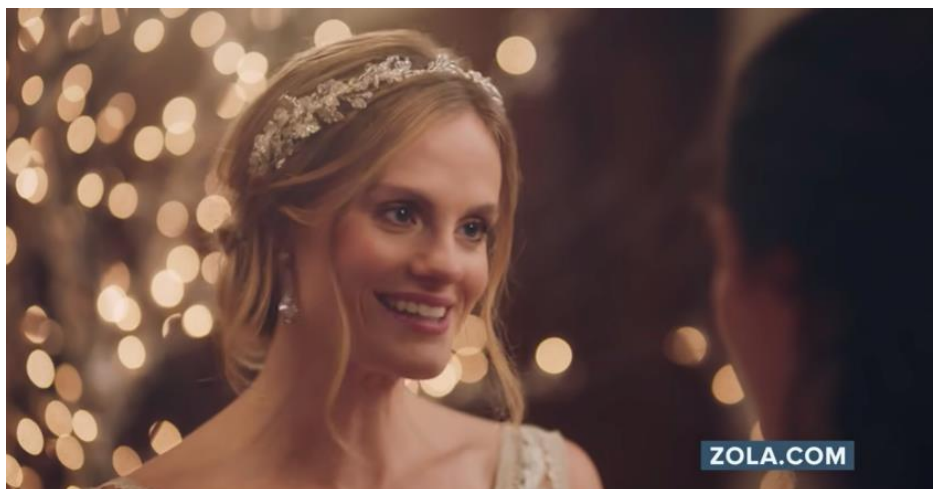
Figure 4. Easy Wedding Planning (Zola, 2020, 0:08).

The second most dominant stereotype that was featured in the advertisements was a mixture of 'butch' and 'femme' lesbians (16.67%, N=16) (Overview in *Figure 10*). Women that were coded as a mixture of 'butch' and 'femme' displayed characteristics of both the 'butch' stereotype and the 'femme' stereotype. In the Swarovski advertisement 'Valentine' (2018) a lesbian woman that was coded as a mixture of 'butch' and 'femme' was featured. The woman on the left in *Figure 5,* a poster that was created as part of the advertising

campaign, wears stereotypically feminine clothing and make-up but has partly shaved hair which is a characteristic of a 'butch' lesbian.

Figure 5. Valentine (Swarovski, 2018).

Of all depicted lesbian women, 12.5% (N=12) could be classified as 'butch' (Overview in *Figure 10*). Verizon (2019) (*Figure 6*) presents the story of a 'butch' lesbian 'coming out' to her mother and the mother's process of gradual acceptance of her daughter's sexuality in their 'Love Calls Back' advertisement. The woman was coded as 'butch' as she has partly shaved hair, wears no make-up and loose clothing.

As the advertisement by Verizon (2019) is part of a larger LGBTQ+ support campaign, the efforts of the company will be explored in the context of CSR. The telecommunications company Verizon has been listed among the best LGBTQ+-friendly workplaces in the United States by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (2020). The foundation investigated 1059 companies based on the three categories "non-discrimination policies across business entities, equitable benefits for LGBTQ+ workers and their families and supporting an inclusive culture and corporate social responsibility" (Human Rights Campaign Foundation, 2020, p.4). The advertisement 'Love Calls Back' was launched as part of Verizon's national pride campaign for which they partnered with the U.S.' first and largest LGBTQ+ organisation PFLAG (Verizon, 2020). It becomes apparent that Verizon is actively engaging in CSR activities aimed at sexual minority groups. Their partnership with PFLAG falls under the CSR category of cause-related marketing (CRM) which describes the

partnership between a corporate company and a charitable organisation which form a long-term relationship that is mutually beneficial (Papasolomou, Vrontis, & Demetriou, 2010). CRM initiatives that show the continuous engagement of a company with a social cause and that are implemented with a carefully chosen partner can attract consumers (Papasolomou et al., 2010). The cooperation between Verizon and PFLAG as well as the 'Love Calls Back' advertisements have been successful as there has been 55% increase in donations for PFLAG after the launch of the spot (Shorty Awards, n.d.).

Figure 6. Love Calls Back (Verizon, 2019, 0:09).

Lipstick lesbians were represented the least; only 4.16% (N=4) of the portrayed women were identified as a mixture of 'femme' and 'lipstick' lesbians which included that they had to display characteristics of both stereotypes (Overview in *Figure 10*)**.** The advertisement '#ihaveaplan' by Desigual (2012) presents a woman who is shown in underwear throughout the first half of the advertisement as she is trying on a variety of clothes; nakedness is a feature of 'lipstick' lesbians. However, she only wears light make-up and eventually ends up wearing form-fitting clothing which matches the definition of a 'femme' lesbian (*Figure 7*). The woman is discussing whether she should 'come out' to her parents and makes the decision to do so at the end of the advertisement. The process of 'coming out' is further explored in the section 'Negative Interpersonal and Societal Responses to 'Lesbianism''.

Figure 7. #ihaveaplan (Desigual, 2012, 0:16).

Fewer models, namely 2.08% (N=2) were coded as 'lipstick' lesbians (Overview in *Figure 10*). The advertisement 'Airport Love' by XXL All Sports United (*Figure 8*) is one of the two advertisements that portrays a woman coded as a 'lipstick' lesbian. The woman is wearing high heels, a short, tight leather dress, strong make-up and has long hair. In the first third of the advertisement only parts of the woman's body are shown focussing on her legs and backside. In the second third of the advertisement her face is shown, however, sunglasses are covering her eyes. Only in the last third of the advertisement she takes off the sunglasses and the whole person can be seen. The advertisement lays the focus on the woman's body which is underlined by various men gazing at her and trying to get her attention throughout the advertisement. The eroticised presentation of lesbian women through the lens of the male gaze is an indicator of a 'lipstick' lesbian. At the end of the advertisement the woman kisses another woman and gives the men who are looking surprised at the two an apologetic shoulder shrug. Homosexuality as a 'surprise effect' is discussed in the 'Explicit Romantic Relationships' section.

Figure 8. Airport Love (XXL All Sports United, 2014, 0:44).

Lastly, 1.04% (N=1) was coded as a mixture of a 'butch' and a 'lipstick' lesbian (Overview in *Figure 10*). The lesbian woman that was coded as a mixture of 'butch' and 'lipstick' lesbian can be seen in the advertisement '#loveislove' by BVW Jewelers (2015) (*Figure 9*). She is portrayed in her underwear at the beginning of the advertisement and she wears strong make-up which are indicators for the stereotype 'lipstick' lesbian. However, her hair is partly shaved which hints at the 'butch' stereotype. In the advertisement she proposes to her partner. Same-sex marriage and wedding-related behaviour is discussed later in this chapter within the theme 'Explicit Romantic Relationships'.

Figure 9. #love is love (BVW Jewellers, 2015, 0:09).

The findings of the current study are coherent with the findings of previous research which suggests that advertising features mostly 'femme' lesbians (Nölke, 2018). As

discussed in the Theoretical Framework (see sections 2.1.), 'Western' societies are heteronormative meaning that heterosexual norms and values are favoured. A biological view on gender as two binaries based on reproductive functions is widely accepted in 'Western' countries (West & Zimmermann, 1987). This clear division into the two binaries men and women also connects femininity with women and masculinity with men (Paechter, 2006; Schilt & Westbrook, 2009). As explained in the Theoretical Framework, 'femme' lesbians conform with this heteronormative view on femininity which is why they are perceived to act in a homonormative frame. As heteronormative societies are said to favour LGBTQ+ individuals who conform with heterosexual ideals, the finding that 'femme' lesbians, who are perceived as conforming, are dominantly presented is not surprising (Robinson, 2012). Another factor that might lead marketers to primarily feature 'femme' lesbians in advertising is related to the congruence framework as discussed by Eisend and Hermann (2019) (see section 2.2.2). As the appearance of 'femme' lesbians is closest to the values, schemas and expectations that heterosexual consumers hold, they might be perceived more favourably among heterosexual consumers than for instance 'butch' lesbians. The more 'masculine' characteristics of 'butch' lesbians might present an image that heterosexual consumers struggle to identify with as women are associated with femininity, not masculinity. 'Butch' lesbians challenge this link as they are female but show masculine characteristics (Eves, 2004). The appearance of the women who were coded as 'butch' or a mixture of 'butch' and another stereotype is not congruent with heteronormative gender performances. The portrayal of lesbian women in a heteronormative frame might inspire marketers to believe that an advert has a higher potential for success among heterosexual consumers. By portraying 'femme' lesbians they might hope to appeal to both LGBTQ+ and heterosexual consumers.
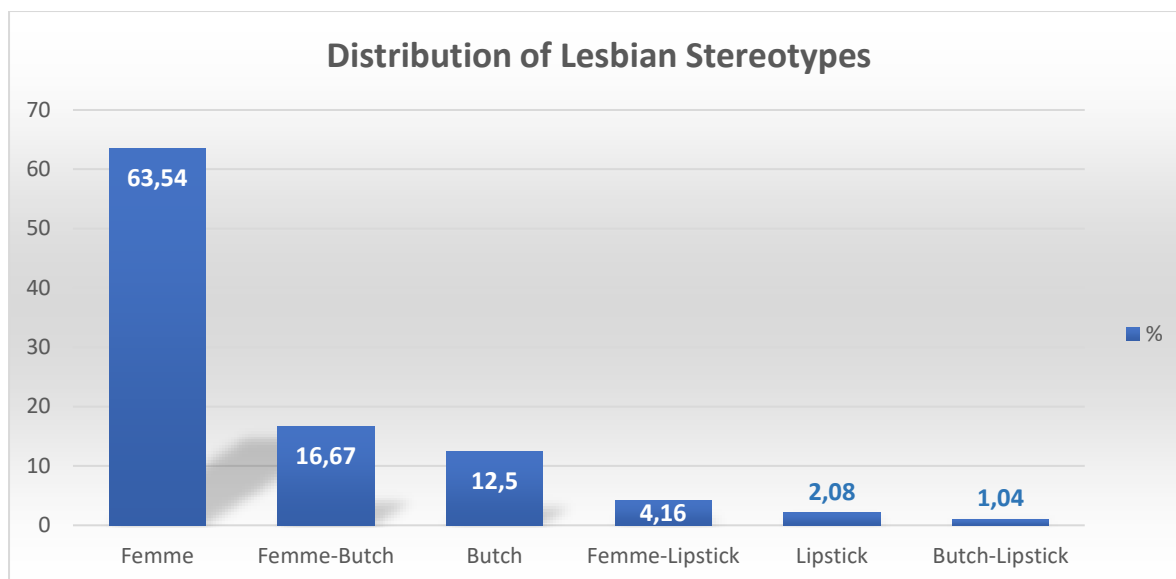
Figure 10. Distribution of stereotypes among the total amount of lesbian women presented in the analysed advertisements in %

When it comes to the demographics of the presented women it was found that most models were Caucasian (79.16%, N=76). The code that was used second most often to describe a model's race was ambiguous which was the case for 10.42% (N=10). Furthermore, 6.25% (N=6) of the women were coded as Afro-American and 4.17% (N=4) were Hispanic. No Asian women were presented (Overview in *Figure 11*). As discussed in the Theoretical Framework, the current study was conducted from a social constructionist perspective in relation to sexual identities and advertising. This perspective assumes that advertising shapes the construction of- and influences public discourse on sexual identities, especially sexual minority identities (Hackley, 1998; Hilton-Morrow & Battles, 2015). Thus a representative presentation of sexual minority identities in advertising is important to accurately inform public- and self-perception of the LGBTQ+ community. In order to evaluate the findings on race with regard to the accuracy with which they reflect the actual distribution of race within the LGBTQ+ community, they will be compared to a study conducted by the Williams Institute at the University of Los Angeles (2016). The institute conducted research through a survey which they carried out via cell phone and landline on the demographics of approximately 350.000 individuals who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in 50 U.S. states and the district of Columbia. The institute found that 58% of the participants identified as Caucasian, 21% identified as Hispanic and 12% identified as Afro-American. The study by the Williams Institute (2016) might not be representative of other 'Western' countries. However, as most of the 40 analysed advertisements (N=29) included in this

current study were produced in the United States it is still interesting and useful to compare the findings of the study administered by the Williams Institute to the current study. It becomes apparent that the results of the two studies differ; the current research shows a disproportionately high number of Caucasian women. Nölke (2018) found similar results as she explains that in her study of video advertisements the majority of lesbian women depicted, namely 85%, were Caucasian. It can be observed that the analysed advertisements reflect a broader trend in advertising which is the dominance of Caucasian models, not only in 'Western' but also other cultures (Frith, Shaw, & Cheng, 2005; Fowler & Carlson 2015; Shankar, 2020). Even though advertisements are becoming more diverse, 'Caucasianess' was marketed as the ultimate beauty ideal for centuries which still influences advertising today (Shankar, 2020). Consequently, advertisements featuring lesbian women are no exception but part of a broader trend in advertising which allows little space for the accurate representation of racial minorities.

Figure 11. Distribution of ethnicities among the total amount of lesbian women presented in the analysed advertisements in %

Another physical characteristic that the analysis looked into was age. It was found that most women in the advertisements were adults (46.88%, N=45), or young adults (44.79%, N=43). Approximately 8% (N=8) of the female models in the advertisements were teenagers, and 2% (N=2) were children (Overview in *Figure 12*). Interestingly, no seniors were depicted. Again, the findings of the current study are compared to the findings by the Williams Institute (2016). The Institute found that the average age of individuals who

identified as LGBTQ+ was 37.3 years and 56% were aged between 18 and 34. However, it should be noted that seniors might not be as comfortable declaring their sexuality as the social stigma around homosexuality has changed significantly over the past years (The Williams Institute, 2019). Therefore, it is likely that many seniors who actually identify as LGBTQ+ did not indicate their actual sexual identity and did not participate in the survey. The findings by the Williams Institute (2016) and the current study align to a large extent. In general, advertising has been found to feature mostly young women as youth has been idealised and established as a standard for beauty in 'Western' cultures (Freitas, Jordan, & Hughes, 2018). On the other hand, senior women are underrepresented in advertising; even products that are targeted towards older generations are advertised by younger models (Simcock, & Lynn, 2006; Jermyn, & Jerslev, 2017). When comparing the findings of the current study to trends in advertising as analysed by the studies discussed above, it can be seen that the findings on the age of the models are not congruent. Most advertisements in the conducted analysis featured adults instead of young adults. However, similar to the findings by previous research, the analysis found that there were no elderly models in the advertisements (Simcock, & Lynn, 2006; Jermyn, & Jerslev, 2017). A potential explanation for the discrepancy in age between the findings by the current research and the findings by other scholars might be that marketers perceive middle-aged lesbian women to be more financially stable than younger lesbian women and thus as a more lucrative target audience. Furthermore, it can be assumed that the brands feature models reflective of the target audience that the brands would like to attract; a strategy which is referred to as target marketing (Johnson, & Grier, 2011). Thus, a majority of the analysed brands might perceive their target audience to consist mostly of middle-aged women rather than young women.
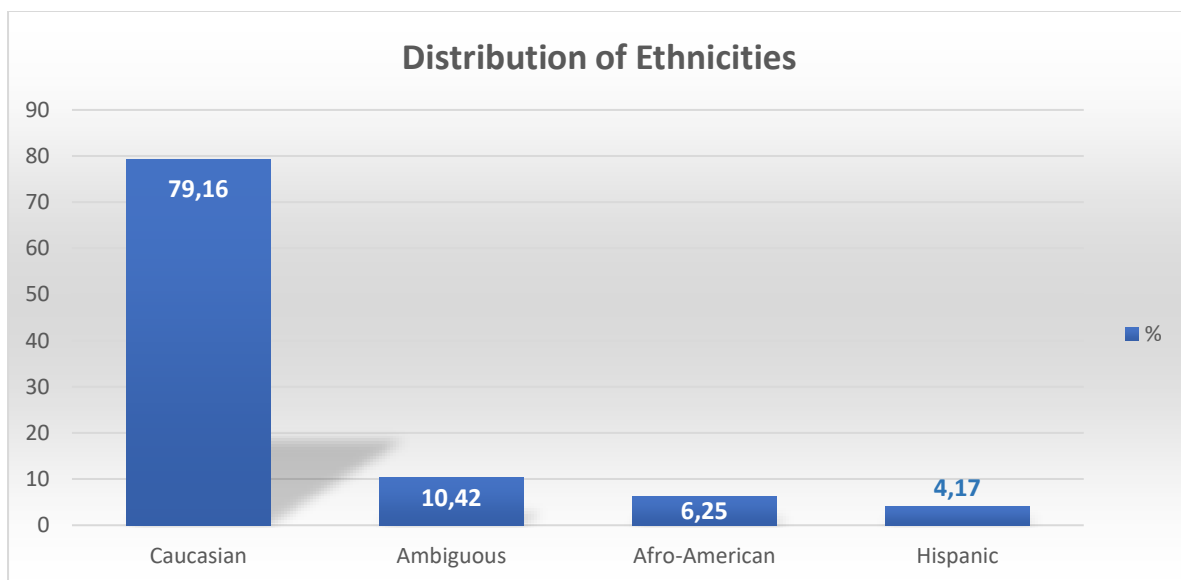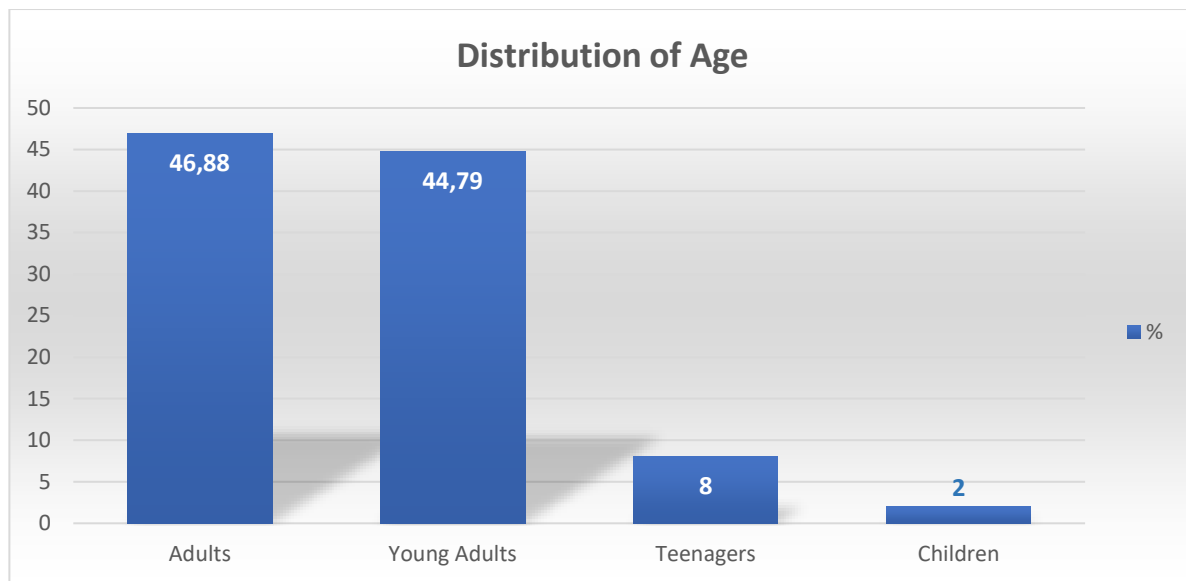
Figure 12. Distribution of age among the total amount of lesbian women presented in the analysed advertisements in %

Lastly, the analysis also explored the bodies of the portrayed women with the FRS by Stunkard et al. (1983). Most women in the advertisements were found to be slim; a total of 41.67% (N=40) was coded as figure two and 29.17% (N=28) was coded as figure three. Type four occurred in 20.83% (N=20) of the women and few women were coded as 'overweight' with 5.21% (N=5) coded as type six and 3.13% (N=3) coded as type five (Overview in *Figure 13*). The labels 'normal' and 'overweight' are assigned based on the BMI that is associated with the figure of the women (Stunkard et al., 1983). It should be noted that it can be difficult to distinguish between the different figure types within the categories 'normal' and 'overweight'. Similar to the findings on race, the findings of the conducted study regarding the body types of the featured models reflect a broader trend in advertising. Especially in 'Western' cultures the ideal female body is thin or even underweight and advertising has represented and reinforced this ideal under the notion of 'thin-sells' (Roberts & Roberts, 2015). Even though brands are increasingly embracing body diversity in advertising, the vast amount of women featured in advertising is still underweight (Freitas et al., 2018). Although no woman was coded as 'underweight' in the present study, a preference for slim women was observed in the analysed advertisements. Consequently, the analysed advertisements contribute to the trend of 'thin-sells' and reproduce the ideal of a slim figure.
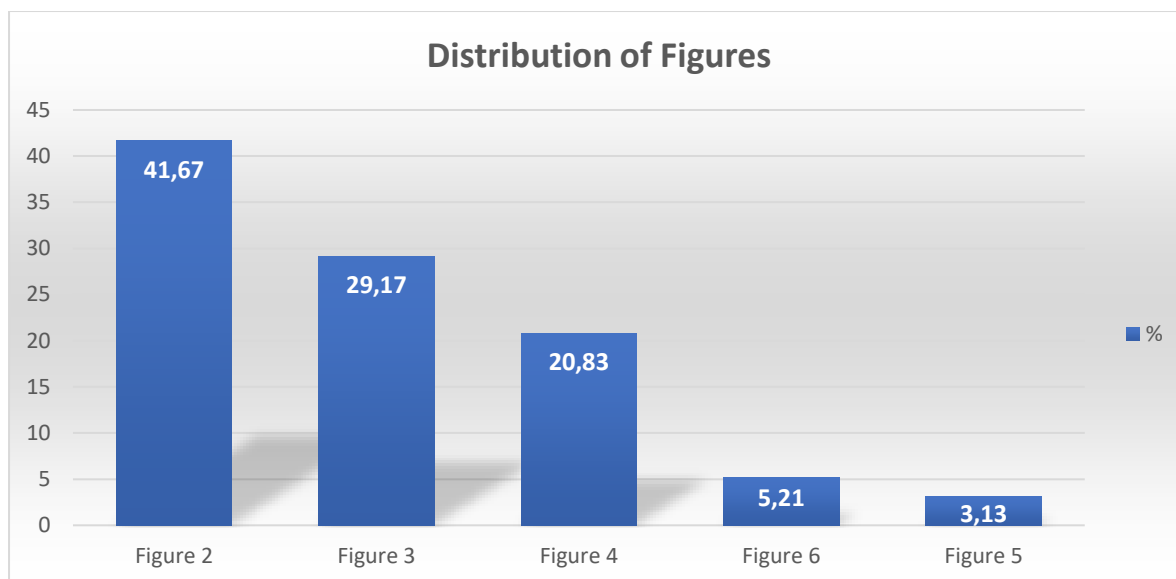
Figure 13. Distribution of figures among the total amount of lesbian women presented in the analysed advertisements in %

4.2. Negative Interpersonal and Societal Responses to 'Lesbianism'

The analysis identified a re-occurring theme of negative responses from the women's family or society to her sexuality. The negative responses were divided into two sub-themes which are 'Negative Responses from Family Members', more specifically parents, and 'Negative Responses from Society'. First, the findings on negative parental responses will be presented and discussed followed by negative societal responses.

Overall, a total of 40.0% (N=16) of the advertisements portray negative responses that lesbian women are confronted with related to their sexuality. Within this theme, most advertisements (22.5%, N=9) discussed (potential) negative responses from parents (Overview in *Figure 19*). All advertisements that were sorted into this sub-theme showed characters who are faced with uncertainty or discomfort because they are unsure about their parents' attitude towards their sexuality or because their parents disapprove of their sexuality. The advertisement 'Now and Then' by Visit Las Vegas (*Figure 14*), for example portrays two women of which one does not want to get married to her partner as she is expecting her parents to disapprove of her sexuality and marriage with a woman. She discusses her worries with her partner throughout the advertisement. Las Vegas belongs to Clark County in the state of Nevada and is the self-proclaimed 'wedding capital' with Nevada having the highest rate of marriage licenses issued in the U.S. (Smialek, 2017). Civil same-sex marriages have been legalised in the U.S. in 2014 and since then over 20.000 same-sex marriage licenses have been issued by Clark County (Michor, 2019). The local economy is highly dependent on

the wedding industry as weddings have generated more than two billion dollars in economic activity in Clark County in 2017 (Kulin, 2019). The legalisation of same-sex marriages has opened up the opportunity for businesses in Las Vegas not only to approach heterosexual couples but also LGBTQ+ couples and thus to earn 'pink money'.

Figure 14. Now and Then (Visit Las Vegas, 2018, 1:29).

Within the sub-theme 'Negative Responses from Family Members' it needs to be distinguished between negative responses from the mother and the father as the father is more frequently associated with negative sentiments towards his daughter's sexuality in the analysed advertisements. Of the nine advertisements that were sorted into this sub-theme, 66.67% (N=6) portrayed the father as the parent the daughter is expecting to have an issue with her homosexuality or who actually has an issue with his daughter's sexuality. In 22.22% (N=2) mother and father- and in 11.11% (N=1) the mother has difficulties accepting her daughter being homosexual (Overview in *Figure 19*). For instance, in a Renault (*Figure 15*) advertisement which portrays the love story of two women, the father of one of the women is shown to be highly upset when he finds out about his daughter's sexuality through a love letter from his daughter's girlfriend.

Figure 15. 30 years in the making (Renault, 2019, 1:14).

However, all advertisements (N=9) come to a positive ending as the women either gain confidence to 'come out' to their parent(s) or the parent(s) change(s) their attitude towards their daughter's sexuality. An example of a happy ending like this can be found in the advertisement 'Find your understanding' by Expedia (*Figure 16*). The title already indicates the end as the advertisement portrays the story of a father who disapproved of his daughter's sexuality at first but ends up flying to her wedding to reassure his daughter he loves her. Similar to Verizon, Expedia is engaging in a broader support campaign for the LGBTQ+ community which is why the company's initiative will be discussed in the following section. Expedia has released a 'Gay Travel Guide' which allows sexual minority travellers to filter for LGBTQ+ friendly hotels. The online travel agency collaborated with the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) to simplify travelling for sexual minorities (Expedia, 2010). The travel difficulties that the LGBTQ+ community is confronted with are discussed towards the end of this section in the example of an Airbnb (2015) advertisement. The partnership between IGLTA and Expedia presents another example of CRM. However, contrary to the advertisement by Verizon (2019) which is in the telecommunications sector and strives for LGBTQ+ equality, Expedia's core business of tourism and their CSR initiative of promoting safe travel for the LGBTQ+ community are aligned. This form of CSR is referred to as strategic CSR which means that apart from positively impacting society, a CSR initiative makes 'business sense' and serves the company (Bhattacharyya, Sahay, Arora, & Chaturvedi, 2008). Research has found conflicting consumer responses to strategic CSR initiatives. On one hand, strategic CSR can lead to suspicion and cynicism among consumers as the CSR initiative might be perceived as less value-driven and more egoistic (Werther & Chandler, 2005). On the other hand, high

congruence between a company's business and its CSR initiative can be perceived as appropriate and as matching the expectations and knowledge of the company (Elving, 2013).

Figure 16. Find your understanding (Expedia, 2012, 2:44).

The findings of the current study are discussed within a theoretical context in the following section. The Theoretical Framework discussed a shift in academia from exploring the process of 'coming out' as a linear model to viewing it as a highly unique experience that cannot be generalised but that differs from person to person (Rosenberg, 2018). Savin-Williams (2001) has been among the first scholars to neglect a linear model of 'coming out'; instead a focus on the social environment in which an LGBTQ+ individual 'comes out' is suggested when evaluating a person's process of 'coming out'. In this view, the development of one's sexual identity is constantly influenced by an individual's social surroundings (Rosenberg, 2018). As the advertisements presented the lesbian women's 'coming out' process in the social context of parental acceptance or lack of acceptance, research on this topic will be discussed and compared to the findings of the present research. As Savin-Williams (2001) describes, the process of 'coming out' to parents can be a highly stressful experience for lesbian women. Relationships with parents have been found to be an important influence throughout a person's life as they influence an individual's sense of self-worth and an individual's other personal relationships (Katz-Wise, Rosario, & Tsappis, 2016). Parental disapproval of their child's sexuality can have negative implications on the child's mental and physical health as parental rejection among LGBTQ+ individuals is related to a higher likelihood of attempted suicide, illegal drug use, and high levels of depression (Katz-Wise et al., 2016). Parental acceptance of their child's sexuality is often a process and some parents

are never able to fully accept their child's sexual identity. It should be noted that similar to the process of 'coming out' for LGBTQ+ individuals, the process of acceptance for parents is a unique experience that cannot be generalised. However, to get an overview of parental reactions to their child's 'coming out' a variety of studies are discussed. Rosario and Schrimshaw (2013) conducted interviews among 164 participants aged between 14 and 21 living in New York who identified as lesbian, gay or bisexual and found that one third of the participants experienced parental acceptance, one-third experienced parental rejection and the remaining third had not 'come out' to their parents. Gosh (2020) found that many parents do not immediately accept their child's homosexuality but go through a gradual process of acceptance which is also referred to as a transitional phase during which their attitudes stabilise and become more concrete. Parental acceptance depends heavily on the pre-conceived opinion of homosexuality which is often shaped by the broader cultural and societal attitude towards homosexuality (Gosh, 2020). A study among lesbian women found that they are more likely to 'come out' to their mother than to their father as 63% of the participants told their mother about their sexuality and only 45% told their father about their sexuality. The reason for this difference that was mentioned most frequently was a distant relationship with the father (Savin-Williams, 2001).

The analysed advertisements often portray parents who are either gradually accepting their daughter's sexuality or who are showing their acceptance right after the daughter has 'come out'. Even though many parents of homosexual children eventually end up accepting their child's sexuality, many LGBTQ+ individuals are confronted with parental rejection. Furthermore, even parents who have more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality often perceive the situation of their child 'coming out' as stressful (Gosh, 2020). Stress is often triggered by anxiety as parents "fear extended family members' treatment of their child, the sexual health of their child, their job prospects, and their social standing as a lesbian/gay person" (Ghosh, 2020, p. 15) Consequently, the analysed advertisements are portraying child-parent relationships in an overly positive manner and are ignoring the possibility of parental rejection. It can be argued that advertisements refrain from portraying negative examples of 'coming out' as they do not want audiences to connect negative emotions with their brand and/or because they want to encourage sexual minorities and foster hope and positivity. A study by Guido, Pichierri and Pino (2018) found that advertisements which shift from negative to positive emotions are better remembered by consumers than advertisements which do not include these emotional shifts. Portraying stories with a happy end might consequently lead to higher brand recall among consumers and influence their purchase

intentions. Furthermore, the focus in the analysed advertisements on daughter-father relationships does not accurately reflect the 'coming out' process for many young lesbians as most 'come out' to their mother first or never 'come out' to their farther.

The remaining advertisements that fall into the theme of 'Negative Responses from Society' (17.5%, N=7), discuss the societal (lack of) acceptance of homosexuality. Within this theme, more advertisements, namely 12,5% (N=5), discuss the societal lack of acceptance of homosexuality (Overview in *Figure 19*). An example of negative societal responses to homosexuality was released by Airbnb (2015) (*Figure 17)* which features two lesbian couples who report on the difficulties that they are confronted with when travelling. They explain the low tolerance towards homosexuality in other cultures and the consequences for planning a holiday. In fact, two travel journalists created an LGBTQ+ Danger Index for 150 countries which ranks the world's most dangerous travel destinations. The index was created based on eight factors among which are the 'legalisation of same-sex marriage', 'protection against discrimination', 'criminalisation of violence' and 'legalisation of same-sex relationships' and found that especially Islamic states including Saudi Arabia, Iran and Malaysia are more dangerous for LGBTQ+ travellers (Fergusson, & Fergusson, 2019). The U.S. Bureau of Consular Affairs suggests for LGBTQ+ travellers to research potential travel destinations as more than 70 countries consider same-sex relationships a crime (U.S. Bureau of Consular Affairs, 2019). Airbnb has acknowledged these travel difficulties for LGBTQ+ travellers and has released an anti-discrimination policy that all users were obliged to sign (BBC, 2016). Hosts and guests have to commit to treating each other with inclusion and respect regardless of "race, colour, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or marital status" (Airbnb, 2020). With their advertisement, Airbnb aims to communicate that they are socially responsible as the company intends to raise awareness for travelling difficulties of LGBTQ+ travellers. The problem that Airbnb discusses is directly linked to the company's business of lodging, similar to the previously discussed Expedia example. Thus, the company's CSR initiative presents an example of strategic CSR. As described in the Expedia example, there are discrepancies within consumer responses to strategic CSR initiatives as some consumers perceive these actions to be egoistic and others perceive them to be appropriate (Werther & Chandler, 2005; Elving, 2013).

Figure 17. Love is welcome here (Airbnb, 2015, 0:54).

Other advertisements that fall into the sub-theme of 'Societal Lack of Acceptance' discuss marriage inequalities or link to other societal issues and movements such as 'Black Lives Matter' or Women's rights movement. For instance, in Björn Borg's (2018) 'Marriage Unblocked' advertisement (*Figure 18*), the company advocates for the legalisation of same-sex marriage. They advertise their eponymous initiative which allows for everyone to get symbolically married on blockchain. Björn Borg built a marriage registry on the Ethereum blockchain which users can access via a website and which distributes the created marriage contracts across various servers (NORD DDB, n.d.). In the advertisement, four same-sex couples discuss marriage discrimination for homosexuals as 87% of all countries forbid same-sex marriage (Björn Borg, 2018). Contrary to the advertisement by Airbnb (2015), the 'Marriage Unblocked' initiative by Björn Borg is not directly related to the company's business activities as they sell fashion. Thus, the CSR actions by Björn Borg cannot be seen as strategic or congruent with their business. As discussed in the previous paragraphs, this low level of alignment can be perceived positively or negatively by consumers. It can be argued that companies increasingly feel the need to engage in CSR initiatives in order to attract consumers. The biggest consumer group in 'Western' countries are millennials who, in comparison to previous generations, require companies to act socially responsible (Anderson, Dahlquist, & Garver, 2018). The definition of millennials varies but a widely accepted definition is that they are the generation born between 1980 and 2000. Companies that engage in CSR activities were not only found to attract millennials as consumers but also as employees which means that CSR initiatives can have various advantages for companies (McGlone, Spain, & McGlone, 2011). Forbes magazine (2019) released an article in which

multiple managers are quoted on the topic of CSR and Patsy Doerr, who holds a management position at the multinational media conglomerate Thomson Reuters, explains "It will no longer be a choice for companies to embed social impact into their business and brand strategies – it will be required to thrive and compete for talent, customers and investors". It becomes apparent that the importance of CSR and the importance for companies to engage in it is growing; congruence between business activities and CSR initiatives seems to be of secondary importance as the examples of Verizon or Björn Borg show.

Figure 18. Marriage Unblocked (Björn Borg, 2018, 0:27).

Only 5% (N=2) of the advertisements discuss societal acceptance of homosexuality (Overview in *Figure 19*). One company discusses its support for its LGBTQ+ employees and the other advertisement presents the community of a city, in this case the U.S. city Seattle, as LGBTQ+ friendly. When evaluating these findings, it is useful to explore the levels of societal acceptance of sexual minorities in 'Western' countries. Homosexuality has gained societal acceptance in 'Western' countries over the past years with the Netherlands, Belgium and the UK being among the most accepting countries worldwide (The Williams Institute, 2019). The number of Americans saying that homosexuality should be accepted by society has increased over the past years from 51% in 2006 to 70% in 2017 (Pew Research Center, 2017). However, this finding also means that 30% of the American population is unaccepting or unaware of homosexuality. Additionally, homosexuals are still frequently faced with discrimination based on their sexuality. Two examples of areas where LGBTQ+ individuals are confronted with discrimination include marriage and the labour market. A study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD (2019) found that only

half of all OECD countries have legalised same-sex marriage. Furthermore, homosexual job applicants in OECD countries are 1.5 times less likely to be invited to a job interview if their sexual orientation is indicated through volunteer work or work experience in a gay or lesbian organisation (OECD, 2019). The latter finding is especially interesting as work experience in a gay or lesbian organisation does not mean that the individual is actually homosexual which means that the individual's sexuality can only be anticipated by potential employers. Advertisements that pick up on societal issues can draw the public's attention to the discussed social issue (O'Cass, & Griffin, 2006). The analysed advertisements that portray the societal lack of acceptance of homosexuality might lead to an increased awareness for the difficulties that sexual minorities are confronted with. Furthermore, brands that address negative societal responses to homosexuality or other social issues - such as the discrimination of women or Afro-American people - position themselves as advocates for discriminated communities. As a consequence, these brands might be able to achieve a positive reputation among the discriminated communities and among other individuals who support equal treatment of sexualities, genders and race. As discussed in the previous section, especially millennials reward companies for acting socially responsible. On the other hand, the brands might also receive negative feedback from sexually prejudiced consumers and drive more conservative consumers away. For instance, the advertisement 'Easy Wedding Planning' by Zola discussed in section 4.1. which features two women getting married was heavily criticised by One Million Moms, a division of the conservative American Family Association, for portraying a same-sex couple. The group's protest led to the Hallmark channel pulling the advertisement (Murphy, 2019). It becomes apparent that even though homosexuality has gained more acceptance in 'Western' societies, advertisers might still be confronted with criticism from certain social groups.
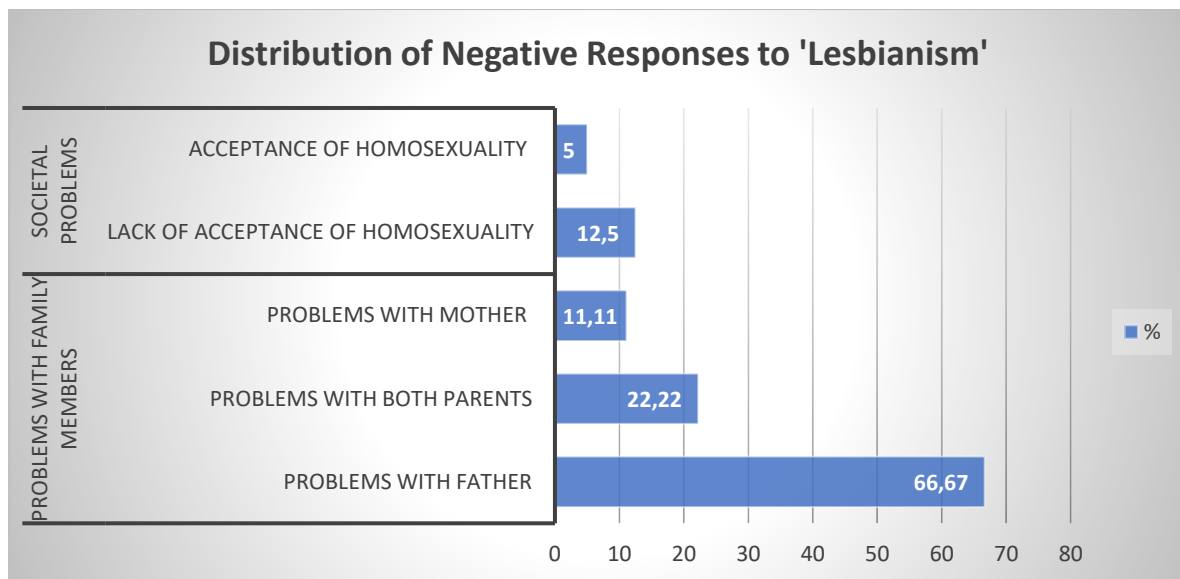
Figure 19. Distribution of problems due to homosexuality among the advertisements which discuss problems in %.

4.3. Explicit Romantic Relationships

The third theme discusses the degree of ambiguity with which the women's sexualities are portrayed as well as the nature of the romantic relationship presented in the advertisements. It can be interesting to explore the ambiguity in the portrayal of homosexuality in advertising as literature suggests that homosexuality is often presented ambiguously. First, findings on ambiguity in the advertisements will be discussed followed by findings on the nature of the presented relationships.

The majority of the advertisements (62.5%, N=25) identified the main character(s) as homosexual in the first half of the advertisement (Overview in *Figure 22*). Lesbian women were identified based on dialogue and performance in the advertisements which was based on the definition by Beirne (2017). The identification of a woman's homosexuality at the beginning of the advertisement leaves little room for ambiguity regarding their sexuality. One example of the explicit portrayal of homosexuality is an advertisement by Target (*Figure 20*) in which two women explain that they are expecting a baby together and imagine their future with their baby. Similar to other companies discussed previously, Target engaged in CRM and partnered with an NGO to support sexual minorities. The company made a $100.000 donation to GLSEN which has the mission to create an affirming learning environment for LGBTQ+ youths (GLSEN, 2019; Target, 2020). Furthermore, the company released a 'pride collection' in 2020 which includes clothing, accessories, swimwear and pet accessories with LGBTQ+ symbolism such as rainbows (Target, 2020). Similar to the previously discussed

companies it can be assumed that Target feels the need to engage in CSR due to societal and economic pressure.

Figure 20. The Magic of Space (Target, 2015, 0:50).

Fewer advertisements, namely 37.5% (N=15), are ambiguous about the women's sexuality at the beginning of the advertisement and only show that the woman is homosexual in the second half (Overview in *Figure 22*). An example of an advertisement that only openly portrays the character's sexuality at the end of the advertisement was created by Douwe Egberts (*Figure 21*). In the advertisement 'Something to Share' the romantic partner of the main character only turns out to be a woman at the end of the advertisement. Throughout the advertisement the gender of the main character's partner is ambiguous as she wears a hood and loose clothing. This presentation of homosexuality is similar to the XXL All Sports United advertisement described in the lesbian stereotype section and will be explored further in the following paragraph.

Figure 21. Something to Share (Douwe Egberts, 2020, 0:30).

The finding that most of the advertisements portray homosexuality in an explicit manner does not align with the results of previous studies which found that homosexuality is frequently portrayed in an ambiguous manner (Tsai, 2012; Oakenfull, & Greenlee, 2005). Oakenfull et al. (2008) argue that the main motivation behind a portrayal that is open for interpretation is that marketers do not have to fear criticism from sexually prejudiced consumers. The discrepancy between the findings of previous studies and the present study might be due to the sampling method that was used for the present study. As discussed in the Research Design (see section 3.1.1.) only advertisements featuring women who were explicitly identifiable as lesbian were included in the research. However, even though advertisers are sometimes still confronted with negative consumer feedback for the portrayal of members from LGBTQ+ community, as for instance the company Zola for their 'Easy Wedding Planning' advertisement, societal attitudes towards homosexuality have generally become increasingly positive in 'Western' countries over the past years. This shift towards more acceptance and inclusiveness, which was discussed earlier in this section, means that advertisers have less reason to fear negative consumer feedback. Also, studies by Gong (2019) and Eisend and Hermanns (2019) found that heterosexual- as well as homosexual consumers responded positively to explicitly homosexually-themed advertisements which includes advertisements featuring lesbian or gay characters or other LGBTQ+ symbols such as a rainbow. The changing societal stigma around homosexuality in 'Western' countries might give advertisers more confidence to produce explicitly homosexual advertising. Furthermore, the heightened societal expectations for companies to focus on CSR have also led to an increased importance for companies to foster diversity and inclusiveness (Forbes,

2019). A minority of the advertisements depicted the sexuality of the featured women with ambiguity until the end of the advertisement. Some of the advertisements that fall into this category communicated the homosexuality of the portrayed women as a 'surprise' to the viewer and to other actors outside of the romantic relationships in the advertisements. The advertisements that play with this 'surprise effect' assume a well-established heteronormativity within their consumers. It can be argued that the use of homosexuality as a 'surprise' emphasises the dominance of heterosexuality in the media as well as a lack of media that features sexual minorities. To underline this argument it can be interesting to conduct a thought experiment during which the roles in the advertisement are reversed. In this case, imagine the heterosexuality of the main character would form the basis for the 'surprise effect'. For instance, in the 'Airport Love' advertisement by XXL All Sports United, which was described when explaining the findings on lesbian stereotypes, the men who were gazing at the woman and trying to get her attention assumed that she could be sexually attracted to them. However, when it turned out that the women had a female love interest, the men were presented being surprised and confused. If the woman would have been portrayed having a male love interest at the end of the advertisement, the 'element of surprise' would have been missing. It becomes apparent, that the described 'element of surprise' is built on the normalisation of heterosexuality in 'Western' societies and in the 'Western' media. The woman being heterosexual would not have surprised the audience.
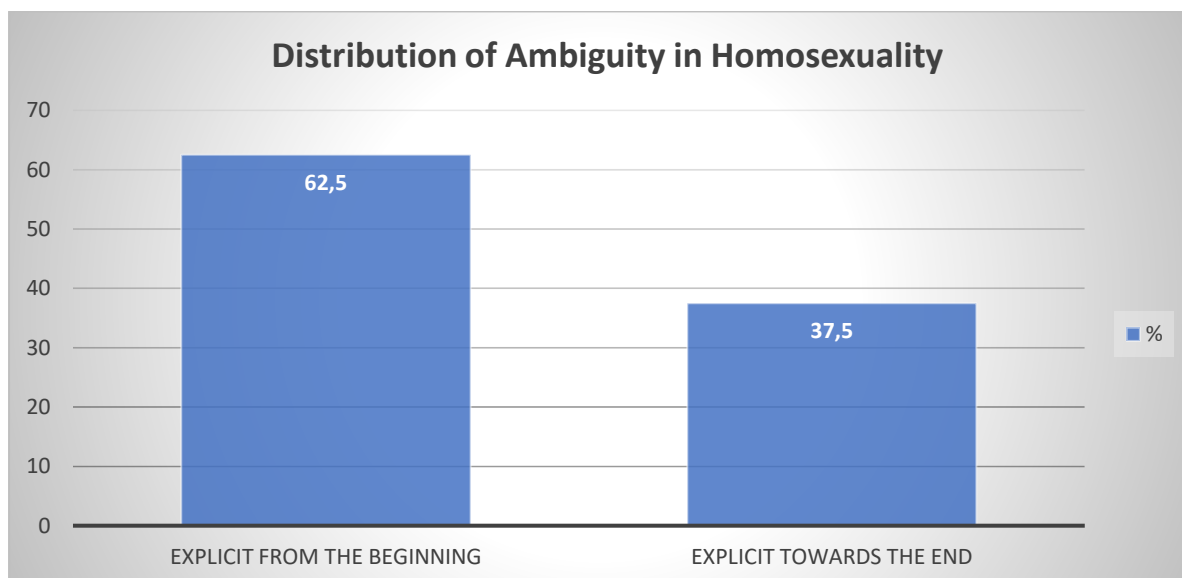

Figure 22. Distribution of ambiguity with which homosexuality is communicated in the analysed advertisements in %

The majority of the advertisements (87.5%, N=35), portrayed women as part of couples rather than showing single lesbian women. Most of the couples, (62.85%, N=22) were presented in a committed relationship, whereas the 'seriousness' of the relationship was open for interpretation in 37.14% (N=13) of the advertisements. Out of the couples that were portrayed being in a committed relationship, most advertisements signified the commitment by portraying civil marriage ceremonies, a marriage proposal or a conversation about the couple's marriage (45.45%, N=10). Other advertisements portrayed the 'seriousness' of the relationship through the couple having children, a woman being pregnant or a couple adopting a child (31.82%, N=7). Another indicator of commitment was a couple living together (13.64%, N=3) or communication of the extended length of the relationship (9.09%, N=2) (Overview in *Figure 24*). An example of an advertisement that features a civil marriage ceremony is by Magnum (2017) (*Figure 23*). The ceremony that is presented in the advertisement is a civil 'white wedding' but similar to a religious ceremony; both women are wearing long white wedding dresses, the father is walking one of the brides down the aisle while the other one is waiting at the altar, a marriage registrar is marrying them and they throw their flower bouquets after the ceremony. The described advertisement by Magnum (2017) is part of a larger campaign in which the Unilever brand positions itself as LGBTQ+ friendly. Magnum (2020) has released multiple advertisements in which they advertised diversity and individuality as they state that "(…) we think a big part of embracing and celebrating this fantastic diversity is by indulging our collective right to enjoy a little more pleasure in life". The company does not specifically mention minority groups in their statement but they underline that 'pleasure' is inclusive of everyone. Furthermore, in past years during pride month, which is the month of June, Magnum has partnered with the non-governmental organisation GLAAD which aims to work against the discrimination of the LGBTQ+ community in the media. During pride month Magnum created a rainbow ice-cream bar where they gave ice creams away for free (Rivera, 2018). It becomes apparent, that Magnum has chosen to promote diversity within their CSR activities by engaging in CRM.

Figure 23. Pleasure is Diverse (Magnum, 2017, 0:57).

Even though all weddings portrayed in the advertisements are civil marriage ceremonies it can be interesting to explore the relationship between religion and same-sex marriage as some 'Western' countries link civil marriage and religious marriage. In some 'Western' countries, such as the U.S., churches are allowed to perform the civil function of marriage, meaning that a wedding held in church by a religious representative can be valid under the law. However, although civil same-sex marriage has been legalised in many 'Western' countries, most churches are not willing to allow for LGBTQ+ individuals to have a religious wedding ceremony (BBC, 2019; Jackson, 2019; Sands, 2000). One of the main reasons for the exclusion of the LGBTQ+ community from religious marriage is that especially Christians take a biological determinist perspective on sexuality as they view only heterosexuality as 'natural' (Sullivan-Blum, 2006). Biological determinism in relation to sex, gender, and sexuality is discussed in the Theoretical Framework. Thus, religious institutions argue that weddings should be reserved for heterosexual couples. Generally, religiosity was found to have an impact on a person's attitude towards same-sex marriage as more religious people are often more critical of same-sex marriage (Walls, 2010; Wright, 2014).

When evaluating marriage in relation to heteronormativity and gender roles, Arend (2016) argues that weddings are closely related to normative gender performance as the desire to have 'the perfect wedding' is considered to be highly feminine. It is suggested that the media plays a decisive role in fostering the wish for women to get married. Furthermore, scholars are debating whether making the institution of marriage legal for same-sex couples is contributing to an assimilation of heteronormativity into the LGBTQ+ community, also referred to as homonormativity, or whether this will contribute to a collapse of heteronormativity (Kimport, 2012). Kimport (2012) supports the first argument as she

describes weddings, especially white weddings, as ritualised heteronormativity meaning that weddings are rituals which were until recently an exclusively heterosexual space. She explains that for a long time in most 'Western' countries marriage was a 'privilege' that was only granted to heterosexuals. Therefore, weddings were initially found for a female bride and a male groom to get married (Kimport, 2012). In light of the analysed advertisements two contradicting arguments can be made. On one hand, based on the argument made by Kimport (2012), it can be argued that lesbian women who are portrayed having a 'white wedding' are reproducing and reinforcing normative gender performance and what Kates (1999) refers to as 'heteronormative gayness'. Kates (1999) criticises the influence of heterosexual norms and values on homosexuality in advertising. Following this argument, the portrayal of lesbian women having a 'white wedding' should be viewed critically as it reproduces the dominance of heterosexuality. This argument can also be connected to the concept of homonormativity. The legalisation of civil same-sex marriage if often noted in the context of homonormativity as Eng, Halberstam, and Munoz (2005) claim that LGBTQ+ individuals have become less critical of the concept of marriage when the right to get married was extended to the LGBTQ+ community. Sexual minorities that engage in same-sex marriage are argued to assimilate into normalised heterosexuality. On the other hand, it can be contended that the engagement of sexual minorities in traditionally heterosexual rituals contributes to the equality of sexual minorities and might lead to a disruption and a reconsideration of these rituals. Before the legalisation of same-sex marriage in some countries, homosexual couples were not able to have their relationship acknowledged by the state they live in and they could not get certain economic advantages as for instance tax or healthcare benefits (Dean, 2011). Allowing homosexual couples to have the same rights as heterosexual couples could lead to greater public acknowledgement and improve equality for sexual minorities. This argument presents a more positive view of the weddings portrayed in the advertisements.
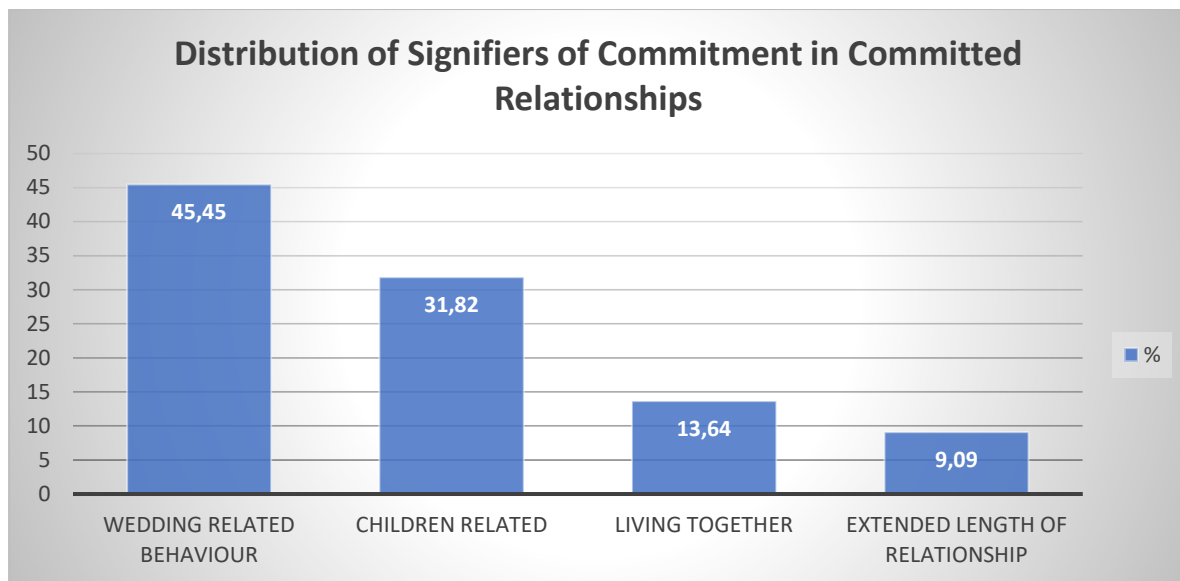
Figure 24. Distribution of the signifiers of commitment among the advertisements that portray committed relationships in %

4.4. Brands Emphasising Love

The analysis of the advertisements also explored the brand's slogans as well as the lyrics of the title songs as both factors influence the brand's intended message (Heaton, & Paris, 2006; Kohli, Thomas, & Suri, 2013). The following section will first present and discuss the findings of the slogans that the brands used in their advertisements and then move on to the title songs. The findings and discussion will be explored in light of the brands that produced the advertisements.

The messages of the slogans were highly diverse and the only sub-theme that was found more frequently within the slogans was an emphasis on love and unity as a total of 22.5% (N=13) of the slogans in the advertisements were related to these topics. Examples of slogans that address love and unity are "Love is Love" by Ben & Jerry's (2015), "It's never too late for love to call back" by Verizon (2019), "Together we'll go far" by Wells Fargo (2015), or "Bringing people together one cup at a time" by Red Rose Tea (2017). The slogan of a brand should capture the meaning of a brand and can lead to increased brand awareness, enhance a brand's image and can influence a brand's market value (Kohli et al., 2013). A brand's positioning should become visible in its slogan which can be communicated by emphasising the benefits of a brand (Dass, Kohli, Kumar, & Thomas, 2014). In the analysed advertisements, a majority of the brands emphasised love and unity in their slogans. Therefore, it can be assumed that consumers are supposed to associate these two terms with the featured brands. Love and unity have positive connotations so that consumers might

connect positive feelings with the brands that created the analysed advertisements. Furthermore, a majority of the analysed advertisements portray love stories which means that the storyline and the slogan of the advertisement are aligned. Thus, the brands are communicating a consistently positive image and position themselves as advocates for love and unity. A favourable brand image among consumers has been found to positively impact purchase intentions (Wang, & Yang, 2010).

The title songs of the advertisements show a pattern similar to the slogans. Even though most advertisements (57.5%, N=23) featured instrumental title songs, 42.5% (N=17) of the advertisements featured vocal title songs. Out of the title songs which included lyrics, 64.71% (N=11) were about love. The analysis only discusses vocal background music and lyrics as an analysis of instrumental music and different genres extends beyond the scope of this thesis. To mention a few examples on vocal background music on love, the advertisement "30 years in the making" by Renault (2019) features a cover of the song 'Wonderwall' which is originally by Oasis. The chorus features the lyrics "I said maybe, you're gonna be the one that saves me; and after all, you're my wonderwall" (Gallagher, 1995). Another example is the advertisement "Cupidity" by Cornetto (2014) which features the song 'What a difference a day makes' by Dinah Washington who sings "My yesterday was blue dear, today I'm a part of you dear, my lonely nights are through dear, since you said you were mine" (Adams, 1959). When the lyrics of the music in advertisements are similar to the product being advertised, also referred to as musical fit, it can deepen the meaning of the message the advertisement aims to send (Heaton, & Paris, 2006). For instance, in an advertisement about a banking product, a song on money would be a high musical fit. Furthermore, perceived high musical fit can enhance "brand recall, brand attitude, affective response and purchase intention" (Craton, & Lantos, 2011, p. 399). Consequently, it is not surprising that the analysed advertisements chose songs that reflect the content and the slogans of the advertisements as a congruent advertisement enhances the advertisement's message and is related to higher purchase intentions and a positive brand image.

4.5. Conclusion

The analysis of the advertisements has shown that many of the companies that produced the analysed advertisements promote sexual diversity within their CSR initiatives. Nowadays, companies are under societal pressure to include CSR in their business model and the brands included in the analysis chose different approaches to do so, ranging from CSR

initiatives that show high congruence between the company's core business and their CSR initiatives to little or no congruence.

Furthermore, the current study is to a large extent aligned with findings of previous studies and general trends in advertising. The physical characteristics reflect this finding as the average lesbian woman in the advertisements looked 'femme', was Caucasian, middle-aged and slim. Except age, the physical characteristics of the women in the present study are coherent with 'Western' beauty ideals and the findings of other studies exploring the portrayal of women in 'Western' media. Furthermore, many advertisements discussed difficulties associated with homosexuality and focussed especially on the important role that parents play for lesbian women. All advertisements simplified the process of 'coming out' as all included a happy ending with the parents accepting their daughter's sexuality. It can be argued that an oversimplification of the process of 'coming out' in advertising neglects the stress that many LGBTQ+ individuals and their parents experience. However, a positive presentation of 'coming out' could also encourage LGBTQ+ individuals and set a positive example for parents. The third theme was related to the explicitness with which the sexuality of the portrayed women was presented. The explicit portrayal of the women's homosexuality from the beginning in most advertisements suggests that advertisers have become more comfortable with the portrayal of homosexuality. Furthermore, an emphasis on the 'seriousness' of the portrayed romantic relationships, which is to a large extent suggested through wedding-related behaviour was observed. The presentation of same-sex marriages in advertisement can be seen critically or positively depending on the perceived influence of heteronormativity on same-sex marriage. Lastly, it became apparent that 'love' is an overarching theme in the slogans and title songs of the advertisements. High congruence between content, slogan and music of the advertisement can lead to an improved brand image and higher purchase intentions among consumer.

5. Conclusion

The following section will conclude the present study and outline the implications of the findings. Following this, the limitations of the study will be explained and recommendations for future research will be given. The section will end with a short paragraph on reflexivity.

5.1. Conclusion and Implications

The present study has explored how 'lesbianism' has been portrayed in advertising published between 2010 and 2020. The following section will answer the research question by discussing the findings of the study.

As a socialising agent, the media, and advertising in particular, do not only shape public discourses but also influence how we see ourselves and others (Hilton-Morrow, & Battles, 2015; Reddy-Best, & Jones, 2020). In the context of sexual minority groups, such as lesbian women, this means that the media can impact the public perception of lesbian women as well as these lesbian women's self-perception (Hilton-Morrow, & Battles, 2015; Gomillion, & Giuliano, 2011). Thus, it is important for the media to produce content that reflects the reality for lesbian women, meaning that women are presented in a diverse manner that is free from stereotypes and 'Western' beauty ideals. This presentation could contribute to greater public acceptance and visibility of this group and could allow for lesbian women to have role models in the media that they can identify with (Gomillion, & Giuliano, 2011). However, previous studies suggest that lesbian women are under- as well as misrepresented in the media (Nölke, 2018; Oakenfull 2013; Gill, 2009). As discussed in the Theoretical Framework, marketers have been found to prefer depicting gay males over lesbian females. Scholars explain this bias against women by referring to various negative stereotypes that are connected with lesbian women. Contrary to gay males who are perceived to have high spending power and to be brand- and trend-conscious, lesbian women are associated with a lower income and capitalist critique (Baxter, 2010; Oakenfull 2013; Descubes et al., 2018; Nölke, 2018;).

The present study aimed to contribute to the existing body of research on the topic of lesbian women in advertising as not only marketers but also academia has given this sexual minority group little attention. The findings were generated through a thematic analysis of 40 video advertisements and suggest that the portrayal of lesbian women is reflective of general trends in advertising which could have implications on the public- and self-perception of sexual minority groups. These trends are related to the appearance of lesbian women as well

as a bias for overly positive portrayals of 'lesbianism'. This study showed that the physical characteristics of lesbian women in advertising reflect and reinforce 'ideal' 'Western' beauty standards for women. In this regard, advertisements presenting lesbian women are similar to the 'idealised' portrayal of women that can often be found in advertisements in 'Western' countries. Even though it can be argued that a presentation of lesbian women that is similar to other women in advertising contributes to their equality, it can also be contended that the issue of a distorted portrayal of women in advertising extends to lesbian women. Thus, lesbian women are as much target of the media's preference for a specific 'Western' ideal of a woman's appearance as others. The analysed advertisements drastically overrepresented 'femme' and Caucasian lesbians with a slim body which communicates an image that is not reflective of society and that allows little space for diversity. Lesbian women that do not look like the described 'ideal' are not represented by the media. Moreover, many advertisements present the main characters in committed and 'happy' relationships which are signified through the display of weddings, proposals, and couples with children. The overly positive portrayal of 'lesbianism' is also reflected in the slogans and title songs of the advertisements which emphasise love and unity. It can be assumed that the main motivation behind this representation of 'lesbianism' is of an economic nature; consumers generally prefer 'happy endings' in advertisement and emotional turns that end on a positive note lead to higher brand recall (Guido et al., 2018). Difficulties that sexual minorities are confronted with such as 'coming out' are addressed but often simplified. It can be seen that most of the analysed advertisements represent 'lesbianism' in an overly positive manner that discards the various difficulties that lesbian women in 'Western' countries may be confronted with due to their sexuality. Even though the public perception of homosexuality has become increasingly positive over the past years in many 'Western' countries, sexual minority groups are still confronted with discrimination, for instance in their professional career or with regard to marriage equality (OECD, 2019; The Williams Institute 2019). Only a small amount of the analysed advertisements discusses these difficulties critically and might be able to increase public acceptance of homosexuality which could eventually lead to more equal treatment of sexual minorities (O'Cass & Griffin, 2006). Overall, a more realistic and more diverse portrayal of lesbian women would allow for more lesbian women to see themselves represented in the media which might contribute to increased feelings of confidence with their sexuality. Especially sexual minority youths who are in the process of identity development might be able to derive self-esteem and encouragement from lesbian role-models in the media (Gomillion & Giuliano, 2011).

It can be argued that many of the companies featured lesbian women in their advertisements to communicate their CSR efforts. Even though some companies might be genuinely interested in contributing to sexual diversity and to equality for sexual minorities, the economic advantages of CSR for companies can be assumed to play an important role (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004). Consumers are increasingly expecting companies to act socially responsible; engaging in CSR initiatives is becoming the standard rather than an exception if companies want to stay attractive for consumers (Anderson et al., 2018). The analysed firms present various ways to incorporate CSR in their business model as some companies such as Verizon have committed to a long-term cooperation with an NGO, whereas others have not taken initiatives except producing the analysed advertisements.

A variety of scholars have connected the presentation of sexual minorities in advertising to the notion of heteronormativity as they argue that the presentation of homosexual women and men is guided by heterosexual values such as the reinforcement of gender binaries through the overrepresentation of 'femme' lesbians (Eves, 2004; Kates, 1999; Kimport, 2012). The influence of heteronormativity on the presentation of homosexuality in advertising is believed to reinforce heterosexual dominance. A quote by the gender theorist Judith Butler (1990, p. 169) relates to the findings of the present study and will be explained in the following section,

> "The structuring presence of heterosexual constructs within gay and lesbian sexuality does not mean that those constructs *determine* gay and lesbian sexuality nor that gay and lesbian sexuality are derivable or reducible to those constructs. Indeed, consider the disempowering and denaturalizing effects of a specifically gay deployment of heterosexual constructs"

Butler (1990) does not neglect the influence of heterosexuality on gay and lesbian identities but instead she argues that homosexuality shows that the naturalisation and dominance of heterosexuality are not very natural after all. In her view, homosexuality that engages in a 'heterosexual context' has the power to show that heteronormativity is neither "natural" nor "original" (Butler, 1990, p. 169). This argument by Butler (1990) can be connected to the portrayal of 'lesbianism' in the media. The present study found that most of the lesbian women presented in the advertisements closely resemble 'idealised' 'Western' beauty standards and reinforce stereotypical femininity. Furthermore, as mentioned above, the presented couples often engaged in romantic rituals such as marriage that were initially

exclusively available to heterosexuals (Kimport, 2012). However, these findings do not necessarily mean that the presentation of lesbian women in advertising is guided by heterosexual principles. Even though the influence of values often connected to heterosexuality, such as gender binaries, might influence the presentation of lesbian women in advertising, it can also be argued that the portrayal of lesbian women engaging in a 'heterosexual context' contributes to their equality and disrupts heterosexual dominance. For instance, the legalisation of civil same-sex marriage can be seen as an advancement towards equal rights for homosexuals rather than a dominance of heterosexuality which imposes heterosexual values onto homosexuality. Furthermore, it might nudge people into reconsidering why homosexuals were not given the right to get married in the first place and might make people second guess why many religious institutions still do not allow same-sex marriage. Thus, advertisements portraying homosexuals in 'heterosexual contexts' might contribute to a critical engagement with heterosexual dominance.

5.2. Limitations and Recommendations

The limitations of the study will be discussed with regard to validity and reliability. Validity describes the extent to which the methodological decisions made for a study are appropriate to measure the concept that is being researched (Babbie, 2014). Reliability discusses whether a technique allows to yield the same results when applied multiple times to the same object (Babbie, 2014). The following section will evaluate the study's validity and reliability. Furthermore, as the topic 'lesbianism' presents a broad field with many related concepts, the study was not able to address all of these related concepts which is why a variety of suggestions on how the present research could be continued will be given in this section.

When it comes to the study's validity, it should be noted that the present study built on the work of other scholars when defining the concepts related to 'lesbianism' in advertising. The integration of the findings of other scholars into the present study contributes to the study's validity. However, as 'lesbianism' incorporates a variety of interrelated concepts, inclusion of all related topics would have extended beyond the scope of the present study. Also, to ensure that the advertisements portrayed the concept of 'lesbianism', only women who were explicitly identifiable as lesbian – i.e. they signified their sexual identity through dialogue and/or performance– were included in the research. Additionally, the analysis included advertisements from a variety of industries which aimed to ensure a broad perspective on the research topic and contribute to its validity.

Furthermore, a limited amount of advertisements were included in the analysis and the dataset was restricted to advertisements from 'Western' countries. The findings of the study are therefore not generalisable and might not be representative of advertisements featuring lesbian women in other countries. Moreover, the term 'Western' generalises a variety of distinct countries. It is possible that the analysis and findings are not equally applicable to all countries included in this research as the term 'Western' would suggest. For future research it is therefore recommended to conduct this study by considering the countries in which the advertisements were produced and aired with more detail. Moreover, an analysis of advertisements from countries outside the 'Western' part of the world such as Asia or South America might be interesting. As beauty ideals and the acceptance of homosexuality differ in various cultures, a cross-cultural analysis of the presentation of lesbianism could contribute to the present study (Fergusson & Fergusson, 2019; Frith et al., 2005). Within this context the role of globalisation could be considered.

When it comes to the reliability of the present study it should be noted that the present study aimed to be as transparent as possible through the creation of a thematic map which features all codes used (see Appendix B). Furthermore, definitions for the various themes and sub-themes were created to explain the connection of certain codes with their assigned themes.

Further recommendations for future research include an analysis of the genre of the background music in the advertisements. Even though this study discussed the lyrics of the background music, a more in-depth discussion of, for example genre, was excluded from the analysis. However, various scholars have addressed the importance of music genres in advertising and the effect it has on consumers (Oakes, 2007; Zander, 2006; North, Mackenzie, Law, & Hargreaves, 2004). Thus, it is recommended to include an analysis of music genres into the present study. Lastly, inclusion of interviews with lesbian women and their perception of the analysed advertisements should be considered to address the reception side. The present study was focussed on the analysis of advertisements and their production rather than the consumer's perception of them. This different angle on the topic of 'lesbianism' in advertising might contribute to the present study.

5.3. Reflexivity

Reflexivity can be described as a process of introspection and self-reflection as to how the researcher's own social background and values influence the research. Within the

process of reflexivity the researcher acknowledges her own role in the research (Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, & Caricativo, 2017). To contribute to the transparency of the study the researcher's position within the context of the research will be explained.

It should be acknowledged that the researcher does not identify as homosexual and is therefore only able to comprehend the various difficulties that lesbian women are confronted with to a limited extent. However, due to the close and personal relationship of the researcher with lesbian women as well as a high interest in feminism and gender research, the researcher felt sufficiently aware to address the topic of 'lesbianism' in the study.

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8. Appendices

8.1. Appendix A List of Dataset

	Name Advertisement	Company	Company Sector	Release Year	Country of Origin	Length
1	30 Years in the Making	Renault	Automotive	2019	France	2:10
2	#Ihaveaplan	Desigual	Fashion	2012	Spain	1:02
3	#loveislove	BVW Jewellers	Jewellery	2015	US	00:30
4	#seattleproud	Visit Seattle	Tourism	2017	US	1:57
5	A Girl Like You	Real is a Diamond	Jewellery	2017	US	1:00
6	Accountant	Malteser	Food and Beverages	2018	UK	0:31
7	Airport Love	XXL All Sports United	Sport and Outdoor	2014	Norway	1:30
8	Bathing - We Know How It Feels	Zwitsal	Body Care	2018	Netherlands	0:20
9	Bringing People Together One Cup at a Time	Red Rose Tea	Food and Beverages	2017	Canada	1:00
10	Cashback	NatWest	Financial Services	2013	UK	0:40
11	Chosen Family	Mercedes	Automotive	2018	US	1:00
12	Control Yourself	Agent Provocateur	Fashion	2013	US	3:38
13	Cupidity Love Stories	Cornetto	Food and Beverages	2014	US	8:56
14	Don't Hate Me Because I'm Beautiful	Pantene	Body Care	2019	US	1:18
15	Easy Wedding Planning	Zola	E-Commerce	2020	US	0:31
16	Find Your Understanding	Expedia	Tourism	2012	US	3:19
17	First Love	Aetna	Medical Insurance	2015	US	2:20
18	Food Envy	Campbell's	Food and Beverages	2017	US	0:25
19	Get Updated	Microsoft	Technology	2013	US	0:30
20	Headstrong	Head and Shoulders	Body Care	2019	US	0:15
21	Holiday 2019	Amazon	E-Commerce	2019	US	1:30
22	How We Family	Tylenol	Medication	2018	US	2:18

23	Learning Sign Language	Wells Fargo	Financial Services	2015	US	1:00
24	Live Proud We Are Bold	AT&T	Telecommunication	2017	US	1:39
25	Love Calls Back	Verizon	Telecommunications	2019	US	3:15
26	Love is Love	Ben & Jerry's	Food and Beverages	2015	US	2:43
27	Love is Welcome Here	Airbnb	Tourism	2015	US	3:40
28	Marriage Unblocked	Björn Borg	Fashion	2018	Sweden	1:30
29	Neighbourhood Get Together	Cox	Telecommunication	2019	US	0:30
30	Now and Then	Visit Las Vegas	Tourism	2018	US	3:19
31	Pleasure is Diverse	Magnum	Food and Beverages	2017	Spain	1:31
32	Put Your Heart to Paper	Hallmark	Stationary	2015	US	2:02
33	Rewrite the rules	David's bridal	Fashion	2019	US	0:30
34	Simply 100	Chobani	Food and Beverages	2015	US	0:30
35	Something to share	Douwe Egberts	Food and Beverages	2020	Belgium	0:40
36	The Magic of Space	Target	Retailer	2015	US	1:06
37	Together Stories by Pride	Google+ & Pride Toronto	Technology	2012	Canada	1:56
38	Valentine	Swarovski	Jewellery	2018	US	0:30
39	We Belong to Something Beautiful	Sephora	Body Care	2019	US	1:39
40	You're a Lesbian, Now What?!	Moovz	Technology	2015	US	3:07

8.2. Appendix B Thematic Map

Modality	Category	Sub-category	Definition
Visual	Setting	Type	The ad portrays 'lesbianism' either in an interview or a story setting
		Home	The ad is set in someone's home; inside the home or outside
		Photo Studio	The ad is set in a photo studio
		Nature	The ad is set in the nature
		Streets/Public	The ad is set on the streets/in a public place
		Event	The ad is set at an event
	Portrayed Appearance	Hairstyle	The woman's hair length is described
		Make-Up	The strength of a woman's make-up is described
		Clothing	The clothes that a woman wears are described
		Tattoos	The tattoos a woman has are described
		Shoes	The shoes a woman wears are described
		Body Type	The figure of the woman is described with the Figure Rating Scale by Stunkard et al. (1983)
		Stereotype	The stereotype the woman's physical characteristics can be connected with is described (divided into Femme, Butch, Lipstick or a combination)
	Portrayed Demographics	Age	The age of the woman is described based on grey hair and wrinkles (divided into child (younger than 12), teenager (between 12 and 17), young adult (20s-early 30s), adult (30s-60s) or senior (60+))
		Race	The race of the woman is described based on skin colour (divided into Caucasian, Afro-American, Hispanic, Asian or Ambiguous)
		Occupation	The occupation of the woman is described based on what the advertisement portrays
		Sexuality	The ambiguity with which the sexuality of the woman is portrayed is described by defining when the advertisement portrays the woman as homosexual
	Portrayed Emotions	Positive Emotions	Emotions that are typically connected with positivity such as joy
		Negative Emotions	Emotions that are typically connected with negativity such as disappointment

	Portrayed Non-Romantic/ Non-Sexual Activities woman or between women	Sport	Woman engages in activity associated with sport such as Tennis
		Travelling	Woman engages in activity associated with travelling such as driving a car
		Food & Drinks	Woman engages in activity associated with food and drinks such as eatig or drinking
		Photo/Video/ Performance Related	Woman engages in activity associated with performance such as posing in front of a camera
		Music Related	Woman engages in activity associated with music such as playing an instrument
		Work Related	Woman engages in activity associated with work such as working on a computer
		House Work	Woman engages in activity associated with house work such as doing groceries
		Other Leisure Activities	Woman engages in activity associated with leisure such as playing board games
		Festive Activities	Woman engages in activity associated with festive events such as going to a prom
		Getting Ready/Clothes	Woman engages in activity associated with getting herself ready such as doing her make-up
		Couple Activities	Woman engages in activity with her partner such as moving in together
		Support	Woman engages in activity associated with supporting another such as comforting another
		Everyday Activities	Woman engages in activity associated with things that are done on a daily basis such as sleeping
	Portrayed Romantic/ sexual activities between women	Physical	Women engaging in activity that involves physical contact such as kissing
		Non-physical	Women engaging in activity that does not involve physical contact such as sending a love letter

	Portrayed Relationship between women	Nature of Relationship	Way in which the ad portrays the relationship of the women such as romantic or friendship
		Stereotype Constellation	Stereotypes the couple consists of such as a 'femme' and a 'butch'
		First Meeting	Way in which the ad portrays the first meeting between the women
	Portrayed non-Romantic/ Non-Sexual Activities between women and other actors	Free-time Activities	Leisure activities that the women engage in with other actors such as playing cards together
		Food & Drinks Related	Activities that the women engage in with other actors related to food and drinks such as cooking
		Wedding Related	Activities that the women engage in with other actors that are related to the women's or another actor's wedding such as the farther walking the bride down the aisle
		Work Related	Activities that the women engage in with other actors that are related to the women's job such as a woman being photographed for a fashion show
		Communicatio n	Activities that the women engage in with other actors that are related to communicating with other actors such as sending a text message
		Negative Activities	Activities that the women engage in with other actors that are typically associated with negativity such as fighting
		Emotional Activities	Activities that the women engage in with other actors that are typically associated with strong emotions such as reuniting after a fight
		Sexuality Related	Activities that the women engage in with other actors that are related to the women's sexuality or romantic partner such as meeting the woman's partner for the first time
	Portrayed Romantic/ Sexual Activities between women and other actors		Activities that the women engage in with other actors that show romantic and or sexual behaviour

	Other Actors Attitude towards Sexuality		Emotions other actors have towards the sexuality of the women
Textual	External Narrating; Character that is talking		The character that is talking is defined
	External Narrating about the main character	Love Life of Main Character	External is talking about the woman's sexuality and/or the romantic relationship she has/does not have
		Wanting to Change her Life	External is taking about the steps that the woman takes to change her life such as changing her look
		Family/ Children	External talking about the family life of the woman and about her children
	External Narrating about his/her Relationship with the main character	Farther-Daughter Relationship	Farther is narrating bout the relationship that he has with his daughter
		Mother-Daughter Relationship	Mother is narrating about the relationship she has with her daughter
	External Narrating referring to Social Stigma around homosexuality		External talking about the social movements and difficulties that are connected to homosexuality
	Woman as a Narrator/being Interviewed about herself		Woman giving information about themselves such as their occupation
	Woman as a Narrator/being Interviewed about the social stigma around homosexuality	Social acceptance of homosexuality	Woman giving positive examples of acceptance of homosexuality by society
		Social lack of acceptance of homosexuality	Woman giving negative examples of lack of acceptance of homosexuality by society
		Reference to other social movements	Woman referring to other social movements such as black lives matter

	Woman as a Narrator/being Interviewed about her partner	Characteristics of Partner	Woman giving information about her partner such as positive characteristics
	Woman as a Narrator/being Interviewed about her Relationship with her Partner	Internal Difficulties	Woman talking about problems in the relationship with her partner such as fights
		Advantages of Relationship	Woman talking about the positive sides of the relationship with her partner such as her partner motivating her
		Future of the Relationship	Woman talking about the prospects she sees for the relationship with her partner such as being together forever
		Physicality	Woman talking about physical activities with her partner such as sex
		Activities with Partner	Woman talking about the activities that she and her partner are doing together such as riding their bikes
		Roles in Relationship	Woman talking about the division of roles and responsibilities in the relationship with her partner
		Shared Characteristics	Woman talking about characteristics that they share such as both being nerdy
		First Meeting	Woman talking about the first time they met each other
		Emotional Connection	Woman talking about the emotional connection they have
		Getting Married	Woman talking about when they got married
	Woman as a Narrator/being Interviewed about Family/ Children	Characteristics of Child	Woman talking about the characteristics of her child such as a passion for science
		Homosexuality	Woman talking about the impact her homosexuality has on her child
		Pregnancy	Woman talking about their pregnancy and their unborn child
		Family	Woman talking about the influence children have on the family
		Family Life	Woman talking about their life as a family with children
	Women as a Narrator/being	Fist Love	Woman talking about meeting her first love

	Interviewed about Love		
		General Definition of Love	Woman talking about the meaning of love
	Women as a Narrator/being Interviewed about her Relationship with Other Actors	Parents	Woman talking about the relationship she has with her parents
		Colleagues	Woman talking about the relationship she has with her colleagues
		Previous Romantic Relationships	Woman talking about previous romantic relationships and partners
	Women talking to each other about their relationship with other Actors	Parents	Woman talking to each other about the relationship they have with their parents
	Women talking to each other about their Relationship	Past	Woman talking to each other about their relationship in the past
		Getting Married	Woman talking to each other about the prospect of getting married
		Future of Relationship	Woman talking to each other about their expectations for their relationship in the future
		Compliments	Woman talking to each other about and giving each other compliments
		Daily Life	Woman talking to each other about daily activities such as cooking
		Negative	Woman talking to each other about in a typically negative context such as breaking up
		Dating	Woman talking to each other about their dating life
		First Meeting	Woman talking to each other and reflecting upon their first meeting
	Women talking to each other about themselves	Characteristics and Abilities	Woman telling another about their characteristics and abilities such as their tennis skills

	Women talking to other Actors talking about their sexuality	Parents	Woman talking to their parents about their sexuality
		Friends	Woman talking to her friends about her sexuality
		Outsiders	Woman talking to outsiders about her sexuality
	Women talking to other Actors talking about their relationship		Woman talking to other actors about their relationship
	Brand	Sector	The sector the brand that produced the advertisement is active in
		Slogan on Love	The slogan of the advertisement is on love
		Slogan on Being Proud	The slogan of the advertisement is on being proud
		Slogan on Togetherness	The slogan of the advertisement is on togetherness
		Slogan on Beauty	The slogan of the advertisement is on beauty
		Slogan on Diversity	The slogan of the advertisement is on diversity
		Slogan on Life	The slogan of the advertisement is on life
		Slogan on Activating Change	The slogan of the advertisement is on activating change
		Slogan on Understanding	The slogan of the advertisement is on understanding
		Slogan on Uniqueness	The slogan of the advertisement is on uniqueness
		Slogan on Fun	The slogan of the advertisement is on fun
		Slogan on Product	The slogan of the advertisement is on the company's products
	Other written Information on Women	Occupation	The ad states the occupation of the woman
		Information on Relationship	The ad states information on the woman's relationship such as the length
		Information on Children	The ad states information on the women's child such as the due date of the unborn baby
	Written Reference to Social Stigma	Reference to other Social Movements	The ad related to other social movements such as black lives matter

		around Homosexuality	
Musical	Music	Title Song on Life	The title song of the advertisement is on life
		Title Song on Love	The title song of the advertisement is on love
		Title Song on Setting Free	The title song of the advertisement is on setting free
		Title Song on Ambiguous Homosexuality	The title song of the advertisement is on ambiguous homosexuality
		Title Song on Being who you are	The title song of the advertisement is on being yourself
		Title Song on Being Beautiful	The title song of the advertisement is on being beautiful