

USING THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA TO POSITIVELY CONTRIBUTE TO BABY
BOOMER'S AND GENERATION X'S PERCEPTION OF MILLENNIALS WITH
VISIBLE BODY ART IN THE NETHERLANDS TO ENCOURAGE POSITIVE
INTERGENERATIONAL COLLABORATIONS

BY

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“The media's the most powerful entity on earth.
They have the power to make the innocent guilty
and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power.
Because they control the minds of the masses.”

- Malcolm X



Koi Fish tattoo art by Zakarias



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The goal of this dissertation is to research how media can positively contribute to the perception of Dutch Baby Boomers and Generation X (BB/Gen-X) towards Millennials with visible body art (VBA). By making BB/Gen-X more positive about this phenomenon and encouraging collaborations between the two groups, this can prevent distrust, miscommunication, stigmatization and possible social unrest. Dutch society can ultimately become more open and accepting of all kinds of people who are/feel out of the ordinary.

Data was gathered through a questionnaire distributed among 250 respondents of BB/Gen-X and interviews with nine BB/Gen-X'ers. Interviews with Millennials with VBA were also conducted to verify their position in society. Results of the questionnaires were analyzed through descriptive statistics and the interviews were analyzed through thematic organization. All of the data collection methods were also analyzed through media and behavioral theories in order to provide a more in-depth, scientific explanation behind certain choices.

The research suggests that BB/Gen-X have a prejudicial negative opinion about Millennials with VBA. Concerns about the future job prospects of Millennials with VBA and a general unknowingness about the reasons behind their VBA makes this opinion the most notable among the participants. The media's role is claimed to be minimal in the development of this opinion, but desk research, theoretical analyses (i.e. through the Hypodermic Needle Theory) and the interviews proved that all media have a subconscious influence on the lives of all of its consumers. And the results of the questionnaire prove that the large majority of BB/Gen-X are active media users; television, newspapers, radio and Facebook were among the most highly rated media in daily use. BB/Gen-X'ers do claim that they are more susceptible to the media if there are verifiable facts included.

Ultimately, research shows that in order to positively contribute to the perception of BB/Gen-X, the media strategy needs to include elements that empathize with the target audience. Elements such as getting straight to the point (no marketing jargon), credible expert opinions, components that are important to the target audience such as family and traveling, humor and simplicity should all be included. The final key is to provide an explanation. BB/Gen-X have a thirst for knowledge so showing the reasons behind getting VBA will broaden their perspective and add understanding. Combining all of these elements into one media campaign is a reliable way to positively contribute to BB/Gen-X's perception of Millennials with VBA.



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First of all, I would like to express the excitement and joy I experienced with writing this thesis. In my home country, visible body art is extremely taboo. Anyone with tattoos gets immediately stigmatized as unprofessional. My goal was to find out the opinion of visible body art in The Netherlands, and what I could do to change the stigma attached to it.

The first person I would like to give a special thank you to is my Hogeschool Utrecht tutor, Renée Coers, for her guidance, honesty and encouragement. We went on this 'first thesis' adventure together and I hope she will inspire many more students to achieve their goal.

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You are all awesome.

Thelea Terborg, Utrecht, 2014



TERMINOLOGY

In order to make this research understandable and attainable, restrictions on the definitions of certain terms need to be set.

1.4.1. Visible body art (VBA)

For the purpose of this research, VBA refers to (cosmetic) tattoos and piercings on visible body parts such as feet, legs, arms, hands, neck and face. Whether or not they can be hidden underneath clothing is irrelevant, but the size should be significant enough to be noticeable. It can be argued that not visible body art will not cause discomfort with the target audience, as they will not be aware of the VBA. However, eventually the presence of VBA will be revealed leading to the same effect as unconcealed VBA.

1.4.2. Millennials with VBA

Millennials refer to anyone born between 1984 and 2004 and are also known as 'Generation Me' (Chau, 2012, para. 2). One study from the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology found Millennials to be "more civically and politically disengaged, more focused on materialistic values, and less concerned about helping the larger community than Generation X and Baby Boomers were at the same ages" (Healy, 2012, para. 2).

1.4.3. Generation X (Gen-X)

Gen-X is roughly defined as anyone born between 1964 and 1984. As with most generation labels, 'Generation X' is a term first coined and later disowned by Douglas Coupland, author of *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture* (1991). For Coupland, the letter 'X' was meant to signify the generation's random, ambiguous, contradictory ways (Stephey, 2008, para. 10). For the purpose of this research, this group has been chosen because of their experience with several shifts of popular culture.

Given their current age, Gen-X is now holding managerial and executive positions in organizations and is now the one essentially hiring the Millennials with VBA in question.

1.4.4. Baby Boomers (BB)

BB's were born between 1946 and 1964 (after the war). Historically speaking, the BB's witnessed and participated in some of the largest social changes during the 1960s and 1970s with i.e. the Civil Rights Movement and the Women's Movement. This includes dramatic shifts in educational, economic and social opportunities. This group was chosen, because their upbringing and morals presumably differ from what Millennials find normal and acceptable. Their perception on VBA will only strengthen the reasoning behind this research.



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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

"The beauty of collaboration between older and younger generations is that we combine strength with wisdom—a surefire way to accomplish more for glory." — **Brett Harris**

This dissertation examines the media's influence on the perception of people with visible body art (VBA), with an emphasis on Dutch Baby Boomers (born 1946–1964) and Generation X (born 1964–1984) (BB/Gen-X) who primarily use Dutch media. It will also explore and attempt to explain their view on VBA through the evolution and influences of media. The outcome of this research will result in an advice on how to incorporate media to positively contribute to BB/Gen-X's overall perception of Millennials (born 1984–2004) with VBA so there can be a progressive intergenerational collaboration. Facilitating collaboration between different generations is necessary to prevent distrust, miscommunication, stigmatization and possible social unrest. The Netherlands can become a more peaceful, welcoming and open society for everyone who feels (or is) out of the ordinary in societal terms, such as Millennials with VBA.

1.1. Introduction to the problem

Humans have marked their bodies with tattoos and piercings for thousands of years. According to a research done in the *Journal of Archaeological Science* (2009), the earliest known example of tattoos were tattoo patterns found on an Iceman over 5300 years old. These permanent designs have served as adornments, status symbols, amulets, signs of religious beliefs and even forms of punishment (Lineberry, 2007, para. 1). The tattoo is also seen as a powerful symbol of affiliation and identity. For Chicanos, convicts, sailors, and others, tattoos serve to position individuals within communities and relationships and to express personal and collective identity (DeMello, 2003, p. 12). Nowadays, celebrities in popular culture proudly herald the mainstreaming of this previously marginalized and historically underground practice (Kosut, 2006, p. 1035). Despite its evolution from Iceman to popular culture, tattoos and piercings remain taboos within many western societies.

The main stigma attached to tattoos is that they are unprofessional and regrettable (Rashid, 2013, para. 8). Timming (2013) found that in a study with fifteen managers between 30 and 60 years old, most of the respondents saw visible tattoos as unacceptable in the workplace. They believed that tattoos made a person look dirty and 'thuggish' and would subconsciously avoid hiring a person with tattoos. This means that there is still a prejudice attached to VBA within society. A study published in the *Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Dermatologie en Venereologie* (Dutch Journal for Dermatology and Venereology) showed that in 2011 31 percent of Dutch people between the ages of 18 and 29 had a tattoo while one out of three people within the same age group have a piercing other than in their earlobe. This shows that BB/Gen-X (who fall under Timming's target audience) are now the ones hiring this growing group of Millennials with VBA. Therefore, the challenge that society faces is a



general incomprehensibility of a practice that will only grow more popular with time. Avoiding hiring this group because of their appearance will only result in conflict and unjust treatment.

The role of the media in BB/Gen-X's perception is inevitable. The entertainment industry is brimming with tattooed personalities—both 'real' and fictional. Television programs, including soap operas, sitcoms and the reality genre broadcast tattooed characters and everyday people who openly exhibit their ink (Kosut, 2006, p. 1037). Tattoo's mainstream status is also illustrated by their usage as an advertising tool for a diverse range of consumer products. Does this commodification of VBA contribute to the negative image associated to the people who have them or does it add a sense of normality to the practice? Ultimately, this research is meant to give an advice on how to use the influential notion of media to positively contribute to the perception that BB/Gen-X have about Millennials with VBA. A change of perception can lead to a more positive outlook on possible collaborations and so more faith in the generation that will be carrying the future of The Netherlands.

1.2. Justification

There has not been a lot of research done on the issue of moral acceptance between different generations within The Netherlands. Growing up in different times means having grown up with different morals and values. What BB/Gen-X found unacceptable in the 1960's might be common practice for the Millennials, for example. Exposing the potential misunderstandings and friction between BB/Gen-X and Millennials (with VBA) might contribute to larger understanding and a more positive outlook on the generation in question.

Media expressions have also changed over the past few decades. This research will not only examine the media's influence on BB/Gen-X, but also how to use these media to bridge the gap between the aforementioned generational differences. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, in 2011 nearly 31 percent of Dutch people ages 18 to 29 had a tattoo while one out of three had a piercing other than in their earlobe. With the mainstreaming of VBA in the media, this number will only increase with time. Our current society craves individuality and self-expression. And now many people wear their artistic expression on their skin (Karim, 2012, para. 15). This means that the future of any western society lies in the hands of a generation whose self-expressiveness is at the forefront of their identity. The millennial generation has been raised in a culture that places more focus on the self and less focus on the group, society, and community (Twenge, 2013, as cited by Chau, 2013, para. 11). Refusing to accept this or not understanding its reasoning might cause unnecessary friction that can be thwarted with openness to what defines Millennials in current society.

This research can be of importance to businesses all over the country that want to integrate diversity into their workplace. Much like differences in race, gender or sexual orientation, having VBA does not speak for a person's capabilities or talents. In other words, despite the fact that having VBA is a personal choice (unlike gender, race or sexual



orientation), it does not decide who the person is or their moral compass. Every person has different skills and people with VBA should get an equal opportunity to show theirs rather than be cast aside as 'dirty' or 'thuggish' (Timmings, 2013, as cited by Matilda, 2013, para. 4).

The advice of this research will be aimed at Dutch (social) media and nonprofit organizations specialized in social issues who have the ability to positively influence the population. By knowing how to reach the target audience and which channels to use, a media campaign based on a strong media strategy can be designed to pitch to these organizations in order to positively contribute to BB/Gen-X's perception of Millennials with VBA.

1.3. Problem definition

The main problem is the lack of understanding between two generations that could potentially negatively influence the relationship (from business to family) between BB/Gen-X and Millennials with VBA. By answering the following research question, an advice will be given on how to appropriately design a media strategy that can effectively reach BB/Gen-X:

How can media positively contribute to Baby Boomer and Generation X's current perception of Millennials with visible body art in the Netherlands?

The following sub-questions will assist in answering the research question as well as aid in the formulation of recommendations and the final advice:

1. *What is Baby Boomers and Generation X's current perception of people with visible body art?*
2. *How has the media influenced Baby Boomers and Generation X's past and current perception of visible body art?*
3. *A. Which media do Baby Boomers and Generation X mostly consume?
B. How influenced are they by these media?*

Based on the results of these sub-questions and research question, an advice will be provided that outlines how to use the influence of media for a future media campaign built on a media strategy that will positively contribute to BB/Gen-X's perception of VBA.

1.4. Constraints and limitations of the study

The first limitation of this research is sample size; if the sample size is too small (which can be the result of time constraint and not having enough reach to the target audience), it will be difficult to find significant relationships from the data, as statistical tests normally require a larger sample size to ensure a representative distribution of the population.



A second limitation is the probability of getting socially preferable answers from both target audiences (BB/Gen-X and Millennials with VBA). Upon confrontation with a direct subject of the research (someone with VBA or a personal relationship with the author), the target audience might unknowingly adapt their answers to a situational appropriate response. Maintaining a neutral position might become a challenge. Millennials with VBA might also have a preset biasedness towards the subject due to prior experiences with the research topic. The majority of the parents of Millennials with VBA are BB/Gen-X; they might take their personal situation and use it to generalize for all BB/Gen-X.

The final constraint is the time available to investigate this problem. The author wishes to finalize this dissertation within the primary timeframe given by the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht. This means that measuring the change or stability within a sample is constrained by the proximity of the due date. It also limits the possibilities for more thorough research in the behavioral changes that are caused by mass media through long-term experiments that are conducive to giving a concrete conclusion. Time constraint also limits the possibility of pre-researching the exact intentions of Millennials with VBA. This means that the author is basing this view on the assumption (grounded in 10 years of personal experience with Millennials with VBA and a lifelong experience with BB/Gen-X) that Millennials with VBA consider VBA a positive form of self-expression while BB/Gen-X supposedly see VBA serving a different purpose (namely, to express rebellion). This will be further discussed in Chapter 7 (recommendations for further research).

1.5. Purpose and rationale

This research does not have any commercial purposes. It is not written for a specific company or with the purpose of promoting or criticizing the tattoo culture. It is merely based on the idealistic view of the author that by bringing together two generations who seemingly have little in common, The Netherlands (a country that prides itself on its liberal views on various issues) can become a melting pot of creative freedom and expression. There are many groups within society that are 'different than the norm' and the goal is to take one of those groups (Millennials with VBA) and research how to normalize their perception through the media. Once achieving that, it can be applied to many more groups who differ in sexual orientation, race, etcetera. The Dutch media's role in achieving this goal is unquestionable. This research will hopefully create a better understanding of an age old practice with a bad reputation by combining theoretical models with research findings in the hopes of creating a strategy that will bring this future one step closer to the present.



1.6. Professional advice

The advice for this research that will be in the form of suggestions for media strategies and campaigns is targeted at Dutch (social) media and nonprofit organizations focused on social issues. It will result in a clear understanding of which organizations to approach and which media strategies to implement in order to positively contribute to BB/Gen-X's perception. It will also give proposals for media campaigns to be further developed for potential implementation.

1.7. Structure of the thesis

This research paper starts with an executive summary that shortly describes the findings for those who do not have time to read the entire paper or are looking for fast results. It is followed by the introduction and theoretical framework that elaborates on the theories and researches that this dissertation is based on. Afterwards, the methodology and research design will elaborate on how the research was carried out. Following this are the research results of the questionnaire and interviews. Finally, an advice and recommendations for further research will follow after the discussion and conclusion where the research and sub-questions will be answered. In the appendices, detailed results of the questionnaire will be provided as well as transcripts of all the interviews, examples of VBA in the media, a sample of the questionnaire and an example of a media campaign that will be used as inspiration.



CHAPTER 2 – THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework will serve as a tool to analyze and answer the sub-questions in order to provide more theoretical reasoning and substance to answering the research question. This theoretical framework will support previous researches done concerning VBA within society, the influence of media and how to approach BB/Gen-X in media. There will be two behavioral theories and one media theory that will be used to gain a larger understanding about how media influences behavior and in turn how society influences behavior.

2.1. The Civilizing Process

Norbert Elias (1897-1990) was a German sociologist who is especially famous for his theory of civilizing processes. In *The Civilizing Process* (1939) Elias argues that the process of civilization is not linear and consistent. The varieties of social groups, as well as the varying and uneven sources of change, have created a variety of social behaviors and formations. This dissertation is rooted in the theory that Millennials with VBA and BB/Gen-X have been raised in versions of society that differ over two decades. To understand the difference in perspective of each group, the behavioral theory on individualism by Elias (*The Society of Individuals*, 1987) and his theory on the civilizing process in combination with the role of modern-day media could be used to clarify these differences. Elias states that the entirety of social patterns of self-regulation, which each individual has to develop within himself or herself while growing up into a unique individual, is generation-specific and thus, in the broader sense, society-specific (Elias, 1987). His work on the civilizing process noticeably showed that something that did not provoke shame or indignity in an earlier century could be shameful in a later one, and vice versa (Elias, 1987, p. viii). This evidence of change in societal acceptability revealed to what extent the development of individuals is influenced by the position at which they enter the flow of the social process.

As mentioned before, BB/Gen-X and Millennials with VBA have entered these 'social processes' over two decades apart. What used to be a practice among the lower classes in previous decades is now a mark of individuality and self-expression (Mwai, 2013, para. 6). Researching BB/Gen-X's overall perception and acceptance of VBA in relation to their past (and thus clarifying society's role in this development) will provide the key to understanding their attitude towards VBA and thus how to effectively target and adapt.

It is assumed that Millennials with VBA are growing up in a society where expressing one's individuality in a physical fashion is widely accepted and encouraged by the media. Fitness experts, dieticians, physical therapists, cosmetic surgeons, aestheticians and personal stylists collectively instruct people to redesign, rehabilitate, reconstruct and extend their bodies through the aid of commercial products and services (Atkinson, 2004, p. 134). However, mass media are making this 'molding of one's physical appearance to achieve a



higher level of individuality' into a collective need, contradicting its original intent of individuality. Whereas wearing a particular style of clothing, building muscles or styling one's hair a certain way are widely accepted methods for showing individuality and compliance to standards of body idiom, tattooing projects are considered ideal for literally illustrating individuality (Miles et al., 1998, as cited in Atkinson, 2004). Put differently, tattoos may now be an important means through which individuals can develop unique identities, particularly in the appearance domain (Tiggemann & Hopkins, 2011, as cited by Swami, 2012, p. 103).

Elias (1987, p. 14) states that "By his birth, an individual is inserted into a functional complex with a quite definite structure; he must conform to it, shape himself in accordance with it and perhaps develop further on its basis." By applying Elias' position on an individual's inevitability of molding to the society in which they are born, the choices and behavior of BB/Gen-X and Millennials with VBA can be explained as unavoidable occurrences. To paraphrase, by simply being born in the late 1980's or 1990's, the Millennials with VBA were inevitably, and uncontrollably, influenced by the society they were born into. The same counts for BB/Gen-X. By approaching these Millennials in The Netherlands and enquiring about their VBA choices, their sense of individuality within society can be assessed. Combining BB/Gen-X's past experiences with the Millennials' reasoning behind their VBA will provide the necessary profundity to verify Elias' theory on the generational differences within society.

2.2. Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) is a behavioral theory coined by Henri Tajfel (1919-1982) who was a British social psychologist, best known for his pioneering work on the cognitive aspects of prejudice and the social identity theory.

To answer the sub-question '*What are Baby Boomer's and Generation X's current perception of people with VBA?*' a closer look at the SIT might provide more insight into the reasoning behind general perception and discrimination. Henri Tajfel (1971) attempted to identify the minimal conditions that would lead members of one group to discriminate in favor of the in-group to which they belonged and against another out-group. For this research, the in-group would be BB/Gen-X and the out-group would consist of Millennials with VBA. SIT asserts that group membership creates in-group / self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favor the in-group at the expense of the out-group. A purely intergroup interaction is one in which people relate entirely as representatives of their groups, and where one's idiosyncratic, individualizing qualities are overwhelmed by the salience of one's group memberships (Hornsey, 2008, p. 206). A study amongst 400 college students by Horne et al. (2007) showed that those individuals with VBA were viewed differently from those without VBA. Also, specific views that society attributes to individuals with VBA are highly noticed in the workplace (Kramer, 2006, p. 594). As a result, employers are updating dress code policies which, in some cases, are loosening up to attract younger talent while in others are adding new rules to keep body art covered up. So by



researching if BB/Gen-X is inclined to discriminate against VBA because of the abovementioned in-group mentality, the future prospects of Millennials with VBA can be outlined in terms of job opportunity and overall acceptance.

Also, the group studies of Turner and Tajfel (1986) showed that the mere act of individuals categorizing themselves as group members was sufficient to lead them to display in-group favoritism. Researching if BB/Gen-X's behavior would alter in a confrontational situation with the Millennials (and vice versa) will establish whether or not there is a difference in how they would respond to someone from their own generation or without VBA, versus someone with VBA. By also researching if Millennials with VBA feel a sense of collectivism amongst other VBA wearers will establish favoritism from the out-group perspective.

2.3. Hypodermic Needle ('Magic Bullet') Theory

Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz are considered to be the founders of functional theory and their book *Personal Influence* (1955) is considered to be the handbook to the theory. The Hypodermic Needle Theory states that "mass media could influence a very large group of people by shooting or injecting them with appropriate messages designed to trigger a desired response". This research is built on how the media influences an audience. The sub-questions '*Which media do Baby Boomers and Generation X mostly consume and how influenced are they by these media?*' could be examined and explained through the HNT.

The Magic Bullet Theory assumes that the media's message is a bullet fired from the 'media gun' into the viewer's head. Similarly, the HNT suggests that the media injects its messages straight into the passive audience that is immediately affected by these messages. This theory was developed in the 1920s and 1930s after researchers observed the effect of propaganda during World War I and events like Orson Welles' War of the Worlds broadcast (Lamb, 2013, para. 1). According to University of Twente in the Netherlands, the theory states that mass media have a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences. Moreover, researchers noted the television's power to influence even people who are illiterate. Smith-Speck and Roy (2008, as cited by Worsham, 2011, para. 6) explained that even individuals who cannot read or write could be highly influenced by advertising to purchase certain products or develop a certain lifestyle. It is this media picture that portrays and actually molds our society's value system. In essence, media is conveying what we should buy, who we should be or who we should become in order to be happy (Worsham, para. 6). By these statements, BB/Gen-X's perception is highly influenced by the media they consume regularly, whether consciously or subconsciously.

Research done by the Central Bureau of Statistics in the Netherlands shows that in 2013, 50% of people between 55-65 use social media. Of people between 45-55, 65% uses social media and of people between 35-45, 76% uses social media. This means that in each age group within BB/Gen-X, at least half of the target audience uses social media. According



to the HNT, the messages that they are receiving from all these media channels are not without influence. Researching which media BB/Gen-X consumes on a regular basis, and going in-depth about their personal opinion about its influence, will help facilitate how to use this influence in a positive way and whether they are aware of this influence.

2.4. Approaching different generations

Understanding the role of media influence within BB/Gen-X is vital for answering the research question and the sub-question '*Which media will be most influential to use in a future strategy to influence Generation X's perception of VBA?*' However, knowing how to target the audience is also of considerable importance to know how to effectively use these media, because no generation has similar experiences. Diversity within the different generations makes the effectiveness of trans-generational communication that much more complex.

Research into the behavioral patterns of different generations shows that each generation wants to be approached differently. For example, Swildens (2014) claims that there are four types of 50+'ers in the Netherlands: 'resisters' who are having trouble with getting older, 'passive enjoyers' whose career ambitions have dwindled and who hold little value for material things, the 'active adapters' who are still making a career and looking for stability, and finally the group who are not financially stable, but will sporadically spend money on something excessive for gratification purposes (Verwijs, 2014, p.19, translation by me). Swildens continues to explain that in marketing terms, 50+'ers are to be approached with respect and to the point; they cannot stand excessive chats packed with marketing terms. The BKC (Bindinc Kennis Centrum, 2013) has also done research about the media behavior of 50+'ers. It appears that older generations stick to familiar media and only use newer media in a complementary way, but even then in moderation. The research continues to prove that the older someone gets, the more his or her media use is planned and less spontaneous, while the opposite is the norm under the younger generations (50+'ers are among the audience who use the television guide the most) (Verwijs, 2014, p. 18).

In a similar research done by Saxion Kenniscentrum (2011) concerning the digital and traditional media use of seniors (50+), they emphasize certain characteristics that will be of great use in figuring out how to use the media accordingly: BB/Gen-X have a thirst for knowledge and information, they are critical consumers, they love- and enjoy life, family is of significant importance and they respond well to what they familiarize with (raising a family, traveling etcetera) (Overbeek, 2011, p. 10, translation by me).

However, when it comes to marketing approaches, a research done by the BKC (2013) amongst 2375 respondents between 50 and 70 prove most useful. The respondents were asked to rate 72 commercials, ranging between traditional and online media. Advertisements with unrealistic or unfamiliar expressions were the worst rated while calm, honest, realistic, funny and recognizable advertisements scored the highest. That is why the



primary advice by BKC is to avoid using models that the 50+ group does not familiarize with or in which implausible promises are made. By adding a question in the interview/questionnaire about what the respondents prefer to see in the media, or what they use media for, the way to use it can be tailored even more.

2.5. Positive influence of the media

Researching and analyzing how successful media campaigns became so successful amongst their target audience will not only contribute to the tone in which media should be used, but will also provide guidelines on how to get a widespread response. With global issues such as health, sustainability and poverty, some campaigns such as SIRE's "I am still here" (2010)¹, are trying to make small-scale differences within society's way of thinking. There are more campaigns that have provoked the media in a positive way, but none have reached the iconic level of the most viral advertisement of all time (Cassinelli, 2013, para. 7): Dove's 'Real Beauty Sketches' of 2013. This campaign features a professional forensic artist who drew women's faces as they described themselves without him being able to see them, and then compared that photo to one of a stranger describing the same woman. The idea is that women are too critical of themselves. This video (at the time of writing this dissertation) has been viewed over 114 million times, uploaded in 25 languages, seen in 110 countries and awarded the Titanium Grand Prix at Cannes Lions- a prize only awarded for innovative and transformational work (Cassinelli, 2013, para. 7). Laura Stamper (2013), a reporter for Business Insider, analyzed why this advertisement got its viral status. She concludes that it elicits a strong emotional response; it has a high level of share-ability and the roll out strategy (in which countries to publish it first) was strategically planned.

An interview with Anselmo Ramos, creative lead on this campaign, gives an insight on the process and work that went into creating the campaign. She notes: "According to statistics, only 4% of women feel good about themselves across the globe. We decided to do something that would move the other 96%." Also: "We like to come up with ideas that a) haven't been done before, and b) we have no idea how the heck we'll do it" (Grose, 2013, para. 5). She mentions the power of collaborating with someone in a different industry (FBI-trained sketch artist and women's self-esteem). And, finally, she thinks it went viral because it moves the audience, and makes them think, because it is based on a true insight. This makes Dove's campaign very powerful, because commercialism is a big driving force in all advertisement. The message to take away from Dove's success: do the research to scientifically support the idea, be original and daring, getting an outside perspective might actually strengthen the message and do not be afraid to show emotion.

¹ This campaign featured posters of terminally ill people with the message that 'one out of four Dutch people avoid contacting with someone who is terminally ill'.



CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

In order to get concrete answers to the sub-questions and research question, certain research procedures need to be completed. These procedures were specifically chosen and designed to get the most optimal results in order to write a helpful and thorough advice and recommendation.

3.1. Research design

Research can be divided into two categories: qualitative and quantitative research. According to Murray Thomas (2003, p. 1), qualitative methods involve a researcher describing different characteristics of people and events without comparing the events in measurements of amounts. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, focus attention on measurements and amounts (more and less, often and seldom) of the characteristics displayed by the people and events that the researcher studies. McDowell and MacLean (1998, p. 16) offer a few critiques and advantages on both methods. One critique of quantitative methods and statistical data is that they give a summary of patterns, while qualitative studies offer depth, detail and individual meaning. McDowell and MacLean (p. 16) state that by compressing the certainties that are fundamental in qualitative data, quantitative methods may obscure the meaning of the data, letting the numbers that encode the meaning take a principal role. As for qualitative data, McDowell and MacLean (p. 17) continue to state that words can be interpreted as ambiguous symbols, and their interpretation can differ from one researcher to another.

Based on this analysis of both quantitative and qualitative research, a combination of both proved most useful for this particular research. By using the measures of quantitative data, large volumes of information can be gathered and analyzed over a short period of time. Despite its limitation for gathering in-depth information, a quantitative analysis is the perfect way to derive general conclusions about the perceptions of BB/Gen-X and their media use. With the results of this data, qualitative research can be enabled to get more in-depth information. Even though qualitative research produces a large volume of data, it is the most appropriate tool to gather more insight on the reasoning behind the media choices of the target audience and the developments of their perception on VBA. Combining both research methods means a more accurate and detailed analysis can be provided.

The most relevant research methods for this particular research are desk research, questionnaires and interviews. The desk research and questionnaires are mostly used as exploratory research- they serve to establish the initial views and ideas about the problem. However, questionnaires can be limiting. They provide superficial information and are more apt to give descriptive information rather than explanations behind the answers (Munn &



Drever, 1990, p. 5). So the proceeding interviews are meant as descriptive research to further elaborate on the results obtained from the questionnaire and desk research.

3.1.1. Desk research

As explained by DJS Research Ltd. (n.d., para. 1): desk research, also known as secondary research, involves processing data that has already been collected by another party. With this form, previous studies and findings will be consulted (such as reports, press articles and previous market research projects) in order to come to a conclusion.

The biggest advantage of desk research is its accessibility. The physical library of the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht (HU), the HU's online library and online databases such as Google Scholar and Academic Search Premier provide credible sources of previous researches. As a student, these options are easily accessible and provide an abundance of reliable information with trustworthy sources.

Similarly, the biggest disadvantage of desk research is accessibility to certain articles. Some articles make a small portion available for the general public, but charge expensive fees for full access. The quality of desk research may also be compromised. The fact that it is published does not speak for its reliability or validity. Every article needs to be critically evaluated before using it as a source (Prescott, 2008, para. 2-10).

Desk research's qualitative approach is especially beneficial to this research because it strengthens and complements the results obtained in the other phases of the research (questionnaire and interviews). It also provides additional information and depth to the answers of the sub-questions; information not easily obtained through the other methods (such as examples of media influences and why they were successful). Finally, due to the author's voluntary time constraints of this research, desk research is the most efficient way to support (or disprove) any results obtained in this research. In other words, it serves as an authentication tool.

In this case, desk research will be used to analyze the different media in The Netherlands, the reasons behind successful media campaigns, generational differences and how to approach different generations within media and the history of VBA in Europe. The results of this qualitative research can be found throughout this dissertation and in an upcoming paragraph of this chapter.

3.1.2. Questionnaire

The primary research method is online questionnaires. The three biggest advantages of using online questionnaires are that they are time-efficient, this particular questionnaire will provide the respondents with anonymity so that there is a higher probability of honesty and because it is distributed online, there is the possibility of a high return rate (Munn & Drever, 1990, p. 2). A big limitation to questionnaires is that the information obtained from the respondents is



limited to their interpretation of the questions and thus more open to misinterpretation (Munn & Drever, 1990, p. 5). However, this can be prevented by making the questions as simple and to the point as possible. For this research, online questionnaires were the most realistic way to obtain large amounts of data from respondents all over the Netherlands over a short period of time as social media facilitates its distribution.

With the popularity of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, online questionnaires are easy to distribute and can reach a large audience from all over the country. The questionnaire was aimed at Dutch people and Dutch media users older than 30. The questionnaire included questions to support all four sub-questions, such as BB/Gen-X's current perception of VBA, their media use, their opinion on statements about VBA and what role they think the media played in their views. As advised by the supervising attendant of this dissertation, in order to increase the credibility of this research paper a minimal of 100 respondents were to be collected. Out of the 250 that filled in the questionnaire, 106 had to be excluded due to irrelevancy of age, media use or insufficient information. An elaboration on the results of these quantitative analyses can be found in Chapter 4.

3.1.3. Interviews

The secondary research method, in support of the questionnaire, were interviews with BB/Gen-X and Millennials with VBA. Nine interviews with BB/Gen-X were conducted over the course of two weeks to gain more insight on the views of the target audience. The interviewees were Dutch people and Dutch media users. They ranged from 39 to 62 years old and varied in gender and educational level. The majority (save for one) were chosen at random on the premises of the HU. The reason for this variety was to increase the diversity of views from people of different backgrounds and levels of education within society. After the ninth interview, there was enough information gathered to provide a substantial conclusion to the aforementioned discrepancies observed from the questionnaire.

The purpose of the research interview was to explore the views, experiences, beliefs and/or motivations of the research subjects on specific matters. Qualitative methods, such as interviews, are believed to provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from predominantly quantitative methods, such as questionnaires (Gill et al., 2008, para. 7). By including an interview with BB/Gen-X to the research methods, the credibility of the sources used in this research increases. Getting an unbiased, unfiltered insight on their views of (Millennials with) VBA and having the ability to ask for more details or examples adds more substance when answering the research question than the limiting questionnaire or impersonal desk research do.



3.2. Data collection and analysis

The methods used in this research consisted of abovementioned desk research, questionnaire and interviews. A qualitative evaluation method has been used for the research regarding subjective methods such as the interviews and desk research. The interviews consisted of nine participants who provided more in-depth data collection and opportunities for follow-up. Upon collecting the qualitative data, careful analysis was done (both manually and utilizing software) as preparation for further analysis. The interviews have been transcribed in order to divide the data into meaningful analytical units that were coded according to theme and relevance. The quantitative data was processed and analyzed through the software PSPP.

3.3. European timeline: tattoo culture from the 18th century to the 21st century

Before researching the reasons behind the current perception of VBA and the media's influence, a look into the history of VBA in Europe can provide some historic insight that can be used to compare the views and methods used over the course of this research. Knowing where the general perception came from can provide an insight on where it might go.

The development and popularization of VBA has penetrated many cultures throughout the world. Since these cultures were so widely separated by geography, tattooing probably arose spontaneously in different parts of the world to a need inherent in all humans (Fried, 1983, p. 239). The word "tattoo" was brought to Europe by the explorer and captain James Cook. He returned to England in 1771 from his first voyage to Tahiti and New Zealand with a tattooed Polynesian native to exhibit, initiating an entirely new form of cultural exchange (DeMello, 2000, p. 47). The European's disdain against tattooing can stem for a variety of reasons; in this case, the Polynesian was seen as inferior or primitive and his markings became associated with this mentality. Particularly in Europe, this perspective continues with the use of tattoos to number Jews in concentration camps during World War II (WWII), a contributing factor in their dehumanization by the Nazis. To be sure, the employment of tattoos by the Nazis has fostered the historical negativity surrounding tattoo culture throughout Europe.

After WWII ended, tattooing itself also faded out because of the rise of conservative social and cultural attitudes during the 1950s (West, 2009, p.12). However, in the 1990s, tattooing experienced another revival. Millennials began to seek behavior that mortified both their elders and society. Modified rap music, grunge rock and roll and the ability to gain fame with virtually no talent accelerated the development of tattoo culture. It was throughout the late 1990s that tattoo culture itself became more mainstreamed (West, 2009, p. 13).

Sociologist Josh Adams (2009) conducted a study in which he found that tattoos were much more prevalent among individuals of younger generations than they were among individuals of older generations. This finding illustrates both tattooing's growing popularity



amongst the Millennials and its failure to gain full social acceptance. Older generations' general aversion to tattooing can be explained by their retention of traditional characterizations of tattooing. When individuals of the older generations were the same age as today's youth, tattooing was instinctively perceived as a deviant practice. Unlike today, deviance in those days was neither desired nor accepted in society (Porcella, 2009, p. 33).

First taboo, then trendy and now common as a form of personal expression, tattoos are being used in magazines and online advertisements to sell a range of mass appeal products looking to communicate an image of being modern or edgy, or just to stand out (Ahmed, 2007, para. 2). Advertising agencies are now using tattoo artists as graphic designers to create interfaces and packaging that will appeal to the younger generation. Tattoos have been commoditized and its popularity can be traced to the mainstream media that are making shows like *Miami Ink* (Discovery Channel, Netherlands) and *Tattoo Stories* (RTL5, Netherlands) popular amongst every generation who consumes media on a regular basis. The continued usage of tattoo (and tattoo art) in advertising campaigns helps to circulate a variety of new images and messages about tattoo into the public's imagination; it shows tattoos as a legitimate and desirable consumer product for all social classes (Kosut, 2006, p. 1040).

Actors, models, musicians, and athletes represent the mainstreaming of this culture. New generations of children are growing up in a cultural landscape that is more tattoo-friendly and tattoo-flooded than any other time in history (Kosut, 2006, p. 1036). Hollywood films also frequently use tattoos as physical signifiers that suggest disenchantment and rebellion (please refer to Appendix 4 for detailed examples). Tattooed characters aside, musicians, actors and actresses seem to be just as captivated with tattoos. The world of professional sports is also filling up with tattooed bodies, particularly in the fields of soccer (one of the most popular sports in the Netherlands²) and basketball. These individuals are currently being idolized and adored by current generations. Currently, in the Netherlands, there are celebrities like Ruud de Wild (radio host), Ben Saunders (singer), Anouk (singer), Gers Pardoel (singer) and Arie Boomsma (VJ, model and highly religious) who are abundantly tattooed and often in the public eye. They are contributing to the normalization process of VBA in Dutch society.

² Next to running and billiards, as concluded by a research done by the Dutch statistics office (CBS) in 2008



CHAPTER 4 – QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

Distributing the questionnaire among the target audience proved to be the most useful distributing tool for gathering a substantial amount of data in a short period of time. This left more time for processing the data and focusing on other research tools (i.e. interviews). Questionnaires are easy to distribute digitally. Moreover, the respondents are anonymous, which encourages an honest response to the (sometimes) provoking questions. The questionnaire's main purpose was to find out the media use of the target audience and their general opinion about (Millennials with) VBA.

This questionnaire got a total of 100 respondents within the first 24 hours and 250 respondents over a total timespan of three weeks (1 April 2014 until 21 April 2014). However, 106 respondents had to be excluded for the following reasons:

1. Respondents were too young to be a part of the target audience (between 24-30)
2. Respondents stated non-Dutch media as their most used media
3. Respondents did not specify their age or cultural background

These three factors are crucial for reliable results and, ultimately, an adequate overview of BB/Gen-X so they will not be included in the following analyses. The 144 respondents that remained matched the two most important criteria for the questionnaire target group: users of Dutch media (which indicates their affinity with The Netherlands) and over 31 years old.

Please consult Appendix 2 for detailed graphs to every question discussed in the following paragraphs.

4.1. Demographics

The last four questions of the questionnaire concerned the demographics of the respondents. Their age, cultural background, gender and level of education contributed to a better understanding of the results. The age and cultural background were included to eliminate irrelevant data (if the respondents were below 31 or not from the Dutch Caribbean or The Netherlands). However, the demographics mostly served as a way to measure the 'average respondent' of this questionnaire.

The results show that the respondents were predominantly female (n=103) and the majority was between the ages of 51-60 (n=53). Of the remaining respondents, 43 were between 41-50 while the rest was divided between 31-40 and 61+. As for cultural background, 95 of the respondents were Dutch and 44 were from the Dutch Caribbean. Even though the research is targeted at Dutch society, it is normal for people from the Dutch Caribbean (former Dutch Antilles) to live in The Netherlands. If a respondent with a Caribbean cultural background gave examples of Dutch media in the questionnaire, they were included in the data as this indicates their affinity with Dutch society and thus belonging to the target audience. When it comes to the education level, more than half (n=77) of the respondents



completed the HBO while the second most completed form of education was university (n=34). This information indicates that the average respondent is female, between 41-60 years old, Dutch and either completed HBO or the university.

4.2. Do you have VBA?

This question, like the demographics, also contributed to finding out the average VBA wearer amongst the respondents. Overall, the majority of the respondents (n=72) have no VBA whatsoever while a small minority (n=21) has a tattoo and the smallest minority has other VBA (n=8). Earrings are the 2nd most popular answer (n=62), however, this does not count as VBA (unless they are stretched earrings, but this was not specified). So, in total, 29 (20,14%) of all respondents have some form of VBA. The Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) does not have any information on VBA wearers within the Netherlands. The only relevant information is the aforementioned data from the Dutch Journal for Dermatology and Venereology (2011), which only outlines VBA amongst Millennials. This means that as of the date of writing this dissertation (May, 2014), there is no confirmation on whether the numbers attained in this study are indicative of Dutch society as a whole.

4.3. Could you describe your view on VBA in 3 words?

Out of the 144 respondents, there were a total of 395 terms collected for the question '*Could you describe your view on VBA in 3 words?*' This question is crucial in measuring BB/Gen-X's current perception of VBA and thus answering the first sub-question about BB/Gen-X's perception of VBA. By making it an open question, the respondents were free to choose any term that came to mind rather than a predetermined choice that limits their views. Out of these 395 terms, 195 could be grouped into ten categories (please see the questionnaire results in Appendix 2 for a more detailed explanation of all terms in the following figure):

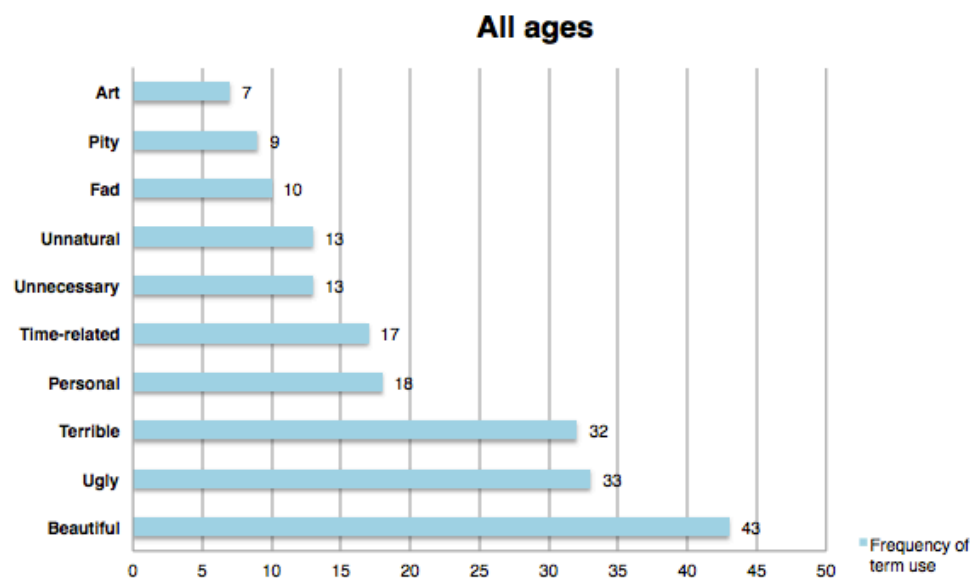


Figure 1: Graph of most frequently used terms by all ages



As seen in figure 1, the most common terms used were varieties of the term beautiful (which included 'striking' and 'tasteful') by 43 respondents whereas 33 used the term 'ugly' in their description. Other frequently used terms were varieties of the word 'terrible' (which included 'distasteful' and 'horrible') by 32 respondents while 'personal' and time-related terms (such as 'permanent' and 'irreversible') were the fourth and fifth most used.

The two most frequently used terms ('beautiful' and 'ugly'), as seen in figure 1, allude to contrary connotations: positive and negative. However, 'ugly' and 'terrible' (the 3rd most used term) come closer in their definition when it comes to the negative association of those terms. 'Ugly' is defined as '*unpleasant or repulsive, especially in appearance*' and 'terrible' is defined as '*extremely unpleasant or disagreeable*'³.

By grouping together 'ugly' (n=33), 'terrible' (n=32) and 'unnatural' (n=13) in the 'negative' category, a total of 78 terms makes them the majority. Thus concluding that out of the 195 terms, the majority has a negative opinion about VBA. Out of the remaining 130 terms, 43 are positive (the term 'beautiful'). The 87 terms that remain are mixed in their connotation: 'art', 'fad', time-related terms and 'personal' are neither predominantly negative nor positive. They are simply expressions of general connotations towards VBA. However, 'pity', 'unnatural' and 'unnecessary' lean more (albeit not definitively) towards a negative connotation. By those definitions, the following graph comes closest to an overall conclusion of the 195 categorized words:

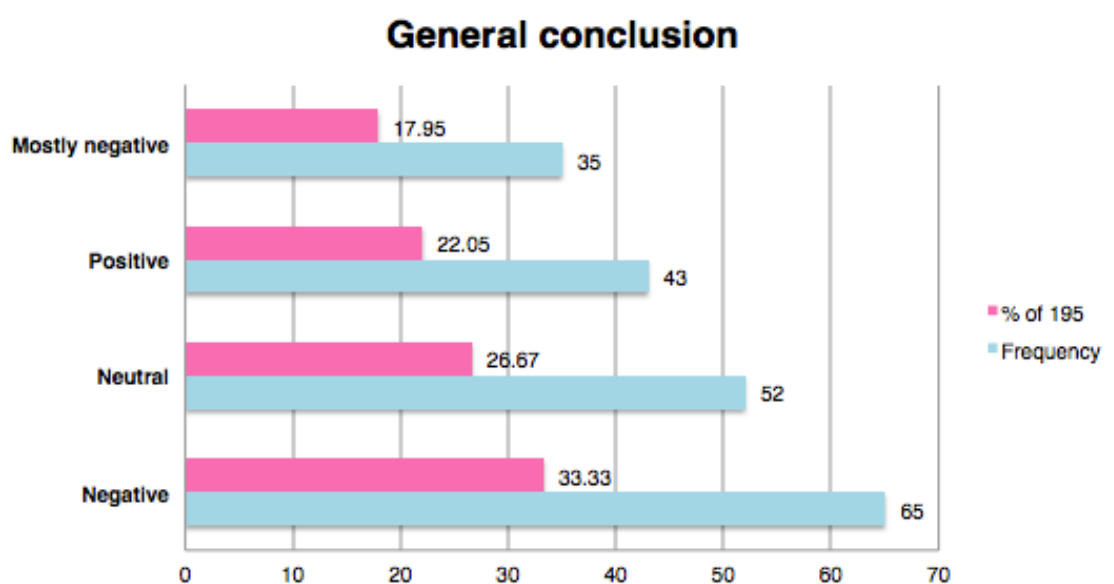


Figure 2: General conclusion about most used terms to describe VBA

³ Definitions derived from Google Dictionary and Merriam-Webster Online, consulted on 5 May 2014



By looking at figure 2, it becomes clear that there is an overall negative or mostly negative response when it comes to the 195 categorized terms (n=100). The minority is positive (n=34) while the rest (n=52) has a neutral or undefined opinion about VBA.

As for the remaining 200 terms, there is no consistency or repetitiveness. Answers such as 'does not look good on black people', 'breaks all language barriers' or 'only earrings are beautiful' and the sporadic use of terms such as 'exciting' and 'freedom' makes these terms irrelevant in analyzing whether BB/Gen-X has a positive or negative outlook on VBA. The 195 categorized terms are a good representation of their views.

4.4. Has your image of VBA changed over the past 10 years? And in what way have media contributed to this change?

The question 'Has your image of VBA changed over the past 10 years?' by itself does not add enough merit to answering the research question (or any particular sub-question). However, by combining it with the question 'In what way have media contributed to this change?' the (lack of) media's influence on BB/Gen-X becomes immediately clear. This question is crucial in answering the sub-question 'How has the media influenced Baby Boomers and Generation X's past and current perception of visible body art?'

The following figure is a combination of 'Has your image of VBA changed over the past 10 years?' and 'In what way have the media contributed to this change?'

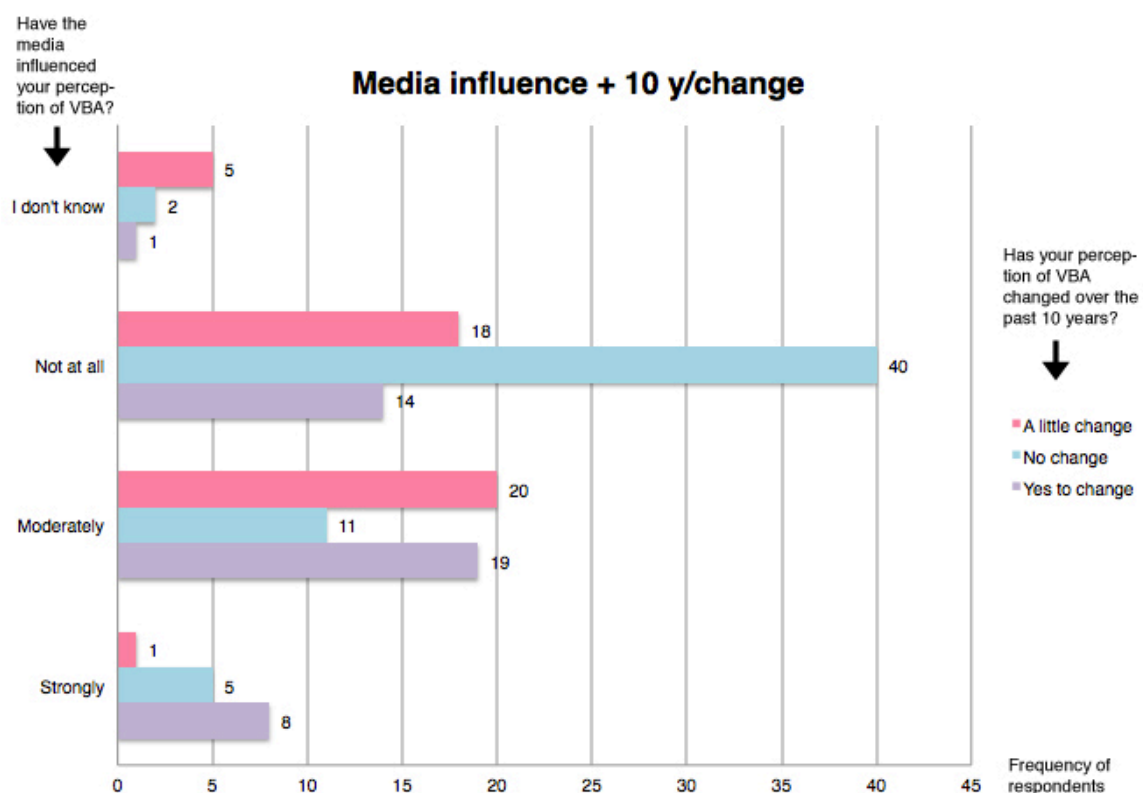


Figure 3: Media's influence combined with change of opinion over the past 10 years. Please consult the colors in the legend for an explanation of the bars.



The most popular combination (n=40) was no change in opinion over the past ten years with no media influence on their views at all. The second most popular combination (n=20) was a moderate change in opinion combined with moderate media influence. Overall, by looking at figure 3, the grand majority (n=122) chooses no- to moderate change of views over the past ten years combined with no- to moderate media influence on their views. This means that the media's role in the respondents' perception of VBA is minor and that their perception has hardly changed.

Of the remaining respondents, a minority (n=8) claims that their opinion has changed over the past ten years and that the media has had a strong influence on their views. A smaller minority (n=5) claims that their opinion has not changed at all, but that the media has a strong influence on their views. The smallest minority (n=1) states that their opinion has changed, but they do not know which role the media has played in their views; and that their opinion has moderately changed, but the media's influence is strong in their views.

In conclusion, of the N=144 respondents, 84,72% (n=122) have a moderate- to no change in opinion with a moderate- to no influence of the media. This conclusion begs the question what has caused this 'moderate change', if not media? This will be discussed in the following paragraphs and chapters of this dissertation.

4.5. In what way have media contributed to your view on VBA?

Overall, 50% of the N=144 respondents claim that the media has had no influence at all on their views on VBA. 50 respondents claim that there was a moderate media influence while 14 say that the media has had a strong influence. The remaining 8 respondents do not know to which extent the media has influenced their opinion.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, these numbers beg the question of which role the media *does* play in the lives of the respondents. Ever since the start of the printing press in the 15th century, there have been studies conducted on the role of media within society. How aware are participants of Dutch society of the media's influences? Lawrence De Fleur (1988, p. 491) questions the role of mass media in our lives as consumers and claims that its role, no matter how dominant in an individual's life, will always be subjective. Some consider the influence of advertising as purely socioeconomical instead of psychological while others recognize it as being a basic form of human development. Additionally, in a research done on the Media's Influence on Social Norms and Identity Development of Youth, Worsham (2011, para. 6) claims that "in essence, media is conveying what we should buy, who we should be, or who we should become, in order to be 'happy'. Unfortunately, whether young or old, this seems to be working." And, finally, with the exponential advancement of technology (smartphones, tablets and laptops), our need for constant communication and shared information is more widespread than ever. This means that the media's influence is exponentially growing along with it. It is masquerading as the 'norm of everyday life' and



manifests itself as part of our culture. To some people, this influence may be seen as unavoidable, harmless or simply just not a big deal. What they are not realizing is that many of the social standards we abide by are constructed and inspired from what we see and hear from these media outlets (Romo, 2012, para 11).

As will be shown in the following paragraphs, all of the respondents of the questionnaire use one form of media or the other (from print to digital). So if the role of mass media in the everyday lives of media users (and thus society and culture) is undeniable, how aware are the respondents of the media's influence? This question will be further discussed and analyzed during the interviews with BB/Gen-X in the following chapter of this dissertation.

4.6. Which media do you use and how often?

The media options in question were: newspaper / television / magazine / radio / Twitter / Facebook / LinkedIn / Hyves. The options for each medium were: Daily / Few times a week (or 'Frequently') / Every once in a while / Yearly / Never. This question's answer is intrinsically linked to the sub-question *'Which media do Baby Boomers and Generation X mostly consume?'* By knowing which media type is most popular amongst BB/Gen-X, an appropriate method of using these media can be developed. After gathering the data for each medium, grouping them by frequency (rather than by medium) made it clear which media should be targeted when aspiring to positively contribute to BB/Gen-X's perception of VBA.

The frequencies 'daily' and 'few times a week' are most relevant for this research, because by making the message unavoidable in a subtle way, its impact will be greater. Figure 4 shows the grand majority for daily use favors television, Facebook, radio and newspapers. While a smaller majority favors magazines, newspapers, radio, Facebook and LinkedIn frequently (figure 5). This data indicates that by adding the media that BB/Gen-X mostly consumes on a frequent basis (from daily to few times a week), the most used media are television (n=124), radio (n=99), Facebook (n=98) and newspapers (n=98). The remaining media (magazines and other popular social media) seem to be of little (to no) importance within this target group. On a broader spectrum, this means that traditional media are still preferred amongst BB/Gen-X. This means that despite Facebook's popularity, using a social media campaign would not be beneficial for reaching the majority of the target audience. Keeping it to traditional campaigns will be most advantageous.

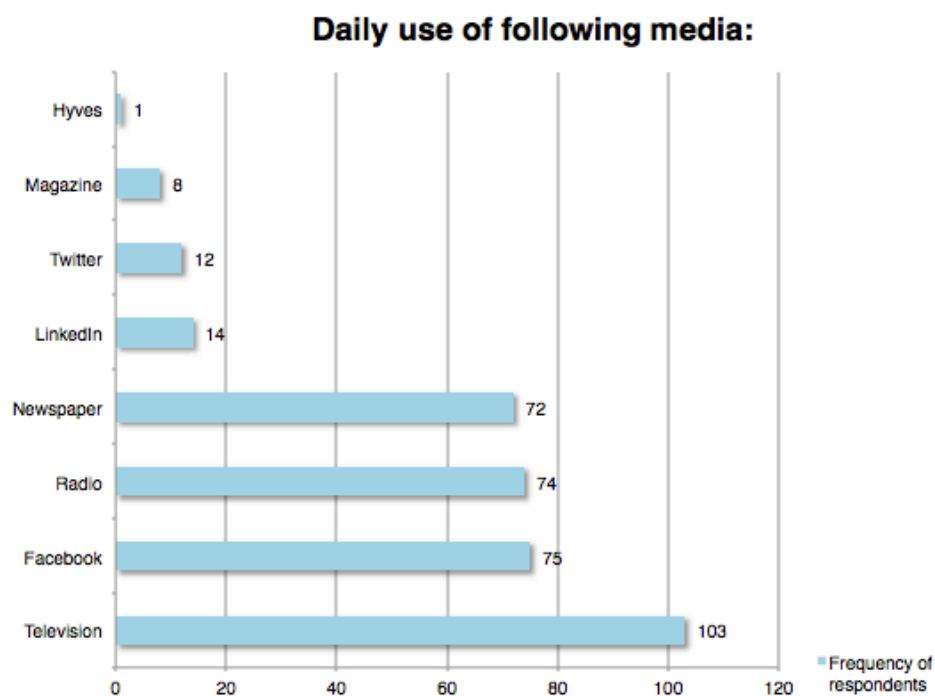


Figure 4: Daily uses of media

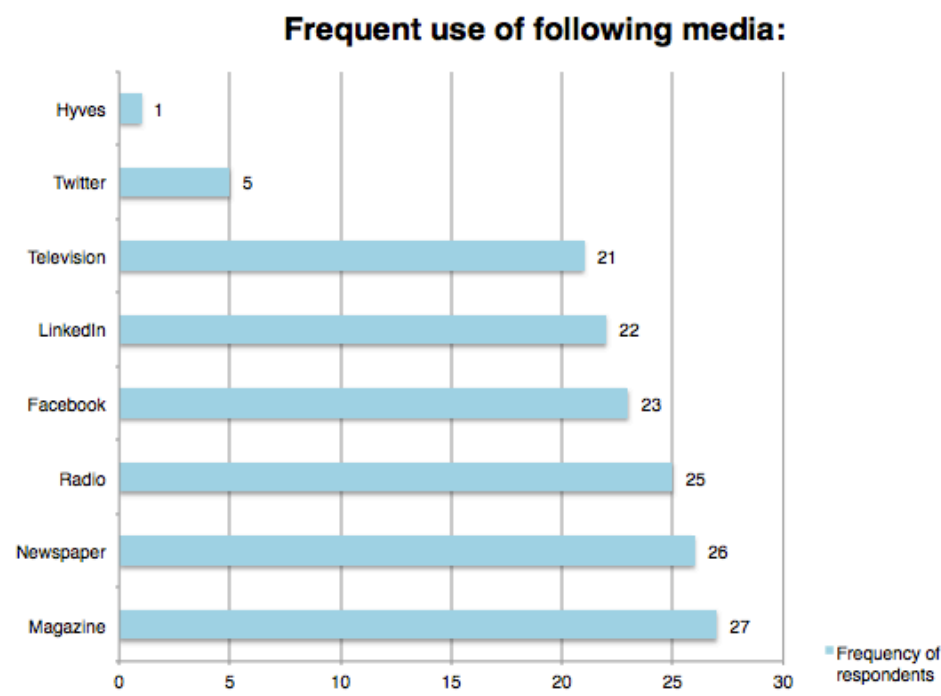


Figure 5: Frequent use of media

4.7. If you answered “every day” or “a few times a week” at the previous question. Can you specify with some examples?

This question generated a total of 394 examples of media (ranging from radio stations to newspapers). However, this question has been discarded due to irrelevancy to the advice given in this dissertation. The media examples proved not to add any merit as the advice is



mostly geared towards nonprofit organizations that cater to social issues. The ultimate goal is to get the message to these media examples (such as popular radio stations and television channels and programs), but not to cater it specifically to any particular channel. It is very costly to go straight from message to media so using organizations and social media as a middle step might potentially facilitate getting it to broadcast media. The ultimate advice of this dissertation is to be as realistic as possible so that the possibility of producing a media strategy becomes attainable. Not focusing on immediately getting to the popular radio and television channels means more opportunity in using this research to approach the nonprofit organizations whose goals are more in line with the goals of this research.

4.8. What do you use these media for?

The respondents were asked to elaborate on the uses for each medium. This question was relevant to know how to target the content for each of the most popular media. The categories were: entertainment, business, hobby, development, sport, arts and other.

The top three uses for each medium were:

Newspaper	Television	Social media	Magazine	Radio
1. Development (n=82)	1. Entertainment (n=115)	1. Entertainment (n=82)	1. Entertainment (n=70)	1. Entertainment (n=94)
2. Entertainment (n=46)	2. Development (n=80)	2. Business (n=44)	2. Development (n=52)	2. Development (n=51)
3. Business (n=37)	3. Sport (n=33)	3. Other (n=29)	3. Hobby (n=35)	3. Business (n=26)

Table 1: Results top three most used for media

Entertainment prevails as the #1 category for four out of the five media, but development comes in at a close second with favoritism in three out of the five media. Social media is the only medium where development plays no role at all in the top three, but for the remaining four media, entertainment and development alternate between first- and second position.

These results will determine how to approach each medium. For example, as seen in §4.6, newspapers are amongst the most used media. And as seen here, the majority uses it for development. This means that a strategy for newspapers will need a different tone than that of television (where entertainment prevails). An example could be to use rational marketing (i.e. where objective information or statistics are provided) in the newspaper versus emotional marketing (documentaries or more expressive advertisements) on television.



4.9. Statements

There were four statements which the respondents had to choose whether they strongly agree / agree / neither agree nor disagree / disagree / strongly disagree. The main goal of these statements was to get a deeper insight on BB/Gen-X's views on VBA (and thus an answer closer to the sub-question 'What are Baby Boomer's and Generation X's current perception of VBA?')

Statement 1: Visible tattoos in professional fields are unprofessional.

Finding out BB/Gen-X's perception on VBA in the workplace contributes to their opinion on the overall professionalism of VBA. As figure 6 shows, there is not much difference in frequency between each answer- this was the case in the majority of the statements. However, it comes as a surprise that 40 of the respondents are neutral about this statement. With the steady progression in VBA popularity, its place in the work environment has recently become one of the most controversial issues in the media. Less than a decade ago, tattoos and piercings were not listed in employee handbooks. Now, because of the major increase, tattoos have been implemented into company policies and dress codes (Stanley, 2011, para. 2). During the interviews with BB/Gen-X that will be discussed in the following chapter, it has been brought to light that BB/Gen-X's hesitancy towards tattoos is largely linked to their concern for job opportunities and future prospects of Millennials with VBA. So by these results, there is no surprise that the second most popular answers (n=33) were 'strongly agree' and 'agree' (n=32). This means that BB/Gen-X finds VBA generally unprofessional in professional fields.

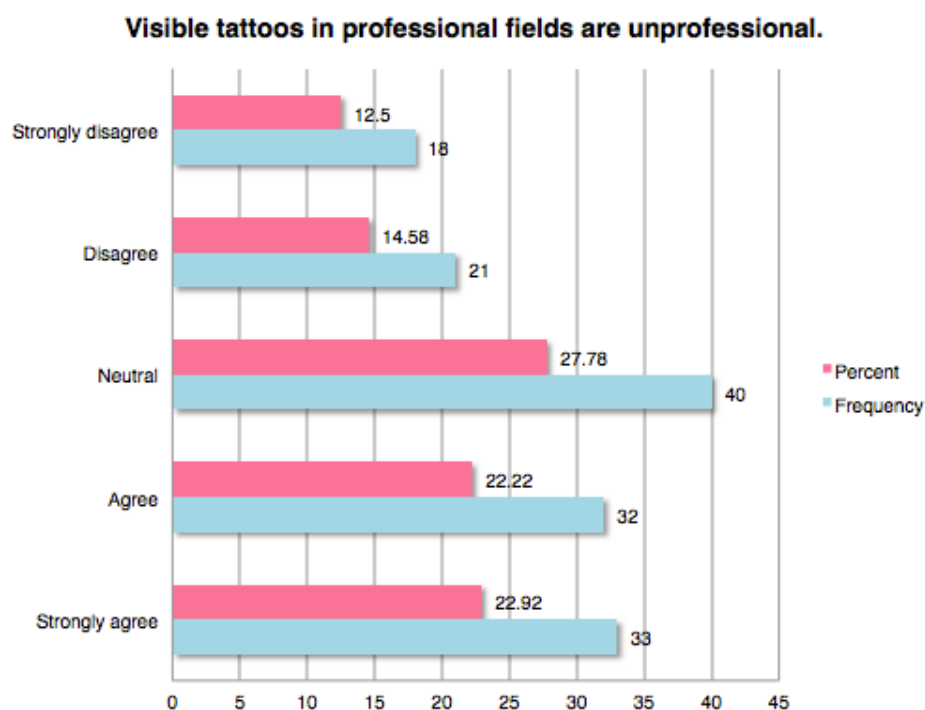


Figure 6: Results statement 1



Statement 2: I don't believe employers should take into consideration whether or not interviewees have tattoos during the interview process.

This statement also highlights the professionalism factor of VBA. Much like the first statement, this one also does not see a big dissimilarity between each answer within the scale. The clear majority is neutral (n=35), but 'agree' and 'disagree' are not far behind in popularity (both n=24 and n=25 respondents). However, 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree' also only differ one person (n=24 and n=25). The only conclusion that can be derived from this is that 55 respondents are on the (strongly) disagree side, 53 respondents on the (strongly) agree side while 35 remain neutral. By these numbers, the majority disagrees with the statement, but the numbers are too close to definitively state whether or not Gen-X feels that VBA should play a role during the interview process. This opinion contradicts the results of statement 1 where the majority (n=55) (strongly) agrees with the fact that VBA in professional environments are unprofessional versus the 39 respondents who (strongly) disagree with the statement.

By comparing the results of statement 1 and statement 2, the conclusion is that VBA in professional environments are unprofessional, but when it comes to employability- there is not much difference in opinion on whether or not VBA should be taken into consideration.

Statement 3: The media has contributed to my view on VBA.

This question served as a general reassessment of the previously asked question '*In what way have media contributed to your view on VBA?*' (§4.5). By repeating the question in a slightly different way, the answer might differ from what the respondent initially answered (a common interrogation technique- not that the respondents are being interrogated). However, the results of this statement are in line with the results of §4.5. 54 respondents strongly disagree with the statement and 25 disagree. This already makes up the $\pm 50\%$ as seen with the results of 'no media influence at all' in §4.5. However, 35 respondents have a neutral opinion about the media's influence while a total of 10 respondents (strongly) agree that it has contributed to their view. This reconfirms that BB/Gen-X feels like the media has no influence on their perception of VBA.

Statement 4: I don't have a problem with family members who have VBA (i.e. neck/arm tattoos, lip/nose piercings).

This statement is to gauge whether or not BB/Gen-X's opinion on VBA differs when the 'issue' is brought close to home. The answers to this statement are the most contradictory; 36 respondents strongly agree while 32 strongly disagree. The tiebreaker could be found in the less definitive 'agree' (n=22) and 'disagree' (n=30). By those numbers, the majority disagrees with the statement with a total of n=62 (compared to the n=58 that agree). The numbers are too close to make an accurate analysis of the impact of VBA when it comes close to home



(family). This means that their general opinion does not drastically change when VBA comes close to home.

4.10. Images

The four images in the questionnaire were used to investigate if the *type* of VBA, gender of the VBA wearer and general setting play a role in BB/Gen-X's perception. Does it matter if it is a beautiful female with a neck tattoo versus a tattooed male in a business suit? There are four images, each of someone with extreme VBA. The respondents were asked to rank their opinion from 'very professional/credible' to 'very unprofessional/not credible'.

Image 1



Image 1 is a male between 20 and 24 years old, with stretched ears (perimeter of ± 5 centimeters), a tubercle stud, a lip ring and a nose bridge staff. He is wearing what is presumed to be a t-shirt and has very short hair.

80 respondents found him (very) unprofessional looking; 46 respondents were neutral, while 26 found him (very) professional / credible. Thus, the majority found the first male to be mostly unprofessional looking.

Image 2



The second image is of a male between 24 and 28 years old, stretched ears (perimeter of ± 3 centimeters), both hands and neck fully covered with tattoos, with two small tattoos



underneath his eyes and a beard. He is dressed in a button-up shirt with his hair neatly combed.

79 of the respondents found him (very) unprofessional looking; 48 found him neutral, while 13 found him (very) professional. Compared to the first image, the respondents were slightly more positive about this male. There were two more neutrals than image 1 and image 2 is $\pm 1\%$ less 'unprofessional'. However, $\pm 2\%$ of respondents found him less professional than the male in image 1.

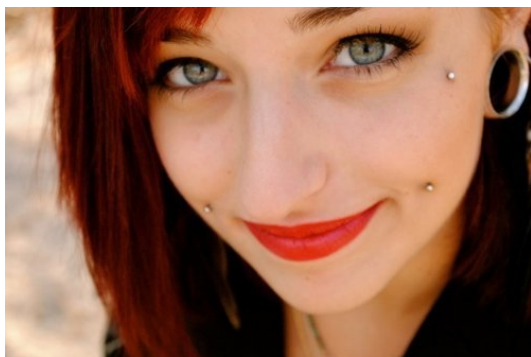
Image 3



The third image is of a female between 25 and 30 years old, multiple colors in her hair, left side of her hair is shaved, studs on her nose bridge and cheeks, stretched ears with considerably large hoops in them (perimeter of ± 10 centimeters). She also has marks on her neck and heavy eye makeup (suggesting she might be a model).

The majority of the respondents ($n=91$) found her (very) unprofessional looking. 38 respondents found her neutral while 12 found her (very) professional. So far, she is the most unprofessional looking.

Image 4



The fourth image is of a female between 18 and 21 years old with studs in her cheeks, one on her cheekbone and stretched ears (perimeter of ± 4 centimeters).



59 of the respondents found her neutral, 56 found her (very) unprofessional and 27 found her (very) professional. These results make her the most professional and neutral looking.

Comparing image results

These results do not indicate any kind of clear gender favoritism. The females are not predominantly viewed as more or less professional than the males.

The fact that the third image is the least professional could be written off to her eccentric physical appearance and overall lack of facial expression. Every unconventional aspect about her is highlighted in the photo (makeup, hair, VBA), while the female in the fourth image has a clear joyous expression, despite her VBA. An explanation could be that expression plays a role in how the severity of the VBA is viewed by BB/Gen-X. If the VBA wearer has a positive and friendly appearance, the chances of them being seen as more professional raises. The interviewees discussed in the upcoming chapter verify this.

The two males do not differ enough in respondent opinion to derive a definitive conclusion about their differences. Even though image 2 has a slightly more positive response, it is not conclusive. This means that despite one male being more dressed up, clothing or overall neatness did not matter in terms of professionalism.

These results indicate that the majority of the respondents found all four people in the images wholly unprofessional, but the fourth female was the most neutral. This could be due to her positive expression, the fact that she looks quite young and that her VBA is not her dominant feature (she lacks tattoos which the other subjects in the images do have).



CHAPTER 5 – INTERVIEW RESULTS

After analyzing the results of the questionnaire, some crucial information appeared to be missing. The fact that at least half of the respondents stated that their perception of VBA had (moderately) changed over the past decade, but that media played no part in this change raised a few questions. If not the media, what is the reason behind this change?

Firstly, for clarification purposes of this research, interviews were conducted with three Millennials with VBA. These interviews provided additional insight from within the targeted community. The interviews were used as an additional research tool (next to the questionnaires and interviews with BB/Gen-X) to find out how Millennials with VBA see themselves in society. The goals of these interviews were separate from the interviews with BB/Gen-X; they served to gain a better understanding behind the reasons for getting exceptional VBA⁴, what role they think the media plays in mainstreaming VBA and if they feel like they are treated differently because of their unconventional appearance.

Secondly, by conducting interviews with members of BB/Gen-X, more depth was provided into the real reasoning behind the change of perception over the past decade. The interviews with this group were also meant to elaborate on the research question and the sub-question *'What are Baby Boomer's and Generation X's current perception of people with VBA?'* The questionnaire, although useful to gain quantitative data for analysis, only provided a limited view on how BB/Gen-X perceives people with VBA. Conducting interviews in addition to the questionnaires means more qualitative data to confirm the results.

5.1. Millennials with VBA results

Three Dutch Millennials with VBA were interviewed over the course of three hours. The interview was conducted in an informal focus group manner (no individual interviews) where casual conversations between the participants lead to more insight into how Millennials with VBA view themselves, the community, the media and their role within society. After this interview, a basic idea could be formulated on their views.

The requirements for these interviewees were:

1. Age: 20+
2. Must have considerable VBA
3. Born and raised in the Netherlands
4. Dutch media users

⁴ Referring to large tattoos on their neck, fingers and facial piercings.



The interviewees were two males (39 and 21 years old) and one female (21 years old). The importance of this interview serves as background for why this research has merit and relevancy; and how VBA wearers feel about their treatment within society and the media.

Personal feelings about VBA

When it comes to the reason behind their VBA, two of the three interviewees always wanted a tattoo, simply because they liked the idea of having one. Bo Simon (sales clerk, 21) grew up with a father who belonged to a biker crew. This meant she was exposed to fully tattooed individuals for as long as she can remember and knew she wanted to be a part of that group since the age of 12. At 21, her observable VBA includes several finger tattoos, stretched ears, facial piercings and a neck tattoo while the other two participants had their tattoos (mostly) concealed during the interview. The two male participants simply claimed that they like the way tattoos look and were just waiting for the right time and right tattoo artist to put them.

Two of the three interviewees do not feel any emotional or physical difference after getting a new tattoo. Simon, however, enjoys her body more after every tattoo. She claims that it is art that you are carrying around everywhere you go. She looks at herself much more often now and sees her body as one big puzzle piece that needs to be completed over time. The other two participants compare it to getting new clothes; they feel a sense of satisfaction after every tattoo, but no lasting change on how they view their physical appearance.

Two of the three participants were unanimous in their response to whether or not they feel like people treat them differently because they have VBA. The third participant denied, because his tattoos are easier to hide than the other two interviewees who have full sleeves on both arms and legs and neck/finger tattoos. Erik de Haan (tattoo artist, 39) who has a full sleeve argues that people without tattoos are the ones who are quickest to judge. Which is ironic, because the interviewees would never ask why someone *does not* have tattoos. Sometimes the judgment goes so far as bullying, which is why he thinks he is always pulled out of lines at the airport. Simon has the same experience with airports and adds that when she gets confronted negatively about her VBA (when people grab her arm or shake their heads in disapproval), she feels a sense of pride about them. It immediately filters out the people she does not want to be around or interact with.

De Haan understands the hesitance of older generations. He understands that they had a different life where getting tattoos of skulls and devil masks meant something completely different than what it means now. He uses the example of sailors and circus folk as belonging to the VBA wearers of 80 years ago. As for future generations, the speculation is unanimous: it can go either way. Human beings have a tendency to defy and exceed whatever came before. A person receives a higher level of satisfaction (or utility) when consumption of almost any good rises (Schiffman, 2004). So future generations can either go



more extreme with VBA or end up having none at all and focusing on some other way to rebel.

Job opportunities and prospects

Asking about their job prospects as VBA wearers provides more background information for the statements and images used in the questionnaire. The first two statements were regarding VBA in the workplace and the images were to gauge the professionalism of VBA wearers. Asking about the professionalism of their VBA will provide an explanation to their own future prospects.

Two of the three participants were overtly clear about their response to whether they would hide their VBA for a job interview: absolutely not. They figure that the employer will find out about it eventually so there is no use in hiding who you are. They continue by saying that it should not matter at all whether or not someone has VBA, but that they have no interest in the jobs that disapprove VBA. Before Simon even decided to get tattoos, she carefully considered and accepted her future job opportunities. She never had the ambition to be successful in any way that required her not to have VBA. De Haan adds that even if she changes her mind about wanting a job where it is not accepted, she will just have to work harder to get where she wants to be. It will just make her a better and more capable person than anyone else. The third interviewee would hide his tattoos, merely to exclude the possibility that it matters at all.

These answers in relation to the questionnaire results from the statements and images show that even though BB/Gen-X's opinion about VBA in the workplace varies equally from acceptable to unacceptable, the VBA wearers are highly aware of their job prospects and are not likely to apply to jobs where it is frowned upon or unaccepted. They see VBA as who they are and not what they are capable of.

Media's influence on VBA

When asked if the media plays a role in how VBA is perceived in society, all three participants agree. All three use celebrities and tattoo shows as the biggest advisory for this argument. However, two interviewees see it as negative development for the tattoo world. De Haan strongly dislikes the TV shows [such as Miami Ink on TLC or Tattoo Stories on RTL5 in the Netherlands]. He claims that it does not give a good image of how tattooing is done, because it revolves around drama rather than the fun aspects of getting a tattoo. Simon states that the tattoos that are hyped up by the media end up being the ones that get removed later on. The media might fill up tattoo chairs and raise a tattoo shop's profits, but it no longer seems to be about the art or aesthetics; rather the image that goes with having the tattoo.



5.2. Gen-X results

Nine Dutch people of BB/Gen-X were interviewed over the course of one week. The requirements for the participants were:

1. Born and raised in the Netherlands
2. Age: 31+ (belonging to Gen-X)
3. Knowledge of Dutch media or active Dutch media users

The interviewees consisted of 4 males and 5 females between the ages of 39 and 62, with educational levels ranging from MAVO to a master's degree. These nine participants were chosen at random, but due to accessibility, consisted primarily of workers at the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht (HU). Although the participants were random, the ranges in employment positions of the interviewees within the HU were purposely chosen. These positions included: lecturer, researcher, someone from human resources, administrators and library consultants. By varying age, employment position and educational level in a similar range of the questionnaire respondents, insights from different backgrounds could be researched and compared more accurately to the results of the questionnaire. After interviewing these nine participants, there was enough data to derive a general conclusion and no more interviews had to be conducted.

For a detailed transcript and audio links to each interview, please consult Appendix 3.

Change in perception

The first question of the interview: *'Has your view on people with VBA changed over the last 10 years?'* had varying answers. Five candidates responded 'yes', three responded 'no' and one responded 'a little bit'. The three candidates who responded 'no' are all in agreement that their opinion about VBA is dependent on the person who has them. They can look beautiful or they can look ugly- what a person does with their body is their own business. Jeroen Heuts (lecturer at the HU, 58) mentions that society has just become more tolerant due to the normalization of VBA in the media. Heuts, who is not an active media user, argues that an influx of the *carpe diem* mentality has lead to the popularization of VBA. People of this generation have stopped focusing on the future and started living more day-to-day. There is now a bigger adoration of the body and outer appearance has become more important than intellectual or spiritual development.

This verifies Elias' theory discussed in the theoretical framework of §2.1. ('The Civilizing Process', 1939) that societal acceptability reveals to what extent the development of individuals is influenced by the position at which they enter the flow of the social process. This current generation who is choosing to put VBA has entered society in an era where the media controls what beauty is (and thus solidifying the opinion of Heuts that there is now a bigger body adoration) rather than one where spirituality or religion is the backbone of the society as



is the case for BB/Gen-X. This is confirmed by Roof's study of 'boomer religion' (2001, p. 102), which states that boomers are more prone to launching a search for spirituality.

Reasons behind the change

The five candidates who admitted to a change in perception over the past decade had comparable answers to the question: *'How has your perception changed (past versus present view) and what is the biggest reason for this change?'* The unanimous response amongst the five about the reason for this change is that VBA has been normalized. It has become a part of every day life when, in the past, the people with VBA could easily be placed in a specific category (the unanimous example being sailors and people from the lower classes of society). The fact that VBA has gained more exposure through media plays a role with half of the candidates. Ad Franzen (lecturer and researcher at the HU, 59) says that the biggest change is contributed to the fact that a lot of people have tattoos nowadays. When he was a child, it had a negative image, but because it is everywhere now, he had to adapt his opinion too. All four in this category had similar answers about the media normalizing their perception of VBA.

The reason behind the change for the remaining four candidates is unanimous as well: being- and working in social environments. Norbert van der Hulst (lecturer at the HU, 42) makes the point that being a lecturer at a university means a continuous stream of new faces every year. He does not need the media to show him who has VBA; he is confronted with it on a daily basis. The same goes for the remaining three who all have a past of working with people in social environments. The conclusion that can be derived from these answers is that the media is not necessarily the dominant factor in changing someone's perception- even though the majority (5/9) claims that is the case. Human interaction and being confronted with the issue on a regular basis plays an almost equally (4/9) important role in developing a lasting opinion.

Approachability VBA community

When it came to the third question: *'If you were sitting next to someone with VBA on the train, what are the chances you would start a conversation with them, versus someone without VBA?'* lead to the most differentiating answers amongst the interviewees. This question was included to see if there is a difference in the behavior towards Millennials with VBA and to either verify or disprove the Social Identity Theory.

Three interviewees claim that there would be no difference in the approachability, but that the type of VBA (fully covered versus modest coverage) and the individual's overall body language plays the biggest role in how they would approach them. This confirms the results of the questionnaire (in §4.10) where the female in Image 4 (with the positive facial expression) was the most favored amongst the three other images. Another three interviewees claim that VBA does not play a role at all in whether or not they would talk to someone (equal chances



of starting a conversation); while the remaining two would *prefer* to talk to people with VBA, simply to challenge their reasoning behind it. Van der Hulst who chooses to challenge people with abundant VBA explains that people with very obvious VBA are often unaware of the message they are bringing across or the reaction they are provoking. So he purposely asks them the 'why' behind their decisions, as does Arina de Jager (human resources at the HU, 55). Heuts, however, admits that he would try to avoid talking to people with VBA altogether. He fears that he might come across as negative towards them or that they might detect a sense of unintended arrogance or hesitation. However, it is not a relevant issue, as he generally prefers to read books on train rides.

To reflect back on the theoretical framework- the answers to this question disprove the Social Identity Theory (SIT) presented in §2.2 of this dissertation. SIT states that group membership creates in-group / self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favor the in-group at the expense of the out-group. The fact that the interviewees mostly do not differentiate in who they would prefer to talk to prove on small scale that they do not group themselves apart from Millennials with VBA thus disproving that there is any kind of in-group favoritism from BB/Gen-X.

Media influence

When it comes to how influential the media is, the majority would take media content with a grain of salt and consult an expert on the topic before letting it change or influence their behavior. However, as all nine participants claim, the media's exposure does play a role in the normalization of VBA. Being confronted with VBA on the television programs they watch on a daily to weekly basis contributes to their behavior towards it. However, only two participants admitted to the media playing a big role in their consumption behavior as well. The remaining seven participants would consult experts in the field before committing to any media claims. Thus concluding that attractiveness in an advertisement plays a miniscule role while reliability and expert opinions will have a bigger impact. This confirms the study done by the Swildens (2013) and the Saxion Kenniscentrum (2013) that states that 50+ have a thirst for knowledge and would prefer honesty and to-the-point marketing. One participant admitted to unconditionally believing anything that the Volkskrant (national newspaper) publishes. Two participants did mention that an attractive media campaign, targeted at bringing a larger understanding behind the VBA, might alter their opinion, but not change it altogether.

As seen in figure 3, 50% of the questionnaire respondents claim that the media has had no influence at all on their view of people with VBA. However, two interviewees claim that the media influences everyone, but not everyone is aware of its influence or is willing to admit to its level of influence. Franzen argues that the biggest reason that nobody is aware of the media's influence is because it goes unnoticed. The media uses tricks that influence you as a consumer. He mentions how some commercials can make you hate a product, simply



because the way it is portrayed is not attractive to you as a consumer. Heuts concurs and argues that every media user is influenced, but people will not admit to it. People do not want to admit that something has power or control over them.

The 'cucumber hysteria' of 2011 is an example of when the media had a mass influence over the lifestyles, economy and agriculture within Dutch society. In June of 2011, there was uproar about particular EHEC bacteria that infected eight people in the Netherlands and 470 people in Germany (Editorial Office, 2011, para. 4). These bacteria allegedly originated from The Netherlands- Germany's biggest supplier of tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers. However, "even after the confirmation that the EHEC bacteria had nothing to do with [abovementioned vegetables], the Dutch farmers were unable to sell their produce and had to destroy 56 million kilo's of healthy vegetables" (Editorial Office, 2011, para. 5, translated by me). This led to a loss of 230 million euro's in the farming industry. The biggest news outlets in the Netherlands such as NRC, NOS and Algemeen Dagblad reported about this issue on a daily basis for almost two weeks. There was even a website set up with the name "cucumberbacteria.nl" (translated from "komkommerbacterie.nl") that updated with the latest news about this epidemic. Therefore, the fact that it caused mass hysteria and thus impacted the economic welfare of an entire industry is an undeniable conclusion. Additionally, every interviewee either mentioned this as an example of how the media influenced them (or not) or expressed familiarity when the topic arose. The majority (5/9) of the interviewees admitted to reducing their cucumber purchases during this time.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the questionnaires and interviews with Millennials with VBA and BB/Gen-X, this research has merit in its purpose. In this regard, the overall conclusion of the questionnaire and BB/Gen-X interviews is that the target group still has a negative connotation towards people with VBA (not limited to Millennials). As for the perspective of the Millennials with VBA, they sense a difference in the way they are treated because of their appearance, but it is not necessarily generation-specific. They get treated differently by different people of different generations. If anything, Millennials with VBA show a sense of understanding for the older generation who is confused and unaccepting of the practice. They grew up in time where VBA meant someone belonged to a certain social class or group. Despite this hesitancy, they do not let it influence their behavior and would not hide their VBA to appease the image of what they think they should look like within the confines of society or any other generation. Additionally, BB/Gen-X do not feel like the media influences them, but theory, history and reasoning challenges this notion. They do trust expert opinions over whatever is in the media so the more trustworthy the information, the more likely they are to believe it and/or look up additional information.



CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the sub-questions and research question will be presented through the results obtained from the questionnaire, the interviews, and desk research and reflected on through the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2.

The problem stated in the introduction of this dissertation was that, according to several researches, BB/Gen-X have a generally negative perception of Millennials with VBA. According to these researches (i.e. Kosut, 2006 and DeMello, 2000) and confirmed by the interviews in this research, this perception is largely due to the negative connotation of VBA in previous decades. However, by holding on to the prejudice that VBA is meant for the lower class, Millennials with VBA might be missing out on job opportunities because of how they look. So by researching the media's influence on this phenomenon and finding out how to use it in a positive way, collaboration and understanding between these two dissimilar and unlikely groups can result in a more open and positive future for The Netherlands.

This research was conducted through desk research, questionnaires and interviews with BB/Gen-X and Millennials with VBA. These methods all gave insight on an issue that will, hopefully, cease to be an issue in the near future.

SUB-QUESTION 1: What are Baby Boomers and Generation X's current perception of Millennials with VBA?

To reflect on the theoretical framework of Chapter 2: the Social Identity Theory (SIT) asserts that group membership creates in-group / self-categorization and enhancement in ways that favor the in-group at the expense of the out-group. Also, the examples of Turner and Tajfel (1986) who developed this theory showed that the mere act of individuals categorizing themselves as group members was sufficient to lead them to display in-group favoritism. Through results of the interviews with people of BB/Gen-X, there is no real detectable difference in their face-to-face attitude towards Millennials with VBA, versus people from their own generation without VBA. When given the choice of whether they would talk to a Millennials with VBA versus someone from the same generation on a train ride, the large majority (7/9) of BB/Gen-X showed no preference. This shows that there is no in-group to out-group favoritism from BB/Gen-X's perspective.

Contrastingly, the questionnaire results show that 51% of the categorized terms used to describe VBA were (mostly) negative (i.e. terms such as 'terrible', 'ugly', 'skin contamination') while only 22% used positive terms (i.e. 'beautiful', 'striking', 'tasteful'). Also, during the interviews with BB/Gen-X, through general observation and the examples used, it became clear that there is still a negative connotation towards the Millennials with VBA. When it comes to members of their own generation with VBA, they are a lot more lenient in their judgment. Two interviewees claimed that the BB/Gen-X'ers who are putting tattoos in the



2010's are making a more informed and carefully considered decision about this permanent practice. This difference in judgment could be deduced from the lack of understanding and knowledge from BB-/Gen-X regarding the reasons behind the choices of the Millennials. They feel that Millennials make this choice spontaneously rather than think about future consequences. As the questionnaire results show- the more VBA a person has, the bigger the lack of professionalism and credibility. This was confirmed during the interviews when every participant mentioned the repercussions that VBA has on future job opportunities. The majority claim that the current generation has stopped focusing on the future and is more focused on the present (*carpe diem* mentality). The values that were held high in previous generations, such as spiritual development, are now put on the backburner and making room for a higher concern for body adornment and self-image (Heuts, personal communications).

However, when asking Millennials with VBA about their approachability towards BB/Gen-X or people without VBA, they admitted to having an easier time talking to people who have gone through something similar. The interviewees compared it to belonging to the same club. As mentioned in the theoretical framework: by researching if Millennials with VBA feel a sense of collectivism amongst other VBA wearers will establish favoritism from the out-group perspective. In their case, there is a sense of out-group favoritism (where there is no in-group favoritism from BB/Gen-X). The lack of understanding from the 'older generation' (the in-group) makes talking to someone with similar VBA more pleasant and stimulating (the out-group). This means that Millennials with VBA feel like they are being treated unfavorably by BB/Gen-X, despite their understanding of the reasons behind BB/Gen-X's behavior. This verifies the SIT from the out-group perspective. That it makes them more reluctant to start a conversation further proves the problem statement and that a solution should be sought.

As for Elias' theory (1987, p. viii) that the entirety of social patterns of self-regulation is generation-specific and thus, in the broader sense, society-specific was proven by a third party study conducted between the two different generations. In this study, which compares the traits of young people in high school and entering college today with those of BB/Gen-X at the same age from 1966 to 2009, shows an increasing trend of valuing money, image, and fame more than inherent principles like self-acceptance, affiliation, and community (Chau, 2012, para. 2). This was reconfirmed during the interviews where it was mentioned that *carpe diem* and self-image have taken the place of future-related ambitions. By also having nine out of the nine interviewees (and one interviewee of the VBA interviewees) mentioning that no longer than three decades ago tattooing exclusively belonged to the lower class society, verifies that something that did not provoke shame or indignity in an earlier time could be shameful in a later one, and vice versa (Elias, 1984, p. viii).

The media's role in this development cannot be overlooked. VBA interviewees say that the media has contributed to filling more tattoo chairs, but not for the reasons that



tattooing is meant for. Young people nowadays enter tattoo shops and ask for tattoos that are seen on celebrities or athletes (De Haan, personal communications). While this is good for business, the media's role in commoditizing this ancient art form is changing the way society looks at its intent. On the other hand, the media also contributes to what BB/Gen-X refers to as "normalizing VBA". By being confronted with it on television shows, in the newspaper and on social media, BB/Gen-X has become more lenient of VBA. Despite its gateway into normalcy through the help of media and confrontation in everyday life, BB/Gen-X's opinion on VBA does not differ greatly from what it was a decade ago.

In conclusion, the current perception of BB/Gen-X on VBA wearers (not just Millennials) is predominantly negative. However, the reasons behind this negativity revolve around a lack of understanding and a general perplexity surrounding the future prospects of these Millennials with VBA. The fact that they grew up in a society where it was undesirable plays a considerable role.

SUB-QUESTION 2: How has the media influenced Baby Boomers and Generation X's past and current perception of VBA?

Through the desk research presented in Chapter 2, it becomes clear that Europe's past with VBA has been distorted and has fluctuated in perceptions from the 18th century until the 21st century. The fact that Europe's first encounter of a tattooed body in 1771 was through a native Polynesian established the original connotation of tattoos with primitiveness and lower class society. Research also showed that religion presumably played a big role in the aversion to tattooing. In the 18th century, the most popular religions within Europe believed that the human body was made in the image of God and that by marking it (with tattoos), the body of God would be defiled. However, when asked about the role of religion on their views of VBA, none of the interviewees confirmed its impact- even the ones who were raised religiously. Through research and interviews it became clear that the most influential factor on the past perception of VBA was what BB/Gen-X were taught by their parents and the people they encountered wearing them. According to the respondents, the media did not play any role in the development of their past perception.

This does not differ much from their claims on their current perception of VBA; most respondents (as proven by the questionnaire and the interviews) deny the media's influence on their perception. However, they do mention that the media has helped in normalizing the practice. So even though it cannot be said that the media has contributed positively or negatively to BB/Gen-X's perception of VBA (both past and current), its role in desensitizing society (from a lower class practice to 'normal') speaks louder than their claims. However, this claim will be challenged and further discussed in the answer to the subsequent sub-question.



SUB-QUESTION 3: A. Which media do Baby Boomers and Generation X mostly consume? B. How influenced are they by these media?

According to the results of the questionnaire, the most used media (on a daily basis) are television, newspapers, Facebook and radio. Identical to the research done by the Central Bureau of Statistics in 2013, over half of the respondents (52,08%) admitted to being on one social media network on a daily basis. As for the media used less frequently, but still on a regular basis, magazines, newspapers and radio are the main contenders. Television, newspapers and radio are mostly used for entertainment and development while Facebook's use also includes business.

In an attempt to keep it brief and thus generate more responses, the questionnaire did not go into depth about the media's influence within BB/Gen-X. Conversely, the proceeding interviews provided more depth into the subject. To reflect back on the theoretical framework: according to University of Twente in the Netherlands, the Hypodermic Needle Theory (HNT) states that mass media have a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences. However, the majority (77,78%) of the interviewees contradicted this theory. Even though television and social media were mentioned as their most used media during the interviews (thus confirming the questionnaire results), they claim that the media has little to no influence on their lifestyle choices or opinion on issues. What *does* come closest to influencing them is an expert's opinion. If the media elaborates on the reasoning behind certain choices with verifiable arguments, they are more likely to look into it and consider its validity. Whether it will have an effect on their personal opinion or lifestyle is still debatable.

Despite this denial of the media's influence, all interviewees acknowledged the media's role in their perception change about VBA. They mention that the media has normalized the phenomenon by adopting it into its regular programming, yet a few questions later they mention it has little to no influence. This reasoning contradicts itself. Two interviewees (Heuts and Franzen) explain their analysis behind this contradiction; namely, that the media's influence is subconscious, but inevitable. This goes back to the HNT, as explained by the University of Twente: "The media fires the message directly into audience head without their own knowledge". The reasoning behind the denial of the influence of media, according to these two interviewees, is because people do not like admitting that something has control over them. By being exposed to the different media incentives that are implanted into everyday society, it is close to impossible to ignore their effect (unless the recipient is not a regular media user). In conclusion, despite its seemingly miniscule effect on their personal judgment, BB/Gen-X are active media users who are equally oblivious as susceptible to the media's influence on their perception of VBA.



RESEARCH QUESTION: How can media positively contribute to Baby Boomer and Generation X's current perception of Millennials with visible body art in the Netherlands?

To answer the research question, all of the results obtained in the previous chapters of this dissertation will be taken into account. The answer will be a combination of the sub-questions discussed in this chapter as well as the theoretical framework and desk research.

Through the questionnaire, interviews, desk research and general observation (through interviews and everyday interaction), it has been concluded that BB/Gen-X have an overall negative perception of Millennials with VBA. Millennials with VBA, on the other hand, have no negative bias about BB/Gen-X. In fact, they show understanding for their hesitance towards them. So even though there are two groups within this discussion, only one group needs to be more informed and encouraged about this phenomenon. Encouraging and inspiring a collaboration between these two groups through the media channels most used by BB/Gen-X can create an (unlikely) partnership that will bring together two different worlds and merge them into one of diversity, understanding, respect and creativity. This will ultimately add to a more peaceful and open society in The Netherlands. However, research shows that BB/Gen-X are not easily influenced by the media. This complicates the search for a concrete answer on how to positively contribute to their perception of VBA. However, by selectively choosing their most used media types, the reasons behind their perception and combining that with research done by media centers on consumer behavior of BB/Gen-X in the Netherlands, the concept of a media strategy (that will lead to a media campaign) can be formulated.

The most used media amongst the respondents were television (71%), newspapers (50%), Facebook (52%) and radio (51%). Focusing on these four media means using the media in such a way that it suits BB/Gen-X's use for each medium. These media can be optimally integrated to create the desired response.

As the research amongst the 144 respondents shows, entertainment, development and business are the main reasons for using specific media. This is elaborated on in the research done by Saxion Kenniscentrum (2011) that emphasizes the characteristics to consider when targeting BB/Gen-X in marketing: they have a thirst for knowledge and information, are critical consumers, love and enjoy life, emphasize the importance of family and include aspects that are familiar to the generation. They conclude with the best way to approach BB/Gen-X is to make the message unavoidable, honest and realistic. The research done by BKC (2013) advises to avoid using models that BB/Gen-X does not familiarize with or in which implausible promises are made. This is confirmed by the interviews conducted to gain a better insight on BB/Gen-X's views on VBA and their media use. The majority (6/9) of the interviewees take what the media broadcasts with a grain of salt. They will not easily buy into what the media is selling; they would rather get confirmation from an expert or someone



they trust. If what the media says seems prevalent to their life, they will put in the extra effort to research its validity.

By those results, the following ways of using the media to positively contribute to BB/Gen-X's current perception of Millennials with VBA can be implemented into a media strategy:

1. By using concrete information (preferably with statistics, expert opinions and/or visual evidence) that supports the thought behind the message, BB/Gen-X will be more inclined to give it their attention and look up further information about it. As seen in a previous research, they have a thirst for knowledge. In this case, this would mean getting firsthand knowledge from Millennials with VBA, experts in the field of culture and history, and possibly firsthand experience from BB/Gen-X with Millennials with VBA (looking at it through the eyes of the target audience and using it as a mirror).
2. The information needs to be displayed in a simple, to the point and reliable way with a minimum of jargon, overpromises and fanfare. Reasonability and simplicity is key. As Swildens (2013) mentioned that in marketing terms, 50+'ers are to be approached with respect and to the point; they cannot stand excessive chats packed with marketing terms.
3. Emphasizing the benefits of collaborating with Millennials with VBA will be at the heart of the strategy. If BB/Gen-X know what is in it for them, the chances of peeking their interest increases. This will be the most effective way of reaching them. This means also emphasizing the benefits it will reap for The Netherlands as a whole. 'The Netherlands' that BB/Gen-X grew up in is now different from what they know (as logistically happens when there are generational shifts in society) so by emphasizing that such collaboration will only increase the overall peacefulness and openness of Dutch society, hopefully BB-Gen-X will feel inclined to participate.
4. Adding what they know and making it relatable will add the emotional factor that makes many viral campaigns go viral. Emotional triggers such as family, traveling, quality time and hobbies should be emphasized and will ideally provoke an empathetic and enthusiastic reaction, as the BKC (2013) concluded in their research.
5. The lack of understanding of BB/Gen-X about Millennials with VBA is the primary concern that needs to be addressed in any strategy that involves a change of perception of something they are unfamiliar with. By providing the explanation behind the VBA choices, verifying that Millennials with VBA are not recklessly making these choices and showing the personality behind the art will inform BB/Gen-X that the past



views on VBA should stay where they came from: the past. However, this needs to be done tactfully so that it will not be seen as an attack, but rather a way of improving their quality of life by broadening their knowledge and increasing their curiosity.

6. And, last but certainly not least, by not forcefully trying to change the opinion of a generation who has decades of experience supporting their views, but by simply giving them a window of opportunity to reconsider something that comes naturally to them. The point is not to force change; it is to get this issue into the media to start a discussion about why something so unfamiliar gets such a negative stigmatization. This will get the ball rolling and encourage people to reconsider past views.

Becoming more accepting of a small group in society, in this case Millennials with VBA, could open the window to accepting people from all ethnicities, sexual orientations and other issues that still play a big role in keeping society from a healthy and positive progression. Getting BB/Gen-X to warm up to Millennials with VBA might not seem like much, but even getting one person with a negative perception to reconsider their view is a step in the right direction. This encouragement to facilitate intergenerational collaboration is necessary to prevent distrust, miscommunication, stigmatization and possible social unrest. By developing a media strategy that caters to what BB/Gen-X responds to, a more peaceful and open future could be awaiting The Netherlands. And to quote John Paul II: "The future starts today, not tomorrow".



CHAPTER 7 – RECOMMENDATIONS / ADVICE

This final chapter will elaborate on the points mentioned in the answers to the research question in Chapter 7 and how using the media to positively contribute to BB/Gen-X's perception can be realistically achieved. Recommendations for further research will be included.

7.1. Organizations to approach

Creating a successful media campaign without the financial or judicial support of an organization is close to impossible. The Netherlands has one organization that specializes in idealistic campaigns to contribute to a vital and connected society. SIRE (Stichting Ideële Reclame), the organization in question, is a foundation that aims to motivate people and make them think about issues that do not get enough attention in society. One of their campaigns includes the popular "I am still here". The campaign featured posters of unmistakably terminally ill people with the message that 'one out of four Dutch people avoid contacting someone who is terminally ill' (see Appendix 5 for the posters). Through the posters that were seen all over train stations and bus stops in The Netherlands, they were trying to raise awareness of the fact that prematurely stepping out of the life of someone who is terminally ill is unnecessary. Even though the images are very confronting and undoubtedly meant to provoke a certain reaction from the bystanders, the message was unavoidable to anyone who came in contact with it.

SIRE would be the ideal and primary organization to approach with this concept. Through this research, it has been shown that VBA is still a controversial topic that needs to be put into a different light. The fact that job opportunities and futures are potentially on the line because of a choice someone makes about their own body is cause for concern. SIRE is not a commercial company and works mainly with volunteers (i.e. all the designers, photographers, writers are doing it on a voluntary basis). So by getting together a group of talented people who are equally passionate about this subject, a detailed media strategy, built on the research done in this paper, can be developed and pitched to SIRE. One way of getting these volunteers could be to approach universities with media specializations (i.e. International Communication and Media and/or Communicatie en Media Design at the University of Applied Sciences in Utrecht) (HU).

Another goal could be to design a campaign to raise awareness of this problem on a larger scale, rather than target the BB/Gen-X audience directly. Next to SIRE, there are many nonprofit organizations that target social issues within society. There are nonprofit organizations dedicated to i.e. discrimination against different ethnicities, sexual orientation and sexism. The biggest challenge here will be convincing these organizations (and the target audience) that (indirect) discrimination against Millennials with VBA who are being negatively



perceived by a certain group within society is part of a larger social issue. Being unaccepting of who someone is, despite the choices they make about their body should always be addressed and respected. The Netherlands should be a place where anyone can be himself or herself without getting treated differently for their choices.

However, a media strategy could be carried out without the help of organizations as well. Nowadays there are many options of getting a message across without the financial help of organizations. Even though the reach will not be as wide if it is done through personal channels rather than media channels, inspiring just one person to have a change of heart is a step forward. Media such as Weblogs, YouTube and Facebook provide a platform where creativity can thrive at virtually no cost. Getting a message across on these platforms requires dedication, persistence and confidence in the message. There are many campaigns that have gone viral due to persistence and conviction. A perfect example is the 'Zwarte Piet is Racisme' debate that went viral December 2013⁵. Turns out that one student wrote their thesis about this topic 5/6 years ago and has been challenging the statement on every social media for years until it became as viral as it did in 2013 (Terborg, personal communication). This student persisted and all it took was a few people to share his view before it became national news. Even though it has been proven that BB/Gen-X are not equally active on social media as traditional media, a similar tactic could work for this topic. Using a statement that will provoke a reaction and start a discussion has become simple with the reach of social media. With that said, in the near future the author of this dissertation will challenge this and continue with this research, apart from any ties to the HU.

7.2. Campaign ideas

There are many ideas for campaigns that can be built on the research done in this dissertation. By combining the information of BB/Gen-X's media use with what they like to see in the media, a few campaign ideas can be formulated, targeted at their needs. These ideas are largely inspired by the reaction-provoking ideas seen by SIRE.

1. Bringing 'the issue' close to home. By using Dutch Millennials or people that the average Dutch BB/Gen-X can relate to (blonde, blue eyes / brunette, brown eyes) in a family situation (eating dinner, watching TV with their parents or grandparents), but adding VBA will show that VBA does not change who a person is, it merely alters the outer appearance. The tagline of this campaign will be something along the lines of: 'lichaamsversiering is maar versiering' (translation: 'body art is just art'). The

⁵ Sinterklaas is a traditional holiday celebrated in The Netherlands and the Dutch Caribbean. In December 2013, the discussion that Sinterklaas' helpers (who wear blackface) were racist got an overwhelming media response. The biggest newspapers and television stations in The Netherlands covered it, opinion programs revolved around it, there were protests- it was impossibly inevitable to anyone who lived in The Netherlands.



message will imply that VBA should not/does not play the dominant role in a person's life. This could be applied to a television commercial, but will have the biggest impact as posters and other print media placed all over The Netherlands.

2. Showing tattoo culture from all around the world in a positive light. The target audience has been shown to enjoy traveling and travel websites (as concluded by a study from the BKC in 2013). By combining their love for traveling with the meaning of VBA from all different countries, the beauty and culture of one country will be intrinsically linked to this culture's meaning behind VBA. In Africa VBA has a different connotation than in America, and highlighting these differences in culture and tradition might not only intrigue the audience to visit this specific place, but also to see VBA in a different light. This would be done in a documentary style with supporting print media. This could be done in collaboration with travel agencies and/or airlines to promote traveling and diversity. The information will be provided through experts in the field of culture and history of that specific country as to make it as informative as entertaining.
3. Showing Millennials with VBA doing something positive for the community and/or doing everyday things. This will humanize VBA and put it in a positive light. Displaying acts such as helping an old lady cross the street, doing community service or even simple acts such as walking their dog can bring across a positive (or even neutral) message. This could be done in the form of posters and commercials.
4. Simple, but effective and the most plausible: starting a discussion on social media. It has been proven that humans process visual information much faster than text. So using visual content instead of words to invite consumers into the story, as suggested by the previous three campaign ideas, is highly advised (Edwards, 2013, para. 8). However, social media is gaining power over the masses from all age groups. Taking a page out of the 'Zwarte Piet is Racisme' handbook; sometimes it merely takes sharing the message with the right audience for it to go viral. Dedicating a video and blog post to this topic and sharing it on all social media channels could get the desired response. Creating a documentary also does not take more than a few willing participants, a video camera and the conviction that it will inspire change.

There are countless ways to get the message across. It is just a matter of persistence, dedication and confidence in the message and its intent.



7.3. Recommendation for future research

Due to the voluntary time constraint, some elements of the research had to be assumed rather than based on verifiable facts. For future research, getting into the VBA 'scene' and finding out what Millennials with VBA are really like through qualitative research will prove (or disprove) that they have what it takes to carry the future of this and every progressive society in a positive direction. By visiting various tattoo shops all over the country and interviewing as many members as possible (including tattoo artists and those coming to support the ones getting tattooed) in each tattoo shop over the course of a week, a decent idea can be formed in half a year or less of how the VBA group truly is.

Secondly, getting a larger sample of the BB/Gen-X target audience will further verify if there is a need for such a strategy, or if there is already a widespread acceptance of Millennials with VBA. This research is based on a small sample of Dutch society so it is not definitive. In that same vein, another idea is to narrow down the scope. Focusing on the biggest cities of the Netherlands versus the smallest ones and comparing their views can provide some interesting data. Is there a difference in how small-town folk look at VBA versus people from urban areas, such as Amsterdam and Utrecht? That way, a media strategy can be specifically targeted and designed for one group within The Netherlands.

What could also largely benefit any kind of campaign targeted at this specific audience is to research their response to popular media campaigns and find out which one they respond to most. Campaigns in the list of '40 Of The Most Powerful Social Issue Ads That'll Make You Stop And Think' (BoredPanda, 2013). By finding out what kind of social issue ad they respond to most, it could be used as inspiration for a campaign. An example:



Source: Advertising Agency: Publicis Conseil, Paris, France



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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 – QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE MEDIA AND VISIBLE BODY ART (± 4 minutes)

Dear Sir or Madam,

My name is Thelea Terborg and I am in my 4th year HBO (International Communication and Media). I am currently researching the influence of the media on the perception of people with visible body art (VBA).

What is your view on people with visible body art? I would really appreciate your help by filling in the following 13 questions. With this research I hope to gain more insight in how people's perception of VBA is developed.

For the purpose of this questionnaire, VBA refers to tattoos and piercings on visible body parts such as feet, legs, arms, hands, neck and face.

Questions about you and the media:

1. Do you have any visible body art?
 - A. Yes, in my ears
 - B. Yes, elsewhere
 - C. Yes, I have a tattoo
 - D. None

 2. Could you describe your view on VBA in 3 words?
-
3. Has your image of VBA changed in the past 10 years?
 - A. Yes
 - B. No
 - C. A little

 4. In what way have media contributed to your view on VBA?
 - A. Strongly
 - B. Moderately
 - C. Not at all
 - D. I don't know

5. Which media do you use and how often? (More than one answer possible)

	Daily	A few times a week	Every once in a while	Yearly	Not at all
Newspaper					
Television					
Social media					
Magazines					
Radio					

If you answered "every day" or "almost every day" at the previous question. Can you specify with some examples? I.e. Volkskrant, Telegraaf etc.

6. What do you use these media for? (More than one answer possible)

	Newspaper	Television	Social media	Magazines	Radio	Other
Entertainment						
Business						
Hobbies						
Development						
Sport						
Arts						
Other						

Please state your opinion on the following statements:

7. Visible tattoos in professional fields are unprofessional.
- A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neutral
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree
8. I don't believe employers should take into consideration whether or not interviewees have tattoos during the interview process.
- A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neutral
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree
9. The media has contributed to my view on VBA.
- A. Strongly agree
B. Agree
C. Neutral
D. Disagree
E. Strongly disagree

10. I don't have a problem with family members who have VBA (i.e. neck/arm tattoos, lip/nose piercings)
- A. Strongly agree
 - B. Agree
 - C. Neutral
 - D. Disagree
 - E. Strongly disagree

11. How professional / credible are the following 4 people with VBA?

a.



- A. Very professional
- B. Professional
- C. Neutral
- D. Unprofessional
- E. Very unprofessional

b.



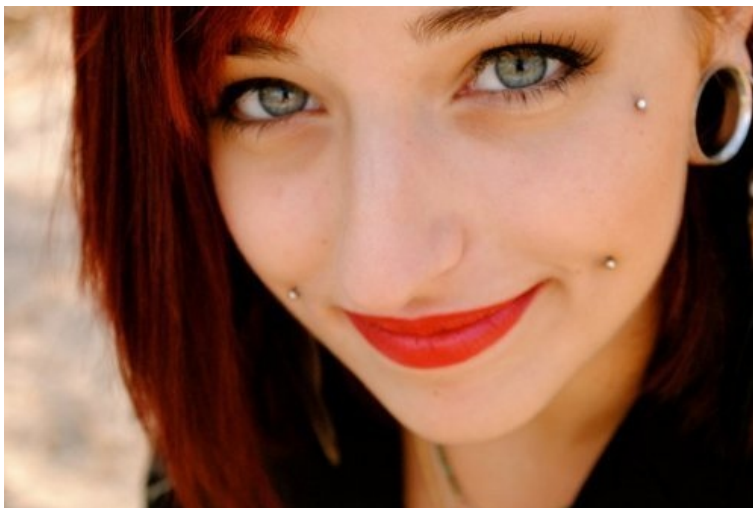
- A. Very professional
- B. Professional
- C. Neutral
- D. Unprofessional
- E. Very unprofessional

c.



- A. Very professional
- B. Professional
- C. Neutral
- D. Unprofessional
- E. Very unprofessional

d.



- A. Very professional
- B. Professional
- C. Neutral
- D. Unprofessional
- E. Very unprofessional

Persoonlijke informatie

12. Gender

- A. Male
- B. Female

13. Age

- A. 24-30
- B. 31-40
- C. 41-50
- D. 51-60
- E. >61

14. Highest level of education

- A. VMBO
- B. HAVO / VWO
- C. MBO
- D. HBO
- E. University
- F. PhD

15. Cultural background

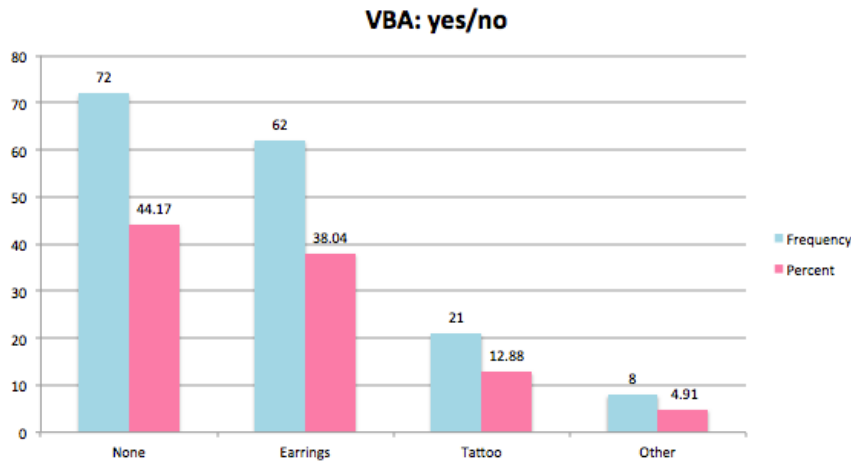
- A. Dutch
- B. Belgian
- C. Caribbean
- D. Other,
namelijk_____

Finally: would you be willing to participate in a group discussion where views on VBA will be further discussed? If so, please contact me at thelea.terborg@student.hu.nl

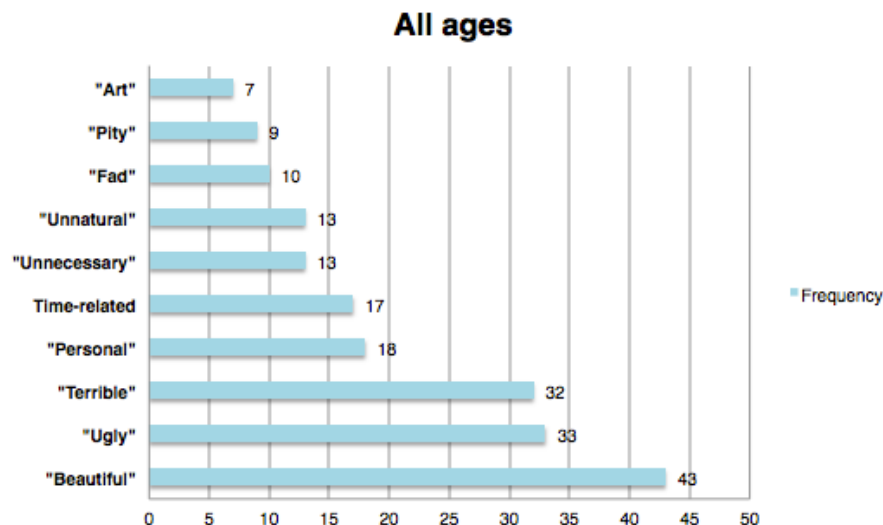
My infinite gratitude for participating in the questionnaire!

APPENDIX 2 – QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. Do you have any visible body art?



2. Could you describe your view on VBA in 3 words?



General conclusion top 10 frequently used terms

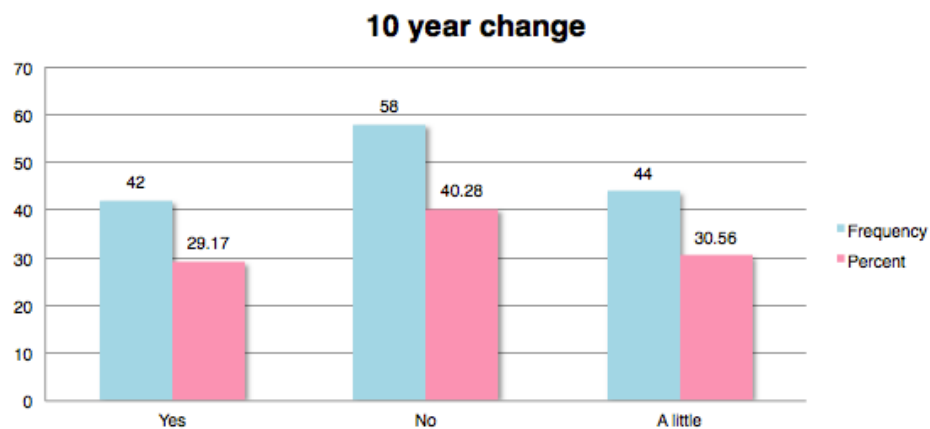
Out of the 144 respondents of the questionnaire, there were a total of 395 terms collected for the question “**Could you describe your view on VBA in 3 words?**” Out of these 395 terms, 195 (49,37%) could be grouped into ten categories (in order of most used- please refer to figure 1 for more elaborate information):

1. Varieties of the term ‘beautiful’- including ‘tasteful’ / ‘graceful’ / ‘striking’
2. ‘Ugly’
3. Varieties of the term ‘terrible’- including ‘horrible’ / ‘distasteful’ / ‘damaging’ / ‘revulsive’ / ‘disfiguring’ / ‘repellent’ / ‘mutilation’
4. Varieties of the term ‘personal’- including ‘identity’ / ‘own choice’ / ‘individual’

5. Varieties of time-related terms, such as 'future' / 'permanent' / 'irreversible' / 'determinative' / 'time-bound' / 'forever'
6. Varieties of the term 'unnecessary'- including 'superfluous'
7. Varieties of the term 'unnatural'- including 'unhealthy'
8. Varieties of the term 'fad'- including 'modern' / 'common' / 'topical' / 'stylish' / 'fashion' / 'hype'
9. 'Pity'
10. 'Art'

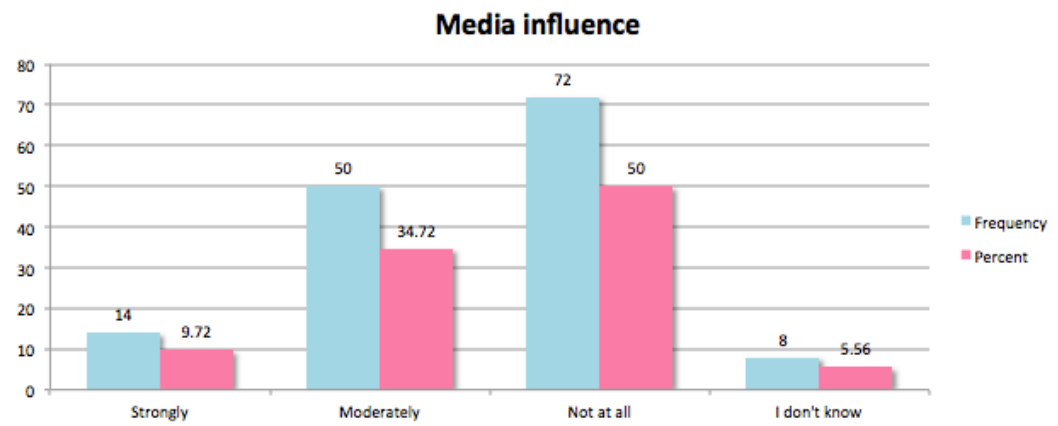
The reason these terms are grouped together is because they are either synonymous or similar in their definition and expression. For example⁶, beautiful is defined as 'pleasing the senses or mind aesthetically'; tasteful is defined as 'showing good aesthetic judgment or appropriate behavior'; graceful is defined as: 'characterized by elegance or beauty of form'; striking is defined as 'attractive; impressive'. All of these terms have aesthetics in their precedential definition.

3. Has your image of VBA changed in the past 10 years?

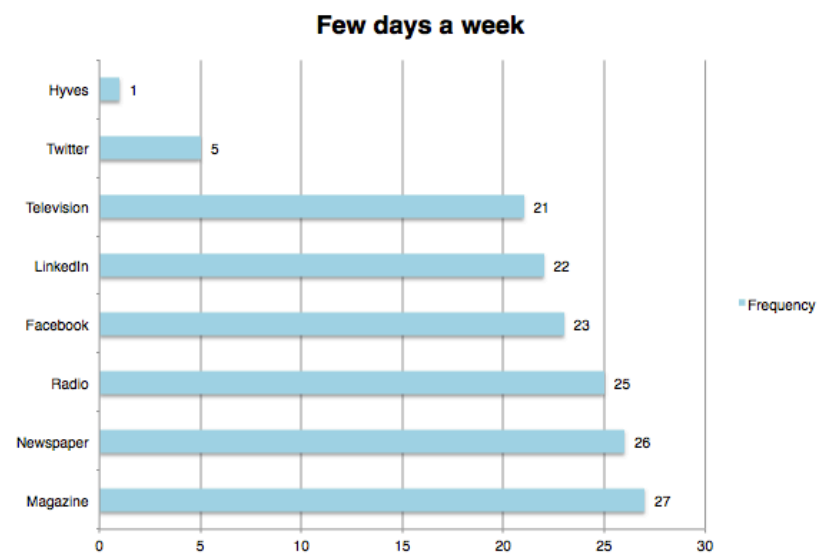
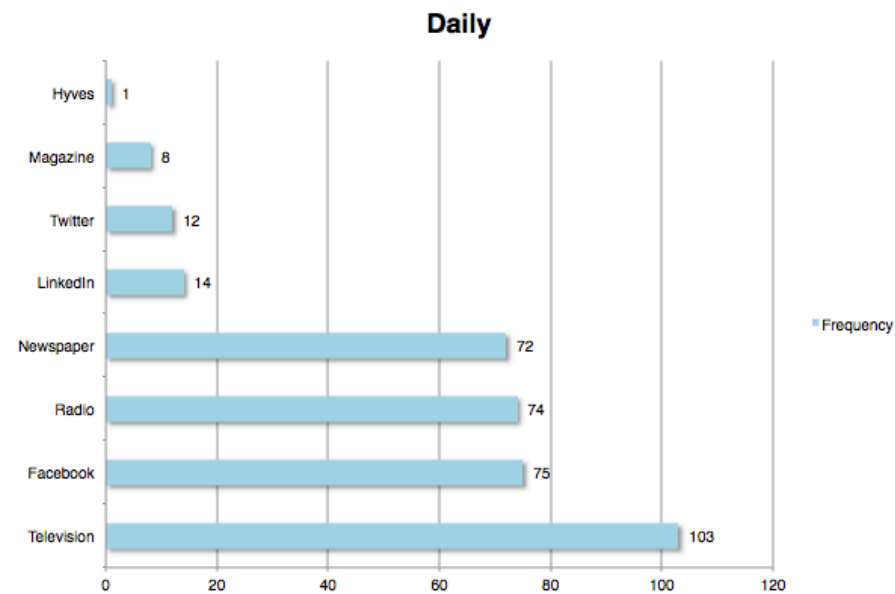


⁶ As defined by Google Dictionary and Dictionary.com, referred to on May 13, 2014

4. In what way have media contributed to your view on VBA?

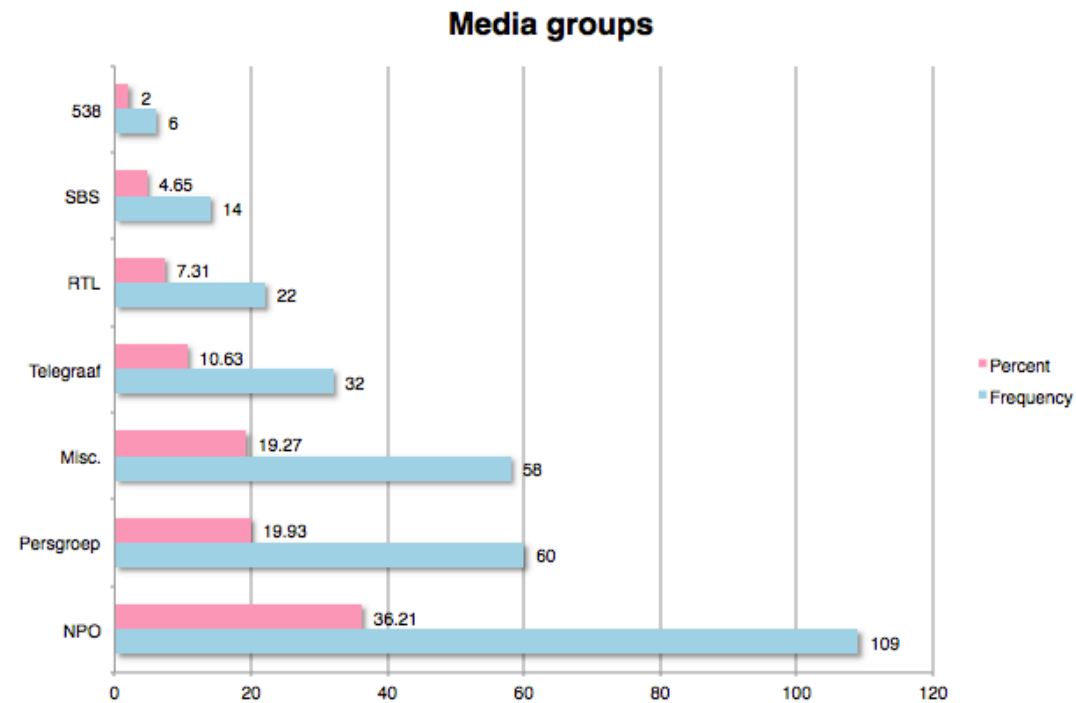


5. Which media do you use and how often?

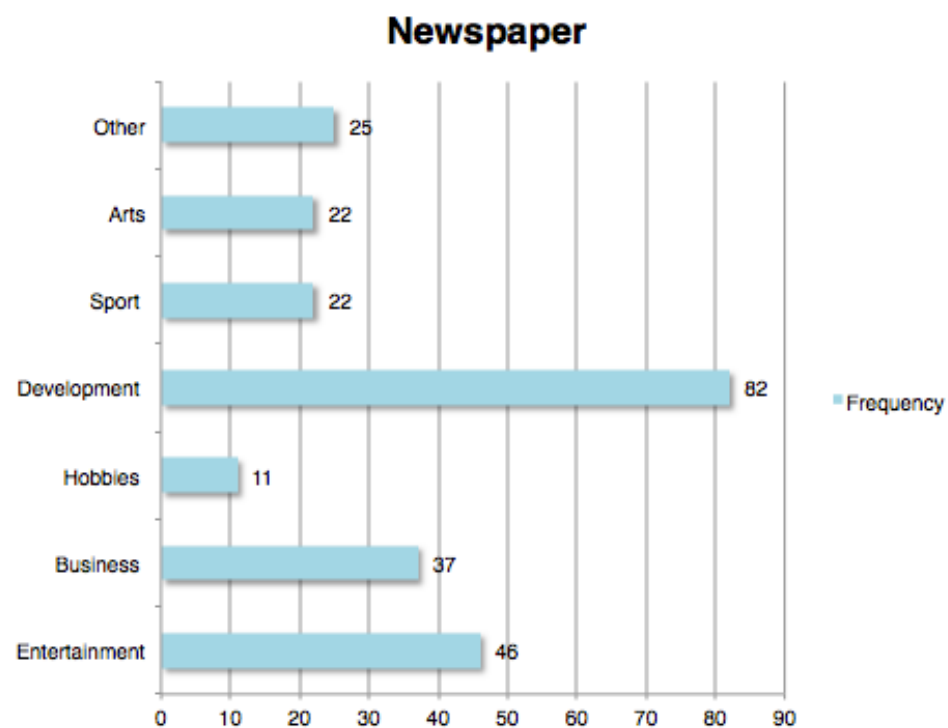


6. If you answered “every day” or “almost every day” at the previous question. Can you specify with some examples? I.e. Volkskrant, Telegraaf etc.

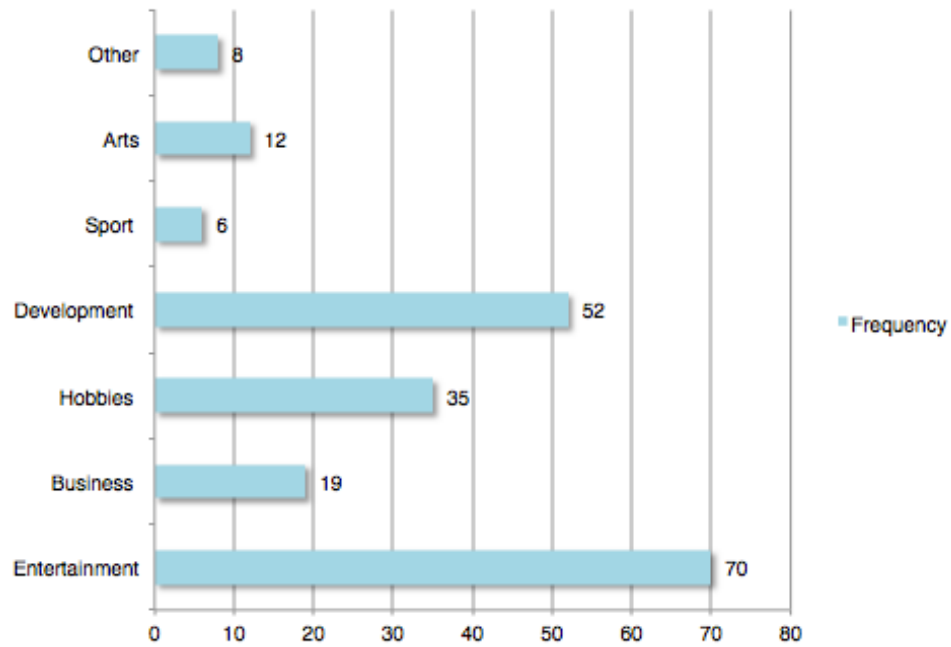
This question was removed from data analysis due to irrelevancy.



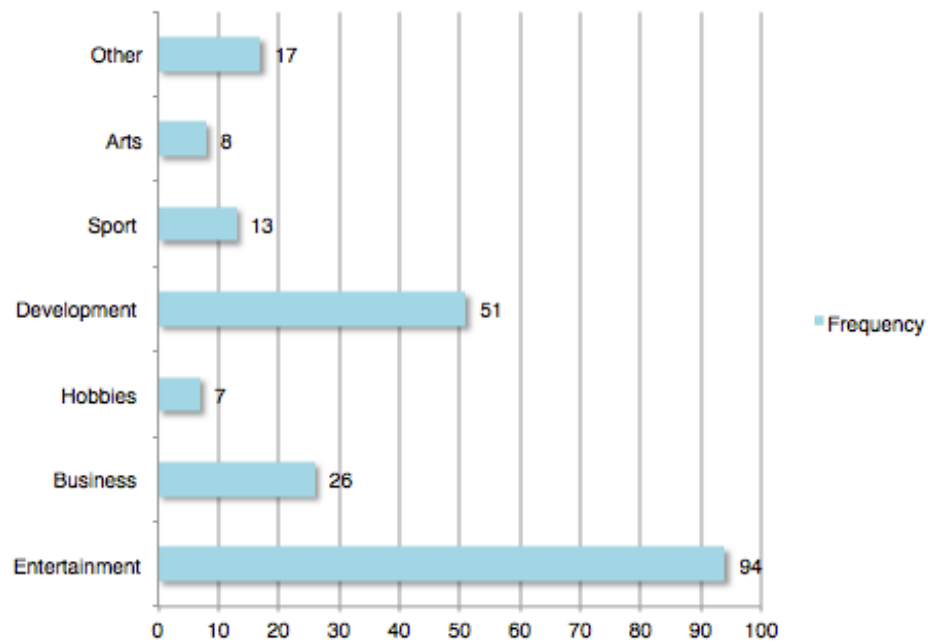
7. What do you use these media for? (Choose as many as you want for each)



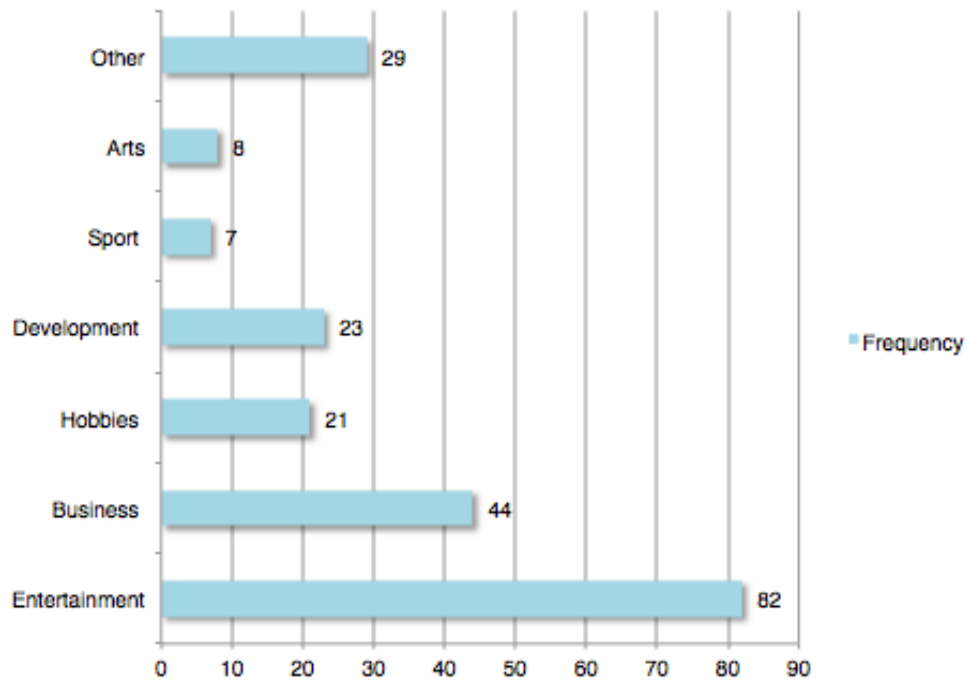
Magazines



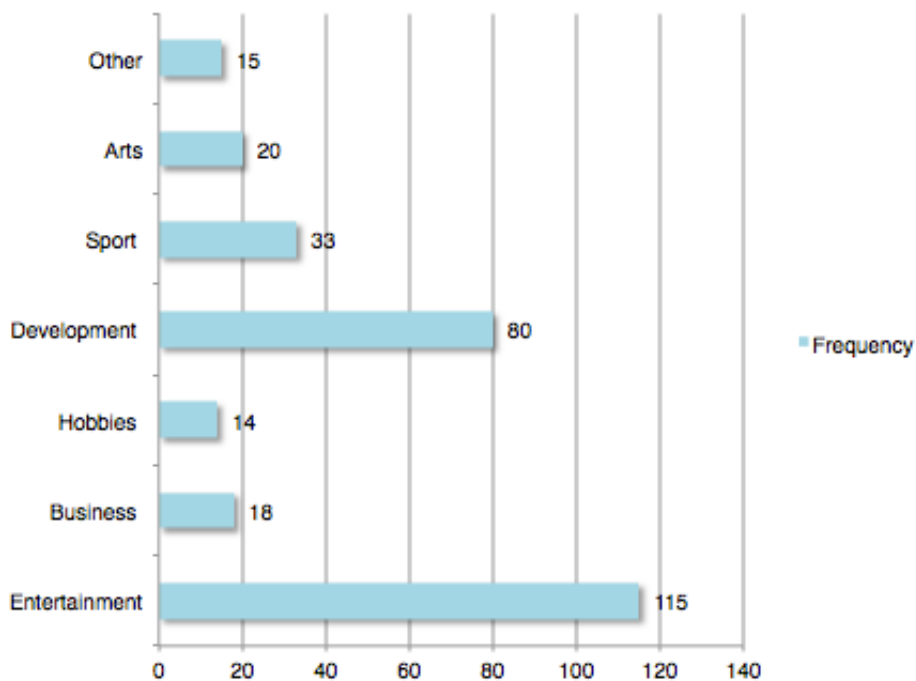
Radio



Social media

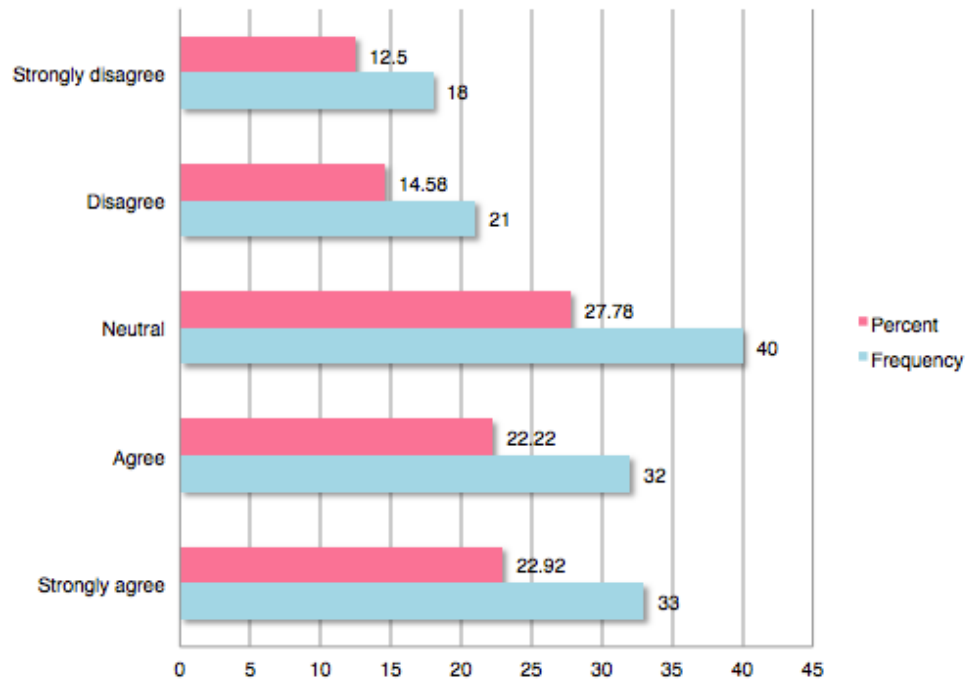


Television

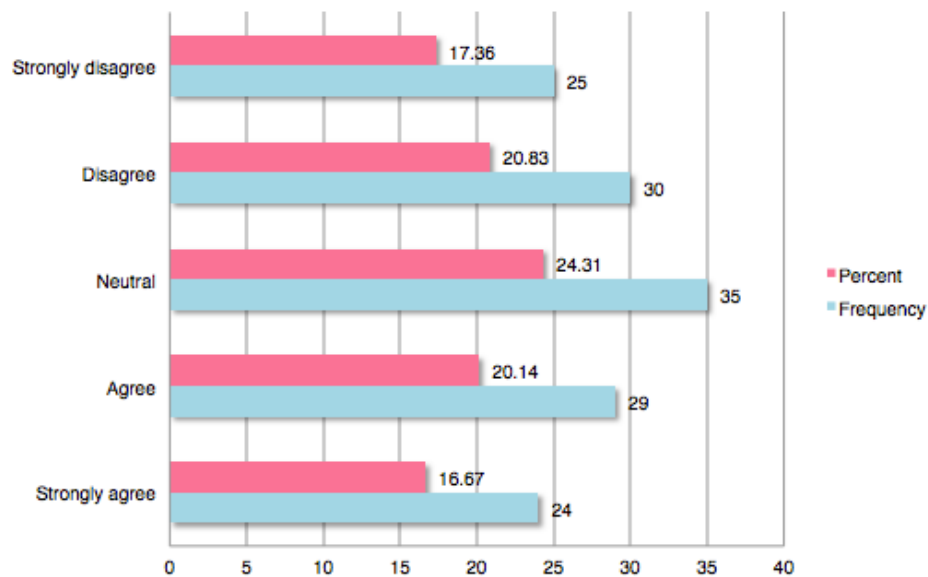


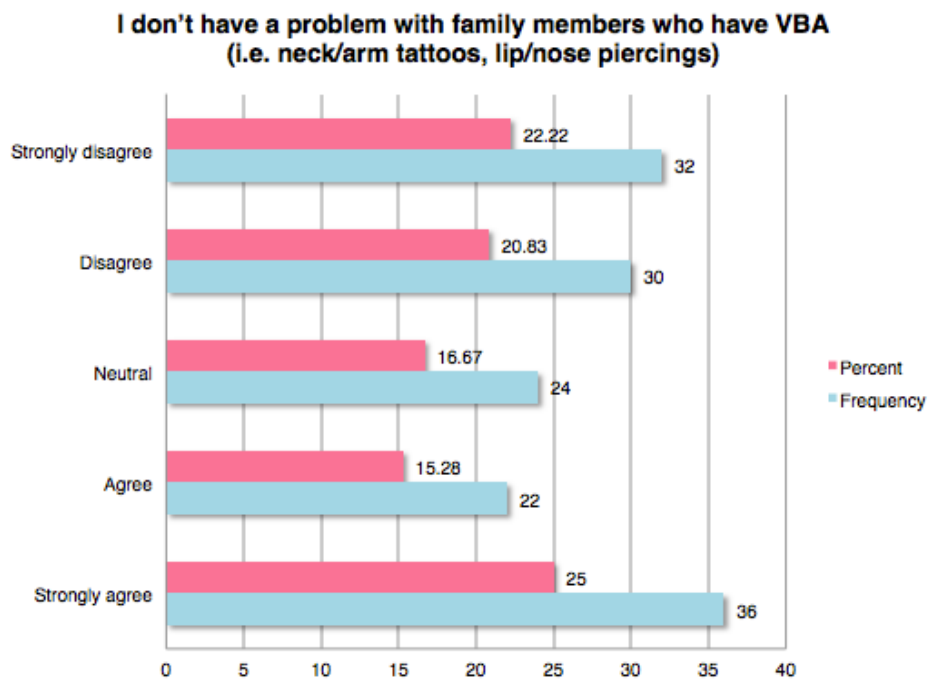
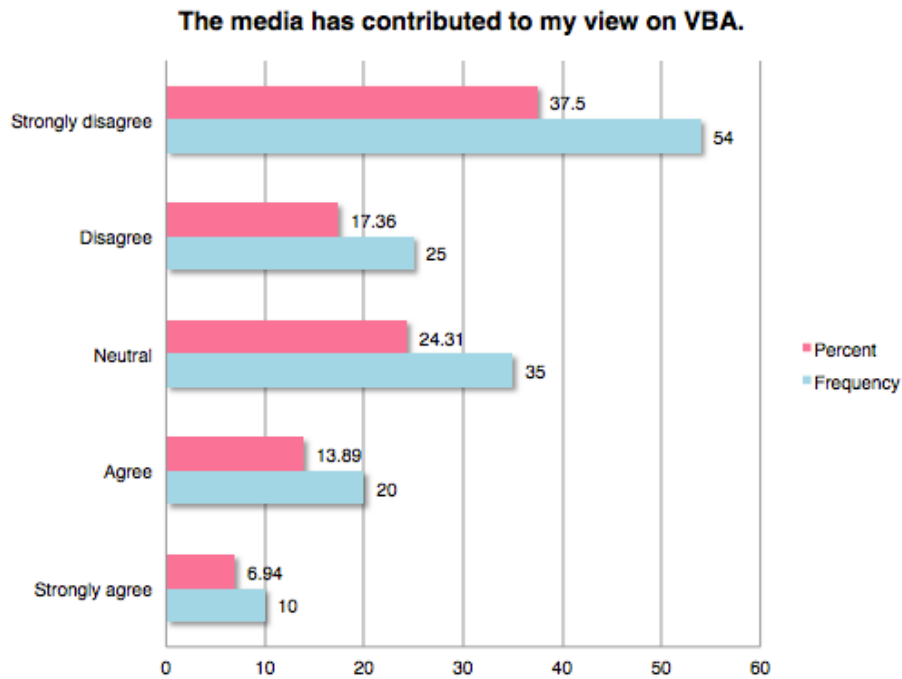
8. Please give your opinion on the following statements:

Visible tattoos in professional fields are unprofessional.



I don't believe employers should take into consideration whether or not interviewees have tattoos during the interview process.





9-12. How professional / credible are the following 4 people with VBA?

Image 1

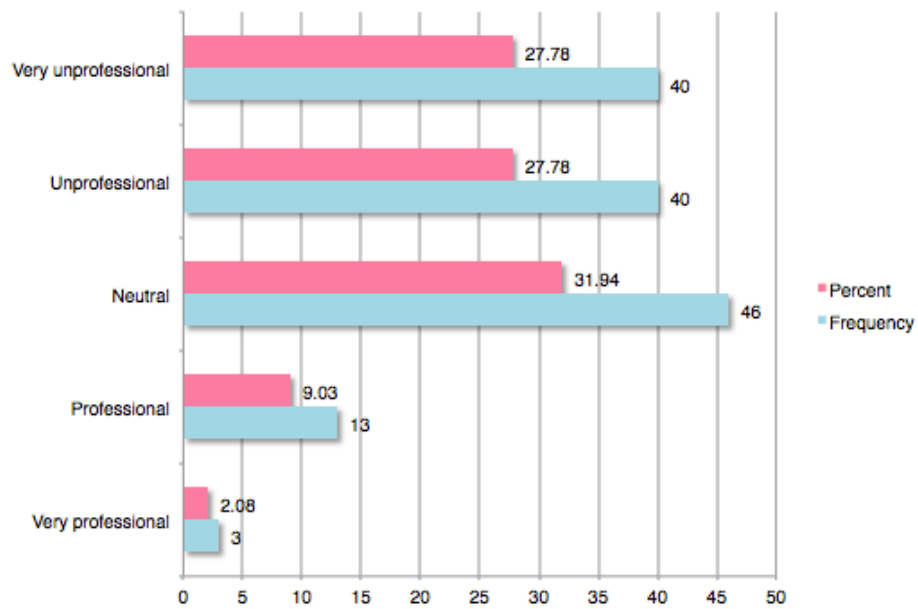


Image 2

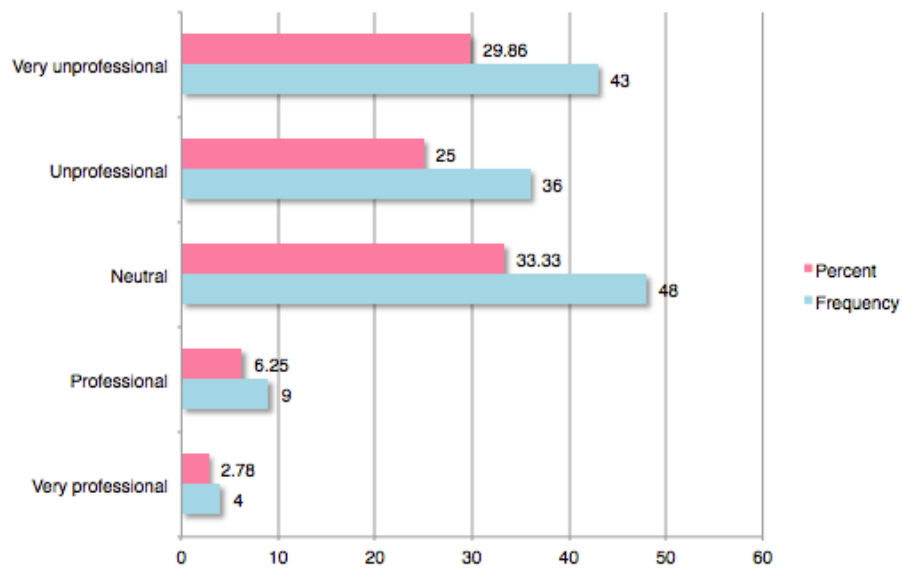


Image 3

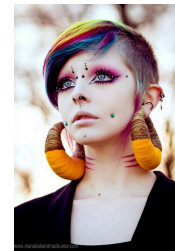
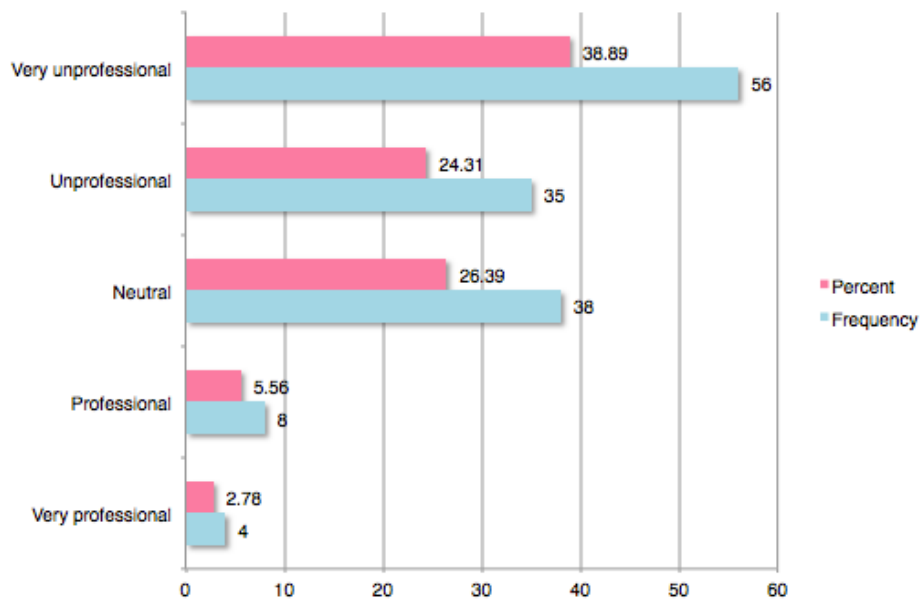
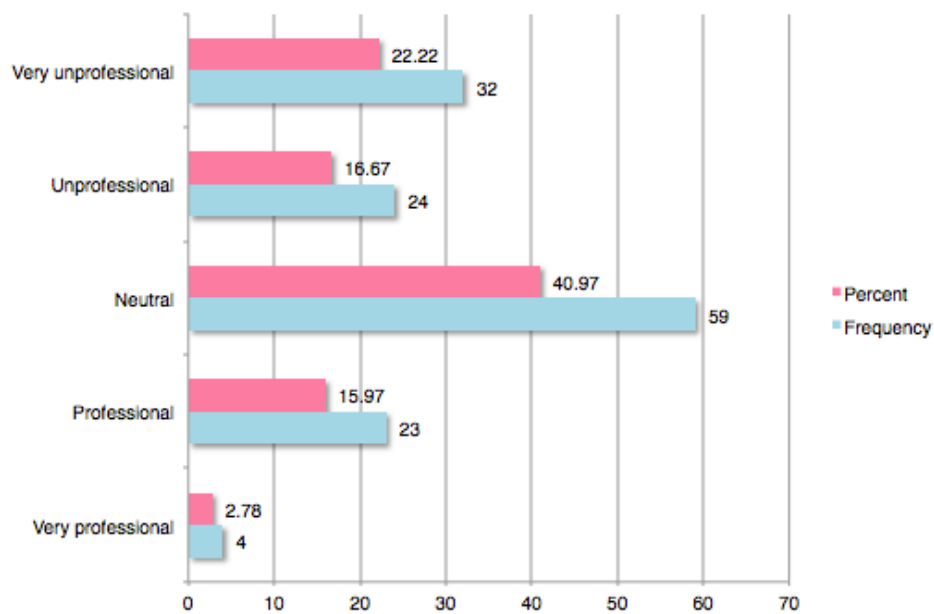
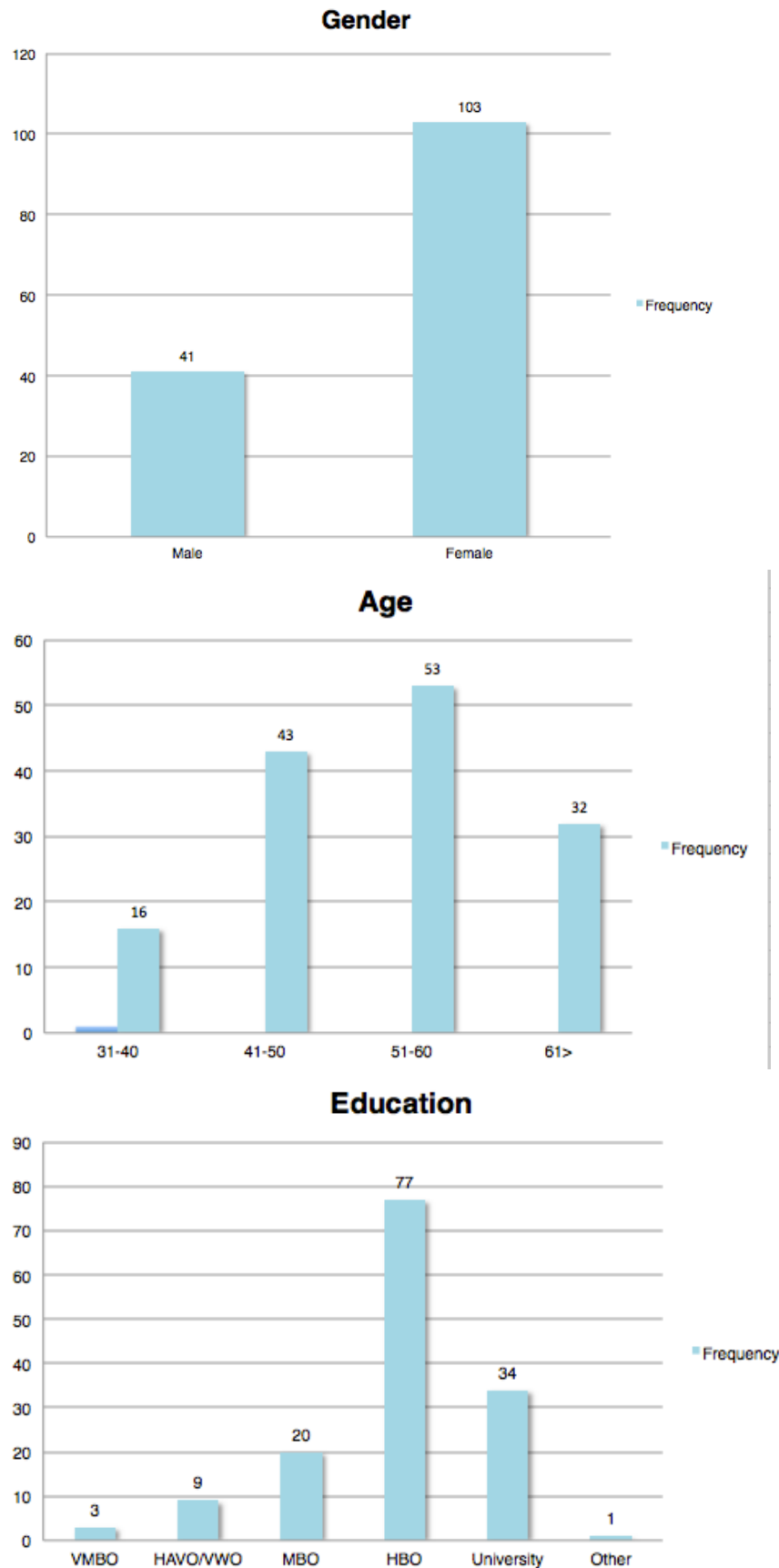


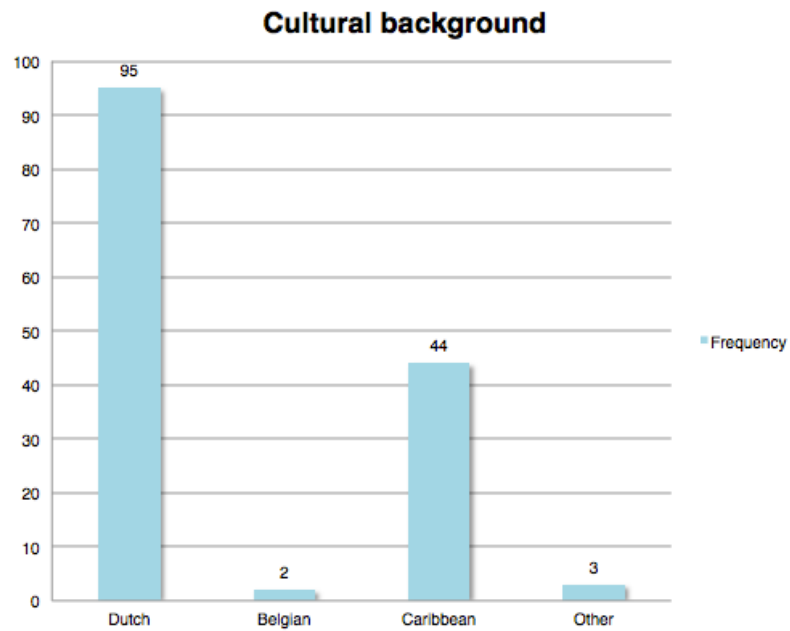
Image 4



Demographics



16. Cultural background



APPENDIX 3 – INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

3.1. Interviews VBA community

Bo Simon (BS) / Erik de Haan (EDH) @ Papanatos, Den Haag

[Audio link to the interview](#)

1. Age / gender / employment status

BS: 21 / EDH: 39

BS: Female / EDH: male

BS: Employed at a coffee shop in the Hague /

EDH: Employed as a tattoo artist at Papanatos Tattoo Den Haag

2. How old were you when you got your first tattoo?

BS: 18

EDH: 26

3. What inspired/drove you to put tattoos at all?

EDH: I think I always wanted a tattoo, but I wanted a big one instead of the small ones everyone had. And I was waiting for a tattoo artist whose work I really liked so that he could make a design that he liked and I liked. That way you know it's going to be cool. It took a while to find the right artist, because only in the last ten or fifteen years has tattoo art really developed into something crazy. Being an artist myself and having studied at an art academy made me extra critical.

BS: My dad was in a biker crew so ever since I was a little girl I've been around people with tattoos. I always thought they were fascinating and painted on them as a little kid. I think I was about 12 when I realized I wanted what they had. My dad gave me permission, but asked to wait until I was 18. So a few weeks after I turned 18, I got a heart tattooed that I drew for my grandmother who had survived her 4th heart attack. I have a list of things I would like to get tattooed, but it costs quite a bit of money so I usually get them around birthdays or Christmas or when an international tattoo artists comes into town for a short period of time.

4. How does having them make you feel?

BS: They make me happy. I like looking at my body after a tattoo and I look at myself in the mirror way more often now. It's basically art that you're carrying around with you everywhere you go. It's just like scrolling through Instagram and seeing all these beautiful images... In our case it's just on our bodies. And behind every tattoo there is a memory. You always remember the day you put it, what you were feeling, who you were with.

EDH: I just do it for myself. Some people get tattoos because they think they will look more like this or that soccer player who has them, but to me it's more about the fact

that I am collecting something. Every tattoo artist has his or her own autograph and it's fun to be collecting all these different pieces from all these different people.

5. Do you feel like people treat you differently when they see your tattoos?

BS: It depends on the people. Like for example, I was at a party the other day where some high school students teased me about my tattoos. I got really uncomfortable, but also felt a sense of pride about having them. People also tend to just grab my arm or my foot to look at them or ask "why in god's name would you put that on your neck?". I enjoy it, but it sucks when I get pulled out of lines at airports. That happened in Albania and they emptied my suitcase. It then occurred to me that it's probably not normal to have tattoos in their culture.

EDH: People without tattoos usually have something to say. They are quick to jump to conclusions and usually ask why I would do this. However, if it were the other way around, I would never go up to someone and ask why they *don't* have tattoos. A lot of people think it's a pity that we have them and sometimes the way people judge tattooed people is a type of bullying. It doesn't happen to me often, because I usually cover them up due to the cold weather in the Netherlands, but when I don't cover them up at airports, I usually get pulled aside. That happened in India, for example.

6. Would you leave your tattoos exposed for a job interview?

BS: Absolutely. I want to get many more tattoos in the future and I just don't want to work at a place where I can't have them. I have never been turned down for a job and had about 3 or 4 different jobs in the service industry. You just have to know where to go, I won't be going to a Hilton for example. Hiding them makes no sense, because they will find out about them eventually and you will be the one who comes across dishonest. I understand that in some industries it's unacceptable, but the policy at Starbucks (where) is ridiculous. Should it *really* matter what someone has on their body? I've thought about it long and hard and I've just never had the ambition to be successful in any way that required me not to have tattoos. And even if it does happen, I'll just have to be accepted for who I am. It's just skin, the way someone looks, it says nothing about who they are. And the people who think otherwise are idiots.

EDH: Absolutely. You have no other choice. I would rather be up front about it immediately than later hear: "oh... you have tattoos?" I enjoy seeing people with tattoos and piercings at stores. It immediately gives them a unique kind of identity. In the United States tattoos are more integrated. You see cops with tattoos and in Australia there are even people at customs with full sleeves.

7. Does the media play a role in how tattoos and piercings are perceived? / What image do you think the media gives people w/ tats?

BS: Definitely. Especially now with TV shows like LA Ink or Tattoo Stories. I think that getting tattoos that are hyped up by the media end up being the ones that get removed later on.

EDH: I think so, yes. If Rihanna gets a new tattoo and it's in the media, everyone will want it. I find those TV shows horrible. It's a bad program that's trying to play "tattoo shop". And there always has to be a horrible story attached to every tattoo someone gets, but you can also get a tattoo, because it's awesome. And there is so much cutting and editing, so we never know what is truly being said. It doesn't give a good image of how tattooing is done, because it revolves around drama. Everything on TV revolves around drama. People never cry here in our shop, because it's an exciting experience and it should be fun. It is fun! But I will try to discourage people from getting tattoos that are hyped up by the media, especially if it's an 18 year old who wants a neck or finger tattoo. Look, even if you end up wanting a job where tattoos are not allowed, you will just have to work harder for it. I see it as something positive, because you'll be bettering yourself and your skills.

8. Do you see a difference in how different generations treat you?

BS: Sometimes, like those high school students for example. I got teased when I was younger so it affected me. But on the other hand, it also serves as a filter. People that judge me based on my tattoos or who ask inappropriate questions immediately get filtered out as people I don't want to have a conversation with in the first place.

EDH: And then you have the older generation. They've had a different life and I can imagine being that age and seeing all these kids with devils and skulls tattooed... My parents don't like my tattoos. My dad thinks I look like a criminal, but we have a sense of humor about it. It's just a different generation. Then it was easy to say 'that person is a biker' or 'that person is a sailor'. In that time you could pay 10 cents to go to a circus and see someone who was fully tattooed. So imagine being 70 or 80 now. The new generation doesn't care, they're used to it. Maybe it will become popular not to have tattoos at all in the future. Look, everyone will judge. It just depends on how you deal with it. If you are open to me, I will be open to you.

9. Do you feel part of a community?

EDH: If I see someone with tattoos, I tend to think "that looks good" or I'll recognize that particular artist's work. It does depend on the kind of tattoo though. If it's one of those prison tattoos, I won't talk to them as easily.

BS: I do enjoy talking to people who have tattoos. If I am in the train and I see someone sitting in front of me with a tattoo, I have the tendency to start talking to them. It's just an easy way to start a conversation. But, yes, it does depend on the kind of tattoo, but even if I see someone with prison tattoos I would love to know the story behind it.

Interview 2: Anonymous @ Papanatos, Den Haag

1. Age / gender / employment status

22 / male / works in the CV (heating) branch

2. How old were you when you got your first tattoo?

18

3. What inspired/drove you to put tattoos at all?

I have one small one on my shoulders that goes to a bigger one on my back. I thought it looked nice and I really wanted it for a long time.

4. How does having them make you feel?

It doesn't really make me feel any differently- it's just about what you like. It's like buying new clothes that make you look good. You don't feel any different, but you like the feeling. It's some kind of satisfaction.

5. Do you feel like people treat you differently when they see your tattoos?

No, because they usually don't see them. I work somewhere where they are always covered, because we go into people's homes a lot. However, some of my colleagues have their entire arms tattooed and it doesn't matter. My boss doesn't mind them at all. They are usually caught off guard, but I don't get treated any differently.

6. Would you leave your tattoos exposed for a job interview?

No, I would hide them. To exclude the possibility that it matters. It's not like you're a different person if you have a tattoo, it's just something on your skin. It shouldn't matter, but I would hide them for old-fashioned people. Nowadays it doesn't matter.

7. Does the media play a role in how tattoos and piercings are perceived? / What image do you think the media gives people w/ tats?

Yes, nowadays it doesn't matter anymore. A lot of artists and celebrities have tattoos. It happens way more often so more people see it so it becomes more acceptable. Also, some people just don't want tattoos and that's also fine. I don't feel like there is any tension between people with tattoos and people without.

8. Do you see a difference in how different generations treat you?

The younger generation, not at all, but I only notice it with the older generation- like my grandmother's generation. She doesn't like them at all and finds it a waste, but most of the people around me like them. My dad doesn't mind, but my mom doesn't like them or the way they look. It's just not her taste.

9. Do you feel part of a community?

No, not really. If someone has a nice tattoo it's a good conversation starter. You do share an experience, but that's about it. It's just a nice way to start a conversation.

3.2. Interview BB/Gen-X

Interview 3: Babette Veilinga / 39 / WO / Dutch

[Audio link to the interview](#)

1. What is your current view on VBA?

Some things look good and others don't. I don't like it when people are covered, like Ben Saunders or Kat Von D, they're taking it a bit too far. Plus you limit yourself. They can only do what they're doing now. However, it's really different when it comes to a work environment. On the beach I can enjoy someone's tattoo, but in the office you can't get away with it. In the past, only the Hell's Angels or prisoners and sailors had tattoos. You would never see a tattoo at the office. There are also a lot of programs about tattoos and other body art now. Everyone has earrings, but a nose piercing or a tongue piercing is already a bit controversial or exciting. If I would get one, I would get it in an unnoticeable place, but tattoos are just so permanent. For all you know, you'll hate it later in life like when tribal designs were popular when I was 16 or so. A lot of people follow the trend, but in 6 years you might hate it.

Tattoos definitely negatively influence how I look at younger people and my perception of them. It's a choice that decides what you are going to do for the rest of your life, it can limit your possibilities later in life and I don't think it's a smart decision. I know the embassy, for example, would never hire anyone with VBA. That can change, of course, but we're not there yet. I don't think having VBA says anything about the kind of person you are or how capable or smart you are at your job.

2. Has your view on people with VBA changed over the last 10 years?

Yes, definitely.

3. How has it changed (past versus present view) and what is the biggest reason for this change?

When I was growing up, tattoos were a big no-no. I could do whatever I wanted after I turned 18, but at the time I wasn't allowed to have anything at all, even though I wasn't raised religiously or anything. I was happy enough I could have earrings. I don't really have any tattoos in the family though. My mother and her siblings were raised religiously and much stricter, so maybe they also raised me in a similar way. And I plan to raise my daughter the same way; when she turns 18 she could do whatever she wants, but until then I will definitely discourage her getting any kind of tattoo. I do think the media played the biggest role in this change. For example, Ben Saunders that wins the Voice of Holland or Miami Ink- it's in the media so it also becomes more normal. The more they show it in the media, the more normal it will become.

4. If you were sitting next to someone with VBA in the train, what are the chances you would start a conversation with them, versus someone without VBA?

I think there is a difference in how I would approach both. I would first look at the kind of person they are though- gender, how they present themselves. But in that case, tattoos are the first thing you see so it's a bit harder to look at how they are while someone without tattoos is easier to form an image about. Like if it's a man with a leather jacket, covered in tattoos I don't think I would talk to him as fast. But if it were Ben Saunders, for example, I would talk to him. He has such a positive attitude that I think he would be the one to start the conversation, but that's just his personality. Ultimately, I think it would be easier for me to talk to someone without VBA.

5. What role does the media play in your life? Do you base any of your choices on what you consume in the media / does it influence your opinion on issues, i.e.?

The media plays a very big role in my life- I watch television everyday. I watch the news and other TV programs and I'm on Facebook all day. It also influences my opinion in some ways. If I read some new fact somewhere, I am more prone to look up more about it. For example, on dr. Oz there was a segment about biological milk and why it's better. Now I only buy biological for my daughter. So it does influence my choices and behavior. Also, when there was 'the cucumber scandal' a few years ago where there was speculation that someone got sick from eating cucumbers, I bought fewer cucumbers. And I read something about palm oil recently, so I minimize that as much as I can. But if I see a nice commercial about some new product like peanut butter, I have the tendency to go out and get it immediately. I think that if I saw something about VBA on television, I would have more understanding for it, but I don't think it would change my perception. That happens over time, not immediately.

Interview 4: Ad Franzen / 59 / WO / Dutch

[Audiolink to interview](#)

1. Has your view on people with VBA changed over the last 10 years?

Yes.

2. How has it changed (past versus present view) and what is the biggest reason for this change?

When I was young, having tattoos meant you were either a sailor or there was something the matter with you. Only lower class people had tattoos so it was not appreciated at all. But at a specific moment it became a lot more popular and more people started getting piercings and tattoos so it became more visible in the day-to-day world. And that shows that it was more accepted in society. In the past, you were immediately put in some corner, but not anymore. And the people who say that the media did not influence this are wrong, because they can't think of the connection straight away. You see a lot of people on TV with tattoos or piercings so you cannot deny that it has a strong influence on the way that people look at it now.

For me, the biggest change is that a lot of people have tattoos nowadays and I have to set my mind differently. When I was raised, it had a negative image. But because of the media I see that a lot of people are using it so I had to change my opinion. You cannot pretend it's still negative, because that would mean that 3 quarters of the world has a negative image. There is some art in it now and the technique of tattooing has also improved a lot. But in some parts of society, like the business part, it is still a taboo. There was an ICM student who came into the course with a lot of VBA, but over the course of the years and work placements etcetera, he graduated without any of them. He saw that he had a bigger chance of getting where he wanted without all of that. In the business world you just don't see a lot of tattoos or earrings and piercings on men.

3. Has religion influenced the way you view VBA?

As a child I was brought up religiously, but my parents never connected body art to religion.

4. If you were sitting next to one of these people in the train, what are the chances you would start a conversation with them, versus someone without VBA?

I think the chances are equal, because sometimes it makes me curious. I could always ask if it was painful, because it gives you the opportunity to start a conversation based on this or "when did you decide to have your first one?" It doesn't say I don't want to talk to you. But if I get the impression that they are a hooligan or someone from a motor club, then I would be more careful, because you don't know if they will get mad for asking. I don't think having tattoos says something about the person, I am more curious as to why they have chosen for this. I have noticed that for young people it is a way to express themselves- to show that they are different.

5. What role does the media play in your life? Do you base any of your choices on what you consume in the media / does it influence your opinion on issues, i.e.?

Everyone is influenced by media and I think the biggest part is that you don't realize it, because there are tricky things that influence you. But by the shows that you watch, the news, and of course you don't like some commercials, but they make you hate some products, because the message that they send out is not attractive. Unless you have people who do not consume any media. They are probably the ones who are not influenced at all, because they shut off the media. I think the more simple you are as a person, the more influenced you are by media and by things like fashion and fads.

I always think about whether or not something is true, because I'm a researcher and I look at things from a different point of view. I do a lot of things with finding out if what I see is true or is it just what I see. And because I am critical about what I see, I don't immediately believe things. Whenever I see a message on TV, I wonder who is behind this message. Because there are so many conflicting messages in society, I don't follow trends. First I like to find out if it is of value for me, personally. I personally use the Internet when I want to buy an expensive product. I am willing to use experiences of other people, but I'm searching for them- if I want to know opinions, I will look for them. If people come to me and try to sell me something, I say that I'm not interested.

Interview 5: Ad van den Brekel / 62 / WO / Dutch

[Audiolink to interview](#)

1. Has your view on people with VBA changed over the last 10 years?

Yes.

2. How has it changed (past versus present view) and what is the biggest reason for this change?

I think my perception has changed, because you see it more often now. There are a lot more people with VBA and because of that it is now much more normal. And the media definitely plays a big role in this. I don't only see these people on the street, but also on TV and other media. There was a time when only seaman had tattoos so you immediately had a perception of that person, but now it has become so common that you can't know someone's background just because they have tattoos. But even seaman didn't have a negative image.

3. If you were sitting next to one of these people in the train, what are the chances you would start a conversation with them, versus someone without VBA?

I don't think I would differentiate it. I would talk to someone with VBA as much as a random person. I don't distance myself from people with VBA. It has become much more normal so I also experience it as something normal. If I were a manager, the only time I might differ from that opinion is if it were someone in a representative function (of work), I can imagine that it could be bothersome. But if it were a job where that doesn't play a role at all, I wouldn't worry about it at all.

4. What role does the media play in your life? Do you base any of your choices on what you consume in the media / does it influence your opinion on issues, i.e.?

If the media gives the reason for why I should change my behavior, I probably would. But if it were something serious I also assume I won't have to make that choice at all. So I do trust the news, even if I take it with a grain of salt. I wait for confirmation of other sources before committing to it. These other sources could be radio, TV, personal contacts, internet, Facebook. I am very brand loyal so my buying behavior will not easily change. But if the media does show that, for example, some huge issue about 3rd world countries, I will try to steer clear of it. I want to see facts.

Interview 6: Norbert van der Hulst / 42 / WO / Dutch

[Audiolink to interview](#)

1. Has your view on people with VBA changed over the last 10 years?

Yes.

2. How has it changed (past versus present view) and what is the biggest reason for this change?

It's changed, because you see it more often so it has become 'normal'. If something becomes normal, it changes your perception. At the same time, the people with VBA also have an image they want to bring across or a meaning behind it. Does that mean I'm more negative about it? No, not necessarily negative, but it's comparable to other people who want to bring across a certain image- like a burka. They don't only do it for themselves- it's a two-way communication. I do ask people with very obvious VBA if they have a message they want to bring across and it has come to my attention that they are not even conscious of this message. It really surprises me that someone would do something so drastic and not be conscious of the message and reaction they are provoking. When I was growing up, it wasn't around at all. I don't act differently towards people with VBA, be it positive or negative.

As for the media, I don't think it has played a big role in the change. It's more the people I have around me; I don't need the media to tell me who or what kind of person is now walking around with VBA. I work at a school where the people I see change every 4 years so I see enough people to know it has become more normal.

3. If you were sitting next to one of these people in the train, what are the chances you would start a conversation with them, versus someone without VBA?

There's a very big chance I would talk to someone with VBA. It has happened before where I approached someone with VBA to ask if they get a lot of reactions and why they would do it so drastically. I am just genuinely interested in the why. I can imagine that not everyone from my generation would be so open to it. In the past, people with tattoos were of the wrong crowd- they were either extremely conservative or extremely liberal. In the past it was easier to label people with tattoos. They were easier to identify as people you don't want to associate with. They were part of the most extreme crowds in society and now it's more acceptable. Even at the HU there are students walking around with tattoos so now it's penetrating through all the layers of society.

4. What role does the media play in your life? Do you base any of your choices on what you consume in the media / does it influence your opinion on issues, i.e.?

About this issue it doesn't play a role, but with other topics, for sure. I am on social media a lot where other societal issues play a bigger role. I do get influenced by the people I trust on social media, but on big issues I consult experts.

Interview 7: Janet den Ouden / 46 / MBO / Dutch

[Audiolink to interview](#)

1. Has your view on people with VBA changed over the last 10 years?

No. I am very steadfast. I don't really have a particular perception about it- it either looks good or it doesn't.

2. What is your experience with people with VBA? Where does your current image come from?

I grew up in a village where it didn't occur that often so I also didn't have any judgment about it. People need to decide for themselves what they do. I do have two cousins who have very big tattoos on their backs that I like. Other than that, in Amersfoort there is a man who is completely covered, but he is very sociable. So it's not that I have a prejudice opinion about it. I'm sure my work also has something to do with it. I have always had jobs where I had to be very social (working with disabled people, florist, administration) so you come across all kinds of characters. Nothing is weird anymore. I think 70% of people get their current image from how they were raised.

3. If you were sitting next to one of these people in the train, what are the chances you would start a conversation with them, versus someone without VBA?

It really doesn't matter to me whether or not someone has tattoos. Maybe we'll talk about it, but I treat everyone the same way.

4. What role does the media play in your life? Do you base any of your choices on what you consume in the media / does it influence your opinion on issues, i.e.?

Very big role! If I see a commercial about a new product and I happen to be in a store where I see the product, I'll buy it. Other than that, the media does not influence my opinion about issues. I am only partially influenced by the media. I am also not easily influenced by the people around me, unless they're experts.

Interview 8: Arina de Jager / 55 / WO / Dutch

[Audiolink to interview](#)

1. Has your view on people with VBA changed over the last 10 years?

Yes, I think so.

2. How has it changed (past versus present view) and what is the biggest reason for this change?

I have two kids of 18 and 20 and the oldest came back from Thailand with a tattoo. I did go into a discussion with him about it. I think after some time you can just get bored with it, but then you're stuck with it for the rest of your life. I have noticed that it's no longer special amongst younger people to get a tattoo. I also see it on TV a lot, like a lot of soccer players or sportsman and TV presenters. In the past having a tattoo was very unique and people with tattoos belonged to a certain social group. You were considered a bit lowbrow. I was not raised religiously so that doesn't play a role. I just had an association with seaman and road makers, for example. You barely saw anyone with tattoos at the time. Or women that have a rose at their chest, I find it ridiculous. It has something to do with manhandling your own body. I still really don't like them, but I no longer associate them with belonging to a certain social class.

3. If you were sitting next to one of these people in the train, what are the chances you would start a conversation with them, versus someone without VBA?

[after long deliberation] Maybe. I might ask someone who is fully covered how many more tattoos they want, for example. It's not like I would avoid sitting next to them. I do think there is more familiarity with people of my own generation, but I can also enjoy talking to someone of a different generation to see what people around them think of their VBA, like their mother or significant other. I do get confronted with people from 30+ who have tattoos so I ask them the same questions.

4. What role does the media play in your life? Do you base any of your choices on what you consume in the media / does it influence your opinion on issues, i.e.?

That's hard to say. I watch TV a lot so I see a lot of commercials, but I don't get influenced to buy new products by a nice commercial or anything. I only get influenced if I know for a fact that it is a good product, but I don't get easily influenced on issues. I do listen to warnings of experts though. However, I do trust the Volkskrant- if there is something written in there, I assume that it's the truth.

Interview 9: Nellie Ursem/ 55 / HBO / Dutch

[Audiolink to interview](#)

1. Has your view on people with VBA changed over the last 10 years?

No, I don't think so. VBA can be beautiful, but it can also be terrible. I don't personally find it beautiful, but if it fits someone's personality that's also fine. Ben Saunders, for example is a very open person so it fits him. But if you're an introvert I don't think you should be walking around with things like that. Everyone needs to decide for themselves what they do, but if I were to come across someone covered in tattoos in a dark alley, I would be intimidated. Those kinds of extreme tattoos I easily associate with, for example, Hell's Angels-type. I was raised religiously, but don't feel like that had any affect on how I view VBA. But my parents-in-law who were raised religiously find it horrible and do associate VBA with the lower class.

I think the thing that influences my perception of VBA is my kids. I have three kids with tattoos and they do play a big role in my perception of VBA. My daughter has "Made In Holland" in huge letters on her back. At the time, she was into a particular kind of scene where people could see the tattoo as something negative and be intimidated by her, but I know the kind of person she is. I've just always been open-minded and curious and want to know how people see themselves in society.

2. If you were sitting next to one of these people in the train, what are the chances you would start a conversation with them, versus someone without VBA?

That doesn't matter to me. It's more about their expression. I would probably even talk more to someone with VBA purely out of curiosity.

3. What role does the media play in your life? Do you base any of your choices on what you consume in the media / does it influence your opinion on issues, i.e.?

Not a big role, I think. I usually change the channel when I see a commercial, but if it's something I think I need I'll probably watch it. Also when it comes to issues I'm not that easily influenced. However, if there is something in the news about a food product that is no longer healthy, I will stop giving it to my grandchildren. When it comes to big issues, I will consult experts or scientific sources. There is so much in the media, you can't believe everything you see.

Interview 10: Yvonne van den Hoven/ 51 / MAVO / Dutch

[Audiolink to interview](#)

1. Has your view on people with VBA changed over the last 10 years?

My view hasn't changed, but I do find that you see it much more often now.

2. What is your experience with people with VBA? Where does your current image come from?

I find it a pity. Small tattoos are fine, but fully covered just isn't good-looking. I do understand that some people get them to belong to a certain group, but that is separate from who the person is. I do think the Internet and the media have raised a bigger consciousness about VBA. More people see it and want it for themselves to belong somewhere. But it hasn't influenced me. The thing that has influenced me the most is the people around me. You can go to any beach and *not* having a tattoo is unique. It is no longer something personal or for yourself. I think that people in the past did it more consciously. It made them unique while now it has become so normal. I have two sons and even though I would prefer them not to get any tattoos, it's their bodies. I do subconsciously put labels on people. It happens automatically.

3. If you were sitting next to one of these people in the train, what are the chances you would start a conversation with them, versus someone without VBA?

That doesn't matter at all. But when it comes to someone with a lot of piercings, I am more distant. I don't like those at all. They're just not a part of my world.

4. What role does the media play in your life? Do you base any of your choices on what you consume in the media / does it influence your opinion on issues, i.e.?

Not really. I watch TV, use the Internet, but I would look for more information. I'm a bit old-fashioned, I don't really spend whole nights on the Internet, looking for information. I would be influenced by some people. The media do have the power to blow things up and influence a whole society, but I wouldn't personally change my behavior by one news story. I would probably challenge it if someone were to tell me something drastic that's in the news.

APPENDIX 4 – EXAMPLES OF VBA IN THE MEDIA

4.1. VBA in movies



1. In the *Red Dragon*, Ralph Fiennes acts as the schizophrenic killer Francis Dolarhyde a.k.a. the “Tooth Fairy” - who tortures, kills, then butchers his victims. The tattoo on his back is one of the most memorable tattoos on screen of the past 10 years.



2. Viggo Mortensen's character Nikolai Luzhin is a Russian mobster who cleans up other mobster's “messes” by throwing dead bodies in the river. His tattoos in *Eastern Promises* are mostly religious in nature, but they also serve as a warning to anyone who would challenge him.



3.

Matthew McConaughey as Denton Van Zan in *Reign of Fire* is a rebel whose tattoos help to reinforce that notion.



4.

Louis Changchien is Hanzo in the movie *Predators* – a Japanese gangster and Yakuza enforcer who is just as deadly and cold as he is silent. Like most members of the Yakuza, Hanzo has a full body tattoo known as an irezumi.

4.2. VBA in advertisements



1.

This was the best ad from a 2010 award-winning campaign for Pilot extra fine pens. Even though this is a humoristic approach to tattoos, the image that they are trying to portray with the tattoos, beard and sunglasses leans more towards rebellious.



2.

There is nothing better then selling a healthy drink with a sweet innocent Little Red Hiding Hood, who is "only a little bit naughty." Her naughty side is of course shown in her having a tattoo. The copy reads: "Rush Ultimate Chocolate. Just a little naughty. 99% fat free. 30% less sugar."



3.

The tagline “for difficult little people” in combination with the tattoo implies a certain level of rebelliousness associated with tattoos.

APPENDIX 5 – SIRE “I AM STILL HERE” CAMPAIGN EXAMPLE

