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To cite this article: Susanna Molander, Ingeborg Astrid Kleppe & Jacob Ostberg (2018): Hero shots: involved fathers conquering new discursive territory in consumer culture, Consumption Markets & Culture, DOI: [10.1080/10253866.2018.1512252](https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2018.1512252)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10253866.2018.1512252>



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Published online: 03 Oct 2018.



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Hero shots: involved fathers conquering new discursive territory in consumer culture

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, we explore how visual expressions of culture offer new discursive territory within which consumer cultural ideals can be negotiated on a global scale. Through a critical visual analysis of the revelatory case *Swedish Dads*, we find hero shots depicting involved fathers where children's needs and the hermetic confines of the home take center stage, as opposed to the traditional fatherhood ideals portrayed in western contemporary advertising, media, and popular culture. We demonstrate how the Swedish state's gender ideology was encoded into a communicative event in the form of hero shots and subsequently dispersed by visual consumers as well as political and commercial stakeholders pushing this particular agenda and/or capitalizing on its tendencies. This in such a way that the event conquered new discursive territory fostering new types of consumer cultural negotiations on fatherhood ideals also in other cultural settings.

KEYWORDS

Critical visual analysis; discursive territory; hegemonic masculinity; hero shots; involved fatherhood; Swedish gender equality

Introduction

No, this is not a father laughingly dancing around with his child in his arms surrounded by lush nature. This is the everyday for a stay-at-home father and his toddler stuck in the home. The father in the photograph is not even smiling. Instead, he looks absently at the camera while in the background, we see his toddler tirelessly pulling the balloon bouquets hung on to the door. The photograph gives a morning-after taste. The balloons are already a bit lax and the father looks tired, worn-out even. They have just finished the toddler's one-year birthday celebrations, and the well-informed observer can sense what has been going on (Figure 1).

The photo above was part of Swedish photographer Johan Bävman's project *Swedish Dads* portraying 45 fathers engaging in childcare. With a photographic gaze (Schroeder and Zwick 2004) embedded in the Swedish socio-political context with nearly half a century of state interventions for gender equality in work and family, Bävman's goal was to get male care taking out there, get people to talk about it and let everyone know that everyone is capable of taking care of children. The project, displayed both as exhibitions and published in a book, caused quite a stir when traveling around the world, featured in news media, widely debated in social media, and winning several prizes including one of the world's most respected photography competitions, the Sony World Photography Awards (2015). The project also struck a chord with several companies who piggybacked on its

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Figure 1. Stay-at-home dad Fredric Janson, 34, Engineer (Source: www.johanbavman.se/swedish-dads/).

success, as well as the Swedish state, that started using it to brand Sweden abroad. With the motive “to demonstrate what effects an equal parenting policy has on both the individual and society,” the project had been shown in some 15 embassies around the world by the spring of 2017 (Forskar-Världen 2017) and at the time of this writing more exhibitions were underway.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how visual expressions of culture offer new discursive territories within which consumer cultural ideals can be negotiated. We are not only exploring this in one cultural context, but study how these visual expressions can be exported and subsequently negotiated globally. To achieve this purpose, we will analyze Bävman’s fatherhood imagery as well as the negotiations that this imagery gave rise to in consumer culture. More specifically, we ask what discursive territory of parent–child interaction the imagery conquered in relation to relevant historical and contemporary discursive fatherhood territories. We furthermore provide a necessary complement to the current dominance of various text-based methodologies. Despite repeated calls for more attention to the visual in order to capture the dynamics of our image-saturated consumer culture, visual methods are surprisingly absent (Schroeder 2006).

We know from previous research that visual expressions of culture are central to our understanding of identity and serve as blueprints of how life should be lived (Schroeder 2004). Furthermore, understanding visual consumption and its effects are central in a consumer culture influenced by and saturated with images (Schroeder 2004). As part of the circuit of culture (Du Gay et al. 1997), the production, circulation, and consumption of images like Bävman’s both reflect and create culture. Messages can be encoded into images that either reinforce the current state of things or challenge the status quo and instigate changes (Hall 2009). Moreover, consumers with different cultural frames of reference are likely to decode the messages embedded in the images in different ways that either support or challenge the intended message (Hall 2009).

While studies on representation in advertising are a recurrent theme in consumer cultural research (Bonsu 2009; Cronin 2004; Schroeder and Zwick 2004), there has been less attention to other types of popular cultural images appearing in, for example, art, editorials, public information, or social media despite their influence on consumer culture. We can read all such images, regardless of format, as texts that both mirror and create discourses with consumer culture, and are thus never neutral representations (Clarke 1997, 27–28; Hall 2009). Consumer research has a long history of analyzing popular culture's interrelation with consumer culture (Holbrook and Hirschman 1993). In the past, scholars have for example analyzed film (Holbrook and Grayson 1986), literature (Fittett 2002), and music (Askegaard 2010). In this article, we follow this path by using Bävman's fatherhood imagery as a basis for understanding consumer cultural discourses about gender (Gregory and Milner 2011; Marshall et al. 2014; Robinson and Hunter 2008; Schroeder and Borgerson 1998; Schroeder and Zwick 2004; Wall and Arnold 2007) and more specifically about fatherhood.

Inspired by Schroeder and Zwick's (2004, 33) notion of "hero shots," we propose that Bävman's imagery can be labeled "hero shots" wherein someone conquers new discursive territory that thereby holds the potential for radical change. The imagery is particularly interesting since it is tightly interwoven with the Swedish state ideology of gender equality. Previous consumer cultural research on families establishes frameworks to analyze relationship dynamics between contemporary family practices and commercial stakeholders (e.g. Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Moisisio, Arnould, and Price 2004). These studies are mostly based in a North American context and thereby fail to capture contexts like the Swedish where the role of the state and its influence on consumer culture in general and the family, in particular, are important. While the Swedish context might be viewed as a cultural outlier and thus not intrinsically relevant to study, it serves the purpose of highlighting the role of state policy in shaping consumer culture. More specifically, in this study, the Swedish context demonstrates the links between macro-politics, micro-political acts, and consumer culture. We hereby also follow appeals to look beyond consumers and commercial stakeholders to also include other types of stakeholders who may affect consumer culture (Thompson 2011).

We organize this paper as follows. First, we present a synthesis of relevant literature specifying the theoretical gap that we address as well as our theoretical framework. Then, we present our critical visual analysis method where we explain how we sampled, coded, and interpreted the imagery and related texts. Next, we present the findings and start by putting Bävman's imagery in a brief historical socio-political context. We subsequently analyze the imagery and texts of Bävman's project followed by an analysis of the reactions the project has given rise to in order to specify the new discursive territory this imagery has carved out. In our concluding discussion, we tease out our theoretical contributions and suggest implications for further research. In doing, so we suggest how our findings may have relevance for policymakers and marketers.

The production and consumption of visual representations

Following Hall (1997) representation is the production of meaning through various systems of representation such as languages and images – a production that occupies a central place in consumer culture. Indeed, representations are the media through which thoughts, ideas, and feelings are communicated and today they spread faster and more widely than ever before. Not least images. The allure of images, especially if they follow the visual conventions of documentary photography, is that they appear to mirror "the world out there" and thus downplay their ideological content. However, images are never neutral and any event depicted – the changes in gender ideology in Sweden, in this particular case – "must become a 'story' before it can become a *communicative event*" (Hall 2009, 164, emphasis in original). In Hall's (2009) terms, images are thus encoded in a process that is underscored by a particular ideological apparatus and includes certain frameworks of knowledge, relations of production, and technical infrastructure in order to emerge as "meaningful" discourse." The production process does not end with the production of images, rather what is conventionally seen as the *consumption* of images is instead in Hall's terms defined as yet another process of production,

where meaning is produced through the act of decoding. Depending on the degree of mutual understanding and common ideological ground between those encoding and those decoding the messages might be more or less effective in instigating change. Consequently, ideologically charged images like those produced by Bävman will have very different effects depending on the cultural background and context of the one's decoding. Thus, to understand the impact of these images, following their reception across the globe becomes an important endeavor.

According to Schroeder (2004), visual consumption characterizes life in the information age by providing a steady stream of images that bring the world to us and visual consumption constitutes a key attribute of an experience economy organized around attention. Images thereby also provide a key to understanding how consumers make sense of our world, and we will not be able to understand consumer culture unless we understand the role images play in forming identities and practices. In order to be intelligible the meanings embedded in these images must be shared, and due to the fast pace and wide reach of their dissemination, this is not always the case. Hall (2009) suggests that meanings can be decoded in three principle ways: Firstly, the consumer might be operating inside the dominant code, and thus accept the ideological content encoded into the message. Secondly, a consumer might decode according to a negotiated version. In this case, a consumer would understand and accord a privileged position to the dominant definitions of events encoded into the images, while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to their own life conditions. Thirdly, a consumer might be operating with what Hall (2009) calls an oppositional code, whereby the consumer understands the message encoded and the intentions of the sender but then chooses to oppose this message and make an alternative decoding. We use the metaphor discursive territory to define the boundaries within which the codes involved in Hall's coding processes can be expressed and negotiated. In doing so, we have been inspired by geographer Claude Raffestin (2012, 124) who argues that "territory and territoriality derive from the activity that humans carry out in the space that is given or provided to them in common, within the limits of the conception that they have of it." More specifically, the discursive territory of fatherhood derives from the activities that are carried out in relation to fatherhood in a specific time and space, and those activities are of course related to the fathers' conception of what fatherhood is.

Although it might be highly contested, at each point of time this discursive territory is delineated by conventions. We argue that to push the boundaries of what can legitimately be expressed and how images are negotiated requires a radically different type of images that destabilizes the conventions, such as the hero shots analyzed in this paper. This dynamic of changes in representations is characteristic of how gender has been dealt with in consumer culture over the years. Not least fatherhood that has historically been subjected to many different representations and linked set of practices.

Traditional representations of masculinity and fatherhood

Some 20 years ago, Lupton and Barclay (1997) showed how traditional gender representations of fathers as protectors and breadwinners persisted in contemporary western popular media such as television, film, press, and magazines, alongside a "new" type of fatherhood drawing on affection and care. More recent research has shown that the parallel existence of traditional and new types of fatherhoods remain in popular media (Gregory and Milner 2011; Marshall et al. 2014; Robinson and Hunter 2008; Wall and Arnold 2007) offering a hybrid form of masculine fatherhood (Marshall et al. 2014). This hybrid appears to be acceptable to both conservative and more liberal audiences as well as to the institutions that sanction these portrayals, including media representatives and marketers (Marshall et al. 2014). Another example of a strategy that caters to various audiences is to make fathers increasingly invisible in advertising and hereby offer ambiguous portrayals that open up for a multiplicity of interpretations that do not alienate anyone (Marshall et al. 2014; Robinson and Hunter 2008). With the father "out of the picture," the audience is left with the task of inferring his role. Despite the emergence of new fatherhood practices, research suggests that popular media is more inclined to reinforce existing stereotypes than to offer innovative representations of gender relations

(Gentry and Harrison 2010; Gregory and Milner 2011; Marshall et al. 2014; Robinson and Hunter 2008; Wall and Arnold 2007).

Contemporary depictions of men and particularly fathers are still steeped in a traditional form (Ostberg 2012). The father–child relationship is typically depicted as less important than the mother–child relationship. Fathers assume a secondary role and engage in fun and play with the children rather than undertaking domestic chores (Marshall et al. 2014; Wall and Arnold 2007). Men are still portrayed as protectors and breadwinners and while a broadening of the available repertoire of masculinities has occurred, patriarchal masculinity is never threatened and hence the gender hegemony itself is undisturbed.

This is why the public reactions to Bävman’s imagery are interesting, as they indicate that his photographs represent a radical shift in the available public imagery of fatherhood by questioning traditional masculinity in a more profound manner. We will explore how these hero shots offer a new discursive territory within which new ideals can be negotiated in consumer culture. One important reason for doing this is that these ideals give indications about future practices, as ideals spread via popular media irrevocably influence how men relate to their own practices (Schroeder and Borgerson 2003; Schroeder and Zwick 2004, 25). Though Bävman’s imagery is merely one instantiation of this change in gender ideals, we argue that it is a revelatory case (Yin 2003) of how macro-political discursive positions are translated into a communicative event of comprehensive and relatable micro-politics to be consumed in consumer culture. The Swedish welfare state has engaged in a persistent ideological gender equality work with a mix of legislation, nudging incentives, and marketing. Taken together, popular culture, commercial stakeholders, and consumers have shaped new discursive territories in both Sweden and globally where new cultural ideals can be negotiated. We propose that this study is a step towards more systematic attention to the ideological influence that state policy might have on consumer culture, an area that we find under-researched. Below, we give a brief overview of the three theoretical concepts that we will draw upon in our critical visual analysis of Bävman’s imagery.

Hegemonic masculinity, child-oriented masculinity, and involved fatherhood

Hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005) comprises the dominant and ideal masculinity to which most men are seen to aspire, but not all men achieve. It obtains its meaning from its position relative to non-hegemonic masculinities to which the notion of femininity is irrevocably connected (Messerschmidt 2012) and which relates to the intimate sphere, care, and consumption (Ostberg 2012). Thus, the question is what the different caring father ideals spreading through a great variety of outlets can tell us about hegemonic masculinity and the directions it seems to be taking.

Men’s care orientation does not necessarily lead to increased gender equality. The concept of *child-oriented masculinity* (Aarseth 2013) focuses on men’s need of close relations to their children. It is a care where the child becomes incorporated into the father’s self-fulfillment project, rather than the father attending to the child’s needs (Aarseth 2013). This type of care enables the father to keep the right to choose when and how to care while leaving the basic responsibility to the mother. This is the type of fatherhood that can link to hybrid representations (Marshall et al. 2014), where the fatherhood, on the one hand, emerges as caring, but on the other hand, never challenges the father as protector and breadwinner, and thereby never challenges patriarchy. The occurrence and proliferation of this type of child-oriented masculinity can be explained by the rising importance of children in late modernity. When institutions such as marriage and work life are becoming more and more unstable, the only relationship that seems to last over time is that with the child (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1995). But while women have secured their relationship to the child through tradition, men have to actively and continuously work on it (Aarseth 2013).

In contrast, the concept of *involved fatherhood* is defined by a close relationship with the child and a bodily/corporal alertness responsive to the needs of the child (Aarseth 2013). This type of care goes hand in hand with Ruddick’s concept mothering (1995 [1989]) that describes the emotional

relationship between a caregiver and a needing child that develops over time, during the daily wear and tear, and that is oriented towards making sure the child is well-equipped for life. What knits the practice together is attentive love, which means letting go of oneself and focusing the child's reality, revealed only through patience and by caring intensely about it. Thus, the type of care expressed through involved fatherhood is child-focused and exposes how the father attends to the needs of the child rather than having the child serve his own needs by using the child as a prop in his own life project. Research shows that it is the daily wear and tear and intimate contact with the child that brings this type of the nurturing experience into existence (Johansson 2003; Ruddick 1995 [1989]) and that also has proven to have transformative effects on men's view of gender identity and fatherhood (Coltrane 1996). Since 1974, Swedish gender equality policies have facilitated men's involvement in this type of childcare.

The family, the market ... and the state

While much can be learnt about market and family negotiations from previous consumer culture theory research focused on families (e.g. Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Epp and Velagaleti 2014; Moisiso, Arnould, and Price 2004), there is a paucity of studies in this field exploring the influence of the state on consumer culture. As evident in the special edition of *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research* (2016), traditional consumer research on the role of the state focuses mainly on state regulations and consumers' response from a consumer behavioral perspective of self-interest. A related, but more socio-culturally informed area, is transformative consumer research that often studies how public policy initiatives can overcome problems inherent to our current consumer society. However, there is little emphasis on gender equality and family dynamics (Hein et al. 2016). The focus is the state as a legislator setting up absolute limits or giving incentives, while its ideology-producing function largely has been neglected. The field of masculinity studies, however, provides interesting input and suggest that unclear public fatherhood policies in for example France, UK (Gregory and Milner 2011), and Canada (Wall and Arnold 2007) are reflected in the public discourse and popular culture representations. Indeed, the ideology-producing function of the state is central and though ideology is a highly flexible concept, the main aspects we wish to outline here are its normative ideas aimed at promoting certain macro-political positions and ways of life. We, therefore, lean on the following definition:

[An ideology is] a system of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas and beliefs and attitudes advocating a particular pattern of social relationships and arrangements and/or aimed at justifying a particular pattern of conduct, which its proponents seek to promote, realise, pursue and maintain. (Hamilton 1987, 39)

The Swedish context enables theorizing the state as an involved actor with the legitimacy to influence individual citizens' lives and consumption choices (Berggren and Trägårdh 2006; Brandt and Kvande 2013). State policies define the conditions under which individuals and families organize their lives concerning childcare, participation in the labor force, and consumption of market offerings. One example of this is the generous parental leave allowances that enable parents to stay at home with their children up to one and a half years. Even if fathers still take far less parental leave than mothers do, there is an increasing political and social pressure for fathers to spend time at home with their children as the primary caretaker (Plantin 2003). While these are peculiarities of the particular empirical context of this study, we suggest that the state's ideological influence on market negotiations is worthy of systematic attention even in other contexts where the ideological influence might be subtler.

Method – a critical visual analysis of a revelatory case

In the present study, we use Bävman's imagery as a revelatory case (Yin 2003) to explore the new type of involved fatherhood discourse surfacing in the Swedish context with its unique approach

to gender equality. Indeed, the proliferation of the images and the reactions they have spurred are aspects that serve, we argue, as support for studying the case as revelatory by exposing data previously inaccessible to the scientific community (Yin 2003). We contend that the imagery represents the type of micro-politics that is front-running a new discursive fatherhood territory and therefore is key for understanding emergent macro-political positions on gender roles in consumer cultures.

The study applies a critical visual analysis inspired by the work of Schroeder (2006), and Schroeder and Zwick (2004) arguing that photographs are data that can be studied as rich text embedded in and connected to a cultural context. By connecting images to the cultural context of their consumption, we gain a more thorough understanding of how these images embody and express cultural values and contradictions (Schroeder 2006, 303). Critical visual analysis means bringing the context to the fore, underscoring the imagery's history and socio-political role when it comes to influencing the constitution of consumer subjects. Independently of the originator's intentions, visual representations can be seen as socio-political artifacts creating meaning within the circuit of culture (Du Gay et al. 1997). The study starts with (1) a brief genealogy of Swedish fatherhood to contextualize and historicize Bävman's imagery, followed by (2) a detailed critical visual analysis of the imagery itself and continues with (3) an analysis of the consumer cultural reactions on the imagery when displayed in countries all over the world. We integrate these three perspectives in the discussion to elaborate on the discursive territory of Bävman's imagery.

The data

The case study builds on multiple data sources. Our point of departure is Bävman's book from 2015 documenting 45 Swedish stay-at-home fathers in 46 everyday situations together with their children, each accompanied with a short text presenting the father by name and profession and most together with a statement of how he experienced his parental leave. From a featured article in the Swedish photo magazine *Kamera & Bild* (Wessel 2016), we learn that in order to capture what he saw as the right type of situations, Bävman focused on fathers who had been at home for six months or more; and that he used word-of-mouth as well as strategically posted signs and visits to find fathers interested in being part of his project. Bävman's photographs were never taken on a whim, but rather reflectively and selectively. "I see myself as a social photographer who is part of the situation, not as a fly on the wall. I try to explain what I want and am selective when choosing the images" (Wessel 2016). Thus, while the imagery can be seen as documentary, it was carefully selected to represent the type of role models Bävman was eager to promote.

We then continue with the cultural context within which Bävman's imagery is embedded and that is based on multiple data sources – on the one hand, historical and on the other hand unfolding in real time. The historical context consists of a brief genealogy of Swedish fatherhood and builds on works from ethnology, history, and men's studies. The real-time context, in turn, is based on the reactions Bävman's imagery generated in different Swedish and international media. The search term "Swedish dads' + Bävman" generated some 9660 hits and some 200 news and feature articles on Google. After having sorted out the major articles with Bävman's Swedish Dads project in focus, we ended up with 26 Swedish and 40 international articles. We also included two major consumer-to-consumer online conversations: one from *Buzzfeed* known for its more liberal audience and one from *The Daily Telegraph* known for its more conservative ditto. We moreover followed hashtags providing updates on Bävman's project including #swedishdads; #swedishdad; #swedishdadsontour; #Bavman; #johanbavman as well as Bävman's Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/fotografjohanbavman/>. As the Swedish Dads imagery also migrated to exhibitions and campaigns around the world organized by the Swedish Institute (SI), a public agency with the aim to promote Sweden globally, and inspired local photographers, we followed this through both the hashtags above and their websites including www.sweden.se, www.si.se, and www.sharingsweden.se. We furthermore followed how the imagery migrated to commercial brands such as Ikea, Axkid, and BabyBjörn, including BabyBjörn's hashtag #dadstories, where fathers share their experiences of becoming a father. Table 1 summarizes the data sources on real-time

Table 1. Data sources on the media coverage of “Swedish dads” and type of analyses conducted.

Data sources Swedish media, 2015–2017:

- 30 news media articles on the book *Swedish Dads* and book project events: Sveriges Radio, TV4 Nyhetsmorgon, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen, Helsingborgs Dagblad, Svenska Dagbladet, Sydsvenskan, Trelleborgs Allehanda, Norkopings Tidningar, Kristianstadsbladet, Ystads Allehanda, Norrlandska Socialdemokraten (NSD), The Local.se
- 6 Feature media articles: SDS Dygnet runt, Kristianstadsbladet Kultur&Nöje, Kamera og Bild, Vi Föräldrar, Forskarvärlden, Lunds Universitets Magasin, fotosidan.se, firstfoto.se, utredarna.nu

Data sources international media, 2015–2017 (Most sites also offer an English version):

- *US*: atn.com, buzzfeed.com, CNN, Cosmopolitan, fatherly.com, Financial Times, Marie Claire, National Geographic, newrepublic.com, The New Republic, TIME, Wall Street Journal
- *Europe*: en.a1plus.am (Armenia), Panorama (Armenia), TV5MONDE Actualités (France), L’Obs Grand format (France), femmeactuelle.fr (France), tempsreel.nouvelobs.com (France), terrafemina.com (France), Spiegel (Germany), ziuadecj.realitatea.net (Hungary), welingelichtekringen.nl (Netherlands), Gazeta de Sud (Romania), enfemenino.com (Spain), Men-care.org (Suisse), onedio.com (Turkey), Sözcü (Turkey), Hürriyet (Turkey), BBC news (UK), The Daily Telegraph (UK), METRO.co.uk (UK), Telegraph.co.uk (UK), bzb.rometro.co.uk (UK)
- *Oceania*: The Sydney Morning Herald (Australia), NEWS.com.au (Australia)
- *Asia*: EastDay.com (China), Global Times China (China), Metro Shanghai (China), Shanghai Daily (China), Jakarta Post (Indonesia), Vemale.com (Indonesia), Financial Tribune (Iran), afamily.vn (Vietnam), ScandAsia.com (Nordic news and business promotion in Asia)
- *South America*: Correio Braziliense (Brazil)
- *Africa*: Kapitalis (Tunisia), New Vision – Uganda’s Leading Daily (Uganda)

Data from C-2-C Online conversations

Buzzfeed: 208 postings – 93 men/115 women (March 2015)

Telegraph online: 63 postings – 23 men/1 woman (March 2015)

The comments took place March 2015 in response to articles in The Telegraph online and BuzzFeed. The Telegraph is a conservative outlet and BuzzFeed appeals to more progressive intellectual audiences. Both articles have a short introduction with an extensive replication of the photographs and textual presentation of the dads in Bävman’s book.

Hashtags in social media:

#Swedishdadsontour, #swedishdads, #swedishdad, #Bavman, and #johanbavman

Commercial brands partnering with Swedish Dads:

Baby Björn; www.babybjorn.com/, #dadstories, www.babybjorn.com/tag/dadstories/

IKEA; www.ikea.com/; “Democratic design,” www.ikea.com/ms/en_JP/this-is-ikea/democratic-design/; “Life at home” www.ikea.com/ms/en_JP/this-is-ikea/democratic-design/#life-at-home

Axkid – <http://www.axkid.com/about-us/>

Text analysis

- (1) All articles were printed and organized in one folder.
- (2) We studied in-depth all the articles that were available in English, French, and German. These articles constitute the majority of all the articles and all the rich text articles as many had an in English version online. We Google translated the articles in foreign language that only seemed to be imprint of the text and photographs in the press release for the book.
- (3) In the second reading, the three researchers identified and agreed upon emergent themes.
- (4) In a third reading we sampled text and images that represent the themes in the analysis of marketplace negotiations

We uploaded the online conversations into one word document and studied them as a rich text of marketplace conversation.

- (1) First, we read all postings and then singled out the specific discussion threads.
- (2) Second, we identified topics and themes of discourses in the c-2-c conversations.
- (3) Third, we aligned these with the global marketplace negotiations that emerged from the media analysis.

We searched social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) looking for content marked with the hashtags and studied the commercial brand websites to enrich and contextualize the analysis from the other parts of the dataset.

Swedish State official websites on the Swedishdadsontour project:

The research team explored the event updates at the Swedish Institute websites si.se, sweden.se and sharingsweden.se, and Bävman's Facebook updates @fotografjohanbavman. The *Swedishdadsontour* had by July 2017 been shown at 17 embassies, consulates or public display areas. In 2016; Bucharest, Romania; Kampala, Uganda; Washington, U.S; Hanoi, Vietnam; Zingst, Germany; Hannover, Germany; Bern, Switzerland; Beijing, China. In 2017; Paris, France OECD; Tel Aviv, Israel; Teheran, Iran; Sousse, Tunis; Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Seoul and Bucheon, South Korea; Maputo, Mozambique; Harare, Zimbabwe; Sydney, Australia, Yerevan Armenia. (By August 2018 the project had been shown at some 60 embassies and consulates worldwide.)

We analysed these data from the website updates to validate and to enrich the marketplace conversation analysis of the media. Since the Swedish institute has developed a Swedishdadsontour toolkit – sharingsweden.se/toolkits/swedishdads – the setup was very similar across the cities and countries involved.

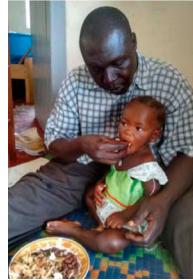
Examples from the Swedish Dads photo competition project abroad:

"Ugandan dads" – <https://men-care.org/>

"Armenian and Swedish Dads" – <https://www.panorama.am/en/news/2017/06/23/Armenian-and-Swedish-Dads-exhibition-Yerevan/1797865>

"Chinese Dads" – <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1051087.shtml>

These images are downloaded from public media web-sites.



negotiations and together with the book and the genealogy, they provide a broad and diverse pool of information on which to build a case study of a global communicative event (Hall 2009) consumed and negotiated in global consumer culture.

The analysis

We organized the critical visual analysis of Bävman's book in four steps: (i) a description of the elements traced in each photograph; (ii) a mapping of the placement of elements in each photograph; (iii) a reflection of the emotions evoked; and, finally, (iv) relating the photograph to the cultural context (Schroeder 2006; Schroeder and Zwick 2004). To capture and systemize descriptive detail that helped establishing links to our theoretical construct "discursive territory," and facilitating the inter-rater reliability of the coding and the conceptual validity of the themes, we used a codebook partly inspired by Presi, Maehle, and Kleppe's (2016) study of brand selfies.

Like Presi, Maehle, and Kleppe (2016), we coded "what you see" in step *i* by making notes of nouns, verbs, and adjectives and used them to describe what happened in the photograph. These descriptions were also supplemented with the fathers' statements accompanying the photographs in the book. In line with Presi, Maehle, and Kleppe (2016), we performed formal coding in step (ii) by applying principles of photographic composition to explain how elements and their arrangement gave meaning to the image. In order to identify the most important compositional elements, we applied the "Rule of Thirds," which follows best practices of professional photographers for determining where to place the main elements in a photograph (Marchesotti et al. 2011). This rule stipulates that an image should be imagined as divided into nine equal parts by two equally spaced horizontal lines and two equally spaced vertical lines, and that important compositional elements – i.e. those intended to stand out and draw the viewer's attention – should be placed along these lines or their intersections. In this way, the photograph communicates effectively but still looks balanced and is pleasing to the eye. In step *iii* we reflected on the descriptions and formal coding by listing the emotions that the photograph evoked.

In step (iv), we coded the relation between the analyzed photograph and the cultural context. This last step included relating Bävman's imagery to the genealogy of Swedish fatherhood as well as what earlier research has depicted as widespread contemporary western fatherhood representations, and making sense of how Bävman's imagery related to these (Schroeder 2006) by using our aforementioned analytical concepts including hegemonic masculinity, child-oriented masculinity and involved fatherhood. After unfolding the story told by each photograph we made an intertextual analysis across photographs distinguishing three themes summarized in Table 2 and that maps the discursive territory of Bävman's project, including involved chores, involved play, and involved tenderness each revolving around the child–father interaction.



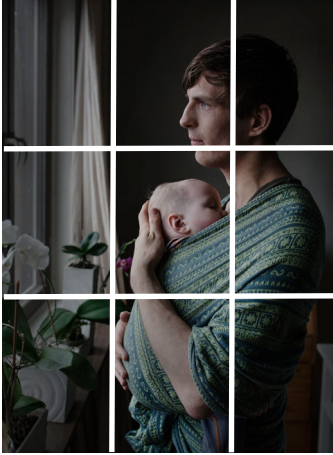
The reactions on Bävman's imagery in news media articles, hashtags, web pages, and online consumer community conversations were analyzed as emerging consumer cultural negotiations based on the discursive territory laid out in Bävman's imagery. We delineated three consumer cultural negotiation themes across the different data sources: embracing, contesting, and appropriating the territory.

In summary, our analysis thus draws on the genealogy of Swedish fatherhood, the detailed critical visual analysis of the imagery itself and the analysis of the reactions to explore how this new type of fatherhood imagery appearing in consumer culture offers a new discursive territory to be negotiated. The first two authors conducted the visual analysis procedure on all the 46 photographs in the book and the interpretive analysis of the newspaper articles and online sources. To validate the interpretations, they were discussed with the third author and summarized in the three involved fatherhood themes as well as the three consumer cultural negotiation themes.

Findings

In line with Schroeder's (2006) critical visual analysis schema, we start by doing a brief genealogy of the discursive territory of fatherhood imagery. We hereby put Bävman's imagery in its historical and

Table 2. Four-step analytical procedure of Bävman's photographs – illustrated with three photographs and the emergent themes.

Emergent themes:	Involved fatherhood chores	Involved fatherhood play	Involved fatherhood tenderness
<p><i>Typical image for each emergent theme, and n in each category</i></p> <p>Chores: Anders, n = 17</p> <p>Play: Jonas, n = 17</p> <p>Tenderness: Göran, n = 11</p>			
<p><i>First step: Description analysis</i></p> <p>(a) Example of description of elements traced in the above photograph – nouns, verbs and adjectives</p> <p>(b) Emergent thematic analysis of the descriptions across the photographs.</p>	<p><i>Nouns:</i> children, man, bathroom, home, daily chore, calm, control.</p> <p><i>Verbs:</i> helping, improvising, adjusting, holding together, keeping in check, getting the job done, multitasking, juggling.</p> <p><i>Adjectives:</i> small, dependent, superior, helpful, present, active, empathetic, attentive, firm, challenging, intimate, egalitarian, involved.</p>	<p><i>Nouns:</i> child, man, home, play, construction, stage, roles</p> <p><i>Verbs:</i> constructing, building, staging, playing, enjoying, resting.</p> <p><i>Adjectives:</i> small, confident, big, submissive, creative, involved, exclusive, intimate.</p>	<p><i>Nouns:</i> male body, child body, skin, chest, heartbeat, contact, intimacy, comfort, home.</p> <p><i>Verbs:</i> touching, breathing, focusing, bonding, protecting, hugging, relaxing, trusting, caring.</p> <p><i>Adjectives:</i> small, dependent, vulnerable, big, tender, calm, close, warm, strong, involved.</p>
<p><i>Second step: Formal analysis – Rule of Thirds</i></p> <p>(a) Example of formal analysis of the placement of elements in the squares, in intersections and across squares in the above photograph.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each person has a separate square/space. • The father is in the center square stretching across to other squares. • The father and children are at the same horizontal level. • Simultaneous actions in multiple squares. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child's face is the only face in the photograph intersecting the first vertical line. • The lace curtain dominates the center square. • The father's feet dominates the bottom right squares • The cardboard box frames the child and father's body. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The father's face placed in one intersection of vertical and horizontal lines draws our attention. • The child and the father's caring hand are in the center square – almost like one gestalt. • The white curtain in the left column of the photograph constitutes a soft framing element.

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued.

Emergent themes:	Involved fatherhood chores	Involved fatherhood play	Involved fatherhood tenderness
(b) Emergent thematic analysis across photographs based on emphasis and dominance of the elements in the photographs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fathers are usually in the center stretching out across squares holding the elements together. Simultaneous and multiple actions across squares. The background is usually unimportant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A focused and playing child is usually the center of attention. The fathers usually play a supportive/secondary role in the play. The children usually play the leading role. The play scene usually dominates the room. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fathers' bodies usually dominate the photographs. The fathers usually hold their arms around the child and close to their bodies The child is usually resting on the father's body. Together they usually form one gestalt
<i>Third step: Reflection on emotions evoked</i>	<i>Emotions across themes:</i>	<i>Emotions across themes:</i>	<i>Emotions across themes:</i>
Emergent thematic analysis on emotions evoked by the descriptive and formal analysis across photographs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attentive love (father) Trust (child/ren) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attentive love (father) Trust (child/ren) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attentive love (father) Trust (child/ren)
	<i>Chore emotions:</i>	<i>Play emotions:</i>	<i>Tenderness emotions:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vigilance & confidence (father) Frustration & acceptance (child/ren) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fatigue & acceptance (father) Joy & confidence (child/ren) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Serenity (both) Harmony (both)
<i>Fourth step: Cultural context analysis</i>	The father immerses himself into the uncoordinated world of his three children by joining them on the floor. His focus is entirely on his children making sure they have clean teeth. The scene indicates a father caught up with daily chores – different from the invisible and/or breadwinning father as implied in Marshall et al. (2014) or the child-oriented father (Aarseth 2013) who can chose when to care. Anders, 41, and game developer, underscores this interpretation in his statement: "I think the key to a successful parental leave lies in admitting to yourself that life has changed. You become bound to your child's desires and routines, which is something you have to get used to."	A small toddler boy is sitting on top of his father who appear to be in the child's command. They have built a cardboard box hut decorated with lace curtain. The father must lay down to fit in the box together with the toddler. The center of attention is the child's proud and confident face peeking out from behind the lace curtain. Vintage furniture suggests quality conscious shoppers and home decorators. The cardboard box, worn and unstable, clashes with the decorated living room indicating other sets of rules for the father-child play, and that the cardboard box play is a regular activity. This suggests that adult rules give way for the child's agenda. A play different from competitive play we usually see when fathers are involved (Kimmel 2013).	The father and child are as physically close as they can be reminiscent of the mother and child during breastfeeding. An interpretation reinforced by Göran, who is 27 and a student: "The baby sling functions partly as a substitute for breastfeeding." The father appears to be in a calm and relaxed state of mind, focusing completely on the father-child intimacy. The viewer can literally feel how the strength of the father transfers to the small child and how the child's complete dependency and comfort in the situation feels good for the father. This is in opposition to what we usually relate to the male body ideal imbued with physical superiority (Schroeder and Zwick 2004), competition (Kimmel 2012), patriarchy, power and potential violence (Hearn 2002).

socio-political context as Sweden moved away from the traditional agrarian society towards a modern society with new perspectives on family, children, and gender. With this analysis as a backdrop, we analyze Bävman's imagery in detail and compare it with more recent studies of western contemporary fatherhood imagery as well as reflect on the negotiations Bävman's imagery gave rise to.

Swedish fatherhood in context

The work-introducing father

According to French demographic historian Philippe Aries' (1962) exploration into European paintings from medieval times and onwards, the profane iconography of men was long characterized by work life. This was also the case in Sweden at the turn of the twentieth century where the majority of the population lived in an agrarian society where the family worked together as a production unit. One of the key functions of parents was to introduce them to the domain of work (Plantin 2003). The family organization was patriarchal and activities gendered. Fathers introduced the sons to men's work and mothers introduced the daughters to women's work (Frykman and Löfgren 1979). This was a time when the discursive territory of fatherhood circulated around a generational knowledge transmittal that guaranteed the family's survival.

The breadwinning father

The 1930s and 1940s have been described as the period when the modern Swedish welfare state began to take shape. This was a time when new types of family ideals were spreading quickly and when the more distant breadwinning father took over as the hegemonic masculinity ideal (Frykman and Löfgren 1979; Hallberg 2017). A study of how the family and the welfare state were constructed through representations of children in photo contests and photo books during this period underlines the importance of a caregiving and, preferably, non-working mother. While the mothers were constantly present in the photographs or in the texts that accompanied them, the fathers were not visible at all, nor were they attributed any caring tasks. Instead, they served as an invisible, but necessary part in the construction of the nuclear family (Hallberg 2017). This discursive territory of fatherhood underlining his functioning as a role model, moral fosterer, and breadwinner providing for the family, culminated during the 1950s with increased prosperity and housewife ideals.

The child-oriented father

During the 1960s and 1970s, feminism and labor needs forced men to make room for women in the public sphere, and made men face a greater demand to spend time with their children (Plantin 2003). From the 1970s and onwards, the Swedish government rolled out an extensive parental leave policy that enabled families to negotiate how to distribute the leave between the mother and the father. The goal was to accomplish a "double emancipation," ensuring men and women the same access to and opportunities in both work and family life (Johansson and Klinth 2008; Klinth 2002).

In 1974, Swedish authorities launched a seminal campaign with the muscular weight lifter Lenart "Hoa-Hoa" Dahlgren smilingly holding a cheeky baby in his arms. The aim was to encourage fathers to take paternity leave. The image showed a man who did not compromise with his masculinity. Indeed, the little baby made the muscles beneath his tight t-shirt even more impressive. Hoa-Hoa's pose with the baby suggested that men's commitment to childcare was effortless and optional.

Despite the fact that these gender equality efforts have lasted for nearly half a century, fathers' outtake is low. This typical case of child-oriented masculinity (Aarseth 2013) is not driven by the child's need for care but rather how the care for the child can be integrated into the father's self-fulfillment project. Under the notion of gender equality, the child-oriented father has in a sense been liberated from his traditional role as the sole breadwinner while the mother has become both breadwinner and primary caregiver. This discursive territory thus opens up for a father who chooses when and how to care while leaving the breadwinning and involved mother with no choice at all.

The involved father

Bävman's imagery, however, represents a new groundbreaking fatherhood ideal. These fathers do not only spend their allotted 20 percent with their children, but share them more or less equally with their partners. As our analysis will show, the images reflect a type of care characterizing parents spending an extended and intensive period together with their children (Coltrane 1996). This was also noted in a Swedish chronicle:

This is the short period in which the contemporary man lives a bit like the old housewife, inside the four walls, where he or she is not visible to the world. If the images in the "Swedish dads" exhibition tell a story it is not the story of the new man, but about the ethics of care. What happens in a relationship where one person's life is totally dependent upon the other's attentions? A relationship in which one is entirely dependent upon the other. (Rydell 2016)

What we see described here is an involved fatherhood that distinguishes this imagery from other types of imagery and that therefore renders it both provocative and celebrated. Our analysis of Bävman's imagery exposes a new type of discursive territory that we will elucidate in what follows.

Bävman's Swedish dads

Our analysis of Bävman's imagery distinguished an involved fatherhood played out through three themes including *involved fatherhood chores*, *involved fatherhood play* and *involved fatherhood tenderness* – themes that together map the discursive territory of Bävman's project. The fact that the men portrayed were identified not only by name and age, but also by occupation underlined that they were still in possession of one of the main traditional fatherhood characteristics, namely their professional identity. Table 2 outlines the details of the visual analysis and the following link gives access to parts of the Swedish Dads imagery www.johanbavman.se/swedish-dads/.

Involved fatherhood chores

While the breadwinning father is distant and the child-oriented father engage in his children when his time allows – and more likely in play than in dealing with everyday chores (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Forsberg 2009; Plantin 2003) – Bävman's imagery tells another story. The images in the *involved fatherhood chores* category show fathers mostly on the same level as their children interacting with them in daily chores such as brushing their teeth, feeding them, and putting on their bike helmets. The scenes stand in sharp contrast to the invisible father (Marshall et al. 2014; Robinson and Hunter 2008) and are instead populated by a highly visible and active father. They also differ strongly from a fatherhood executed through authority and control over dependent children. What we see are fathers caught up in daily chores that they just have to adjust to and get done.

The scenes evoke mixed emotions. On one hand, they show vigilant and confident fathers who take charge over children focused on their own agendas and who express everything from acceptance to frustration. On the other hand, the fathers take this charge in a loving and tender manner by reaching out for the children rather than putting them in place. This requires a balancing act by the fathers who aim to "get the job done" while at the same time being receptive to the children's individual agendas and skills. Indeed, the fathers display attentive love, which means they let go of themselves and understand the child's reality through patience rather than distance, and make caring activities a regular and substantial part of everyday life (Ruddick 1995 [1989]). More details about the formal analysis can be found in Table 2.

This type of involved fatherhood stands in contrast to the typical masculine traits of planning and control. Instead of forcing a particular, pre-planned order onto the situation and using their grown-up physical superiority to control and dominate, these fathers use their physical superiority to be agile and present in the children's physical space. Nor do they just focus on themselves and forget about the children. Rather than emerging as a means to the fathers' self-fulfillment projects in line with child-oriented masculinity, these images depict situations where the child's fulfillment becomes the end in itself.

Involved fatherhood play

Traditionally, caretaking has dominated the mother–child interaction whereas play has dominated the father–child interaction. Rather than devoting time to children in the home, fathers are often depicted in children’s public life through play and various leisure activities, especially sports (Coskuner-Balli and Thompson 2013; Forsberg 2009; Plantin 2003). Like marketplace masculinity (Kimmel 2013), competition is also an essential facet in the performance-oriented orthodox masculinity that characterizes the majority of sports (Gottzén and Kremer-Sadlik 2012).

In contrast, the photographs depicting *involved fatherhood play* usually portray the child as the lead character and the father as a supportive actor or “instrument” under the child’s command. In many of the involved play photographs, the fathers appear to be tired. The children, on the other hand, always appear as joyful and confident. Most of the play scenes have required certain logistics and engineering, which suggest that the fathers have invested substantial backstage energy and creativity in setting up the playing facility. While such types of activities are usually decoded as masculine (Moisio and Beruchashvili 2016), this type of masculinity is not on display in Bävman’s imagery. The warm and homey scenes portray an involved father directing attentive love towards the children in line with what usually is associated with mothering (Ruddick 1995 [1989]). The involved fatherhood play on display is more about the creative staging of an educational setting for the child. Indeed, what emerges from many of the involved play images are imitations of real-life situations that the child may be involved in later in life. In doing so, the playful fathers not only assume an instrumental role as service provider and industrious companion but also as an educator. As opposed to traditional versions of the competitive play, we here see men who are closer to the traditionally feminine attentive love.

Involved fatherhood tenderness

The male physical body ideal – muscular, strong, and hard – signifies many of manhood’s sociocultural attributes such as power, self-control, and readiness for competition (Kimmel 2013, 228; Lilleaas 2007). This type of body is in many ways in line with the since long faded work introducing father discourse. But even if the male body’s explicit economic utility more or less disappeared as the breadwinning father discourse took hold, the male body’s association to masculinity remains strong (Kimmel 2012, 248; Marshall et al. 2014). It is also clear that rather than being linked to the intimate care of a child, this body ideal is associated with physical superiority (Schroeder and Zwick 2004) and seen as a last bastion of masculinity (Marshall et al. 2014), not least confirmed in child-oriented fathers’ engagement in play and competition. The male body ideal also symbolizes sexuality, a patriarchal manifestation of men’s power imbued with potential violence (Hearn 2002) that risks pushing men away from engaging in childcare (Murray 1996). To a child, the adult male body typically appears as big and strong with a lot of power and dominance just by its presence.

In contrast, the photographs depicting *involved tenderness* illustrate how the male body can institute a physically close, caring and bonding relation to the child devoid of the masculine sexuality typically depicted in mainstream media images. These images challenge traditional representations of fatherhood by opposing the social perception that this type of male physicality with children is inappropriate and too “close” (Doucet 2004; Murray 1996). While the strong male body and the small dependent child may be seen as supporting versions of traditional hegemonic masculinity (Connell 2005), their void of sexuality instead emphasizes attentive love transpiring from the fathers and complete comfort and trust transpiring from the children.

Emergent marketplace negotiations

Our study explores how images can embody state policy initiatives and thus can come to function as socio-political artifacts. A critical visual analysis (Schroeder 2006) of these types of representations does not only include the meanings that are produced via the imagery itself in the process of encoding (Hall 2009), but also how these meanings spread and become part of the circuit of culture

(Du Gay et al. 1997) with the potential to raise a variety of issues depending on different decoding processes (Hall 2009). Bävman's photo project is an example of this, and over the course of two years, it evolved into a highly noticed phenomenon that in various ways spread widely over the world. We analyze how these hero shots conquered a new discursive territory of fatherhood which was not only widely disseminated but also contested, embraced, and appropriated by actors in the marketplace.

Worldwide dissemination

Bävman's global breakthrough is said to be unique in Swedish photo history (Nilsson 2016). A key event was when *BuzzFeed* – a US online media company – presented the project with the headline “This Is What It Looks Like When Men Are Allowed To Take 480 Days Of Paternity Leave.” After that, the project appeared in everything from global magazines like *Cosmopolitan* and *National Geographic*, widely spread newspapers like *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Times*, media houses such as *BBC* and *CNN*, to local newspapers in several countries. In disseminating these images, these media outlets engaged in a process of first decoding the original message consisting of the imagery and the text and then re-encoding it as a new story (Hall 2009). In doing this most of the media outlets stayed very close to the original version and reported on how Bävman wanted to change the way fatherhood was currently represented not only internationally but also in Sweden, making the case that parental leave is important for men and that Sweden is a good place for fathers. Although the re-encoding process might seem to merely channel the original story there are subtle alterations that many times exoticize Sweden and sometimes also eroticize the Swedish fathers. Examples include headlines such as “These Photos Show What Makes Sweden a Great Place to Be a Dad”; “These Incredible Photos Show How Fatherhood Works in Sweden Compared to America”; and “One Photographer Documents Sweden's Amazing Leave Policies.” In the media features the imagery itself got a lot of space, supplemented typically with only the exoticizing headlines and a few sentences about Bävman's goals with the exhibition and book, and the audiences were thus given plenty of room for their own interpretations.

In the Swedish media context, Bävman's imagery got a lot of attention and as the imagery started to gain worldwide attention, Bävman and his success were re-packaged as a story of its own. Like in the international media, the imagery itself got a lot of space, but here the images were supplemented by stories of Bävman's worldwide attention and the prices he had received. Frequently, the media also took a critical perspective and commented on the fact that so few Swedish fathers took advantage of the unique benefits. Indeed, while the imagery was in line with the mainstream ideal of involved fatherhood, it was not a reflection of mainstream practices (Plantin 2003). The Swedish media also exhibited an undertone of pride over the reactions garnered by both Bävman and the Swedish parental leave policies as manifested by headlines such as “Swedish Dads Surprise and Provoke”; “His Dad Imagery Took Internet by Storm”; “World-Famous Dad Images Wins Big Photo Prize”; and “Swedish Dads Surprise the World.”

Marketplace embracing and contesting

Judging by the comments given by consumers of the media coverage of Bävman's imagery, many instantly engaged in critical explorations and reacted strongly. We have analyzed the consumer comments of *Buzzfeed* known for its more liberal audience, and *The Daily Telegraph* known for being more conservative. Overall, the *Buzzfeed* comments were generally more positive towards the imagery as well as the underlying policy initiatives by the Swedish state, while the majority of *The Daily Telegraph* comments contested the imagery and what it stood for.

To use Hall's (2009) terminology, in *Buzzfeed* the ones commenting were mostly decoding the images by negotiating the code in such a way that they understood and accorded a privileged position to the dominant definitions of events encoded into the images, while reserving the right to make a more negotiated application to their own life conditions. In other words, they expressed a positive attitude towards what was depicted in the imagery, but made disclaimers that this social organization was not viable in their own cultural context: “The Swedes have an excellent parental-leave system,

parents are encouraged to take a leave to be with their children / ... / I think the problem here in North America is the system, not the lack of dads wanting to take parental leave.”

The comments on Buzzfeed started with a few female threads discussing the imagery’s sex appeal. Göran with the baby sling that in his own words partly functioned as a substitute for breastfeeding, turned out to be a favorite. “Dads being dads are incredibly sexy. Paternal instinct is a turn on.” Indeed, to these women, the fathers’ involved tenderness did not seem to jeopardize their masculinity but made them even more attractive. Interestingly, Bävman experienced that the image of Göran had been the most provocative overall (Metro 2017), likely due to the allusions into such a clearly delineated female territory as breastfeeding and by pushing the limits for what kind of baby devices men can use. Furthermore, while many female posters commented on the implications of the activities depicted in the imagery – “How the frigging he’ll [*sic*] can a baby be nappy free at 4 months?!?!?! Tell me now!” (Baby held over the toilet) – and the feelings they evoked – “Love these photos. And that baby in the second photo is basically every feeling I have ever felt ever” (Baby held over the toilet) – the male posters focused on the political system allowing this type of care. Both contesters and embracers discussed tax levels and the system’s consequences for the labor market, small businesses and the like. Embracers argued that “Not everything is gold in Sweden, but paternity leave is one of them,” and contesters wondered “what percentage of people’s paychecks go to taxes over there?” In essence, they were thus accepting the general message encoded in the images, that involved fatherhood is a positive thing, but questioning the sacrifices a society needs to make in order to achieve those goals: “While it’s awesome for fathers to spend more time with their children, this seems a little unfair to people who choose to not or are unable to have children. Who is paying for the leave?” Even though quite a few women also engaged in the discussion of the political system, hardly any men were involved in discussing the imagery’s caring details. Just like the classic breadwinners they were more engaged in what provided for the care, i.e. how the system was financed.

Many Swedes, both men and women, also engaged in the debates emanating from the international media coverage. Virtually all of them were fierce defenders of the system: “All of our male friends who have become a father has taken at least 6 months ‘off’ work – the best months of their lives!” and “It is soooooo amazing the system we have. And it also results in less discrimination against women when hiring.” In contrast to the international audience, the Swedes were thus operating inside the dominant code (Hall 2009) where they accepted the ideological content encoded into the message. Indeed, the discursive territory that Bävman’s imagery opened up with its involved care, play and tenderness was something they proudly embraced.

The Daily Telegraph’s consumer comments were mostly made by men and had a more aggressive tone, discussing the system and over-parenting: “Sweden is the liberal vision of feminist/liberal/socialist utopia. Even the Swedes are getting fed up with Sweden. You do not want to live in Sweden as a man. Maybe as a cuckolded ATM – but not as a man.” The consumers were operating within an oppositional code (Hall 2009), where they understand the message encoded and the intentions of the sender but chose to oppose the message and make an alternative decoding. Most of the time they were flat out rejecting the system’s implications: “/F/or anyone who has the misfortune to have to engage with a Scandinavian company/organisation, they’ll know just how crippling it is when half their staff are off on absurdly long parental leave most of the time”; or questioning whether it worked along with the natural order of things; “If it is all so good, why don’t they [the men] want it, and why do so many women put up with them not wanting it? Could it be because both genders actually prefer the natural order of things?” Only a few of the male commentators actually engaged in the imagery as such wondering “Why on Earth do half these idiots have their kids strapped to themselves while they’re doing something like Hoovering [*sic*]?” To a person not familiar with the situation, using a baby carrier in this way might seem absurd. But for an involved parent able to recognize the dilemma it is easier to sympathize; the father depicted explained he kept his toddler in a carrier on his back while hovering, to make sure he knew what his son was up to while cleaning in order to avoid an accident. Indeed, the photos and commentary in Bävman’s book (2015) echoes a bodily preparedness to act on behalf of the children’s needs – a preparedness that also takes precedence

over the fathers' own needs (Brandt and Kvande 2013; Aarseth 2013) and this preparedness is easier to decode by those who already are involved parents.

Thus, among the commentators, women and Swedes were generally more likely to decode the images according to the dominant codes and embrace a political system enabling fathers to stay at home. To the Swedes, this way of reasoning was already part of the discursive territory wherein gender identity in consumer culture is negotiated. To the most contesting men, however, the imagery seemed to represent a potential systemic change that might challenge the more traditional patriarchal discursive territory they felt comfortable with.

Political appropriation

Bävman's imagery can be seen as a materialization of nearly half a century of Swedish public policy initiatives. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Swedish state jumped on the bandwagon when Bävman started to get international media traction for his project, and used it as an effective way to promote Swedish values. The Swedish Institute (SI) acquired the production rights of the exhibition and developed a toolkit for organizing events abroad, at Swedish embassies or other locations. During 2016 and 2017, the SI collaborated with local artists, museums, public authorities, social-action groups, and local consumers in 17 countries on all continents (see Table 1).

One part of SI's promotion toolkit was to organize photo competitions where local consumers could submit their own photographs inspired by Bävman's imagery. The photo competitions in Uganda and China, in particular, illustrate how the exhibition opened up new discursive territory. One of the Ugandan finalists, Richard Onyai, reflected on how he had tried to embody his experience as a father in his photography: "Before having kids I was hard on myself, my wife, and my workplace mates. After participating in nurturing my first child, I noticed that I'd changed ... " Just like Bävman, this Ugandan dad wanted to show what happens when involved care becomes a fundamental part of the everyday and SI's photo exhibition opened up a discursive territory where he could vocalize this experience.

Other political organizations also saw the potential to use Bävman's imagery to leverage their own agendas. Examples include the global fatherhood movement MenCare (men-care.org), gender justice movements (empowerwomen.org; genderjustice.org.za), and global human rights movements (actio-aid.org), who all posted photographs and comments on their websites referring both to the "Ugandan Dads" project explicitly and to SI's use of Bävman's imagery more broadly. Since Uganda is an emergent economy that requires change in many domains, this particular project became an important reference for how opening up new discursive territory for gender equality can be instrumental to economic and social development.

In Shanghai, in turn, the local photo competition "Chinese Dads" coincided with the rollout of the new two-child policy in China, and according to the Consul General of Sweden, Lisette Lindahl, the photo competition helped bringing attention to the role Chinese fathers have in this process. Out of 15,000 submitted photos, 25 finalists from the event toured different public venues displaying Chinese and Swedish dads alongside each other in art museums, public squares, department stores, and parks. The Chinese media discourse following from the exhibition focused on the importance of fathers to be part of their children's upbringing.

There was also an "Armenian and Swedish Dads" exhibition at the National Gallery of Armenia and in the Yerevan Metro that became a significant national news and social media event. The project was initiated by the film producer Raffi Niziblian, a father of four, who had been inspired by Bävman's Swedish Dads exhibition and who wanted to visualize that this type fatherhood could be found in Armenia as well. By imitating Bävman's original project, he contributed to spreading this new discursive territory of fatherhood also in his own country. Though the media discourse in conjunction with the exhibition defended Armenian fathers' involvement in childcare, it also showed some curiosity in the Swedish family policy.

We see here how SI's global Swedish Dads campaign managed to open up discursive territory to reflect on fatherhood in various consumer cultural contexts. The process whereby local consumers

produced their own photographs inspired by Bävman's imagery is a very concrete manifestation of how this discursive territory enabled reflection on contemporary fatherhood. The media coverage of these events documents the imagery's impact on the discourses on local political standards, aspirations, and rights as well as the emotional qualities of the relations, not only between fathers and children but also between men and women.

Commercial appropriation

The Swedish Dads project became part of a marketing campaign for "Brand Sweden" promoting not only Sweden's political ideology of gender equality but also commercial brands feeding off on the appeal of the new discursive territory it opened up. This is not new as the Swedish welfare state ideology has long been used by many commercial Swedish brands. In this case, there were particularly two global Swedish brands who partnered with and appropriated the Swedish Dads project into their own marketing – the furniture company IKEA and the baby carrier company BabyBjörn. In Shanghai and Singapore, IKEA partnered by making their stores one of the main venues for the photo exhibition. Manifest on the company's global webpages and campaigns was a general affinity towards the dual emancipation idea by featuring both fathers and mothers engaged in involved chores, involved play and involved tenderness. Also the Swedish car seat company Axkid sponsored the event in Shanghai but without any specific follow-up on their website.

The BabyBjörn brand was more explicit in their appropriation. As a sponsor of the "Chinese Dads" project, Tao Wenjia, senior sales and marketing manager of BabyBjörn in China said: "We will try to encourage more Chinese fathers to take responsibility in the caring of their children [...] It is important to create an encouraging environment here, though it will take a long time to change attitudes" (Jing 2017). Emphasizing its ambition to "create an encouraging environment here," the company claimed to be part of a community building ethos that has long been part of the mythology surrounding Swedish brands. BabyBjörn's ambition also expanded to preach this gospel globally. On more than 40 of the company's approximately 50 country-adapted website pages (BabyBjörn 2017), there were fathers with their children in BabyBjörn's baby carriers, surrounded by flowers and pink walls, seemingly embracing their feminine side. The website also introduced "dad stories" via images, texts, videos, and hashtags (#dadstories) where fathers shared their experiences while posing in BabyBjörn's products. With headlines such as "I just wanted other guys to share that experience" exposing everyday care such as changing diapers, going to the playground or holding and caressing their babies, these commercial messages imbued the same type of care as Bävman's imagery on involved chores, play, and tenderness. What this illustrates is that the discursive territory that Bävman's imagery opened up did not only have consequences for Swedish international politics and ideological dissemination, but also for Swedish companies' global brand building endeavors.

In sum, we have shown that Bävman's imagery represented a new discursive territory that challenged the existing territories of the breadwinner and child-oriented masculinity. Even if Bävman's imagery in many ways was idealized and not mirroring the way that the entirety of fatherhood was being orchestrated in Sweden at the time, the quick appropriation among various stakeholders signaled that consumer culture was more than ready for engaging in and exploring this new discursive territory of fatherhood.

Discussion

Our revelatory case study (Yin 2003) has demonstrated how a state ideology in one cultural setting was encoded into a communicative event by a popular cultural stakeholder in the form of hero shots conquering new territory; and how this communicative event was subsequently dispersed by consumers as well as political and commercial stakeholders pushing this particular agenda and/or capitalizing on its tendencies in such a way that it conquered new discursive territory fostering consumer cultural negotiations also in other cultural settings.

In doing so, the article firstly adds theoretical and empirical detail to the two concepts hero shots and discursive territory, previously noted only in passing in consumer research, by defining them and exploring their interplay. While Schroeder and Zwick (2004) describe hero shots as images of lone men conquering some territory, we expand on this definition by theorizing them as images wherein someone conquers new discursive territory that thereby hold the potential for radical change. We argue that hero shots have the ability to open up a clearly delineated and highly contested discursive territory by drawing new boundaries that challenge the previous conceptions of the issue in question – in this case, fatherhood – and, consequently, also the activities that are carried out in relation to it. If we take Göran with the sling as an example, we have shown how this – for many highly provocative – hero shot conquered new discursive territory by pushing the limits for how to talk about male care. Indeed, Bävman's imagery put traditional constructions of masculinity at risk and stood in stark contrast to the usual portrayals of caring fathers that typically complement rather than challenge the hegemonic fatherhood position (Gregory and Milner 2011; Marshall et al. 2014; Robinson and Hunter 2008; Wall and Arnold 2007).

By bringing the interplay between hero shots and discursive territory to the fore, we are also able to highlight more in detail the processes through which this may take place. Indeed, Bävman was not merely capturing the world “as it is,” but engaged in producing a communicative event. As a form of micro-politics (Hanauer 2011), Bävman engaged in producing a communicative event referencing a range of wider discursive positions, relating his micro-political action with macro-political positions and discursive understandings. Bävman's imagery encoded the rather complex gender equality developments that had taken place in Sweden for almost half a decade and translated them into a symbolically loaded and comprehensive story that could enter into exchange processes in consumer culture reaching intended (as well as unintended) audiences. Through its referential function, Bävman was able to bring macro-politics to bear via his imagery. Conversely, the Swedish state re-appropriated Bävman's micro-politically charged imagery for its own purposes once it was found to be straightforward, easily consumable, and interpreted in line with the Swedish gender equality project. The imagery became an appealing as well as controversial consumer object that entered into consumers' identity construction and was, as demonstrated by Ikea, Babybjörn, and Axkid, also appealing for marketers who wanted to capitalize on these developments. With Bävman's hero model as an example, our analysis supports the idea that resistance towards old models of masculinity is facilitated if alternative models emerge (Bihl 1996). Furthermore, while our aim has not been to establish how this communicative event materialized in practice, we argue that media and popular culture provide idealized images that irrevocably influence how men relate to their own practices and related consumption (Schroeder and Borgerson 2003).

Secondly, and as already hinted at when discussing the interplay between hero shots and discursive territory, our study has also been able to add theoretical and empirical detail to the role of the state in shaping consumer culture both on a national and global scale. The Swedish context, which has hitherto been given rather sparse attention in consumer research, is important since it is imbued with a gender ideology of double emancipation that deviates from those contexts where the bulk of masculinity and fatherhood studies in marketing and consumer behavior have been conducted so far. We have demonstrated how the Swedish state took advantage of Bävman's communicative event in order to push the boundaries and engaging not only national and global citizens but also commercial stakeholders contributing to reinforcing these developments. While Hays (1996, 176–178) points out that transforming child rearing into shared work among social equals requires changes at the level of ideology, policy and actual paternal behavior and that each of these reinforces the others, we would like to highlight the importance of getting commercial stakeholders onboard to be able to reach these goals. In an increasingly politicized marketplace where it is key to understand how different stakeholders interrelate, we have shown how the state can use popular culture and commercial stakeholders in order to pursue its interests.

Thirdly, based on a cross-cultural reading of materials, we have been able to capture the dynamics of our global consumer culture, as called for by Schroeder and Zwick (2004) and demonstrated how

consumers' decoding processes operated within different codes (Hall 2009) depending on cultural background and gender. Indeed, while most Swedes operated inside the dominant code and accepted the ideological content encoded into the message, the international audience either accepted the general message but reserved the right to make a more negotiated application to their own life conditions or operated within an oppositional code and chose to do oppose the message and make an alternative decoding. In doing so we also contribute to discussions on "the context of context" (Askegaard and Linnet 2011) by moving our research beyond the lived experience of consumers towards regionalized consumer cultures and showing how these lived experiences are dependent upon political ideological systems. Thus, if a hero shot is pushing the discursive territory too far in certain contexts, it risks becoming a controversial consumer object that works against the intended identity construction.

Finally, our study places the visual image at the center and expands on the concept of critical visual analysis (Schroeder 2006) via a four-step analysis that helps weave together data and context, and link history with real-time market negotiations both domestically and globally. Indeed, while leaning on the theoretical points of departure mapped out in earlier research on critical visual analysis (ibid.), this study expands their work by providing hands-on instructions on how to perform the critical visual analysis.

In closing, by illustrating the variety in consumer cultural negotiation, our study also opens up for a continued exploration into an accelerating fragmentation of fatherhood. Indeed, while the fathers portrayed in Bävman's photographic project might appear to represent a progressive masculinity that poses challenges to the patriarchal hegemony, they still conform to the heteronormative ideal of a nuclear family consisting of a woman, a man, and their offspring. Looking forward, it will be interesting to see if and how the increased consumer cultural representations and real-life proliferation of LGBTQ-families (Malmquist, Hydén, and Nelson 2012) as well as families consisting of both single mothers and single fathers with children (Harrison, Gentry, and Commuri 2012; Molander 2011) may challenge the culturally ingrained ideas of traditional father- and motherhood. This area offers a great opportunity for future research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Anna Ahlström and Ellen Terserus Foundation.

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