The commercialisation of cuteness

The popular image and the working lives of female Scandinavian cabin attendants, 1950-1980.

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Abstract

Since the early years of the airline industry, the female cabin attendant was portrayed in popular media as an icon of femininity, which had implications for the working lives of the women employed in the industry. This thesis shines light on the battle for labour improvements and women's empowerment that the female cabin attendants in Scandinavia fought. The thesis charts the strong influence of the American airline industry on the standardisation of the cabin attendant job. It traces the portrayal of cabin attendants in books, films, plays, interviews, articles and at beauty pageants to find a trend toward increasing sexualisation. The thesis asks, how did the image of the cabin attendant affect the material side of the job and what role did female cabin attendants play in the labour movement? Questions like these have been addressed in American historiography, but not for the Scandinavian case. Informed by concepts from the sociology of work, the thesis will cover the development, the idea and the material side of the cabin attendants in Scandinavia from c.1950 into the 1970s. The airline company SAS stands in focus; archival material of this company will be used. The thesis wants to contribute to a growing body of "pink-collar" work in labour history.

Acknowledgements

I am a SAS-child, which means that one of the child's parents works in SAS. In my case, this has been both of my parents who has had their entire careers in SAS. My father worked as a co-pilot and is for the present a captain and instructor on long distance flights for SAS. My mother started working as a cabin attendant before taking on the responsibility as a purser, in charge of the cabin crew on SAS flights. My parents' vocation has marked my upbringing in numerous ways. From wonderful travels with my family, following my father on work trips and experiencing exciting countries. But it has also brought worry, about my parents working after 9/11-terrorist attacks and the several SAS bankruptcies scares over the decades.

The company has changed over the years. The pride of SAS is not what it once was when my parents started working in middle of the 1980s. It is now a company that does not invest in its employees and actively undermines unions. Strangely, it is still a very respected and idealised industry, especially when it comes to the position of the cabin attendant. This makes for a very interesting topic to study.

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Contents

Introduction

In 1950, Danish cabin attendant Birthe Lund represented *Scandinavian Airlines System* (SAS) in the new international pageant, "Miss Airways", an event that brought together sixteen women from "all over the world" at London Airport. *Miss Airways* was a beauty contest that featured the rising stars of the sky, the cabin attendants. An established film star, Valerie Hobson, crowned the winner, thusly consecrating movie glamour on the participants.[1] The organizers of the pageant stressed that the contest was not just focused on appearance alone, they set out to find the "perfect stewardess." Indeed, later contest would include tasks such as soothing children and pouring tea, a nod to the pivotal skills of empathy and dexterity that the job required. Ultimately, the *Miss Airways* contest was a beauty pageant that tied the work of the cabin attendant closely to physical attractiveness and charged it with glamour, while eclipsing the physical effort and overshadowing the pay and conditions of the job. Miss Lund had to return to Denmark without the ceremonial sash of "Miss Airways 1950,"[2] but her job would provide her and thousands of other girls an opportunity to travel to exotic destinations, a coveted position in society and admiration. However, the exciting job would also come to require enduring degrading work requirements, near impossible beauty standards and sexualization. In Scandinavian society the profession went from exciting and adventurous in the 1950s, to a training ground for domesticity in the 1960s. In the 1970s the job went through a process of deglamourisation and professionalisation, whilst at the same time experiencing extreme sexualisation.

This thesis follows the trajectory of both the image of the female cabin attendant and the material side of her job from the 1950s to the 1970s, to see how they influenced another. It takes the 1950s beauty pageant as a starting point and asks how image and working life developed in a period that brought the expansion of the welfare state and the demand for women's liberation. The period also saw the coming of mass air travel and intensified competition between airline companies. The focus of the thesis is on Scandinavian women in this line of work, as their case promises to bring out the tension between the image and the material conditions to the fullest. On the one hand, Scandinavian welfare states prided themselves with exceptionally progressive policies when it came to the inclusion of women in the labour market and gender equality. On the other hand, as we shall see, Scandinavian women were confronted with a particular sexualisation that likely affected the working lives of cabin attendants, who were, as Birthe Lund in 1950, regarded as representatives of their nations. Studying a prominent case of women's wage labour as this was, the thesis is

[1] Pathé, "Miss Air Hostess Contest Of 1950."
[2] "Miss Airways til SAS," in *Tromsø* 01.10.1951, 8.

informed by and wants to contribute to a growing body on "pink-collar" work both in historiography and social sciences. Historical research on women's wage labour in the service sector that acknowledges the important of the job's popular perception while studying the material realities, goes at least back to "shop girls" employed at the department stores at the turn to the twentieth century. Studies by Susan Porter Benson and Erika Rappaport have highlighted the close connection between the work of women as sales assistants and a popular culture that defined the image of the "shop girls" in musical comedies, films, fashion and print media.[3] Shop girls were mostly "young and pretty college girls with refined accents".[4] As Benson writes "They used the palace of consumption as a setting for a wide range of female fantasies about work and love, success, and fulfilment (…) a richly varied cultural terrain".[5] Benson's work is descriptive of the view of pink-collar work, and how this highly feminised profession used the femininity for all it was worth, playing on the attractiveness, sexual availability and "feminine knowledge" of the employees. Like cabin attendants, Benson argues that shop girls used their femininity and societal standing, to better their work lives, both through labour efforts, but also on an individual basis.

The thesis takes these works on the "shop girls" as guidance to look for similar dynamics in the cabin attendant profession. At the same time, studies on modern female wage labour in the service sector has assessed the relative gains and losses of those respective jobs. Some scholars have stressed inequality and exploitation, as they point out consistent differences in pay and conditions between men and women doing the same job. They argue that promises of "excitement", "freedom", and "social advance" were mainly deployed as a reason to pay women less and treat them worse. Erin Hatton in her study of "temp work" for women in USA, for instance, discovered the same arguments in advertisement for low paying temp jobs for white middle class women; that urged women to work for a change of scenery from housework.[6] While not taking them at face value, other scholars have nevertheless seen tangible gains in women's service sector work. Female sales assistants in department stores may not have been paid as much as men doing the same work and did not have the same chances of a career, though compared with what had been available to them in other lines of work, their department store job still must have felt like a step up.[7] The job of the female cabin attendant came with a lot of promises as well as exploitation; it was portrayed as novel and exceptional, and employers tried to recruit women from a particular social background. While assessing relative losses and gains depends on one's point of comparison, the

[3] Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 215; Rappaport, *Shopping for Pleasure*, 178–79.
[4] Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 203.
[5] Benson, 215.
[6] Hatton, *The Temp Economy*, 19.
[7] Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 181.

thesis keeps this aspect in view, asking whether women had reason to feel that their expectations were being fulfilled.

Shifting the attention to research that deals with the labour of cabin crew in particular, one finds quite a large number of studies that have analysed aspects relevant to the present thesis. Much scholarship has been devoted to the history of the American cabin attendant from perspectives of gender history, feminist history and labour history. Kathleen Barry's *Femininity in Flight*, for instance, covers the development of the American cabin attendant, discussing the importance of unions and coordinated fight for labour rights. She lists names, discusses legal battles and supreme court rulings, but also brings in the importance of the jobs societal image.[8] In similar fashion, Victoria Vantoch discusses the importance of the cabin attendants labour unions and the contribution to the female workforce.[9] In comparison to Barry, Vantoch gives more weight to the cultural depictions of cabin attendants, as she highlights the strongly suggestive sexual tones throughout the development of the job. While Vantoch writes primarily from an American point of view, she occasionally casts her view beyond the US industry to notice the Cold War competition or the preferential hiring of Scandinavian cabin attendants. Both Barry and Vantoch examine the job of cabin attendants without any nostalgia of the "golden era" of the "air hostess". Whilst Vantoch describes cultural depiction and sexual harassment, race and age discrimination and how this affected the societal image, Barry focuses on how these issued played a role in the unionisation of cabin attendants. Joan Sangster and Julia Smith have contributed to the field, with their article about popular culture and the diminishing of the professionality and rising sexualisation of the cabin attendant in North America.[10] They have also written a USA-Canadian transnational history of influences on the cabin attendants.[11] The article examines how the Canadian airline industry looked to the US when modelling and advertising their cabin attendants and thusly shows the construction and exploitation of sexuality and gender, but also how the working women responded to the situation.

The thesis will explore and investigate the Scandinavian cabin attendant, more specifically the standing of the pink-collar profession in the ever more liberated welfare states. In what ways were the women in this line of work treated, how did they react to the industry and societal view of their jobs and how did they fight for change? As an added layer, the thesis will also trace the international and national influences on the job and the cabin attendants themselves. Historical studies on cabin

[8] Barry, *Femininity in Flight*.
[9] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*.
[10] Sangster and Smith, "From Career Girl to Sexy Stewardess."
[11] Sangster and Smith, "'Thigh in the Sky.'"

attendants' work in the United States inform the present thesis to look for similar developments in Scandinavia. In addition to that, they also provide the thesis with insight into an industry that pioneered certain developments and was keenly observed by both employers and employees in other countries. The study of service work and pink-collar professions are quite new in the study of labour history, and the study of transnational themes is fairly new to the academic field of history.[12] This thesis will exemplify some points of contact that lead to, using Jan de Vries wording, "transnational interactions", and how this helped shaped the cultural image of the cabin attendant, but also how the pink-collar profession was perceived in Scandinavian society. De Vrier claims that "trade networks reveal patterns of exchange and interaction, but they also reveal patterns of power".[13] Written about trade networks in the renaissance and the industrial revolution, de Vrier's idea is still applicable to period from 1950s to the 1970s. The trade networks of aviation were visible, whole buildings are built for it, namely airports and the pattern of power were still there. The US was at the time the biggest producer and exporter of culture, heavily influencing trends, culture and consumption in Scandinavia.

The American standardisation of the occupation, the beautiful, slim and smiling woman, was exported and admired in Scandinavia. Irrespective of this historical prominence, Scandinavian cabin attendants have found less attention among scholar in contrast to the USA. Moreover, much of the available literature on Scandinavian cabin attendants makes no attempt at engaging with scholarly discussion and is aimed at general readership. In effect it tends to be anecdotal and uncritical, to the effect that it confirms many of the clichés about female cabin attendants – complete with smiling blond women on the cover – rather than questioning them. A case in point is *Dröm och värklighet – Ett Yrke i Det Blå* (Dream and Reality: An Occupation in the Blue), a collection of stories told by retired SAS cabin attendants.[14] Chapters recount life on board and in training, but most of them are telling of the glossy images of the past, retelling the story of superb service, exciting layovers and VIPs on board. While another chapter mentions the fight for women to be hired as pursers (head of cabin crew on board), the volume reads mostly like a nostalgic coffee table book for former cabin crew.[15] The present thesis utilises these and similar books for factual information that is then followed up and verified with other sources.

[12] Berg, *Writing the History of the Global*, 1.
[13] Berg, 36.
[14] Bjurtoft et al., *Dröm och verklighet: Ett yrke i det blå*.
[15] Bjurtoft et al., 118–20.

The only academic work about Scandinavian cabin attendants that I have found is by sociologist Ulla Forseth, who in a paper studied the changes in emotional work among cabin crew.[16] Forseth looks at the period 1970 to 2020 and is therefore partly outside the timespan of this thesis. Her work, based on interviews done with cabin attendants, tells of sexual harassment in the workplace, but also how the job has become less valued and less glamorous. This is due to lower wages, more competition, and different customers, caused by deregulations from governments in aviation. On the international comparison with other airlines, Forseth describes that coming on board a SAS flight was like coming home.[17] Forseth's article argues that consumerism, mass tourism and capital competition created a shift in the ideal of the cabin attendant, from idolised hostesses to safety personnel, because the former ideal was just too expensive to keep up. Forseth concludes that the work went from being a highly coveted and "glamourous" to a low wage job in a few decades. These findings inform the present thesis as they help inform the last decade in focus, the 1970s, and the quick reshaping of the industry.

Looking beyond historian's work on women's service labour and research on cabin attendants, this thesis uses sociological concepts developed in scholarship on "pink-collar" work as analytical lenses. An important aspect in this discussion has been the commodification of the female body. This has created an expectation to the female body, sexually, reproductively, and productively. Sociologist Carol Wolkowitz writes "Everyone has a body, not everyone has the same relation to its economic and symbolic significance".[18] Women earn less than men, the argument often being weaker bodies or inferior minds. For men the economic value of the body is through manual labour and for women the economic value of the body has often been sexual, in various degrees from functional ornaments to sex workers. The sexual value of the female body was brought into the workplace when women entered the workforce. The combination of the expected femininity and "female qualities" like nurturing, domesticity and emotional facilitation, was recreated in the pink-collar professions that emerged, like secretaries, nursing, shop girls or cabin attendants. Pink collar work is often defined as workplaces where femininity is used as a resource to be exploited by the employer, but also often mobilized by the women working themselves.[19] Influenced by poststructuralist thought, V. Smith and H. Gottfried claimed, "the cultural (re)production of gendered identities [happens] through practices enacted in the workplace".[20] This thought rings especially true for the perception of the cabin attendant. Cabin attendants were not only expected

[16] Forseth, "«Smile away»."
[17] Forseth, 14.
[18] Wolkowitz, *Bodies at Work*, 6.
[19] Barry, "'Too Glamorous to Be Considered Workers,'" 120.
[20] Wolkowitz, *Bodies at Work*, 13.

to perform gender on the job, but it was the job itself.[21] The female cabin crew was required to play on femininity and sexuality as part of their job, it was in fact a requirement beginning already in hiring and training. The full scope of the societal and economical boundaries and expectations of women and the female body is far too complex for this thesis to discuss. However, it is needed to understand and explore the expectation and exploitation of female bodies and minds at work, because the workplace is more than just an economical space, it is "also a place in which people – as socially conditioned sexes are made. A room in which gendered value is being created".[22] Gendered value was present when cabin attendants in training were told to think of the cabin as their living room, and the passengers as their guest, and they had to act as hostesses, giving the job its name at the time: air hostesses.[23] The thought of the private hostess welcoming guest into their homes is repeated in feminised service work. Frances Steel's work on women in the nautical service industry describes the evolution of the nautical "stewardess" and the promotion of ships as "homes-at-sea".[24] The same thought and reconstruction of gender is evident in the SAS cabin crew hiring contract from 1954, where it is stated that "the air hostess' labour (…) consist of (…) being in charge of the serving, as well as provide service that the passengers comfort and pleasure commands".[25]

The women were not simply cabin attendants, they were female cabin attendants, and that femininity was to be shown. This of course require thought, preparation, and attention outside of the allotted working hours. Wolkowitz gives the example of the "corporate" body and the personal body through a short story of a woman who is used for an advertising campaign of the beauty salon she is employed at. She is put through an extensive reducing routine and given a new look. The main character consoles herself that "at weekends, at least, this body was hers".[26] Female cabin crew were required to have weight, height, hair style, make up and general outward appearance. The companies required the women to be more than just dressed in the standardized uniform, they required full control of the body. Similar to the woman in the short story – their body were not their own. Aside from the discriminatory rules and requirements for the job, the time that was necessary to maintain an appealing physical appearance was not compensated. The thesis keeps these

[21] Barry, "'Too Glamorous to Be Considered Workers,'" 7.
[22] Fehr, Rosenbeck, and Anna G. Jónasdóttir, *Is There a Nordic Feminism?*, 10.
[23] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 40.
[24] Steel, "Waitresses at Sea," 229.
[25] Norske Ruteflygeres Forening, Contract memorandum "Ad. Flyvertinneavtalen. Deres ref. TE/AVa", 26.10.1954, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[26] Wolkowitz, *Bodies at Work*, 17.

concepts as a vital part of the research and the debate, because as evidence will show, commercialisation and display of the cabin attendants' bodies was an active part of the industry.

Another important concept that helps understand the work of cabin attendants, "emotional labour", has been coined by Arlie Russel Hochschild in her influential book *The Managed Heart.*[27] The importance of "feminine qualities" like nurturing, service and even smiling for the other cabin attendant, made the industry believe that women should be recruited into the field. The mental work, the emotional labour, was not compensated, but taken for granted. Her theory explains that emotional labour occurs when employees introduce or supress emotions in order to portray themselves a certain way that the employer desires, and that produces a wanted state of mind in the customer or client. Hochschild conducted an empirical study on female cabin attendants, and separated the work done into three categories: the mental work concerning safety and handling emergency situations, the physical work of mixing drinks and serving food, and finally the emotional work of repressing negative feelings and remaining calm in any situation.[28] Hochschild underlined the imbalance of sexes doing emotional labour. At the time half of the working women in America worked in occupations that required emotional labour, whilst only one quarter of working men had emotional labour as part of their work life. Women's feelings were more commercialised.[29]

Hochschild points throughout the book is the effect the emotional work has on one's self. The different acts and techniques that are required to handle passengers, keep smiling after long flights or to be comforting was expected to eventually lead to a "diminished self". Hochschild claims that "when emotional labour is put into the public marketplace, it behaves like a commodity, it waxes and wanes depending upon the competition".[30] One example of this emotional labour is the focus on service and friendliness that the cabin attendants provided onboard. This expectation was created by advertising campaigns to lure passengers to fly with specific airline companies.[31] When the airline industry was regulated, a certain way to get customers was putting emphasis on the level of service on board, because "when competition in price is out, competition in service is in".[32] To keep Hochschild's theory in mind when examining sources will bring an additional layer of understanding of the pressure put on cabin attendants. In addition to balancing social and bodily control by the airlines, they were also expected to perform a part and put their own self aside. This

[27] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.
[28] Forseth, "«Smile away»," 11.
[29] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 11.
[30] Hochschild, 14.
[31] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 33.
[32] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 92.

exhaustion of emotion is evident in the internal discussions in the newsletters of Scandinavian cabin attendants, into which I will take a close look in this thesis. The pink-collar profession of the cabin attendant is heavily marked by the sexual associations, the bodily requirement and the emotional labour that was integrated into the ideal and into the job itself. It is necessary to acknowledge these angles to understand the societal standing of the job, but also the fight for the cabin attendants' complaints and issues to be taken as serious labour disputes.

To study the image of the cabin attendant and its implications on women's working lives in the industry, this thesis is based on three main categories of sources. First, I examined the internal communication, published newsletters and minutes of meetings from *Norsk Kabin Forening* (Norwegian Cabin Association) accessible at *Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv og bibliotek* (Labour movement archive and library). These documents give insight into the work of the unions, but also provide indications of the thoughts and feelings of individual employees. [33] The second category of sources encompasses material generated by the airline company, held at the archives at the SAS Museum at Oslo Airport Gardermoen, Norway. I have read internal company communication, instruction manuals and communication with the media. These sources will provide the angle of SAS itself, of the internal workings and the main goals for the company pertaining employment issues. In addition, these sources also provide communication between employees and the company. The discussion found in these two categories provides insight into the struggle between employer and employee, but also offer insight into societal standing of the airline industry and the profession of cabin attendants. [34] Lastly, I have looked through the collection of the digitised Norwegian newspapers, made accessible online by *Nasjonalbiblioteket* (National Library of Norway) in the period of 1950 to 1980. The newspapers not only reflected the public image of the female cabin attendants, but shaped this image through features, reports, news, interviews, caricatures and photos. Published sources also include selected popular fictional depictions of female cabin attendants such as *Coffee, Tea or Me?* Published sources help trace the change of cabin attendants' image, which in turn was a factor in the status of the job and the expectation with which women entered the profession.*

[33] Please note, the archive recently acquired the material and was not organised, hence the lack of shelf mark in the footnotes, as it was none.

[34] Please note, the material at the museum was unorganised, and it is therefore no shelf mark to note.

* Please note that all bibliography and sources in Scandinavian have been translated to English by the author of this thesis, by the best of her abilities.

The thesis precedes in three roughly chronological chapters. The first one focuses on the early days of the profession in the 1950s and the international standardisation of the job, the economic incentives of a female workforce, the international and domestic fascination of the "Scandinavian woman" and lastly, how the media provide a platform for the labour disputes of cabin attendants. The second chapter continues the story into the 1960s and discusses how the job was presented as an ideal pastime for young women until marriage. The heavy focus on cabin attendants' bodies and uniforms will be discussed, illustrating the capitalisation of femininity as well as the cultural and medias depiction of the job. The third chapter homes in on the professionalisation of the job, at the same time as the cabin attendants endured heightened sexualisation in popular culture and advertisement. The chapter will also discuss the double role of working mothers, both in the cabin attendant job and the Scandinavian welfare states. Lastly the chapter will discuss the unionizing effort and the cabin attendants fight for recognition as safety workers, and their issues to be considered labour disputes.

Chapter 1

International take-off and a Scandinavian landing: Transnational influences in the making of a feminised profession in the 1950s

The World's Fair in Brussel, Belgium in 1958 was a chaotic one for the American representation. It was meant to garner support for the fight against Communism and Sovietism, and shine light on the wonders of capitalism. But when the time had come, it was uncertain if the US were to exhibit anything at all, due to domestic tensions around race relations and the ongoing fight for civil rights. Luckily there was a perfect distraction present; the "flight attendant". The American airline company Pan American World Airways (Pan Am) decided that their cabin attendants were going to be featured prominently at their exhibition, which consisted of a large inflatable globe that was 15,8m in diameters. It seated 160 people and had lights and a short film explaining the travel and exploration efforts of mankind. But the main attraction was the group of Pan Am "stewardesses" who stood smiling hand in hand circling the globe.[35] The "stewardesses" were presented as the stars of the sky, a hallmark of US modernity and progress. The smiling, pretty American cabin attendant set the standard for the job at any airline.

This chapter will first focus on the international influences on the standardisation of the cabin attendant in the early years of SAS. Analysing internal company documents, I will highlight the strong US influence in the airline industry in the Scandinavian countries. I shall also briefly discuss the economic incentives of a feminised profession, based on early SAS contracts for cabin attendants and the company's arguments for hinderance of wage increase for women. Then I will turn to examining the idea of the Scandinavian woman, both in the international society, but also in the region itself, found in media's depiction. Lastly, I will look at the culmination of both these themes when I discuss the SAS treatment of married cabin attendants and the media serving as a platform for change in company policy and the discrimination on the basis of sex.

[35] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 120–21.

International standardisation of the cabin attendant ideal.

The cabin attendant was a completely new job, a highly feminised workplace which provided women the opportunity to be independent and provide for oneself, whilst exploring new and exciting destinations. In American society, the 1950s was the era of the professional "stewardess", the career-minded, all-American girl in the sky. "She represented an airborne carnation of the much-mythologized American homemaker of the 1950s – a paragon of feminine virtue, a virginal girl next door, and a model wife-to-be".[36] The 1950s presents an era with a contradictorily narrative for the woman in America, but also in Europe. On one side the domesticated housewife was glorified, at the same time, women entered the workforce in large numbers. Vantoch writes that by 1960, about a third of American women worked outside the home.[37] She sums up the two-sided development of the feminine ideal in the 1950s:

> [O]n the one hand (…) stewardesses appeared to be a submissive housewife in training, whose primary role was to serve her mostly male passengers. On the other hand, she was educated, intelligent, career-minded, committed to self-improvement, successful and independent.[38]

In this decade the "stewardesses" became the main feature in advertisement for airlines, though not as sexualised at they would be in later years.[39] American media presented flying as a domain space where "men could be men" while "stewardesses" were there to provide "female servitude".[40] The title "stewardess" came from the nautical service industry, but the airborne stewardess was presented as a more desirable figure than the nautical stewardess.[41] Similar to the nautical service industry, airline companies hired women to entice men to fly, and to promote the means of travel as safe.[42]After the Second World War, the American government initiated many programs to spread western culture and ideals abroad, partly to stop the spread of Soviet communism.[43] The cultural programs led to a period that has been dubbed "cultural imperialism" and was already in 1977 defined as "the use of political and economic power to exalt and spread the values and habits of a foreign culture at the expense of a native culture".[44] The discussion of the impact and the importance of the cultural imperialism is too grand and out of the scope of this thesis, but the important factor is that the American cultural export was deliberate from the US government and

[36] Vantoch, 27.
[37] Vantoch, 31–32.
[38] Vantoch, 32.
[39] Vantoch, 33.
[40] Vantoch, 38.
[41] Steel, "Waitresses at Sea," 224.
[42] Steel, 226; Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 39.
[43] Gienow-Hecht, "Shame on U.S.?," 467.
[44] Gienow-Hecht, 472.

were present in Europe after the Second World War. American sociologists claimed that the use of media and culture would familiarise the rest of the world with American ideals, politics, and culture.[45] The cabin attendant were the perfect ideal to be presented, a smiling and chic woman who was feminine, but not too liberated to represent the ideal woman and a potential mother.

The American cabin attendant became the standard for the job all over the world.[46] It was also recreated in the newly formed airline company SAS. Formed as an inter-Scandinavian airline company in 1946, the hiring practices of cabin crew members went through a process of standardisation. In this process the company sought advice and inspiration from international airline companies. Det Norske Luftfartselskap (DNL) (The Norwegian Aviation Company), the Norwegian company part of SAS, received international advice in 1946. The information that was sent contained the requirements and conditions for the cabin crew working for American Overseas Airlines, and an example of the contract being discussed between cabin attendants working for Pan Am and their union, Transport Workers Union of America.[47] In their argument of American Overseas Airlines not signing a contract with the cabin attendants working for them, the company claimed that if the cabin attendant enjoys her job, she will not need a contract as she will be staying there because she enjoys it. If she does not enjoy it and is bound to a contract, it will hurt the company more than the cabin attendant. And in the case of forced resignation upon marriage, the company claimed that "they get married anyway, if they want too".[48] This implies that once women got married, they would want to leave their job and the company tried to absolve themselves of the responsibility of the decision.

The list of qualities that DNL received were to set the standard for the usual requirements for the profession, including: "attractive appearance, pleasant characteristic, sales personality, stable temperament, good judgement, good character, pleasing personality". The weight was to be appropriate to the height, but never to "exceed 125 lbs" (56,6 kilos).[49] It is uncertain whether the list provided by American Overseas Airlines set the exact standard for SAS hiring practices, no directly correlating list have been found in the SAS archives. But many of the same qualities were present when discussing the training and requirements. The weight requirement was present, as was height, good eyesight, pleasing appearance. It should be noted that upon reviewing the comments of recruits, appearance of the cabin crew could be noted upon of both the sexes. For

[45] Gienow-Hecht, 469.
[46] Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 53.
[47] Gert Meidell, International communication, "The Norwegian Airlines (Det Norske Luftfartselskap) Letter No.56." 23.08.1948, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[48] Gert Meidell, 2.
[49] Gert Meidell, 3.

example, one male purser who was assessed by the company doctor was said to have "protruding teeth that could be the cause of embarrassment".[50] However, the available documentation does not reveal whether these teeth hindered this particular purser from being hired by SAS. Moreover, this example is the only time a male employee's appearance is noted upon in the archival material. It is therefore safe to say that looks were considered to be an important part for the female cabin crew more than the male cabin crew. This becomes clear from the qualities listed in the job recruitments. An internal communication from 1947 that compares recruitments between the SAS branches, notices that that DNL's cabin attendants were the youngest, because the hiring practices favoured "personal qualities and language skills" over office experience. Personal qualities in this case were appearances and the highly elusive "charm".

The industry standard, the idea of the attractive and chic cabin attendant, might perhaps have set the bar too high for SAS. The focus on looks might have reduced the candidate pool, according to a newspaper clipping amongst the requirements for new recruits for DNL in 1952. The newspaper clippings headline read "SAS on the hunt after Norwegian air hostesses. - The healthiest and cutest". The article further states that there were fewer Norwegian "girls" applying than women from Sweden and Denmark. To explain this, the public relations manager in SAS, Knutsson, suggested that the potential applicant realised the work is hard and demanding and went beyond looking attractive, thus fewer attractive girls were applying, reducing the candidate pool even further. He went on to admit "in the beginning we allowed appearance to play a large part, [in hiring], but we discovered that this was not the most important, and now we are following a different principle".[51] However, Knutsson's thoughts about the relative importance of looks as part of the cabin attendant job and his announcement of a "different principle" seemed to have little practical consequence. In the archives, the newspaper article is attached to a document that specifies the requirements for aspiring cabin attendants which were meant to be published in newspapers. These requirements were a high school diploma, fluency in English, a maximum height of 1.68m and a weight limit of no more than 58 kilos.[52] Apparently, applicants were still discriminated on the basis of weight, regardless of Knutsson's announcement of a "different principle".

[50] Birger, Internal communication,"Følgende pursere på kurs nr.24/56." 14.02.1956, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[51] J.H.S, Internal communication"SAS På Jakt Etter Norske Flyvertinner."1954, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[52] Det Norske Luftfartselskap A/S, Internal communication "Krav som stilles for å bli opptatt som flyvertinneaspirant i DNL," 1. 23.01.1952, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.

Recruiters for SAS kept their eyes on the physical appearance of applicants when looking for potential candidates. In 1955, a copy of the list of requirements of the cabin crew was sent to the Norwegian director of personnel from the Danish branch. The document mentions that female cabin attendants would have to undergo a "psychotechnical" test to assess amongst other things: their language proficiency, tending to children, health, and character. Candidates were also to be evaluated in view to "advantage in looks, cultivated and friendly performance, calmness and trustworthiness". Whilst assessing the language skills of the candidate, one would have the opportunity to assess the candidates' "appearance and demeanour".[53] This alludes to the quality of "charm", because the other personal qualities such as "calm, cultivated and friendly" is already covered earlier in the document. Placing this extra dimension, the charm, the "star quality" on the female applicant places even greater importance on the feminine aspect and emotional labour of the job. As internal documents kept a focus on looks, any "change of principles in hiring" that Knutsson may have envisaged, left no trace in the media. In an interview conducted by *Oppland Arbeiderblad* with a future cabin attendant in 1959, it is mentioned that good education, language abilities and, yet again, appealing looks were required to enter the profession.[54] The first cultivated ideal of the pretty and slim cabin attendant were still dominant. Based on the requirements from internal communication, job listings in the media and later media exposure and advertisement, I would argue that the American ideal for cabin attendants was recreated in a Scandinavian environment.

The economic incentives for female labour and the women's pay in the airline industry.

When the profession of cabin attendants became established, the airline industry quickly realised that hiring women for the job would cost less.[55] The no-marriage rule also meant that few cabin attendants worked long enough to earn promotions, raises or other benefits.[56] The standard of the feminine cabin attendant had been solidified out of economic incentives. When SAS was formed, this was the industry standard, with a smaller number of men being hired for higher level cabin crew positions, such as "stewards". In SAS, the different national branches of the company had different rules for the termination of employees' contracts upon marriage. In Sweden, cabin

[53] J.Kyhn, Internal communication, "Psykoteknisk undersøkelse av cabin attendants. 17.11.1955, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark."
[54] ''21 år unge Anne M. Furuseth ble flyvertinne i SAS'' in *Oppland Arbeiderblad.* 29.12 1959, 2.
[55] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 15.
[56] Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 26.

attendants in AB Aerotransport (ABA) would lose a sum of money if they resigned earlier than 14 months after hiring, which was the time it took to recoup their training expenses. This was not the case for cabin attendants working for DNL, who claimed that they did not want to keep on cabin attendants that wanted to leave, because their job was important work. This argument is precisely the same as American Overseas Airlines' argument for not signing a contract with their cabin attendants. Neither ABA nor Braathen SAFE (a Norwegian domestic airline) required their cabin attendants to resign upon marriage, but DNL kept this rule. They believed that it would be of no joy, neither for the cabin attendants or the company, to continue working after marriage.[57] When SAS focused on the "joy" of the work, it undermined the seriousness of the job, painting it as a pastime until domesticity was an alternative. At the same time, the focus on joy also strips away the argument of this being hard mental and physical work, thus lessening the workers argument in debates. In the same document, the head of personnel at DNL states that when it comes to the wages, the company feels that they have considered the cost that befalls the cabin attendants of keeping their uniform and keeping up to fashion on cosmetics, hair care etc.[58] This leaves out the important factor of time. The women were expected to arrive at work, with perfect make up and styled hair. This takes time, time not paid for by the employer. Hanson claims that the cost of the beauty products is covered in the cabin attendants' wages but when examining the wages, female cabin crew is paid less than their male counterparts who had notably lower expectations tied to their appearance and thus no hidden expenses at the company request. In 1955, the starting wage for "air hostesses" was 560 NOK per month, then rising steadily with seniority, capped at five years with 900 NOK per month. Stewards started at 585 NOK per month and rose to 925 NOK per month after five years at the company. The position of pursers was not attainable for female cabin crew. For the male pursers the starting wage was 830 NOK per month and rose to 1,300 NOK per month.[59] The company had extensively more female cabin crew than male, thus the incentive of lower wages for women was highly present.

In this example American Overseas Airline had a more equal wage plan. According to the example that DNL was sent, the American company paid their "stewards and stewardesses" the same,

[57] Stener A. Hanson, Contract memorandum "Lønns-og arbeidsvilkår for flyvertinner,"2, 09.06.1947, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[58] Stener A. Hanson, Contract memorandum "Lønns-og arbeidsvilkår for flyvertinner,"2, 09.06.1947, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[59] SAS, Cabin Attendants Union, Contract memorandum, "Overenskomst mellom Norsk Arbeidsgiverforening og SAS, Region Norge på den ene side og Norges Funksjonærforbund og Cabin Attendants Union på den annen side,"3 15.07.1955, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.

starting at 190 USD per month, rising to 240 USD per month after four years.[60] In this case, DNL did not follow the similar route of equal pay as the Americans did, and acted intentionally with economic gender differences. It is hard to say why SAS chose this wage plan for their employees. Could it have been that the Scandinavian countries did not experience the same surge of women in the workforce during the Second World War as the US, thus the idea of women as breadwinners had not solidified itself? Or could it simply be out of the company's desire to capitalise on female labour?

The international and domestic fascination with Scandinavian women

As an airline company whose machines were present at airports around the world, SAS considered itself an ambassador for Scandinavia. Female cabin crew became part of this effort too.[61] Most explicitly, the deployment of "stewardesses" for representing their nations happened in beauty pageants where female cabin attendants were judged on appearances, smiles and simple cabin attendant tasks. In later years these kinds of contest would be arranged all over the world, often by airline companies themselves.[62] To an extent, the Scandinavian cabin attendants scored highly in these prestigious competitions of female attractiveness, which may be explained with the fact that the women hired for the job resembled the ideal type of the blonde, white woman shared throughout the West. American airline companies searched actively for blonde cabin attendant recruits. Many companies even hired cabin attendants from Scandinavia,[63] as Aftenposten could proclaim in 1966 when Pan Am hired a Norwegian woman.[64] The white woman desired as the "face of the company" is nothing new. Benson mentions that amongst shop girls employed in American department stores 1890-1930, immigrants from the British Isles, Germany and Scandinavia were well represented.[65]

While Scandinavian female cabin attendants were regarded to represent a certain type and whereas this type was considered attractive in the industry, the looks and charms of the "stewardess" was in the 1950s not yet as standardised as it would become in later decades. This becomes apparent in a piece written by Bjørn Bjørnhovde and published in *Morgenbladet* in 1959. Bjørnhovde reported his impressions from a flight in Jordan, where he sat next to tourists and SAS cabin crew, while

[60] Gert Meidell, Internal communication, "The Norwegian Airlines (Det Norske Luftfartselskap) Letter No.56," 5, 23.08.1946, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[61] ''Oslo-Buenos Aires på - -'' in *Østlandets blad*, 07.03.1952, 4.
[62] ''SAS-vertinne til konkurranse'' in *Tromsø*, 10.02.1969, 3.
[63] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 117.
[64] Gunnar Berg, "Norske flyvertinner trafikerer Stillehavet» in *Aftenposten*, 29.12.1966, 5.
[65] Benson, *Counter Cultures*, 209.

being served by Jordanian staff. Exoticizing the Middle Eastern women, he described the Jordanian cabin attendants as giddy and playful as they pour drinks and pinching each other's "more meaty parts". A SAS cabin attendant remarked that cabin crew worked too slowly for the short flight, and though the meal service was completed before landing, the Jordanian cabin attendants did not manage to find their seats on time. One of them "sink down on the nearest reporter's knee, where hands willingly serve as safety belts". On the flight back the cabin crew also performed belly dancing. The writer exclaims that SAS cabin crew have something to learn from the Jordanian cabin crew, at least when it comes to entertainment.[66] Bjørnhovde characterised the Jordanian cabin crew as girlish and unprofessional, which he contrasts with SAS cabin crew that behave appropriately and professional. However, his appreciation for the "exotic" performance suggests that the range of behaviour with which "stewardesses" could please the male passengers was relative wide.

Settings like these show that the Scandinavian cabin attendants were from the start compared with cabin attendants from other regions. This tendency is showcased through the host of the countless pageants that would be held, [67] but also the portrayal in the media. The Scandinavian writers in articles often pointed out the loveliness, but also professionalism of the cabin attendants. "If one is to compare these (…) of Scandinavian heritage with cabin attendants from other companies of the world, (…) there is none like SAS air hostesses".[68] Alongside this fascination and idolization of the blonde and white Scandinavian woman as the ideal woman, there is the contrasting image of the liberalised woman in the welfare states.

The media, a platform for cabin attendants' issues.

The media's fascination for the new and allegedly exciting job led to a major discussion between unions, the different branches of SAS, and members of government. In 1950 the Norwegian magazine "*Norsk Dameblad"* featured an article in which their author strikes up a conversation with a cabin attendant working for DNL. The cabin attendant and the author spoke about the "modern, airy, female profession", and how she wished that Norway would follow suit and allow female cabin attendants to keep working upon entering marriage. According to the Norwegian law of equal opportunity and a supreme court ruling from 1939, the termination of an employment contract on the grounds of marriage is unlawful. SAS still had their rule of termination upon

[66] Bjørn Bjørnhovde, ''Ikke tid til mavedans ombord i jetpassasjerflyene'' in *Morgenbladet,* 16.05.1959, 9.
[67] ''Dansk pike verdens flyvertinne nr.1 '' in *Østlendingen*, 05.06.1965, 1.
[68] Jos Norborg, ''Fra Oslo til New York på 18 timer'' in *Nationen,*15.11.1952, 8.

marriage, and when the author asked head of personnel at DNL, Stener Hansson, why this was the case, Hansson claimed the rule was modelled after the American model, which illustrates the influence of the pioneers in civil aviation. Furthermore, Hansson claimed that DNL did not have to follow the ruling of the Norwegian supreme court because of "objective grounds." The objective grounds that SAS presented was that it was hard to combine the job with being a housewife, thusly they claimed they were exempt from the equal opportunity act. Being able to dismiss female staff upon marriage allowed SAS to keep many cabin attendants from reaching higher seniority, and thus higher wages. The money the company saved on wages this way was considerable. In 1951, cabin attendants with more than five years of seniority were paid 460 NOK per month, whereas a cabin attendant who had just started out received 325 NOK per month, and 360 NOK after six months.[69] Thus, the decision to fire women upon entering marriage clearly had an economic incentive as well.

After speaking with Stener, the author of *Norsk Dameblad* went to the Norwegian Minister of Social Affairs, Aaslug Aasland who was surprised to hear that SAS employed this policy, as it was clearly in breach with the worker protection act. *Norsk Dameblad* subsequently interviewed Claudia Olsen, member of parliament and head of *Norske Kvinners Nasjonalråd* (Norwegian Women's National Council). Olsen, too, thought SAS's discriminatory practice illegitimate. Yet another critical statement came from Bergliot Lie, head of *Norges Yrkeskvinners Landsforbud* (Norwegian Working Womens Association) who claimed that "air hostesses are nothing more than a combination of waitresses and nurses, and they are allowed to keep working after marriage". Lie also pondered why this rule was only applied to the female crew, not the male cabin crew. On the face of it, Lie's statement seems in support of the female cabin attendants. However, it still positions "stewardesses" squarely in the realm of women's work, as it connects the job with two other prominent pink-collar occupations. Lastly *Norsk Dameblad* went to the director of DNL, Hjalmar Riiser-Larsen, who claimed that he only followed the already standing directions in the company, adding that he lifted the maximum age requirement to 28 years. In spite of this promise, the maximum age of 28 is not something that lasted, according to a job announcement from 1962, seeking women between the ages of 21-27. The job announcement for male cabin crew, crucially mentions no age requirement.[70] Nor was there any rule of forced resignation upon marriage for them. When *Norsk Dameblad* asked if the rule was up for revision, the director answered "of

[69] Norske Ruteflygeres Forening and Det Norske Luftfartselskap A/S, Contract memorandum "Avtale mellom Det Norske Luftfartselskap A/S og Norske Ruteflygeres Forening angående tjeneste som flyvertinne,"2, 12.03.1951, SAS Museum Arhives, no shelf mark.

[70] Nordlandsposten, Internal communication, ''SAS søker flyvertinner'' 02.10.1962, SAS Museum Arhcives, no shelf mark.

course" adding that he did not want to subject Norwegian cabin attendants to rules no one else at SAS had to follow.[71]

Riise-Larsen's public promise to bring his company's recruitment policy toward women in line with the pre-Second World War legislation gave the Norwegian Air hostess Association (Norske Flyvertinners Forening) an argument to demand immediate change. On August 19th of August 1950, the association wrote to Riise-Larsen, referring to the article in *Norsk Dameblad* and demanded that the change he had committed to was implemented formally.[72] A document noting this complaint was written just eleven days later, on the 31st of August 1950. The document was meant for DNL and Norske Ruteflygeres Forening (NRF) (Norwegian Airliner Association), with Stener Hansson and Riise-Larsen as authors of the document. The internal documents remind NRF that in 1949, DNL and NRF came to agreement that DNL could terminate a cabin attendant employment upon entering marriage, because of the "characteristics of the service". The company claimed that the cabin attendant would lose interest in the job anyways because she would be away for long periods of time, sometimes overnight. She would have a harder time "keeping up with her work and her duties at home". It would also be many complications related to pregnancies, birth, and small children. The company also "worried" about scheduling problems if the cabin attendants were married to other employees in the company. The average working period for female cabin attendants were shorter than other working women, averaging about ten months of service. DNL therefore reserved the right to terminate any cabin crew upon entering marriage. In other words, the short span of the average SAS cabin attendant and the trouble of combining housework and cabin attendant work, was grounds enough for SAS to terminate cabin attendants upon marriage. The reasoning sounded like they presented the argument out of concern for the women themselves, rather than an attempt at exempting themselves of responsibilities as employers.

The same document also states that this is not allowed in ABA. This was due to a Swedish law from 1939 prohibiting employers from firing employees due to engagement or marriage. It is uncertain whether the same law was present for Det Danske Luftfartselskap (DDL), the Danish branch of SAS. Regardless, they decided to keep their married cabin attendants and did not report any problems with this as of 1950.[73] This contrasts with what the same document claims was established in 1948, that DLL claimed that women who entered marriage were not allowed to

[71] Stener A. Hanson, Contract memorandum "Avtale Mellom DNL Og NRF Angående Tjeneste Som Flyvertinne - Adgang Til å Inngå Ekteskap,"4, 31.08.1950, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[72] Norske Flyvertinners Forening, Contract memorandum "Ad Flyvertinner.19.08.1950, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark"
[73] Stener A. Hanson, Contract memorandum "Avtale Mellom DNL Og NRF Angående Tjeneste Som Flyvertinne - Adgang Til å Inngå Ekteskap,"4, 31.08.1950, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.

continue working, and that married women were not allowed to enter the profession. Due to the negotiations between DNL and NRF in 1948, information about practices in other airline companies was gathered. Two British airline companies, British European Airways (BEA) and British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) did not have any written rule about terminating married female cabin attendants. Most of their cabin attendants resigned upon marriage, only two stayed on for a short while after marriage. The American companies Pan Am, Trans-world Airlines and American Overseas Airlines held the right to fire cabin attendants upon marriage. AirFrance did not opposed to their cabin attendants continuing service after marriage. This was further reason for the decision that DNL could terminate cabin attendants upon marriage.

Because of the article in *Norsk Dameblad* and Riise-Larsens comment, the debate was opened up once again. DNL reasoned for their company rulings that the law does not apply to airborne personnel such as cabin crew, and that the worker protection act states that reasonable argument for termination must only be made if the worker has been with the company for more than three years. They made the claim, once again, that because of the "characteristics of the service" there was more than reasonable grounds for termination. Time would tell if the rule would be up for revision or not, but for the time being they held their ground with the right to fire cabin attendants upon entering marriage. This document is dated 31st of August 1950. Barely two weeks later, 15th of September 1950, Stener A. Hanson could report from a board meeting that the paragraph enabling the company to fire cabin attendants on the grounds of marriage would be removed.[74] But SAS kept their rule of not allowing female cabin crew to enter the position already married. In 1966 *Telemark Arbeiderblad* wrote about a Swedish girl who had completed her training as a cabin attendant for SAS, but before entering the position married a male cabin crew in SAS. She was then denied starting her position.[75] To defend this, SAS used the same argument as before, but in a new setting. SAS claimed that it was expensive to train a cabin attendant and if she was married, it is a higher risk of her leaving the job. The same rule was applied within Pan Am.[76] A married cabin attendant would tarnish the image of the cabin attendant who was romantically available, but also would distract cabin attendants from their devotions to passengers and it disrupt her wifely duties towards her husband at home.[77]

[74] Den Norske Luftfarttjeneste, Internal communication, "Utdrag Av Referat Fra Styremøte 15.09.1950, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark."
[75] Korrespodent ''Nygift får ikke bli flyvertinne'' in *Telemark Arbeiderblad 04.06.1966, 13*.
[76] H.C. Hansen, ''Notodden-pike på vinger mellom verdensdeler'' in *VG*, 22.04.1967, 21.
[77] Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 25.

Another case in which media attention was used to this end was the fight against age restriction for women working in the industry.[78] Here, the situation abroad was referred to as an argument for change at home. Norwegian *Bergens Tidende* reported that 6 of the 1,100 female cabin attendants in American Airline were due to be terminated because they were 31 years old. Referencing the job description that a cabin attendant "shall have an appealing look, comfortable creature, be neat and unmarried", the protesting cabin attendants concluded, tongue in cheek, that once she turned 32 the "feminine attraction would leave the woman", at least according to the company.[79] Focusing the issue on the aspect of women's attractiveness would have certainly helped gaining media attention, which in turn could be used to raise the issue with employers. As the Norwegian *Aftenposten* reported in 1954 on the protest among the American cabin attendants who lampooned the idea that women lost their appeal at age 32, it also turned to SAS. SAS spokesperson could assure readers that the company placed no age cap on their female cabin attendants, with some working up until they were forty years old.[80] This SAS rule might be true, but if it were, SAS had only existed for eight years, making it very unlikely that they even had any forty year old women to be allowed to work, but no statistical evidence of the ages of the female cabin attendants have been found.

Media fascination was a double-edged sword. The issue of forced resignation upon marriage provides a perfect example of the many assumptions tied to the job, but also the role of women in the era. Liberation and empowerment of women were officially promoted by governments and a political aim cherished in society under expanding welfare states.[81] This general policy encompassed the participation of women in the labour force outside the home. At the same time, the general expectation that women would centre their lives and aspiration outside the domain of wage work was still very prevalent and informed employment relations, for instance at SAS. The airline company's attitude toward married women reflects the view that a woman's place was at home. Like in other pink-collar professions, such nursing or retail, the workplace of the airplane cabin was considered temporary and ultimately a training ground to prepare her for domestic life.[82] Far from being considered an end in itself, the cabin attendants work was defined as a useful pastime. It kept her busy and enriched her personally, but it was not to be mistaken for a "calling" or a path towards status. Media and employers colluded in this vision, as it produced interesting copy for the former and saved the latter higher wage expenditure and the hassle with unions. The

[78] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 198.
[79] ''Aldersgrense for flyvertinner'' in *Bergens Tidende*, 23.02.1954, 4.
[80] ''Er flyvertinner over 32 år for gamle?'' in *Aftenposten,* 20.02.1954, 4.
[81] Hernes, *Welfare State and Woman Power*, 11.
[82] Steel, "Waitresses at Sea," 226.

transnational media's fascination with the "stewardess," her "exciting" life and her "glamourous" job perpetuated clichés that airline companies could use to pursue discriminatory employment policies towards cabin attendants. However, and as the fight against marriage discrimination shows, media attention could also provide female cabin crew and their unions a platform to raise issues such as the violation of the equal opportunity act.

Looking at female cabin attendants, their public perception, and their work during the foundational period of the profession, this chapter has pointed out some of the trace that connect the "stewardess" of the 1950s with the "shop girls" during the long turn of the century. Both occupations were the object of titillating stories about attractive, modern girls who would ultimately settle for domestic bliss. Both occupations recruited young women who were white and relatively well-educated who would be susceptible to the promise of self-realisation and female employees in both occupations were paid less on the grounds of that experiential benefit. It has been concluded that SAS standards for their cabin crew was heavily influenced by American industry standard, as shown by the international communication. In addition to looking at the origins of the "ideal" cabin attendant and the economic side of female employment, the chapter has looked at transnational influences and searched for possible Scandinavian particularities in which the "Scandinavian woman" was idolised and partly fetishised. Lastly, I have shown how cabin attendants used this idolisation and attention from the media to fight for change in their industry. Women was allowed to marry after employment, and as the next chapter will show, being a cabin attendant meant higher changes of a "good" marriage.

Chapter 2

Projections of the female perfection: Cabin attendance as training for marriage and media representations of "stewardesses" from late 1950s to early 1970s

"Do air hostesses make the best wives?" VG asked this question in 1963, and answered it with "yes, they do". The reasons why cabin attendants managed to "hold onto their man" was, according to the paper, because of their job. Once trained as cabin crew she was combination of a "mother, teacher, nanny, confidant, comforter, chef and party hostess", as VG put it.[83] She could also "serve dishes, apply perfect make-up, do her own hair" and as a cabin attendant she had learned to converse and most importantly when not to speak. As a cabin attendant she was been trained to serve, no matter how tired she is, she will always ask "what can I do for you?". According to VG this made her to the world's best hostess and the perfect wife. The job was presented as the best way to attract and keep a husband, and the men who married cabin attendants would acquire a perfect cookie cutter standard of a smiling, servile and poised woman.

In this chapter I will discuss the idea of the female cabin attendant job as a stepping-stone towards marriage, a common view on pink-collar professions. The focus will then shift to the feminine and strictly uniformed body the profession required and presented. Lastly, I will trace how the media and popular culture changed the perception of the cabin attendant, from brave and adventurous, to frilly and flirtatious then lastly, to sexually available

[83] ''Blir flyvertinner verdens beste koner*?*'' in *VG*, 28.08.1963, 10.

A dream job (be)for(e) marriage.

The 1960s were the decade of the air hostess, the glamourous working girl who through her job travelled all over the word. While this image contrasted with the ideal of housewife and mother, cabin attendants were still subjected to the expectation that they would "settle down" rather sooner than later.[84] This expectation was highly noticeable in the western world, including Scandinavia. Directing the female cabin attendants' work to the housewife-destination, the job was presented in the media as the perfect "hunting grounds" for a husband. The expectation that female cabin attendants would only stay for a few years and then leave for marriage shaped the job training at SAS. The company deemed it necessary to have rolling acceptance to their training program. The cabin attendant training was viewed by both the media but also SAS themselves as an extended "husmorskole", a domesticity school. According to the Norwegian press, "husmorskoler" was popular for young women after the Second World War and prepared them for married life.[85] In training the cabin attendants learned geography, service, and sales as well as personal grooming and upkeep and they were trained to be a "nanny and a nurse in the air". Thus, the work was deemed as a training ground for the "real work" women would later go in to, namely motherhood and domestic work. It was seen as something to keep the women busy until marriage, a common conception for pink-collar professions.[86]

The Norwegian newspaper *Samholdet,* speculated about the marriage prospect of the SAS cabin attendants under the headline "Suitors in line for stewardesses".[87] SAS only confirmed this narrative by mentioning often that they had a high turnover rate of cabin crew because many left the position as they got married. The *Samholdet*-article referenced this information, stating that SAS lost 15-20 % of their 550 stewardesses each year to marriage. Apparently, the average SAS cabin attendant worked four to five years before giving in their resignation and putting on their wedding bands. The job was an excellent way of preparing young women to become good housewives, according to an interview with SAS chief hostess Evy Nansen, from 1966.[88] This idea of the job being something to occupy young women until they venture into their "real job", namely homemaking, was an international phenomenon, as demonstrated by Barry.[89] Society viewed the

[84] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 32.
[85] ''De lærer veien til mannens hjerte'' in *Aftenposten,* 17.02.1969, 1.
[86] Steel, "Waitresses at Sea," 226.
[87] Bjørn Bjørnhovde "Friere i kø etter flyvertinner" in *Samhold 31.01. 1962*, 5.
[88] ''Sjefflyvertinnen'' in *Morgenbladet,* 09.09.1966, 7.
[89] Barry, "'Too Glamorous to Be Considered Workers,'" 124.

true calling for women as becoming wives and mothers. They were pressured to give up their jobs in favour of domestic duties that society deemed was required of them.

Rogaland Avis wrote about a SAS application process in 1969, where "cute Stavanger-girls" showed up in hope to earn their wings. The article also informed that SAS required the girls who were accepted not to be married but did not however fire female cabin attendants upon marrying. "After finding that the decision went against the human rights conventions, a number of airline companies allow their air hostesses to be married". It is pointed out that many chose to leave the jobs because of the difficulty of combining work and family life.[90] At a time when the majority of caring for children and maintaining a home fell on women, it was hard enough to combine a 9 to 5 job, not to mention a job with differentiating work hours and nights away.

The insistence of calling the women performing the job "girls" and not women, not only infantilises them, but also reduces the professionality of the job. This is similar to USA, where the airline companies insisted on hiring "girls" because it was "an acceptable job and useful job for young girls, as a training ground for future wives and mothers".[91] Contradictory to the US, the Scandinavian welfare states had started the processes of incorporating some of the many caregiving duties that women were required to perform into institutions. These were chores such as childcare, maternal health, care of the elderly and schooling.[92] But in the 1960s many of these programs lacked resources and fewer women had access, because "there is [was] more work than (…) jobs".[93]

Generally speaking, the attitude towards working women was changing, with voices in mainstream society advocating for women to seek jobs. In 1969 the conservative newspaper *Aftenposten* encouraged women to get an education and a profession, with a headline stating "marriage is not a life-long support institution". The article pointed out that one in ten marriages ended in divorce, and that men died earlier, leaving behind widows who had to provide for themselves and their children. The article also hinted at the fact that a job could be positive for one's self-development, and that women were a resource of talent and intelligence for society. *Aftenposten* quoted Elsa Rastad Bråten from the directorate of work, saying that while in 1875, 1/3 of women were working, this had changed to just ¼ by 1960.[94] Bråten even encouraged women to aim high: "If you are good with people, why stop at becoming a nurse? Why not a doctor?" However, even this ringing endorsement for the presence of women in the labour market held onto the conviction that "women

[90] Lars Chr. Sande "SAS på jente-jakt'' in *Rogaland Avis,* 08.10.1969, 1, 14.
[91] Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 157.
[92] Hernes, *Welfare State and Woman Power*, 44.
[93] Hernes, 125.
[94] Pia, ''Russepiker: Ekteskapet er ingen livsvarig forsørgelsesinstitusjon'' in *Aftenposten,* 17.02.1969, 5.

will always take consideration of their marriage and motherly duties in the future. Plans and education have to incorporate these factors". Whilst proclaiming the need for women in the workforce, Bråten reminds the reader of the true role of women – wives and mothers. Furthermore, the actual career alternatives were not plentiful. Most women worked in health, education, as hairdressers or secretaries or a few selected as cabin attendants. Bråten states that women are careful not to be superior to the man in their choice of profession, as this would lead to an unsustainable relationship. She also notes that women often consider their profession as part of their womanhood.[95] The same argument was used for American women entering the workforce through temp-jobs, the pay did not threaten the male bread winner, the women were housewives first and workers second.[96]

The job as a cabin attendant was perceived as particularly feminine, making it an unthreatening choice for a potential husband. The job was so intrinsically linked to the feminine, that even champions in femininity such as beauty pageant queens aspired to be cabin attendants, like one Miss Norway Britt Aaberg.[97] According to *Harstad Tidende*, "To become an air hostess is many young girls' dream".[98] The job became a dream mainly because of media portrayal. It was described as "exotic" and exciting, and became a glamorous and, crucially, an attainable job, not like many young women's fantasies of becoming a Hollywood star. For many aspiring cabin attendants, the allure of the job lay in the opportunities that came followed and especially the opportunity for social upward mobility – perhaps through the chance of meeting a husband of higher status. When mentioning the job, the newspapers often exclaimed it to be an excellent way to secure a husband and an opportunity to climb the social ladder, as *"*the gorgeous Ellen" from Norway, who became a Pan Am cabin attendant. She had entered one of the many pageants for cabin attendants and won the prize for "world's most beautiful air hostess". This was glamourous enough, but she was also to marry an American pineapple heir.[99] Ellen's life was the best possible outcome of a career as a cabin attendant, according to *Nordisk Tidende*, a Norwegian newspaper published in the US.

The job seemed to have been perceived less radical, more safe and more respected in the 1960s. *Sør-Varanger Avis* wrote about cabin attendant Barbro Hansen and began the article claiming that "[i]f you 25-30 years ago said to a mother that her daughter would have her profession in the sky,

[95] Pia, ''Russepiker: Ekteskapet er ingen livsvarig forsørgelsesinstitusjon'' in *Aftenposten,* 17.02.1969, 5.
[96] Hatton, *The Temp Economy*, 31–32.
[97] ''Nyvalgt frk. Norge ut i verden'' in *Nordlys* 24.05.1965, 6.
[98] ''SAS trenger 100 flyvertinner'' in *Harstad Tidende* 29.02.1960*,* 2.
[99] ''Den smukke Ellen fra Trondheim forlovet med den amerikanske unge ananas-millionæren William'' in *Nordisk Tidende* 21.01.1960, 1, 10.

she would protest madly and call you utterly crazy. But today this is not the case, and the new dream of young girls, who not too long ago dreamed of becoming actresses".[100] The idealistic media portrayal of the job as a glamourous "dream" shaped the image that this was not real work. Being a cabin attendant had been enduring and demanding from the beginning, but the cabin attendants also had to work hard to seem like they did not work at all.[101] This expectation and the "dream" image made it seem as though women should be grateful to experience it and therefor did not need to be paid properly. This it hard for female cabin attendants to be taken as seriously in later labour disputes.

The "dream" of a job in the skies and the possibility of finding love was what inspired Liv Irene Waage to become a cabin attendant. In her interview with *Arbeiderbladet* in 1966, Waage described her obstacles and her path to become a newly graduated cabin attendant from the SAS course. Two photos accompany the article. One is of Waage in her uniform in front of a SAS aircraft. The other is of Waage dressed in a bikini, lying on the grass, whilst looking longingly at a SAS model airplane. The picture text reads "Liv Irene dreams of higher altitudes. Tomorrow, she dreams for the last time".[102] The same interview is recanted in *Bergen Arbeiderblad*, the front page of the newspaper featured the headline "Liv from Florø on the wings today" with a picture of Waage in a bikini laying front down on the grass looking at the model airplane. The interview itself is the same as in *Arbeiderbladet*, except for a question from the journalist Artur Bruflat "It will not take long before you have captured the attention of a flight captain and come down to earth again?" To this question Liv Irene replies "Time will show and smiles secretly".[103] The journalist asking Waage when she will "capture" a captain and settle down includes many layers of expectation and perceptions of both women and of the job itself. It portrays women both as lofty and ditsy with one goal in mind – a good marriage, whilst at the same time it speaks to the expectation of romantically available and flirtatious cabin attendants. The sexualised image of the job is visible in the decision of having Waage pose both in her uniform and in a bikini, underlining that yes, she is a cabin attendant, but she is also a woman. The question is, why is Waage presented in a bikini with a model airplane? Is it because Waage wished to present herself this way, perhaps to catch a husband faster, as it is hinted to in the article? Or could it be because the feminine body was intrinsically part of the society's idea of the job?

[100] Sør-Varanger Avis, ''Morgenkaffe i Oslo - aftens på Kirkenes Turisthotell" in *Sør-Varanger Avis*, 14.02.1967, 1.
[101] Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 3.
[102] Artur Bruflat, ''Fra drøm til virkelighet'' in *Arbeiderbladet* 20.06.1966, 3.
[103] Artur Bruflat, '' Liv fra Florø på vingene i dag'' in *Bergens Arbeiderblad* 22.06.1966, 1, 5.

Whatever the reason, the feature of Waage and the interview shows how acceptable it has been to portray the female body as a symbol of the profession. A female body that was put under very specific demands.

The physical body and uniformed femininity.

Sociologist Carol Wolkowitz write that "the agency of the body is appropriated by the demands of capital accumulation and is therefore intrinsic to the construction of production, consumption and social reproduction in late capitalism".[104] This general statement is easily applicable to the situation of the female body in the airplane cabin. The bodies of cabin attendants have been extremely controlled from the early days of the industry. Weight control was already an issue back then because fewer pounds on the cabin attendants meant more pounds in cargo or mail, and maximum weight for female crew was set at 52 kilos.[105] But even when airplanes could carry significantly heavier loads, advertising and the media had already created an ideal, a glamorous, attractive, and willing woman of the sky, and bodily control was still enforced. The expectation was not just the practice of safety and service routines, the body also represented the airline. Femininity was at the top of the list of the qualities for the cabin attendant and the slender body mirrored the preferred feminine ideal. Thusly, femininity became a personal quality that was required upon hiring. This quality is a paradox, as it is taken for granted and exploited, by the corporate world and by passengers and at the same time is a highly personal quality required by the cabin attendants. Ericsson writes that femininity is associated with the "personal", the feminine activities and a women's activity is not considered as a result of the qualifications.[106] Thus, femininity is made something mythical and undefinable yet at the same highly visible and mandatory, but not compensated by the industry. This is a recurrent theme in the study of pink-collar professions.

As much as the airline companies extended their catalogue of requirements for staff to include language skills, hospitality experience and other qualifications, the main trait when discussing their cabin attendants or the job requirements in the media, is the physical appearance. It is noted upon in nearly all interviews with aspiring or new cabin attendants. It is also exemplified in the requirement information from 1966, that is remarkably similar to the list provided by American Overseas Airlines to SAS in 1946. Applicants had to "[b]e representative, charming, and service minded. They should not weigh over 58 kilos and not be taller than 168 cm".[107] Again, the highly

[104] Wolkowitz, *Bodies at Work*, 30.
[105] Omelia and Waldock, *Come Fly with Us! A Global History of the Airline Hostess*, 13–15.
[106] Fehr, Rosenbeck, and Anna G. Jónasdóttir, *Is There a Nordic Feminism?*, 190.
[107] ''Ikke lett å bli flyvertinne'' in *Hadeland* 13.01.1966, 4.

elusive and mysterious "charm" is required. The feminine and the charm makes the job into something other than work, it makes it into an ideal. The ideal hides the very real physical and mental work that the job requires, both in the airplane cabin and outside of it. The low weight never ceased to be an important part of SAS's image for their cabin attendants, regardless of the fact that this was met with resistance, not only in Scandinavia. *Nordlands Framtid* reported of the American cabin attendant who complained her case about termination due to her weight, to the UN's human rights commission for discrimination on the basis of sex, since there was no weight requirement for the male cabin crew. She weighed 62,5 kilos and this was 1.36 kilos more than the airline company allowed.[108] The preoccupation with weight was a constant source of stress for many cabin attendants. One Pan Am cabin attendant giving diet advice in the company newsletter stated, "I positively starve to keep my weight down (…) the secret is – just don't eat".[109] Weighing more than the arbitrary standard for your height could lead to often shameful reprimands from the company, or even termination. The focus on weight sometimes had a tragic outcome, resulting in eating disorders, if not death as *Bergen Arbeiderblad* reported, that a German girl died after dieting for a year and taking diet pills. The girl wished to become a cabin attendant, but believed she was to "fat" to be hired. At the time of death, she had weighed 40 kilos.[110]

Although SAS did not have random or scheduled weight check-ins for staff, like many American companies[111], they did pay attention to the physical conditions of their female cabin attendants. A headline in *Harstad Tiende* in 1967 reads '"Air hostesses that "expand"' risks getting fired". The article claims that Danish SAS cabin attendants have been noticed watching personal weight. The Danish reactions started with a dispute over one crew member being grounded due to the requirements of hair length and styling. The article also claims that a Swedish representant for the SAS cabin attendants thought the Danish cabin attendants were overacting, because "certain norms are expected of us, so we have not hired under any false prerequisites". The Norwegian head of personnel, Bent Pedersen stated that the claims about the notices were false, but "if an air hostess weighs 52 kilos upon starting at SAS and 3 years later weighs 70 kilos, we will tell her that a weight reduction is preferable". Pedersen reassured readers that no cabin attendant had been fired due to weight gain.[112] The focus on appearance and the failure to meet those, is put on the workers themselves, and exempts the employer of discriminatory rules and practices.[113] This is a common

[108] ''Flyvertinnen og menneskerettene'' in *Nordlands Framtid* 14.03.1967, 2.
[109] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 114.
[110] "Ung Jente Død Etter Slankekur." in *Bergens Arbeiderblad,* 25.01.1966, 5.
[111] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 110–19.
[112] "Flyvertinner som ,,eser ut'' risikerer sparken.'' in *Harstad Tidende*, 18.09.1967, 6.
[113] Williams and Connell, "'Looking Good and Sounding Right,'" 367.

occurrence in, what Christine William and Cahterine Connell has dubbed; "aesthetic labour" – the qualities of "looking good" and "sounding right".[114] Once hired with certain expectations of appearance, you are required to maintain them at your own time and expense. The work to maintain these qualities required constant personal control. As with femininity, it was a personal quality that was required upon hiring and was capitalised.

The persistence on the slender bodies of the cabin attendant was the association with the brand. The hire of attractive and slender women was in large part due to please the largest passenger group: men. Once in uniform the cabin attendant was a cultural ideal, but more important, they were representatives for the company. Uniforms for female cabin attendants were a source of much debate in the US, but also in Scandinavia. The difference is that in Scandinavia, the debate happened mainly in the newspapers, where often flippant writers expressed a wish for "more chic" or "revealing" uniforms. In the US, it was the companies themselves that drove sexualisation and shortened the hemlines of the skirts.

The representation of Scandinavia through SAS comes to light in an article describing frustration over the "old-fashioned New-look" of the SAS uniforms. Air France got new uniforms, and they were "worthy" of representing their country. Certainly SAS, who, *Dagbladet* argued, was the first over the North Pole and were leading many other aspects, could start thinking about acquiring a new and more fashionable uniforms for their "well-trimmed, shapely, army of lovely stewardesses. (…) They deserve it – and so do we".[115] The comment shows the societies expectation of the cabin attendant, playing both the role of service personnel and attractive ornament. In 1965, SAS crew got new uniforms, because "the pleasure of knowing one is well dressed, will be to everyone's advantage".[116]

In December 1967, *Aftenposten* referenced a survey that American Overseas Airline had conducted about the preferences for their cabin attendants' uniform. The article could inform that men under thirty and over fifty preferred shorter skirts as part of the uniform. Men between the age of thirty and fifty preferred the long skirts.[117] The article was the subject for playful response in the same paper the following day. The writer imagined that by 1970, passengers could choose which options of the cabin attendants uniform they preferred and board that plane. The options would be "very long old-fashioned skirts (…), hotpants (…) and mini bikinis".[118] Although the article was dressed

[114] Williams and Connell, 250.
[115] Love Yngve Anderson, ''Vesener med og uten vinger'' in *Dagbladet,* 19.04.1963, 8-9.
[116] ''Ny flyvertinne-uniform'' in *Finnmarken,* 30.03.1965, 4.
[117] "Nu Skal Flyvertinnen Bli Mer Sivilkledd." in *Aftenposten,* 18.12.1967, 4.
[118] ''Flyvertinnens låkorthet og passasjerenes smak'' in *Aftenposten,* 19.12.1967, 4.

as a humorous commentary on the survey itself, it perpetuated the view of the cabin attendants as sexual objects and reveals a dominant male view of the job. The fashion industry and the cabin attendant uniform had long influenced each other, with big fashion houses like Yves Saint Lauren, Dior, Ralph Lauren and Pucci designing uniforms.[119] Designer uniforms made the job even more fashionable and chic, which in turn was recreated by the fashion industry, even in small cities. *Moss Dagblad* wrote about a local fashion show for teens, and one segment of this meant dressing girls up as stewardesses with "real uniforms" and the male compère would be dressed in a "captains' uniform". The fashion show was arranged by *Seventeen* magazine which aimed to "inspire the youth to dress pretty and be fashion-minded".[120] As exemplified, the fashion industry placed trends on the perceived cabin attendant model, hitching revealing trends and a glamourised image onto the job. The fashion focus and trendy uniforms is partly the reason behind American airline companies placing more focus on the reveal of new "trendy" uniforms for their cabin attendants with headlines like "Introducing the Air Strip", in which the cabin attendant would remove articles of her uniform, each one containing a new and exciting outfit.[121] The cabin attendant was transforming from potential wife-to be, nurturing, chic, smiling, effortless, attractive, and now, even a model.

The depiction of cabin attendant as sexualised fashion models provoked resistance among women who regarded their job as skilled labour. In 1973, the cabin attendants' union threatened *Linjeflyg*, a Swedish domestic airline company, with strike if they were forced to wear the then fashionable miniskirt uniforms. "We will no longer accept to be viewed as sex symbols, and the miniskirts are cold". The cabin attendants wanted to wear jumpsuits and in response the CEO of Linjeflyg, Sandberg claimed that they do not mind what they wear, as long as everyone wears the same.[122] Linjeflyg might have been inspired by the short length of the skirts by uniforms for Southwest or National Airlines.[123] New uniforms meant publicity events, and the media was always willing to cover news and stories about cabin attendants. The uniform represented the company, but it was also used to express the femininity or sexual attractiveness of the cabin attendants. The uniform contained symbolic meaning, and with the often feminine or sexualised image, the wearer and their sexuality became commercialised and thusly capitalised.

[119] SFO Museum, "Fashion In Flight: A History of Airline Uniform Design | SFO Museum."
[120] ''15 mossepiker med i seventeen moteshow'' in *Moss Dagblad* 12.09.1964, 4.
[121] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 169.
[122] ''Svenske flyvertinner vil ha buksedress - ikke miniskjørt!'' in *Trønder-Avisa,* 13.03.1973, 1.
[123] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 176–84.

Cultural representation of the job and a media favourite

The broad spectre of cultural references and depiction of the job helped shaped the public opinion of it. These depictions were often of a glamourous situation, where cabin attendants had a string of admirers or even lovers. In the 1950s, cultural portrayals of the cabin attendants had often highlighted how brave, quick-thinking, and adventurous they were, whilst advertisement highlighted qualities like nurturing and motherly. During the 1960s this changed, as cabin attendants were now often portrayed as ditsy or vain, or as a prop for a male protagonist, whilst in advertisement the cabin attendants were chic and worldly. Throughout the industry's history the personal qualities of the women have been highlighted, and emotional labour has always been expected. The personal qualities became more physical in the 1970s with a strong sexual innuendo and a welcoming smile. But the service has always been at the centre of the advertisement, whether this hinted to sexual service as in the campaigns of National Airways or Pacific Airlines or the smiling services of Delta Airlines.[124]

Joan Sangster and Julia Smith reference the influence of the Vicky Barr books, that popularised the profession for young girls in the USA and Canada.[125] The adventure books were also released in Norway and Sweden, from the 1950s into early 1960s.[126] Vicki Barr, the heroine of the series, is a cabin attendant, who through her line of work partakes in several adventures, such as finding criminals on board, saving her family farm, and rescuing a kidnapped heiress. Marcus Axelsson, associate professor, has written about the translation of gender in one of the Vicki Barr books, from English to Swedish and Norwegian. He concludes that:

> "[Scandinavian] seem to contain fewer descriptions of Vicki's appearance, and fewer instances of misogynistic comments. (…) Vicki faces fewer negative remarks from other people around her, and she appears more confident than in the American".[127]

The books portrayed a strong-willed woman working and creating a life for herself, but she was still explicitly feminine.[128] But in the Scandinavian books, this feminine ideal was partly lost in translation, and Vicky was more so allowed to stand on her own, without her femininity as a shield. But the 1960s brought along changes in the cultural recreation of the cabin attendant. "*Boeing Boeing"* was a French play that premiered in 1960, and was a major hit in London, UK from the

[124] Sangster and Smith, "'Thigh in the Sky,'" 54; Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 93; Hochschild, 97–98.
[125] Sangster and Smith, "From Career Girl to Sexy Stewardess."
[126] Wells, *Vicki oppklarer sølvringmysteriet*; Wells, *Vicki i faresonen*; Wells and Nilsen, *Vicki løser Magnoliahusets gåte*; "Vicki Finner Den Forsvunne Tvilling. Bærekraftsperspektiver i Pikeboken"
[127] Axelsson, *Helen Wells' Peril over the Airport (1953)*, 125.
[128] Sangster and Smith, "From Career Girl to Sexy Stewardess," 145.

start in 1962.[129] In 1963 the play was produced in many rounds in local theatres around Norway and was a great success at Edderkoppen theatre in Oslo.[130] It was eventually turned into a film with starring Hollywood's Jerry Lewis and Tony Curtis. The story centres around a man in Paris who is able to maintain a relationship with three cabin attendants, simply because their occupation means no one is in Paris at the same time, and a farce ensues. The film was shown all over Norway in the many local cinemas, from 1966 to at least 1971.[131] Singer and Smith sum up the plot; "The tree women (…) are naïve and foolish (…) and display little in the way of personality or character development. We never even see them doing their jobs. (…) the audience spends much of its time laughing at the naiveté of the three women".[132] The women are treated like a revolving door of sexual objects for the main character, and are portrayed as ditsy and lovestruck women and used as a prop to help the plot along.

The presence of the cabin attendants was noticeable on the silver screen and on the television, such as in the Swedish TV- show *Girl with a dream job* which was a retelling of the life of a cabin attendant.[133] Or it was presented in book form through the diary of Liv Normann who wrote of her experiences as a SAS cabin attendant.[134] The American comedy *Come fly with me* was shown in local and major cinemas in Norway throughout the 1960s. It premiered in 1963 but was still shown in local cinemas until at least 1966.[135] The plot followed "Three cute air hostesses (…) that don't intend to give up their profession for the first and best charming man". Yet the plot of the film is based around the three cabin attendants' husband-hunting.[136] Film like these staged the airplane as a perfect venue to look for love. The cultural depiction of the job went from ditsy "air hostesses" on the prowl for a husband to vampy and sexual available "swinging stewardesses" with the publication of *Coffee, Tea or Me?*, published in 1967. In Scandinavia, the book was first mentioned in 1968 in *Romerikes blad*, which promised that the authors "Trudy Baker and Rachel Jones", would provide readers with insight into experiences from their interesting profession.[137] Eventually, the book would become a major reference point in conversations about cabin attendants in Scandinavia. For instance, in an interview with head of recruiting for Pan Am, Margaret Lagergren,

[129] Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias, "Boeing-Boeing (Play)."
[130] Odd-Stein Anderssen, '' Edderkoppen: På Vingene'' in *Aftenposten,* 08.02.1963, 3.
[131]''Odda kino'' in *Hardanger Folkeblad* 25.08.1966, 3; ''Film'' in *Rogalands Avis* 10.08.1966, 4; ''Levanger kino'' in *Levanger-Avisa,* 18.02.1967, 2; ''Variert program på Hønefoss kino i helgen'' in *Ringerikes Blad,* 04.02.1967, 2; ''Ørnes kino'' in *Nordlands Framtid,* 08.12.1971*,* 4.
[132] Sangster and Smith, "From Career Girl to Sexy Stewardess," 150.
[133] ''Svensk-TV'' in *Sarpsborg Arbeiderblad*, 02.02.1965, 6.
[134] ''Flyvertinnen på vingene'' in *Helgeland Arbeiderblad,* 07.10.1967, 3.
[135] ''Filmer i Kirkenes'' in *Finnmarken*, 05.01.1966, 5; ''Egersunds kino'' in *Dalane Tidende,* 2201.1965, 2*;* "Komm. Kino" in *Sør-Varanger Avis,* 05.01.1966, 2.
[136] ''Rådhusteaterets kino'' in *Akershus* Amtstidende, 29.05.1964, 2.
[137] ''Trudy Baker'' in *Romerikes Blad,* 08.02.1968, 3.

in *Dagbladet* in 1973, the newspaper asked: "With the bestseller about stewardesses' offers in the air, *Coffee, Tea or me?* – how does an air hostess go about with accepting offers of dates from male passengers?" The article mentions the "loveliness" of the candidates more than once.[138] The blurb of the book puts the alleged sexual promiscuity of the "swinging stewardess" centre-stage: "Remember when flying was glamourous and sexy? (…) and stewardesses catered to our every need – at least in our imaginations?(…) This huge bestseller (…) offers (…) anecdotes from the high-flying and amorous lives of those busty lusty, adventuresome young women of the swinging `60s".[139] Advertised as a memoir of two women, the book was actually written by a man, Donald Blain, who at the time worked in the public relations department of American Airlines in New York. The book was a huge success, and it was not until its re-release in 2003 that Donald Blaine was credited with the work.[140] Already in the first chapter, the motivation for the job is set in a way that diminishes it in two ways, depicting it as a pretext for dating while disregarding the aspect of skills: "We hoped many men would ask us for dates. Why else be a flying waitress?"[141] The book was instrumental in cementing the cultural image of the sexual available cabin attendant and paved the way for the long line of soft core and pornographic films that were produced in the 1970s which featured the willing and sexual "stewardess".[142]

The chapter has discussed how the job was portrayed as a fitting pastime for young women until marriage and shown how this diminishes the professionality and seriousness of the job. This hinders women from having a career as cabin attendants, and thusly also hinders employees from benefits such as pay rise or promotions. The chapter has also discussed the cultural depiction of the job, that veered from a strong willed, but feminine woman with a serious job, to ditsy love crazed husband hungry "air hostesses" and finally to the "sultry stewardess." The book *Coffee, Tea or Me?* was even portrayed as facts, a memoir of the adventures, sexual and airborne experiences that awaited in the lives of cabin attendants. The professionalism of the job diminished with these depictions, as is evident in the interview in *Dagbladet*. I have also discussed the expectation to the female body in this line of work, and how aesthetic labour and emotional labour was expected of the women, but not compensated. The strict body image was tied to the ever more sexualised view of the job in the cultural, and thus societal image. The cabin attendants' revolt against this sexualised depiction will be discussed in the next chapter.

[138] ''Ikke bare sol i høyden'' in Dagbladet, 13.03.73, 20.
[139] Baker et al., *Coffee, Tea, or Me?* - blurb
[140] Joe Sharkey, Joesharkey.com, "Joe Sharkey.Com."
[141] Baker et al., *Coffee, Tea, or Me?*, 12.
[142] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 183–84.

Chapter 3

Sex and unions: Increasing sexualisation and the fight for professional acknowledgement of female cabin attendants in the 1970s.

"Air hostesses – just a routine job or the modern sex symbol?"[143] This was the headline in an article in VG in 1970. The American author Marilyn Goldstein simply mentions all the expectations of the women in the job, glamour, beauty, and a smile away attitude. But alongside this, some passengers saw them as plastic people with plastic smiles, whilst other passengers saw them as a symbol of sexual freedom leading a desirable life. The change in perception of the job, from highly glamorous waitresses to normal safety and service personnel, started at the beginning of the decade. The signs of the changing perception are evident in the sentence "once air hostesses might have been something special (…) but today they are more and more common. Just like flying".[144] It foreshadows the two contrasting views of the job in the decade that was to come; flying sex objects or professional workers. In this chapter I will further examine the duality of the professionalisation of the job, whilst at the same time marketing them as romantically available objects. I will then turn to the debate in *inforum*, newsletter for SCCA and NKF, which centred around the presentation of the cabin attendant in advertisements. The thesis will then look upon the role of the cabin attendant as a working mother and how this issue was made a private problem, rather than a public one. Lastly, I will look upon the "deglamourisation" of the job, and the fight to change the perception of the flirty smiling waitress, to be taken as professional safety and service workers.

[143] Marilyn Goldstein, ''Bare en rutinejobb eller det moderne sexsymbol?'' in *VG,* 13.06.1970, 13.
[144] Marilyn Goldstein, ''Bare en rutinejobb eller det moderne sexsymbol?'' in *VG,* 13.06.1970, 13.

Institutionalised training in femininity

"How can you tell that an air hostess is tired of her job? – When she no longer smiles to the passengers".[145] This is how *Tønsberg Blad* ends their article describing the new SAS cabin attendant school in Sandefjord, Norway in 1970. The article exemplifies the emotional labour expected from the job in a turbulent decade that would be filled with sexualisation, downsizing, terrorism hijacks and rising oil prices. The *Tønsberg Blad* article describes a typical school day for the 48 aspiring cabin attendants, which course leader Lars Lovén claims do not have to be shining movie stars, but they had to have an "acceptable" appearance. The students lived at Park Hotel during their education, and every night the corridor at the hotel was locked. The article insist that this was to keep people out, not keep people in. They had experienced that a corridor full of "young, unwed, non-engaged and cute girls have brought trouble", but none of the girls have complained about the nightly locked doors.[146] The article is subtly hinting to the attractiveness of these girls and the sexualization that follows the job, whilst at the same time describing how demanding the education is. The article is also telling of the gatekeeping of female virtue, whilst at the same time advertising the sexual attractiveness of the women.

The sexualisation and the duality is often at its clearest in the media portrayal of the job. *Aftenposten* featured a light-hearted essay in their weekend publication *A-Magasinet.* The essay was written by a male journalist who described the fear of flying for "normal people." He described the cabin attendants as "caramels tripping down the aisle", and the accompanying illustration is of a blonde cabin attendant, with a short skirt, pouting lips, large breasts, and eyelashes so long that the eyes are not depicted. All the passengers are male.[147] The depiction of the cabin attendant presents a clear example of the cultural and male passengers' expectation of the profession. Another example of this is Konrad Antonsen's article in the Norwegian newspaper *Nordlands Framtid* in 1970. In an article following the daily life of SAS cabin attendant Gro Tønseth, the headline is "These daring girls in safe airplanes", playing on the implied sexual meaning of the world "daring". The writer described the feeling in their stomachs when the sweet voice of the cabin attendant describes the safety procedures.[148] The job is hardly ever mentioned without underlining the appearance of the cabin attendants.

The cabin attendant school was a symbol of modernity and chicness, like the image of the cabin attendant herself. It featured a model airplane cabin, swimming pool for emergency landing training

[145] Ilse, ''Skolepult med sikkerhetssele'' in *Tønsbergs Blad,* 01.17.1970,12.
[146] Ilse, ''Skolepult med sikkerhetssele'' in *Tønsbergs Blad,* 01.17.1970,12.
[147] Knut Nilsen, ''Våre fly faller alltid ned'', in *A-Magasinet*, 11.10.1969, 26-27.
[148] Konrad Antonsen, ''…disse dristige piker i ufarlige fly…..'' in *Nordlands Framtid,* 04.04.1970, 12-13.

and regular classrooms. The schedule for the SAS Air Hostesses College was packed from morning to night with subjects ranging from airline history, geography, public address, duties on board, meal service and public appearance. The training lasted four weeks, and of twenty-eight days, six whole days was set aside for personal appearance.[149] This adds up to 21 % of the allotted training time. The time allotted for personal appearance and grooming went drastically up from the instruction course in 1951. Then, out of 169 hours total, only 4 hours were devoted to "beauty instructions". This is a total of 2,3% of the total training time.[150] The training had become standardised and professionalised, so had the insistence on beauty. Looks were still a very important part of the highly feminised job, cabin attendants had to keep up appearances, as they acted as ambassadors for SAS and for Scandinavia. This is exemplified at the world fair exposition in New York, USA in 1964. Denmark and Sweden contributed with national exhibitions, but Norway did wish to spend the money. But as the Norwegian newspaper *Samhold* wrote, SAS was represented, and therefore Norway as well.[151]

The opening of the SAS Air hostess College exemplifies the years to come of restructuring and professionalisation of the cabin attendant. An article in *Aktuell* from 1970 describes the nature of the education and the amount of hard work the women put in.[152] Their good looks are mentioned as a job requirement, but overall, the article describes the mental and physical skill that is required to become a SAS cabin attendant. Apart from a few mentions of appearance, one can sense a sort of demystification of the job, and more admiration for the hard work itself. Contrasting this, in 1971, *Sandefjords Blad* wrote about Soviet Russian cabin attendants that visited the school. The Soviet cabin attendants were employed in the Soviet company Aeroflot and their cabin crew were compared to the "western" SAS cabin attendants, claiming that the Aeroflot attendants were "more motherly, less sophisticated, bulkier, less professional. They don't have the same eye-catching busts, but their chest is probably better to lean your head on if you need to cry". The journalist claimed that the Aeroflot "girls" certainly worked hard, but "you can tell there is a difference from the SAS air hostesses."[153] The difference was the level of beauty and elegance. The article puts the women in the imagined roles of "mothers" and "potential wives" based on the level of attractiveness, not as professional workers. The newspaper article is also telling of the "rivalry"

[149] SAS Air Hostess College, Training and manuals, "SAS Air Hostess College Schedule." 1970, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[150] SAS, Training and manuals, "Plan for Flyvertinnekurs." 03.1951, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[151] '' Norge vil ikke kaste bort 4-5 mill. kroner på å delta i NewYork-utstillingen til våren'' in *Samhold,* 07.04.1964, 10.
[152] Jarle Bruvik, ''En flytur i kjelleren'', in *Aktuell,* vol. 25, issue, 7, 26-27.
[153] ''Interessant å besøke SAS-kurs i Sandefjord'' in *Sandefjords Blad,* 06.05.1971, 2.

between ideologies, the western and the eastern, that Vantoch also mentions in her book. According to Vantoch the cabin attendants from USA and the Soviet Union were compared against each other as symbols or representatives. The American "stewardess¨" was "an international icon who sold America to the world. Beauty was a powerful political weapon. (…) As a cultural ambassador, the American jet stewardess would assume an important post at international cultural exchanges during the Cold War".[154] Attractiveness and the beauty of the women of the regions or states became a point of pride, which was also the case for the Scandinavian region. It was a point of pride whenever local girls were hired as a cabin attendant, or they were sent off to an "Air Hostess pageant."[155] *Esquire*, an American magazine for men, featured a picture of forty female cabin attendants as their cover in 1964.[156] The women were numbered, then listed with name and airline company. The cover claimed, "Fly to Europe with the stewardess of your choice". Among these women were three from SAS and the advertisement claimed that looks were the main factor when choosing your travel arrangements. Scandinavian women fell into the feminine ideal of the time, so much that Pan Am hired Scandinavian women for their flights to Europe, and heavily publicised their "Nordic" looks and physical features.[157] The fascination with Scandinavian women, the beauty contest for the cabin attendants and the comparison between nations cabin attendants were positive for SAS and for the Scandinavian region. This is exemplified in a traveling essay written about the "Women of Valhall" by William Caldwell, that claimed all American men have a fascination for Scandinavia, because they believe that the "golden goddesses" exist there. This idea is perpetuated every time they meet a "SAS-stewardess."[158]

The SAS Air Hostess College was step towards professionalisation of the job, but at the same time it failed to fulfil this promise. With the heightened focus on appearances and the coverage in the media constantly reassuring readers of the attractiveness of the women, the media coverage read more like a modern finishing school for young women.

Imagined sexual availability and real risks on the job.

The cabin crew newsletter *inforum* had been present since the early 1970s and often featured debates, updates about rules and requirement and also personal stories, travel letters and social gatherings. The March 1978 edition featured tips regarding hotel safety, since many cabin crew

[154] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 119.
[155] ''Gro Berge klar for Australia'' in *VG,* 30.10.1969, 30-31.
[156] Omelia and Waldock, *Come Fly with Us! A Global History of the Airline Hostess*, 106.
[157] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 109.
[158] William Caldwell, '' Kvinner i Valhall I og II'' i *A-Magasinet,* 27.07.1963, 4-5.

members had experienced robberies, theft and even assaults. The tips were many, such as, “ask a bell boy to escort you to your room”, “[d]on’t be alone with strangers in the elevator” and “[d]on’t dress too elegantly”. The tip section informs that this is to help the new female cabin attendants and perhaps the new stewards.”[159] A reason for this caution is perhaps the many times female crew had been the object for unwanted sexual advances, due to high sexualisation in the media. In 1967, a report from the SAS cabin crew exemplified this. They were staying at Hotel Shelton Towers, New York, but the crew experienced several instances of sexual approaches and even intruders, including “while waiting for the bell boy to bring the luggage, a man tried to get in to one of the hostess’s rooms.”[160] Instances like this, as well as numerous advances in the cabin, made safety tips necessary, as well as concern with having to wear a name tag. This was expressed in the same issue of *inforum.* It featured a clipping from an October 1977 *Sensus*, which is assumed to be a bulletin for cabin crews, in Denmark. The bulletin expresses the grievances with having to wear name tag, with full names. Among other complications, it also makes it easier for passengers to contact cabin attendants with sexual advances after leaving the flight.[161]

Arbeiderbladet got a comment from a retired cabin attendant, when they posted about an Argentinian football player that had been fined for “Flirting with an airhostess”. The paper described an act of sexual harassment, where the football player had smacked a cabin attendant’s buttocks. She wrote in that even if *Arbeiderbladet* might think of this as flirting, for her and many others it is certainly not so.[162] The article shows of how sexual harassment was viewed in the media and in society. The unwanted sexual advance is written off as flirting, and thus not a big deal, perpetuating the idea that the women welcomed the “attention”. The former cabin attendants need to clarify that this behaviour is not appreciated, shows how this was a common occurrence among the female cabin crew. Company policies like name tags could potentially endanger the crew, and the constant multifaceted cultural sexualisation put the female cabin crew at constant risk of sexual or physical violence. And it is this risk and the cause of it that cabin attendants were beginning to protest.

[159] 747-A/H, OSL-baser, “Det angår også deg." in *inforum* 03.1978. ,– Issues of the newsletter are held at the Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv, no shelf mark.
[160] Carl Butler, NKF internal communication, “Report from Cabin Crew SK 911, April 3, 1967." 03.04.1967, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv, no shelf mark.
[161] Sensus, “Fra C/A Bulletin.''in *inforum,* 03.1978.
[162] Tidl. Flyvertinne, ‘’Flørtet med flyvertinnen’’ in *Arbeiderbladet,* 07.11.1967, 22.

The ideal "Britt Nilsson" vs. the real "Kari Olsson"

The effect of the highly sexualised image if the cabin attendant in American culture, and the fact that the cabin crew job is, at its core, a job that works internationally, is found when discussing a new SAS advertising campaign. The objectification in the media and the downplay of the importance of the work was frustrating for the women, who saw themselves as safety personnel. The cabin attendant job was increasingly sexualised in the media and in cultural reproduction, and sometimes even the Scandinavian woman was targeted as the most desirable like in "*Coffee, Tea or Me?*". Whilst discussing Scandinavian men the "writers" claim "the women of your country are held in the highest esteem for beauty and lovemaking (…) Someday, when the eyes of the male world shift from the Nordic beauties (…)."[163] For cabin attendants the fight for professional recognition had become more vital. One of these fights is exemplified in an *inforum* newsletter from 1979, that created a series of debates of the use of personalising women as the main pull of advertising. The ad featured a portrait from neck up of a smiling blonde woman, wearing her SAS uniform and hat. The text is as follows.

> Meet Britt Nilsson. Skier. Golfer. Nature lover. Twenty nine-year old Britt Nilsson is a hostess on SAS DC-10 wide-bo services (…) She speaks English, German, French, Spanish (…) and Swedish. "I like meeting people (…) sometimes, businessmen prefer to work on their own with their papers – then, you just have to know when not to offer a cup of coffee. (…) Yes, I think we have a rather good service – but then I'm prejudiced. [164]

The writer, Anne, questions if Britt Nilsson is the "typical air hostess" in SAS. This advertisement was featured in a business magazine meant for the European continent, and Anne wonders whether the personal interest, age and name of Britt is interesting for the 16 million readers. She claims that the advertisement reduces Britt Nilsson's skills to "deciding whether or not the businessman wants another cup of coffee". She encourages to a discussion about the advertisement campaign, about the intentions and what value or potential damage representing one person for a numerous amount of people can have.[165]

The debate had started. In the next issue, Ragnhild voiced her opinion. "Britt Nilsson is sweet enough, (…) but her representation seems rather naïve. She is not representative of all of us. It is sad to register that SAS is trying to maintain this worn image of air hostesses".[166] Ragnhild wrote that the passengers would not be interested in knowing that their air hostess is an outdoorsy type and that "this advertisement reveals that the most important decision for the experienced C/A is to

[163] Baker et al., *Coffee, Tea, or Me?*, 239.
[164] Anne, "Meet Britt Nilsson." in *inforum,* 1979.
[165] Anne, "Meet Britt Nilsson." in *inforum,* 1979.
[166] Ragnhild, "Debatt." 05.1979, 11.

decide whether businessmen want coffee or not. One does have some professional pride". It is the same sentiment that Hochschild mentions, that passengers see them as no more than glamours waitresses, and that this view was encouraged by the airline companies. The appearance of working a low level skill job, leads to resentment from the cabin attendants, when they were in charge of security more than service.[167] The truly international point in this debate is found in Ragnhild comments "after reading this advertisement I compare this to the American PR-campaign "I'm Linda – Fly me", that created debate some years ago."[168] The campaign was created by National Airways, USA, in 1972, the same company that SAS had a cabin attendant exchange program with ten years prior.[169] The campaign varied of pictures of smiling women in National Airways uniform with the tagline "I'm Cheryl – Fly Me", or other names.[170] Female names were written on the side of the planes, so you could actually fly "Linda."[171] The campaign also had television advertisement, featuring a blonde woman driving, with her voice speaking "I'm Judy, and I was born to fly". Then we see Judy undressing at the beach down to a bikini and then running into the ocean. "Fly me to Houston, Nationals has non-stop DC10s everyday (…) You can fly me morning, afternoon and night. Just say when. I'm Judy and I was born to fly. Fly me!"[172] The phrase "Fly Me" became a sexual innuendo, and culture picked up the catchphrase. Omelia and Waldock claim that this advertisement campaign can be seen as the jump off point for the soft-core porn movies imagined on airplanes, with names such as "Swinging Stewardesses", "Naughty Stewardesses" or "Bedroom Stewardesses". Popular culture literature started dubbing the job with names such as "Mile high club" or "Sky Sluts".[173] The debate in *inforum* continued in the next issue. Kirsten wrote:

> How would it look if Grand Cafè (a luxurious and old restaurant in Oslo) started advertising that their waitresses went skating and loved the sea? (…)But when it comes to air hostesses one can do it. Then everything goes. We have in decades been known for being tall, blond, skilled in language and from good families. It has possibly been the common marker that fitted the female ideal that was fashionable at the time. (…) It is about time that we air hostesses acknowledge the right to be who we are, our selves, several thousand different persons with different characteristics and interest. It is what the company have been able to collect profits from throughout the years, even if the men who controls us have a hard time understanding this.[174]

With this comment Kirsten pointed to the sexualisation and perception of the Scandinavian woman, the standard ideal that few women lived up to, but also a frustration when industry represented the

[167] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 121.
[168] Ragnhild, "Debatt," in *inforum*, 05.1979, 11.
[169] "Amerikansk og Norsk sjarm i Rådhuset'' in *Fremover* 04.10.1962*,* 6-13.
[170] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 183.
[171] Omelia and Waldock, *Come Fly with Us! A Global History of the Airline Hostess*, 110.
[172] United Jet Mainliner, *1974 National Airlines "Fly Judy" Commercial*.
[173] Omelia and Waldock, *Come Fly with Us! A Global History of the Airline Hostess*, 110.
[174] Kirsten, "Debatt," in *inforum*, 06.1979, 12.

cabin attendant as almost a cookie cutter standardisation of a woman. The cause of frustration is multifaceted, as Anne shows in the same issue of *inforum.* Her argument was more concerned with the new "quasi-science" of marketing. "The original function of information is drowned in the fight for audiences. (…) It is speculated in people's dreams. Is it not still dreams that is speculated when an air hostess's personal data is facilitated in a businessman magazine?" Anne claims the advertisement is so based on gender that she wonders if the first line of the ad should not have been "Nature lover" but rather "natural lover" or even "naturally a lover". She concludes "As professionals we can like or dislike being portrayed as coffee pouring bait, but do not think that the advertisement is coincident".[175]

Anne challenges the often-used strategy of "sex sells" and promoting the cabin attendant themselves as a reason to fly. A following issue of *inforum* has a front page with drawing of a female cabin attendant with a slight frown and the text:

> Meet Kari Olsson. Housewife. Mother of four. Forty-three-year-old. Kari is the typical experienced cabin attendant you'll meet on our daily flights to New York. "I hate meeting people. It's always dreadful with our full flights. Sometimes, businessmen prefer to work on their own with their papers thats when I'm happy. Then I sit down and do some knitting or read my book. Yes, I think we have rather good service – but then I'm prejudiced.[176]

This reply meant to ridicule the advertisement of Britt Nilsson, and to display how many felt about the job, that it often is hard and demanding. The same issue featured replies in the debate. Gisle, who was not a cabin attendant but married to one, was fittingly a marketer and claimed he had great respect for the job, entered the debate to defend marketing as a profession and the advertisement. He writes that the advertisement and description of Britt Nilsson is according to what he has seen, the typical air hostess. He goes on to defend the marketing campaign and claims that when you are hired in SAS or any type of service profession there is requirements of uniformity when it comes to customer service. "You are paid for it".[177] In the same issue of *inforum* Anne replies to Gisle that if she understood him correctly, his arguments can be summed up to "1. Marketing is a reflection of society. 2. Advertisement represents the business sector. 3.The individual does not influence the powers in society. 4. The individual/worker (CA) has to accept uniformity no matter personal prerequisites". She repeats that she cannot understand that the job was still portrayed as stereotypical as in SAS advertisement campaign.[178] Still in the same issue, Espen, a steward, chimes

[175] Anne, "Debatt." in *inforum*, 06.1979, 12-13.
[176] Michelle, "Meet Kari Olsson." in *inforum,* 08.1979.
[177] Gisle, "Debatt," in *inforum,* 08.1979, 5-6.
[178] Anne, "Debatt." in *inforum*, 08.1979, 7.

in with his reply in the debate. He points to the heavily appearance focused advertisement of THAI airways with the line "The only wide bodies we have in service are our DC10s and Airbus 300. (…) Some say it's our beautiful wide-bodied DC10s and Airbus 300 that cause so many heads to turn at airports throughout the world. We think our beautiful slim-bodied hostesses have a lot to do with it". Espen writes that he would like to contribute to the "emotive debate" about Britt Nilsson. He did not think the advertisement was that bad, except maybe the coffee comment, but that can hardly be called a problem according to Espen. "Read this advertisement for Thai International and judge accordingly".[179] His point borders to "why do you complain when others have it worse?" Some issues of *inforum* are missing from the archives because it is in the December issue in 1979 "[t]he door is closed regarding the advertisement debate". Kirsten writes "in the past years the advertisement have had a tendency to present us like a piece of meat. Some liked that the job was glorified. Today, with different attitude, we do not want that kind of advertisement. What was once positive, is today negative and associated with stupidity. I am not sure that this "delicious image" that was made of us is completely gone. We have our reasons to be on guard against new advertisements".[180]

Some debate post may have been lost, but from what has been preserved and studied, I would argue that the advertisement and the following debate showed the fear and resentment of the female cabin attendant to be sexualised and presented as "ready to please" and someone the passengers could feel too familiar with. The use of the word "emotive" dismisses the very real feelings of anger over the oversexualised and unprofessional image of the job, that these women were communicating. The cabin attendants themselves pointed out the parallel to National Airway's "Fly Me" campaign and with reasons; according to Omelia and Waldock the campaign resulted with booking going up 20 percent for National Airlines, inspiring Trans World Airlines and even SAS to start using names of cabin crew in advertisement.[181] Ticket sales went up, as morale and safety for the cabin attendants went down.

[179] Espen, "Apropos B.Nilsson,"08.1979, 17.
[180] Anne, "Omkring reklame," in *inforum,* 12.1979, 14-15.
[181] Omelia and Waldock, *Come Fly with Us! A Global History of the Airline Hostess*, 110.

The double work of cabin attendants with families

Marie-Louise Stagh, a SAS cabin attendant, told of the double work expected of women in the 1970s. They were allowed and often expected to work, but it should not come at the expense of the family. She describes the never-ending challenge of providing childcare whilst working, especially when you had layovers. "Children nor the husband should suffer because the mother is away from home. (…) food should be ready to heat, groceries in the fridge and cupboard. The clothes should be clean and ironed."[182] Stagh's recollection sums up the double role many women faced in society's effort to put women in the workforce. "We had been taught, (…) how to maintain a home (…) the house should be cleaned before you left the home, still with a bad conscience, leaving a numerous "remember"-notes (…) so the child's activities were not forgotten".[183] Stagh mentions the law that gives working parents with children under the age of eight, the right to choose to work up to 75 % part time and this helped in managing the puzzle of childcare and home maintenance. The second feminist movement in Scandinavia had primarily been focused on structural patriarchal domination and had goals such as structural changes and personal liberation. These changes were shown in the focus on women's family role, both regarding accessible birth control, but also women's ability to combine work and children.[184] However, it was not until 1975 that the legislative assembly in Norway introduced the first day care law. At the time only 2,8% of Norway's children went to day care. This number went up, in the beginning of the 1980s approximately a quarter of Norwegian children attended nursery.[185] In Sweden a nursery law was signed in 1975, and in the same year 10 % of Swedish children attended day care.[186] Even if Scandinavia was on the forefront of women's liberation, in 1970 only ¼ Norwegian women over the age of fifteen was working.[187] The traditional view of child rearing as a women's responsibility was hard to shift, when the access to childcare was limited. This prevented women from entering the workforce, and if they did, the usual choice for women was part time job, full time housework.[188]

Stagh tells of the work that is expected, first at home and then at the actual job, the only one which was viewed as work. Stagh mentions leaving notes with instructions for the husbands. The situation can be defined as "weaponized incompetence", whereas person A will pretend to not be able to do a simple task such as to get out of doing it, because it will be more work for person B to explain

[182] Bjurtoft et al., *Dröm och verklighet: Ett yrke i det blå*, 117.
[183] Bjurtoft et al., 117.
[184] Hernes, *Welfare State and Woman Power*, 68.
[185] Høgskulen på Vestlandet"Barnehagen fra 1800 til i dag."
[186] Louis, M. "Förskolans historiska framväxt."
[187] Skaarer, Åse Camilla, kjønnsforskning.no, "Gifte kvinners rett til arbeid."
[188] Hernes, *Welfare State and Woman Power*, 125.

the task for person A than for B to do it themselves. Examples often given is men not knowing what groceries to shop for, or women not being able to change a tire. The terminology is somewhat new, but the practices are not, as is evident in Stagh's description. The practice is also evident in an informal essay in *inforum* from 1979. The humorous essay with the title "Mr. Air Hostess" shows how men reacted to the household chores. When claiming that many husbands of cabin attendants are "good at "their part" of the housework, using quotation marks for the males share of the housework. His wife does not think that the writer is doing a good job with their share, but the writer thinks he is contributing far more than what is expected of a "hard working husband". The writer has a good friend who has created a work manual for men with flying wives. He describes chores such as washing clothes, ironing, and vacuuming. In addition, the writer is required to "make dinner 2-3 times a week!" The essay is concluded that he should mention that he has acquired a new washing machine, vacuum, lawn mower "and lest not forget - a maid!"[189] The job as a cabin attendant was a female dominated workplace; women were encouraged into the position. But it was also a job that required long hours and days away from home. Societies expectation of women as primary caregivers and household managers meant that many reduced their hours or even quit when getting married or becoming mothers. Those who continued working had to endure both the stress of two jobs and guilt for "failing their" families as caregivers, as is evident in Stagh's memoir and the expectations from men, as evident in the essay by "Mr. Air hostess".

Deglamourisation of the industry and strikes from the unions.

The workplace of cabin crew is ever changing, so it the work environment. Different colleagues and different planes nearly every day, one can go weeks or even months before seeing a fellow colleague again. These circumstances heightened the necessity for a union for cabin crew, a collective organ who could voice demands for the workers scattered across countries and up in the air. Already in 1955, nine years after the first cabin attendant had been hired in SAS, the stewards, purser, and cabin attendants had formed Cabin Attendants Union. This union was members under the umbrella union organisation called Norges Funksjonærforbund (Norway's Functionary Union).[190] It is uncertain when Scandinavian Cabin Crew Association (SCCA) was formed, but it was present in the late 1960s.[191] In 1978, *Norsk Kabinforening* (Norwegian Cabin Association) (NKF) was formed. Their mission statement was from the start that an inter-Scandinavian

[189] Herr Flyvertinne, "Brev fra Herr Flyvertinne," in *inforum*, 03.1979, 16-18.
[190] Thor Ericson, internal communication, "Cabin attendants Union", 21.04.1955, SAS Museum Archives, no shelf mark.
[191] Bjurtoft et al., *Dröm och verklighet: Ett yrke i det blå*, 118.

cooperation was of utmost importance to promote the cabin crew common interest and the union was not tied to a specific company, but rather to the profession of cabin attendants itself. NKF invited the already formed unions and associations to meet to discuss future cooperation.[192] The importance of unions in the 1970s is clear in the article from *Klassekampen,* a Norwegian leftist newspaper, in 1977. The article headlines "SAS strike is about important demands for women." The Womens Front in Norway has decided to support the ongoing SAS cabin crew strike, and the claim for seven months paid maternity leave was especially important. In fact, the cabin crew was on a forefront for changing the rules about maternity leave for all working women. During the time of the strike, the maternity leave varied from six to twelve weeks, often forcing women to resign or take unpaid time off when having children. As Solveig Nyhamar, the forewoman in Womens Front states "Our experience is that the employers do not accept women as fully-fledged workers, because we give birth".[193]

At the start of the 1970s the job, mainly staffed by young women, went through a process of restructure. SCCA fought many battles to better the working conditions for cabin attendants, such as equal wages for stewards and cabin attendants, or pensions. After one round of negotiations, one SAS cabin attendant pointed out the unequal terms for men and women stationed abroad. Her male co-workers in the union expressed "but you have gotten so much else" and "You air hostesses should be grateful you have gotten the same pay as your male steward-colleagues".[194] The battle of female pursers was won in 1972 and according to Stagh this was a long-fought fight, many male pursers and bosses did not think women were suited for supervising positions, due to a lack of physical strength. Hochschild echoes this in her study, that passengers often tended to view the man in the uniform as the leader, and the male worker would be able to get a "troublemaker to shut up".[195] A SAS museum worker told me that a lot of the arguments were that women could not handle "unruly" passengers. He then continues the story with the first Norwegian female purser being a petite woman, that once in the air encountered an unruly passenger, she took the coffee can and knocked him over the head. The arguments mostly boiled down to that the male colleagues in SAS did not want to give up their privileged position. During the 1970s a lot of restrictions and cut downs occurred in SAS. This meant that the purser position ceased to exist, and the longest working cabin attendant often had to take on the extra responsibility without compensation. This

[192] Norsk Kabinforening, "Norsk Kabinforening." in *inforum,* 12.1979.
[193] Klassekampen, '' SAS-streiken gjelder viktige kvinnekrav'' in *Klassekampen*, 16.05.1977, 4.
[194] Bjurtoft et al., *Dröm och verklighet: Ett yrke i det blå*, 118–19.
[195] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 179.

arrangement only lasted a few years, and in the late 1970s the recruitment of pursers started again, and this time with female pursers.[196]

With the straining economy in the 1970s, eventually the deglamourisation of the job became evident in the media, especially when covering the strikes. *Klassekampen* covered the SAS cabin crew strike in 1977. The cabin crew went on strike to gain 15% wage raise, due to being left behind in the wage rises over the years. They also wanted seven months maternity leave. In the article a cabin attendant challenges the idea of her job as luxurious: "The impression is that air hostess lies on Miami Beach the whole year".[197] The media's coverage of the unions striking ultimately contributed to the simultaneous deglamourisation and professionalisation of the job. *Østlandets Blad* wrote about Braathen SAFE where the cabin crew went on strike. "Who would have believed that the beauties of the sky, those with a never faltering smile, (…) quick on their silk draped legs, smelling of a discreet and "dangerous" perfume. (…) who would have thought that they could go on strike?" The journalist asks, "striking air hostess" Liv Amundsen – "But dear, air hostesses have it perfectly fine and make good wages, better than most?" upon which Amundsen answer is clear and collected that they have a good job, but the wages are not, they demand the same wages as SAS cabin crew. Upon mentioning that the work is tiresome, so much that some employees had breakdowns because of work related pressure, the journalist asks, "but isn't the air hostess profession a bed on velvet smooth red roses?" - "Absolutely not. That is something the audience thinks – the reality is something else entirely". Amundsen defends their strike: "We have much to gain from this. I have the impression that people view us as spoiled girls who travel from place to place and see the world from the sunny side. (…) we work hard for the few rays of sun we get". Lastly Amundsen informs that the SAS cabin attendants was on their side.[198] SAS cabin crew had a history of supporting other cabin crew unions in their strikes. In 1970, SCCA agreed at a meeting that "SCCA in Norway sympathise with the air hostesses in Braaten SAFE and give them their support in the complicated situations of today".[199] It is unclear whether this included economical support.

The strikes and the fight for better working conditions were often met with similar kinds of replies and comments from the media and the public who had a certain image of the work. Certainly, their attractive and exciting job meant that they had it better than other working women? Barry explains

[196] Bjurtoft et al., *Dröm och verklighet: Ett yrke i det blå*, 116–17.
[197] ''Kravene våre koster SAS 1 dags streik'' in *Klassekampen*, 12.05.1977, 8.
[198] Sve-, ''Fra flyvertinne til streikevakt'' in *Østlandets blad,* 18.09.1970, 6.
[199] Scandinavian Cabin Crew Association, NKF internal communication, "Protokoll ved Medlemssmøte," 3, 18.09.1970, Arbeiderbevegelsens arkiv, no shelf mark.

the often-overlooked contribution of cabin attendants in the fight for workers' rights because their image and mystique of "glamourous femininity made them unrecognizable as workers of any kind".[200] This is illustrated in the questions and assumptions of the journalist. This response is similar to what female cabin attendants faced when discussing how their job was represented in advertisement. The contradicting replies that have been found has been male, and rephrasing Espen's argument in the Britt Nilsson vs Kari Olsson debate: "others have it worse, so why should you complain?"[201] The attractiveness of the job, the idea of the glamour had weakened the case for working women trying to get their voices heard. This was also the case for the American cabin attendants as Barry argues, that the "the mystique of feminine glamour (…) made them unrecognizable as real workers and political actors".[202] The mystification and idolisation that before had provided a platform in the media in the 1950s, was now working against the cabin attendants in their fight for labour rights.

The 1970s was a turbulent decade for the airline industry and for cabin attendants. The signs of unrest and uncertainty of the work were visible in an issue of *inforum* from 1978. A steward writes to the question section of *inforum*, that his daughter has expressed that she wants to become an air hostess. He asks "what can I do? For some strange reason I am anxious about this".[203] He does not state why he is anxious of his daughter's career goals, and it would be wrong to speculate. It does however coincide with a period of trouble for SAS, with pilot strikes, cabin crew strikes and downsizing. The airline industry also saw a rising challenge with incidents of terrorist hijacks.[204] This was also the height of sexualisation of the profession in America and frequents events of sexual violence and aggression towards female cabin crew. *Rogalands Avis* writes about an issue in BEA, where a steward was accused of raping a cabin attendant.[205] *Bergens Tidende* wrote about an ongoing case in the US of unruly behaviour in the air. "Pilots in the american airlines almost demands that air hostesses should sit on their laps during flights".[206] These stories exemplify the very real risks the women were put in during their workday. Sangster and Sky write "By the early 1970s, (…) airline competition for customer attention, were reflected in promotional photos showing a stewardess in a short skirt, coyly peeking out from inside the phallic fuselage of the aircraft, showy legs dangling".[207] Sexual harassment from passengers was a common experience in

[200] Barry, "'Too Glamorous to Be Considered Workers,'" 121.
[201] Espen, "Apropos B.Nilsson," in *inforum,* 08.1979, 17.
[202] Barry, *Femininity in Flight*, 2.
[203] "Spørrespalten." in *inforum,* 08.1978.
[204] Omelia and Waldock, *Come Fly with Us! A Global History of the Airline Hostess*, 121.
[205] ''Hopper ikke til køys med purserne'' in *Rogalands Avis,* 22.04.1968, 2.
[206] ''De fører fly med jenter på fanget'' in *Bergens Tidende,* 09.10.1962, 4.
[207] Sangster and Smith, "'Thigh in the Sky,'" 44.

the airplane cabin.[208] The fact that a male cabin crew is anxious about his child having ambitions in the same line of work is telling about the attractiveness of the job.

The job went through a process of professionalisation, but it was still highly feminised at the end of the 1970s. In 1979 a headline read "Air hostesses in line with women's role." The article states that even though more women were working and educated, they still work in "traditional feminine professions" meaning the service industry. The men who work in the service industry are often in position of authority, and they seldom have contact with the passengers. The job description for an "air hostess" is to be of service for the passengers, and female qualities like personal contact and care were expected.[209] Whilst at the same time it seemed that society was changing its view on the job. The Norwegian newspaper *Tidens Krav* wrote of a sexist job recruitment for cabin crew at Air-Executive Norway Busy Bee airline company. The advertisement cheekily used the equality act and claimed men was welcome to apply but added "we inform that company policy requires the employee to wear the uniform of a blouse and a skirt". The Norwegian department of Gender Equality claimed they had to print a new job recruitment, but also ads that male cabin attendants are accepted internationally, why should it not be normal in Norway? "They can cater and provide service as well as women. It does not matter for the one in the chair".[210] The profession was on the verge of a gender change.

As the 1970s saw a rise in unions, this meant the opportunity to fight for better working conditions and the possibility to go on strikes. This would become necessary, due to economic hardship in SAS and other Scandinavian airline companies. The unionising also meant that women's rights in the airplane cabin was up on the agenda. This is evident with the introduction of female pursers, the fight for and enlightenment of welfare support for working women and families. The American culture export of explicit films, books and advertisement is present in the company internal discussion and in the Scandinavian media. "Coffee, Tea or Me" is mentioned in interviews and the National Airways "Fly Me" campaign had made a detrimental mark on the cabin attendant image even in Scandinavia. On top of the sexualisation and degrading comments, cabin attendants with families were torn between their career and the expectations from society to maintain and keep a household.

[208] "Teltet på DC10'Eren." in *inforum,* 1980.
[209] Edela Espeland, ''Flyvertinner i pakt med kvinnerollen'' in *Aftenposten*, 04.02.1979, 8.
[210] Marit Jahreie, ''Brudd på likestillingsloven: Flyverter i skjørt!'' in *Tidens Krav,* 03.09.1979, 2.

Conclusion

Victoria Vantoch states provocatively that "Pretty women do not fit into what we have come to think of as serious history".[211] The case of female cabin attendants, at least in Scandinavia, seems to confirm her statement, as in Scandinavian historiography, the figure has been overlooked, both in labour history and in women's history. But "pretty women" are serious history, and as this thesis has argued, and the cabin attendant provides an excellent opportunity to explore women's contribution to the labour movement and emancipation, social change in the welfare state and transnational cultural influences. The women working in the airline industry had to play a myriad of roles, often at the expense of their own selves. As a I have shown, the cabin attendants fit into the larger discussion about pink-collar professions, glamourised femininity, women's imagined and real role in society and, cultural influences. There is also evidence of cabin attendants' many contributions to labour reform and women's movement.

The job of cabin attendant has had many names; women working in the cabin were called stewardess, air hostess, flight attendant and cabin crew. All these names represented a job that from the start was picked up in popular culture and the media, moulded that way for light entertainment and, in turn, profit interest. The conflict between a public perception shaped by media representations and the material interest of working women was a major issue this thesis has highlighted. As shown the media was not unilaterally using the women to sell copy but were also used as a platform by the cabin attendants themselves, to speak about labour disputes and to try to communicate the seriousness of their work. Unfortunately, the media's fascination with the job made it harder for the female cabin attendants to be viewed as serious workers. The "glamour" hid the demanding and enduring working conditions, and the huge amount of emotional and aesthetic labour that was required. Eventually the media and culture started depicting cabin attendants as sexually adventurous and available girls willing to please male passengers. Arguably, the media clichés shaped expectations of participants in the workplace interactions, so that the instances of sexual harassment that female cabin attendants experienced on the job increased.[212]

The expectation of a female workforce in liberated welfare-states was contested in society and by the industry. This is evident in SAS rules about termination of contract upon marriage as well as not allowing married women to become cabin attendants. Using societal expectations of women's obligations to children, home and husband, SAS could hinder women from reaching seniority and higher wages. But at the same time SAS was dependent on young women entering the profession,

[211] Vantoch, *The Jet Sex*, 7.
[212] Barry, "'Too Glamorous to Be Considered Workers,'" 135.

thusly it was called “a training ground for housewives” and made into a past-time for women until a husband came along.

The industry turned the professional safety and service worker into a projection screen for sexual fantasy and female servitude to promote the means of travel, to entice male passengers. At the same time the women in the frontlines of sexual harassment, enduring degrading work conditions and requirements, fought with the weapons they had been given. They used the media to focus the attention on issues, they unionised and went on strikes, and negotiated with their employers. From the start the organisation of the cabin attendants were present, demanding the removal of termination of contract upon marriage. After this battle was won, the union for cabin attendants remained quiet for nearly all of the 1960s. However, in the 1970s the unions became active once again as well as the fight for labour rights and equality. Another battle was won when female pursers were allowed in SAS in 1972. In addition to that, married women could be cabin attendants, and seven months maternity leave was granted. The wins for the working environments and rights for cabin attendants were important because the industry was changing. The long hours, downsizing and a different clientele meant that the workload for the cabin attendants was growing. Meanwhile, the job’s depiction in the media hindered furthering the cabin attendants’ cause. Sexualisation was still increasing in the culture, resulting in sexual harassment. The public opinion of the job was still of a glamorous women serving dry martinis on their way to a sunny beach, resulting in a dismissal of the labour disputes for cabin attendants.

SAS cabin attendant and *Miss Airways* contestant Birthe Lund entered the job in the early years of the industry. She and many other cabin attendants from 1950 until about 1980, were celebrated for their femininity and appearance, admired for the glamoured associated with travel and meeting rich and “interesting” people. At the same time, they were belittled, faced hyper sexualisation, bodily control and disregarded as workers. The commercial exploitation of femininity by SAS and other Scandinavian airline companies was less overly exploitative than the American examples, but was, nonetheless, present and persistent. However, female cabins attendants fought back. A change in requirements, working conditions and labour benefits eventually occurred, but the societal perception and media portrayal of the job did not change as fast. The cabin attendant as a pink-collar profession had become slightly less pink but was still nonetheless a prominent feminine job. The general expectations that were associated with the job between 1950s and 1970s, and which this thesis has studied are still very much with us today.

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