

Creating a more positive product response for low social accepted beauty products: The influence of aspirational and dissociative celebrities on men's product response

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Samenvatting

Doel – Deze studie onderzoekt of het gebruik van een aspirerende of een dissociatieve beroemdheid in een advertentie een verschillend effect heeft op de product respons van mannen voor laag, gemiddeld of hoog sociaal geaccepteerde schoonheidsproducten voor mannen. Daarnaast wordt onderzocht of verschillende karakteristieken van mannen in termen van een laag of hoog self-esteem van invloed zijn op deze relatie. Ook wordt er in deze studie gekeken of het aanbieden van een ambigue of een niet ambigue situatie in een advertentie een verschillend effect heeft op de product respons van mannen, voor producten die laag of hoog worden beoordeeld op sociale acceptatie.

Opzet/methodologie/aanpak en bevindingen – Een experimenteel-onderzoek met data van 240 mannen (studie 1) laat zien dat de koopintentie voor mannen hoger is wanneer er in de advertentie een aspirerende beroemdheid wordt getoond in plaats van een dissociatieve beroemdheid voor laag of gemiddeld sociaal geaccepteerde schoonheidsproducten. Dit effect werd niet gevonden voor schoonheidsproducten die wel erg sociaal geaccepteerd zijn. Het gebruik van een aspirerende beroemdheid in plaats van een dissociatieve voor laag, medium en hoog sociaal geaccepteerde producten had geen invloed op de attitude ten opzichte van de advertentie. De resultaten laten zien dat het tonen van een aspirerende of een dissociatieve beroemdheid voor laag, gemiddeld of hoog sociaal geaccepteerde schoonheidsproducten in combinatie met self-esteem geen enkele invloed heeft op de product respons van mannen. Daarnaast laat een experimenteel-onderzoek met data van 80 mannen (studie 2) zien dat het aanbieden van een onambigue situatie in plaats van een ambigue situatie geen enkele invloed lijkt te hebben op de product respons van mannen voor laag en hoog sociaal geaccepteerde producten.

Onderzoek implicaties – Voor het vergroten van de koopintentie van mannen voor laag en gemiddeld sociaal geaccepteerde schoonheidsproducten, is het belangrijk dat er in de advertentie een aspirerende beroemdheid ingezet wordt. Het inzetten van een dissociatieve beroemdheid heeft negatieve consequenties voor de koopintentie van mannen voor laag en gemiddeld sociaal geaccepteerde producten. Daarnaast is de invloed van een aspirerende of een dissociatieve beroemdheid van grotere invloed is op de koopintentie van mannen dan het aanbieden van een onambigue situatie.

Abstract

Purpose – This study examines whether the usage of an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity in advertisements will have a different influence on men’s product response for beauty products low, medium or high in social acceptance. Furthermore, this research elaborates whether different characteristics of men in terms of a low or high self-esteem will be of influence on this relationship. In addition, this research examines whether the depiction of a low ambiguous or a high ambiguous situation in the advertisement will have a different influence on men’s product response for products low or high in social acceptance.

Design/methodology/approach and findings – An experimental study with data of 240 males (study 1) have been showed that purchase intentions are higher when an aspirational celebrity is used in the advertisement instead of a dissociative celebrity for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance. This effect is not found for beauty products which are highly social accepted. The usage of an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity in the advertisement for products low, medium or high in social acceptance seems not to have any influence on men’s attitude towards the advertisement. The results have also shown that the usage of an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity in the advertisement for products low, medium or high in social acceptance in combination with a low or high self-esteem seems not to have any influence on men’s product attitude. Further an experimental study with data from 80 males (study 2) has shown that the usage of a low ambiguous situation instead of a high ambiguous situation in the advertisement for products low or high in social acceptance, seems not to have any influence on men’s product response.

Research implications – For increasing men’s purchase intentions for beauty products for men that are low or medium in social acceptance, it is important that an aspirational celebrity should be used in the advertisement. It appears that the usage of a dissociative celebrity group has negative consequences on the purchase intentions for low and medium socially accepted products. Furthermore, it seems that the influence of an aspirational or dissociative celebrity has greater influence on men’s purchase intentions than offering an unambiguous situation in the advertisement.

Introduction

Historically most researchers have focused on female physical attractiveness (e.g. Cunningham, 1986; Cunningham, Roberts, Barbee, Druen, & Wu, 1995; Singh, 1993). But this has changed: Men and women are now treated as generic individuals in need of the same desire for physical attractiveness (Davis, 2002). There are more products on the market that address the appearance of men. A large sector in the economy is now increasingly devoted to sell beauty aids and bodily care to men (Peiss, 2000). According to contemporary theorists of masculinity (Bordo, 1994, 1999; Connell, 1995; Dutton, 1995; Kimmel, 1996), there seems to be a new trend, whereby the male body can be viewed as an object that can be improved and beautified. In addition, in today's society there is a lot of importance placed on the physical attributes, because the more pretty or handsome someone is, the higher your chances are on a successful life (Calton, 2001; Etcoff, 2000; Peiss, 1998), e.g. attractive people are more often selected as work partners (Buckley & Roach, 1981) or dating partners (Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottman, 1966) in comparison to unattractive people. Attractiveness affects not only the perceived characteristics of a person but also affects social interactions (Miller, 1970; Patzer, 1983). Attractive people are more successful at influencing people and also getting people to help them more often rather than unattractive people (Benson, Karabenick, & Lerner, 1976; Chaiken, 1979; Pallak, 1983;). Consumption of personal grooming products by men has been attributed to the desires to create, develop and maintain self-image and identity (Bocock, 1993; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). Physical appearance has become a more important aspect of the self for men and today there is an enormous range in beauty products that can help men to improve their appearance.

For improving their appearance and self-image, men can choose from a wide range of beauty products, such as skincare products, hair care products, make-up and even cosmetic surgery. There is a steady increase found in men who are having a plastic surgery (Davis, 2002). But it is imaginable that these products are not equally accepted by men and also their tendency to try or use a specific product will vary across the different products. The use of deodorant or hair care products by men is probably seen as acceptable and institutionalized in the society, but men wearing make-up or having plastic surgery is not accepted as of yet. The social acceptance of a beauty product can

therefore probably influence the choice to purchase or not purchase such a product. Consumers will be motivated to purchase a positively valued product to maintain a positive self-image (Sirgy, 1982). Influence of others (social influence) is therefore an important determinant for individual's consumer behavior (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989), for example on their purchase behavior (Stafford & Cocanougher, 1977). Social acceptance of a certain beauty product by others can be of influence on men's product response, whereby there will be a bigger chance that men will purchase beauty products which are perceived by men as more accepted and hold a more positive product attitude against these products.

As mentioned above an important determinant of individual's behavior, and therefore consumer behavior, is social influence (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). The use of prominent/attractive spokespersons for endorsing a product is also evidence of this belief (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). The perception of a certain spokesperson who promotes a beauty product can probably influence men's consumer behavior, because past research has focused on consumer social influence via aspirational reference groups (Madrigal, 2000). The reference group construct has generally been accepted by marketers as important in some types of consumer decision making (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). Reference groups refer to these groups or group members who are "psychologically significant for one's attitudes and behavior" (Turner, 1991, p.5). Reference groups can be distinguished in aspirational reference groups and dissociative reference groups. Aspirational reference groups are positive groups that a individual identifies with and to which an individual is attracted, but are also groups that a individual aspires to be a member of (e.g., a celebrity; Englis & Solomon, 1995). Dissociative reference groups are negative groups and are groups whereby an individual wishes to avoid being associated with and therefore "disidentifies" with these groups (Englis & Solomon, 1995). Aspirational reference groups have shown that they guide consumer preferences and in addition identification with admired groups is related to purchase intentions (White & Dahl, 2006). It could therefore be expected that for men's product response not only the degree of social acceptance plays a role, but also the use of aspirational or dissociative celebrities who promotes this kind of product. When a celebrity is used in a campaign or advertisement, who is admired by men, the product

response will be more positive. Product choice of men is motivated by the desire to identify with these particular idealized groups. It can for example be expected that the purchase intention of a specific beauty product will become much lower in case a celebrity is used in a campaign or advertisement who is labeled by men as a dissociative reference group, e.g. men do not want to. In contrast, when a beauty product is perceived by men as low in social acceptance, the use of a celebrity who is admired by these men can probably help to increase men's purchase intention.

Some people are more susceptible to these influences on others than other people. It is assumed that this susceptibility to interpersonal influence is a general trait that varies across individuals (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). Susceptibility to interpersonal influence is related to personality factors. Several dozen studies have examined the effects of these personality factors on general consumer behavior (Kassarjian & Scheffer, 1991; Rallapalli, Vitell, Wiebe, & Barnes, 1994), and one such factor is a person's self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to our positive and negative evaluations of ourselves (Coopersmith, 1967). People with a low self-esteem seek to increase social acceptance (Leary, Cottrell & Phillips, 2001) and do not like to fall out of place in society. People with low self-esteem comply with others to avoid social disapproval (Cox & Bauer, 1964). Persons with high self-esteem have probably less need for social approval (Robinson & Shaver, 1973). It can therefore be expected that men's self-esteem influences the relationship between the degree of social acceptance of a product and the use of an aspirational or dissociative celebrity on their product response. For example, when a certain beauty product has a low social acceptance, this will play a more important role in men's consideration to purchase this product or positive evaluate this product for men low in self-esteem rather than for men high in self-esteem, e.g. men low in self-esteem are more focused on the avoidance of products that will lead to social disapproval. It is of great importance that the beauty product is perceived as high in social acceptance to increase a more positive product response for men low in self-esteem.

The effect of the degree of social acceptance of different beauty products on men's product response in terms of men's purchase intentions and men's attitude towards the advertisement will be elaborated upon in this research. Also the effect of the usage of an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity in a campaign or advertisements on men's

product attitude will be discussed. In addition, the moderating role of men's self-esteem on the relationship between the social acceptance and the usage of aspirational or dissociative celebrities on men's product attitude will be described. Consequently, the research question of this study is (Figure 1.1):

RQ. What is the effect of the social acceptance of a beauty product for men and the use of aspirational or dissociative celebrities for this product on men's product response? How will different characteristics of men in terms of a low or high self-esteem influence this relationship?

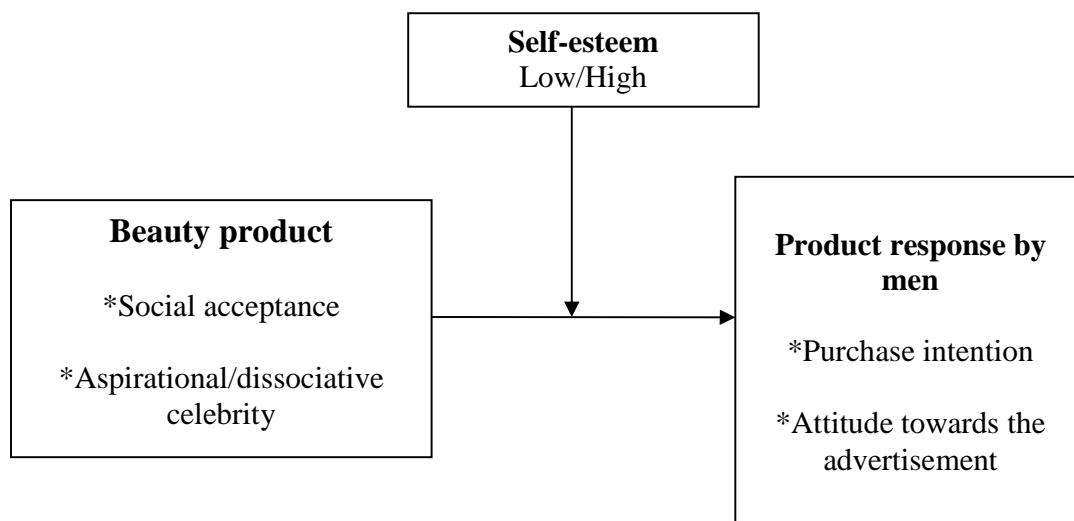


Figure 1.1. *Research model*

Theoretical background

History of beauty products

Back to 10,000 BC in Egypt, people were already using cosmetics in the form of scented oils, dyes, henna and paints (Tan, 2005). Beauty, hygiene and body care was indispensable for them (Pons-Guiraud, 2004). By using natural products men could

distinguish themselves from other men. The Romans took around 100 AD men's grooming and make-up products to a higher level. Men's grooming practices expanded to dyeing of their hair frequently. The preferred color of that time was the color blond and this grooming habit of men was intended to make men look younger (4VOO, 2011). Many centuries later, in the 18th in the so-called wig time, make up was used both by women and men. Aristocrats used white powder and rouge, because a pale face was a sign that someone came out infrequently. This indicated that someone did not have to perform heavy work and therefore should be of a good family (Wikipedia, 2011). In the 19th century cosmetics were viewed as symbols of commerce and were linked to prostitution and tainted goods (Peiss, 2000). Queen Victoria declared that the use of make up was seen as impolite and was seen as really vulgar and stuff that was only used by prostitutes and actors (Wikipedia, 2011). Furthermore, beauty ideals that tend to naturalize gender differences were also common in the 19th century (Peiss, 2000) and by using beauty products was seen as a distinctively feminine behavior. This induced a mainly increase in beauty products for the women market during that time. Meanwhile, in the 19th century there was a group of men which were focused on their appearance: the so-called dandies. A dandy was usually a male person who, from his view of life, paid a lot of attention on his appearance. Dandyism began as a form of resistance against the French Revolutions, around 1790. Dandyism is primarily associated with a 19th- century English man, who was proficient in behaving and dressing elegantly (Wikipedia, 2011).

In contrast, in these days the gender gap is closing again (Gullette, 1994). The differences for gender in bodily experiences, body practices and the cultural discourses on beauty and body alteration seem to be converged in the direction of equality of the sexes (Davis, 2002). Men and women are now treated as generic individuals in need of the same desire for physical attractiveness (Davis, 2002). It is assumed that the pressure of cultural ideals of beauty are equal for men and women, when both are treated as generic individuals having the same desire for physical attractiveness.

The metro sexual culture is an emerging culture which is rising and increasing in popularity (Tan, 2005). A metro sexual man wants to ensure that he looks good and spends therefore a lot of money to achieve this goal (Simpson, 1994). The metro sexual men are redefining masculinity (Khanna, 2004). A lot of time and money is spend by the

metro sexual men to ensure that he looks good and could enjoy the finer things in life. “With all the money modern man has begun to spend on pampering and coiffing himself... we might be forgiven for thinking that traditional masculinity has entirely given away” (Salzman, Mathathia, & O’Reilly, 2005). This popularity of the metro sexual culture has opened new doors for the creation of male consumerism (Tan, 2005). Were in the past only cars and sport hot products for men, today there are new realms add to cosmetics for men (Tan, 2005). In addition, in today’s society there is a lot of importance placed on the physical attributes, because the more pretty or handsome someone is, the higher your chances are on a successful life (Calton, 2001; Etkoff, 2000; Peiss, 1998). Men are currently spending billion of dollars on beauty products, exercise equipment, memberships for gym and hair color treatments and transplantations (Davis, 2002). In the Netherlands for example, cosmetics for men showed a big growth in 2010 (turnover 340 million euro), which is the biggest increase in all cosmetic categories. The growth dynamism for grooming products for men and especially in the skincare range for men has been identified as a product sector with great prospect (Tan, 2005). Sales gimmicks, for example toupees, that attached to the accomplishment of “professional success” are quickly produced by marketers. These are precisely the products that were considered before as symbols of vanity, narcissism and feminine (Luciano, 2001).

Social acceptance product

When men have the desire to create, develop or maintain their self-image and identity, they can make the choice to consume personal grooming products. Men who are aware that an attractive physical appearance is of great importance or men who for example experience a gap between their real and ideal self and who want to maintain a positive self-image can choose from a wide range of beauty products for improving their physical appearance. But the acceptance of all these different beauty products for men will probably not be equal in society. The use of shampoos or deodorant by men has already been accepted in society. The use of hair coloring products or face-cream by men has been more or less accepted in society as of yet. But you may wonder whether the usage of Botox or make-up by men is fully accepted in society right now.

Nevertheless, the social acceptance of certain beauty products by others plays a role whether men will or will not have the intention to buy these products and whether they hold a positive or negative product attitude. Others' influence is in fact an important determinant of an individual's behavior (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). The intention of men to buy such kind of products or rather their consumer behavior cannot be fully understood unless the consideration of the effects of interpersonal influences (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). This interpersonal influence is manifested through normative or informational influences (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Normative influence can be identified as the tendency to conform to the expectations of others (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975). These normative influences have been separated by consumer research into value expressive and utilitarian influences (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Park & Lessig, 1977). With value-expressiveness, the individual desire to enhance self-image by association with a reference group is reflected. Utilitarian influence reflects individual attempts to comply with others expectations to achieve rewards or avoid punishments. In addition, the informational influence can be defined as the tendency to accept other's information as evidence about the reality (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). As the normative influence stated, men will conform to expectations of others (their reference group). Therefore, it can be expected that when in case men have the feeling that the usage of a certain beauty product is low accepted, they will have a very low intention to use this product because they feel that is not expected that men will use such a product. Furthermore, men will also determine whether the usage of a certain beauty product will be rewarded, or whether they will be punished for using it. For example, when they expect that the use of a low accepted product will cause negative reactions, their intentions to purchase such a product will not be very high. In addition, when men experience that others see the usage of a certain beauty product as unacceptable, men will take this opinion for granted. According to the informational influence, they accept other's information as evidence about reality. Thus, when it is determined by society that the use of a certain beauty product by men is unacceptable, this will be accepted as the truth. Although when men feel the desire to improve or maintain their appearances, they will not have the intention to purchase a beauty product that is low accepted and hold a more negative attitude against this product.

Aspirational or dissociative celebrity

Social influence is an important determinant for consumer behavior and is also linked to the use of prominent and attractive spokespersons endorsing a product (Bearden, Netemeyer, & Teel, 1989). These spokespersons can be classified into different reference groups. These reference groups are also reflected in the value-expressiveness construct of interpersonal influence, in which “the individuals desire to enhance self-image through association with a reference group” is reflected. Spokespersons can be categorized as belonging to aspirational group, which are positive groups that the individual identifies with and is also attracted to, or belonging to a dissociative group, which are groups an individual avoids to be associated with and “misidentifies” with (White & Dahl, 2006). It appears from a consumer-behavior perspective that the products and brands, selected by individuals, can be influenced by their reference group (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). The far-reaching influence of groups was for example suggested by Caconongher and Bruce (1971). They found that a socially distant reference group can influence consumers if consumers hold favorably attitudes towards these group members. Also individual brand choice is affected by group influence (Stafford, 1966). People will emulate the behaviors of their aspirational group (Englis & Solomon, 1995), but they diverge and avoid products which are associated with dissociative reference groups (Berger & Heath, 2007,2008; White & Dahl, 2006,2007). Aspirational reference groups have been showed to guide consumer preferences (White & Dahl, 2006). The identification with aspirational reference groups is related to purchase intention. Madrigal (2000) for example demonstrated that the level of identification with a basketball team was positively related with people’s intentions to purchase sponsor’s products. Dissociative reference groups have also implications for the evaluations of consumers and for their product choice (White & Dahl, 2006). Consumers can have the desire to avoid dissociative reference groups and therefore this will influence their preferences (White & Dahl, 2006). A dissociative reference group is seen as an out-group and an individual is motivated to avoid being associated with this group (White & Dahl, 2006). For example, when a banquet scenario is given to men, they were less likely to order a steak when it was labeled “ladies cut” then it was labeled as the “chef’s cut” (White & Dahl, 2006). Dissociative reference groups will not only have implications for consumer evaluations

and choice, but this effect will be more pronounced when self-presentation concerns are relevant. It is suggested by self-report that membership reference groups may have greater influence when the product is consumed publicly rather than privately (Bearden & Etzel, 1982; Childers & Rao, 1992). In addition, individuals are more likely to oppose another person's opinion when they associate this individual with a negative reference group and this specific finding is correlated with public self-consciousness (Carver & Humphries, 1981).

Marketers will of course create positive effects about their products towards consumers and in helping to achieve this; they are using celebrity endorsers as their spokespersons (Erdogan, 1999). These celebrity endorsers are used to shape consumers' product opinions (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). These celebrity endorsers can also serve as a peripheral cue and the endorsement of celebrities can increase the attention that is paid to an advertisement (Buttle, Raymond, and Danziger 2000). Their attractiveness, or how much they are being liked, can lead to more favorable opinions being formed (Baker & Churchill, 1977; Chaiken, 1979). It is hoped by the marketers that consumers will relate the product to the celebrity endorser and of course in a positive light (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). It is of great importance that these celebrities are assessed by men as belonging to an aspirational reference group because celebrity endorsers can shape product opinions. When men are attracted to a celebrity, this will probably help them to form more positive opinions about the beauty product. In addition, when there is identification of individuals with admired groups, this is related to purchase intention (White & Dahl, 2006). In case the celebrity who is promoting a certain beauty product is assessed as belonging to an aspirational group, men's product attitude will probably be higher. In contrast, men may avoid associations which are derived from celebrities they do not aspire to obtain. Therefore, men will probably form more negative opinions about a product if a dissociative celebrity is used for endorsing a product, because they will not be associated with this group. Also men's product response for this product will be very negative.

As mentioned above, products can be experienced by men as low, medium or high in social acceptance. The use of an aspirational or dissociative celebrity for product promoting will have an effect for beauty products that are experienced by men as high in

social acceptance. Their product response will probably be more positive by the usage of an aspirational celebrity. But it is expected that this effect for a highly accepted beauty product will be much smaller than for beauty products experienced as low or medium socially accepted, because when a product is highly accepted and already institutionalized in the society, using this product is more of a habit. The influence of the usage of an aspirational or dissociative celebrity will therefore be lower for this kind of products. For medium and low accepted beauty products it is another story. For example, purchase intentions by men will be much lower when men expect that usage of a certain product will cause punishments or negative reactions. If the used celebrity in the advertisement is also labeled as belonging to a dissociative reference group, men will be also very motivated to avoid being associated with this out-group and will therefore oppose the recommended product by this celebrity, making their purchase intentions for these products even lower. If marketers use a celebrity, who is assessed by men as aspirational or who is admired by men, they will probably create more positive effects in mind of those men because aspirational reference groups can guide consumer preferences and can therefore influence men's product response in a positive way. In addition, more favorable opinions about a low or medium accepted beauty product can be induced if the used celebrity is being more liked. A very powerful and aspirational celebrity endorser is needed for medium or low social accepted beauty products and should especially be applied for very low accepted and out of thinking beauty products. Although it is expected that the use of a dissociative reference group will in generally lead to a more negative product response by men, it will be experimentally tested here whether the use of a dissociative or aspirational reference group is more crucial for men's purchase intentions and men's attitude towards the advertisement for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance than for products high in social acceptance. This because it is expected that the use of products that are high in social acceptance is more of a habit and therefore a reference group will be of less influence on men's product response. From this line of reasoning the following hypothesis is formulated:

H1: Men's product response will be more positive when an aspirational celebrity is used instead of a dissociative celebrity in the advertisement for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance, men are holding a more positive attitude towards the advertisement and showing higher purchase intentions when an aspirational celebrity is used instead of a dissociative celebrity.

There will be a minor influence of a dissociative or aspirational celebrity on men's product response when the product is perceived as high in social acceptance.

Self-esteem

As mentioned above, it is expected that the degree of social acceptance of a beauty product determines men's product response. Hence, social influence is an important determinant for men's consumer behavior. This susceptibility to interpersonal influence is related to personality factors and one such a factor is a person's self-esteem (McGuire, 1968; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). This self-esteem construct plays for example a critical role in the structure of a person's self-concept (Rogers, 1981; Tesser & Campbell, 1983).

All individuals are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept (Shrauger, 1975), and this construct can be viewed as the "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7). Self-concept has been used for examining the perception of products (French & Glaschner, 1971; Hamm & Cundiff, 1969). When men for example experience a gap between their actual and ideal self, they can decide to use grooming products for men to improve their appearance. Self-esteem has an influence on the self-concept motive and refers to the tendency to seek experiences that will enhance the self-concept (Sirgy, 1982). Self-esteem can be referred to the positive and negative evaluations we have about ourselves (Coopersmith, 1967). All people can have a high or low self-esteem. People with a low self-esteem are for example more willing to comply with others' suggestion for avoiding social disapproval (Bearden, Netemeyer & Teel, 1989). In contrast, people high in self-esteem are less

influenced by others opinions (Wood & Stagner, 1994). It is for example also reported by Janis (1954) that persons with low self-esteem are most easily influenced and persons who are high in self-esteem are least influenced.

Social acceptance of product usage, thus the social influence, could therefore be of influence on the choice of men to purchase or not purchase these products. For products high in social acceptance, there will probably be little difference in the purchase intention for men who are high or low in self-esteem. This, because men low in self-esteem do not feel any social disapproval when using these products, due to the big social acceptance of these products. For products which are medium or low accepted in the society, it is expected that men's self-esteem will play a more important role. For men high in self-esteem, the degree of acceptance will not be of great importance, because they are less influenced by others opinions. In addition, individuals high in self-esteem are more likely to believe that others think well of them and they are therefore less concerned with social rejection than low self-esteem persons are (Bearden, Hardesty, & Rose, 2001). But for men low in self-esteem, the medium or low acceptance of beauty products will influence their product response in a negative way. These men do not want to fall out and are avoiding social disapproval. When they have the feeling that a certain beauty product is medium or low accepted in society, this will probably reduce their purchase intention. They will not purchase these medium or low social accepted beauty products, in order to protect their self-concept and self-esteem.

As mentioned above, people's product response is not only influenced through social influence, but also through the usage of an admired celebrity in the advertisement (White & Dahl, 2006). When these celebrity endorsers are liked and are belonging to an inspirational reference group, men can form more positive opinions about these products. When a beauty product is medium or low in social acceptance, it can be expected that the use of a powerful and inspirational celebrity can help to increase a more positive product response in terms of purchase intention or product attitude, especially for men low in self-esteem. This because it has been shown by aspirational reference groups that they can guide consumer preferences. Other research (Lockwood & Kunda, 1997) has for example showed that people can become inspired and also motivated by relevant group members. Thus, when in the first place product response for men low in self-esteem will

be very negative for products low or medium in social acceptance because of the social rejection concerns, the use of an admired celebrity in an advertisement, will probably increase a more positive product response. On the other hand, it is expected that the use of an aspirational celebrity will be of lower influence on product response for men high in self-esteem than for men low in self-esteem, because they are less influenced by opinion shaping.

In contrast, when a celebrity is used who belongs to a dissociative reference group, men are motivated to avoid being associated with this person or group. They will give a negative label to the product, because this product is used by an out-group and their evaluation of this product will therefore be very low which results in a more negative product response. They probably expect that the usage of a beauty product recommended by a negative reference group (dissociative celebrity), will increase the chance of social rejection in their eyes. It is expected that when a beauty product is experienced as low or medium in social acceptance, especially men with a low self-esteem would show a more pronounced tendency to avoid association with these dissociative reference group. For men high in self-esteem the use of dissociative celebrity for products low or medium in social acceptance will be of lesser importance, because they are less influenced by this opinion shaping. Thus it is expected, that the label of a reference group will be of greater influence on men's product response in terms of purchase intention and attitude towards the advertisement for men low in self-esteem than for men high in self-esteem. Giving the above mentioned line of reasoning the following hypotheses are formulated:

- H2:** Product response of men in terms of purchase intention and attitude towards the advertisement will be more negative for men low in self-esteem than for men high in self-esteem when the celebrity in the advertisement of a low social accepted beauty product is associated with a dissociative reference group.

- H3:** Product response of men in terms of purchase intention and attitude towards the advertisement will be more negative for men low in self-esteem than for men high in self-esteem when the celebrity in the advertisement of a medium social accepted beauty product is associated with a dissociative reference group.
- H4:** Product response of men in terms of purchase intention and attitude towards the advertisement will be more positive for men low in self-esteem than for men high in self-esteem when the celebrity in the advertisement of a low social accepted beauty product is associated with an aspirational reference group.
- H5:** Product response of men in terms of purchase intention and attitude towards the advertisement will be more positive for men low in self-esteem than for men high in self-esteem when the celebrity in the advertisement of a medium social accepted beauty product is associated with an aspirational reference group.

STUDY 1

In this study, the influence of the degree of social acceptance of a beauty product on men's product response and the influence of the use of different reference groups on men's product response were examined. In addition, it was examined whether men's self-esteem will have a moderating effect on the relationship between social product acceptance and the use of different reference groups on men's product response.

Method

Pre-test

To determine whether men assess the usage of different beauty products (shampoo, deodorant, foundation, hair coloring products, body crème, nail care, waxing body hair, moisturizer, and face cream) by men as low, medium or high in social acceptance, 16 men had been asked to indicate how acceptable it is for men to use these products with anchors 1 = totally acceptable, to 7 = totally unacceptable (Appendix A). The mean acceptability ratings were examined to identify three products that would meet the criteria that the beauty product is low, medium or high in social acceptability. Based on the results, deodorant was selected as a high social acceptable product ($M = 7.00$; $SD = 0.00$), hair coloring products as a medium social accepted product ($M = 3.81$; $SD = 1.47$) and foundation was selected as a low social accepted product ($M = 2.44$; $SD = 1.36$).

An aspirational celebrity and also a dissociative celebrity will be used in the advertisements to determine the reference group influence on men's purchase intentions. To determine whether men label male celebrities as aspirational or dissociative, a sort of Q-sort test was used. Pictures of ten famous men were showed to sixteen men (George Clooney, Jason Statham, Hans Kraay Jr., Humberto Tan, Daniel Craig, Gerard Joling, David Beckham, Marilyn Manson, Charlie Sheen, and Cristiano Ronaldo) and these men must then specify a hierarchy from 1 = least appealing, to 10 = most appealing. Based on the results, those men labelled Jason Statham as the most appealing person ($M = 8.81$; $SD = 1.33$). Marilyn Manson was labeled as the least appealing person ($M = 1.88$; $SD = 2.25$), followed by Gerard Joling ($M = 3.00$; $SD = 1.37$). Because it was expected that Marilyn Manson will be valued very positively in some subcultures, it will be better to use Gerard Joling as the dissociative celebrity.

Respondents

Data from 240 males has been collected. Forty-nine respondents fall within the age range of 0 – 20 years (21 percent), 117 fall within the age range of 21 – 30 years (49 percent), 28 fall within the age range of 31-40 years (11 percent), 28 fall within the range of 41 – 50 years (11 percent) and 18 fall within the age range of 51 years and older (8 percent).

Among the respondents three males have attended primary education (1 percent), thirteen secondary education (6 percent), 39 secondary vocational education (16 percent), 65 higher vocational education (27 percent) and 120 University education (50 percent). Two hundred thirty-three respondents are heterosexual (97 percent) and seven respondents are homosexual (3 percent).

Procedure

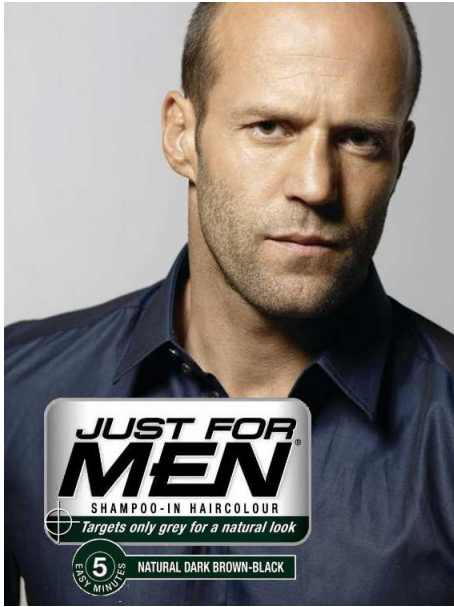
The questionnaire was distributed both digitally and on paper among friends, family, colleagues and other college students. The anonymity of the respondents was safeguarded. For this study, a questionnaire was used which consists of different measurement scales which will be further explained in the section instruments. A 3 (product acceptance: low vs. medium vs. high) x 2 (celebrity: aspirational vs. dissociative) x 2 (self-esteem: low vs. high) between subjects design was used in this study. The respondents were randomly assigned among six groups and each group received one of the six versions of the advertisement (depicted below). All respondents were given the same questionnaire (Appendix B).



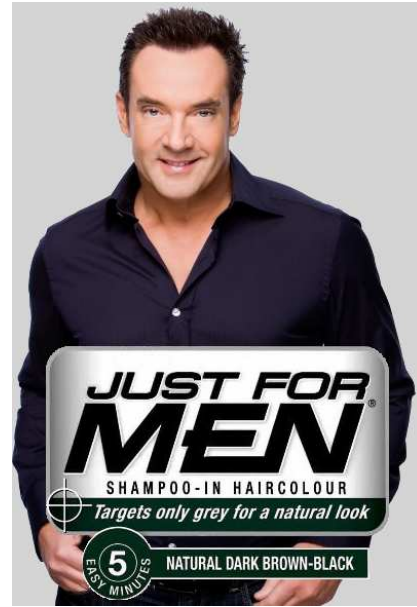
Advertisement 1:
High social accepted product +
Aspirational celebrity



Advertisement 2:
High social accepted product +
Dissociative celebrity



Advertisement 3:
 Medium social accepted product +
 Aspirational celebrity



Advertisement 4:
 Medium social accepted product +
 Dissociative celebrity



Advertisement 5:
 Low social accepted product +
 Aspirational celebrity



Advertisement 6:
 Low social accepted product +
 Dissociative celebrity

Instruments

Purchase intention (Bearden, Lichtenstein, & Teel, 1984) was measured by four descriptors arranged on a seven point semantic differential scale anchored by the following descriptors: unlikely/likely, improbable/probable, uncertain/certain, and definitely/not definitely. After deleting the item definitely/not definitely, the scale proved highly reliable (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.86$).

Social acceptance of the product was measured by a seven point semantic differential scale with one item anchored from 1 = not appropriate, to 7 = very appropriate: "Could you indicate how appropriate it is for men to use the beauty product which is showed in the advertisement?".

Attitude towards the ad (Goodstein, 1993) was measured by three descriptors arranged on a seven point semantic differential scale anchored by the following descriptors: good/bad, likable/dislikable and favorable/unfavorable (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.88$).

Aspirational/dissociative celebrity (Escalas & Bettman, 2005) was measured by two items with a seven point semantic differential scale with anchors 1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree: "I would like to be more like ___ someday" and "I wish I were more like ___" (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.82$).

Self-esteem was measured by the Rosenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965). The scale consists of ten items with anchors 1 = strongly disagree, to 6 = strongly agree. After deleting the item "I take a positive attitude toward myself", the scale proved reasonably reliable (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.70$).

Background variables. The following background variables were included: age, highest level of education (1 = primary education; 2 = secondary education; 3 = secondary vocational education; 4 = higher vocational education; 5 = University education), sexual preference (1 = heterosexual; 2 = homosexual; 3 = bisexual; 4 = other, namely).

Results

Attitude towards the advertisement.

A 3 (product acceptance: low vs. medium vs. high) x 2 (celebrity: aspirational vs. dissociative) x 2 (self-esteem: low vs. high) univariate analysis did not reveal the predicted interaction ($F(2, 240) = 1.31, p = 0.27$). The usage of an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity in the advertisement for products low, medium or high in social acceptance in combination with a low or high self-esteem did not seem to have any influence on men's attitude towards the advertisement.

The 3 (product acceptance: low vs. medium vs. high) x 2 (celebrity: aspirational vs. dissociative) interaction was not significant ($F(2, 240) = 0.66, p = 0.52$). The usage of a dissociative or an aspirational celebrity in the advertisement for products low, medium or high in social acceptance did not seem to have any influence on men's attitude towards the advertisement.

No significant main effect was found for self-esteem ($F(1, 240) = 1.69, p = 0.19$). No difference in attitude towards the advertisement was revealed for men low or high in self-esteem. Also no significant main effect was found for product acceptance ($F(2, 240) = 0.61, p = 0.54$). Men did not show a more positive attitude towards the advertisement when a high social accepted product was showed in the advertisement instead of a low or medium social accepted product. In contrast, a significant main effect for celebrity emerged ($F(1, 240) = 28.61, p < 0.01$). Men showed a more positive attitude towards the advertisement when an aspirational celebrity was used in the advertisement instead of a dissociative celebrity.

Purchase intention.

A 3 (product acceptance: low vs. medium vs. high) x 2 (celebrity: aspirational vs. dissociative) x 2 (self-esteem: low vs. high) univariate analysis did not reveal the predicted interaction ($F(2, 240) = 0.51, p = 0.60$). The usage of an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity in the advertisement for products low, medium or high in social acceptance in combination with a low or high self-esteem did not seem to have any influence on men's purchase intentions.

The 3 (product acceptance: low vs. medium vs. high) x 2 (celebrity: aspirational vs. dissociative) interaction was significant ($F(2, 240) = 4.57, p < 0.01$), see Figure 2.1. For beauty products low ($F(1, 80) = 6.32, p < 0.01$) or medium ($F(1, 80) = 5.90; p < 0.05$) in social acceptance men's purchase intentions depended whether an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity was used in the advertisements. For these products, men's purchase intentions were higher when an aspirational celebrity was used instead of a dissociative celebrity. For products high in social acceptance, men's purchase intentions were not significantly higher when an aspirational celebrity was used instead of a dissociative celebrity ($F(1, 80) = 1.93, p = 0.17$). This could be explained by the high variance which was found for beauty products high in social acceptance, see figure 2.2. Men's purchase intentions diverged more for products high in social acceptance regardless the sort of celebrity that was used. There was a case of natural variance.

No significant main effect was found for self-esteem ($F(1, 240) = 1.25, p = 0.26$). No difference in purchase intention was found for men low or high in self-esteem. A significant main effect for product acceptance emerged ($F(2, 240) = 75.80, p < 0.01$), revealing higher purchase intentions for high accepted products than for low or medium social accepted products. There was no significant main effect found for celebrity ($F(1, 240) = 0.86, p = 0.36$). Men did not show higher purchase intentions when an aspirational celebrity was showed in the advertisement instead of a dissociative celebrity.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for each advertisement

	Highly accepted product				Medium accepted product				Low accepted product			
	Aspirational (N = 40)		Dissociative (N = 40)		Aspirational (N = 40)		Dissociative (N = 40)		Aspirational (N = 40)		Dissociative (N = 40)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. Purchase intention	3.91	1.83	4.51	2.10	2.18	1.12	1.64	0.82	2.10	1.24	1.50	0.82
2. Social acceptance of the product	5.70	1.49	5.98	1.17	5.76	1.35	5.10	1.36	4.33	1.80	4.65	1.59
3. Attitude towards the ad	3.62	1.42	2.98	1.45	3.69	1.46	2.53	1.20	3.52	1.19	2.54	1.04
4. Aspirational/dissociative celebrity	2.03	1.13	1.39	0.72	3.01	1.43	1.18	0.38	2.63	1.38	1.34	0.74
5. Self-esteem	3.72	0.72	3.66	0.64	3.57	0.53	3.72	0.56	3.64	0.68	3.68	0.60

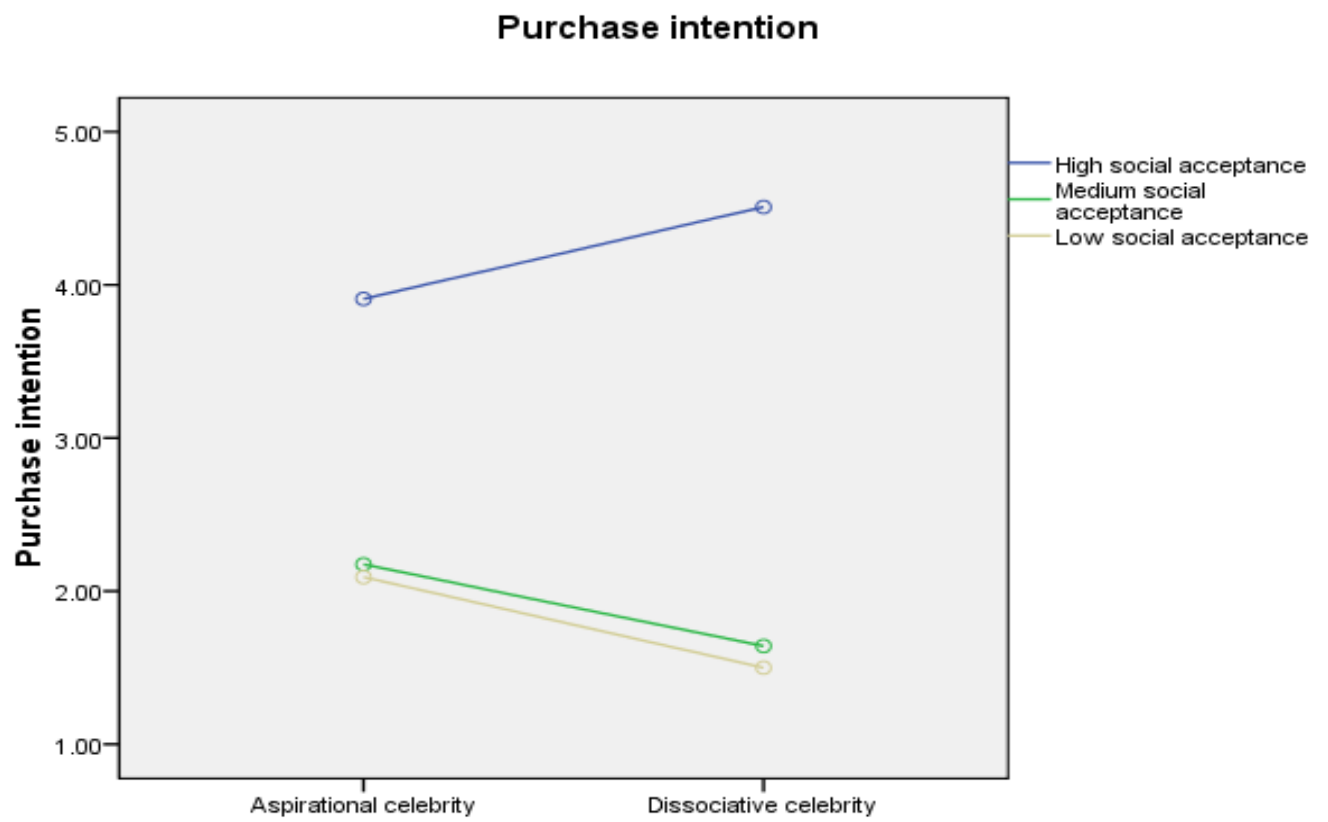
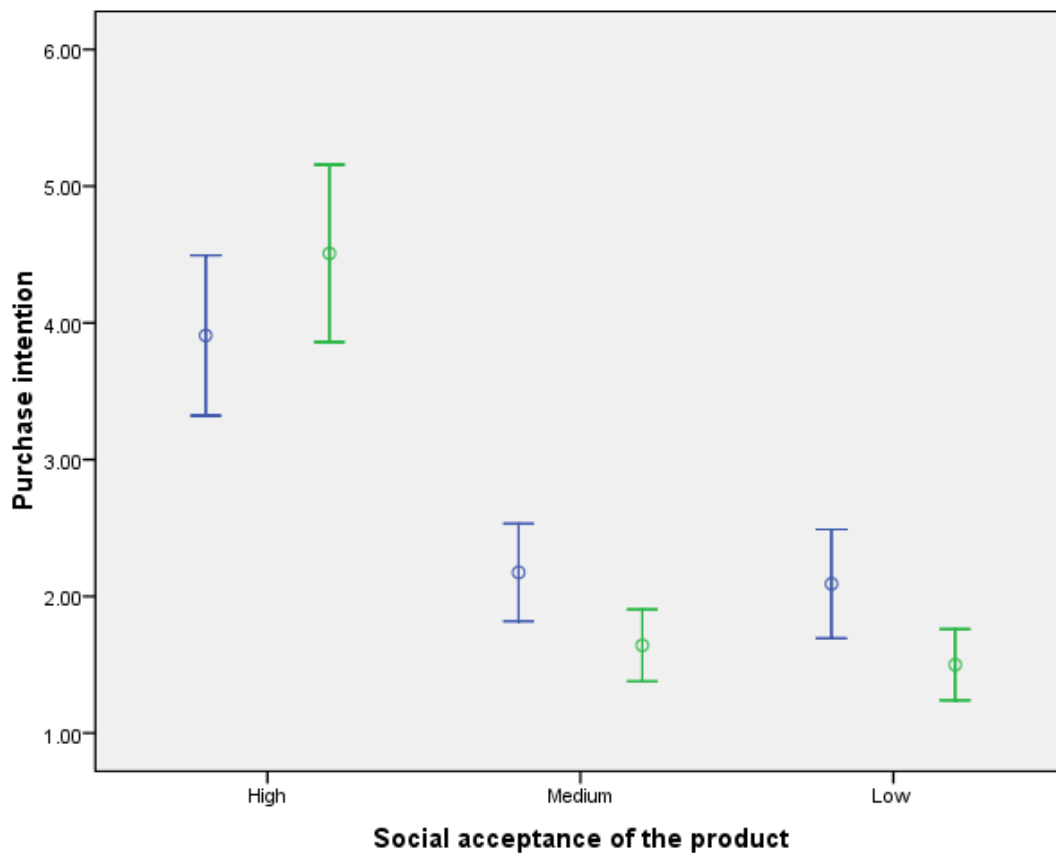


Figure 1.2 Men's purchase intentions as a function of reference group and social product acceptance.



Note: Blue lines are representing the aspirational celebrity and green lines are representing the dissociative celebrity.

Figure 1.3 Men's purchase intentions as a function of reference group and social product acceptance.

Conclusion

In study 1 it was found that different characteristics of men in terms of holding a low or high self-esteem did not have any influence on men's attitude towards the advertisement or on men's purchase intentions. In addition, there was also no significant effect found for the usage of a dissociative or an aspirational celebrity in the advertisement for beauty products low, medium or high in social acceptance on men's attitude towards the advertisement. For example, men did not show a more positive attitude towards the advertisement when an aspirational celebrity was used in the advertisement instead of a dissociative celebrity for beauty products low, medium or high in social acceptance.

In contrast, it was found that the purchase intentions of men depend whether an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity is used in the advertisement for beauty products low, medium or high in social acceptance. For beauty products high in social acceptance the usage of an aspirational or dissociative celebrity in the advertisement has no influence on men's purchase intentions. However, for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance, the usage of an aspirational celebrity instead of a dissociative celebrity resulted in higher purchase intentions by men. When a product already was high in social acceptance, the effect of celebrity did not matter. But the effect for celebrity did really matter for products low or medium in social acceptance. For products where a social risk was experienced by men, the role of the celebrity was more important. It is therefore expected that there exist some external cues which can play an important role for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance. These cues can probably explain why there was an effect found for celebrity for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance, but not for highly social accepted products.

STUDY 2

In the previous study, it was found that men's purchase intentions for beauty products, low or medium in social acceptance, is dependent whether an aspirational or dissociative celebrity is chosen for the advertisements. Therefore, it is expected that external cues can play an important role for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance. The influence of probable product ambiguity (external cue) of these beauty products for men on men's purchase intentions will be elaborated in study 2. Men are probably not sure how to evaluate these products (feel ambiguity) and therefore are more sensitive to external cues like the sort celebrity that is imaged in the advertisement. Ambiguity can be defined as a "quality which depends on the amount, type, and the reliability and unanimity of information (Ellsberg, 1961). Ambiguous situations can further be identified as "available information which is obviously unreliable or highly conflicting". In addition, ambiguous products can be referred to products that may be categorized into different categories and these products provide consumers with a choice, because they can place these products in different categories (Rajagopal, 2004). For products low or

medium in social acceptance, it can be hard for men to determine whether it is acceptable for men to use such a product and especially in which situation. Consumers generally hold gender images of a product (Debevec & Iyer, 1986). Cultural roles, which are related to sex roles, may dictate the types of products that are most appropriate to use for men (Morris & Cundiff, 1971). Deodorant and shampoo are products that are generally judged as acceptable to use by both men and women. But hair coloring products, foundation or facial creams are generally perceived as more feminine products. For these products it will probably be more difficult for men to estimate whether it is acceptable to use these products and especially in which type of situation. For example, men can find it acceptable that foundation is used by actors but not by ordinary men.

People always like to reduce uncertainty and want to make sense of ambiguous situations (Fiol & O'Conner, 2005). By evaluating your own cognitions against the physical or social reality, or comparing your own perceptions with similar others, these uncertainty can be reduced (Fiol & O'Conner, 2005). Men can evaluate their cognitions against the social reality to determine whether it is acceptable for man to use a certain beauty product. They will hold a more positive attitude against this product if they perceive a beauty product as social acceptable. For beauty products, like facial creams and make-up, man will probably find it harder to judge whether these products are seen as pure feminine, or both feminine and masculine. The acceptance of usage of these kind of products by man can depend on specific situations. Men probably will hold a more positive attitude against the product when a beauty product is perceived as more masculine. In addition, the more ambiguous a consumer's experience with a product, the more is his or her evaluations susceptible to other cues like the product description (Hoch & Ha, 1986; Levin & Gaeth, 1988). Marketers can therefore play an important role here, because they have the opportunity to frame the advertisement about beauty products in a certain context. People respond differently to messages, which depend on how these messages are framed (Levin, Schneider, & Gaeth, 1998). When men perceive a beauty product as ambiguous, they will check their cognitions about this product against the physical or social reality. Marketers can set up a certain social reality in the advertisement and offer this to the male public as a clear social clue in order to make the product less ambiguous. It is expected that if men perceive product ambiguity, they will

check their cognitions about the product against the social reality which is shown in the advertisement which will consequently influence their attitudes about the product and their purchase intentions. In case a beauty product is perceived as an ambiguous product by men, for example when the product crossed the gender line and marketers wants to 'ungenderize' the product if the product is perceived as really feminine, it will probably be good to offer a social situation or a sort of image in which the usage of these products is seen as really masculine. For example, when the advertisement is linking product usage to masculinity, it can be expected that men will hold more positive attitudes about this product, which in the end will influence their purchase intentions in a positive way. Marketers can use a form of aspirational marketing, which means that for example an advertisement depicts an image or a lifestyle that is desired by consumers to attain (Englis & Solomon, 1995). A reference group can then be used to depict a desired image in advertisements. Groups can serve as reference points for how consumers could behave and think (White & Dahl, 2006). Consumers are using other individuals as an information source for evaluating their beliefs about the world (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). Aspirational reference groups are reference groups to which an individual aspires to belong (Escalas & Bettman, 2003). As earlier mentioned, aspirational reference groups showed that they guide consumer preferences (White & Dahl, 2006) and that the identification with these aspirational reference groups is related to purchase intentions. When men are not certain whether they can use a certain beauty product (experience product ambiguity), because they are not certain whether this product is assessed as masculine, it is likely that when an aspirational reference group is used in the advertisement this will lead to a more positive response for this product by men. In addition, men avoid activities that are associated with being female (Elling & Knoppers, 2005) and generally hold the desire to be very masculine. When an advertisement depicts that using a certain beauty product is related to masculinity, it will reduce men's uncertainty whether it is or is not acceptable for them to use this product. An advertisement will therefore be used in this study that is associated with being masculine, to represent a choice associated with an aspirational reference group for men. Besides usage of a masculine associated advertisement, also a more neutral advertisement will be used in this study. These neutral advertisement maintains the uncertainty about the

propriety of the usage of a certain beauty product by men. It does not give men a clear cue whether this product usage can be seen as purely feminine, masculine or both. By using an advertisement which includes a pure masculine image (aspirational reference group), you can give the description that this product is really masculine and will be very acceptable to use by men. When a beauty product is seen as high or low in social acceptance, it is expected that men's product response will differ whether a neutral advertisement (high ambiguity) or an advertisement with an aspirational reference group (low ambiguity) will be used. For products high in social acceptance, these external cues in terms of depicting a low ambiguous or a high ambiguous situation are of less importance. The product is already accepted and probably assessed as a masculine product. In contrast, for products low in social acceptance men will probably not be very sure whether the product can be seen as masculine. Therefore it is expected that the depiction of an aspirational reference group (low ambiguity) instead of the depiction of a neutral cue (high ambiguity) will lead to a more positive response of men. Giving the above mentioned line of reasoning the following hypothesis is formulated:

H6: For beauty products low in social acceptance, men will hold a more positive product response (i.e., positive product attitude, positive attitude towards the advertisement and higher purchase intentions) when an advertisement is used which includes a low ambiguous situation (aspirational reference group) instead of a highly ambiguous situation (neutral cue).

There will be a minor influence by usage of a highly ambiguous situation or a low ambiguous situation on men's response for beauty products high in social acceptance.

Method

Pre-test

To determine whether men assessed different beauty products (shampoo, deodorant, foundation, hair coloring products, body crème, nail care, waxing body hair, moisturizer, and face cream) as high or low in social acceptance, twelve men were asked to indicate to what extent they experience a product as feminine, masculine or both masculine and feminine, with anchors 1 = feminine, to 7 = masculine. Further, men had to indicate how sure they were about their given answer, anchored from 1 = not sure, to 7 = very sure (see Appendix C). Deodorant was selected as a product high in social acceptance, because this product was assessed as the most masculine product ($M = 4.33$; $SD = 0.65$). Foundation was selected as a low social accepted product, because men assessed this product as a really feminine product $M = 1.33$; $SD = 0.49$). Men were slightly more confident about their given answer for deodorant ($M = 6.80$; $SD = 0.45$) than for foundation ($M = 6.33$; $SD = 0.78$).

Respondents

Data from 80 males has been collected. Thirty-one respondents fall within the age range of 0 – 20 years (39 percent), 20 fall within the age range of 21 – 30 years (25 percent), eleven fall within the age range of 31-40 years (14 percent), six fall within the range of 41 – 50 years (7 percent) and twelve fall within the age range of 51 years and older (15 percent). Among the respondents one male attended primary education (1 percent), seven secondary education (9 percent), 44 secondary vocational education (55 percent), 16 higher vocational education (20 percent) and 12 University education (15 percent). Seventy-eight respondents are heterosexual (98 percent) and two respondents are homosexual (2 percent).

Procedure

The questionnaire was distributed both digitally and by paper among friends, family, colleagues and other college students. The anonymity of the respondents was

safeguarded. For this study, a questionnaire was used which consists of different measurement scales that will be further explained in the section instruments. A 2 (social product acceptance: high vs. low) x 2 (situation: low ambiguous vs. high ambiguous) between subjects design was used. The respondents were randomly assigned among four groups and each group received one of the four versions of the advertisement (depicted below). All respondents were given the same questionnaire (see Appendix D).



Advertisement 1:

High social accepted product +
Low ambiguous situation



Advertisement 2:

High social accepted product +
High ambiguous situation



Advertisement 3:

Low social accepted product +

Low ambiguous situation



Advertisement 4:

Low social accepted product +

High ambiguous situation

Instruments

Purchase intention (Bearden, Lichtenstein, & Teel, 1984) was measured by four descriptors arranged on a seven point semantic differential scale anchored by the following descriptors: unlikely/likely, improbable/probable, uncertain/certain and definitely/not definitely (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.99$).

Product attitude (Munch, Boller, & Swasy, 1993) was measured with two seven point semantic differentials: from “negative” to “positive” and from “like” to “dislike” (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.92$).

Attitude towards the advertisement (Goodstein, 1993) was measured by three descriptors arranged on a seven point semantic differential scale anchored by the following descriptors: good/bad, likable/dislikable and favorable/unfavorable (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.92$).

Masculinity of the product was measured by a seven point semantic differential scale with one item anchored from 1 = feminine, to 7 = masculine: “Could you indicate whether you find the showed product in the advertisement very masculine, very feminine, or both masculine and feminine?”

Sure of the given answer about the masculinity/femininity of the product was measured by a seven point semantic differential scale with one item anchored from 1 = very unsure, to 7 = very sure.

Background variables. The following background variables were included: age, highest level of education (1 = primary education; 2 = secondary education; 3 = secondary vocational education; 4 = higher vocational education; 5 = University education), sexual preference (1 = heterosexual; 2 = homosexual; 3 = bisexual; 4 = other, namely).

Results

Attitude towards the advertisement.

A 2 (social product acceptance: high vs. low) x 2 (situation: low ambiguous vs. high ambiguous) univariate analysis did not reveal the predicted interaction for men’s attitude towards the ad ($F(1, 80) = 0.12, p = 0.74$). The usage of a high ambiguous

situation or a low ambiguous situation in the advertisement for products low or high in social acceptance, did not seem to have any influence on men's attitude towards the advertisement.

A significant main effect for product acceptance emerged ($F(1, 80) = 7.91, p < 0.01$), revealing a more positive attitude for products high in social acceptance (deodorant) than for products low in social acceptance (foundation). Also a significant main effect for situation emerged ($F(1, 80) = 5.10, p < 0.05$), revealing a more positive attitude for a low ambiguous situation (aspirational reference group) than for a high ambiguous situation (neutral cue).

Purchase intention.

A 2 (social product acceptance: high vs. low) x 2 (situation: low ambiguous vs. high ambiguous) univariate analysis did not reveal the predicted interaction for men's purchase intentions ($F(1, 80) = 0.13, p = 0.72$). The usage of a high ambiguous situation or a low ambiguous situation in the advertisement for products low or high in social acceptance, does not seem to have any influence on men's purchase intentions.

A significant main effect for product acceptance emerged ($F(1, 80) = 67.21, p < 0.01$), revealing higher purchase intentions for products high in social acceptance (deodorant) than for products low in social acceptance (foundation). No significant main effect for situation was found ($F(1, 80) = 0.64, p = 0.43$). Men did not show higher purchase intentions for a low ambiguous situation (aspirational reference group) than for a high ambiguous situation (neutral cue).

Product attitude.

A 2 (social product acceptance: high vs. low) x 2 (situation: low ambiguous vs. high ambiguous) univariate analysis did not reveal the predicted interaction for men's attitude towards the product ($F(1, 80) = 0.84, p = 0.36$). The usage of a high ambiguous situation or a low ambiguous situation in the advertisement for products low or high in

social acceptance, did not seem to have any influence on men's attitude towards the product.

A significant main effect for product acceptance emerged ($F(1, 80) = 33.17, p < 0.01$), revealing a more positive product attitude for products high in social acceptance (deodorant) than for products low in social acceptance (foundation). No significant main effect for situation was found ($F(1, 80) = 0.56, p = 0.46$). Men did not show a more positive product attitude for a low ambiguous situation (aspirational reference group) than for high ambiguous situation (neutral cue).

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for each advertisement

	Highly accepted product				Low accepted product			
	Aspirational group (N = 20)		Neutral situation (N = 20)		Aspirational group (N = 20)		Neutral situation (N = 20)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1. Purchase intention	4.56	2.10	4.41	1.78	1.86	1.33	1.46	0.68
2. Product attitude	4.88	1.34	4.93	1.34	3.43	1.39	2.93	1.29
3. Attitude towards the ad	4.83	1.38	4.10	1.25	3.90	1.27	3.33	1.39
4. Masculinity of the product	5.90	1.18	5.50	1.43	2.45	1.67	1.95	1.88
5. Sure about given answer	6.35	0.67	6.35	0.99	6.10	1.21	6.30	1.13

General discussion

Conclusion and discussion

The main objective of this research is to examine which influence aspirational or dissociative reference groups will have on men's product response for beauty products low, medium or high in social acceptance. In addition, attention has been paid whether different characteristics of men in terms of a low or high self-esteem will influence this above mentioned relationship. This research has elaborated whether a difference in depicting a high ambiguous or a low ambiguous situation in the advertisement will have different effects on men's product response for beauty products low or high in social acceptance.

The results have shown that H1 can partly be confirmed. The usage of an aspirational celebrity instead of a dissociative celebrity for beauty products low, medium or high in social acceptance, does not lead to a more positive attitude towards the advertisement by men. Although it was expected that for beauty products, which are low or medium in social acceptance, the usage of an aspirational celebrity instead of a dissociative celebrity in the advertisement will lead to a more positive attitude towards the product by men, the results did not confirm this. In contrast, the results have shown that when an aspirational celebrity is used in the advertisement instead of a dissociative celebrity for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance, this indeed leads to higher purchase intentions by men. This effect was however not found for beauty products which are highly social accepted. For these products the use of an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity will not influence men's purchase intentions. Men's purchase intentions are even higher in case a dissociative celebrity is used instead of an aspirational celebrity in the advertisement. External cues plays a major role for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance. The usage of a dissociative or an aspirational reference group is of great importance for the degree of purchase intentions by men. It seems that for products, where the social risk is high and when there is a greater chance on negative rejection, the role of celebrity is really important. Further, it can be questioned whether you even want to use a dissociative celebrity in your advertisement. An aspirational person for one group, can be assessed as dissociative by another group of people. For beauty products low or medium in social acceptance, it

seems therefore important to discover which celebrities are normally seen as aspirational by your focus group. The purchase intentions of men for products high in social acceptance, are less affected by reference groups. For these products there is less need to explore which celebrity is seen as aspirational or dissociative. The purchase intentions of men for highly social accepted products vary widely, which can be attributed to a natural variance. There exists a very diverse assessment for high accepted beauty product (deodorant) for both the aspirational celebrity advertisement respondents group as well for the dissociative celebrity advertisement group. For some men their purchase intentions are very high and for some men just a bit lower and is therefore independent of e.g. cues and stimuli. These evaluations of the product and therefore their buying intentions have nothing to do with the sort of reference group that has been used in the advertisement. In addition, the influence of the usage of an aspirational celebrity instead of a dissociative celebrity on men's purchase intentions for products low or medium social accepted products can also probably be explained by the 'match-up hypothesis' (Kamins, 1990). This hypothesis states that the celebrity endorser must be a good fit for the brand which is being endorsed. Jason Statham is probably seen as more appropriate and having a bigger fit with these products than Gerard Joling. For example when these products are seen as products belonging to famous movie stars and therefore it will be very appropriate for Jason Statham to use these kind of products. In addition, the 'meaning transfer perspective' stated that the personality of the celebrity endorser will be transferred to the brand, or in this case the product (McCracken, 1986, 1989). Men could assess Jason Statham as successful, but with an eye for personal grooming. Because of the positive attitude towards the celebrity endorser (Jason Statham), this will probably be transferred to a more positive product attitude and therefore to higher purchase intentions by men.

The usage of an aspirational or a dissociative celebrity in the advertisement for low, medium or high social accepted products in combination with a low or a high self-esteem personality seems not to have any influence on men's product response. Product response for men low in self-esteem seems not to be more positive than for men high in self-esteem when an aspirational celebrity is used in the advertisement for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance. It is also revealed that product response for

men low in self-esteem are not necessarily more negative for products low or medium in social acceptance when a dissociative celebrity is used than for men high in self-esteem. This may be explained by the fact that there is not a clear dispersion between men low or high in self-esteem. Therefore H2, H3, H4 and H5 could not be confirmed.

Because it was expected from the results from study 1 that external cues could play an important role for men's product response for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance, it was examined whether this has something to do with the ambiguity of these products. It was expected that men are probably not sure how to evaluate these low and medium accepted products, for example whether these kind of products are seen as pure feminine or also as a masculine product. They will therefore not be very sure whether it is acceptable for men to use these kind of products and therefore they will experience some product ambiguity. However, the results did not support these expectations and H6 can therefore not be confirmed. The usage of a high ambiguous or a low ambiguous situation in the advertisement did not have any effect on men's product response for products low or high in social acceptance. When a low ambiguous situation (aspirational reference group) was showed in the advertisement instead of a high ambiguous situation (neutral cue), this did not lead to higher purchase intentions or a more positive attitude towards the advertisement and product for products low in social acceptance. Offering an low ambiguous situation seems not to be helpful for creating a more positive product response for low social accepted products. It was expected that foundation was not seen as a masculine product, in comparison with deodorant which will be assessed as a more masculine product by men. Because it was expected that it is for men not clear whether foundation is a product that is also acceptable to be used by men, it was expected that they will feel any product ambiguity by this product. But perhaps foundation is not a product that is actually evaluated as an ambiguous product by men. Men are probably holding a clear picture about foundation. They see it as a pure feminine product and it is therefore absolutely not acceptable to be used by men. They are already holding a strong opinion about this product and therefore offering an unambiguous situational cue –making it more masculine – will not be very effective for changing their opinion about this product. Ambiguous products are products that can be categorized in different categories (Rajagopal, 2004), but foundation seems a product that

is only categorized as a purely feminine product. The results of the pre-test not only have shown that men were in fact judging the product as really feminine, but also that they were also very sure about their given answer whether they assess this product as feminine, masculine or both. Perhaps product ambiguity is not the underlying mechanism to explain the difference in purchase intentions when using an aspirational celebrity in the advertisement instead of a dissociative celebrity for low and medium social accepted beauty products. For the observed influence of aspirational or dissociative celebrities on men's purchase intentions, the public or private consumption of these products can probably have some influence. Public products are products where the consumption is seen by others, while privately consumed products are not (Bearden & Etzel, 1982). Foundation and hair coloring products seems not only low and medium social accepted products, but are also products that are public consumed products because it is visible for other people that you are using these products. These products require perhaps more persuasiveness before using it than private consumed products. Bearden and Etzel (1982) are for example suggesting a strong reference group influence for public consumption circumstances and Childers and Rao (1992) are also suggesting that peer influence for publicly consumed products is very strong. An aspirational celebrity can be helpful to convince men to purchase such a publicly product. An aspirational celebrity probably will convince men that it is really normal to use this product and that they are also already using it.

Practical implications

A lot of beauty products are already seen as not socially accepted by men. For example, foundation and hair coloring products are products that were evaluated by men as low or medium in social acceptance. For these products it is of great importance which kind of person you will use in your advertisement. Using an aspirational celebrity in your advertisement will lead to higher purchase intentions for men. The usage of a dissociative celebrity will drastic decrease these intentions. It is therefore really useful to explore what kind of person is evaluated as aspirational by your focus group. A celebrity may be seen as aspirational for one group of people and seen as dissociative by other groups of people.

Good research which persons are seen as aspirational by your focus group is therefore absolutely desirable in order to get a clear picture which person is most suitable to use in the advertisement. For beauty products high in social acceptance it is of less importance whether you use an aspirational or dissociative celebrity in your advertisement, because purchase intentions seems even be higher when using a dissociative reference group.

Future research

For future research it will be interesting to explore which underlying mechanism explains the influence of the usage of an aspirational celebrity instead of a dissociative celebrity for low and medium social accepted beauty products on men's purchase intentions. In this research it was assumed in Study 2 that ambiguity was the underlying mechanism, but there was no evidence found. As mentioned above, the match-up hypothesis can be an explanation for the founded results. The celebrity endorser must be a good fit for the brand, or in this case the product, being endorsed. Jason Statham has probably a better fit with these products than Gerard Joling. For future research it will probably be interesting to explore whether the degree of fit between celebrity and product (or brand) will be of influence on men's product response for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance. In addition, trusted sources (celebrities) evoke more favorable opinions than sources of which the trustworthiness is questioned (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). The degree of trustworthiness of the celebrity used in the advertisement could therefore also play a role for men's product response. It will therefore probably be interesting for future research not only to explore whether there is a good fit between the product and the celebrity, but also in which degree the celebrity endorser is assessed as trustworthy and which influence this has on men's product response for products low, medium or high in social acceptance. Another mechanism construct that can be the underlying mechanism to explain the founded relationship between celebrity and purchase intentions by men for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance is the above mentioned public or private product consumption. The low and medium social accepted beauty products that were used in this study, were public consumed products. For products for which it is visible to other people that you use it, there is more persuasive power needed.

It may be interesting to categorize (low and medium social acceptance) products into public and private consumed products and explore which influence the usage of an aspirational or dissociative celebrity will have on men's product response for these different type of products.

In addition, when assuming that ambiguity nevertheless plays an important role for the influence of the usage of an aspirational celebrity on men's purchase intentions for beauty products low or medium in social acceptance, it may be interesting to offer a different social situation in the advertisement. Instead of offering a masculine image in the advertisement it is probably better to offer a situation in which usage of these products by men is approached as perfectly normal. Or offering a social situation in the advertisement where the usage of this product is encouraged by peer groups. Making the product more masculine is probably hard to reach, but depicting the product like something what is found –quite normal to use- would probably record a better result.

There are also other constructs conceivable that may be of influence on the relationship between the usage of an aspirational or dissociative celebrity endorser and men's products response. For example, the degree of product involvement of men can play an important role. Depending on their level of involvement, consumers can differ in the extent of their decision making process (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985). For example, products that evoke higher involvement, will increase the motivation of consumers to acquire and to consume these products (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). It might therefore be interesting for future research to include product involvement as a covariate, because the pre-existing difference in product involvement with a certain beauty product can be of influence on the response of men to the different beauty products. Another construct that may be interesting to include as a covariate is androgyny. When gender roles in the purchase of products are blurred, this can be called the 'androgynous consumer' (Blackwell, Miniard, & Engel, 2006). Changes in society's structure have blurred the traditional distinctions that consisted between men and women. For example men who take part in the household or men which are more focusing on their physical appearances and personal grooming. Androgynous individuals of both sexes seem to vary their behavior cross-situationally and they are then able to do well at both masculine as feminine behaviors (Bem, 1975). It can therefore be expected that men which are more

androgynous, which means that they are more open to both masculine as feminine behaviors, will be more open to the usage of these low and medium social accepted beauty products than men which are less androgynous. These men will find it for example more normal to use beauty products that in first instance will be attributed as feminine products.

Finally, there was not a real clear distinction found between men low or high in self-esteem. It is probably a good idea to prime men on these characteristics. It is for example possible to distribute them among different conditions and offering them different primes. For example to let them read some story before completing the questionnaire to increase or decrease their self-esteem.

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Appendix

APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN PRE-TEST STUDY 1

1. Could you indicate whether you find it acceptable for men to use these products? Tick the box that best reflects you're opinion.

a. Shampoo;

Unacceptable Very acceptable

b. Face cream;

Unacceptable Very acceptable

c. Deodorant;

Unacceptable Very acceptable

d. Foundation;

Unacceptable Very acceptable

e. Hair coloring products;

Unacceptable Very acceptable

f. Body crème;

Unacceptable Very acceptable

g. Nail care;

Unacceptable Very acceptable

h. Waxing bodyhair;

Unacceptable Very acceptable

i. Moisturizer;

Unacceptable Very acceptable

2. Could you indicate whether you are already using one of the following products?

a. Shampoo; Yes
 No

b. Face cream; Yes
 No

c. Deodorant; Yes
 No

d. Foundation; Yes
 No

e. Hair coloring products; Yes
 No

f. Body crème; Yes
 No

g. Nail care; Yes
 No

h. Waxing bodyhair; Yes
 No

i. Moisturizer; Yes
 No

3. Could you give other examples of beauty products which you find or find not acceptable for men to use?

1. acceptable / unacceptable
2. acceptable / unacceptable
3. acceptable / unacceptable
4. acceptable / unacceptable
5. acceptable / unacceptable

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN STUDY 1

UNIVERSITEIT TWENTE.

Dear participant,

For my master thesis report for the study Communication science, I am working on a research about the influence of social acceptance and the influence of reference groups on men's purchase intentions. By completing this questionnaire you could help me with this research.

The questionnaire consists of 3 parts. It takes about 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire and it is anonymous. You could really help me performing my research by completing this questionnaire! Thanks for your time!

Best regards,

Leoni Kruse

Part 1

The first part of the questionnaire relates to yourself as a person. Tick the box that best reflects you're opinion.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2	At times I think I am no good at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3	I feel that I have a number of good qualities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4	I am able to do things as well as most other people do	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5	I feel I do not have much to be proud of	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6	I certainly feel useless at times	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7	I feel that I'm a person of worth, or at least on an equal plane with others	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8	I wish I could have more respect for myself	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5	6
9	All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	0	0	0	0	0	0
10	I take a positive attitude toward myself	0	0	0	0	0	0

Part 2

An advertisement will now be showed to you.



The following questions are related to the advertisement that has just been showed to you. You can again tick the box that best reflects you're opinion.

A. Could you indicate what is your opinion about the advertisement?

- | | | | | | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------|
| 1. Bad | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Good |
| 2. Dislikable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Likable |
| 3. Unfavorable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Favorable |

B. The next questionnaires are related to the person who is showed in the advertisement.

1. I would like to be more like _____ someday;

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

2. I wish I were more like _____;

Strongly disagree Strongly agree

C. To what extent you have the intention to buy this product?

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------|
| 1. Unlikely | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Likely |
| 2. Improbable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Probable |
| 3. Uncertain | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Certain |
| 4. Not definitely | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Definitely |

D. Could you indicate to what extent you find it appropriate that the showed product is used by men?

Not appropriate Very appropriate

Part 3

For the last part of the questionnaire, I will ask you to answer some personal data. This will of course be processed anonymously.

1. Age
 - a. Younger than 20 years
 - b. 20-30 jaar
 - c. 31-40 jaar
 - d. 41-50 jaar
 - e. 50 years and older

2. Highest level of education
 - a. Primary education
 - b. Secondary education
 - c. Secondary vocational education
 - d. Higher vocational education
 - e. University education

3. Sexual preference
 - a. Heterosexual
 - b. Homosexual
 - c. Bisexual
 - d. Other, namely

Thanks for your participation!

APPENDIX C
QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN PRE-TEST STUDY 2

UNIVERSITEIT TWENTE.

Dear participant,

For my master thesis report for the study Communication science, I am working on a research about advertisements for male beauty products. By completing this questionnaire you could help me with this research.

It takes about 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire and it is anonymous. Thanks for your time!

Best regards,

Leoni Kruse

Part 1

Could you indicate whether you assess the mentioned products as typical feminine, typical masculine, or for example both feminine and masculine? In addition, you could indicate how sure you are about the given answers. Tick the box that best reflects you're opinion.

A.

1. Shampoo;

Feminine *Masculine*

2. How sure are you about your given answer;

Unsure *Very sure*

B.

1. Facecream;

Feminine *Masculine*

2. How sure are you about your given answer;

Unsure *Very sure*

C.

1. Foundation;

Feminine *Masculine*

2. How sure are you about your given answer;

Unsure *Very sure*

D.

1. Deodorant;

Feminine *Masculine*

2. How sure are you about your given answer;

Unsure *Very sure*

E.

1. Hair colouring;

Feminine *Masculine*

2. How sure are you about your given answer;

Unsure *Very sure*

F.

1. Moisturizer;

Feminine *Masculine*

2. How sure are you about your given answer;

Unsure *Very sure*

G.

1. Bodylotion;

Feminine *Masculine*

2. How sure are you about your given answer;

Unsure *Very sure*

H.

1. Waxing bodyhair;

Feminine *Masculine*

2. How sure are you about your given answer;

Unsure *Very sure*

I.

1. Nail care

Feminine *Masculine*

2. How sure are you about your given answer;

Unsure *Very sure*

Part 2

For the second part of the questionnaire, I will ask you to answer some personal data.
This will of course be processed anonymously.

1. Age _____ years

2. Highest level of education
- a. Primary education
 - b. Secondary education
 - c. Secondary vocational education
 - d. Higher vocational education
 - e. University education

3. Sexual preference
- a. Heterosexual
 - b. Homosexual
 - c. Bisexual

Thanks for your participation!

APPENDIX D
QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN STUDY 2

UNIVERSITEIT TWENTE.

Dear participant,

For my master thesis report for the study Communication science, I am working on a research about the influence of social acceptance and the influence of reference groups on men's purchase intentions. By completing this questionnaire you could help me with this research.

The questionnaire consists of 2 parts. It takes about 3 minutes to complete the questionnaire and it is anonymous. You could really help me performing my research by completing this questionnaire! Thanks for your time!

Best regards,

Leoni Kruse

Part 1

An advertisement will now be showed to you.



The following questions are related to the advertisement that has just been showed to you. You can again tick the box that best reflects you're opinion.

A. Could you indicate what is your opinion about the advertisement?

- | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1. Bad | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Good |
| 2. Dislikable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Likable |
| 3. Favorable | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | Unfavorable |

B. Could you give your opinion about the product which is showed in the advertisement?

1. Negative Positive
2. Dislike Like

C. To what extent you have the intention to buy this product?

1. Unlikely Likely
2. Improbable Probable
3. Uncertain Certain
4. Not definitely Definitely

D. Could you indicate whether you find the product which is showed in the advertisement a feminine product, a masculine product or both?

- Feminine Masculine

How sure are you about your given answer?

- Unsure Very sure

Part 2

For the last part of the questionnaire, I will ask you to answer some personal data. This will of course be processed anonymously.

1. Age
 - a. Younger than 20 years
 - b. 20-30 jaar
 - c. 31-40 jaar
 - d. 41-50 jaar
 - e. 50 years and older

2. Highest level of education
 - a. Primary education
 - b. Secondary education
 - c. Secondary vocational education
 - d. Higher vocational education
 - e. University education

3. Sexual preference
 - a. Heterosexual
 - b. Homosexual
 - c. Bisexual
 - d. Other, namely

Thanks for your participation!