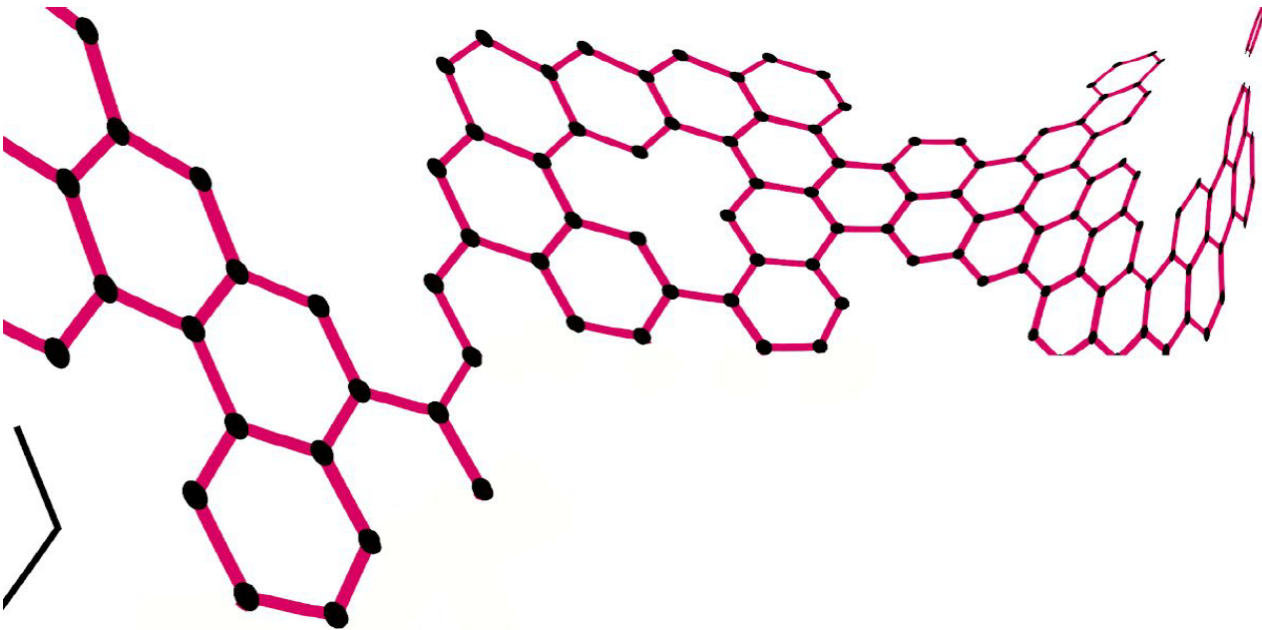# The Future is Fluid:

The Impact of Gender Fluid Marketing on Brand Attitudes, Attitudes towards the Advertisement, and Brand Engagement

Master Thesis

Helena Frieling (s2770423)

University of Twente
Communication Science (MSC)
Faculty of Behavioural, Management, and Social Sciences (BMS)

Graduation Committee
Dr. Mirjam Galetzka
Dr. Hanneke Scholten

Date   *February 2022*
Place   *Enschede, The Netherlands*

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Abstract

Objective: The aim of this study was to explain brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement as well as brand engagement to gender fluid advertising in comparison to binary gendered advertising for three different product categories while accounting for the role of individuals' gender norms.

Method: A 2 (binary vs. gender fluid marketing) x2 (conservative vs. liberal gender norms) x3 (fragrance vs. period vs. necktie products) mixed model was designed to investigate the effects of gender norms (liberal vs. conservative) and product category (fragrance vs. period vs.necktie) on the outcome variables brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement in an online experiment (N = 158; male (N = 77), female (N = 70), third-gender (N = 5), other (N = 6)). The targeted population was generation z that are between 21 and 27 years old (Mdn = 23; SD = 2.06).

Results: The study found favourable brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement and brand engagement on gender fluid and binary gendered marketing to be predetermined by individuals' gender norms. Gender fluid marketing is more positively evaluated by individuals with liberal gender norms while conservative individuals prefer binary gendered advertisements. It was discovered that period products were evaluated as most positive when marketed in a gender fluid fashion.

Conclusions: This study contributes to marketing research by providing a first conceptual insight into the design of gender fluid marketing and its increasing relevance in todays' society as well as empirical evidence of its effects on brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement while considering individuals' gender norms and different product categories. Future studies may investigate the impact of gender fluid

marketing on actual behaviour of people, test the effects by using real brands, how to design
for gender fluid brands as well as how outcomes differ between other product categories.
Furthermore, future research should place an increased focus on the LGBTQIA+ community
and a nuanced view on gender norms.

Key words: gender fluid marketing, binary gender marketing, brand attitudes, attitudes
towards the advertisement, brand engagement, generation z, fragrance products, period
products, necktie products, advertising design

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

1. Introduction

Traditionally, society distinguished between two genders - women and men that are identified as such at birth and constant throughout life. In 2016, the first person has legally been recognized as neither female nor male – hence, non-binary (Dake, 2016). Since then, more people are identifying as, amongst others, non-binary, third-gender, or gender fluid (Watson, 2021). While today's society grows increasingly tolerant towards non-binary genders, by using inclusive language and acknowledging them in mainstream media, they are still underrepresented in brands' marketing strategies (Morgenroth et al., 2021). Traditionally, marketing strategies are rooted in gender marketing as for example cars are portrayed as manly, makeup is for women, so are kitchen utensils, and period products (Grow, 2008; Guittar et al., 2022).

As of today, few brands have made it their mission to embrace gender fluidity by designing unisex products or market traditionally female products, such as period products, as gender fluid. However, there are brands that are standing against gender stereotypes, of which one is lunette. The US cosmetics brand openly speaks up about not only gender equality but fluidity (lunette, n.d.). Their slogan "not all women menstruate and not all people who menstruate are women. No matter how you identify, we welcome you with open arms" (lunette, n.d.) represents their inclusive collection of cosmetic products range from period hygiene to skin care. Historically, research emphasized the importance of gender marketing as a framework for brands to connect to their target audiences (Lieven et al., 2014). However, the marketing realm has recently seen a shift by representing members of the LGBTQIA+ community as ambassadors for beauty brands or fashion labels (Cannon, 2021; Dua, 2016). Examples of such can be Harry Styles in a dress in a 2020 issue of Vogue although

he identifies as a cis male (Bowles, 2020) or the use of non-gender specific colour palettes

and language, such as cosmetics brand "We are fluide" (We are fluide, n.d.).

As target audience analysis has evolved, researchers have expressed the need to

question gender stereotypes within marketing (Guittar et al., 2022; Morgenroth et al., 2021;

Ratten, 2017). More brands are focusing on connecting with their target audience on a

deeper level through what they stand for (i.e., gender inclusivity) and their social contribution

in line with their gender norms, rather than solely characterizing their ideal client by their age

or gender (Morgenroth et al., 2021). Conclusively, multiple researchers identify a need to

research the "gendered voice of advertising" as they elaborate on the cultural, historical, and

societal influences of gender on marketing and emerging gender-fluid developments (Grow,

2008; Ratten, 2017; Read et al., 2019). As Lieven et al. (2014) solely researched the impact of

male and female branded genders on brand attitudes, the question remains if a gender-fluid

brand would be as impactful. Ratten (2017) and Read et al. (2019) further describe

generation z to be expecting brands to follow societal developments more like any other

generation. Thus, it is important to research gender fluid marketing in the context of

generation z for brands to stay relevant to their target markets (Miles, 2020).

It is evident that the academic body of knowledge about the effect of gender-fluid

marketing on brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement

is limited as of this time, as gender fluidity is a relatively new development in itself (Prance-

Miles, 2019). While previous studies have addressed how societal developments shape

gender marketing campaigns, this study will take this development one step further and

investigate the effect of gender-fluid brands on brand attitude, attitude towards the

advertisement and brand engagement. Hence, it will add to the academic understanding of

how gender-fluid marketing impacts consumers reactions to marketing efforts as well as their

opinions and attitudes after exposure. Keeping this in mind, the following question arises:

To what extent do gender fluid marketing strategies impact brand attitude, attitude towards

the advertisement, and brand engagement of generation z, and what is the role of gender

norms and product category?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Binary gendered marketing

Although gender and sex are often used interchangeably there is a fundamental

difference. While the National Institutes of Health (n.d.) discusses sex to be of biological and

anatomical nature, gender is a construct created by society involving cultural and

psychological characteristics. This means that the gender of an individual may be able to

evolve throughout time while their sex stays constant (National Institutes of Health, n.d.).

Nevertheless, traditional marketing tactics solely make use of binary gender identities –

hence males and females – disregarding the potential shift between genders (Miles, 2020).

Binary gendered marketing has historically been used for brands to create meaningful

connections with their target audiences (Lieven et al., 2014). As the same authors indicate,

men and women express themselves differently, have different needs, and enjoy different

products (Sandhu, 2017). Thus, binary gendered marketing served as a way to make both

genders feel seen individually and used as a type of heuristic, in which it facilitates

information processing and therefore require less cognitive effort of people (Åkestam et al.,

2021). Binary gendered marketing reaches from product and packaging design to retail store

layouts, the choice of brand ambassadors, pricing structures as well as the complete

positionings of a brand (Grow, 2008; Guittar et al., 2022). However, while binary gendered

marketing was successful in the past by portraying cultural and societal values, such values

are currently changing, requiring marketing to evolve with them (Grau & Zotos, 2016).

2.2 Gender fluid marketing

Recent developments within society have shown that more people are becoming

aware of the distinction between sex and gender, hereby exploring new opportunities for

self-identification and -expression (Dvorsky & Hughes, 2008). An individual who is expressing

themselves as gender fluid can be described as "[someone who experiences their] own

gender as neither man nor woman, both man and woman, or acknowledging change over the

life course between and beyond these options" (Sumerau et al., 2020, p. 206). Consequently,

the gender debate rose awareness about individuals who express themselves as a-gender,

non-binary, third-gender or gender fluid, moving binary gender expressions from a necessity

to a matter of choice (Dvorsky & Hughes, 2008). While this definition suggests that gender

fluid individuals may be included in binary gender marketing to some degree, they are not

fully represented by binary gendered marketing strategies. Instead of focusing on either male

or female characteristics like binary gendered marketing does, gender fluid brands use

gender non-specific language and design to express their fluidity and connect to their target

audience. Thus, "being a fluid brand involves neutralizing restrictive language and images,

opting instead to explore expressive gender identities and communicate a sense of

belonging." (Pointbleu Design, 2021), which is especially demanded by generation z (Ratten,

2017; Read et al., 2019).

2.3 Generation Z

Being born around the millennium (mid 1990's to early 2000's), this generation encountered the effects of globalisation and technology from a very young age (Cilliers, 2017). They are more conscious in their consumption than any other generation, as they have access to review portals and social media which display opinions of other consumers as well as background information on brands (Sachdev et al., 2021). Being one of the most educated generations, generation z lives in a critical period where climate change and human rights stand at the forefront of politics. This leads them to be aware of their situation in a global society, their potential impact on societal developments such as becoming more inclusive towards LGBTQIA+ individuals, as well as the power of brands to hinder or support such societal developments (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Although LGBTQIA+ advertisements reach back to the 1980's, brands increasingly portrayed LGBTQIA+ individuals in marketing during the 2010's. Around this time, generation z was approximately 5 to 15 years old indicating a strong impact of media and advertisements on the generation's developing worldview (Trussell, 2022).

As gender fluidity is a relatively new phenomenon, binary gendered marketing strategies remain to be predominant (Cannon, 2021; Kuehn & Parker, 2021). Consequently, generation z consumers grew up experiencing binary gendered marketing, but they increasingly demand and are exposed to gender fluid marketing campaigns in recent years (Read et al., 2019). Additionally, the increasing purchasing power of this generation creates an importance to investigate the effects of gender fluid marketing on generation z as it may impact brands' profitability as well as brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement and brand engagement.

2.4 Brand attitudes, attitudes towards advertisements, and brand engagement

There are a variety of goals brands can aim at when designing marketing campaigns. One of the most important goals is to influence consumer attitudes on various levels (Boyd et al., 1972). Attitudes can be defined as the enduring good or bad evaluations that we attach to objects in our social world (Fabrigar et al., 2010). Firstly, Keller (1993) elaborates on the importance of brand attitudes people form when consuming marketing materials. Meaning that consumers do not solely form an opinion about the advertisement itself but also to the brand it is relating to. Secondly, Wang et al (2020) describe the attitude towards an advertisement after being exposed to an advertisement to be important since it increases brand awareness as well as information processing - as described by the central route of the elaboration likelihood model (Shahab et al., 2021). Facilitating positive attitudes towards the advertisement is especially important for penetrating new markets such as the gender fluid segment (Wang et al., 2020). Thirdly, the social media age has shown that community building has become vital for brands (Lee et al., 2020). Brand engagement is described as the active participation of an individual in brand-related activities that reach beyond purchase. Brand engagement reaches from being active in brand communities such as Facebook groups to participating in a giveaway and more (Pongpaew et al., 2017). If a brand can create an engaged community and foster a sense of belonging for consumers, they can profit from, amongst others, favourable word-of-mouth marketing which increase brand loyalty and profitability over time (Lee et al., 2020).

Although binary gendered marketing functions as a type of heuristic, Åkestam et al. (2021) explained the possible negative consequences of gender stereotyping in advertising. By investigating the impact of gender stereotypical advertisements, researchers found males and females to dislike such advertisements as they feel like it limits their sense of freedom

and consequently develop negative attitudes towards the advertised brand as such

advertisements are not in line with their values. Moreover, Åkestam et al. (2021) discovered

non-stereotypical gender portrayals to have a positive effect on attitude towards the

advertisement, brand attitude, and purchasing intention as they are in line with todays'

societal development towards a gender fluid expression. Hence, by operating in an

increasingly tolerant and inclusivity demanding society, gender fluid marketing is expected to

have a positive influence on brand attitude, attitude towards the advertisement as well as

brand engagement as opposed to binary gender marketing (Åkestam et al., 2021; Ratten,

2017; Read et al., 2019). Since gender fluid brands acknowledge the diversity of all genders,

communicate a sense of belonging and speak up about societal issues demanded by

generation z (Kuehn & Parker, 2021).

2.4 Fragrance vs. period vs. necktie products

As of today, there are industries such as the luxury fashion and cosmetics industry

which are more progressive in eliminating binary gendered marketing campaigns (Akdemir,

2018; Ngono & Melingui, 2021). Nevertheless, within those industries, niches struggle to

grasp the concept of gender fluid marketing. As such, we see an increasing inclusivity in the

fragrance segments (Jiménez & Guzmán Alonso, 2019), but barely see gender fluid brands

within the period care and necktie realm (Frank, 2020).

While this can have many reasons, van Tilburg et al (2015) describe some product

categories to be more androgynous than others. Hence, although fragrance products are

gendered through marketing efforts, their gender is not as attached to the product as period

products and neckties are. Being closely related to an individual's sex, period products are

traditionally more intertwined with binary gender marketing and thus, not as progressive as

the fragrance industry. When advertised in a gender fluid manner, individuals tend to be more open minded towards fragrance products as opposed to period and necktie products.

Additionally, based on the mere-exposure effect, which indicates that the more people are exposed to an advertisement, the more familiar and hence favourable brand attitudes become, the favourable outcome for fragrance products is strengthened, as they are presented in mass media more frequently than gender fluid period and necktie products (Fetto, 2020; Stafford & Grimes, 2012). Consequently, as society is welcoming gender fluidity and brands are experimenting with gender fluid marketing, the question arises whether such marketing efforts affect brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement differently between various product categories. Therefore, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H_1 = a) Brand attitudes, b) attitudes towards the advertisement, and c) brand engagement will be more favourable for gender fluid marketing in the fragrance industry compared to period and necktie products.

2.5 Gender norms

Fugate and Phillips (2010) elaborate on the social identity theory developed by Henri Tajfel (Turner et al., 1979) which is based on the notion that mass media and social interactions are the foundation for individuals forming their social role identity. If an individual is majorly exposed to binary gender expressions, the social identity theory implies such individuals to identify with binary gender expressions as well. Historically, as individuals learn their gender from a very young age by for instance playing with gender-specific toys,

this perception is engrained in their personalities and reinforced by binary gendered marketing throughout time which leads to the formation of specific gender norms (Belk, 1988).

With the society becoming increasingly tolerant towards LGBTQAI+ individuals, by placing third-gender people in the forefront of our communities, people encounter different gender norms. Hence, the perceptions of gender of people who are exposed to gender fluid marketing, may shift, or are challenged (Fabrigar et al., 2010). In a review of "Consumer Response to Brand Gender Bending", Sandhu (2017) identified 2 ways in which people react when being exposed to gender fluid marketing. The ones who tend to be close-minded or conservative and others who are more open-minded or liberal towards gender fluid marketing. Sandhu (2017) found that gender norms are a determinant to the response to gender fluid advertisements. On the one hand, conservative individuals are repelled by gender fluid marketing campaigns as they feel challenged in their core beliefs which they have identified with since they were children (Sandhu, 2017). Such individuals are likely to form negative brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement as a result of being exposed to gender fluid advertisements and prefer binary gendered marketing campaigns (Fabrigar et al., 2010).

On the other hand, Ratten (2017) mentioned an increasing demand of people for brands to engage in brand activism such as fighting for gender equality and LGBTQIA+ rights. Therefore, people who support the gender fluid development in society will develop positive attitudes towards gender fluid advertisements, the respective brand as well as brand engagement. Consequently, the more people are exposed to a gender fluid advertisement, the more favourable those attitudes become (Stafford & Grimes, 2012).

Based on these studies, we can conclude that brand attitude, attitude towards the advertisement, and brand engagement will be most favourable when marketing campaigns are congruent with consumers' gender norms. Specifically, conservative individuals will prefer binary gendered marketing and liberal individuals prefer gender fluid marketing. Hence, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H_2 = a) brand attitude, b) attitude towards the advertisement, c) brand engagement will be more favourable when the marketing strategy matches consumers' gender norms.

As consumers also purchase products as an extension of themselves, brad attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement differ between binary gendered and gender fluid marketing campaigns depending on how consumers express themselves (Sandhu, 2017). Meaning that brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement will be most favourable when aligning the marketing strategy to customers' gender norms while accounting for the image of different product categories. Consequently, it can further be assumed that brand attitude, attitude towards the advertisement and brand engagement are evaluated more favourably for product categories individuals strongly identify with. Thus, we can hypothesize:

H_3 = a) brand attitude, b) attitude towards the advertisement, c) brand engagement will be more favourable if the product category matches consumers' gender norms.

3. Conceptual model

The main aim of this study was to explain brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement as well as brand engagement to gender fluid advertising in comparison to binary gendered advertising for three different product categories while accounting for the role of individuals' gender norms. One is expected to be more conservative and the others to be more liberal. Figure 1 depicts the key research concepts as well as the relation to each of the above-mentioned hypotheses.
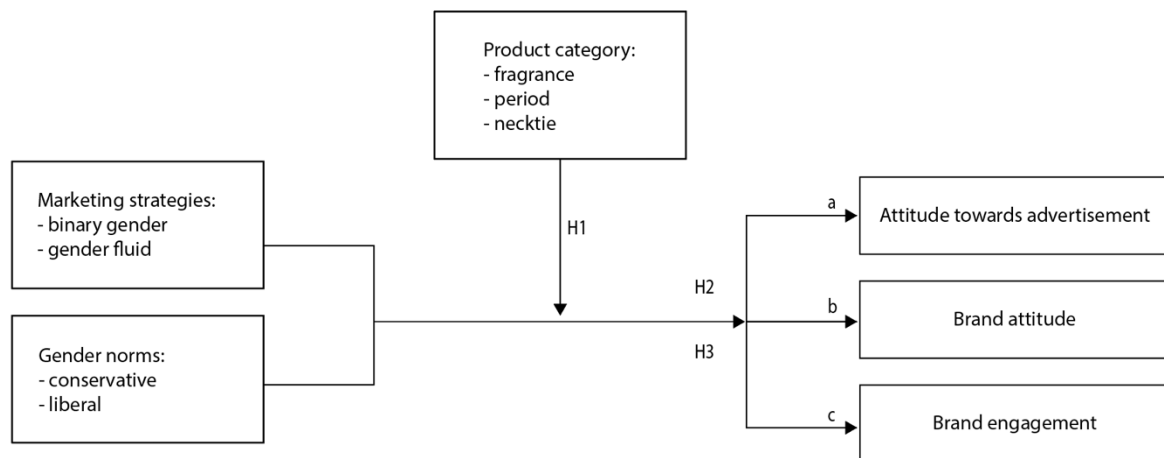

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

4. Methodology

4.1 Research design

This study examines the differences between binary gendered and gender fluid marketing of brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement as well as brand engagement and the moderating role of different product categories while considering the gender norms of participants. To test the hypotheses as mentioned in Figure 1, a 2 (marketing: binary vs. gender fluid) x2 (gender norms: conservative vs. liberal) x3 (product category: fragrance vs. period vs. necktie product) mixed-model online experiment was designed. Hereby, the effects of binary vs. gender fluid marketing as well as the conservative vs. liberal view on gender norms were investigated as between subject factors while the product category was analysed as within subject factor.

The study consisted of 7 conditions: (1) feminine fragrance advertisement, (2) a masculine fragrance advertisement (3) a gender fluid fragrance advertisement, (4) a feminine period product advertisement, (5) a gender fluid period product advertisement, (6) a masculine necktie advertisement and (7) a gender-fluid necktie advertisement. Gender norms were measured before the exposure.

4.2 Stimulus Materials

To test brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement of binary and gender fluid marketing, 7 advertisements have been designed. The design varied in language used as well as packaging design, all differing in the use of gender specific, or gender fluid cues adapted from research by Lieven et al (2015). Specifically, the stimuli of this study included advertisements of fictional fragrance, period product, and necktie brands.

The fragrance advertisement has been designed as male and female brand personality, while the period product and necktie advertisement has been designed as either female or male. This is because fragrances are used by both males and females while traditionally period products and neckties are only used by one of the two genders. Moreover, all product categories included a gender-fluid brand personality version.

4.2.1 Design of stimulus materials

A comprehensive pre-test in form of a questionnaire has been conducted that investigated whether the designed stimuli were categorized correctly, hence as binary gendered or gender fluid marketing campaign, and which stimuli had the strongest effect to be included in the final research design. This research differentiated the gender fluid stimuli and binary gendered stimuli between language and design cues (font, colour, brand name).

4.2.1.1 Font

The binary gendered stimuli made use of gender-specific language cues as described by Lieven et al (2015). For instance, Lieven et al (2015) describe soft, roundly shaped typefaces vowels to be associated with feminine brand genders while edgy and bold typefaces are associated with masculine brand genders. On the other hand, the gender fluid stimuli were designed using inclusive/ gender neutral language.

4.2.1.2 Colour

Furthermore, different colours have been chosen for the binary gendered as well as gender fluid stimuli based on research by Lieven et al (2015). Thus, feminine stimuli included warm and bright tones while the masculine stimuli made use of cool and darker toned

colours. For the gender fluid stimuli, a mix of masculine and feminine colours have been chosen to represent gender fluidity.

4.2.1.3 Brand Name

Lastly, Lieven et al (2015) mentioned brand names including the "a" and "e" vowels to be associated with feminine brand genders while the "o" and "u" vowels are associated with masculine brands. Hence, binary gendered brand names have been chosen based on the above-mentioned criteria. The gender fluid stimuli made use of brand names suggesting a neutral stance and that are generally used by both genders.

4.2.2 Pre-test

The pre-test included 10 binary gendered advertisements (5 masculine and 5 feminine) and 8 gender fluid advertisements (in total 6 fragrance advertisements, 6 period product advertisements and 6 tie advertisements). The stimuli were evaluated based on brand personality statements adapted from Grohmann (2009). Moreover, font, brand name, and colour perceptions were evaluated to measure which stimuli had the strongest effect on the respondents in each product as well as gender category. Additionally, since the stimuli are not based on real brands, participants were asked to evaluate each stimulus in terms of realism and attractiveness. Thus, ensuring the results can be translated to a real marketing context. All stimuli and questions asked in the pre-test can be found in the Appendix. All questions were evaluated based on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree).

Pre-test respondents were selected by non-probability sampling and were recruited via WhatsApp. Consequently, 43 respondents participated in the pre-test, including 21 female (48.8%), 14 male (32.6%) and 8 non-binary people (18.6%). Respondents were between 21 – 27 years old.

4.2.3 Final stimuli designs

Based on the pre-test the final stimuli have been designed using Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop. Summarizing the pre-test decisions, font 3 (Roca One), colour 5 (Dark Pink) and brand name 2 (Emma) have been selected for the main feminine stimuli. For the masculine stimuli font, colour, and brand name 6 (Avenir LT Std 85 Heavy; Grey; Homme) and for the gender fluid stimuli font 15 (Menlo), colour and brand name 11 (Beige; Fluide) have been chosen. The following chapter provides an overview of the pre-test results and analysis that led to this conclusion.

In total 7 manipulations were created (1) feminine fragrance advertisement, (2) a masculine fragrance advertisement (3) a gender fluid fragrance advertisement, (4) a feminine period product advertisement, (5) a gender fluid period product advertisement, (6) a masculine necktie advertisement and (7) a gender-fluid necktie advertisement.

By using the same mock-ups within product categories, we can ensure comparability across stimuli. To reduce confounding effects from previous exposure, we opted for fictional advertisements. Moreover, the background has been photoshopped grey to minimize distraction from other design elements. An overview of the final stimuli can be found in figure 2.

Figure 2. Final stimuli designed

4.2.4 Pre-test results

The overall manipulation of the stimuli to test which designs - differing in font, colour, and brand name choice - have the strongest effect on which brand gender (feminine, masculine, gender fluid) was successful in the pre-test. The following paragraphs will discuss the results for each design manipulation and overall brand personality, as measured by the brand personality scale of Grohmann (2009). An overview of the pre-test stimuli can be found in the Appendix.

4.2.4.1 Fonts

Font 3 (Roca One) was chosen to be in the final feminine design as it is highly readable (M = 1.78) and distinctively categorized as feminine (M = 2.22). Although font 4 (Medusa) was considered more feminine (M = 1.63), it was also rather unreadable (M = 4.13). Based on the notion described by Lieven et al (2015), who explained that lower case letters are softer and more feminine, the brand name for the feminine stimuli was spelled in lower case letters including a softer and bolder version of the font for the main testing. This is to positively influence femininity ratings of font 3 (Roca One) for the main manipulation.

For the masculine stimuli, the font with the least feminine and most masculine rating has been selected for the main study, font 6 (Avenir LT Std 85 Heavy; femininity: M = 4.38; masculinity: M = 1.63). Furthermore, font 6 has a high readability score (M = 1.50), strengthening its position as the selected font for the masculine stimuli.

Lastly, looking at the gender fluid fonts, the font with the highest gender fluidity as well as readability ratings has been selected to represent the gender fluid stimuli in the main study (font 15: Menlo; gender fluidity: M = 1.63; readability: M = 1.38). Font 15 is also considered to be neutrally feminine and masculine (femininity: M = 3.13; masculinity:

M = 3.00), making it an appropriate final choice. The Appendix gives an overview about the means and standard deviations of the fonts for all tested stimuli.

4.2.4.2 Colours

On the one hand, the most feminine colour of the stimuli is colour 3 (Light Pink & Yellow). However, it is also perceived a neutrally gender fluid (femininity: *M* = 1.56; gender fluidity: *M* = 3.11). On the other hand, colour 5 (Dark Pink) is less feminine, but has a stronger distinction between its feminine, masculine and gender fluid evaluations (femininity: *M* = 2.22; masculinity: *M* = 4.33; gender fluidity: *M* = 3.44). Thus, colour 5 (Dark Pink) has been chosen for the main feminine manipulation.

For the masculine colours, colour 6 (Grey) has been selected as it has the strongest masculine score as well as strongest distinction between masculinity, femininity, and gender fluidity (masculinity: *M* = 1.50; femininity: *M* = 4.75; gender fluidity: *M* = 3.25).

Furthermore, the selected gender fluid colour for the main manipulation is colour 11 (Beige). Although colour 16 (Green) has a high gender fluidity rating (*M* = 1.67), its femininity and masculinity ratings are less distinct (femininity: *M* = 3.67; masculinity: *M* = 3.56). Colour 11 (Beige) is perceived as not feminine and moderately masculine with high gender fluidity ratings, making it the strongest choice for the main study (femininity: *M* = 4.00; masculinity: *M* = 3.25; gender fluidity: *M* = 2.00). The Appendix gives an overview about the means and standard deviations of the colours for all tested stimuli.

4.2.4.2 Brand names

Looking at the feminine brand names, brand names 2 (Emma) and 4 (Fille) have the highest femininity scores (M = 1.38; M = 1.38). However, brand name 2 has a clearer distinction between its femininity, masculinity, and gender fluidity ratings (masculinity: M = 4.75; gender fluidity: M = 4.50), making it the strongest choice for the main manipulation.

For the masculine brand name, the name with the most masculine-favourable ranking and clearest distinction between masculine, feminine, and gender fluid names have been selected (masculinity: M = 1.25; femininity: M = 4.63; gender fluidity: M = 4.50). Although brand name 9 (Menfolk) is slightly more masculine (M = 1.22), brand name 6 (Homme) has been chosen for the main study as the distinction between brand genders is stronger.

Lastly, the selected gender fluid brand name is name 11 (Fluide). Name 11 has low femininity and masculinity scores (femininity: M = 4.38; masculinity: M = 4.25), while simultaneously being categorized as highly gender fluid (M = 1.75). The Appendix gives an overview about the means and standard deviations of the brand names for all tested stimuli.

4.2.4.4 Attractiveness and realism

After analysing the individual design elements (font, colour, brand name), participants have been asked to indicate the overall attractiveness and realism of the pre-test stimuli. This is important as this study is using fictional brands with the aim of translating the results into a real marketing context. A detailed overview of the results can be found in the Appendix.

For the feminine stimuli, stimuli 2 (Emma, Fragrance) and 3 (Emma, Period Product) have been evaluated as most attractive and realistic (stimulus 2: attractiveness: M = 1.63; realism: M = 1.50; stimulus 3: attractiveness: M = 1.44; realism: M = 1.44), which supports

our previous analysis. Stimulus 5 (Fille, Fragrance) has been evaluated as less attractive and realistic (attractiveness: *M* = 3.33; realism: *M* = 3.00). This can be due to the low font readability identified previously.

Stimulus 9 (Menfolk, Necktie) has the highest attractiveness ratings (*M* = 2.00), while stimulus 6 (Homme, Necktie) is most realistic (*M* = 1.25), while still ranking high in attractiveness (*M* = 2.13). This strengthens the decision made of selecting design elements from stimulus 6 for the main study.

Lastly, for the gender fluid stimuli, both stimuli 11 (Fluide, Period Product) and 15 (Fluide, Necktie) have high attractiveness and realism scores supporting our selection made (stimulus 11: attractiveness: *M* = 2.25; realism: *M* = 1.75*;* stimulus 15: attractiveness: M = 2.50; realism: *M* = 2.25).

4.2.4.5 Brand personality

To check whether the stimuli have been perceived as intended and strengthen the selection of final design elements for the feminine, masculine, and gender fluid conditions, means and standard deviations of the stimuli's brand personality scales (Grohmann, 2009) have been investigated.

Firstly, the brand personality scale of the feminine stimuli for design elements based on stimulus 2 (Emma, Fragrance), stimulus 3 (Emma, Period Product) and stimulus 5 (Fille, Fragrance) was investigated. Stimulus 2 was considered as sweet (*M* = 1.88; *SD* = 1.22) and fragile (*M* = 2.00; *SD* = 1.31) while participants evaluated stimulus 3 as sweet (*M* = 1.78; *SD* = 0.97) and tender (*M* = 2.11; *SD* = 1.27). Additionally, stimulus 5 has been described as sweet (*M* = 1.89; *SD* = 1.17) and graceful (*M* = 1.67; *SD* = 1.00). All characteristics are in line with Grohmann's (2009) brand personality scale.

Looking at stimulus 6 (Homme, Necktie), participants have evaluated this stimulus as sturdy (*M* = 1.24; *SD* = 0.46), dominant (*M* = 1.75; *SD* = 1.04) and daring (*M* = 1.88; *SD* = 0.99) on the brand personality scale which is in line with the previous analysis of individual design characteristics as well as Grohmann's (2009) brand personality scale.

Lastly, the final design elements of the gender fluid condition were based on characteristics of stimulus 11 (Fluide, Period Product) and 15 (Fluide, Necktie). Investigating the brand personality characteristics, both stimulus 11 and stimulus 15 were described as unisex (stimulus 11: *M* = 1.75; *SD* = 1.50; stimulus 15: *M* = 1.75; *SD* = 0.71), and tolerant (stimulus 11: *M* = 1.50; *SD* = 0.76; stimulus 15: *M* = 1.38; *SD* = 0.52) which strengthens the choice of the font, colour, and brand name selection for the final testing.

4.3 Participants

The experiment was held in an online setting through the survey tool Qualtrics and was approved by the ethics committee of the University of Twente, Faculty of Behavioural, Management, and Social Sciences, before launching (request no. 221152). Due to time and money constraints the sampling procedure included non-probability sampling techniques such as convenience and snowball sampling. Hereby, the researcher was responsible for the distribution of the experiment through various social media channels as well as via a printed QR code on various locations on the University of Twente campus as well as the University of Münster.

This study focuses on generation z as a target audience. By asking participants about their age, their eligibility to participate in this experiment was pre-assessed, hereby minimizing the probability of invalid responses. The researcher acknowledges that the academic body of knowledge is not consistent with its age range of generation z. To simplify

analysis, the definition by Cilliers (2017) was used: "born after 1995, who is still to come into the workforce, but tend to be digital natives, fast decision makers, and highly connected" (p. 4). Hence, targeting people between the ages of 21 to 27. Moreover, to ensure the sample represented the broader population, in addition to distributing the survey amongst the general generation z population, the researcher further contacted LGBTQIA+ communities as well as conservative political parties and church communities.

A total of 237 participants participated in the survey. However, 6 participants did not give informed consent, 73 individuals did not finish the survey or were not part of the target population and have been removed from the dataset. As a result, a total of 158 respondents were included in the data analysis. A chi-square test found the participants to be equally distributed amongst the conditions based on gender ($\chi^2(8) = 3.10$, $p = 0.928$). Moreover, a one-way ANOVA analysis revealed no significant relationship between the conditions and age ($F(2, 155) = 0.63$; $p = 0.534$). The distribution of demographic characteristics, based on the blocks that participants were exposed to in the questionnaire, is displayed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Participant Demographics

	Block 1 (Feminine Fragrance, Masculine Necktie, Feminine Period Product)	Block 2 (Gender fluid period product, gender fluid fragrance, Gender fluid necktie)	Block 3 (Masculine Necktie, Feminine Period Product, Masculine Fragrance)	Total
	n = 51	*n = 48*	*n = 59*	*N = 158*
Age	*M = 23.80*	*M = 23.67*	*M = 23.37*	*Mdn = 23*
	SD = 2.35	*SD = 2.04*	*SD = 1.82*	*SD = 2.06*
Gender				
Female	51%	47.9%	47.5%	48.7%
Male	41.2%	45.8%	45.8%	44.3%
Non-Binary	3.9%	2.1%	3.4%	3.2%
Other	3.9%	2.1%	3.4%	3.2%
Prefer not to say	0%	2.1%	0%	0.6%

4.4 Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to 3 of the 7 conditions through a block structure as visible in table 1 above. To ensure comparability, the same questions were asked in each scenario. The survey flow was structured as follows: At first participants were able to read and accept the informed consent form which educated them on their rights and how their data is treated. Afterwards, a series of filter questions (age, gender) were asked to ensure they fit the target population. If participants did not fit the target population, they were redirected to the end of the survey. If they fit into the target population, they were asked about their gender norms as the between-subjects factor of this research. Afterwards, they were randomly assigned to 3 of the 7 experimental conditions, which have been structured in blocks of either binary (male vs. female) or gender fluid conditions as the within-subjects factor. They were asked to answer questions on their attitude towards the advertisements, brand attitude as well as potential brand engagement. At the end of the survey, all respondents were asked to indicate if the questions asked were clear and directed to a closing statement.

4.5 Measurement instruments

To measure all constructs, different scales adapted from various researchers are used on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 7 = "strongly agree". By using a pre-established measurement instrument, reliability as well as validity was ensured. The constructs measured are explained below. A complete overview of items can be found in the Appendix.

4.5.1 Brand attitude

Firstly, brand attitudes were investigated by using 6 items from research by Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) and Martínez and de Chernatony (2004), asking questions about the perceived reputation, characteristics as well as image about the brand after seeing each stimulus. Statements included amongst others "I associate positive characteristics with (brand)". Brand attitude was measured 3 times for each product category resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.912$ for fragrance, $\alpha = 0.919$ for period products, and $\alpha = 0.916$ for necktie products.

4.5.2 Attitude towards advertisements

Secondly, respondents' attitudes towards the presented advertisement were measured by using a pre-established scale by Taylor et al (2011) as cited in Mukherjee and Banerjee (2019), and Kaushal and Kumar (2016), asking whether participants liked the advertisement and would purchase the advertised product. Three items were adapted by the above-mentioned scales, items "I like the product packaging of (brand)" and "I like the slogan of this advertisement" were added. Cronbach's Alpha indicated a reliability of $\alpha = 0.905$ for fragrance, $\alpha = 0.916$ for period, and $\alpha = 0.934$ for necktie products.

4.5.3 Brand engagement

Thirdly, the dependent outcome variable brand engagement was measured by investigating respondents perceived personal connection to the presented stimuli and whether they can identify themselves with the brand (i.e., "I can identify with (brand)"). This was done by adapting a scale by Lee et al (2020) which consisted of 6 items. The reliability

analysis revealed a Cronbach's Alpha of α = 0.948 for fragrance, α = 0.957 for period, and

α = 0.948 for necktie products.

4.5.4 Gender norms

Lastly, by asking participants how they perceive gender fluidity and binary genders, their gender norms were evaluated (conservativeness vs. liberality towards gender fluidity). 5 items based on research by Molin et al (2021) were used (α = 0.87) asking questions such as "An individual's gender can change throughout their lives". The effect of the variable gender norms on brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement as well as brand engagement has been analysed based on a median split (Mdn = 4.15, *SD* = 1.79) clustering individuals in either the conservative (*N* = 79; *M* = 5.64; *SD* = 0.70) or liberal (*N* = 79; *M* = 2.66; *SD* = 1.19) category.

5. Results

5.1 Brand attitude

A repeated measures mixed model ANOVA was conducted to investigate the effects of marketing strategy and gender norms as independent variables and product category as a covariate on the dependent variables brand attitude. Results showed there is a significant main effect of gender norms on brand attitude ($F(1, 146) = 9.91$, $p = 0.002$). This indicates that participants evaluated their brand attitude differently depending on whether they have liberal or conservative gender norms. Additionally, although results showed no significant main effect of marketing strategy on brand attitude, analysing the moderating effect of product category, the effect was significant when comparing binary gendered and gender

fluid marketing and accounting for gender norms ($F(1, 146) = 32.76$, $p < 0.001$). This means that there was a difference in brand attitude between the fragrance, period, and necktie products when the marketing strategy (binary gendered vs. gender fluid) aligned with the gender norms (conservative vs. liberal) of participants. Hence, brand attitudes are evaluated as most favourable for conservative individuals being exposed to binary gendered advertisements ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.19$) and liberal individuals to gender fluid advertisements ($M = 4.86$, $SD = 1.04$). Examination of the means revealed that brand attitudes differ for both conservative and liberal individuals. However, without accounting for participants' gender norms, marketing strategy does not influence brand attitudes. An overview is visible in Figure 3. As a result, hypotheses H$_2$A and H$_3$A are supported.
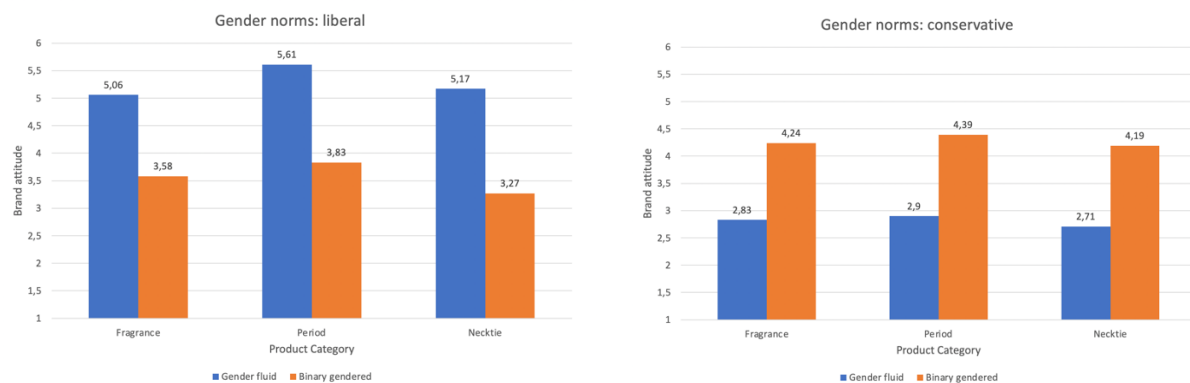

Figure 3. The interaction effect of marketing strategy, product category and liberal (left); conservative (right) gender norms on brand attitude

Specifically, conservative individuals perceived binary gendered necktie ($M = 4.41$, $SD = 1.14$) and fragrance products ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.22$) as most positively while evaluating the gender fluid necktie as least favourable ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.54$). Oppositely, liberal participants perceived gender fluid period products as most favourable ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 0.97$) and gender fluid fragrances as least positive ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.23$). Additionally, their brand attitudes towards the binary gendered necktie product were least positive ($M = 3.54$,

SD = 1.21). Figure 3 illustrates brand attitudes for gender fluid marketing to be positive with an average mean of above 5 for individuals with liberal gender norms. Although preferring binary gendered marketing, conservative individuals evaluated both marketing strategies less favourable compared to liberal participants with an average mean below 5. Even though brand attitudes are differently impacted by combining product category and gender norms, the gender fluid fragrance product did not result in the strongest brand attitudes. Therefore, hypothesis H_1A is rejected.

5.2 Attitude towards the advertisement

To test the effects of the independent variables gender norms and marketing strategy as well as the covariate product category on the dependent variable attitude towards the advertisement a second repeated measures mixed model ANOVA has been conducted. Analysis showed no main effect for the independent variable marketing strategy on the dependent variable attitude towards the advertisement. However, there was a significant main effect of gender norms on attitude towards the advertisement ($F(1, 146) = 10.33$, $p = 0.002$), meaning that conservative and liberal participants evaluated their attitude towards the advertisement differently for different advertisements. Additionally, a significant interaction has further been discovered between gender norms and marketing strategy on attitude towards the advertisement while accounting for the covariate of product category ($F(1, 146) = 38.45$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that although marketing strategy on its own does not affect attitudes towards the advertisement, aligning marketing strategy (binary gendered vs. gender fluid) to participants gender norms (liberal vs. conservative) does result in significant differences for fragrance, period, or necktie products. Thus, liberal participants developed more favourable attitudes towards gender fluid advertisements whereas

conservative individuals preferred binary gendered advertisements. Consequently, hypotheses H$_2$B and H$_3$B are supported. An overview of the results can be seen in Figure 4.
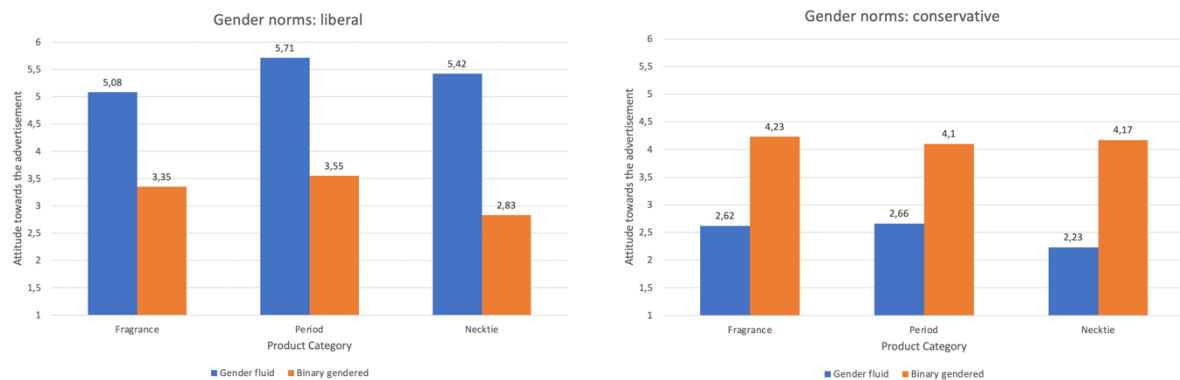

Figure 4. The interaction effect of marketing strategy, product category and liberal (left); conservative (right) gender norms on attitude towards the advertisement

Liberal participants' overall evaluation of the dependent variable attitudes towards the advertisement was, with an average mean of above 5, higher than conservative individuals. Specifically looking at Figure 4 above, it is evident that liberal participants evaluated their attitude towards the advertisement for gender fluid period products as most favourable (M = 5.42, SD = 0.90), while conservative individuals viewed binary gendered fragrance as most positively (M = 4.30, SD = 1.33). As it has been hypothesised that gender fluid fragrances will be evaluated as most positively, hypotheses H$_1$B is rejected.

5.3 Brand engagement

A third repeated measures mixed model ANOVA has been conducted to test the effects of the independent variables gender norms and marketing strategy as well as the covariate product category on the third dependent variable brand engagement. Analysis discovered no main effect of marketing strategy on brand engagement. Hence, marketing strategy (binary gendered vs. gender fluid) did not make a difference when evaluating the brand engagement for different product categories. Hence, neither gender fluid nor binary

gendered marketing alone led to more or less favourable brand engagement of participants.

However, results showed a significant main effect of gender norms on brand engagement

($F(1, 146) = 6.75$, $p < 0.01$), meaning that brand engagement has been evaluated differently

for fragrance, period, and necktie products depending on the individuals gender norms

(conservative vs. liberal). Investigating the moderating effects of the covariate product

category and the interaction between the independent variables gender norms and

marketing strategy on brand engagement, results showed a significant effect between

participants ($F(2, 146) = 25.96$, $p < 0.001$). This means that there was a difference in brand

engagement between the fragrance, period, and necktie products when the marketing

strategy (binary gendered vs. gender fluid) aligned with the gender norms (liberal vs.

conservative). As a result, hypotheses H_2C and H_3C are supported. Figure 5 gives an overview

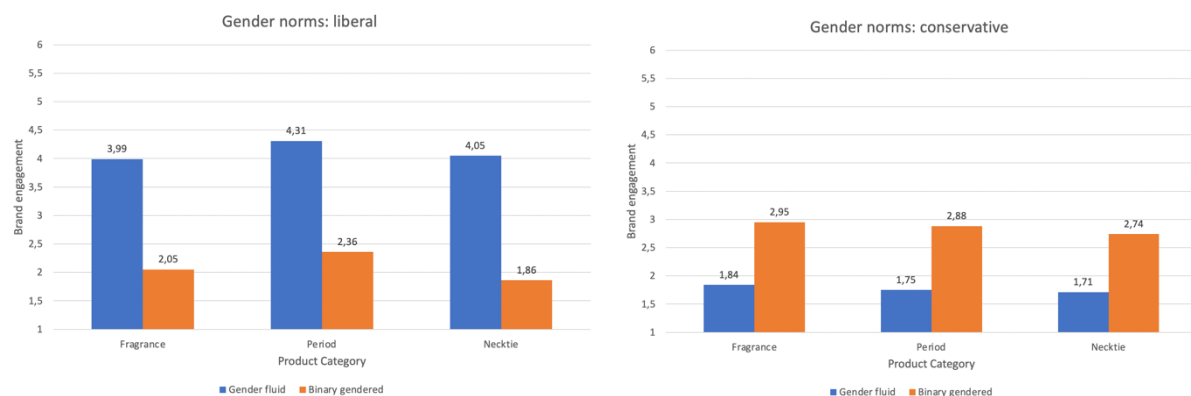of the relationship between the respective variables.

Figure 5. The interaction effect of marketing strategy, product category and liberal (left); conservative (right) gender norms on brand engagement

While liberal participants evaluated the overall brand engagement higher than

conservative individuals (liberal: $M > 4$; conservative: $M < 4$), it is evident that brand

engagement resulted in the least positive results compared to brand attitude and attitude

towards the advertisement. In particular, gender fluid period products have the highest

brand engagement rates for liberal individuals ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 1.37$).

33

Conservative participants viewed binary gendered fragrances as most favourable in terms of brand engagement (M = 2.88, SD = 1.55). Therefore, we can conclude that gender fluid fragrances did not result in the most positive brand engagement and results in hypothesis H_1C to be rejected.

5.4 Overview of hypotheses

Table 6 shows an overview of the hypotheses tested during this research as well as whether they were supported by the statistical findings.

Table 2 Overview of results of hypothesis testing

	Hypotheses	Result
H_1A	Brand attitudes will be more favourable for gender fluid marketing in the fragrance industry compared to period and necktie products.	Rejected
H_1B	Attitudes towards the advertisement will be more favourable for gender fluid marketing in the fragrance industry compared to period and necktie products.	Rejected
H_1C	Brand engagement will be more favourable for gender fluid marketing in the fragrance industry compared to period and necktie products.	Rejected
H_2A	Brand attitudes will be more favourable when the marketing strategy matches consumers' gender norms.	Supported
H_2B	Attitudes towards the advertisement will be more favourable when the marketing strategy matches consumers' gender norms.	Supported
H_2C	Brand engagement will be more favourable when the marketing strategy matches consumers' gender norms.	Supported
H_3A	Brand attitudes will be more favourable if the product category matches customers' gender norms.	Supported
H_3B	Attitudes towards the advertisement will be more favourable if the product category matches customers' gender norms.	Supported
H_3C	Brand engagement will be more favourable if the product category matches customers' gender norms.	Supported

6. Discussion and Conclusions

6.1 Discussion

The main aim of this study was to investigate whether and how marketing strategy (gender fluid vs. binary gendered) impacts brand attitude, attitude towards the advertisement, and brand engagement for different product categories (fragrance, period, necktie) while accounting for the role of gender norms (liberal vs. conservative) for a generation z audience.

Analysis discovered aligning individuals' gender norms with the respective marketing strategy impacts brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement. Gender fluid marketing was evaluated more favourable if an individual has liberal gender norms and binary gendered marketing was more favourable if an individual is conservative. This effect occurred for all three outcome variables (brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement) and is in line with the findings of Read et al (2019) and Sandhu (2017). Sandhu (2017) explained responses to gender fluid advertisements to differ based on consumers gender norms as people see products as an extension of themselves and feel the need to identify with products they buy. Moreover, Read et al.(2019) describe generation z to increasingly demand gender fluid advertising. They desire to challenge gender stereotypes and create a more tolerant society towards LGBTQIA+ individuals which strengthens the findings of this study.

More specifically, this effect also depends on product category. Analysis discovered a difference between product categories suggesting gender fluid period products to have a more positive effect on brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement as opposed to fragrance and necktie products especially for individuals with

liberal gender norms. Although this supports the hypothesis that liberal individuals prefer gender fluid advertisements, it was expected that results would be more favourable for fragrance products as opposed to period or necktie products. A possible cause for this may be that gender fluid fragrance products are already widely established on the markets and seen as normal by generation z (Jiménez & Guzmán Alonso, 2019). Hence, based on the mere-exposure effect customers do not realise fragrance products to be advertised as gender-fluid and therefore do not have a strong reaction to it either. At the same time, as Kuehn and Parker (2021) suggest, generation z likes to challenge stereotypes. With period products being traditionally closely tied to the female gender (Guittar et al., 2022) brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement are more positive for this product to be advertised as gender fluid as it represents an active form of brand activism desired by generation z (Ratten, 2017).

However, this study found that these effects do not occur regardless of marketing strategy. Without accounting for gender norms, gender fluid marketing does not lead to more positive brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement as opposed to binary gendered marketing. These results add to findings discussed by Ratten (2017), who found societal gender developments to influence global marketing strategies of brands as we currently moving to a more fluid understanding of gender in society. In their study, Ratten (2017) elaborated on how global gender-neutral marketing strategies are demanded by generation z and how these developments influence brands to adopt their marketing strategies to foster an increased dialogue about gender stereotypes and contribute to a more open and inclusive society. Through this experimental study, new findings have been added to the literature understanding that although gender fluid marketing may be demanded by generation z, it does not ultimately lead to more favourable

brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement but results depend on product category and gender norms.

6.1.1 Additional findings

6.1.1.1 Design for gender fluid brands

While design characteristics of feminine and masculine brand genders have been extensively researched, the in-depth pre-test to this study extends the body of knowledge by giving a first conceptualisation on how to design for gender fluid brands.

The pre-test discovered the feminine and masculine stimuli to be characterised in line with research by Lieven et al (2015). Here, fonts, colours, and brand names were correctly categorized as either male or female. Findings have been strengthened by using the brand personality scale of Grohmann (2009) describing feminine stimuli as for instance sweet, tender, and graceful and masculine stimuli as for instance dominant, daring, and sturdy. Adding to this research, a minimalistic sans serif font has been associated with gender fluidity, indicating that it is neither associated with strongly feminine nor strongly masculine brand characteristics. Moreover, a neutral beige colour has been identified as gender fluid, and the brand name "Fluide" suggested the strongest gender fluid stance. Overall gender fluid stimuli have been categorized as for instance unisex, and tolerant which strengthens the findings of design characteristics for gender fluid brands.

6.1.1.2 Risks of gender fluid marketing

Cannon (2021) noted gender fluid marketing to be contemporary and thought provoking in todays' marketing sphere, by conducting this study the aim was to pioneer a new era of marketing research and investigate the effects of gender fluid marketing on brand attitudes, attitude towards the advertisement, and brand engagement in order to help marketers make informed decisions for future marketing campaigns. However, during this study it became visible that adopting a gender fluid marketing approach can also lead to negative and aggressive reactions. As such, this experimental survey received discriminatory, antisemitic, and homophobic comments of participants being exposed to the gender fluid marketing condition. A small selection of the comments can be found below but should be read with caution.

- *Products and brands don't have values or personality. Just the same as you.*
- *The backlash against the transgender movement will be horrifying, you are creating the conditions for a far right takeover of the west. You are responsible for all the evil that is to come*

Sandhu (2017) indicated that conservative individuals potentially develop aggression towards a society that is increasingly tolerant and open minded towards the LGBTQIA+ community and all involved. For instance, customers may develop negative associations to the brand as well as alienate the brand which decreases its sales volume. These reactions illustrate the potential negative effects brands need to account for when engaging in gender fluid marketing and brand activism despite the potential positive effects on brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement.

6.2 Theoretical and practical implications

6.2.1 Theoretical implications

Traditional gender marketing research focused on the differences and effects of binary gendered marketing, hence masculine versus feminine marketing strategies, on brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement as well as brand engagement. Noticing a societal shift towards a more open-minded, gender fluid society, this research focused on the different impacts of gender fluid and binary gendered marketing on the above-mentioned factors. With gender fluidity being a relatively new development, the academic body of knowledge is currently lacking comprehensive research. Hence, this study adds insight into a new era of marketing research.

A trend is visible in which gender fluid marketing is gaining popularity over traditional binary gendered marketing techniques amongst generation z with a liberal worldview. Specifically, this study found brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement to be predetermined by the interaction between individuals' gender norms as well as the marketing strategy chosen. Comparing the effects between product categories, the study found gender fluid period products to have resulted in the most favourable outcomes of brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement compared to fragrance or necktie products for liberal participants. This is indicating a positive reaction of generation z towards a progressive gender fluid marketing of stereotypically feminine products and is in line with previous research discovering generation z to favour brands that engage in brand activism (Ratten, 2017). The positive reaction to gender fluid period products by generation z can further be understood as a reflection of themselves and their worldviews as indicated by Fugate and Phillips (2010).

Additionally, this study adds insight into how to design for gender fluid brands as the pre-test explored how design characteristics (font, colour, brand name) are perceived differently between masculine, feminine, and gender fluid stimuli. The findings suggest that brands can differentiate themselves from traditional feminine and masculine design characteristics by adopting a gender fluid marketing approach based on the use of a minimalistic sans-serif font, a neutral beige colour, and a brand name that suggests a gender fluid stance. The results also provide a direction for extending Grohmann's (2009) brand personality scale as well as Lieven's et al (2015) design characteristics to include gender fluid characteristics.

6.2.2 Practical Implications

Furthermore, the findings of this study may also be implemented in a practical setting by marketers. This research gives an insight into how generation z responds when being exposed to different gender marketing tactics for different product categories. While gender fluid marketing was well received by people with liberal gender norms, research found this type of marketing to lead to negative effects, in this case hate comments, as well. It is therefore advised for marketers to carefully analyse their target audience before implementing gender fluid marketing strategies. Marketers should not base their decision solely on the trend of gender fluid expression in society but consider the interaction effects of how their target audience perceives this development. Thus, it is favourable for brands with a liberal target audience to adopt gender fluid marketing, while it is not favourable for brands with a conservative audience.

Furthermore, this study showed that although period products are not often advertised in a gender fluid manner, this product category resulted in most positive

evaluations by liberal participants compared to fragrance and necktie products. This indicates that gender fluid marketing may be categorised as form of brand activism as period products have traditionally been linked closely to a females' sex. Previous research discovered brand activism to be desired by generation z consumers signifying that marketers can leverage this opportunity by advertising stereotypical products in a gender fluid manner (Ratten, 2017).

Lastly, few brands have yet to adopt a gender fluid marketing approach especially in stereotypically male and female industries such as period and necktie products. Hence, marketers can take this as an advantage and use gender fluid marketing to establish a unique position in their industry and use it as a differentiation factor which attracts a generation z target audience, establish favourable brand associations, and increase customers' brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement as well as brand engagement. To advice brands on how to adopt a gender fluid marketing approach, this research established a first design conceptualisation of brand name, font, and colour characteristics.

6.3 Limitations and future research

There are several limitations to this study which will be outlined in the following paragraph. First, this study made use of fictional brands instead of real brands. Although this decision has been made intentionally to eliminate potential bias resulting from the participants' already established brand awareness and image, this may have influenced the results. Doyle et al (2014) explained participants' attitudes differ between real and fictional brands as brand familiarity has a moderating effect on brand attitudes. Thus, it is advised to use the same research design on real brands and account for influences stemming from previous knowledge and exposure of the brand in future research. Doing this will allow researchers and marketers to understand the compounding effects of an established brand

image, and brand familiarity as well as a shift to gender fluid marketing on brand attitude, attitude towards the advertisement, and brand engagement. It will consequently provide a nuanced picture of real-life scenarios for brands.

Second, constructs measured were based on scales developed by Kaushal and Kumar (2016), Lee et al. (2020), Martínez and de Chernatony (2004), Molin et al. (2021), Mukherjee and Banerjee (2019) as well as Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016). Although this study found a high reliability between the items that measure brand attitude, attitude towards the advertisement, brand engagement, and gender norms. Researchers consider an alpha level of > 0.90 to indicate redundancy between elements (Panayides, 2013). As we found an alpha level of > 0.90 for the variables brand attitude, attitude towards the advertisement, and brand engagement future research may investigate individual items within the scales and make adjustments for them to become increasingly concise and effective.

Third, future research may also explore the actual behaviour of consumers when encountering gender fluid marketing. As this research included questions on potential brand engagement, future studies may test this in a real-life setting giving marketers a comprehensive outlook on the effects of gender fluid marketing on brand engagement. Doing this will help to uncover possible opportunities for an increased brand engagement which ultimately may lead to for instance enhanced brand evaluations by the target audience and an increased sales volume. This is especially important has research has shown potential brand engagement to not always align with actual brand engagement (Cooke et al., 2022).

Fourth, while there is extensive knowledge on the different design characteristics between masculine and feminine design, there is little academic knowledge on which typography and colours are perceived as gender fluid. While this study made use of comprehensive pre-tests, future research is needed to distinguish binary from gender fluid

design characteristics and hence establishing comprehensive design guidelines for marketers. These guidelines are needed to efficiently target the desired target audience, reduce negative effects of misusing design characteristics, and evaluate the role of different product categories.

Fifth, due to time and money constraints this study made use of non-probability sampling methods resulting in an unequal representation of males and females versus third gender participants. With gender fluid marketing being a vessel to communicate open-mindedness and inclusivity of all genders, the LGBTQIA+ community is an important group which needs further investigation in this context (Cooke et al., 2022). Therefore, it is advised to conduct further empirical analyses on gender fluid marketing while especially accounting for the LGBTQIA+ community and investigate effects on brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement of this. Analysing this will illustrate for which product categories gender fluid marketing is especially desired by the target audience and which opportunities can be leveraged by brands based on this.

Sixth, in addition to discussing the potential benefits of gender fluid marketing, future research needs to investigate the potential negative consequences for brands when adopting a gender fluid marketing approach. This research illustrated 2 consequences of gender fluid marketing, one evaluating a gender fluid marketing approach as positive and form of brand activism, and the other resulting in hateful and discriminatory reactions. Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) elaborated the benefits of brand activism to depend on peoples' agreement with the brand's stance. If people do not agree, Mukherjee and Althuizen (2020) found brand activism to result in a decreased brand image and negative brand engagement. Analysing the potential negative effects of brand activism particularly addressing the LGBTQIA+ community

will help marketers to conduct a comprehensive risk and benefit analysis and make well-informed decisions before implementing a gender fluid marketing approach.

Finally, in connection to this, this study took a binary approach to gender norms by solely investigating the differences between liberal and conservative individuals. To get a better understanding on the role of gender norms, it is therefore necessary to include a more complex view on gender norms. Moreau et al (2021) explained contradicting gender worldviews to potentially coexist in people which adds an increased complexity to the findings of this study. In their study, Moreau et al (2021) investigated 3 gender norm scales (sexual double standards, stereotypical traits, and stereotypical roles) and found conservative and liberal gender norms to potentially coexist between those scales. As this study discovered different effects on brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement for individuals with either liberal or conservative gender norms on different product categories, further research is needed to nuance the results and craft an all-encompassing picture of the effect of gender norms. This will help marketers to see the differences in brand attitude, attitude towards the advertisement as well as brand engagement for people with different gender norms and evaluate which marketing strategy will be most suitable for their target audience.

6.4 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of gender fluid and binary gendered marketing on brand attitude, attitude towards the advertisement, and brand engagement of generation z customers while considering the differences between fragrance, period, and necktie products and accounting for individuals' liberal or conservative gender norms. This study contributes to a new era of marketing research by providing a first conceptual insight into the design of gender fluid marketing and its increasing relevance in todays' society as well as empirical evidence of its effects on brand attitudes, attitudes towards the advertisement, and brand engagement. Future studies may investigate the impact of gender fluid marketing on actual behaviour of people, test the effects by using real brands, how to design for gender fluid brands as well as how outcomes differ between other product categories. Furthermore, future research should place an increased focus on the LGBTQIA+ community and a nuanced view on gender norms.

7. References

Akdemir, N. (2018). Deconstruction of gender stereotypes through fashion. *European Journal of Social Science Education and Research*, *5*(2), 185. https://doi.org/10.26417/ejser.v5i2.p185-190

Åkestam, N., Rosengren, S., Dahlén, M., Liljedal, K. T., & Berg, H. (2021). Gender stereotypes in advertising have negative cross-gender effects. *European Journal of Marketing*, *55*(13), 63–93. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-02-2019-0125

Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the extended Self. In *Source: Journal of Consumer Research*, *15*(2). https://www.jstor.org/stable/2489522

Bowles, H. (2020, November 13). *Playtime with Harry Styles*. Vogue. https://www.vogue.com/article/harry-styles-cover-december-2020

Boyd, H. W., Ray, M. L., & Strong, E. C. (1972). An attitudinal framework for advertising strategy. *Journal of Marketing*, *36*(2). https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429720360020

Cannon, C. (2021). Non-binary gender identity and algorithmic-psychometric marketing legibility. *Feminist Media Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2021.1902367

Cilliers, E. J. (2017). The challenge of teaching generation Z. *People: International Journal of Social Sciences*, *3*(1), 188–198. https://doi.org/10.20319/pijss.2017.31.188198

Cooke, A., Russell-Bennett, R., Wang, D., & Whyte, S. (2022). Branding beyond the gender binary. *Psychology and Marketing*, *39*(8), 1621–1632. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21675

Dake, L. (2016, June 16). *Jamie Shupe becomes first legally non-binary person in the US*. The Guardian. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jun/16/jamie-shupe-first-non-binary-person-oregon

Doyle, J. P., Pentecost, R. D., & Funk, D. C. (2014). The effect of familiarity on associated sponsor and event brand attitudes following negative celebrity endorser publicity. *Sport Management Review*, *17*(3), 310–323. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2013.10.003

Dua, T. (2016, March 29). *From Coca-Cola to Barbie: The fierce rise of gender-neutral advertising*. Digiday. https://digiday.com/marketing/theyre-just-fierce-rise-gender-fluid-advertising/

Dvorsky, G., & Hughes, J. (2008). *Postgenderism: beyond the gender binary*. *Institute for Ethics and Emerging Technologies*, *20*, 44-57.

Fabrigar, L. R., Wegener, D. T., & MacDonald, T. K. (2010). Distinguishing between prediction and influence: multiple processes underlying attitude-behavior consistency. In *Then A Miracle Occurs: Focusing on Behavior in Social Psychological Theory and Research*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195377798.003.0009

Fetto, F. (2020, February 19). *Smell like you: why gender-free is the future of fragrance*. https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2020/feb/19/smell-like-you-why-gender-free-is-the-future-of-fragrance

Frank, S. E. (2020). Queering menstruation: trans and non-binary identity and body politics. *Sociological Inquiry*, *90*(2), 371–404. https://doi.org/10.1111/soin.12355

Fugate, D. L., & Phillips, J. (2010). Product gender perceptions and antecedents of product gender congruence. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *27*(3), 251–261. https://doi.org/10.1108/07363761011038329

Grau, S. L., & Zotos, Y. C. (2016). Gender stereotypes in advertising: a review of current research. *International Journal of Advertising*, *35*(5), 761–770. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2016.1203556

Grohmann, B. (2009). Gender dimensions of brand personality. *American Marketing Association*, *46*, 105–119. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.46.1.105

Grow, J. M. (2008). The gender of branding: early Nike women's advertising as a feminist antenarrative. *Women's Studies in Communication*, *31*(3), 312–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2008.10162545

Guittar, S. G., Grauerholz, L., Kidder, E. N., Daye, S. D., & McLaughlin, M. (2022). Beyond the pink tax: gender-based pricing and differentiation of personal care products. *Gender Issues*, *39*(1). https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-021-09280-9

Jiménez, J., & Guzmán Alonso, M. (2019, February 28). *Fluid beauty: biometric measures to innovate "genderless" cosmetics*. Cosmetics & Toiletries. https://www.cosmeticsandtoiletries.com/research/methods-tools/article/21837331/fluid-beauty-biometric-measures-to-innovate-genderless-cosmetics

Kaushal, S. K., & Kumar, R. (2016). *Influence of attitude towards advertisement on purchase intention: exploring the mediating role of attitude towards brand using SEM approach, 15*(4).

Keller, K. L. (1993). *Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity*. *Journal of marketing*, *57*(1), 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429930570010

Kuehn, K. M., & Parker, S. (2021). One of the blokes: brewsters, branding and gender (in)visibility in New Zealand's craft beer industry. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, *21*(3), 519–538. https://doi.org/10.1177/1469540518806956

Lee, J. K., Hansen, S. S., & Lee, S. Y. (2020). The effect of brand personality self-congruity on brand engagement and purchase intention: the moderating role of self-esteem in Facebook. *Current Psychology*, *39*(6), 2116–2128. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-018-9898-3

Lieven, T., Grohmann, B., Herrmann, A., Landwehr, J. R., & van Tilburg, M. (2014). The effect of brand gender on brand equity. *Psychology and Marketing*, *31*(5), 371–385. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20701

Lieven, T., Grohmann, B., Herrmann, A., Landwehr, J. R., & van Tilburg, M. (2015). The effect of brand design on brand gender perceptions and brand preference. *European Journal of Marketing*, *49*, 146–169. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-08-2012-0456

lunette. (n.d.). *Living our values*. Retrieved April 27, 2022, from https://store.lunette.com/pages/activism

Martínez, E., & de Chernatony, L. (2004). The effect of brand extension strategies upon brand image. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, *21*(1), 39–50. https://doi.org/10.1108/07363760410513950

Miles, A. (2020, August 11). *Gender neutral marketing: is unconscious bias holding back your brand?* Aquent. https://aquent.com.au/blog/gender-neutral-marketing-is-unconscious-bias-holding-back-your-brand

Molin, A., Simond, A., Sato, S., Jaeggi, T., Gygax, P. M., & Meuwly, N. (2021). Linking political and feminist ideology with openness towards non-binary gender: the development and initial validation of a scale to measure subjective openness towards non-binary gender (ONBG). *Journal of Gender Studies*, *30*(8), 901–914. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2020.1844644

Moreau, C., Li, M., Ahmed, S., Zuo, X., & Cislaghi, B. (2021). Assessing the spectrum of gender norms perceptions in early adolescence: a cross-cultural analysis of the global early adolescent study. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *69*(1), S16–S22. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2021.03.010

Morgenroth, T., Sendén, M. G., Lindqvist, A., Renström, E. A., Ryan, M. K., & Morton, T. A. (2021). Defending the sex/gender binary: the role of gender identification and need for closure. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *12*(5), 731–740. https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620937188

Mukherjee, K., & Banerjee, N. (2019). Social networking sites and customers' attitude towards advertisements. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, *13*(4), 477–491. https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-06-2018-0081

National Institutes of Health. (n.d.). *Sex & gender*. National Institutes of Health. Retrieved May 18, 2022, from https://orwh.od.nih.gov/sex-gender

Ngono, B. N., & Melingui, E. (2021). The influence of gender on psychological actors in the cosmetics sector. *Finance, Auditing, Management and Economics*, *2*(6), 82–99. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5531952

Panayides, P. (2013). Coefficient alpha: interpret with caution. *Europe's Journal of Psychology*, *9*(4), 687–696. https://doi.org/10.5964/ejop.v9i4.653

Pointbleu Design. (2021, June 21). *Gender fluid*. Pointbleu Design. https://www.pointbleudesign.com/blog/gender-fluid/#:~:text=Being%20a%20fluid%20brand%20involves,representative%20in%20the%20broadest%20sense.

Pongpaew, W., Speece, M., & Tiangsoongnern, L. (2017). Social presence and customer brand engagement on Facebook brand pages. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, *26*(3), 262–281. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-08-2015-0956

Prance-Miles, L. (2019, March 14). Lux appoints first non-gender influencer as brand ambassador. Global Cosmetics News. https://www.globalcosmeticsnews.com/lux-appoints-first-non-gender-influencer-as-brand-ambassador/

Ratten, V. (2017). Gender entrepreneurship and global marketing. *Journal of Global Marketing*, *30*(3), 114–121. https://doi.org/10.1080/08911762.2017.1316532

Read, G. L., Innis, I. J., van Driel, I. I., & Potter, R. F. (2019). Mates or married? Implications of gender composition and physical intimacy on evaluation of images tested for advertising. *Communication Research Reports*, *36*(3), 220–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2019.1605894

Sachdev, N., Chahal, S., & Jain, S. (2021). Study of brand activism on Millennials and Generation Z. *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting*, 50–61. https://doi.org/10.9734/ajeba/2021/v21i1630484

Sandhu, N. (2017). Consumer response to brand gender bending: an integrated review and future research agenda. *Business Perspectives and Research*, *5*(2), 151–166. https://doi.org/10.1177/2278533717692917

Schivinski, B., & Dabrowski, D. (2016). The effect of social media communication on consumer perceptions of brands. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *22*(2), 189–214. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2013.871323

Shahab, M. H., Ghazali, E., & Mohtar, M. (2021). The role of elaboration likelihood model in consumer behaviour research and its extension to new technologies: a review and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12658

Stafford, T., & Grimes, A. (2012). Memory enhances the mere exposure effect. *Psychology and Marketing*, *29*(12), 995–1003. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20581

Sumerau, J. E., Mathers, L. A. B., & Moon, D. (2020). Foreclosing fluidity at the intersection of gender and sexual normativities. *Symbolic Interaction*, *43*(2), 205–234. https://doi.org/10.1002/symb.431

Trussell, J. (2022). *Timeline of LGBTQ+ representation in advertising*. Quickframe. https://quickframe.com/blog/lgbtq-representation-in-advertising/

Turner, J. C., Brown, R. J., & Tajfel, H. (1979). Social comparison and group interest in ingroup favouritism. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *9*, 187–204.

van Tilburg, M., Lieven, T., Herrmann, A., & Townsend, C. (2015). Beyond "Pink It and Shrink It" perceived product gender, aesthetics, and product evaluation. *Psychology and Marketing*, *32*(4), 422–437. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20789

Wang, X., Li, F., & Jia, F. (2020). Optimal advertising budget allocation across markets with different goals and various Ccnstraints. *Complexity*, *2020*. https://doi.org/10.1155/2020/6162056

Watson. (2021, January 11). *The future is fluid: is the age of gender neutral marketing upon us?* The Drum. https://www.thedrum.com/news/2021/01/11/the-future-fluid-the-age-gender-neutral-marketing-upon-us

We are fluide. (n.d.). *About us*. We Are Fluide. Retrieved April 28, 2022, from https://www.fluide.us/pages/about-us

8. Appendix

8.1 Pre-test constructs and items measured

Construct	Statements/ Items	Source
Binary gender perception	If this brand was a person, would you describe it as (5-point Likert Scale) a. Tender b. Graceful c. Emotional d. Sensitive e. Sweet f. Fragile g. Adventurous h. Aggressive i. Brave j. Daring k. Dominant l. Sturdy	(Grohmann, 2009)
Gender fluid perception	If this brand was a person, would you describe it as (5-point Likert Scale): a. Gender-fluid b. Unisex c. Tolerant d. Inclusive	-
Font perceptions	Do you think the font is... a. Readable? b. Feminine? c. Masculine? d. Gender-neutral?	-
Brand name perceptions	Do you think the font is... a. Feminine? b. Masculine? c. Gender-neutral?	-
Colour perceptions	Do you think the font is... a. Feminine? b. Masculine? c. Gender-neutral?	-
Overall evaluation	Do you think the advertisement is... a. Attractive? b. Realistic?	-

Do you have any suggestions to make this
advertisement more attractive and realistic?
- a. Yes, _____
- b. No

8.2 Pre-test design stimuli
* note that the order of the pre-test stimuli in this paper differs from the order in which the stimuli were placed in the pre-test survey. The survey order of the pre-test stimuli can be found in 8.5.

8.2.1 Feminine binary gender marketing stimuli

Stimulus 1   Stimulus 2   Stimulus 3

Stimulus 4   Stimulus 5
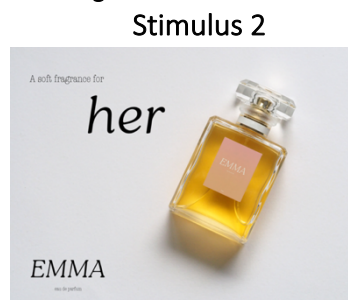
8.2.2 Masculine binary gender marketing stimuli

Stimulus 6   Stimulus 7   Stimulus 8

Stimulus 9   Stimulus 10
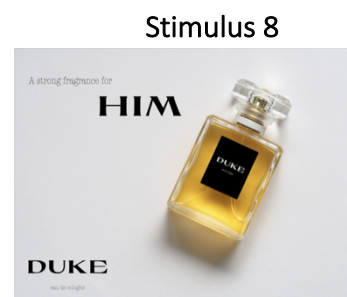
8.2.3 Gender fluid marketing stimuli

Stimulus 11	Stimulus 12	Stimulus 13
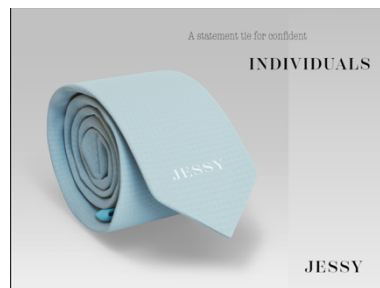
Stimulus 14	Stimulus 15	Stimulus 16

Stimulus 17	Stimulus 18

8.3 Pre-test results

8.3.1 Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) of Fonts

Stimuli	Readability		Femininity		Masculinity		Gender Fluidity	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Feminine Stimuli								
Font 1 Matrix II Script OT	2.63	0.92	2.13	0.64	4.13	0.64	3.00	1.07
Font 2 Roca One	2.13	1.25	1.88	0.99	4.13	0.64	4.13	0.64
Font 3 Roca One	1.78	1.30	2.22	1.09	4.25	1.17	4.25	0.89
Font 4 Medusa	4.13	1.13	1.63	0.74	4.25	1.17	4.25	0.89
Font 5 Medusa	3.67	1.00	1.78	1.09	4.33	0.71	4.33	0.71
Masculine Stimuli								
Font 6 Avenir LT Std 85 Heavy	1.50	0.93	4.38	0.74	1.63	0.52	3.13	0.99
Font 7 Coconat	2.44	1.01	4.11	1.05	2.22	0.44	3.89	0.60

	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Font 8 Coconat	2.13	0.99	4.00	0.93	1.88	0.64	3.13	0.99
Font 9 Copperplate	1.44	0.53	3.89	0.93	2.11	1.05	3.33	0.87
Font 10 Avenir LT Std 85 Heavy	1.89	1.27	3.89	1.05	2.00	1.00	3.33	1.23
Gender-Fluid Stimuli								
Font 11 Menlo	1.63	1.06	3.75	0.71	3.38	0.92	2.50	0.93
Font 12 Scotch Display	2.11	0.60	3.44	0.73	3.00	0.87	2.78	0.97
Font 13 Menlo	1.44	0.53	3.11	0.78	3.11	0.60	2.33	1.00
Font 14 Scotch Display	2.00	1.41	2.88	1.13	3.63	0.92	2.00	0.76
Font 15 Menlo	1.38	0.52	3.13	0.99	3.00	1.07	1.63	0.92
Font 16 The Night Watch	2.56	1.33	3.44	1.01	3.56	0.88	2.44	0.73
Font 17 Scotch Display	1.78	0.44	3.00	1.23	3.56	0.88	2.22	1.09
Font 18 The Night Watch	3.22	1.79	3.22	1.79	3.67	1.41	2.89	1.54

8.3.2 Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) of Colours

Stimuli	Femininity		Masculinity		Gender Fluidity	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Feminine Stimuli						
Colour 1 Bold Pink & Orange	2.00	0.54	4.25	0.71	2.88	0.99
Colour 2 Light Pink & Yellow	1.63	0.52	3.87	0.84	3.87	0.84
Colour 3 Light Pink & Yellow	1.56	0.73	3.89	1.17	3.11	0.93
Colour 4 Dark Pink	1.88	0.36	4.00	0.93	3.50	0.93
Colour 5 Dark Pink	2.22	1.20	4.33	0.71	3.44	0.88
Masculine Stimuli						
Colour 6 Grey	4.75	0.46	1.50	0.54	3.25	1.28
Colour 7 Dark Blue	4.67	0.71	1.89	0.93	3.56	0.73
Colour 8 Black	3.50	1.07	2.13	0.64	3.50	1.07
Colour 9 Dark Green	3.89	1.17	1.67	1.00	3.56	0.88
Colour 10 Dark Blue	4.22	0.83	2.11	1.05	3.33	1.12
Gender-Fluid Stimuli						
Colour 11 Beige	4.00	1.41	3.25	1.28	2.00	1.31
Colour 12 Light Blue	3.67	0.87	3.44	0.73	2.44	0.53
Colour 13 Beige & Light Green	3.89	0.93	3.78	0.83	2.00	0.71
Colour 14 Light Purple	2.63	1.19	4.00	0.54	2.00	0.93
Colour 15 Light Pink	3.67	0.71	2.38	1.06	2.38	1.06
Colour 16 Green	3.67	0.71	3.56	1.01	1.67	0.71
Colour 17 Light Purple	3.11	1.17	3.89	0.78	3.89	0.78
Colour 18 Purple	2.56	1.01	4.00	1.23	2.11	1.05

8.3.3 Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) of Brand Names

Stimuli	Femininity		Masculinity		Gender Fluidity	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Feminine Stimuli						
Brand Name 1 Honey	2.13	0.99	4.38	0.74	2.75	1.28
Brand Name 2 Emma	1.38	1.06	4.75	0.46	4.50	1.07
Brand Name 3 Emma	1.44	1.01	4.78	0.44	4.56	0.73
Brand Name 4 Fille	1.38	0.52	4.25	0.71	3.88	0.99
Brand Name 5 Fille	1.44	1.01	4.67	0.50	4.11	0.93
Masculine Stimuli						
Brand Name 6 Homme	4.63	0.74	1.25	0.46	4.50	1.07
Brand Name 7 Duke	4.33	1.00	4.22	1.09	4.22	1.09
Brand Name 8 Duke	4.25	0.71	1.75	0.46	3.88	0.84
Brand Name 9 Menfolk	4.33	1.00	1.22	0.44	4.22	1.09
Brand Name 10 Homme	4.56	.53	1.56	0.73	4.22	0.97
Gender-Fluid Stimuli						
Brand Name 11 Fluide	4.38	0.74	4.25	0.89	1.75	1.17
Brand Name 12 Jessy	2.78	0.83	2.89	1.05	2.11	0.60
Brand Name 13 Fluide	3.78	0.97	3.78	1.30	1.67	0.50
Brand Name 14 Jessy	2.63	1.06	3.25	0.89	2.38	1.06
Brand Name 15 Fluide	3.63	1.41	3.75	1.28	1.38	0.74
Brand Name 16 Avery	3.78	1.20	3.89	1.27	2.22	0.97
Brand Name 17 Jessy	2.89	1.27	3.78	0.83	2.22	1.20
Brand Name 18 Avery	3.33	1.00	3.11	1.45	2.78	1.20

8.3.4 Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) of Attractiveness and Realism

Stimuli	Attractiveness		Realism	
	M	SD	M	SD
Feminine Stimuli				
Stimulus 1 Honey, Period Product	2.88	1.46	2.38	1.19
Stimulus 2 Emma, Fragrance	1.63	1.06	1.50	0.76
Stimulus 3 Emma, Period Product	1.44	0.73	1.44	0.53
Stimulus 4 Fille, Period Product	3.50	0.93	3.50	1.07
Stimulus 5 Fille, Fragrance	3.33	0.87	3.00	0.87
Masculine Stimuli				
Stimulus 6 Homme, Necktie	2.13	1.13	1.25	0.46
Stimulus 7 Duke, Necktie	2.44	0.88	2.11	1.05
Stimulus 8 Duke, Fragrance	2.00	0.76	1.87	0.64
Stimulus 9 Menfolk, Necktie	2.00	1.50	1.89	0.93
Stimulus 10 Homme, Fragrance	2.22	1.64	2.22	1.30
Gender-Fluid Stimuli				

Stimulus 11 Fluide, Period Product	2.25	1.28	1.75	0.71
Stimulus 12 Jessy, Necktie	2.78	1.09	2.56	0.73
Stimulus 13 Fluide, Fragrance	2.00	1.12	1.89	1.05
Stimulus 14 Jessy, Fragrance	2.38	1.41	2.25	1.28
Stimulus 15 Fluide, Necktie	2.50	1.07	2.25	1.04
Stimulus 16 Avery, Period Product	2.78	0.83	2.56	0.88
Stimulus 17 Jessy, Period Product	1.44	0.53	1.56	0.88
Stimulus 18 Avery, Necktie	3.44	1.24	3.22	1.20

8.4 Final constructs and items measured

Construct	Statements/ Items	Source
Participant selection	1. What is your gender? 2. How old are you?	-
Attitude towards the advertisement	1. I have a favourable attitude towards this advertisement 2. I like this advertisement 3. My attitude towards this advertisement is positive 4. I like the product packaging of (brand) 5. I like the slogan of this advertisement	(Kaushal & Kumar, 2016; K. Mukherjee & Banerjee, 2019)
Brand attitude	1. I have a pleasant idea of (brand) 2. (Brand) has a good reputation 3. I associate positive characteristics with (brand) 4. There's a reason to buy (brand) instead of others 5. The brand has personality 6. The brand is interesting	(Martínez & de Chernatony, 2004; Schivinski & Dabrowski, 2016)
Brand engagement	1. I have a special bond with (brand) 2. I consider (brand) to be part of myself 3. I feel a personal connection between (brand) and myself 4. I feel as if I have a personal connection with (brand) 5. I can identify with (brand) 6. There are links between (brand) and how I view myself	(Lee et al., 2020)
Gender norms	1. An individual's gender can change throughout their lives	(Molin et al., 2021)

55

2. It is possible to identify with more than one gender
3. There are more than 2 genders
4. Gender is defined by sexual organs
5. Gender is relevant for defining a person

8.5 Pre-Test Questionnaire

Start of Block: Intro/ Consent

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to finish. In the survey, you'll be asked to evaluate brands' advertisements based on multiple statements. Furthermore, demographic questions such as age and gender will be asked.

Before you start, it is necessary to read the following information carefully. This study explores, amongst others, the concept gender-fluidity in the marketing industry. It is important for you to know that if you feel discomfort based on the questions asked you are able to stop participation at any point during the survey and withdraw your answers without giving a reason. This study holds a neutral stance to societal binary and gender-fluid developments and does not pose any opinion about what is wrong and what is right. Questions asked in this survey are neutral and for academic analysis only.

Furthermore, your anonymity will be ensured throughout the entire study. The received data are confidential and will be processed anonymously. Therefore, the data cannot be disclosed in a personally identifiable way. Lastly, data will not be accessed by any third parties. Your agreement is necessary in order to be able to analyse your data for academic purposes. Your data will be collected, managed and analysed by Helena Frieling in correspondence to her master thesis at the University of Twente.

If you feel discomfort or have any questions, please contact her via h.frieling@student.utwente.nl

I have read the information above, understand that this survey involves gender-fluidity in the marketing context and that my data will be treated anonymously for academic purposes.

○ Yes, I consent (1)

○ No, I do not consent (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Dear participant, Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey should take... = No, I do not consent

End of Block: Intro/ Consent

Start of Block: Demographics

In order to ensure that you are part of the study's target population, please indicate the following:

How old are you?

○ under 18 (1)

○ 18-20 (2)

○ 21-24 (3)

○ 25-27 (4)

○ over 27 (5)

What is your gender?

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Non-binary / third gender (3)

○ Other (4) _____

○ Prefer not to say (5)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Block 1 - 5

Below you see an advertisement of a fictional {product category } brand. Although you do not have to indicate whether you would buy this brand, please evaluate it as if it would be a real brand and answer the questions below.

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the following blocks:

Block 1

Block 2

Block 3

Block 4

Block 5

After viewing each stimulus, they were assigned to, they were asked the following questions:

Q14 If this brand was a person, would you describe it as:

	strongly agree (1)	agree (2)	neutral (3)	disagree (4)	strongly disagree (5)
Tender (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Graceful (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Emotional (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Sensitive (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Sweet (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Fragile (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Gender-fluid (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Unisex (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Tolerant (9)	○	○	○	○	○
Inclusive (10)	○	○	○	○	○
Adventurous (11)	○	○	○	○	○
Aggressive (12)	○	○	○	○	○
Brave (13)	○	○	○	○	○
Daring (14)	○	○	○	○	○
Dominant (15)	○	○	○	○	○
Sturdy (16)	○	○	○	○	○

Do you think the font is...

	strongly agree (1)	agree (2)	neutral (3)	disagree (4)	strongly disagree (5)
is readable? (1)	○	○	○	○	○
feminine? (2)	○	○	○	○	○
masculine? (5)	○	○	○	○	○
gender-neutral? (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Do you think the colour is...

	strongly agree (1)	agree (2)	neutral (3)	disagree (4)	strongly disagree (5)
feminine? (2)	○	○	○	○	○
masculine? (5)	○	○	○	○	○
gender-neutral? (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Do you think the brand name is...

	strongly agree (1)	agree (2)	neutral (3)	disagree (4)	strongly disagree (5)
feminine? (2)	○	○	○	○	○
masculine? (5)	○	○	○	○	○
gender-neutral? (6)	○	○	○	○	○

Do you think the advertisement is...

	strongly agree (1)	agree (2)	neutral (3)	disagree (4)	strongly disagree (5)
attractive? (1)	○	○	○	○	○
realistic? (2)	○	○	○	○	○

Do you have any suggestions to make this advertisement more attractive and realistic?

○ Yes (1) _____

○ No (2)

After answering the questions from this survey, was everything clear to you or did you encounter any hiccups regarding the comprehension, language or other aspects of the questions asked?

○ No, everything was clear (1)

○ I have a view remarks (2) _____

8.6 Final Test Questionnaire

Dear participant, Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to finish. In the survey, you'll be asked to evaluate brands' advertisements based on multiple statements. Furthermore, demographic questions such as age and gender will be asked.

Before you start, it is necessary to read the following information carefully. This study explores, amongst others, the concept gender-fluidity in the marketing industry.

An individual who is expressing themselves as gender fluid can be described as "someone who experiences their own gender as neither man nor woman, both man and woman, or acknowledging change over the life course between and beyond these options" (Sumerau et al., 2020).

It is important for you to know that if you feel discomfort based on the questions asked you are able to stop participation at any point during the survey and withdraw your answers without giving a reason. This study holds a neutral stance to societal binary and gender-fluid developments and does not pose any opinion about what is wrong or right. Questions asked in this survey are neutral and for academic analysis only.

Furthermore, your anonymity will be ensured throughout the entire study. The received data are confidential and will be processed anonymously. Therefore, the data cannot be disclosed in a personally identifiable way. Lastly, data will not be accessed by any third parties. Your agreement is necessary in order to be able to analyse your data for academic purposes. Your data will be collected, managed and analysed by Helena Frieling in correspondence to her master thesis at the University of Twente.

If you feel discomfort or have any questions, please contact her via h.frieling@student.utwente.nl.

I have read the information above, understand that this survey involves gender-fluidity in the marketing context and that my data will be treated anonymously for academic purposes.

○ Yes, I consent (1)

○ No, I do not consent (2)

End of Block: Intro/ Consent

Start of Block: Demographics

In order to ensure that you are part of the study's target population. Please indicate the following:

How old are you? _____

What is your gender?

○ Male (1)

○ Female (2)

○ Non-binary / third gender (3)

○ Other (4) _____

○ Prefer not to say (5)

End of Block: Demographics

Start of Block: Gender Norms

Please read the following statements and indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statements.

	strongly disagree (1)	disagree (2)	somewhat disagree (3)	neither agree nor disagree (4)	somewhat agree (5)	agree (6)	strongly agree (7)
An individual's gender can change throughout their lives (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is possible to identify with more than one gender (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
There are more than 2 genders (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gender is defined by sexual organs (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gender is relevant for defining a person (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Gender Norms

Start of Block: Block 1 - 3

Participants were randomly assigned to one of the following blocks:
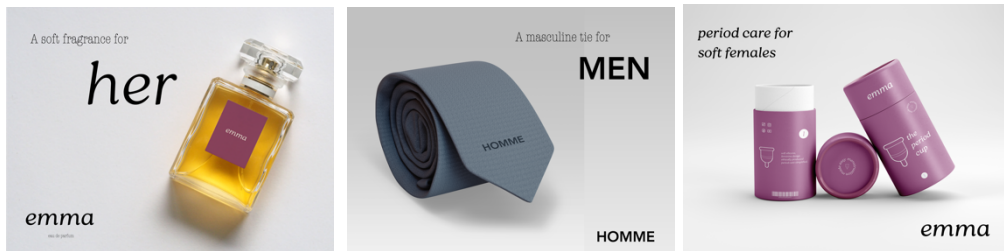
Block 1

Block 2

Block 3

Q27 Below you see an advertisement of a fictional {product category} brand. Although you do not have to indicate whether you would buy this brand, please evaluate it as if it would be a real brand and answer the questions below.

Please read the following statements and indicate whether you agree or disagree.

	strongly disagree (1)	disagree (2)	somewhat disagree (3)	neither agree nor disagree (4)	somewhat agree (5)	agree (6)	strongly agree (7)
I have a pleasant idea of brand (1)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
brand has a good reputation (2)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
I associate positive characteristics with brand (3)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
There's a reason to buy brand instead of others (4)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
brand has personality (5)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
brand is interesting (6)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Please read the following statements and indicate whether you agree or disagree.

	strongly disagree (1)	disagree (2)	somewhat disagree (3)	neither agree nor disagree (4)	somewhat agree (5)	agree (6)	strongly agree (7)
I have a favourable attitude towards this advertisement (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like this advertisement (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My attitude towards this advertisement is positive (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like the product packaging of brand (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I like the slogan of this advertisement (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Q39 Please read the following statements and indicate whether you agree or disagree.

	strongly disagree (1)	disagree (2)	somewhat disagree (3)	neither agree nor disagree (4)	somewhat agree (5)	agree (6)	strongly agree (7)
I have a special bond with brand (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I consider brand to be part of myself (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a personal connection between brand and myself (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel as if I have a personal connection with brand (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can identify with brand (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
There are links between brand and how I view myself (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Block 1 - 3

Start of Block: Remarks/ Understanding

After answering the questions from this survey, was everything clear to you or did you encounter any hiccups regarding the comprehension, language or other aspects of the questions asked?

○ No, everything was clear (1)

○ I have a few remarks (2) _____

End of Block: Remarks/ Understanding