Beyond Stereotypes: Exploring Diversity in Male Grooming Advertising and its Influence on Consumer Self-Perception and Brand Attitude

Kyriaki Dikaiofylakos

s2672928

University of Twente

Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences (BMS)

Master thesis

Communication Science

Supervisor: Dr. R. S. Jacobs

Co-reader: M. H. Tempelman (MSc)

January 11, 2024

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Abstract

Background: Advertising in the male grooming industry has changed over the years, with marketers trying to move away from the stereotypical representation of a man and focus on more inclusive campaigns. Previous research has proven that diversity in advertisements leads to more positive consumer reactions and purchase behaviour. Even though there is a varied focus on diversity in advertising for men-oriented products, there seems to be limited research available on male grooming advertising and the different types of diversity that can affect consumers' attitudes. More specifically, there seems to be limited research regarding the effect on the LGBTQ+ community and whether a more inclusive campaign would lead to positive reactions from non-cisgender consumers specifically and/or whether this would affect the cis-gender consumers who are the majority.

Purpose: This study aims to explore two types of diversity, (a) in body types and (b) in gender identity and to determine whether these two types affect consumers' attitudes. Specifically, its purpose is to determine whether consumers' self-perception, which includes self-esteem and group identification as well as consumers' brand attitudes, which include brand image and purchase intention are affected by the depiction of these two types of diversity in male grooming advertising and whether there is a significant difference on these variables when diversity is included compared to when there is no diversity at all.

Method: A 2 (only muscular body types vs diversity in body types) by 2 (only cisgender models vs diversity in gender identity of the models) between-subjects experimental design was carried out through an online survey among 297 participants. Four advertising posters were created for this survey focusing on showing different elements of body and gender identity diversity. The survey assessed participants' levels of self-esteem, group identification, brand image, and purchase intention after they were randomly introduced to one of the four posters.

Results: Results indicated that body diversity has a positive effect on consumers' level of group identification. On the other hand, gender identity diversity did not have any effect on participants' reactions. Additionally, when both types of diversity were depicted in the same poster, participants

perceived the brand in a better way, had higher intentions to buy the product, and identified more with the depicted group of people compared to when only one type of diversity was depicted. No mediation effect was found between the types of diversity and brand perception (brand image and purchase intention) through self-esteem and group identification. On the other hand, a significant moderator effect occurred; when non-cisgender consumers saw the advertisement, gender diversity was associated with higher levels of group identification, brand image, and purchase intention compared to when cis-gender consumers saw the poster.

Discussion: The findings of this study offer insight into how body diversity and gender identity diversity can affect consumers' attitudes. Male grooming companies can benefit from this information by more easily deciding which type of diversity they can use depending on their target group and by creating more inclusive ads overall. Additionally, LGBTQ+ groups can play a critical role in supporting positive developments in the advertising business, both externally and internally, by adding this information to their already existing knowledge of diversity and inclusion, and by creating more impactful marketing campaigns. In conclusion, this study provides evidence that consumers feel more represented when different bodies are depicted and that the incorporation of more than one type of diversity plays a crucial and positive role in consumers' attitudes. More types of diversity can be further explored in the future.

Keywords: male grooming advertising, gender identity diversity, body diversity, self-perception, brand attitude, LGBTQ+

Table of contents

Introduction

Grooming supplies that are made specifically for men have been existing from the past, but in recent days, a wider range of products are available not only for shaving but also for cleaning, moisturizing, improving men's appearance, etc. During COVID-19, there have been many changes in the purchase behaviour of consumers and their habits in general. The pandemic has led to a tendency toward thicker facial hair since many people could not go to a barbershop as they used to, so many of them were experimenting with different hair and beard styles. This has had an impact on the market for men's razors, but it has also resulted in greater demand for beard-grooming products (Bednarksi, 2021). Males are using more products from the grooming industry than ever before, which has also changed how men interact with these products (Del Saz-Rubio, 2018). There are different reasons behind why and how men choose to groom themselves; from being obliged to look professional and formal for their job, to having the need to show their personality through their appearance and feeling better about themselves. For all these reasons, their purchase behaviour is getting more complicated and the decision to buy grooming items is influenced by a variety of elements, including cost, brand name, product ingredients, ads, packaging, and accessibility (Ajai et.al, 2013).

One of the elements that companies find mostly important for having a profitable product and an effective way of persuading its audience to recognize their own needs, is advertising (Feng, 2008). Poole (2021) supports that modern advertising has the potent ability to alter society as it reflects how society has changed over time. Additionally, male grooming advertising is influenced by how more humanized masculinities have been constructed and rebuilt (Poole, 2021). Sternberg (2021) discusses that throughout the years, advertisements in the male grooming industry usually depict white men with "perfect" bodies, muscular, hairless, and heterosexual, creating the impression that men should look like this and excluding men with alternative appearances. However, in the last decade, there has been a shift in society regarding representation and equality because many brands use diverse body types in their advertisements. Inspiring and empowering people is facilitated by exhibiting a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion and by incorporating various forms of beauty diversity, brands

have the chance to have a positive influence on consumers in terms of affinity and preference (Sternberg, 2021).

Referring to diversity, it is not only about body types but about gender identities as well. According to Sternberg (2021) who discusses the findings of research from Mintel (a market research firm), 63% of American consumers are influenced by companies that use diverse models in their campaigns, and 68% of them like to see diversity and inclusion in their advertisements. Specifically, Gen Z members who grew up with the internet believe that beauty is about both personality and society. In addition to assisting men in selecting the appropriate products for them, the rise of diverse male beauty influencers like Patrick Starrr, Manny Gutierrez, and Bretman Rock, some of the biggest LGBTQ+ names in this area, has been essential in eradicating the stereotype that shaving is only for facial hair and only to enhance a person's masculinity (Ingenuity, 2022). Therefore, for this research, it is relevant to explore how diversity in role models' gender identity can affect consumers both in their perception of a brand and themselves. Hence, this study will investigate the impact of advertisements on a brand's image and on consumers' identification in male grooming (shaving products) specifically between generations Y and Z. The choice of this age group has been made according to previous studies that reveal that consumers between the ages of 16 and 24 are more openly shopping for grooming products than in the past and that male consumers between the ages of 18 and 34 are significantly more active than older men in every retail channel (Coley & Burgess, 2010).

Moreover, while many businesses are embracing LGBTQ+ diversity in their marketing, others still struggle with or pass up opportunities to address gender nonconformity. Individuals who identify as gender fluid, nonbinary, or nonconforming are frequently not given the attention or engagement they need, to feel also represented and included in the advertisements and most of the non-binary consumers feel that this needs to change (Fragopoulos, 2022). At the same time, 25% of young people belonging to Generation Z expect to "alter their gender identity at least once over their lifetime" and 56% of US citizens have someone in their social circle who identifies outside of binary pronouns (Hobgood, 2022). This realization alone should prompt marketers to consider how and why they may

appeal to all genders and groups in a manner that is current, unique, and effective—without being offensive or outmoded.

There have been different studies regarding the effect of diversity in advertising on consumers, though limited research exists on male grooming brands' advertisements regarding diversity in their role models and the influence on consumers' identification. Additionally, not enough information exists on how members of the LGBTQ+ community perceive different types of diversity and how this can affect them and their perception of a brand. Therefore, this study aims to explore diversity in male grooming advertising regarding body types and gender identity by answering the following overarching research question:

RQ: To what extent does diversity regarding (a) body types, and (b) gender identity in male grooming advertisements affect brand attitude and self-perception of male consumers that belong to Generation Y and Z?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is structured as follows. First, advertising in male grooming is discussed on how male portrayals have developed over the years and how diversity impacts consumer reactions and attitudes. Specifically, two types of diversity are further analyzed in the context of male grooming advertising; body diversity and gender identity diversity. Afterward, the crucial roles of these two types of diversity are investigated as influential factors on the first two dependent variables of this study: self-esteem and group identification. For self-esteem, the use of social comparison theory is highlighted to better understand the impact of diversity on self-esteem. On the other hand, self-categorization theory, social identity theory, and distinctiveness theory further explain how levels of group identification may alter when diverse models are depicted in an advertisement. This study continues with the analysis of how diversity also influences brand image and purchase intention and the interaction effect of the two independent variables is explained. Furthermore, self-esteem and group identification are introduced as mediators exploring how they can mediate the relationship between diversity and brand image and purchase intention. Finally, this

study explores how consumers' gender identity might affect the relationship between gender identity diversity and the dependent variables (self-esteem, group identification, brand image, and purchase intention); hence, it is introduced as a moderator of this study. All the findings and theories provide a comprehensive view of how diversity in male grooming advertising affects consumers' behavior and attitudes and the hypotheses are formulated based on these.

Diversity in male grooming advertising

Over the years, there has been a change in how males are portrayed in advertising. Kervin (1990) discusses the fact that ads geared toward males typically reinforce the cultural expectation that men should work on their physical appearance to create a desirable identity and reduce feelings of inadequacy. During the 1980s, advertising in the male grooming industry was associated with sports and leisure time (e.g., golf) and males were represented in positions of authority, elegance, and prestige. Additionally, the erotization of the male body began as males started to appear in advertisements wearing less clothing and in more provocative positions (Kervin, 1990).

With an estimated global market value of close to $50 billion US dollars, cosmetics has been one of the major industries for men's goods (Whipp, 2017). Men who use cosmetics appear to go against traditional notions of masculinity. However, a number of advertising strategies can give traditionally male associations to more feminine products. For instance, a study by Frank (2014) about body hair removal in men's magazines, discusses that grooming is seen as "essential for the reassertion of hegemonic masculinity" because it is linked to sustaining physical health, and is attractive for females. Del Saz-Rubio (2019) indicates that advertisements in male grooming feature men engaging in "masculine activities" like driving or playing sports to dispel connotations with femininity. Additionally, football players who are viewed by some as very masculine characters frequently sponsored the advertisements, supporting the notion that "real men can groom" (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). These findings already give an idea of how contradictory the advertisements towards male groups can be and how different types of appearance and masculinity can be portrayed.

Gender identity diversity

It is important to understand how advertising portrays males and their gender identities for several reasons. Advertising perpetuates gender roles and stereotypes, which affect how individuals behave and perceive gender. Firstly, the projection of gender stereotypes in advertisements can normalize discrimination between males, which has put transgenders, genderqueers, etc. in a disadvantageous position (Grau & Zotos, 2016). Secondly, researchers asserted that current masculinity types are made up of more modern traits that conceal how gender inequality persists in modern society (Demetriou, 2001). Finally, advertisements reinforce the desire to become more manly by using catchphrases and slogans like "Look like you give a damn", which consistently linked grooming with masculinity (Ortiz, 2011). Thus, the current study aims to look into how the portrayals of different male gender identities, namely gender identity diversity, affect consumers' reactions.

Gender identity diversity is a broad term for gender identities that reflects a range of expressions outside the binary paradigm. The idea of binary gender - having to choose whether to represent oneself as male or female - can be restrictive for many gender-varied people. Some people would rather have the flexibility to shift genders or not maintain any gender identification at all, while others simply want to be able to openly embrace more conventional gender concepts (AGA, 2019).

Many societies throughout history have recognized gender diversity outside of male and female. Non-binary, genderqueer, and X gender are the most used and general descriptions for gender-varied persons. In this study three different categories of gender identities will be used: cisgender, transgender, and genderqueer. Cisgender, or cis, indicates that someone's gender identity corresponds to the sex given to them at birth. On the other hand, when the gender identification differs from the sex on the birth certificate, then the person is considered transgender (Watson, 2022). However, not everyone's sex corresponds to their gender identification. That identity is defined by how people see themselves and what pronouns they use: he, she, they, or neither. Non-binary gender

identification occurs when an individual's gender identity does not fall into one of the two categories often employed in modern society: man or woman (Watson, 2022). Furthermore, genderqueer can be used as an umbrella word for anybody who questions their gender, as a synonym for gender nonconforming, or as a distinct non-binary gender identity. Gender nonconforming individuals, non-binary people, and others are all included under this umbrella phrase. As a distinct identity, it can be regarded as a gender that is neither male nor female or as a gender that is somewhere in between the two (Penn State Student Affairs, n.d.). In the current research, three of the abovementioned types of gender identities (cisgender, transgender, and genderqueer) will be used as far as gender identity diversity, the first independent variable of this study, is concerned.

Moreover, in this research, the different body types in advertisements will be investigated as well, since they play a crucial role in understanding how male models are portrayed. Thus, the effect of body diversity, the second independent variable, on consumers will be further analysed in the next section.

Body diversity

In the early 2000s, according to Richardelli and Clown's (2013) study on lifestyle magazines, health magazines promoted excessive physical appearance as a sign of masculinity. Later in the mid-2000s, men were shown in Lynx advertising as being macho and mildly muscled in order to show their masculinity (Albrighton, 2016). According to Ricciardelli et al. (2010), male figures in men's magazines portray a highly identical hegemonic body type; the muscular one. Muscular models have become more prevalent in prominent men's publications throughout time (Law & Labre, 2002). Later on, there has been change in the portrayal of the masculine physique, when the skinny body type was introduced (Rees-Roberts, 2013). The fashion sector's requirements have been reduced to smaller sizes (Barry, 2014). Although many businesses promoted the skinny body type, muscular male models have not been eliminated; instead, a binary has been developed. Mears (2011) distinguished two types of male models: editorial and commercial. The first type has a slim physique, whilst the latter is about

the ideal and muscular body type. Furthermore, the depiction of rounder male bodies in advertising is uncommon; when bigger men are depicted, they market non-fashion items (Barry, 2014).

Unquestionably, the ubiquitous, mass-media-produced pictures of the perfect male form contribute significantly to how the male gender is seen, causing tension anxiety, and low levels of self-esteem to consumers (Pompper, 2010). Beauty advertisements lead to negative body image when they promote an unachievable physical ideal. Additionally, watching advertisements that depict sociocultural appearance norms results in people having lower perceptions of their body image, lower self-esteem, and a greater concern about other people's opinions of them (Selensky & Carels, 2021). On the other hand, ads featuring average- and plus-sized models make people feel better about their bodies and experience less body-focused anxiety and social comparison while still efficiently marketing their products (Selensky & Carels, 2021).

While previous studies have mostly focused on the consequences of gender identity and body diversity within industries such as fashion, on consumers' self-esteem, it is critical that this analysis be extended to male grooming advertising, given the unique dynamics and growing significance of this industry. Thus, in the current research, self-esteem, the first dependent variable, is introduced and the effect of gender identity and body diversity depiction in advertising on consumers' self-esteem will be measured.

Self-esteem

Self-esteem is determined by the perceived gap between people's criteria of how they are supposed to look based on society's standards and their current self-perceptions (Green et al., 2018). Too frequently, individuals believe that the only way to increase their self-esteem is to alter their reality, such as by reducing weight but two factors affect self-esteem; internal standards and external standards (Green et al., 2018). Internal standards are those that people have determined are appropriate and suitable for them as individuals. External, on the other hand, might be hazardous as people might fall victims to societal pressures such as relatives, friends, and the media. Especially media that promote unrealistic physical beauty standards make consumers encounter highly altered

representations of attractiveness, and with repeated exposure, they tend to believe that media reflects the requirements they need to meet (Green et al., 2018).

According to previous research, males who saw photographs of muscular models reported having much lower self-esteem than males in the control group (Hobza & Rochlen, 2009). A study by Kalu (2019) also supports that models with alternative appearances and more average looks can boost consumers' self-confidence and purchasing desire. Furthermore, in a study comparing the emotional reactions to "body-positive" marketing campaigns with conventional beauty ads, it was discovered that the body-positive campaigns stirred up stronger emotional reactions (Kraus & Myrick, 2018).

In daily life, people frequently make comparisons to others. Even when watching TV advertising, people have a propensity to compare themselves to the depicted models. According to Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory, people have a strong need to assess their knowledge and skills, and the best way for them to do so is by comparing their traits to a set of benchmarks; yet, whenever there are no objective standards accessible, people tend to compare themselves with others. Previous studies have examined how the media affects body image using the social comparison theory and discovered that when people compare themselves to others and make upward social comparisons (such as with models) leads to negative body images (Selensky & Carels, 2021). According to Buunk et al. (1990), an upward comparison—that is, comparing oneself to someone superior to them on the comparison dimension—decreases body image, whereas a downward comparison—that is, comparing oneself to someone who is in a lower position—increases body image. Overall, very attractive models may reduce the positive effect of advertising since they deflate potential consumers' self-esteem when they compare themselves to these models (Bower, 2001).

Thus, according to the social comparison theory, the findings mentioned above imply that males can integrate and have higher self-esteem when they encounter models with more realistic physiques, and the first hypothesis can be formulated as below:

H1: When models with diverse body types are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to higher (state) self-esteem of the consumers compared to when only models with muscular bodies are depicted.

Moreover, Rogers (2018) argues that marketers are failing to recognize the role that self-esteem plays in female empowerment and how this influences how women perceive brands. Companies are losing billions of pounds by not implementing a gender-balanced strategy to marketing that promotes, rather than damages, female consumers' self-esteem (Rogers, 2018). In the same way, one can assume that the same can happen with the lack of portrayal of different gender identities in male grooming advertisements. Males with different gender identities than the cisgender male one that is usually depicted in marketing campaigns can have lower levels of self-esteem. Based on a survey conducted in Brazil, seven out of ten Gen Zers believe it is necessary to defend identity-related causes, therefore they are more engaged than earlier generations in human rights, ethnicity, and racial and gender identity issues (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). In line with these findings, it can be hypothesized that:

H2: When diverse models regarding gender identity are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to higher (state) self-esteem of the consumers compared to when only cisgender male models are depicted.

Thus, in the current study consumers' self-esteem will be investigated in the context of whether it is affected when (a) different body types and (b) different gender identities are depicted in male grooming advertising. As it will be further described in the methods section of this study, the impact of self-esteem will be measured in a state self-esteem scale at a given point in time.

Examining self-esteem in response to various representations in male grooming commercials is important in understanding individual customer reactions. However, when considering the idea of group identification in consumers' self-perception, this perspective is broadened. According to Wakefield et al. (2016), individual responses to advertising can be greatly influenced by the impression

of belonging to a represented group. As a result, this study broadens its scope to include not only the influence of self-esteem but also the function of group identification, as defined by Henry et al. (1999), in molding consumer attitudes to various models. This dual method enables a more thorough examination of the psychological consequences of diversity in male grooming advertising.

Group identification

Social connection is a basic human need; having somebody to depend on in times of trouble improves people's feelings of well-being. Individuals' collective knowledge of their group's social distinctiveness is characterized as group identification, which is also known as group identity (Henry et al., 1999). Group identification has been associated with increased well-being of an individual in psychological research. Wakefield et al. (2016) studied that the feeling of belonging to groups can boost individuals' feeling of well-being, due to the sense of significance they can get from their social ties. Furthermore, group identification has been discovered to operate as a form of insurance in everyday interactions, particularly in the face of everyday pressures (Wakefield et al., 2016). Therefore, group identification is crucial for an individual's everyday life. In this study different and diverse groups of people will be represented, thus, it is interesting to investigate whether the feeling of belonging to a group increases when the customer sees an advertisement with diverse models.

According to Henry et al. (1999), one of the origins of group identification is the cognitive one which refers to the procedure of self-categorization. Self-categorization as a member of a group is an essential cognitive source of group identity. Moreover, through self-categorization theory, John Turner, a social psychologist widely renowned for his work in intergroup interactions and stereotyping, explained why individuals identify with groups. He said that people form groups to reflect social categories and that people who belong to such groups are easily swayed by common group actions and views (Turner, 2010).

People tend to categorize themselves as well as others into social groups. Tajfel (1969) supported that they split individuals spontaneously based on assigned categories (e.g., race or gender)

and other relevant characteristics, or, more broadly, on impressions of likeness, closeness, and common fate. This social classification process is frequently quick and automatic. Social categorization is important because it helps individuals explore a social environment characterized by group divisions and hierarchies, but it is also the foundation for social stereotypes (Tajfel, 1969). When applied to oneself, social categorization takes on new meaning. Because humans rely on groups for survival (Brewer, 2007), they have evolved an essential desire to be part of social groups (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). This indicates that they are compelled to group themselves into specific categories.

Self-categorization theory attempts to comprehend and explain the mechanisms by which people create cognitive representations of themselves and others concerning various social groupings. The core concept of this theory is that individuals assign themselves and others into social categories based on conspicuous underlying traits, and this process of social categorization impacts a variety of attitudes, emotions, and actions (Turner, 2010). Self-categorization is about more than objective facts of group membership (for example, having a degree in mathematics); it refers to people placing themselves in a social category and considering themselves to be integral parts of that category. Turner et al. (1987) define self-categorization as a component of a person's self-perception or the collection of cognitive representations a person has about themselves.

Moreover, self-categorization, according to Ashmore et al. (2004), comprises not only the cognitive placement of oneself into a social grouping but also the amount to which people view themselves as representative of and comparable to other individuals in their group. In other words, they characterize themselves in terms of the ingroup stereotype rather than only outgroup members. Therefore, categorizing oneself as a member of a group is a critical cognitive source of group identification.

In the context of this study, when varied models are presented in male grooming advertisements, group identification becomes very prominent. This portrayal can increase customers' sense of belonging to specific groups, particularly if these groups have been underrepresented or stereotyped in traditional advertising. When consumers see themselves mirrored in these advertising,

they are more inclined to identify with the represented group, which is consistent with the concepts of self-categorization theory that were abovementioned.

Apart from self-categorization theory, the importance of group identification for this research can be further supported by social identity theory. Social identity theory (SIT) discusses the circumstances in which one's social identity takes precedence over one's identity; it also defines how social identity influences intergroup behavior as its main argument is that people develop their identity through interactions with society (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). SIT supports that when belonging to a social group helps individuals find their social identity and retain it by keeping their group's social position superior to that of relevant out-groups. Social identity is the aspect of one's self that is determined by one's group affiliations. SIT explains how people are affected by groups and addresses how individuals see and put themselves and other people into categories (Tajfel 1981). Moreover, it assumes that people identify with a category of people based on a mixture of their "self-concept, attitudes and behaviors" (Tajfel and Turner 1985); as a result, SIT offers a more thorough foundation for studying consumers' responses to brands using diversity in their advertisements because it was found that people react more favorably to stimuli (like advertisements) that acknowledge the individuality of their social category (Tajfel and Turner 1985). This idea may be applied to male grooming advertising by claiming that when commercials depict models with varied characteristics, customers can see their social identities mirrored. This reflection not only confirms their group membership but also strengthens it.

After the introduction of social identity theory, researchers began to investigate in-group favouritism, or the propensity of people to have a preference for individuals of their in-group over people from other groups (Ma & Rast, 2017). According to the optimal distinctiveness model, Brewer (1991) supported that people have two competing demands that influence how they see themselves and their place in social categories. The first drives people to immerse themselves in social groupings out of a need for adaptation, inclusion and a sense of belonging and the latter is a need to stand out from the crowd, which runs counter to the first's need for engagement (Brewer, 1991). The optimal

distinctiveness theory explains how in-group preference may exist on its own. People in ideally differentiated groups will exhibit in-group bias because they are pleased with their group identity and want to keep it (Leonardelli et al. 2011).

Brewer (1991) discusses optimal distinctiveness theory, which supplements this idea by addressing people's dual demands to belong to a group while simultaneously preserving a feeling of individuality. Based on this theory, in the context of male grooming advertising, customers are drawn to businesses that respect their distinctive social identity within a wider group setting. Brands that successfully balance these objectives by depicting diversity can help customers feel more included and distinguished within their social category, fostering a greater feeling of group identification.

As previously stated, this study will examine two types of diversity; body types and gender identity. Based on the previous findings the following hypotheses of this study are formulated as follows:

H3: When models with diverse body types are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it makes consumers identify more with a group (higher group identification) compared to when only models with muscular bodies are depicted.

H4: When diverse models regarding gender identity are depicted in male grooming advertisements it makes consumers identify more with a group (higher group identification) compared to when only cisgender male models are depicted.

Building on the thorough examination of how various depictions in male grooming advertising influence self-esteem and group identification, this study also aims to explore the same impact on brand image and purchase intention. The relationship between an individual's self-esteem, sense of belonging to a group, and views of a brand is complex, yet crucial. When customers see advertising that corresponds with their identity, whether through gender portrayal or body type, it not only boosts their self-esteem and group affiliation but also influences their impression of the company (Escalas & Bettman, 2005). As a result, investigating brand image and purchase intention becomes critical in fully

comprehending the multidimensional influence of diversity in advertising, becoming the next main area of this study.

Brand image

According to an Accenture poll on the effect of inclusion and diversity (I&D) on consumers' habits, 41% of LGBT consumers have switched companies due to the absence of diversity and inclusiveness in their advertising and would choose a brand that is devoted to I&D (Shukla, 2023). This demonstrates that customers are aware of how corporations portray diversity in their advertisements and are eager to act on such representations. Furthermore, customers value organizations that actively promote diversity and inclusion (Shukla, 2023). The Female Quotient collaborated with Google and Ipsos to gather responses from almost 3,000 U.S. customers from diverse backgrounds to better understand attitudes toward diversity and inclusion in marketing (Future of Marketing, 2019). People were more inclined to evaluate positively a product after watching an advertisement that they believed was diverse or inclusive. LGBTQ+ and black respondents had the biggest desire for diverse and inclusive advertisements among the other categories polled. For example, 71% of LGBTQ+ customers, indicated they were more inclined to connect with an online ad that accurately depicts their sexual orientation (Corwin, 2019).

Additionally, Barry (2014) supports that the usage of male models with diverse body types in fashion advertising may assist men in overcoming their negative body image while also helping companies. According to previous studies, female consumers respond positively to models of various sizes, ages, and ethnicities in advertisements, (Kozar 2010; Barry 2014). Furthermore, in his research, Barry (2014), found out that when models failed to mirror their body types, participants evaluated advertising as useless because they could not see themselves in the apparel. Men in this study had positive evaluations of the brand when models with diverse bodies were depicted in the advertisement since they resembled their forms, ages, and races, and they could see themselves in the clothes while feeling appreciated by the business.

Purchase intention

Apart from having a better and positive opinion about the brand, diversity also plays a crucial role in increasing a brand's profits. As a matter of fact, in the survey of Female Quotient with Google and Ipsos that was mentioned before, about 64% of the participants claimed they took action in terms of buying behaviour after viewing an ad that they thought was diverse or inclusive (Corwin, 2019). Moreover, in 2004, Dove's campaign featuring women of all sizes was more than successful and proved that diversity is an effective marketing strategy as six months after the commercials were released, sales of the marketed product went up by 700%, and over 200 media articles published this project (Barry 2007). According to Kim & Lee (2020), consumer satisfaction predicts subsequent purchase choices. In the context of their study, this means that marketers' actions about diversity and inclusion improve customer well-being and can lead to purchase intentions.

Other studies have focused on racial diversity and the positive effect on purchase intention. For instance, Whittler (1989) studied that Caucasian Americans prefer seeing Caucasian actors or models in an advertisement, whereas African Americans have a greater preference for African American actors or models, perceiving them as more similar and having higher purchase intentions. Racial diversity in advertising methods can favourably affect customer views about the spokesperson and purchase behaviour, as Whittler and DiMeo (1991) observed that racially congruent spokespersons increased buying behaviour.

These findings show that people have a better image of a brand and they are more positive in purchasing a product when diverse models are depicted in the advertisement. Since this study explores gender identity and body diversity, the following hypotheses for brand image and purchase intention are formulated below:

H5: When models with diverse body types are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to (a) more positive consumers' attitudes towards the brand, (b) stronger consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product compared to when only models with muscular bodies are depicted.

H6: When diverse models regarding gender identity are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to (a) more positive consumers' attitudes towards the brand, (b) stronger consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product compared to when only cisgender male models are depicted.

Interaction effect between body and gender identity diversity

The investigation of diversity in body types and gender identity diversity in male grooming advertising provides an exceptional opportunity to better understand the interaction effects these factors can have on the dependent variables of this study. It can be therefore hypothesized that the combined portrayal of body and gender identity diversity in advertising might have a beneficial impact on the dependent variables. Body diversity, as demonstrated by Richardelli and Clown (2013) and Barry (2014), as well as gender identity diversity, as highlighted by Grau & Zotos (2016) and Watson (2022), both challenge existing preconceptions and have the ability to develop a more inclusive attitude among customers. The interaction of body diversity and gender identity diversity in male grooming advertising has the opportunity to address a broader range of customer identities and experiences. Consumers' attitudes towards the brand strengthen when they see themselves more truthfully and inclusively reflected, impacting their thoughts and behaviors.

In this way, the interaction hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H7: When models with diverse body types and diverse gender identities are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to (a) higher (state) self-esteem of the consumers, (b) it makes consumers identify more with a group (higher group identification), it leads to (c) more positive consumers' attitudes towards the brand, and (d) stronger consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product compared to when no diversity or only one type of diversity is depicted in the advertisements.

This hypothesis is based on the idea that customers are more than simply spectators of advertisements; they actively engage with information that represents their identities and ideals. The interaction of body and gender identity diversity in male grooming advertising might, thus, not only

connect more profoundly with a larger audience but also reinforce positive self-perceptions and brand affiliations, thereby influencing customer behaviour.

Self-esteem as mediator

In the setting of the current research, self-esteem apart from being a dependent variable that can be affected by diversity in male grooming advertising also appears as a possible mediator in the association between body diversity in advertising and consumers' sentiments toward companies. This self-esteem mediation function may be viewed via two basic perspectives: the psychological effect of advertising on customers and the subsequent effect on their brand perception.

Advertisements depicting a varied variety of body types, compared to the conventional "ideal" body types, correlate more closely with the true spectrum of customer looks. Because it portrays a more genuine view of society, this inclusive viewpoint is likely to appeal to a larger audience. According to previous studies, such commercial representations can dramatically lessen viewers' negative self-perceptions and social comparison concerns (Hobza & Rochlen, 2009; Kalu, 2019). When consumers see models with similar body types to theirs, their self-esteem may improve. This is especially important considering the current societal change toward acceptance of diversity and tolerance. Increased self-esteem as an outcome of advertising exposure to various body shapes can favorably affect consumers' opinions toward the company. Advertisements that aim to boost consumers' self-esteem may have moral effects in terms of reforming body and gender stereotypes, yet this cannot change the fact that companies seek high profits. For instance, Dove's "Real Beauty" ad exemplifies this issue, since it not only attempted to change body and gender norms but also resulted in a significant boost in sales climbing from 2.5 billion to 4 billion since the launch of the campaign in 2004 (Entrepreneur, 2017). This implies that when people are satisfied with themselves as a result of positive and realistic advertising images, their trust in the business grows. This trust, which is developed by the feeling of being recognized, valued, and represented by the brand, may lead to more favorable brand sentiments and, eventually, better profitability.

Rather than overwhelming viewers with "perfect" (i.e., model) body types, which have a negative impact on consumers, brands can use realistic but positive imagery that helps establish consumer trust, which results in greater revenue. Such efforts, when handled well, have shown to be beneficial for brand image and profits and they can act as a catalyst for beneficial change in cultural and societal prejudices (Entrepreneur, 2017). As a result, in this study, self-esteem may operate as a mediator between the depiction of body diversity in male grooming commercials and customer views about the brand. This mediating position reflects a broader, more structural shift in consumer-brand interactions. Brands that promote high self-esteem not only contribute to societal and cultural transformation but also might profit from greater consumer loyalty and income. Hence, the following mediation hypothesis is formulated below:

H8: Consumers' self-esteem mediates the relationship between body diversity in male grooming advertising, and (a) brand image, (b) consumers' purchase intentions of the advertised product.

Group identification as a mediator

Apart from self-esteem, group identification can be also considered as an important mediator in the link between gender identity diversity in male grooming advertising and customer perception of the brand. This possible mediating effect can be explained by the following findings.

People take much time comparing themselves to other individuals of a specific group to see whether they belong in it or not. This comparison results in the adoption of identical behaviours, attitudes, and even product and buying preferences to conform and earn acceptability within the group. Astrom and Rise (2001) add to this theory by demonstrating how group norms have a major impact on those who have high group identification. People tend to adhere to group standards and exhibit group stereotypical behaviour (Levine & Hogg, 2010). Terry and Hogg (1996) discovered, for example, that high levels of identification with a group of friends positively influenced Australian students' choices to regularly exercise and put on sunscreen, as these behaviours were standard for

people in this group. In terms of food intake, a study including young Norwegian people found that leisure group norms impacted individuals with high group identification but not those with low levels of group identification (Astrom & Rise, 2001). The same thinking can be applied in this study, so it can be assumed that the more a person identifies with a diverse group of people, the higher the possibility for them to use the same products that people in the group use.

Additionally, Johnson & Grier (2012) examined the effects of race-stereotyped portrayals on advertising effectiveness and discovered that consumers' attitudes differ based on the extent of one's connection with the ethnic group that was depicted. DeBenedictis (2018) discusses that identifying with the ethnicity that is depicted is crucial since it influences how customers identify with the brand or advertisement. Consumers can identify with an ad, which can result in favourable behavioural results. Consumers who identify with an advertisement are more likely to be dedicated and loyal to the brand, to repurchase from them, and to have a better brand image (more positive word-of-mouth) (DeBenedictis, 2018).

In the context of this study where gender identity diversity is discussed, it is crucial to highlight that gender identity is not just a personal characteristic, but also a cultural and societal construct that influences many elements of life, such as standards, roles, and expectations. Because of the larger cultural and societal relevance, the portrayal (or the absence) of varied gender identities in advertising can have a greater influence on group identification and consequent brand attitudes. Therefore, it can be assumed that group identification can mediate the influence of gender identity diversity in advertising on consumers' brand attitudes, and the following mediation hypothesis is formulated as below:

H9: Consumers' feeling of group identification mediates the relationship between gender identity diversity in male grooming advertising, and (a) brand image, (b) consumers' purchase intentions of the advertised product.

After exploring the important mediating roles of self-esteem and group identification in how diversity in advertising influences consumer perceptions and actions, another critical aspect of

consumer reaction to take into consideration is to understand that the impact of these various advertising representations is not consistent among all target groups. Hence, the introduction of consumers' gender identity as a moderator interestingly adds value to this study. Understanding how customers' gender identities interact with the gender identities represented in commercials provides new opportunities for further in-depth research.

Consumers' gender identity as moderator

Gender awareness in today's culture has progressed beyond the binary definition of male and female. Recognizing customers' gender identities as a moderator recognizes this diversity and gives a more sophisticated view of consumer behavior. It enables a more in-depth examination of how various gender identities interact with advertisements (Putrevu, 2004). Yet, biological segmentation overlooks variations in psychological inclinations within a single gender (Fischer & Arnold, 1994). Younger generations place a great deal of importance on the notion that gender identity may alter or grow over time. Yet, the bulk of marketing-focused research treats gender as a binary variable, excluding the possibility that psychological gender identity may affect how consumers react to commercials (Wolin, 2003). That is why it is important to think of gender identity as a moderator for this study, as consumers with different gender identities may have different reactions to the advertisements that are going to be portrayed and this can alter the relationships of the hypotheses.

When consumers' gender identity is considered as a moderating variable, it is clear that the influence of gender identity diversity in advertising on dependent variables such as brand image and self-esteem is not consistent across all consumers. It instead fluctuates according to the consumer's gender identification. This difference is consistent with the concepts of in-group bias and polarized appraisal theory (PAT), in which the psychological processing and emotional reaction to advertising material varies depending on the degree of congruence between the consumers' gender identification and the identities depicted in the commercial.

According to the in-group bias theory, bias toward one's group is more closely associated with liking toward in-group individuals than with antipathy against out-group members (Brewer, 1979). One theory for why in-group bias happens is because members of the in-group are seen as being less different from the evaluator and that there is a less social gap between an individual and members of their in-group than there is between them and members of out-groups (Qualls & Moore, 1990). A non-binary customer, for example, may feel a deeper connection to an advertising using non-binary models than one showing just cisgender models. This strengthened bond may result in more positive opinions about the company and a higher chance of buying intentions, mitigating the link between the variety shown in the advertising and the consumer's response.

A different theoretical framework, that of polarized appraisal theory (PAT) also explains how customers respond to models with different characteristics in advertising. If the fundamental underlying premise of excessive judgments of out-group individuals is to remain true, two features of the PAT are crucial as a cognitive-based theory of categorizing (Linville and Jones, 1980). The first claim is that people have more sophisticated cognitive schemas for ingroup members than for members of outgroups. According to Linville and Jones (1980), white individuals exhibited more cognitive complexity toward whites than they did toward blacks, which led to more nuanced assessments of their group. Second, according to this view, individuals of out-groups will have more extreme evaluations due to their lower cognitive complexity. This justification is predicated on the notion that people selectively interpret incoming information as filtered by their present cognitive schema, resulting in an individual's initial conceptualizations of in-group and out-group members being mostly consistent over time (Qualls & Moore, 1990). A transgender person, for example, may view an advertisement showcasing transgender models to be more relevant, resulting in a more positive brand image and greater purchase intention. Advertisements depicting out-group gender identities (those with whom the consumer does not identify) may, on the other hand, be seen more critically or with less interest, impacting brand image and behavior less positively.

These two theories help to examine whether the gender identity of one person plays an important role in liking and trusting the models of the same or different gender identity. Males with diverse gender identities usually appreciate brands that use different gender identities in their advertisements. Therefore the non-cisgender identity of the consumers is suggested as a moderating variable that can alter the effect between the independent variable of diversity in gender identities and the dependent variables of this study.

In this way, the moderation hypotheses are formulated as follows:

H10: Non-cisgender identity of consumers strengthens the relationship between diversity in gender identity and (a) self-esteem, (b) group identification.

H11: Non-cisgender identity of consumers strengthens the relationship between diversity in gender identity and (a) brand image, (b) purchase intention.

Conceptual research model

The conceptual research model (Figure 1) gives a visual representation of the variables and the hypotheses in this study. In Figure 2 and Figure 3, the visual representation of the two mediation analyses are depicted respectively. Additionally, all the hypotheses that were previously discussed, are presented in Table 1.
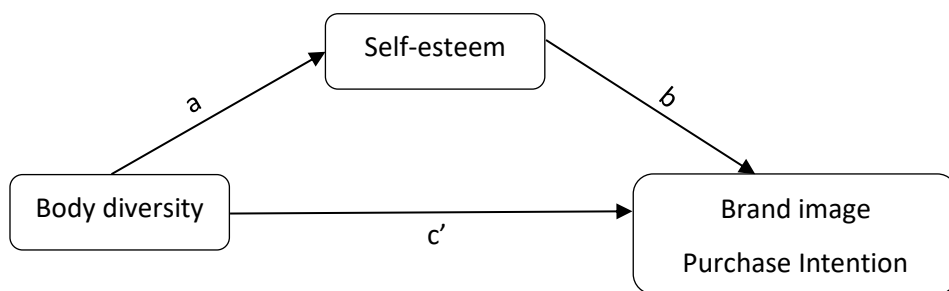
Figure 1
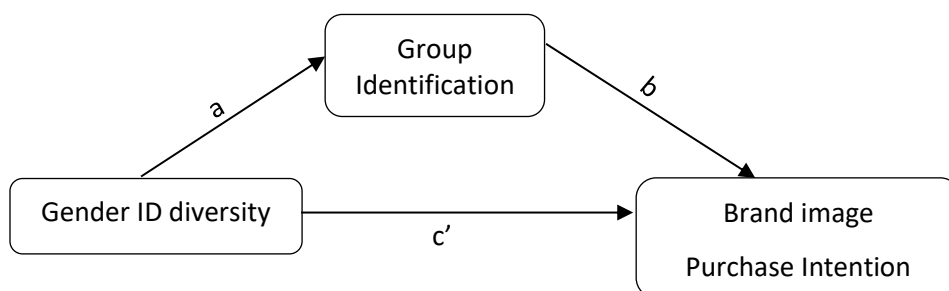
Conceptual Research Model of Hypotheses
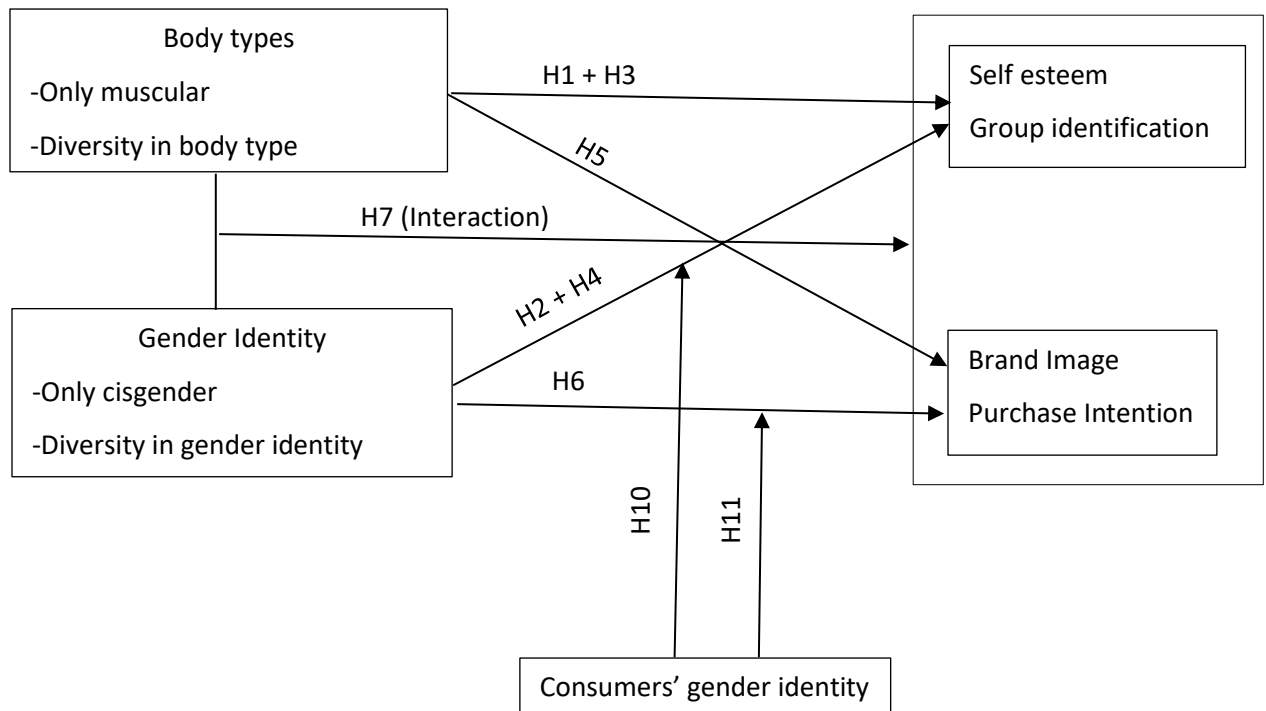
Figure 2

Mediation model of H8

Figure 3

Mediation model of H9

Table 1

Overview of the Hypotheses

№	Hypotheses
1	When models with diverse body types are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to higher (state) self-esteem of the consumers compared to when only models with muscular bodies are depicted.
2	When diverse models regarding gender identity are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to higher (state) self-esteem of the consumers compared to when only cisgender male models are depicted.
3	When models with diverse body types are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it makes consumers identify more with a group (higher group identification) compared to when only models with muscular bodies are depicted.
4	When diverse models regarding gender identity are depicted in male grooming advertisements it makes consumers identify more with a group (higher group identification) compared to when only cisgender male models are depicted.
5	When models with diverse body types are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to (a) more positive consumers' attitudes towards the brand, (b) stronger consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product compared to when only models with muscular bodies are depicted.
6	When diverse models regarding gender identity are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to (a) more positive consumers' attitudes towards the brand, (b) stronger consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product compared to when only cisgender male models are depicted.
7	When models with diverse body types and diverse gender identities are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to (a) higher (state) self-esteem of the consumers, (b) it makes consumers identify more with a group (higher group identification), it leads to (c) more positive consumers' attitudes towards the brand, and (d) stronger consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product compared to when no diversity or only one type of diversity exists in the advertisements.
8	Consumers' self-esteem mediates the relationship between body diversity in male grooming advertising, and (a) brand image, (b) consumers' purchase intentions of the advertised product.
9	Consumers' feeling of group identification mediates the relationship between gender identity diversity in male grooming advertising, and (a) brand image, (b) consumers' purchase intentions of the advertised product.
10	Non-cisgender identity of consumers strengthens the relationship between diversity in gender identity and (a) self-esteem, (b) group identification
11	Non-cisgender identity of consumers strengthens the relationship between diversity in gender identity and (a) brand image, (b) purchase intention.

Methods and Instruments

Research design

In this research, a 2 (only muscular body types vs diversity in body types) by 2 (only cisgender models vs diversity in gender identity of the models) between-subjects experimental design was carried out to examine the research question of this study. Body type representation consisted of two levels; advertisements featuring only models with muscular bodies versus advertisements depicting models with diverse body types. Similarly, gender identity representation also had two levels; advertisements depicting only cisgender models versus advertisements showing models with diverse gender identities. In this way, this complete diversity representation helped to better understand the impact of diversity on self-esteem, group identification, brand image, and purchase intention.

The experiment concerned the display of four different advertisements about a body grooming machine from a fictitious brand "Groom Expert" in an online environment where participants were randomly introduced to one of the four groups, each corresponding to a different combination of the independent variables. The groups were (a) an advertisement with cisgender models and muscular bodies, (b) an advertisement with cisgender models and diverse bodies, (c) an advertisement depicting models with diverse gender identities and muscular bodies, and (d) an advertisement depicting models with diverse gender identities and diverse body types (Table 2).

Table 2

Experiment Design Matrix

	Gender identity diverstity	
	Cisgender models	Diverse gender identities
Body diverstiy		
Muscular bodies	Only cisgender models with muscular bodies	Models with diverse gender identities and muscular bodies
Diverse bodies	Only cisgender models with diverse bodies	Models with diverse gender identities and diverse bodies

Participants

The sample for the main study consisted of 297 participants who agreed to take part. The target population of this experiment, was male people (this was asked before participation as it will be further described in the 'procedure' section) belonging to generations Y and Z, with diverse gender identities and being familiar with or using male grooming products. However, 85 of them did not finish the survey (did not answer the questions about the dependent variables), 4 of them were discarded because of older age (above 50), and 9 of them were also discarded because they stated that they do not use any grooming products and they do not intend to buy one in the future either. Eventually, the data from 199 participants was subjected to further analysis.

The sample consisted of 81.4% cis-gender, 5.5% transgender, 9.5% genderqueer, 1.5% indicated "other'' and 2% preferred not to answer. The mean age of the participants was 24 years old. Table 3 shows the distribution of sample characteristics for each condition separately. It can be indicated that the average age of participants is almost the same in all conditions; however, the gender identity is not equally distributed in each condition which is normal based on the total overall percentage of non-cisgender population of this sample. It is highlighted though that in the third condition where only gender identity diversity was depicted, the lowest percentage of non-cis-gender people participated. Finally, in all conditions, participants on average indicated that they frequently use male grooming products (on a scale ranging from 'never' to 'very frequently').

Table 3

Distribution of Sample Characteristics across the Four Conditions

	Gender Identity			Age	Frequency of use of male grooming products
	Cis-gender	*Non cis-gender*	*I prefer not to answer*		
No diversity	83%	17%	0%	M=23.49/ SD=3,96	M=3.83/ SD=0.893
Only body diversity	75.50%	20.40%	4.10%	M=23.55/ SD=4.28	M=3.88/ SD=0.726
Only gender identity diversity	85.70%	12.30%	2%	M=24.96/ SD=4.75	M=4.06/ SD=0.827
Body & gender identity diversity	81.30%	16.70%	2%	M=24.42/ SD=3.95	M=3.96/ SD=0.944

Furthermore, a one-way ANOVA was conducted for the variable age to check if it is equally divided in all the conditions. An ANOVA determined that age was not significantly different across all

conditions in the experiment (F (20, 178) = 1.05, p = .402). In addition, for the variables gender identity and frequency of use of male grooming products, a Pearson's Chi-Square test was conducted. It can be stated that cisgender and non-cisgender are equally distributed in all the conditions (χ^2 (6) = 3.45, p = .751) and there is not a significant difference for frequency of use between the conditions (χ^2 (12) = 14.10, p = .294) (see Appendix A).

Stimulus design

The four advertisements that were previously described, were created for this experiment. Media analysis of different male grooming vendors and advertisements on male grooming was conducted to understand how brands of this industry advertise their products and four different pictures from royalty-free stock image websites were chosen for the creation of the posters. The pictures needed to depict men, half-naked and either muscular or with different body types to achieve body diversity. For gender identity diversity, pictures were chosen from LGBTQ+ marketing campaigns or advertisements that also met the criteria of body diversity. They mainly depicted queer, transgender people (with chest scars) and people in a closer position (e.g. hugging). To make these posters as realistic as possible, the images were edited via the online design tools Canva and Gimp by adding a slogan about male grooming, a grooming product (body grooming machine), and the LGBTQ+ flag in the advertisements where diverse gender identities were depicted. These posters were the first draft that would later be used in the pre-test.

Before conducting the main experiment, the stimulus material was tested in a pre-test to investigate whether the participants could recognize that there is diversity in body types and gender identity and if they found the advertisements realistic concerning the advertising product. The participants were presented with the four different advertising posters that were created for this experiment.

The pre-test was conducted among 8 male participants, 6 cisgender and 2 non-cisgender, and each one of them was presented with three of the four groups (Figure 4) so that all the conditions

could be reviewed at least a couple of times. After the posters were shown, questions about recognition and realism followed.

Figure 4

Pre-test four advertisements

a) Only <u>cisgender</u> models with <u>muscular bodies</u>

b) Only <u>cisgender</u> models with <u>diverse bodies</u>

c) Models with <u>diverse gender identities</u> and

 <u>muscular bodies</u>

d) Models with <u>diverse gender identities</u> and <u>diverse bodies</u>

The concept of recognition was examined with regard to the questions "What do you think this advertisement is about?" to check if the participants recognize that it is an advertisement about male grooming and "Can you recognize diversity between the models in the advertisement?" and "If yes, what kind of diversity could you recognize?". The concept of realism was examined with regard to the questions "Do you think the given advertisement is realistic for promoting this product?" and "To what extent do you perceive the presented advertisement you just saw as realistic?". Finally, recall questions

were made by asking the participants whether they recalled the number of people depicted in the poster and whether they could recognize different body postures between the models, in order to check if the participants paid enough attention to the posters. In the next paragraph, the main outcomes of the pre-test are presented and the changes and solutions that were applied in the updated stimuli are described.

At first glance, before noticing the grooming machine, most of the participants thought that it was an ad for underwear because, in most of the pictures, the models wear the same underwear and their full body is visible. Therefore, almost none of the participants found the advertisement realistic for its purpose. For this issue, in the updated stimuli, the models' legs were hidden with the banner where the slogan is written, the underwear was edited by erasing the underwear brand name, and the grooming machine was enlarged so people could see it better and understand that it is an advertisement about male grooming. Secondly, in the two advertisements about diversity in gender identity, the pride flag was not enough for people to understand that different gender identities were depicted and most of the participants thought that it was just an LGBTQ+ marketing campaign. For this reason, in the main test, the LGBTQ+ flag was integrated in a better way into the poster by placing it as a frame behind the body grooming machine. In addition to this, apart from the main slogan which will be discussed in the next paragraph, an additional sentence was added in these two advertisements that stated: *"It's time to redefine masculinity, embracing all identities! Queer, trans or cis, discover your style, it's grooming bliss!"* and one in the description before the poster (in the stage where participants were advised to look carefully at the poster before going to the questions) that stated: *"Groom Expert believes in inclusivity and its products are made for everyone regardless gender identity and orientation."*

Moreover, apart from the changes that were made based on participants' comments, some methodological choices were made as well. To achieve uniformity and consistency between the four conditions, a different picture was chosen for the second advertisement - only cisgender models with

diverse bodies - (same models, but in a standing position instead of a sitting one). Additionally, the same, main, slogan was used in all conditions "Body grooming for real men" by using different colours only in the conditions where diversity in gender identity was advertised. Finally, a fictional logo of the fictional brand "Groom Expert" was added at the lower right corner of the poster, to be a more complete and realistic advertisement. All the abovementioned changes can be seen in Figure 5. After the analysis and changes of the pre-test, the main experiment was ready to be conducted.

Figure 5

Main experiment's four advertisements

a) Only cisgender models with muscular bodies

b) Only cisgender models with diverse bodies

c) Models with diverse gender identities and

 muscular bodies

d) Models with diverse gender identities and diverse bodies

Procedure

A combination of methods was used to approach participants for them to take part in the survey. First, convenience sampling was utilized by uploading the survey on the researcher's social

media and asking people to participate, and a snowball sampling technique followed. Additionally, a QR code was created and distributed in the Vrijhof library of the University of Twente two times over two months. In order to specifically engage (biologically and transgender) male people for the survey, a short text was included both in the social media post and the QR code that clearly stated that responses from this demographic were exclusively sought for the study. Furthermore, to ensure that participants with diverse gender identities fill out the survey, different LGBTQ+ associations of various universities across the Netherlands were approached encouraging them to distribute the survey within their communities. Finally, the survey was uploaded on two websites "SurveyCircle" and "SurveySwap" asking for people with the specific demographic criteria to fill it in.

The experiment was carried out as an online survey via the survey software Qualtrics. The research project was first fully approved by the Ethics Committee from the University of Twente. First, the participants had to agree with the informed consent that they were presented, to continue with the survey. After this, they had to answer demographic questions about their gender identity and age. Then questions about their frequency of use of male grooming machines followed. Following this, participants were presented with the advertisement, which they were instructed to look at carefully before continuing. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions and based on this, they were asked to answer the items about the dependent variables. The last questions were the manipulation checks about recalling the number of people in the poster, whether participants could recognize any type of diversity (regarding body types and/or gender identities), and whether they could notice any design cues (e.g. visual indicators or symbols) that represent diversity in the design of the poster. Finally, the participants were thanked for their participation, were asked if they had any additional comments, and were informed again about the purpose of this survey.

Measurements

For measuring the dependent variables, various items were presented for each one of them, and a 5-point Likert scale was used ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" for answering the statements.

To measure self-esteem, participants were presented with ten statements based on how they felt momentarily after seeing the advertising poster. For this study self-esteem is measured at a temporary level, thus, it was asked from the participants to define how they felt at the exact moment they were answering the statements. The scales were taken from Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (RSES), the Harrill self-esteem inventory, Body Image States Scale (BISS) (Cash et al., 2002) and the Single-item self-esteem scale (Robins et al., 2001) and were adapted to measure this construct e.g. "I like and accept myself right now" and "I have high self-esteem".

For measuring the level of group identification, participants had to agree/disagree with ten statements regarding to what extent they identified with one or more members of the group that was presented in the poster. It was clearly stated to the participants that they needed to answer based on how they felt at that particular moment. This variable was measured by combining and adapting the scales used by Leach et al. (2008), Hinkle et al. (1989), Henry et al. (1999), and Sani et al. (2014) e.g. "I feel that being a member of this group is an important part of how I see myself".

The next construct considered brand image. Brand image was measured by six items that were derived from Batra and Stayman (1990) and Spears and Singh (2004) e.g. "This brand was presented in a likable way". These statements were asked to investigate the brand attitude of the participants towards the product.

Finally, purchase intention was measured by five items taken from Limei and Wei (2020) and Duffett (2015) in order to check whether they would buy a product that is promoted by a diverse group of people e.g. "I will buy products that are advertised by this brand on the near future" (see Appendix B).

In this research, for measuring self-esteem, group identification, brand image, and purchase intention a factor analysis was conducted for all of their items. First of all, to verify that the data set was appropriate for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) value and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Bartlett 1954) value were checked. In this data set, the KMO value was .89 which is higher than the minimum recommended value of .60 (Kaiser 1970, 1974) and

Bartlett's test was significant (*p* < .001), therefore factor analysis is considered suitable (see Appendix C). Afterwards, from Catell's scree test, it was suggested to keep four components for future research and the total variance explained indicated that the factors explain 55.037% of the variance. However, after reliability analysis was conducted for the items loading on each factor, it was observed that Cronbach's alpha for the fourth factor had a value of 0.608 showing that reliability cannot be achieved. The fourth factor consisted of two items from the self-esteem scale ("I see flaws in my appearance" and "I feel a great deal worse about my looks than I usually feel") and four items from the group identification scale (Table 4). The low Cronbach's alpha value and the fact that the items did not have much in common rather than they were all negative items, led to the decision to remove this factor and keep only the rest three factors of this study.

As shown in Table 4 in the Rotated Component Matrix, the first factor consists of all the items of brand image (BI) and purchase intention (PI), thus it was named "Brand perception"; this description implies that the factor includes how customers perceive and assess the brand, including its image and reputation as well as how these impressions impact their purchasing intentions. A high Cronbach's alpha value of 0.934 shows that reliability is achieved for this factor. The second factor is about self-esteem (SE) together with one item from the group identification (GID) ("I feel that I belong somewhere") and one item ("I feel bad about how I look") which loaded also in the fourth factor (which as described before, it was decided to be removed). The reason to keep it in the self-esteem factor was first because it was initially an item from the self-esteem scale and secondly, because this factor scored a higher Cronbach's alpha value (a = 0.828) when this item was included. Finally, the third factor explains the group identification (GI) variable which suggests the relationship between the consumer and the group that was presented in the ad and how this affects their identity. However, two items ("I don't think of this group as part of who I am" and "I do not fit in well with the other members of this group") needed to be removed from this factor to achieve a high Cronbach's alpha value (a = 0.839).

In Table 4 the factors are presented in the order that were described, including the eigenvalues, explained variances, and reliability scores.

Table 4

Factor Analysis

Factor analysis - (rotated component matrix)

Statements	1	2	3	4
		Factor loading		
BI-1 - This brand was presented in an appealing way.	.73			
BI-2 - This brand was presented in a likable way.	.84			
BI-3 - This brand was presented in an unpleasant way.	.78			
BI-4 - This brand was presented as one of high quality.	.57			
BI-5 - My opinion about this brand is negative.	.74			
BI-6 - This brand was presented as a good one.	.76			
PI-1 - I am positive towards buying this product.	.86			
PI-2 - I have the intention of buying this product.	.81			
PI-3 - I will buy products that are advertised by this brand on the near future.	.77			
PI-4 - I do not intend to acquire products that are promoted by this brand.	.64			
PI-5 - Advertisements from this brand have a positive influence on my purchase decisions.	.71			
SE-1 - I feel satisfied with myself.		.52		
SE-3 - I can take a positive attitude toward myself.		.64		
SE-4 - I feel bad about how I look.		.46		.63
SE-5 - I like and accept myself right now.		.77		
SE-6 - I feel that I have equal value to other people.		.59		
SE-7 - I love, respect, and honour myself.		.80		
SE-8 - I have high self-esteem.		.72		
SE-10 - I feel that I look a great deal better than the average person looks.		.44		
GID-2 - I feel that I belong somewhere.		.60		
GID-1 - I can identify with one or more members of the group that was presented in the ad.	.42		.55	
GID-4 - I feel that being a member of this group is an important part of how I see myself.			.72	
GID-5 - I feel a bond with this group.			.82	
GID-7 - I feel represented by this ad.	.53		.48	
GID-8 - I have a sense of belonging to this group.			.76	
SE-2 - I see flaws in my appearance.				.50
SE-9 - I feel a great deal worse about my looks than I usually feel				.57
GID-3 - I see myself as quite different from the other members of the group.				.58
GID-9 - I feel there are more people like me.				
GID-6 - I don't think of this group as part of who I am.			.51	
GID-10 - I do not fit in well with the other members of this group.			.50	.55
Explained variance:	22.99%	12.65%	11.41%	7.99%
Eigenvalue:	9.56	3.75	2.02	1.73
Cronbach's alpha:	0.934	0.828	0.839	0.608

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

ra. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Data-analysis plan

In the following paragraphs, the data analysis of this research is described in detail. This study consisted of various tests starting with assessing participants' attention to ads, by implementing manipulation checks. Frequency tests were conducted to evaluate the accuracy of recall, including the number of people featured in the posters, recognition of types of diversity, and recognition of design cues in the advertisements. Furthermore, a descriptive analysis was performed for the dependent variables to understand their central tendency and variability. Measures such as mean and standard deviation are included. Afterward, a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was utilized to test

the hypotheses H1-H7 of this study. The means of the dependent variables, brand perception, self-esteem, and group identification, were analyzed using bar charts for further interpretation, providing insights into significant differences among groups. Finally moderation and mediation analyses were conducted for H8-H9 and H10-H11 respectively. Mediation analysis was implemented using Andrew Hayes' PROCESS macro tool extension in SPSS. The analysis was conducted twice, once for testing whether self-esteem mediates the relationship between body diversity and brand perception and once for testing whether group identification mediates the relationship between gender identity diversity and brand perception. Details on indirect and direct effects, as well as the significance of the mediation paths, are included in the analysis. Moderation analysis was also conducted by using the PROCESS macro model number 1. The moderated model analysis was performed separately for each dependent variable, and results, including coefficients and significance levels, will be presented.

<center>**Results**</center>

Manipulation checks

In order to check if the participants recalled correctly the number of people that were depicted in the posters and whether they could recognize any type of diversity, the same questions from the pre-test, regarding these two concepts were used at the end of the survey. From Table 5, it can be concluded that most of the participants recalled correctly the number of the models depicted in the posters except the fourth condition (diversity in gender identity and body types) ($\chi^2(3) = 39.99$, $p = .000$). The percentage of 68.7% that did not recall correctly can be considered reasonable since it was the only condition where too many models were depicted, so it might have been difficult for the participants to recall the exact number correctly. Many of them recalled a number close to the correct one (11 models in total) so this big percentage is not considered alarming for the validity of the results.

Table 5

Frequencies for Recalling the Number of People

	Recalled correctly		Did not recall (correctly)		Totals	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Conditions						
No diversity	43	81.1%	10	18.9%	53	100.0%
Only body diversity	39	79.6%	10	20.4%	49	100.0%
Only gender identity diversity	36	73.5%	13	26.5%	49	100.0%
Body & gender identity diversity	15	31.3%	33	68.7%	48	100.0%
Totals	133	66.8%	66	33.2%	199	100.0%

Moreover, regarding the diversity in the posters, an analysis can be found in the two tables below. It can be indicated that a sufficient amount of participants recognized that there was some type of diversity in the posters apart from the third condition (diversity in gender identity only) where 43.2% of them (Table 6) could not recognize that there was indeed a type of diversity depicted ($\chi^2(3) = 18.55$, $p = .000$). One explanation for this can be that the participants could not see clearly the scars on the chest of some of the models, and since their bodies were the same type, they answered that there is no type of diversity. Additionally, for the first condition (no diversity) 84% of the participants stated that there is a type of diversity depicted. It might be the case that since the models were different in terms of hair and skin color, participants thought that these characteristics were also a type of diversity.

Table 6

Frequencies for Diversity Recognition

	Recognized		Did not regognize		Totals	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Conditions						
No diversity	42	84.0%	8	16.0%	50	100.0%
Only body diversity	42	91.3%	4	8.7%	46	100.0%
Only gender identity diversity	25	56.8%	19	43.2%	44	100.0%
Body & gender identity diversity	35	83.3%	7	16.7%	42	100.0%
Totals	144	79.1%	38	20.9%	182	100.0%

From Table 7 it is clear that in all conditions the participants recognized the correct type of diversity for each condition respectively apart from the first one (no diversity) where a percentage of 29.3% supported that there was diversity in body types ($\chi^2(9) = 124.41$, $p = .000$).

Table 7

Frequencies for Diversity Types Recognition

	Diversity in body types		Diversity in gender identities		Both		Other types of diversity		Totals	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Conditions										
No diversity	12	29.3%	1	2.4%	2	4.9%	26	63.4%	41	100.0%
Only body diversity	29	69.0%	0	0.0%	7	16.7%	6	14.3%	42	100.0%
Only gender identity diversity	7	28.0%	15	60.0%	2	8.0%	1	4.0%	25	100.0%
Body & gender identity diversity	10	28.6%	2	5.7%	19	54.3%	4	11.4%	35	100.0%
Totals	58	40.6%	18	12.6%	30	20.9%	37	25.9%	143	100.0%

A final manipulation check was made by asking the participants whether they could recognize any design cues of diversity. This question was mainly made to check whether they could see the LGBTQ+ flag and the different colors that were used in the third (diversity in gender identity only) and the fourth condition (diversity in gender identity and body types). From Table 8 it can be concluded that in these two conditions, a sufficient number of participants noticed diversity design cues where most of them mentioned the flag, the vivid colors, the scars, and the text that talked about inclusivity. On the other hand, the high percentage of people answering 'yes' in the first two conditions is explained by their answers where they mentioned the skin color difference as an indicator for diversity $\chi^2(3) = 42.57$, $p = .000$).

Table 8

Frequencies for Design Cues Recognition

	Yes		No		Totals	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Conditions						
No diversity	11	22.9%	37	77.1%	48	100.0%
Only body diversity	20	43.5%	26	56.5%	46	100.0%
Only gender identity diversity	35	79.5%	9	20.5%	44	100.0%
Body & gender identity diversity	33	78.6%	9	21.4%	42	100.0%
Totals	99	55.0%	81	45.0%	180	100.0%

Descriptive statistics of dependent variables

In this section, the statistics of the manipulation of the level of brand perception (brand image and purchase intention), self-esteem, and group identification are described. As can be observed from Table 9, within the current sample, brand perception was higher in the fourth condition (diversity in

gender identity and body types) (*M* = 3.22, *SD* = 0.85) than when only body diversity (*M* = 2.91, *SD* = 0.67) or only gender identity diversity (*M* = 2.81, *SD* = 0.97) is depicted. Additionally, the 'no diversity' condition had a similar level of brand perception (*M* = 3.04, *SD* = 0.88).

Similarly, self-esteem was more positive in the first (no diversity) (*M* = 3.79, *SD* = 0.78) and the fourth (diversity in gender identity and body types) (*M* = 3.77, *SD* = 0.69) condition. Group identification was also higher when both body and gender identity diversity were depicted (*M* =2.73, *SD* = 0.95). Finally, by looking at the grand means, it can be mentioned that self-esteem was in total higher than the other dependent variables (*M* = 3.76, *SD* = 0.69).

Table 9

Descriptive Statistics of the Dependent Variables

	Brand Perception		Self-esteem		Group Identification	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Conditions						
No diversity	3.04	0.88	3.79	0.78	2.29	0.90
Only body diversity	2.91	0.67	3.75	0.63	2.36	0.82
Only gender identity diversity	2.81	0.97	3.71	0.64	2.07	0.87
Body & gender identity diversity	3.22	0.85	3.77	0.69	2.73	0.95
Grand mean	2.99	0.84	3.76	0.69	2.36	0.89

Note: 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree / 5=strongly agree)

Hypotheses testing

To test whether hypotheses H1 – H7 can be supported, a MANOVA was conducted for brand perception (brand image and purchase intention), self-esteem, and group identification. However, before proceeding with it, assumption checks were performed to check whether the data matches the assumptions regarding sample size, normality, outliers, linearity, multicollinearity, and singularity. For univariate normality, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test suggested a violation of the normality assumption, however, this is something that can happen in larger samples (over 100 observations) (see Appendix D). Additionally, for multivariate normality, it was assumed that there were no substantial multivariate outliers (Mahal. Distance = 16.21 < Critical value = 16.27). The linearity assumption was checked via a matrix of scatterplots between cisgender and non-cisgender participants and for all the conditions.

Because there was no evident indication of non-linearity in these graphs, the assumption of linearity was met (see Appendix D). Finally, from Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient it was concluded that there was a medium positive correlation between brand perception and self-esteem (r = .318, n = 184, p < .0005), a strong positive correlation between brand perception and group identification (r = .591, n = 184, p < .0005) and a small positive correlation between self-esteem and group identification (r = .293, n = 186, p < 0.05). None of the correlations was too high, so there is no reason for concern.

This study explores two main independent variables; body diversity and gender identity diversity. From the Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices (p = .092) it can be stated that the data did not violate the assumption of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices. Furthermore, from Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances, none of the variables had significant values, therefore equal variances can be assumed (see Appendix E). After the required tests were performed and since the results fell within normal parameters with no serious violations noted, a one-way between-groups MANOVA was performed to investigate differences in brand perception, self-esteem, and group identification in the different conditions.

Multivariate analysis of variance

In order to check, whether there are statistically significant variations between groups when considering the different conditions, Wilks' Lambda from the Multivariate Tests tables was investigated. Via this analysis, it can be assumed that body diversity, F (3,178) = 3.148, p = .026; Wilks' Lambda = .95; η_p^2 = .05, has a significant effect on the dependent variables. On the other hand, neither the gender identity diversity, F (3,178) = .153, p = .928; Wilk's Lambda = .99; η_p^2 = .003, nor the interaction between the two independent variables F (3,178) = 2.132, p = .098; Wilk's Lambda = .97; η_p^2 = .035) have a significant effect on the dependent variables. Nevertheless, it was worth analysing further these variables and their effect on the dependent variables for exploratory reasons. Discussing the individual effects might yield information for this study as well as later studies, such as determining which dependent variables could be worth pursuing more in-depth in a univariate setting.

Especially for the interaction effect, where the p-value can be considered marginally significant, it would be very interesting to further explore the effects based on the theoretical findings of this study that presented diversity in advertising having an impact on consumers. While continuing with the rest of the MANOVA, it was crucial to proceed cautiously with the interpretation of the results that may be framed as suggestive rather than conclusive.

The test between subjects indicates that there is a significant effect for group identification for people who were presented with ads with body diversity, $F(1,180) = 8.023$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .04$. This result shows that consumers can identify more easily with an advertisement when more and different body types are depicted. An inspection of the mean scores indicated that when body diversity is depicted in the advertisement higher levels of group identification were reported ($M = 2.56$, $SD = 0.09$) vs when there is no body diversity in the advertisement ($M = 2.18$, $SD = 0.09$) (Table 10). It is easier for consumers to feel that they belong to a group of people when diverse bodies are depicted since not all people have the same type of body. Hence, hypothesis H3 which described the relationship between body diversity and group identification can be supported.

Table 10

Dependent Variables' Mean Scores (Body Diversity)

	Brand Perception		Self-esteem		Group Identification	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Conditions						
No body diversity	2.92	0.08	3.76	0.07	2.18	0.09
Body diversity	3.07	0.09	3.73	0.07	2.56	0.09

Additionally, a significant effect was found for the interaction of the two main independent variables on brand perception $F(1,180) = 4.634$, $p = .030$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$ and group identification $F(1,180) = 5.402$, $p = .020$, $\eta_p^2 = .03$. The mean scores for the combination of the independent variables indicated that when both diversity regarding body types and gender identity are depicted, both higher levels of brand perception ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 0.13$) and group identification ($M = 2.76$, $SD = 0.14$) were reported vs when no diversity or only one type of diversity was depicted (Table 11). This explains that consumers' perception of a brand can be positively affected by the use of diversity in an ad and that they can also

identify more; the more diverse models are depicted, the more the consumers feel included and want to buy from the brand. It is more common for them to feel that they belong when more than one type of diversity is depicted since a bigger amount of people are represented and consumers would prefer to buy from a brand that includes a variety of models rather than the stereotypical image of a "perfect" man and at the same time they have a better image for this brand, too. Thus, from the interaction hypothesis (H7), the b, c, and d parts regarding the relationship between the independent variables and brand perception (brand image and purchase intention) and group identification are supported. A better visualization of these differences can be observed in the estimated marginal means bar charts below in Figure 6 and Figure 7 respectively.

Table 11

Dependent Variables' Mean Scores

		Brand Perception		Self-esteem		Group Identification	
		Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Conditions							
No body diversity	No gender ID diversity	3.04	0.12	3.80	0.10	2.30	0.13
	Gender ID diversity	2.81	0.13	3.73	0.10	2.08	0.13
Body diversity	No gender ID diversity	2.92	0.13	3.71	0.10	2.37	0.13
	Gender ID diversity	3.23	0.13	3.77	0.11	2.76	0.14

Figure 6

Estimated Marginal Means of Brand Perception
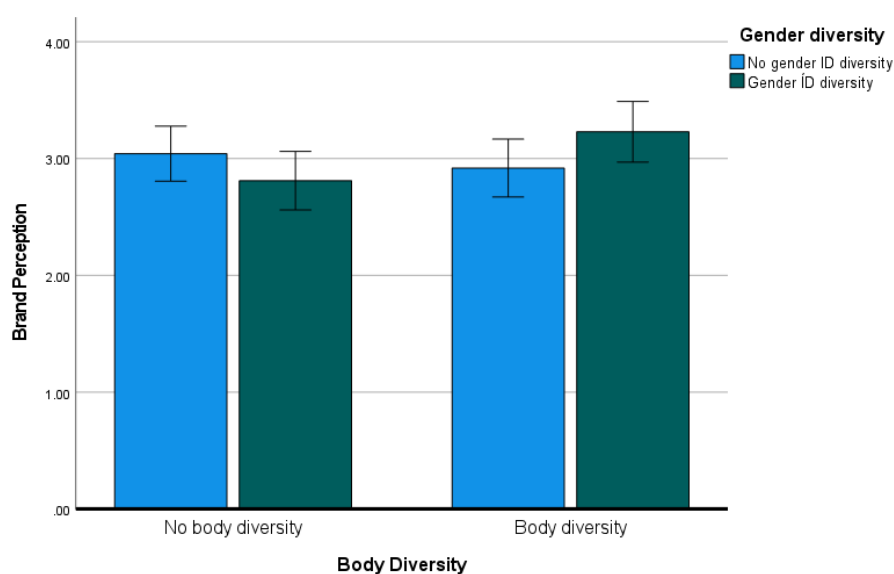
Figure 7

Estimated Marginal Means of Group Identification
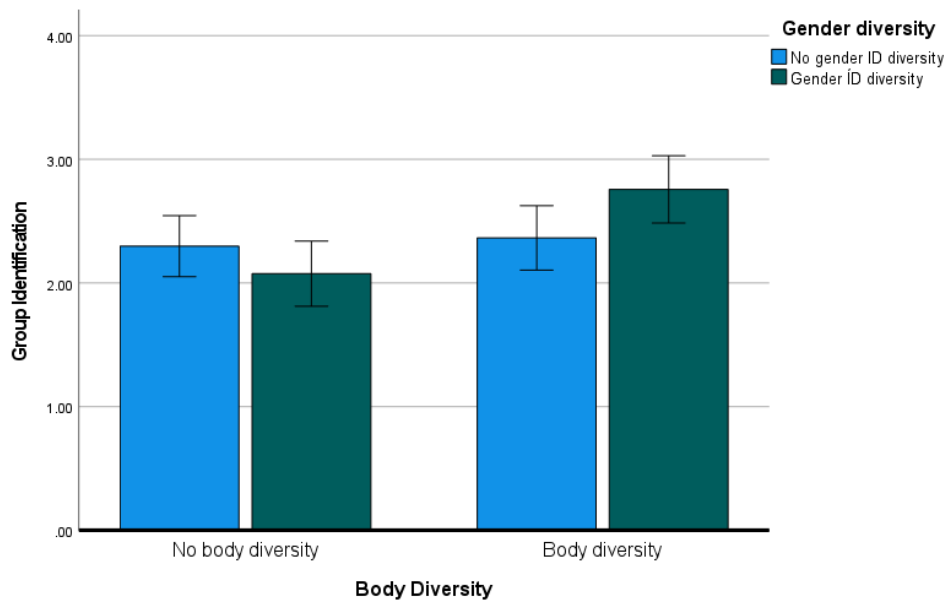
Concluding with the multivariate analysis of variance, the MANOVA findings highlight the positive impact of diversity in advertising on consumer brand perception and group identification. More specifically, it is indicated that diversity in body types and the interaction of the two types of diversity have positively significant effects on group identification and the interaction alone has also a positive effect on brand perception (Table 12). This implies that companies that include a range of diverse models – as opposed to traditional and stereotypical representations of male muscular bodies– make consumers feel more included and connected. In the case of high diversity, people like and react better to brands that embrace and reflect a wider range of society in their advertising.

As discussed at the beginning of the MANOVA section, the results for the interaction effect should be handled with caution since Wilk's Lambda test was not significant and it is therefore advisable to take into account that the interaction effect is potentially spurious. Table 19 (see p.57) summarizes which hypotheses of this study were supported and which were rejected.

Table 12

Multivariate Test for Variance

	Multivariate test					
	Value	*Hypothesis df*	*Error df*	*F-value*	*Sig.*	*Partial η²*
Wilks' Lambda						
Body diversity	.950	3	178	3.148	.026	.050
Gender diversity	.997	3	178	0.153	.928	.003
Body diversity * Gender diversity (interaction)	.965	3	178	2.132	.098	.068
	Tests of Between-Subjects Effect					
	Type II Sum of Squares	*df*	*Mean Sqare*	*F-value*	*Sig.*	*Partial η²*
Body diversity						
Brand perception	.999	1	.999	1.377	.242	.008
Self esteem	.036	1	.036	0.075	.784	.000
Group identification	6.416	1	6.416	8.023	.005	.043
Gender diversity						
Brand perception	.072	1	.072	0.099	.754	.001
Self esteem	.000	1	.000	0.001	.982	.000
Group identification	.329	1	.329	0.411	.522	.002
Body diversity * Gender diversity (interaction)						
Brand perception	3.360	1	3.360	4.634	.033	.025
Self esteem	.175	1	.175	0.368	.545	.002
Group identification	4.320	1	4.320	5.402	.021	.029

Moderation analysis

The hypothesized moderated model was tested using multiple regression analysis via PROCESS macro model number 1. H11 proposed that non-cisgender identity of consumers strengthens the relationship between diversity in gender identity in advertisements and (a) brand image, (b) purchase intention, which after factor analysis were merged and named brand perception. The overall model was statistically significant (F(3, 176) = 2.99, p = .032) indicating that the predictors (gender identity diversity, consumer's gender identity, and their interaction) have a significant impact on brand perception. Gender identity diversity in male grooming advertisements is negatively associated with brand perception (b = -1.13, p = .007). Consumers' gender identity is also negatively associated with brand perception (b = -1.21, p = .017) without taking into account the influence of its interaction with gender identity diversity. Then, by examining whether the relationship between gender identity diversity in male grooming advertisements and brand perception is moderated by consumers' gender identity, it was observed that the interaction term is also significant (b = .97, p = .005). The

unstandardized coefficient (b = 0.97) for the moderator variable (consumers' gender identity) shows a positive interaction effect (Table 13).

Table 13

Moderated Regression Results on Brand Perception

Predictors	b	S.E.	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.42	.629	7.04	.000	3.185	5.668
Gender identity diversity (X)	-1.13	.415	-2.73	.007	-1.952	-.314
Consumers' gender identity (W)	-1.21	.504	-2.41	0017	-2.212	-.220
$X*W$ (interaction)	.97	.339	2.86	.005	.301	1.641

Note. S.E.=Standard error, bs are unstandardized regression coefficients.

This can be better explained with the simple slope analyses and probed interactions that were conducted afterward and are depicted in the bar chart below (Figure 8). When cis-gender consumers see the advertisement, gender identity diversity is associated with lower levels of brand perception but does not significantly affect it (b = -.16, p = .242). However, when non-cisgender consumers see the advertisement, gender identity diversity is associated with statistically significant higher levels of brand perception (b = .81, p = .010) (Table 14). Therefore, this analysis offers strong proof that the gender identity of the consumer moderates the impact of gender identity diversity on brand perception but this effect is not uniform; rather, it changes based on the consumers' gender identity. This means that when cisgender consumers see an advertisement with models with different gender identities depicted, it does not change their image of a brand or their intention to buy the product. On the other hand, when non-cisgender people see the same advertisement they have a more positive image for the brand and there are higher chances for them to buy the advertised product. Thus, hypothesis H11 is supported.

Table 14

Conditional Effects of Gender Identity Diversity on Brand Perception by Consumer Gender Identity

	b	S.E.	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Consumer gender identity						
Cisgender	-.16	.137	-1.17	.242	-.433	.110
Non-cisgender	.81	.310	2.61	.010	.197	1.422

Note. S.E.=Standard error, bs are unstandardized regression coefficients.

Figure 8

Moderating Effect of Consumers' Gender Identity on Brand Perception
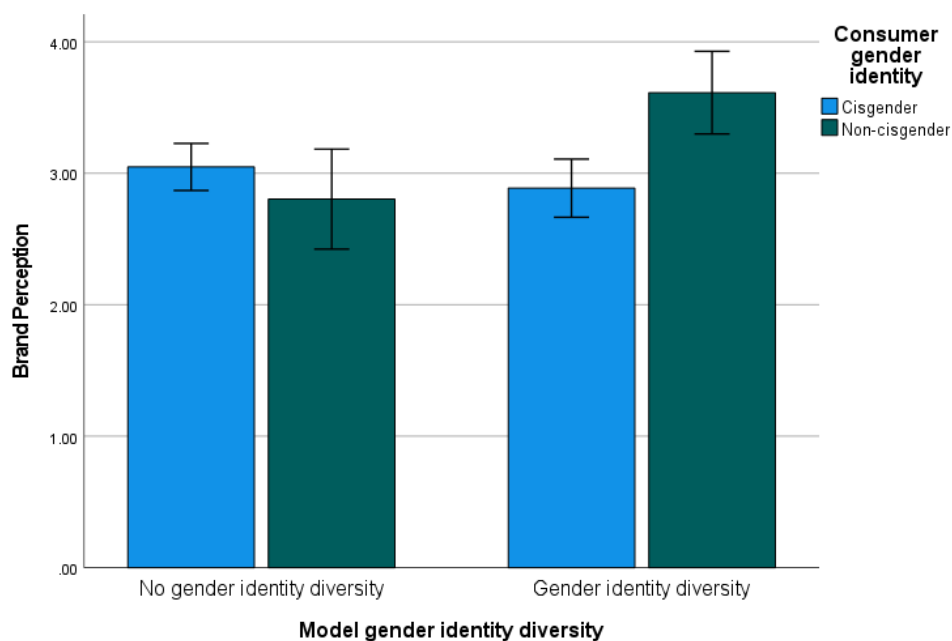
Moreover, H10 proposed that non-cisgender identity of consumers strengthens the relationship between diversity in gender identity in advertisements and (a) self-esteem, (b) group identification. Two different moderation analyses were conducted for each of the dependent variables. First, for self-esteem, the overall model was statistically significant (F(3,191) = 3.07, p = .028) indicating that the predictors (gender identity diversity, consumer's gender identity, and their interaction) have a significant impact on self-esteem. Gender identity diversity in male grooming advertisements is negatively associated with self-esteem (b = -.65, p = .046). Consumers' gender identity is also negatively associated with self-esteem (b = -1.04, p = .010) without taking into account the influence of its interaction with gender identity diversity. Then, by examining whether the relationship between gender identity diversity in male grooming advertisements and self-esteem is moderated by consumers' gender identity, it was observed that the interaction term is not significant (b = .51, p = .052) (Table 15).

Table 15

Moderated Regression Results on Self-esteem

Predictors	*b*	*S.E.*	*t*	*p*	*LLCI*	*ULCI*
Constant	5.05	.494	10.20	.000	4.073	6.025
Gender identity diversity (*X*)	-.65	.321	-2.00	.046	-1.279	-.012
Consumers' gender identity (*W*)	-1.04	.398	-2.60	.010	-1.825	-.250
*X*W (interaction)*	.51	.262	1.95	.052	-.003	1.032

Note. S.E.=Standard error, bs are unstandardized regression coefficients.

Nevertheless, the associations between the variables can still be described. When cis-gender consumers see an advertisement with models with different gender identities depicted, gender identity diversity is associated with lower levels of self-esteem (*b* = -.13, *p* = .222). On the other hand, when non-cisgender consumers see the advertisement, gender identity diversity is associated with higher levels of self-esteem (*b* = .38, *p* = .111) (Table 16). However, since none of these relationships are significant, hypothesis H10a cannot be supported. Bar charts were also created to show the differences between the conditions, similar to brand perception in the previous analysis (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Moderating Effect of Consumers' Gender Identity on Self-esteem
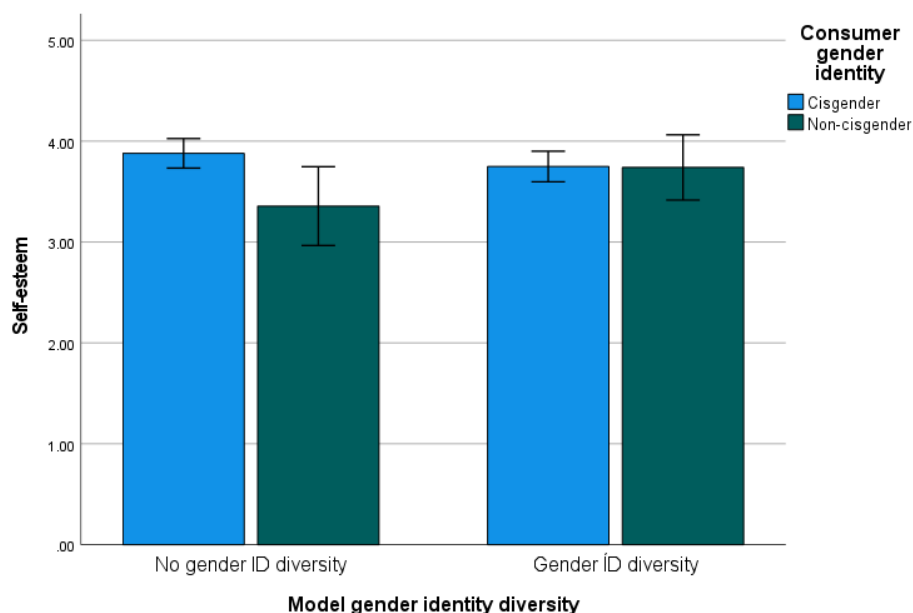
Table 16

Conditional Effects of Gender Identity Diversity on Self-esteem by Consumer Gender Identity

	b	S.E.	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Consumer gender identity						
Cisgender	-.13	.107	-1.23	.222	-.342	.080
Non-cisgender	.38	.240	1.56	.111	-.089	.856

Note. S.E.=Standard error, bs are unstandardized regression coefficients.

Finally, for group identification, the overall model was again statistically significant (F(3,178) = 2.79, p = .042). Similar to the results for self-esteem, both gender identity diversity in male grooming advertisements (b = -1.10, p = .014) and consumers' gender identity (b = -1.30, p = .070) are negatively associated with group identification. The latter, however, is not statistically significant. Then it was investigated whether the relationship between gender identity diversity in male grooming advertisements and group identification is moderated by consumers' gender identity. It was observed that the interaction term is positive and statistically significant (b = 1.01, p = .006) (Table 17).

Table 17

Moderated Regression Results on Group Identification

Predictors	b	S.E.	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	3.77	.672	5.62	.000	2.450	5.102
Gender identity diversity (X)	-1.10	.443	-2.50	.014	-1.982	-.232
Consumers' gender identity (W)	-1.30	.540	-2.41	.070	-2.370	-.237
*X*W (interaction)*	1.01	.363	2.78	.006	.294	1.729

Note. S.E.=Standard error, bs are unstandardized regression coefficients.

When cis-gender consumers the advertisement, gender identity diversity is negatively associated with group identification but does not significantly affect it (b = -.09, p = .516). However, when non-cisgender consumers see the advertisement, gender identity diversity is associated with statistically significant higher levels of group identification (b = .92, p =.007) (Table 18). In conclusion, similar to the results for brand perception, this analysis proves that the gender identity of the consumer moderates the impact of gender identity diversity on group identification but this effect is not uniform. Only when non-cisgender people see the advertisement, does a greater representation of gender diversity positively influence group identification. Hence, hypothesis H10b is supported. The simple

slope analyses and probed interactions that were conducted afterward and are depicted in the bar chart below can better visualize the differences between cisgender and non-cisgender consumers (Figure 10).

Figure 10

Moderating Effect of Consumers' Gender Identity on Group Identification
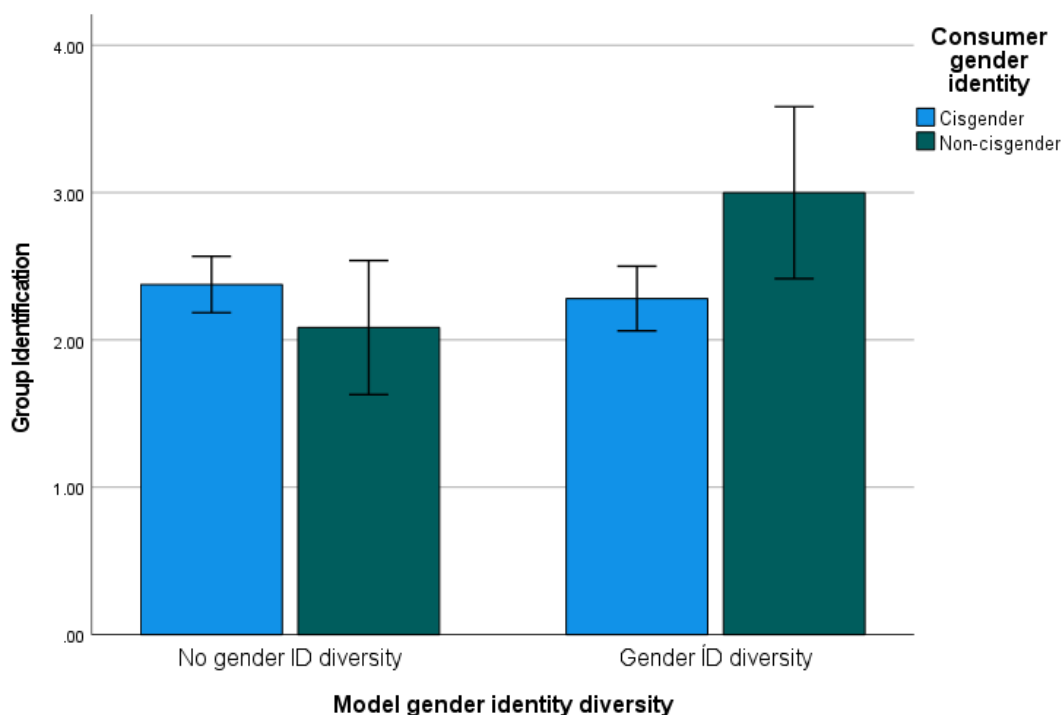

Table 18

Conditional Effects of Gender Identity Diversity on Group Identification by Consumer Gender Identity

	b	S.E.	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Consumer gender identity						
Cisgender	-.09	.147	-.65	.516	-.385	.194
Non-cisgender	.92	.332	2.75	.007	.260	1.571

Mediation analysis

In this section, it will be checked whether self-esteem and group identification mediate the relationship between diversity in male grooming advertising and brand perception (brand image and purchase intention). To check whether hypotheses H8 and H9 are supported, mediation analysis was implemented via Andrew Hayes' PROCESS macro tool extension in SPSS.

Hypothesis 8 proposed that self-esteem would mediate the relationship between body diversity in male grooming advertising and brand perception (brand image and purchase intention). The visual representation of the mediation effect can be seen in Figure 11. As was already mentioned in the main hypothesis testing section, the impact of body diversity on self-esteem was not significant and this can be also supported by the standardized coefficient for the impact of body diversity on self-esteem in the mediation model (β = -.04, p = .757). Similar to self-esteem, regarding the total effect, it can be seen that body diversity has an insignificant association with brand perception (β = .16, p = .293). Regarding the direct effect, when analysing the combined effect on brand perception while controlling for self-esteem, the standardized coefficients are β = .17 for body diversity and β = .32 for self-esteem. The analysis showed that the direct effect of body diversity on brand perception was not statistically significant (β = .17, p =.227). Importantly, it was observed that the indirect effect of body diversity on brand perception through self-esteem was not significant (β = -.01, 95% CI = -.116, .078) because a 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) included zero. Thus, it can be concluded that consumer's self-esteem does not mediate the relationship between body diversity and their perception of a brand and therefore H8 cannot be supported. On the other hand, for the path from the mediator to the dependent variable, self-esteem positively impacts brand perception with a significant relationship (β = .32, p < .001). Although the analysis showed that the indirect effect was not significant, the significance of this path suggests that self-esteem is a predictor of brand perception. This emphasizes how important self-esteem can be in influencing how customers view companies. Consumers with higher levels of self-esteem may have a better image of a brand and want to buy more products from it as a result of increased confidence and general life satisfaction. The results imply that despite including a range of body types in advertisements as a considerate and inclusive practice, it may not have a direct impact on how consumers view a business through changes in their self-esteem.

Figure 11

*Mediation Model of Body Diversity, Self-esteem, and Brand Perception*
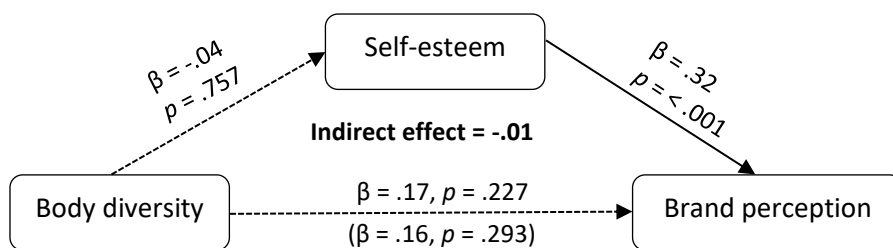
Note. βs are standardized coefficients.

Hypothesis 9 proposed that group identification would mediate the relationship between gender identity diversity in male grooming advertising and brand perception (brand image and purchase intention). The visual representation of the mediation effect can be seen in Figure 12. As was already mentioned in the main hypothesis testing section, the effect of gender identity diversity on group identification was not significant and this can be also supported by the standardized coefficient for the impact of gender identity diversity on group identification in the mediation model (β = .08, *p* = .583). Additionally, regarding the total effect, it can be seen that gender identity diversity has an insignificant association with brand perception (β = .03, *p* = .818). Then, the direct effect of gender identity diversity on brand perception while controlling for group identification is again not significant (β = -.01, *p* = .906). The analysis also showed that the indirect effect of gender identity diversity on brand perception through group identification was not significant (β = .05, 95% *CI* = -.123, .225) because a 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) included zero. Thus, similar to the previous mediation analysis, in the context of this study, it is suggested that consumers' levels of group identification do not mediate the relationship between gender identity diversity and their perception of a brand and therefore H9 cannot be supported. On the other hand, for the path from the mediator to the dependent variable, group identification seemed to positively impact brand perception with a significant relationship (*β* = .59, *p* < .001). This indicates that when a consumer feels a sense of belonging or identification with a group that is depicted in an ad, it is more likely to have a better image of this brand and buy the advertised product. In conclusion, the findings suggest that although group

identification is a significant factor in altering brand perception, its mediating role between gender

identity diversity in advertising and brand perception is not significant.

Figure 12

Mediation Model of Gender Identity Diversity, Group Identification, and Brand Perception
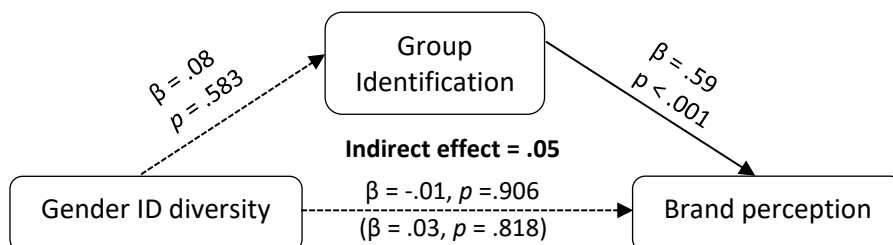
Note. βs are standardized coefficients.

Implementing all of the required tests, resulted in important insights for this study. A thorough

table is provided below that summarizes all of the hypotheses and indicates which ones were rejected

and which ones were supported (Table 19). The significance of these findings is further addressed in

detail in the discussion section that follows, where theoretical and practical implications as well as

limitations and future research suggestions are included.

Table 19

Overview of the hypotheses

№	Hypotheses	Rejected or supported
1	When models with diverse body types are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to higher (state) self-esteem of the consumers compared to when only models with muscular bodies are depicted.	Rejected
2	When diverse models regarding gender identity are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to higher (state) self-esteem of the consumers compared to when only cisgender male models are depicted.	Rejected
3	When models with diverse body types are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it makes consumers identify more with a group (higher group identification) compared to when only models with muscular bodies are depicted.	Supported
4	When diverse models regarding gender identity are depicted in male grooming advertisements it makes consumers identify more with a group (higher group identification) compared to when only cisgender male models are depicted.	Rejected
5	When models with diverse body types are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to (a) more positive consumers' attitudes towards the brand, (b) stronger consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product compared to when only models with muscular bodies are depicted.	Rejected
6	When diverse models regarding gender identity are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to (a) more positive consumers' attitudes towards the brand, (b) stronger consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product compared to when only cisgender male models are depicted.	Rejected
7	When models with diverse body types and diverse gender identities are depicted in male grooming advertisements, it leads to (a) higher (state) self-esteem of the consumers, (b) it makes consumers identify more with a group (higher group identification), it leads to (c) more positive consumers' attitudes towards the brand, and (d) stronger consumers' intentions to purchase the advertised product compared to when no diversity or only one type of diversity exists in the advertisements.	(7a) Rejected (7b,c,d) Supported
8	Consumers' self-esteem mediates the relationship between body diversity in male grooming advertising, and (a) brand image, (b) consumers' purchase intentions of the advertised product.	Rejected
9	Consumers' feeling of group identification mediates the relationship between gender identity diversity in male grooming advertising, and (a) brand image, (b) consumers' purchase intentions of the advertised product.	Rejected
10	Non-cisgender identity of consumers strengthens the relationship between diversity in gender identity and (a) self-esteem, (b) group identification	(10a) Rejected (10b) Supported
11	Non-cisgender identity of consumers strengthens the relationship between diversity in gender identity and (a) brand image, (b) purchase intention.	Supported

Discussion

Several noteworthy findings in this study add significantly to the already existing knowledge of male grooming advertising. Not only have these results supported some of the expected theories, but they have also revealed new evidence that can improve comprehension of this area. On the other hand, several tests of this study did not provide the outcomes that were anticipated. This deviation from expected outcomes highlights the intricacy of diversity in male grooming advertising and points to the need for more research and improvement of the existing theoretical frameworks and procedures, the details of which will be thoroughly discussed in this section.

Effects of diversity

In this research, it was expected that if male grooming companies used diverse models in their advertisements this would lead to higher levels of consumers' brand attitude and self-perception. More specifically, it was studied whether diversity in body types, diversity in gender identity of the models, and the interaction of these two types of diversity, would have a positive effect on consumer's self-esteem, level of group identification, brand image, and purchase intention; the two latter variables were merged into brand perception after factor analysis.

Body diversity

Based on Kalu's (2019) findings combined with social comparison theory, it was expected that diversity in body types would lead to higher levels of consumers' self-esteem, but it did not. This suggests that it is not enough for consumers to see a variety of models with diverse body types to feel good about themselves and probably more factors are needed to achieve this. Customers' perceptions of body diversity in advertising may also differ depending on their cultural background, personal experiences, and preexisting body image ideas and any consistent impact on self-esteem may be reduced by this range of interpretations. This can also explain the non-significant mediation effect of self-esteem that was previously found, and it can be indicated that a wider variety of factors such as personal experiences and cultural norms may affect self-esteem more than just advertisement content. Furthermore, based on Tajfel & Turner (1979) and self-categorization theory, people identify

more with a group that has similar characteristics to them, therefore diversity in body types would lead to higher group identification, and indeed a significant effect was found here. Consumers can more easily feel connected to a group in which one or more people look like them in terms of body type. Additionally, according to Shukla (2023), consumers would prefer a brand that pays attention to diversity and inclusivity, therefore body diversity was expected to have a positive impact on consumers' brand perception. Nevertheless, for this research, this statement could not be proven. It seems that the type of product and advertisement can play a big role in this, as men might not care about how a model looks in order to purchase a shaving machine, for instance, but more about whether this product covers their needs. Overall, male consumers' self-esteem is not affected by body diversity in a male grooming advertisement as expected, and on the same level as in other industries that were described in the theoretical framework (e.g. fashion), which is an important finding for this industry. More investigation is undoubtedly necessary to look at possible mediators or the circumstances in which body diversity in advertising may affect consumers' perceptions of brands and their self-esteem. Figuring out what factors may mitigate this association could provide important information for both theoretical academic work and real-world marketing.

Gender identity diversity

Apart from body diversity, gender identity diversity was expected to have a positive effect on the dependent variables as well. Specifically, the use of diverse models regarding their gender identity would lead to higher self-esteem, as previous findings showed that the depiction of high masculinity in advertisements had a negative impact on consumers' self-esteem (Pompper, 2010). However, in this study, no findings can align with this statement. Even when testing consumers' gender identity as a moderator in this relationship, there was still no evidence that self-esteem could be strengthened. Gender identity diversity is not a strong factor to alter consumers' self-esteem in the context of a male grooming ad, and this might be because people are more used to the stereotypical kind of man to be represented in a commercial about shaving, for instance, and also because self-esteem is a complex construct as discussed in the previous paragraph. Following this, Corwin's (2019) findings showed that

participants felt more connected to an ad that depicted their orientation; in this study, there was no significant direct effect of gender identity diversity on group identification but a significant moderation effect was found. When non-cisgender people see the ad then there is a bigger and more positive effect on group identification when diverse gender identities are depicted. Non-cisgender consumers feel more connected with such a group and the previous findings on this can be further supported while carefully taking into consideration that this applies only to non-cisgender target groups. Similarly, this research failed to prove that gender identity diversity has a direct positive impact on brand perception, nevertheless, the moderation analysis showed that there can be a positive effect for non-cisgender participants. This finding aligns with Corwin's (2019) conclusion that a sizable percentage of participants were more likely to buy a product following their viewing of an advertising that emphasized inclusion and diversity. It is noteworthy, nonetheless, that this pattern seems to apply mostly to customers who identify as non-cisgender. This realization not only deepens researchers' comprehension of the influence of representation in advertising but also identifies the particular resonances that varied and inclusive advertising has with different target groups.

Interaction of body diversity and gender identity diversity

Finally, it was the aim of the study to check whether the combination of the two types of diversity would have a beneficial impact on the dependent variables. Based on the interaction hypothesis of this research (H7), a positive impact was expected on self-esteem, group identification, and brand perception. The findings of this research showed that when there is more than one type of diversity, consumers feel better represented (higher group identification), they perceive the brand as a better one (higher brand image) and they want to purchase from it (higher brand perception). It can be assumed that the more diverse a group of people is the higher the chances that people will feel they belong to a group and while this brand represents them they would want to buy from it. On the other hand, no significant effect was found for self-esteem and similarly as before it can be assumed that in a male grooming advertising, customers would not be seeking the representation of models in the ads as their main source of self-esteem. Rather, the product's utilitarian features might be more

important. This suggests that consumers would prefer that a product's functionality—rather than the person promoting it—be the main source of increased self-esteem in the long term. Customers' idea that utilizing a certain grooming product will allow them to mimic the model's appearance may contribute to higher self-esteem and this is certainly something that varies depending on the advertised product.

Theoretical implications

This study provides additional knowledge to some of the theoretical models that were analysed at the beginning of the research. First of all, social comparison theory discusses how people tend to compare themselves to others, and previous studies, in the field of advertising, added that when consumers make upward societal comparisons (e.g. with the model depicted in the advertisement), they develop negative body impressions for themselves. Contrary to these previous findings, in the context of this study, it was observed that consumers' self-esteem was not positively affected. Thus, this research expands the knowledge to the application of social comparison theory in marketing and advertising, by implying that there may be substantial differences in the dynamics of self-comparison in advertising among other industries like fashion. This difference draws attention to the complex ways that social comparison functions in different advertising industries. It adds significant insights to the larger conversation on consumer behaviour and advertising psychology by highlighting the significance of contextual elements in influencing how consumers perceive and respond to advertising content.

Furthermore, self-categorization theory supports that people place themselves in a social category and believe that they are vital members of that group. More specifically, self-categorization involves more than objective facts about group membership (such as having the same degree). People usually behave as their group and want to possess the same things. In addition to this, based on distinctiveness theory individuals also make actions and choices similar to those of their in-groups to demonstrate their desired identities (Nguyen, 2022). This principle appears to also affect consumers' buying behaviour regarding a male grooming product. The findings of mediation analysis suggested

that the more a person identifies with a group presented in an ad, the higher the chances to buy the product. Therefore, these two theories can be applied in understanding the importance of group identification on buying behaviour while keeping in mind that if only gender identity diversity is depicted, it does not contribute to higher brand perceptions.

Finally, one instrumental theory for this research was the social identity theory (SIT). SIT explores how groups affect people and discusses how individuals view and categorize themselves and others (Tajfel, 1981). In this study, body diversity played a significant role in consumers' group identification and it is a finding that expands the knowledge of SIT; it shows that for the majority of individuals, exposure to a diverse range of bodies is crucial to put themselves in categories rather than encountering different gender identities. The latter, however, was notably more important among non-cis people. This distinction also adds value to this theory by highlighting how people who belong to minority groups (e.g. transgender) may have different perspectives on how their social identities can be affected.

Practical implications

First and foremost, the findings of this experiment can be used and applied by male grooming companies. Even if there were no significant effects in most of the cases, this research can provide more insights into what types of diversity companies can use based on their target groups. If they want to include the majority of people in an advertisement, it is advisable for them to use more than one type of diversity as it was proved that the combination of diversity in body types and gender identities was effective for group identification and brand perception. However, this strategy is associated with the possible risk of alienating cis-gender consumers as it was supported that gender identity diversity was more effective for non-cisgender consumers; it is important to maintain a careful balance to prevent alienating the current cisgender target group. Therefore, the marketers who work in such companies could benefit from this information and take into consideration factors that they may not have thought of before. Equipped with this understanding, advertisers may create more inclusive and successful male grooming ads, increasing consumer interaction and expanding their target audience.

One way to achieve this could be by making a sequence of advertisements highlighting various types of diversity each time and by employing narrative techniques to show a range of people in relevant, genuine situations.

Moreover, consumers could also benefit from this study as they might feel a greater connection to companies that really reflect them and may become more loyal to firms that emphasize diversity and inclusiveness in their advertising. However, since this applies mostly to non-cisgender consumers, based on this study's findings, customer involvement employing continuous communication and feedback channels could be developed. If companies focus firstly on consumers' needs, what a consumer truly needs from a grooming machine, and then on how much they are represented, it will lessen the possibility that customers may view the utilization of gender identity diversity, for instance, as a superficial marketing technique. In this way, trust and loyalty will be easier built among consumers.

Finally, using the study's results, LGBTQ+ groups may play a critical role in supporting positive developments in the advertising business, creating inclusion, and giving valuable information and knowledge to companies. If there is a brand that wants to promote diversity and inclusivity, a collaboration can be made with an LGBTQ+ organization that shares the same or similar values. The results of this research combined with their already existing knowledge of theirs, could lead to an inclusive marketing campaign that would have a greater impact. It could also benefit people working in those male grooming companies by being better educated by the LGBTQ+ organizations on this matter and not only apply diversity and inclusivity in their marketing campaigns but also internally in the company so they would serve their purpose more honestly.

Limitations and future research

In this study, several limitations need to be addressed as points of improvement for future research. The first limitation is that the results of the study should be regarded with caution due to possible spuriousness, especially about the interaction effects. The link between advertisement diversity and customer responses may also be more nuanced than previously thought, as seen by the

non-significance of some predicted effects. Drawing conclusions from the different patterns and outcomes that were observed and discussed should proceed with caution. Future research may repeat the present study with an alternative population, bigger sample size, or even stronger stimuli. For the latter, researchers could think of conducting research that primarily consists of non-cisgender people, where in that case the interaction effect will be possibly significant.

The use of a state scale for self-esteem which measures participants' levels of self-esteem only at a particular point of time is also a limitation for further discussion. Self-esteem is a complicated psychological concept impacted by a wide range of elements such as personal experiences, cultural background, social connections, and one's inherent self-perception overall. Consequently, the effect of diversity on self-esteem may be too complex or indirect to be fully understood in a single research. The nature of this study was to see how participants would feel good about themselves after they saw an advertisement. Future research can use a more diversified methodological approach because of the use of state self-esteem ratings and potential biases in answers resulting from the online survey. A longitudinal study may shed light on the long-term effects of diversity on customer perceptions.

Moreover, it is crucial to mention that since this study was more LGBTQ+ oriented, only consumers' gender identity was checked as a moderator. Future studies could measure also consumers' body types as moderator to check whether there is a significant effect on self-esteem by asking participants to state in which body type (among a given selection) they think that they belong. Hence, for instance, it might be the case that someone who is more insecure of his body because of some extra weight, will be significantly affected by a poster where only muscular men are depicted. Similarly, researchers can take into consideration other types of diversity e.g. race, ethnicity, age, and disability, and test whether one of these types or a combination of them could have a significant effect on the dependent variables that were tested in the current study.

Another limitation is the country in which this study was conducted. This study was conducted in the Netherlands, and although people from different backgrounds participated, the results might have been different if it had been conducted in another country. However, it is important to recognize that

social and cultural standards vary greatly between nations and that these variations may have a big impact on how consumers view and respond to advertisements. Compared to other nations with varied cultural landscapes, the Netherlands, which is renowned for its progressive and inclusive societal principles, may offer a unique situation where the influence of diversity in advertising is interpreted differently. Big male grooming companies that sell their products worldwide, usually have different marketing campaigns for each region. An advertisement that is popular in the Netherlands, for instance, could not have the same effect in the Middle East or Asia, where views on masculinity and cultural standards are very different. Future research can offer more detailed insights into the intricate interactions between cultural backgrounds, purchase intention, and advertising by broadening the geographical reach of the study. This will help international corporations create more successful and culturally relevant marketing strategies.

Finally, it is important to keep in mind that this experiment was based on a fictitious scenario in which participants were asked if they would buy the product in the end. It was not a real purchase so the limitation in this case is that people were not fully engaged with this advertisement. If they indeed needed and wanted to buy a grooming machine, the results would be maybe different. This could be implemented by conducting tests in which participants are shown ads in more realistic environments, including physical stores or even online shopping websites. By giving the participants the chance to make an actual purchase (maybe a discount would lead participants to make one), researchers could watch real judgments about purchases being made in response to various forms of advertising. Furthermore, the nature of this experiment which was conducted in an online environment could also lead to low involvement of the participants as their real reactions and feelings cannot be checked. On the other hand in a qualitative study (e.g. a focus group where different opinions can be further discussed) where the experiment is conducted in a lab where people are being watched and need to answer questions to a person, socially desirable responses might occur, and the outcome might be inaccurate. Future research can use a mix-methods approach where obtaining broad information and detecting trends will be conducted via an online survey and after that an offline research (e.g. focus

groups, in-person interviews) will be conducted to learn more about particular conclusions or patterns that occurred during the online phase.

Conclusion

The current study contributed to enriching the knowledge of diversity in male grooming advertising by investigating the effect of diversity in body types and gender identity diversity on consumers' self-esteem, group identification, brand image, and purchase intention.

The research question was "To what extent does diversity regarding (a) body types, and (b) gender identity in male grooming advertisements affect brand attitude and self-perception of male consumers that belong to Generation Y and Z?". This research found a significant effect between body diversity and group identification. Consumers feel more represented and identify more with a group of people that have diverse body types. Additionally, in the study, significant evidence was found between the interaction of the two types of diversity and group identification and brand perception. It is clear that consumers identify more with a highly diverse group and have the intention to buy a product from a brand that uses more than one type of diversity. Overall, this study shows that diversity in advertising improves group identification and brand perception, but has less of an impact on self-esteem. This emphasizes how complicated the link is between the content of advertisements and how consumers see themselves, especially when it comes to male grooming products. It draws attention to the many ways in which customers interact with different forms of advertising according to the type of product, as well as their social and personal identities. The study specifically shows that gender identity diversity in advertising is more important in creating a feeling of connection with the company for non-cisgender consumers.

In conclusion, this study fills the literature gap on diversity in male grooming advertising by focusing on an LGBTQ+ direction by clarifying the complex relationships between the use of diversity in advertising in the male grooming sector and its many effects on consumer behavior. It lays the groundwork for further investigation and useful business tactics, opening the door to more successful and inclusive advertising methods that appeal to a wide range of customer demographics.

References

AGA. (2019). *What is Gender Diversity?* A Gender Agenda. https://genderrights.org.au/information-hub/what-is-gender-diversity/

Albrighton, T. (2016, March 10). Goodbye, Lynx effect. ABC copywriting. https://www.abccopywriting.com/2016/03/10/goodbye-lynx-effect

Ashmore, R. D., Deaux, K. & McLaughlin-Volpe, T. (2004). An organizing framework for collective identity: Articulation and significance of multidimensionality. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130, 80–114.

Åstrøm, A. N., & Rise, J. (2001). Young adults' intention to eat healthy food: Extending the theory of planned behavior. *Psychology & Health*, 16, 223– 237. doi:10.1080/08870440108405501

Barry, B. (2007). *Fashioning reality: a new generation of entrepreneurship*. Key Porter Books.

Barry, B. (2014). Expanding the male ideal: The need for diversity in men's fashion advertisements. Critical Studies in Men's Fashion, 1(3), 275–293. https://doi.org/10.1386/csmf.1.3.275_1

Bartlett, M.S. (1954). A note on the multiplying factors for various chi square approximations. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, 16 (Series B), 296–8.

Batra, Rajeev & Stayman Douglas M. 1990. The Role of Mood in Advertising Effectiveness. *Journal of Consumer Research* 17:2 p. 203-214

Baumeister, R. F. & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin,* 117, 497–529.

Bednarksi, P. J. (2021, February 2). *Men's Grooming Brands Leverage WFH Trends*. Www.mediapost.com. https://www.mediapost.com/publications/article/360158/mens-grooming-brands-leverage-wfh-trends.html

Bower, A. B. (2001). Highly attractive models in advertising and the women who loathe them: The implications of negative affect for spokesperson effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 30, 51-63.

Brewer, M. B. (2007). The social psychology of intergroup relations: Social categorization, ingroup bias, and outgroup prejudice. In A. W. Kruglanski & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Social psychology: Handbook of basic principles* (2nd ed., pp. 695–715). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Buunk, Bram P., Rebecca L. Collins, Shelley E. Taylor, Nico W. VanYperen and Gayle A. Dakof (1990), "The Affective Consequences of Social Comparison: Either Direction has its Ups and Downs, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59 (6), 1238- 1249.

Cash, T., Fleming, E., Alindogan, J., Steadman, L., & Whitehead, A. (2002). Beyond Body Image as a Trait: The Development and Validation of the Body Image States Scale. *Eating Disorders*, 10(2), 103–113. https://doi.org/10.1080/10640260290081678

Coley, A., & Burgess, B. (2003). Gender differences in cognitive and affective impulse buying. Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: *An International Journal*, 7(3), 282–295. https://doi.org/10.1108/13612020310484834

Corwin, A. (2019, November 6). *Inclusive ads are affecting consumer behavior, according to new research*. The Female Quotient. https://www.thefemalequotient.com/inclusive-ads-are-affecting-consumer-behavior-according-to-new-research-2/

DeBenedictis, E. (2018). You Are Included: The Effectiveness of Diversity and Representation of Ethnic Minorities in TV Advertising. *Honors Program Theses and Projects*. https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/294

Del Saz-Rubio, M. M. (2018). Female identities in TV toiletries ads: A pragmatic and multimodal analysis of implied meanings. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 136, 54–78. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.07.009

Del Saz-Rubio, M. M. (2019). The pragmatic-semiotic construction of male identities in contemporary advertising of male grooming products. *Discourse & Communication*, 13(2), 192–227. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481318817621

Demetriou, D. (2001). Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique. Theory and Society, 30(3), 337-361. http://www.jstor.org/stable/657965

Duffett, R. (2015). The influence of Mxit advertising on purchase intentions and purchase amid Generation Y. *Journal of Contemporary Management*. 12. 336-359.

Entrepreneur. (2017, October 26). *The Self-Esteem Movement: Why Marketers Want You to Love Yourself (and How They Sometimes Fail)*. Entrepreneur. https://www.entrepreneur.com/growing-a-business/the-self-esteem-movement-why-marketers-want-you-to-love/303355

Escalas, J., & Bettman, James R. (2005). Self-Construal, Reference Groups, and Brand Meaning. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32(3), 378–389. https://doi.org/10.1086/497549

Feiereisen, S., Broderick, A. J., & Douglas, S. P. (2009). The effect and moderation of gender identity congruity: Utilizing "real women" advertising images. *Psychology & Marketing*, *26*(9), 813–843. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20301

Feng, W. (2008). Male cosmetics advertisements in Chinese and U.S. Men's Lifestyle Magazine (Diss.). Ohio University, Athens, OH.

Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations*, 7, 117-140.

Fischer, E., & Arnold, S. J. (1994). Sex, gender identity, gender role attitudes, and consumer behavior. *Psychology & Marketing*, 11, 163–182

Forehand, M. R., Deshpandé, R., & Reed, A. (2002). Identity salience and the influence of differential activation of the social self-schema on advertising response. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *87*(6), 1086–1099. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.6.1086

Francis, T., & Hoefel, F. (2018, November 12). *"True Gen": Generation Z and its implications for companies*. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/consumer-packaged-goods/our-insights/true-gen-generation-z-and-its-implications-for-companies

Frank, E. (2014). Groomers and consumers. Men and Masculinities, 17(3), 278–298. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184x14539509

Future of Marketing. (2019, August). How inclusive marketing affects behavior. Think with Google. https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/future-of-marketing/management-and-culture/diversity-and-inclusion/inclusive-marketing-consumer-data/

G., Ajai & Koshy, Dr & Jose, Dr.Mathew. (2013). Factors affecting the purchasing behaviour of customers towards male grooming products: A descriptive study conducted at Ernakulam, Kerala, India. *ZENITH International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* ISSN: 2231-5780. 3. 48-60.

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

Green, K., Fairchild, R., Knudsen, B., & Lease-Gubrud, D. (2018, October 18). *Introduction to Communication*. Introtocommopensource.ridgewater.edu. http://introtocommopensource.ridgewater.edu/index.html

Henry, K. B., Arrow, H., & Carini, B. (1999). A Tripartite Model of Group Identification. *Small Group Research*, *30*(5), 558–581. https://doi.org/10.1177/104649649903000504

Hinkle, S., Taylor, L. A., Fox-Cardamone, D. L., & Crook, K. F. (1989). Intragroup identification and intergroup differentiation: A multicomponent approach. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 28(4), 305–317. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1989.tb00874.x

Hobgood, C. (2022, July 25). *Why are we still using genders in advertising?* The Drum. https://www.thedrum.com/opinion/2022/07/25/why-are-we-still-using-genders-advertising

Hobza, C. L., & Rochlen, A. B. (2009). Gender role conflict, drive for muscularity, and the impact of ideal media portrayals on men. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *10*(2), 120–130. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015040

Ingenuity. (2022, April 6). *The power of influencer marketing*. Www.thgingenuity.com. https://www.thgingenuity.com/resources/blog/the-power-of-influencer-marketing

Johnson, G. D., & Grier, S. A. (2012). "WHAT ABOUT THE INTENDED CONSEQUENCES?" Examining the Effects of Race-Stereotyped Portrayals on Advertising Effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, 41(3), 91–105. https://www.jstor.org/stable/23353024

Kaiser, H. (1970). A second generation Little Jiffy. Psychometrika, 35, 401–15. — (1974). An index of factorial simplicity. *Psychometrika*, 39, 31–6.

Kalu, F. (2019). *THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER MARKETING ON PURCHASE INTENTION FROM AN IRISH MALE MILLENNIAL'S PERCEPTION: A CASE STUDY OF IRISH FASHION INDUSTRY*. https://norma.ncirl.ie/4035/1/feliciakalu.pdf

Kervin D. (1990). Advertising masculinity: The representation of males in Esquire advertisements. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 14(1), 51-70.

Kim, H. Y., & Lee, Y. (2019). The Effect of Online Customization on Consumers' Happiness and Purchase Intention and the Mediating Roles of Autonomy, Competence, and Pride of Authorship. *International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction*, 36(5), 403–413. https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2019.1658375

Kozar, Joy M. (2010), Women's responses to fashion media images: A study of female consumers aged 30–59, *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, 34: 3, pp. 272–78.

Kraus, A., & Myrick, J. G. (2018). Feeling bad about feel-good ads: The emotional and body-image ramifications of body-positive media. *Communication Research Reports*, 35(2), 101–111. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2017.1383233

Law, C., & Labre, M. P. (2002). Cultural Standards of Attractiveness: A Thirty-Year Look at Changes in Male Images in Magazines. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79(3), 697–711. https://doi.org/10.1177/107769900207900310

Leach, C. W., van Zomeren, M., Zebel, S., Vliek, M. L. W., Pennekamp, S. F., Doosje, B., Ouwerkerk, J. W., & Spears, R. (2008). Group-level self-definition and self-investment: A hierarchical (multicomponent) model of in-group identification. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 95(1), 144–165. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.95.1.144

Limei, C., & Wei, L. (2020). The Impact of Reviewers' Creditworthiness on Consumers' Purchase Intention in Edge Path: Implications for the Coronavirus Disease 2019 Pandemic. Frontiers in Public Health, 8. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2020.619263

Leonardelli, G. J., Pickett, C. L., & Brewer, M. B. (2011b). Optimal distinctiveness theory: A framework for social identity, social cognition, and intergroup relations. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, 43, 63–113.

Levine, J., & Hogg, M. (2010). *Self-Categorization Theory*. SAGE Knowledge; SAGE Publications, Inc. https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/processes/n223.xml

Ma, A. C., & Rast, D. E. (2017). Optimal Distinctiveness Theory. *Encyclopedia of Personality and Individual Differences*, 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-28099-8_1144-1

Mears, A. (2011), *Pricing Beauty: The Making of a Fashion Mode*l, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Nguyen, M. (2022). Preface | Social Science Theory. In *bookdown.org*. https://bookdown.org/mike/social-theory/

Ortiz, J. (2011, August 19). Nivea Pulls Racist "Re-Civilize Yourself" Ad After Sparking Outrage.

Business Insider. https://www.businessinsider.com/nivea-racist-re-civilize-yourself-ad-2011-8?international=true&r=US&IR=T

Pallant, J. (2020). SPSS Survival Manual. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003117452

Penn State Student Affairs. (n.d.). *Gender Diversity Terminology*. Studentaffairs.psu.edu. Retrieved

May 3, 2023, from https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/csgd/explore-lgbtq-resources/identity-based/gender-terms

Pompper, D. (2010). Masculinities, the Metrosexual, and Media Images: Across Dimensions of Age

and Ethnicity. *Sex Roles*, *63*(9-10), 682–696. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9870-7

Poole, D. (2021, April 20). *The power of inclusion and diversity in advertising*. Www.kantar.com.

https://www.kantar.com/uki/inspiration/advertising-media/the-power-of-inclusion-and-diversity-in-advertising

Putrevu, S. (2004). Communicating with the sexes: Male and female responses to print advertisements.

Journal of Advertising, 33, 51–62.

Qualls, W. J., & Moore, D. J. (1990). Stereotyping effects on consumers' evaluation of advertising:

Impact of racial differences between actors and viewers. *Psychology and Marketing*, *7*(2), 135–151. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.4220070205

Rees-Roberts, N. (2013). Boys Keep Swinging: The Fashion Iconography of Hedi Slimane. *Fashion*

Theory, 17(1), 7–26. https://doi.org/10.2752/175174113x13502904240659

Ricciardelli, R., Clow, K. A., & White, P. (2010). Investigating Hegemonic Masculinity: Portrayals of

Masculinity in Men's Lifestyle Magazines. Sex Roles, 63(1-2), 64–78. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9764-8

Ricciardelli, R., & Clow, K. A. (2013). The Portrayal of Elements Historically Associated with Masculine

and Feminine Domains in Lad and Metrosexual Men's Lifestyle Magazines. *Masculinities &*

Social Change, *2*(2), 116–145. https://doi.org/10.4471/mcs.2013.26

Robins, R. W., Hendin, H. M., & Trzesniewski, K. H. (2001). Measuring Global Self-Esteem: Construct Validation of a Single-Item Measure and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 27(2), 151–161. https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167201272002

Rogers, C. (2018, November 21). *Brands are losing out on £774bn by failing to bridge the "self-esteem gap."* Marketing Week. https://www.marketingweek.com/brands-losing-out-failing-to-bridge-self-esteem-gap/

Sani, F., Madhok, V., Norbury, M., Dugard, P., & Wakefield, J. R. H. (2014). Greater number of group identifications is associated with healthier behaviour: Evidence from a Scottish community sample. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 20(3), 466–481. https://doi.org/10.1111/bjhp.12119

Selensky, J. C., & Carels, R. A. (2021). Weight stigma and media: An examination of the effect of advertising campaigns on weight bias, internalized weight bias, self-esteem, body image, and affect. *Body Image*, *36*, 95–106. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2020.10.008

Shukla, U. (2023, March 30). *Diversity Of Consumers And Their Behaviour*. Www.tutorialspoint.com. https://www.tutorialspoint.com/diversity-of-consumers-and-their-behaviour

Sirgy, M. Joseph. (1985). Using self-congruity and ideal congruity to predict purchase motivation. *Journal of Business Research*, *13*(3), 195–206. https://doi.org/10.1016/0148-2963(85)90026-8

Sirgy, M. J. (1986). *Self-congruity: Toward a theory of personality and cybernetics.* Praeger Publishers/Greenwood Publishing Group.

Spears, N., & Singh, S. N. (2004). Measuring Attitude toward the Brand and Purchase Intentions. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 26(2), 53–66. doi:10.1080/10641734.2004.1050516

Sternberg, C. (2021, April 21). *How Do Americans Feel About Diversity In Beauty Advertising?* Beauty Packaging. https://www.beautypackaging.com/contents/view_breaking-news/2021-04-21/how-do-americans-feel-about-diversity-in-beauty-advertising/

Tajfel, H. (1969). Cognitive aspects of prejudice. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 1, 173–191.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. Austin & S. Worchel

(Eds.), *Social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Chicago: Nelson.

Terry, D. J., & Hogg, M. A. (1996). Group norms and the attitude–behavior relationship: A role for group

identification. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 22, 8776– 8793.

doi:10.1177/0146167296228002

Turner, J. C. (2010). Social categorization and the self-concept: A social cognitive theory of group

behavior. In T. Postmes & N. R. Branscombe (Eds.), Rediscovering social identity (pp. 243–

272). Psychology Press.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S.D.&Wetherell, M. S. (1987). Rediscovering the social

group: A self-categorization theory. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.

Fragopoulos, J. (2022, June 2). Embracing Gender Fluidity in Advertising Internally & Externally.

Www.ana.net. https://www.ana.net/miccontent/show/id/ii-2022-06-gender-nonconformity-

externally-internally

Wakefield, J. R. H., Sani, F., Madhok, V., Norbury, M., Dugard, P., Gabbanelli, C., Arnetoli, M.,

Beconcini, G., Botindari, L., Grifoni, F., Paoli, P., & Poggesi, F. (2016). The Relationship

Between Group Identification and Satisfaction with Life in a Cross-Cultural Community

Sample. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *18*(3), 785–807. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-016-

9735-z

Watson, S. (2022, November 13). *What Is Cisgender?* WebMD. https://www.webmd.com/a-to-z-

guides/cisgender-overview

Whipp L. (2017, February 3). Made-up men reflect changing $50bn male grooming industry. *Financial

Times*. Retrieved from https://www.ft.com/content/825e520c-c798-11e6-8f29-9445cac8966f

Whittler, T. (1989). The effects of actor's race in commercial advertising: review and extension. *Journal

of Advertising.* Vol. 20 Iss 1 pp 54 – 60

Whittler, T., DiMeo, J. (1991). Viewer's reaction to racial cues in advertising stimuli. *Journal of Advertising Research.* 31 (6): 37-46.

Wolin, L. D. (2003). Gender issues in advertising: An oversight synthesis of research:1970–2002. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 43, 111–129.

Appendices

Appendix A: Anova & Chi-square tests

Table C1

Analysis of Variance for Age

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	26.635	20	1.332	1.054	.402
Within Groups	224.833	178	1.263		
Total	251.467	198			

Table C2

Chi-Square Test – Frequency of Use

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	14.101(a)	12	.294
Likelihood Ratio	14.808	12	.252
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.153	1	.283
N of Valid Cases	199		

Note: (a) 8 cells (40.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .24.

Table C3

Chi-Square Test – Consumers' Gender Identity

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.445(a)	6	.751
Likelihood Ratio	4.296	6	.637
Linear-by-Linear Association	.279	1	.597
N of Valid Cases	199		

Note: (a) 4 cells (33.3%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .96.

Appendix B: Main study measurement instruments

Self-esteem items

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I feel satisfied with myself.	○	○	○	○	○
I see flaws in my appearance.	○	○	○	○	○
I can take a positive attitude toward myself.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel bad about how I look.	○	○	○	○	○
I like and accept myself right now.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I have equal value to other people.	○	○	○	○	○
I love, respect, and honour myself.	○	○	○	○	○
I have high self-esteem.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a great deal worse about my looks than I usually feel.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I look a great deal better than the average person looks.	○	○	○	○	○

Group identification items

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I can identify with one or more members of the group that was presented in the ad.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I belong somewhere.	○	○	○	○	○
I see myself as quite different from the other members of the group.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that being a member of this group is an important part of how I see myself.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel a bond with this group.	○	○	○	○	○
I don't think of this group as part of who I am.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel represented by this ad.	○	○	○	○	○
I have a sense of belonging to this group.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel there are more people like me.	○	○	○	○	○
I do not fit in well with the other members of this group.	○	○	○	○	○

Brand image items

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
This brand was presented in an appealing way.	○	○	○	○	○
This brand was presented in a likable way.	○	○	○	○	○
This brand was presented in an unpleasant way.	○	○	○	○	○
This brand was presented as one of high quality.	○	○	○	○	○
My opinion about this brand is negative.	○	○	○	○	○
This brand was presented as a good one.	○	○	○	○	○

Purchase intention items

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I am positive towards buying this product.	○	○	○	○	○
I have the intention of buying this product.	○	○	○	○	○
I will buy products that are advertised by this brand on the near future.	○	○	○	○	○
I do not intend to acquire products that are promoted by this brand.	○	○	○	○	○
Advertisements from this brand have a positive influence on my purchase decisions.	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix C: KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO and Bartlett's Test

|		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.893
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3074.606
	df	465
	Sig.	.000

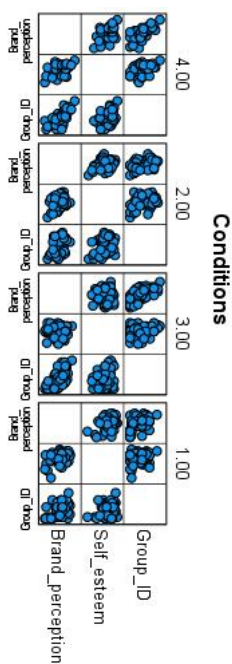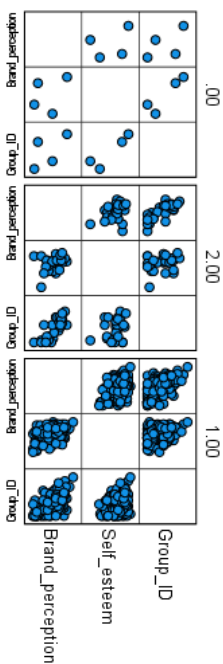***Appendix D: Tests of normality and linearity***

Table D1

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov(a)			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Brand perception	.094	184	.000	0.969	184	.000
Self-esteem	.096	199	.000	0.956	199	.000
Group identification	.09	186	.001	0.962	186	.000

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction
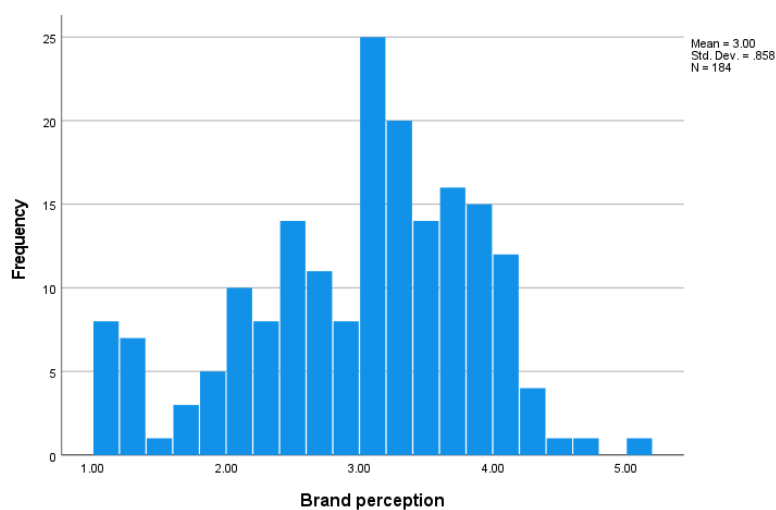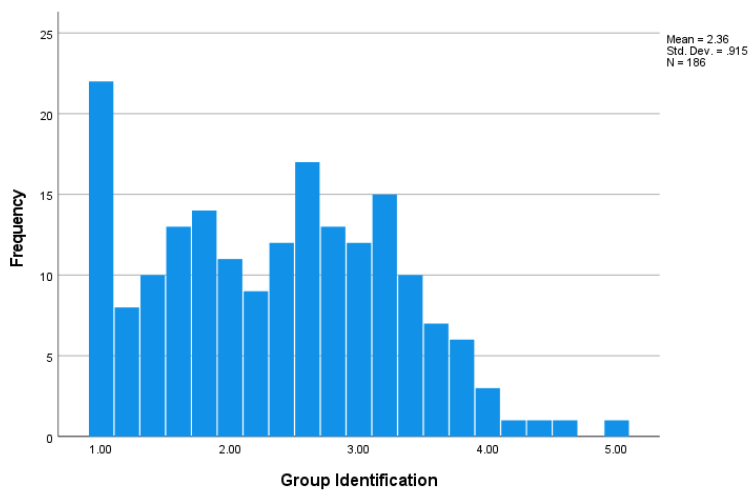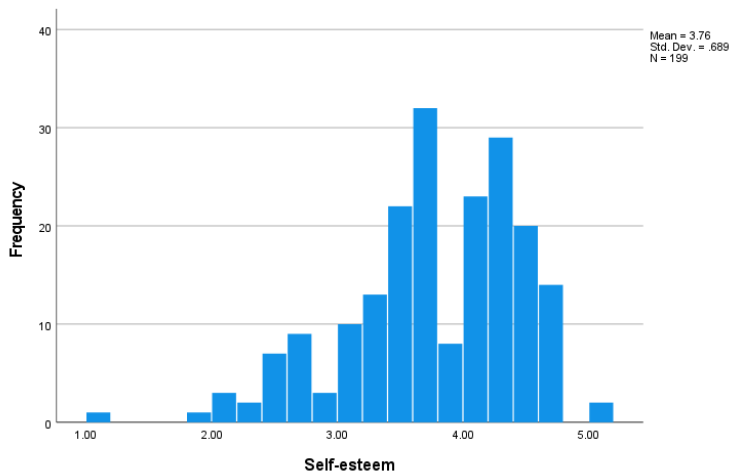
Tests of Linearity

Appendix E: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances

Table E1

Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices(a)	
Box's M	27.162
F	1.463
df1	18
df2	110201.161
Sig.	0.092

Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + Body diversity + Gender diversity + Body diversity * Gender diversity

Table E2

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances (a)

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
Brand perception	Based on Mean	2.586	3	180	.055
	Based on Median	2.351	3	180	.074
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.351	3	168.812	.074
	Based on trimmed mean	2.568	3	180	.056
Self-esteem	Based on Mean	1.199	3	180	.312
	Based on Median	0.887	3	180	.449
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0.887	3	159.179	.449
	Based on trimmed mean	1.092	3	180	.354
Group identification	Based on Mean	0.153	3	180	.928
	Based on Median	0.106	3	180	.957
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	0.106	3	163.768	.957
	Based on trimmed mean	0.18	3	180	.910

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

(a) Design: Intercept + Body_diversity + Gender_diversity + Body_diversity * Gender_diversity