

THE GENDER OF SHAVING  
The Depiction of Gender Roles and Stereotypes in  
Gillette's Advertisements

Bachelor's thesis  
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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Sukupuoliroolit ja niiden muutokset ovat nykypäivänä yhä suuremmassa roolissa. Sukupuoliroolit ovat myös selkeästi nähtävillä mainonnassa. Tässä tutkielmassa tarkastellaan kolmea Gilleten mainoskuvaa, tarkoituksena analysoida niissä näkyviä sukupuolirooleja ja stereotyyppioita joita sukupuoleen usein liitetään. Tutkimuksessa on käytetty tukena etenkin Fairclough’n ja Kressin ja Van Leeuwenin teorioita mainosanalyysistä, sekä tarkemmin Goffmanin ja Litosselin töitä analysoitaessa sukupuolirooleja näissä valituissa mainoksissa.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on vastata kysymyksiin siitä, millaisia sukupuolirooleja näissä mainoksissa on nähtävillä, sekä myös arvioida sitä millainen merkitys näiden sukupuoliroolien olemassaololla on näissä mainoskuvissa. Mainosanalyysin perusteella voidaan sanoa, että sukupuoliroolit ovat yhä hyvin vahvasti läsnä mainoskuvissa. Yksi tärkeimmistä huomioista tässä tutkimuksessa oli se, että naiset yleensä kuvataan hyvin feminiinisessä roolissa, ja miehet maskuliinisessa roolissa. Miehet ja naiset siis kuvataan vahvasti toisensa vastakohtina. Voidaan siis sanoa, että vaikka mainonta ja mainokset ovat vuosien varrella kehittyneet, ovat sukupuoliroolit silti hyvin vahvasti läsnä mainoskuvissa.</p>	
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Gender roles are being examined more and more each day – whether in a subtle way or an explicit way, they are incorporated in several aspects in our lives. They might be present in the way one dresses (or how society expects them to dress), or how their family dynamics are constructed. A good example of gender roles and their impact on clothing is the expectation that only women are allowed to wear skirts or dresses, whereas men wearing them is often seen as something deviating from the norm or even unnatural. Gender roles can also be seen in one's home life. It might be assumed that the woman stays home while the husband is at work, thus creating the idea that women have to be taken care of, and men are the ones doing that.

In recent years, gender roles and their boundaries have begun to blur, allowing people to express themselves more freely and thus creating more accepting spaces. Gender roles and stereotypes are present in the public discussion often. For instance, in December 2020, pop star Harry Styles became the first man to ever appear on the cover of *Vogue* magazine. This caused a controversy that was played out in opinion pieces and social media. The debate centered mostly around how Styles was wearing a dress in the cover picture. Conservatives decried the downfall of the traditional image of a man – *traditional* here meaning the idea of a strong, masculine, and emotionless man that has been present since the 1950s or so. One of the most vocal opinions that was voiced about this issue was made by Candace Owens on Twitter, where she condemned the cover image by making a correlation between effeminate men and Marxism, calling the cover “an outright attack”, and expressing the need to “Bring back manly men” (Owens, 2020). On the other hand, however, many have praised Styles and *Vogue* for helping to redefine gender roles and stereotypes, renouncing the traditional ideas that have been associated with gender and choosing to celebrate the changing ideas instead. Therefore, while society has developed and progressed in the matter of gender roles and their depiction, it is cases such as this where one is able to see how deeply rooted these ideas are.

Gender and gender roles, as well as their role in advertising, have been studied several times in the past. Despite the already existing research in this field, it is important to recognize that the perceptions on gender and gender roles are constantly changing and being reassessed. The previously mentioned Styles' *Vogue* cover is a prime example of that. The cover of a magazine is essentially an advertisement for that publication. The cover inverted the norms often seen in advertising, providing an example of how society perceptions around gender roles and gender representation. Thus, current research in this field is always needed, especially the research focusing on current advertisements.

Researching current advertisements allows the field to also study the possible changes happening in advertisements over the years and how gender roles are portrayed in advertisements. Gender roles in advertising have been extremely traditional and even old-fashioned in the past, but in recent years that has seemed to slowly change.

The present research attempts to investigate gender roles and their construction, while also discussing the impact that those gender roles in advertising can have. This study first introduces some important works done on advertisement analysis, as well as presenting research on gender and gender roles and their relation to advertisements. After introducing those key works, the data for this study will be presented, along with the research questions. The study will then move on to the analysis of the chosen advertisements, discussing each one of them individually. After the analysis section, the study will then discuss the findings and their implications.

## **2 GENDER IN ADVERTISING**

### **2.1 Advertisement analysis**

The basis of this study is advertisement analysis, which is why it is in place to introduce the key concepts that are related to that field. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the analysis of the relations between discourse and other elements, while addressing the social wrongs present in those discourses and giving possible ways of righting those wrongs (Fairclough, 2010). CDA aims to analyze aspects that go beyond the text itself, to study the discursive practices that are related to the one at hand, while also examining social issues and social power relations (Litosseliti, 2006).

The term *discourse* has been defined in several different ways over the years, the definition varying on the context where the concept is being used. Fairclough (1993: 3) has defined discourse as being “extended samples of spoken dialogue”, “extended samples of either spoken or written language”, and “interaction between speaker and addressee or between writer and reader”. Discourses construct a meaning to how one sees the world, as well as represent a particular viewpoint or value (Litosseliti, 2006). In doing so, the values and viewpoints a discourse represents influence the way one thinks about the world.

When analyzing advertisements, visual grammar is a useful tool. Visual grammar describes how depicted elements – such as people, places and things – combine in visual statements (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) have also provided a useful tool in analyzing an image's compositional elements, those being information value, salience, and framing. In addition to their studies, Cook (2001) has also studied the composition of advertisements, discussing the materials that advertisements are constructed from (such as substance, language, and narratives). Cook's (2001) research provides guidelines on how to analyze advertisements in their contexts. Through examining different advertisements, Cook (2001) also provides a list of characteristics that are typical for advertisements. His work can be used in analyzing the linguistic and visual elements in advertising, as well as in analyzing advertisements in which both of those elements occur together. Cook (2001) has also done important work on studying the connotations that are associated with different linguistic elements. For example, he found that using a different language (in this case French and Italian) in advertising a perfume creates positive connotations and the consumer might be more likely to buy the product (Cook, 2001).

## **2.2 Language and gender**

Because this study examines and analyses gender roles, it is relevant to first define what is meant by gender and gender roles. According to the World Health Organization (2020), gender “refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, attributes and opportunities that any society considers appropriate for girls and boys, and women and men”. The WHO also acknowledges that gender does not equal biological sex. For example, according to Litosseliti (2006), sex is physiological and gender is a cultural or social construct. Gender role, according to ScienceDirect (2020) is a term that refers to the behaviors, attitudes, and traits that are associated with being either male or female. Thus, gender and gender roles are not inherently connected to one another. For the purposes of this study, it is also important to note that the following analysis will be discussing gender in binary terms, meaning that the discussions and findings will be focusing on only two genders (them being men and women).

The way in which a person uses language has an impact who they are – language does not only reflect social reality, but it also constructs that reality (Litosseliti, 2006). According to Ehrlich et al. (2014), it has been found that men and women actively construct and maintain masculinity and femininity while telling stories, for example. Typical aspects in men's speech are features such as avoiding personal information, using taboo language and having an emotional restraint (Ehrlich et al., 2014). Goddard's (1998) studies support that, claiming that men stereotypically swear more than women,

the idea being that swearing is considered manly and something that women do not do. However, a more recent finding suggests that this imbalance has disappeared in recent years, with women using the f-word as often as men (Love, 2016).

According to Artz et al. (1999: 1), every utterance can be categorized as “gender-neutral, gender-specific, or gender-biased”. These three each slightly differ from one another. Gender-neutral has been defined as not referring to any gender. Gender-specific, contrastingly, has been defined as referring to one gender in a non-biased manner. Lastly, gender-bias has been defined as having several forms, such as excluding a gender, conveying biased connotations, or implicating irrelevant evaluations of a gender (Artz et al., 1999). In the same manner, advertising language incorporates language in one of those three ways (Artz et al., 1999). In the same vein, Cook (2001) found that the advertised product and its target audience often leads to the usage of words with specific connotations – different words are used depending on the gender of the target audience.

### **2.3 The role of gender in advertising**

One of the most prominent works done on gender representation in advertising has been done by Goffman (1979). He has identified patterns in the representation of gender stereotypes in advertisements and then placed the same types of advertisements in different categories of how genders are represented in those advertisements. The most relevant categories in relation to this study are relative size, the ritualization of subordination, the feminine touch, function ranking, and licensed withdrawal (Goffman, 1979). Relative size is referring to the depiction of men as physically larger or taller than women. The ritualization of subordination means that one is physically lowering themselves, thus indicating inferiority to the other participant. Relative size can also be used in the same manner. The feminine touch is referring to the way women are often pictured only tracing or lightly touching objects, rather than holding it. Function ranking is the depiction of a man in a higher or more important profession or role. Lastly, licensed withdrawal refers to the way in which women are often psychologically removed from the social situation they are in, often done via covering their face or averting their gaze elsewhere. Many advertisements often belong into several of these categories.

Advertisements play an important role in constituting identities (Litosseliti, 2006). Advertising acts as a mirror for the social and cultural trends that are present at the time, which means that the older

advertisements that might now seem outdated, actually did fit into the society and its views on gender and gender roles (Litosseliti, 2006). Although advertising and its representation of gender has changed over the years, advertisements still persistently use gender stereotyping, but in subtler ways (Litosseliti, 2006). A continuing theme in advertising, for example, is to present a woman in a somehow passive or sexual pose, with the focus on their breasts, legs or back. Men, on the other hand, are presented as being active and non-sexual, as well as appearing hostile (Litosseliti, 2006).

### **3 DATA AND METHODS**

The aim of the study is to investigate how gender roles are constructed in advertising and what type of impact those roles might have on the perceiver. My research questions are:

- 1) What gender roles can be seen in Gillette's advertisements and how are they constructed?

Gender roles are present in many, if not most places in society. Their presence can be seen from the justice system (for example the tendency for mothers to win the custody of the children in divorce cases because of the stereotyping of women as caregivers and the traditional role of a stay-at-home mothers) to family structures and from mass media (such as films or television shows) to smaller advertisements. Gender roles can thus be present in places where one might not expect them. In addition, advertisements are also everywhere. We see them every time we go outside, and when not, social media is full of them (with them being even more personalized than before). It is important to understand the presence of gender roles and how they are constructed in advertisements in order to see whether they are constructed in the same way as they have been in previous research.

- 2) What do these advertisements contribute to gender roles?

Advertisements often either reinforce the already existing gender roles or stereotypes that are prevalent in society, or in contrast they choose to challenge or break those roles or stereotypes. Challenging gender roles in media has become more common but reinforcing them still seems to be the norm. The impact of reinforcing gender roles nowadays can be seen as being old-fashioned, since society progresses and develops all the time – people change, ideas about gender and gender expression change, so holding on to traditional gender roles in advertising (as well as elsewhere in



the media) can have negative effects. Representing gender in a particular way can be a powerful tool, since those representations shape one's understanding of what "normal" is (Ehrlich et al., 2014).

In the present study, the data consists of three print advertisements from Gillette – two advertisements are directed at men, and two directed at women (the *Venus* line). The data was gathered by exploring the web page of the company to see what kinds of products they sell to women and men, and then the advertisements for those products were gathered from the internet (the website of Gillette and Gillette Venus). Gillette is one of the largest razor companies in the world, with the brand value \$14.5 billion (Forbes, 2020). Gillette is an American company, which means that these advertisements are likely to reflect Western cultures and values. That being said, Gillette's products are sold all over the world and thus their advertisements have a world-wide reach as well, and in effect they impact people from all over the world. I chose these advertisements as my data because I found it interesting that Gillette chooses to advertise essentially the same product (razors) in such a different way depending on the perceived gender of the target group and even the target body part (meaning the part that supposedly needs the razor – the face or the legs) depending on the gender of the target group.

I will analyze my data by using the theoretical framework or visual grammar by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) to analyze the structure of the advertisements (the power relations between the characters in the advertisements, the relations of those characters to the viewer, the way the participants are arranged in the advertisement etc.). I will study how those structural elements contribute to the construction of gender roles, and I will analyze those elements using Litosseliti's (2006) ideas on representation of gender and gender ideologies.

## 4 ANALYSIS SECTION

### Advertisement 1

In the first advertisement (see Figure 1) the viewer can see a man in the middle of the image, and a woman on the left side. The man is looking in the mirror while shaving, and the viewer is able to see both the man's back and face, but only able to see the woman's reflection on the mirror. In the center of the image, there is a text that says "Notice how much she wants to kiss you since you switched razors? You're welcome.". The advertised product (a razor) is presented in the bottom left corner, with the text "Less irritation, even on sensitive skin". Gillette's logo is on the bottom right corner,

and it is accompanied by the company's slogan, "The best a man can get". The advertisement was released in 2013. In this advertisement, there are several gender roles or stereotypes present: physical size differences, contrasting body language, performing an action, and linguistic elements.



Figure 1. Advertisement for Gillette razor aimed at men.

The way in which the participants of the advertisement are placed, is in and of itself a representation of traditional gender roles. According to Goffman (1979), presenting the man physically larger or taller than the woman in the advertisement creates the illusion of the man being in a dominant position, thus being more “powerful” in the scene that is presented in the advertisement. This is true in this particular advertisement as well. The man is clearly physically bigger than the woman, and the way they are positioned in the advertisement makes the woman appear smaller than the man because she is further away. The participants’ body language can also be seen as an implication of the underlying power dynamics. The two participants are in contrasting each other in the way that the man is standing up straight, with his chin pointed upwards, while the woman is leaning on the wall, her head pointed downwards. Goffman (1979) states that these characteristics are a way of signaling whether one is superior or inferior. Placing the woman in a position of this kind makes her seem inferior to the man. Portraying the participants in this manner reinforces traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes, which place the woman in a weaker position.

According to Goffman (1979), as well as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), it appears that when an advertisement presents a man and a woman, the man is usually the one performing an action –

essentially, he is doing something. This can be seen in this advertisement as well because the man is shaving, while the woman can be seen in a more passive role, just observing the man instead of doing anything. This contributes to the stereotype of the idea that the man is the provider and the woman is more passive, as if she is an object that can be taken advantage of (Litosseliti 2006). Goffman's (1979) findings support this, as he found that men are more often seen as taking the executive and commanding role in advertisements. This advertisement presents the two participants in a very contrasting manner, clearly picturing them as opposites of each other, which is a common theme in advertising. Gender polarization focuses on men and women being inherently different from each other (Litosseliti 2006). Placing men and women in these specific, even strict boxes can make the viewer believe that this is how a man or a woman should be, thus reinforcing ideas of traditional gender roles and gender expressions.

The linguistic element of the advertisement is in the center of the image. It says "Notice how much she wants to kiss you since you switched razors? You're welcome" From this piece of text the viewer is able to interpret several things. Firstly, the text is written in a casual manner, it addresses the viewer directly (which can be seen from the use of the word "you", which is done several times in this short text). However, it seems that the voice in the text belongs to a third party, which is not visually present in the advertisement itself. The voice seems to rather belong to a friend or another familiar person of the man in the advertisement. Because of the casual tone of the text, the viewer can be more likely to buy the product. The people of the advertisement seem to be closer, and thus the person viewing the advertisement might see the product in a more positive light. The content of the text itself, when combined with the casualness of the advertisement, acts as a reinforcement for gender stereotypes and norms. The tone of the text presents the woman as something desirable; one could even say that she is more of an object. The text suggests that if the person (specifically a man, since the advertisement is directed towards men) seeing this advertisement also buys this product, he will also be seen as attractive to women, and thus women want to be with him (or *kiss him* as the text says). This aspect reinforces traditional gender roles because the woman is seen as a some kind of price that men are after - thus giving the woman no possibility of choice, but rather the decision is made without her consent or input. The woman in this advertisement exists solely *for men*, which is a clear depiction of traditional gender roles.

## **Advertisement 2**

In the second advertisement (see figure 2), there is a shirtless man standing in the middle of the image, and he is holding a razor in his right hand. His other arm is leisurely resting on what seems to be a table or a counter. Contrary to the previous advertisement, this image does not include a woman, and it seems that this advertisement does not take place in a bathroom, but instead in a trophy room of some kind, which can be deduced from the trophy shelves visible behind him. Above the man there is a text that says “Start your story. Start with attitude.”, and in the bottom left corner there is a picture of the product that is being advertised. As it was in the previous advertisement, the company logo can be seen in the bottom right corner, as well as the company slogan. The advertisement was published in 2018. Similarly with the previous advertisement, this advertisement also depicts both specific and more general traditional gender roles and stereotypes, those being traditionally masculine physical appearance and body language.



Figure 1. Advertisement for Gillette razor aimed at men.

The way the man is positioned in the image implies several things: he is standing in the center of the image, in a way he is the most important object in the room, overpowering his background, even when objects behind him are lit up. This contributes to the stereotype that men are inherently more important and powerful than everything else that exists in the same space. Even the position in which he stands supports that - his body language consists of straight lines and sharp angles, both of which symbolize concepts, (such as honesty and straightness – in the sense of both physical shapes as well

as heterosexuality), which are typically associated with men, or more broadly, with masculinity (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The way in which his hand is resting on the counter also depicts certain aspects of masculinity. Rather than lightly resting his hand on the counter with an open palm (which is how women are typically presented doing), he is instead depicted with a closed fist, as if he is almost grabbing the object.

In addition to his position in this advertisement, it is important to also note his appearance and how that also plays into the depiction of gender roles in this advertisement. One of the first things that the viewer is able to see, is the fact that the man is shirtless (a similarity with the first advertisement), and one can see that he is thin, muscular and has tattoos on his left arm. He is wearing jewelry (a necklace, earring, and rings), and seems to be wearing dress trousers. These aspects together create an image of an ideal man - he is physically strong and in good shape and is wearing jewelry which suggests that he is also wealthy. Tattoos (while they have been widely destigmatized, especially in the West), create a sense of intimidation and a certain toughness. These qualities are often associated with the notion of what a man is *supposed* to be like. However, the image that this advertisement (as well as advertising as a whole) depicts is often precisely what it is: an ideal, and thus it does not depict reality. This false depiction, however, is used as the company's advantage. When a viewer sees a man looking like this using this specific product, the viewer is tricked into thinking that using this product will help them to also become this 'perfect' man. Gender roles are thus used as a marketing tactic, and while they might help the company to succeed in selling their product, at the same time they contribute to the reinforcement of traditional ideas about gender, and especially masculinity.

The linguistic element of this advertisement is much shorter than the one in the previously analyzed advertisement. The text addresses the viewer directly ("Start *your* story"), and that combined with the fact that the man in the advertisement is looking directly at the camera, creates an illusion that the man in the advertisement is talking to the viewer. However, the tone is more formal, as the text is in imperative form. According to Downing (2014), the speech acts containing imperative clauses are often understood as conveying a command. The commanding tone of the text shows the man in a dominant position, which is a contributing factor to traditional gender roles that often depict men as more commanding and assertive than women. The form of the sentences themselves is also typical in advertisements that are directed towards men. The sentences are short, there are no extra adjectives or adverbs, and the whole text is written in the same font (another similarity with the previous advertisement).

### Advertisement 3

In the third and last advertisement (see figure 3) the most space is taken by a smiling woman, who is on her back with her legs stretched above her and her arms supporting her back – the position might be trying to resemble a yoga pose. There are three different pieces of text in this advertisement - on the top left corner one can see the Gillette Venus logo, in the middle of the image there is a text that says “Smooth. Flexible. Beautifully contoured.”, and on the bottom right corner there is a text that says, “Razors made just like you.” On the woman’s right side there is a picture of three razors. However, this advertisement does not advertise one specific model or type of razor, but the company’s line of razors for women, i.e. Gillette Venus. The advertisement was released in 2017.

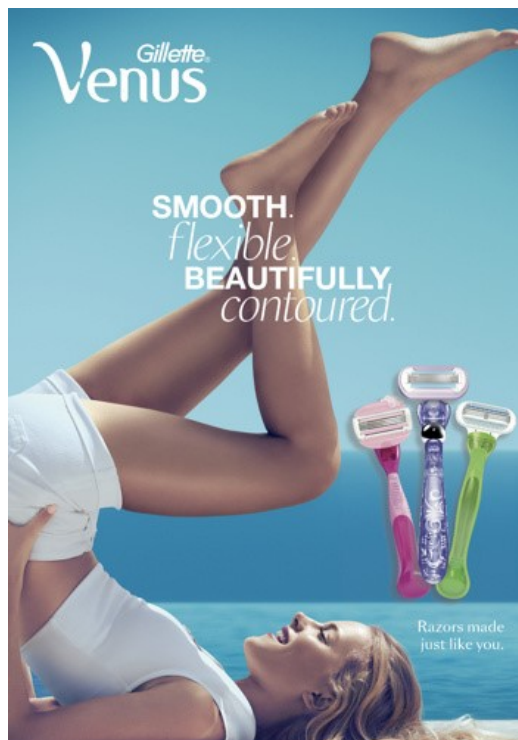


Figure 2. Advertisement for Gillette razor aimed at women.

The difference between this advertisement and the two previous ones is extremely clear - the product is essentially the same, but the target group changes the advertising style completely. This advertisement has a clearly lighter color scheme, with whites and light blues (whereas the two previous advertisements had much darker colors, such as dark blue, grey, and black), and the overall tone of this advertisement is much more relaxed than in the previous two. The gender roles that can be seen in this advertisement are the representation of the woman in a less dominant and passive manner, the more visual, as well as descriptive nature of the linguistic elements.

The gender roles and stereotypes in this advertisement are clear, and they are present in several different aspects in the advertisement. Firstly, one can observe the way she is positioned in the advertisement. Unlike in the two previous advertisements in which the characters were standing up, this advertisement depicts her on the ground – a position which makes her seem less dominant when compared to the men in the previous advertisements. Furthermore, placing her in this position does not make sense when one looks at the product that is being advertised. She is not using the product or even holding it (as was the case previously), instead she seems to be the representation of the beauty that the product can bring. It seems that the advertisement is focusing on beauty, delicateness and femininity. Her body is in a curved position, which, according to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) is essentially a trait that is associated with traditionally feminine features (such as pregnancy, warmth, and protectiveness). Moreover, her legs are bent at the knee (one only slightly, the other almost at a 90-degree angle), which is a trait that is more common in women than in men in advertising (Goffman, 1979). Smiling is the same, as women are more often depicted smiling in advertisements than men, an aspect which is true in these three advertisements as well. The men do not smile, and women do. This is one of the most prominent depictions of gender roles. Men and women are depicted as complete opposite of one another. Men are inherently masculine, tough and serious, whereas women are feminine and smiley.

The linguistic element of this advertisement is also noticeably different from the previous two. The text consists of mostly adjectives, and the company has used at least three different types of fonts in the writing. The words “smooth” and “beautifully” are in the same font, the words “flexible” and “contoured” are in a different font, and finally the sentence “Razors made just like you.” is also in a different font. The reason behind using different fonts in this advertisement might be to appeal to the target audience (women), because the fonts are used in a visually appealing manner. It is thus extremely stereotyped, since the advertisement assumes that women find ‘pretty things’ appealing and thus might be more likely to buy their products. The way in which the text is selling the product is clearly different in nature than the way it was done in the two previous advertisements. In this advertisement the text reassures the viewer that they are already beautiful as they are, thus creating a sense of similarity between the product and the potential buyer. The advertisement asks the question “If you are so similar, why would you not buy this product?”. In the advertisements that were directed towards men (see figures 1 and 2), the texts in a way promised a prize to the person buying the product. The text was thus more of a demand for action, rather than a question.

## 5 DISCUSSION

In these advertisements, there were no attempts to break traditional gender stereotypes, but they rather reinforced gender roles and stereotypes that are present in western society. Although, for example, Litosseliti (2006) has stated that extreme gender stereotyping has greatly subsided over the years, one is still able to see those stereotypes represented in these advertisements. The gender roles in these advertisements in particular were not difficult to notice. The way in which the same product was advertised in two extremely contrasting ways was even shocking to see when these advertisements were put side by side. When comparing these advertisements to Goffman's (1979) findings and the advertisements that he analyzed, one is able to see many differences but even more similarities even though time has passed from the release of the advertisements that he analyzed. In previous advertisements, it was common to place the woman quite literally in the kitchen, taking care of children and performing acts of service for the man (if one was present in the advertisement). These types of advertisements are not as common nowadays.

As previously mentioned, gender roles and their depiction in advertisements has changed in the past decades. However, the fact that the analyzed advertisements were released within the last ten years is quite concerning. Gender roles can still be quite clear in advertisements, as one can see from the analysis. In the case of Gillette, this aspect is particularly interesting because the company has attempted to deviate from those ideas and redefine themselves with the "The best a man can be" advertising campaign in 2019. The campaign took a stance on toxic masculinity, showing support for the #MeToo movement and thus attempted to redefine the ideas about gender and gender roles that the company has showed in their advertisements in the past. After the campaign's release, it sparked the same types of discussions that the Styles' *Vogue* cover did. People expressed their anger, disappointment, and many even proclaimed that they will not support the brand any longer.

When discussing these advertisements, one has to acknowledge that in all of these images, the use of sex is prevalent in the attempt to sell this product. This can be seen in the way that the men are shirtless (even when they do not necessarily have to be, as was the case in the second advertisement), and the fact that women are either depicted as a prize that only exist for men, or they have been pictured by showing them in clothes that do not cover their arms or legs (sometimes they are both of these things - showing skin while also being depicted as the "prize"). Objectifying both men and women and their bodies in order to sell a product is also a contribution to the reinforcement of gender



stereotypes. Showing only perfect bodies creates unrealistic expectations of how a person of a certain gender should look and thus can help create harmful mindsets and ideas.

It can be argued that gender roles are used as a marketing tactic, and while they might help the company to succeed in selling their product, at the same time they contribute to the reinforcement of traditional ideas about gender, and especially masculinity. The company takes advantage of the consumer's insecurities and uses them to sell the idea of a better life, a better version of oneself. Using gender roles in this manner is extremely harmful, since they can help create unhealthy attitudes and mindsets about how a person of a certain gender should act or look. When discussing marketing, one must also consider the position that Gillette is in. Gillette has a worldwide reach with their advertisements. Using them as a marketing tactic can also be a question of ethics, especially nowadays. If a company purposefully makes the decision to market their products in a manner which is harmful in several different levels, one must question their motives behind those decisions.

## **6 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this study was to discover which gender roles could be seen in these advertisements, how they were constructed, and what contributions did these advertisements have to gender roles. The most reoccurring gender roles in these advertisements were depicting women in a passive role, while depicting men in a dominant and active role. Women were also associated with traits that are often seen as explicitly feminine (those being depicted as smiling, submissive physically smaller or weaker), and men were contrastingly associated with traits that are explicitly masculine (being physically strong, dominant, and not showing emotion). The focus on these traits was the key element in the construction of gender roles in these advertisements: men and women were depicted as complete opposites from each other. Placing the two in different ends of a spectrum is a powerful tool in creating ideas of gender that might even be constricting, and in doing so these advertisements create certain expectations of how a particular gender should be expressed or represented.

In previous research (Goffman, 1979, Litosseliti, 2006), it has been established that gender roles indeed are present in today's advertising images. This study supports the studies done previously on this topic, since gender roles could be found in the analyzed advertisements. The results of this study might be of interest to those who are interested in gender studies, or in the study of advertisements as a whole. This study might also be of use to researchers who are studying the same topic. The current study could inspire more researchers into studying gender roles and how they are present in

advertising, as well as possibly in other forms of media, such as television, film or even music. The results of this study could be used in a similar study as this – gender roles in advertising images. The results could be used as a reference or a comparison tool if similar results are found in the advertisements of another company or product.

One limitation of this study is that the analysis could have consisted of even fewer advertisements, as it would have allowed the analysis to be even in more depth. The advertisements had enough content that a thorough analysis would have been possible with fewer images. The strengths of this study are the fact that most findings are backed up by previous research, as well as the fact that these three advertising images had enough relevant content that could be analyzed. The topic of this study is also extremely relevant, as ideas about gender and gender roles are constantly changing and developing.

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