'UNEXPECTED AND UNDENIABLY BOLD' – MASCULINE PRESENTATIONS IN MEN'S FRAGRANCE DESCRIPTIONS

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Abstract

Kielenkäytön ja sukupuolen yhteyksiä on tutkittu useasta näkökulmasta, ja tutkimuksien tuloksia on hyödynnetty myös mainonnan saralla. Kuluttajakulttuuri on nyt vallitsevampi kuin koskaan ennen, ja brändit kehittävät jatkuvasti uusia ideoita ja taktiikoita, joilla vaikuttaa kuluttajien käyttäytymiseen, ajatteluprosesseihin ja siihen, mitä pidämme tärkeänä. Kieli on yksi tärkeimmistä työkaluista, joita ihmiset käyttävät viestien välittämiseen ja vastaanottamiseen, joten on luonnollista, että brändit käyttävät tietyntyyppistä kieltä houkutellakseen asiakkaita ostamaan tuotteitaan.

Tässä tutkimuksessa käsittelin kielen ja sukupuolen välisiä yhteyksiä ja analysoin Sephora.com- sivuston myydyimpien miesten hajuvesien tuoksu kuvauksia. Tavoitteeni oli saada selville käyttävätkö hajuvesibrändit tuoksujen kuvauksissa sukupuolittunutta kieltä, minkälaista mieskuvaa hajusteiden kuvaukset rakentavat ja miten maskuliinisuus tulee esiin eri sanavalinnoissa. Analyysissäni hyödynsin kriittistä diskurssianalyysiä, tekstianalyysiä ja sosiokulttuuristen rakenteiden analyysiä.

Lajittelin datan neljään pääkategoriaan tekstin sisällöstä esille tulleen teeman perusteella. Tutkimuksestani selvisi, että hajuvesibrändit käyttävät sukupuolittuneita sanavalintoja, jotka korostavat maskuliinisuutta eri tavoilla. Maskuliinisia kuvia tuotiin esiin mm. luontoon liittyvillä metaforilla ja kuvauksilla. Seksuaalisuutta kuvattiin mm. viittaamalla kreikkalaisiin jumaliin ja käyttämällä adjektiivejä, jotka johdattelevat lukijan luomaan tietynlaisia mielikuvia. Menestystä kuvattiin sanavalinnoilla, jotka viittasivat rahaan, itsenäisyyteen, itsevarmuuteen ja rohkeuteen. Hajusteissa maskuliinisuus tuotiin esiin hyvin stereotyyppisillä kuvauksilla, jotka vahvistavat jo kauan historiassa kehittynyttä ajatusta siitä, mikä on maskuliinista ja mikä ei. Osa datasta sisälsi myös hyvin neutraalia kielenkäyttöä, joka ei erityisesti nostanut esiin maskuliinisuutta, vaan kuvaustekstit keskittyivät kertomaan, mistä hajuveden tuoksu koostuu. Tutkimuksen tuloksista kävi ilmi, että vaikka sukupuolineutraalisuus on yleistynyt viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana, miesten kosmetiikkatuotteet keskittyvät silti vahvasti markkinointi tapaan, joka korostaa maskuliinisia piirteitä ja ns. maskuliinista ihannetta.

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1   INTRODUCTION

The demand for men's cosmetic products has been on the rise for the past decade thanks to social media and wider acceptance of gender expression (Huba 2020). Regardless of this, men's consumer behaviours around cosmetics have not been studied in much detail in the field of advertising discourse. Companies are constantly exploring better ways how to make men gravitate towards the cosmetic market and thus expand their customer base, which offers a lot of content for interesting research.

The present study sets out to analyse the word choices used in the scent descriptions of men's fragrances. I became motivated to research this topic after browsing different online stores when I noticed that many fragrances created very strong imagery through the descriptions. I also noticed that previous studies that have researched fragrances and fragrance marketing have focused on multimodal aspects of the products and/or fragrance commercials and not just on the word choices. It became clear to me that the men's cosmetics area has a lot to discover in terms of linguistic research, which is why I wanted to focus on that. My data includes 15 fragrance descriptions, which consist of 2-4 lines of descriptive text of the ingredients and inspirations for the scent of the fragrance. The data was collected from a popular online cosmetics store called Sephora.com and analysed using Fairclough's (2003) text analysis and sociocultural analysis.

In the following chapters, I will first introduce the theoretical background, and previous studies that have contributed to similar research. I will cover topics such as language and gender in a more general level, and then move on to more specific aspects of masculinity, masculine language, and advertising. After that I will introduce the research questions, method of analysis and the data. And lastly, in chapters 5 and 6 I will present my analysis and results.

2   LANGUAGE AND GENDER

Gender is not something we are born with, but something we do (West & Zimmerman 1987, as quoted by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013: 1). People start practising certain gender as a child by copying their parents and other role models. This can be seen as small boys walking and talking like their father or a small girl trying to walk in her mother's heels. This way people learn to *perform* gender. However, this doesn't mean that the children will continue to perform their gender the same way as an adult, but their behaviours might still contain small elements of their childhood performances. It is not only the individuals themselves that enforce gendered practises, but also other people around them. As Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013: 2) explain, if a boy child decides to copy his mother and try walking in high heels, there is a chance that other adults might not consider it 'cute', this is because even though everyone is allowed to perform any gender they want, there are also social constrains on who can perform certain types of gendered acts.

2.1   Gendered discourse

Language is a complex system of signs that form meaning, and gender is strongly embedded in these signs and the way they are used in communicative practises. For example, the third-person singular pronouns (she/her/hers & he/him/his) are traditionally used to reference to another person while presenting the individual as a specific gender (Eckert & McGonnell-Ginet 2013: 62). However, in modern discourse, it is not uncommon to see these feminine and masculine forms be used even on animals and inanimate objects, such as stuffed toys or house plants.

One can also sometimes see male presenting individuals use feminine pronouns on themselves and female presenting individuals use masculine pronouns, which shows that the use of gendered language is not always black and white, because it can vary

depending on the individual and their preference. This is because the definition of gender is so wide and often personal to each person.

In addition to masculine and feminine pronouns, the singular 'they' has been used in text as a neutral pronoun since 1375, when it first appeared in a medieval romance poem called 'William and the Werewolf'. The original text is written is Middle English, but in Modern English the poem verse goes:

> 'Each man hurried . . . till they drew near . . . where William and his darling were lying together.'

However, this form may have existed in speech long before it first appeared in text, which mean that the singular 'they' might have been common before the eighteenth century. *They* can be used to replace *he* and *she* when the gender of the word the pronoun is referring to is unknown, irrelevant, non-binary or where the gender needs to be concealed (Baron 2018).

2.1.1 Masculine and feminine speech patterns

Previous studies show that there are differences between how English-speaking men and women behave in communicative situations, for example women tend to use more cooperative strategies when engaging in conversation, utilising *supporting overlap* (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013: 116), meaning agreeing or completing the expected point that the speaker is trying to make (Truong 2013). On the contrary, men tend to use more competitive strategies, such as competitive banter, and in groups of men, they are more likely to establish a hierarchy of conversational dominance. It has also been found that when engaging in a conversation with a same-sex best friend, both sexes discuss similar topics like family activities, personal finances, friendship, religious, social, and political issues, work etc. Even though the topics are similar, the proportion which both sexes talk about each topic has shown a clear difference. Men talk more about sports, and less about their personal problems, doubts and fears, intimate relationships and family problems compared to women (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013:

116). However, it is important to point out that how people talk about certain topics may be affected by gendered expectations and personal responsibilities, which is why these statements should be approached critically and not taken as absolute truths about each sex. Mills' (2003: 185) explains that these types of hypothesised stereotypes are an important part of language assessment and analysis because they do give important insight on gendered behaviours that have been reinforced by society and institutions.

Men and women also tend to interact differently. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013: 116) explain that women are more likely to interact with their friends, both in person and through phone conversations, meanwhile men spend more time engaging in different activities with their close friends, which is not surprising considering how men have throughout history been rewarded for accomplishments, unlike women who have been rewarded for their personal attributes such as looks, personality, and morals. The need to prove themselves is also a reason why men often lean towards conversation topics like work, because it gives them a chance to bring up and highlight their accomplishments, that again is related to the issue of competition.

2.1.2 Word Choice

Lituchy & Wiswall (1991) explain that men and women's speech patterns also have differences in terms of word choices and intonation. Women have been found to use more intensifiers, which are adverbs or adverbial phrases that strengthen the meaning of other expressions and show emphasis such as 'most', 'better', 'very,' 'really'. Women also use more modals ('might', 'can', 'must', 'could', 'should') which are verbs that are used with another verb to express and idea such as a possibility (Cambridge dictionary).

When referring to men and women people can also use titles that seem fit for the person they are talking to/about, for example in a restaurant a customer refers to a male server as a 'waiter' and refers to a woman doing the same job as a 'waitress'. The same

principal can be used for other titles such a prince/princess, or actor/actress. The sex is assigned by using the suffix *–ess* to transform a masculine noun into a feminine one (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013: 62). Even though the use of the suffix *–ess* has been traditionally used to change the gender of nouns, it has become less visible in certain aspects of modern society due to the phenomena of gender neutrality. It is not uncommon to refer to a female presenting actress as an 'actor', or a waitress as a waiter just like their male colleagues. This raises a question of gender equality, since the 'neutral' form here is just using the masculine version for both sexes. This is the same idea as referring to the whole world population as 'men', or something being 'man-made' meaning something is made or caused by human beings. Gendered categories can also assign gender roles, for example words such as 'mother' and 'father' give the person a certain identity, which includes certain types of expected gender behaviours that the person is 'supposed to' perform. Mothers are stereotypically expected to be the warm, emotional home makers, while fathers are stereotypically seen as more distant, bread winners of the family. But these family role titles are not the only titles which carry stereotypes.

Gender directed swearwords and slurs also hold meanings that reinforce gender roles and gendered stereotypes. Kremin (2017) explains that women find slurs that imply that the woman is promiscuous or sexually loose to be the most offensive (e.g., slut, whore). This reinforces the gendered stereotype that it is more acceptable for men to have multiple sexual partners. However, it was also found that women find slurs that imply women being sexually withholding also offensive (e.g., prude). Despite the offensive nature of these slurs, some women have started use these words as terms of endearment in an effort to reclaim them as symbols of female power.

Men tend to be the most offended by slurs that devalue their masculinity, for example implying that they are too feminine or homosexual. This category of slurs comes from the belief that women and homosexual males are seen as devalued members of society. Men also find offensive slurs that suggest that they are not fulfilling the traditional gender roles by being physically unattractive or weak (e.g. wimp, jackass, wuss, bitch).

Interestingly, Kremin (2017) also mentions that studies have shown that men are more offended by slurs implying they are womanly (lesser members of society) than women are by slurs that imply they are manly (potentially better than their feminine peers). This is why understanding patriarchy and gender stereotypes is important when interpreting gender directed swearwords.

2.1.3 Politeness

Politeness is a key factor in creating harmonious social interactions, because it makes cooperating easier and strengthens the bond between people. Previous studies have shown that men and women have different expectations and social standards related to politeness, which reflects on their different communication styles. However, it is important to mention that these are generalizations since it is very difficult to create any universal claims related to gendered politeness because the relationship between gender and power is so complex. Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that not all dynamics of politeness are true to all persons (Burrow 2008). Sung (2011) brings up studies by mills' (2003, 2005) which explains that gender stereotyping can play a role on what is considered (im)polite behaviour, and how politeness is generally considered feminine and impoliteness as masculine.

Politeness is sometimes called 'making nice', which in the past was typically considered to be a part if 'ladylike language', but now niceness or considerateness is a central aspect of politeness in most situations and places. Polite language can be identified for example from the formal expression 'please', 'yes ma'am', 'yes sir', 'excuse me' etc. However, while these polite forms are generally used to create smooth human relations, they can also be used sarcastically. Sometime people can use these respectful terms just to appear as 'nice' people, even if their true feelings and intentions are not polite at all.

2.1.4 Assertiveness

For men, assertiveness is often related to the idea of being successful with relationships and 'making it' with women, in contrast to 'making nice' as mentioned earlier. However, being assertive does not mean to be a bully or to put other people down. Being (seen as) assertive involves being (seen as) confident and forceful in expressing own views, having goals in life and being (seen as) committed to those views and goals. Using assertive language is about trying to enhance one's own agency and the ability to influence other peoples' actions and ideas (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013: 142). Using assertive language can be beneficial for one's overall wellbeing and it can strengthen relationships, by reducing stress from possible conflict and drama, and by providing social support during difficult times. For example, a simple assertive 'No.' can help one maintain a balanced workload and keep a fully booked schedule at bay.

The different communication styles between men and women give an interesting insight into social norms that are currently in place, and how they have developed over time. Some aspects of older gendered discourse have remained into modern day, and it is interesting how these different aspects are visible in different genres of modern discourse, and not just in everyday conversations. In this thesis I investigated how gendered language is visible in men's fragrance descriptions and how these speech patterns can be used to market products and to create masculine imagery in a setting where the purpose is to pitch a product to a potential customer.

2.2 Masculinity

The term 'masculinity' is typically used to emphasize the qualities of being masculine, which is traditionally considered to be a characteristic of men. It is not a biological feature; it is more of a culturally defined characteristic that varies in meaning depending on the social contexts in which it appears in (Kimmel & Tissier-Desbordes 1999).

2.2.1 History of masculinity

To get an idea where the current definitions of masculinity strive from, one needs to look deeper into the history of masculinity and the social roles which defined the expectations for men. In the late nineteenth-century, the sex-differences between men and women became a hot topic, which created space for a lot of new research regarding mental capacities between the sexes all through 1890's to 1990's. This is because during the 1800's women were not allowed to attend universities due to their 'feminine mind' which was thought to be too weak to handle the hard academic work expected from the students. Men were thought to be more mentally strong and their capability to deal with academic pressure was thought to be superior compared to women. It was thought that the academic work would create disturbances in the women's brains which could hinder their capabilities to be good wives and mothers. Women were considered physically weaker, but morally superior to men, which is why women were considered more suitable for domestic life and taking care of the home (Hughes 2014).

However, after the first women graduated from a university in the United States in the 1830s (Cooper 2011: 23), researchers did a lot of tests to figure out the differences in mental capacities between the sexes, but they found very few. This result was considered quite scandalous for the time, which changed the outlook on the sex-differences that were in place during that time (Connell 2005: 21).

Around mid-century there was a collision between the sex-difference research and the concept of a 'social role', which created the idea of 'sex-roles'. Connell (2005) defines this as:

> being a man or a woman means enacting a general set of expectations which are attached to one's sex - the 'sex role' – (Connell 2005: 22)

This gives a more social understanding of gender than the previous solely psychological approach. The definitions of masculinity and femininity, and the expectations they carry with them, are a result of social learning. This relates to the idea presented by

Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013), that people learn to perform their gender by copying the actions and mannerism of their role models, such as parents.

In the 1800's, two important aspects of masculinity were strength and stoicism. Men would showcase their strength from an early age in schools by playing physical games, which in some places were made mandatory (e.g., 1800's England). Physical strength was also a wanted quality in men in case of war, since it was the men's responsibility to fight and defend (Jobbins 2017). Strength was also linked to education and mental strength due to the belief that 'in order to educate one's mind, one had to educate one's body'. However, it is important to note that masculinity during this time was very diverse and was affected by multiple aspects of society, such as domesticity, economy, gender roles, imperialism, manners, and religion. Men generally had a lot of pride in their work and a strong want to protect their wives and children, and an appreciation for good social behaviour (Victorian masculinity 2022). Because of their role as 'protectors', men were also considered the head of the household, which gave men power over the rest of the family. Many of these expectations are still visible in the modern times, which is why some consider the 1800's masculism as the foundation for modern culture and masculinity (Jobbins 2017).

2.2.2 Modern masculinity

Itulua-Abumere (2013: 45) explains how in modern sociology masculinity is understood to be socially and culturally constructed through engagement and interaction, and factors such as class, culture and ethnicity have an impact on how masculinity is shaped in different parts of society. For example, the idea that men are competitive, less emotionally available, and aggressive are thought to be reflected especially in the economic system. This relates to the historic idea of masculinity presented by Jobbins (2017) that men are supposed to be the protectors and providers for the family, and it is the men's responsibility to provide a respectable income for the family. Nowadays the gender limitations for work are no longer nearly as severe as before, and both women and men can earn a living for themselves. While family having a dual income

is also normal, in this modern setting the pressure for men's financial dominance still upholds.

Middleton (1992: 31) explains that boys and men are often represented in a very limited and emotionally distant way in modern entertainment, which sends an indirect message to men and boys on how they are supposed to act to be like the hyper masculine superheroes in science fictions. Middleton (1992: 31) uses an example from Batman (1990), where the villain (Joker) is presented as highly emotional and expressive character, who has green dyed hair, mauve suit, and wears lipstick. He smiles, laughs, and has high cheekbones that emphasize his facial expressions. In contrast to the villain, the hero (Batman) has a very traditionally masculine features, a strong square jaw, and he wears a mask that conceals his emotions and expressions. The only expression that can be seen is anger when he bares his teeth or parts his lips. It is common that heroic men's faces in these types of hypermasculine comics like The Batman, or The Superman are often expressionless, and even in the rare moments where happiness is expressed, it appears in a subtle way by slightly upturning the mouth.

2.2.3   Symbols of masculinity

The most recognizable symbol of masculinity is the 'men's suit', since it sends very particular messages about the male identity and its relationship to the male body. The suit is usually a boxy shape, that is tailored to each wearer, so it showcases the natural curves and contours of the body. It also works to unify the male bodies as visually singular, making the masculine visual a cohesive entity. It suppresses individuality and personality since the suit has a specific regularized form. Cornwell (2005) explains that the modern suit has evolved from suits of armor, and later from military uniforms which to this day convey a message institutional power and functions as a corporate uniform of male authority and power.

In classical art masculinity is also associated with power, dominance, and social status. This goes all the way back to Ancient Greek, where male nudity and the perfection of

the male body represented superiority and civic authority. In the antique art, the human body was often presented in a very extreme way, to emphasize the superhuman characteristics of gods, goddesses, and mythological creatures, such as centaurs, which are half-man, half-animal (Encyclopedia.com). The male body itself is a symbol of masculinity and throughout history the shape of the body has been enhanced through clothing and art pieces to send messages of authority and power.

2.2.4   Masculine discourse

It has been found that when telling a story, men tend to dramatize and jump from one anecdote to another more compared to women (Aries 1976: 13, as quoted by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013: 116). Men also have a more straightforward and as mentioned before, competitive approach to conversations. Men usually try to create hierarchies within the group, and they value completing a goal more than making sure that the other people around them feel good. Men and boys also do not tend to shy away from conflict, unlike women and girls (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013:119). Mills' (2003: 188) also says that masculine language use is often considered to be 'high intensity', and consists of interruption, disputing, and being direct.

These types of linguistic variations between sexes are the result of social differences. Men and women speak the way they feel is the most appropriate way for their sex due to social expectations, this is called 'genderlect' (Hameed 2010: 45).

> a term used to account for the apparently systematic differences in the way men and women talk. – (Liamas and Stockwell 2002: 159, as quoted by Hameed 2010: 45)

These gender specific differences are caused by factors such as social pressure, power talking, conversative purpose, and level of education. Hameed (2010: 46) also mentions that women's talk is typically associated with home and domestic activities, while men's talk is associated with the world outside of the home and financial activities.

2.2.5 Masculine presentations in modern media

Modern mainstream media (television, video games, social networking etc.) frequently depicts both men and women in a very narrow and stereotypical way, which influences how viewers think of gender and gender roles. In terms of masculinity, media presents ideas and expectations of masculinity which can affect young boys' beliefs about manhood and how they express their masculinity. Giaccardi et al. (2016) bring up the cultivation theory (Gerbner 1998), which argues that when viewers are frequently exposed to stereotypes or different media themes, they start to adopt beliefs about the real-life world that coincide with the media content they are consuming.

The depiction of men in the media often falls under 'hegemonic masculinity', which is the embodiment of traditional and stereotypical masculine norms and values. This type of masculinity often includes characteristics such as aggression, power, dominance, status seeking, emotional restraint, heterosexuality, risk taking and financial status. According to Knight et al. (2012), some masculinity theorists categorize hegemonic masculinity as an idealized masculinity that is unachievable for most men, and just barely achievable for some. This means that only a small portion of the male population is more aligned with the ideal version of masculinity, while others fall short of it, although they continue to try to reach it resulting in a social ordering of men.

The traits of hegemonic masculinity are often highlighted in so called 'male oriented media genres', which are types of content that are particularly popular amongst boys and men, for example video games, sports television, and men's magazines. In their study, Giaccardi et al. (2016) found that in the video game genre female characters are often underrepresented in addition to being heavily sexualized or portrayed as victims. Similarly, in sports television women are underrepresented and the type of masculine values that are often praised rely heavily on physical aggression and toughness. They also found that the players that got the most airtime were the ones that performed dangerous or reckless acts, which were replayed multiple times on the sport programs. The third male oriented media was men's magazines, where the ads were

found to depict very hyper masculine beliefs, and sexualized portrayals of women that support gender stereotypes.

Nowadays people consume media from different outlets more than ever before, and the presentations that are showcased on the different platforms influence our thought patterns and self-esteem due to the unrealistic expectations presented to the public via different media and especially via advertising. In this thesis my goal was to identify different types of masculine presentations in the context of perfume advertising and how these presentations are formed through word choices.

3   DISCOURSE OF ADVERTISING

Advertising is a big part of modern society and visible in everyday life. It interrupts our favorite TV shows, plays between songs on the radio and fills the pages of the local newspapers. However, advertising is not just a way for brands to sell products, advertisements also influence us by telling us what food to eat, what cars to drive and how to improve ourselves, therefore influencing our thoughts and actions.

Originally advertisements were created to give general information about the product, but nowadays advertisements are more tactical and need to provoke emotions due to modern society being so incredible competitive with brands fighting for customers. The term 'advertising' itself comes from a Latin verb 'Adverte' which means to 'direct one's attention to' (El-Dali 2019: 96). In the context of consumer advertising, it means directing one's attention to the quality, availability, and/or cost of specific commodities or services.

3.1   Discourse of perfume advertising

Cook (2001) explains that perfumes were traditionally advertised towards women due to the prejudice of men wearing 'cosmetics'. This led to men's perfumes being advertised with a false functionalism and described as 'after-shave' or 'anti-perspirant'. Perfumes are also different from other 'luxuries' in a sense that it is not a product that was created because of demand (unlike panty-liners or cleaning powders). Perfumes have been used throughout history in various ways (e.g., hunting, rituals), but nowadays they serve as a quintessential luxury item.

The scent of the products itself is often described in an indirect way, for example by referring to one sense in terms of another sense (e.g., sharp, sour, gentle), or by using metaphors (e.g., poisonous, dangerous). Another way to describe the scent is to describe the effect that is has (e. seductive, overpowering), the kind of person who would

wear it (e.g., manly), where one might encounter such a scent (e.g., oriental). All of these can serve as an indicator of what the product smells like, but how the customer perceives these messages depend on the individual's knowledge and associations that they draw from these images (Cook 2001: 106-107). It can be impossible to describe a smell, which is why advertisers rely on these abstract descriptions which focus on creating a certain type of feeling rather than trying to accurately describe the scent. Association is the key in perfume advertising, and the quality of the product can be showcased by associating the perfume with another product or entity (referred to as a sphere). When naming a perfume 'Jaguar' the point is not to say that it is fast and streamlined like the car, but to create associations to the same qualities as a luxury car. Fusing these two types of different products together by association makes the perfume seem like a luxury item with desirable qualities. This fusion can also be done by associating a product with a person who is deemed desirable or likeable. Celebrity endorsements are very common in perfume advertising, and they often are the face of the product. There is no need for the spheres to have any logical connection, the only thing that is relevant is that the consumer thinks 'I like this product' or 'I like them and they like this product' (Cook 2001: 108).

The name of the perfume is also a key factor in perfume advertising because it is common for perfume brands to advertise the products to foreign markets with untranslated names. Many Italian and French perfume brands market their products with the original name, especially when the meaning of the name is generally known (e.g., 'Eau sauvage'). In this case there is no need to translate the name to other languages because the message gets transmitted regardless (Cook 2001: 110).

3.2 Masculinity in advertising

Timke & O'Barr (2017) explain how previous studies have shown that both masculinity and femininity are often represented in ways that emphasize certain gender roles that people should play at different points in their lives. It seems to be a common theme for advertisements to have the focus on boys and men, even when the advert

includes people from both sexes. In one example presented by Timke & O'barr (2017) a magazine cover that included a group of young boys and girls running on a field had a boy at the front and the girls were blurred outlines in the background, indicating that the boy in the front has a leader role. This same aspect could also be seen in other adverts presented in the study. Many adverts focus on boys' and men's strength and daring, while not giving girls and women the same attention and appreciation regardless how similar the activities presented in the ads were. Young men are often depicted in a way that showcases their physical strength, control, and accomplishments, as mentioned earlier by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013: 116), these are common aspects of masculine discourse also in conversations.

One presentation of masculinity that differs from the more stereotypical male image is the 'new man' ideal, which has been on the rise since the early 2000s. Timke & O'Barr (2017) define this 'new man' as a young, urban, heterosexual male, who is more focused on his looks, the clothes he wears and being nicely groomed, than being the 'macho' ideal. This 'newmannist' image goes beyond physical looks, because it also includes an attitude that allows him to not be afraid of criticism about his own fashion or his appearance. In advertisements, the promotion of newmannism can be seen as targeted ads for men that focus on achieving a clean-shaven face, or a neatly tucked in shirt.

De Gregorio-Godeo (2009) examined the discourse and multimodality in men's perfume advertisements utilizing Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) social semiotics theory and Fairclough's (1995b) CDA framework to analyse the multimodal discourse of masculinity in various British men's magazine's perfume advertisements. The magazines were all published in 1999 and the aim of this study was to shape the current hypothesis that the discursive construction of masculinity carried out in perfume advertisements is multimodally articulated. It was found that the different features of the magazine's perfume advertisements showcased this 'newmannist' image of masculinity through a multimodal design, a combination of image and language.

3.3   Word choices and self-image

As mentioned before, people learn how to be 'properly' masculine or feminine through the social practices within society, and the media also plays a part in the construction of gender roles. Kervin (1990) explains that in advertising, these rules are constructed through commentary, which is presented in consumer goods that offer ways to achieve the current ideal image of masculinity/femininity. Advertisers know how to control peoples' emotions, and they can shape the way we feel about ourselves and our life-style. This can create insecurities and make some people feel like they are not living the kind of life they are 'supposed to' due to these expectations set by advertisers.

Images and colours have a psychological effect on the consumers, but those aspects can only work so well when they are accompanied by suitable word choices. When the brand's focus is to reach a specific group of potential customers, it is important to figure out a way to tell them what they need and what they get from buying the products (Bui 2021). The reason why word choices play such a big role in advertising is because they affect people's conceptual memory, also known as conceptual short term memory (CSTM).

There have been previous studies made on this topic. Bui (2021) examined the linguistic word choices in advertising. The paper focused on gendered language use and its effects on marketing success of a product and the public's perceptions towards the commercial. Bui (2021) used a qualitative method and collected data through empirical documentation and personal observations. The aim of the study was to examine how gender stereotypes might have an impact on the language choices in advertisements. The data was collected through semi- structured questionnaires and the found that women focus more on the language and language features (e.g. accents, voices, intonations, etc.) than men. Another finding was that male customers are often more interested in 'masculine' products (e.g. cars, household, etc.) while women seem to be interested in beauty, self-care products or clothing.

Bui (2021) focused on a broad variety of advertisements and the focus was on both male and female interests. But in my own research I focused solely on the gendered word choices regarding masculinity. And while the topic of my study is quite similar to Bui's (2021) my own takes a more niche focus on masculine presentations through language.

Advertisements have a lot of power, because they can shape the perception of reality and what is expected of the modern-day person. Everyone is affected by advertising and because society is so technologically advanced now, adverts are visible on almost every app, video streaming service, and social media sites. Even though advertisements differ depending on what they are selling and who their target audiences are, they all have the same goal, which is to sell something and to attract new potential customers. Depending on the target audience, the advertisements use specific type of language, and especially in perfume advertisements the language can be very peculiar and include a lot of metaphors that are left up for interpretation. In this thesis I studied the word choices in men's fragrance descriptions and the type of language they included to find out whether the language has gendered elements in it and how the text can be identified to be specifically written for the male audience.

4 CURRENT STUDY

In this chapter I will go over the aims and research questions of the current study as well as the data and the data collection method. I will explain my methods of analysis and how those methods have been used in this study.

4.1 Aims and research questions

The aim of this study is to research and analyse the language use in popular men's fragrance descriptions and whether the word choices reinforce masculine stereotypes. This study poses three research questions:

1. What kind of gendered language can be found in men's fragrance descriptions?
2. What is the motivation behind using gendered language in men's cosmetics?
3. What kind of masculine images does the word choices create in the fragrance's scent descriptions?

To answer the **first question,** I scanned through the fragrance descriptions and collected all the words that can be considered 'gendered', such as adjectives, nouns etc. that have masculine associations. Then I explained *why* these words can be considered masculine by discussing meanings that the words conveyed. To answer the **second question**, I investigated why do these brands chose to use these words and what is the motivation behind using this type of (gendered) language. I researched marketing tactics and how language can be used to attract a certain audience by making attractive linguistic choices. To answer the **third question**, I explored the social effects of the word choices and the type of masculine images the brands (either accidentally or on purpose) enforced with their product descriptions.

4.2 Data

I collected the data from a multinational cosmetics retail online store called Sephora.com, which was founded in France in the 70's, but the company has since expanded, and the first North American Sephora store opened in New York in 1998. Nowadays, they operate in over 2500 stores in 35 countries worldwide. In the online store Sephora.com, they sell cosmetics, fragrances, hair care, skincare, and beauty tools from various beauty brands. Sephora in defined by its:

> "unique, open-sell environment with an ever-increasing assortment of products from carefully curated brands, featuring emerging favorites, trusted classics, and Sephora's own line, Sephora Collection" (Sephora.com)

Sephora.com is the site for American & Canadian consumers. I chose this store, because it has the English language as a default language setting and their biggest customer base is native English speakers. From this website I selected 15 products from the men's fragrances section by going through their 'best seller' list using the website's own product filter. I went through the list and picked out products that had a fragrance description in their 'About the product' section. This section typically includes a short (2-4 sentence) description, which gives the customer an idea of what the fragrance smells like to make the process of buying fragrances online easier.

On the website there were some 'limited edition' products, which I did not take into consideration, in case the products were removed from the website and I couldn't find information about the products for later analysis. So, my data solely focuses on the permanent fragrance collection that Sephora.com offers.

4.3   Method of analysis

4.3.1   Critical discourse analysis

CDA can be used to examine language not only on the sentence level, but beyond that on a more social level. The aim is to explain what role does discourse play in creating social structures in the social contexts in which it appears in (Rashid 2020: 1744). Fairclough explains that discourse and social structures have a two-sided relationship, meaning that they influence each other (Fairclough 1992, as quoted by Rashid:1744). Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to critical discourse analysis pays attention to the process of text production, distribution, and consumption. It considers that the analysis of text, is related to the analysis of institutional and discoursal practices within the context of the text (Fairclough 1995: 10).

In my analysis I used Fairclough's three-dimensional approach to critical discourse analysis as my theoretical background, but I only utilised the first and third level, which are text analysis and sociocultural analysis. With text analysis, I took a closer look at the elements of the fragrance descriptions such vocabulary, and with sociocultural analysis I was able to focus on the meaning making and how masculinity was represented in these products.

4.3.2   Text analysis

'Text' is traditionally understood to be a piece of written language, either a whole complete work of text, such as a book, or a small part of a work, such as a single chapter. However, in modern discourse analysis, the concept of 'text' is much broader, it can be either written or spoken language (Fairclough 1995: 4). When one speaks or produces texts that others can engage with by reading, interpreting, or listening, one is creating meaning in specific contexts (Sabir & Kanwal 2018: 90).

Fairclough (2003: 26-28) explains that texts have ideational, interpersonal, and textual functions, and the interaction between these three functions is what brings social perspective/meaning into texts. When analysing texts, one is doing two things simultaneously, which are 1) looking at the text in terms of the three aspects mentioned before, and how these aspects can be seen in the text (in the grammar, vocabulary etc.) and 2) making a connection between the text, and the more abstract social practices. Fairclough mentions that one does not talk about the features of text without referencing the text production and interpretation (Fairclough 1992: 74). Text analysis can be organized into four main points, which are vocabulary, grammar, cohesion, and text structure. Vocabulary focuses on individual words, grammar focuses on words being connected into clauses and sentences, cohesion focuses on how clauses and sentences are linked to each other, and text structure deals with largescale organizational properties of text (Fairclough 1992: 75).

In text analysis it is also important to look at the context in which the text appears in, since different topics and places where text appears use words and **tone** that are most fitting for each context. For example, a newspaper article uses a different type of text and tone than an advertisement does, because each of these text pieces have a different goal that they wish to achieve with their audience (Fairclough 1992: 75).

> "**Tone** refers to the writer's voice in a written work. It is what the reader or hearer might perceive as the writer's attitude, bias, or personality." – Walden University

An informative newspaper article writers might use a neutral tone when covering a news story, while an advertisement might use words that evoke a certain desired emotion that makes the reader want to act and interact with the products that appear in the text.

The process of text analysis was the following:

First, I bolded and underlined parts of the description that jumped out as gender expressions or had elements of gender specific language, and then I looked at the text

in more detail using critical discourse analysis as my frame of reference to explore and discuss the linguistic choices of the fragrance descriptions. I used this analysis method to answer my first research question.

4.3.3 Sociocultural analysis

According to Fairclough (2003: 25), social practices can be seen as different types of social elements which are associated with areas of social life. Meaning that in different types of social interactions people are expected to use certain type of language and behave in a certain way depending on the persons that they are interacting with and where the interaction happens. Fairclough (2003: 25) also explains that most social practices often include a variation of these five aspects: action and interaction (who is communicating with who), social relations (social dynamics), persons (one-to-one, one-to-many etc.), the material world (where the communication takes place) and discourse (which mode does the discourse happen in).

The process of sociocultural analysis was the following:

I focused on the social consequences of using gendered language by analysing what types of images of masculinity this type of language use creates. I did this by looking at the context and the type of words that were used to describe the fragrances and what kind of masculine image they constructed. With this analysis method, I was able to find out why the words found in my data were used specifically in men's fragrances and how the words represented masculinity. With this analysis method I was able to answer my second and third research question.

5 ANALYSIS

In this chapter I analyzed the collected data from the website Sephora.com. I utilized Fairclough's (1992) take on text and sociocultural analysis and I divided the findings under four main themes, which are nature/organic elements, success, sensuality and neutral. The name of the fragrance is mentioned in the title and the brand is written in brackets. The whole piece of data is presented under each product name as a quotation from the sephora.com-website.

5.1 Nature/Organic elements

5.1.1 Sauvage Eau de Toilette (Dior)

> **A radically fresh** composition, Dior Sauvage is both **raw** and **noble**. Radiant top notes burst with the juicy freshness of Calabrian bergamot, while Amberwood **unleashes a powerfully woody trail**. Sauvage men's cologne is inspired by wide-open spaces, **a white-hot desert** landscape under a vast blue sky.

This fragrance description uses words that create an image of earthy wilderness with the use of the word 'raw', which can be used as a description of something unpolished, uncontrollable and natural. Some animals are often described as 'noble', for example lions are said to be noble animals. The idea of a raw, and strong and noble king of the jungle is a very masculine idea, which ties in with the name of the fragrance. 'Sauvage' is French and refers to something wild and untamed. The tone of the text is bold and the description has a lot of power-words that create an image of the type of man that has almost animal-like characteristics. An 'alpha male' who is unpredictable and is in control of his surroundings. The scent also references natural elements like wood, that could be linked to ideas of unwavering strength. Other links to nature are the expressions 'wide-open spaces' and 'white-hot desert', which can refer to freedom or 'being free', hence unleashing something into nature, being in a natural state with no judgement or expectations. Dior creates a quite stereotypical image of masculinity that

revolves around the feeling of power and strength, which is showcased through nature related metaphors.

5.1.2 Ombré Leather Eau de Parfum (TOM FORD)

> The tactile **sensuality** of rich **black leather**, textured with addictive patchouli and vetiver envelops like a second skin. The perfume's floral tones of jasmine sambac conjure **wild** desert beauty, while layers of amber and moss mimic the heat of **rock** and **sand.**

This description uses similar images as the previous fragrance with the 'wild desert', and the mention of heat creates and image of hot and raw environments filled with rock and sand, a place where only the strongest survive. In the media 'black leather' has been a symbol of sexiness, and leather as material is often related to sex and sensuality. However, following the theme of the fragrance, the mention of black leather could also refer to the toughness that the man who wears this must have, a thick skin that he needs to survive. This type of imagery can create a very stereotypical image of strong, tough men who are meant to survive and not show their emotions. However, this 'rawness' is balanced with the mention of 'beauty' and floral tones. The delicacy of flowers mixed with the mention of hard earthy materials creates a more well balanced idea of masculinity with both soft and hard imagery.

5.2 Success

5.2.1 BLEU DE CHANEL Eau de Parfum (Chanel)

> **Unexpected** and **undeniably** **bold**. Fresh, clean, and **profoundly** **sensual**, the **woody**, aromatic fragrance reveals the spirit of a man who chooses his own destiny with **independence** and **determination** — **a man who defies convention**.

The word unexpected refers to something that happens suddenly, without warning or by surprise, which gives the idea that this product makes the man unpredictable, and this way gives him an advantage in whatever he is pursuing. This linked to the mention of determination, having a fierce drive that pushes him on to succeed in his goals

no matter what. The man who wears this is making bold choices and sticking to his decisions unapologetically regardless of what others think of him.

The type of man that would wear this product is described directly at the end of the paragraph: 'a man who defies convention'. Meaning he is different, not like the others, or unique. Adding adverbs such as 'with independence and determination', help create an image of a man who is strong minded, not easily swayed by others, follows his own path, and has goals that will be achieved through having confidence in himself. I want to mention that although 'success' in masculine context could be linked to monetary success, it could also mean to be able to do what you want (something not of monetary value) have no restrictions or limitation on what he wants to do. Being 'profoundly sensual' creates and idea that sensuality is something that comes from within, somethings that every man has but this specific scent will help bring it to the surface and make others notice it too.

5.2.2 Luna Rossa Ocean Eau De Toilette (Prada)

> This is a fusing, neo-fresh, and aquatic fragrance, encapsulating a burst of bergamot contrasted with the **extreme sophistication** and **sensuality** of vetiver and **elegant** iris notes. Experience a **unique**, **addictive**, and **masculine** trail with this new Prada men's classic fragrance.

The expression 'extreme sophistication and sensuality' with the mention of elegant notes creates an image of the type of man who would use this fragrance. Perhaps a successful businessman in a suit who attracts other people and who's masculinity is expressed by his one-of-a-kind presence and monetary wealth. The description says it will leave a 'masculine trail', which could indicate that when a man who is wearing this product walks past, other people will turn their heads to look and notice his presence without doing anything else. Without directly saying it, this description creates a very stereotypical male image that is built on the idea of monetary wealth and success in both business life and in personal life (sensuality, being addictive). Prada mentions that this is a 'classic' fragrance, which could indicate that this product is one of the

brands most popular ones, due to the hyper masculine branding. Even though the word is not clearly gendered, I want to point out that the mention of the word 'aquatic', could be a way to create an image of a deep blue sea, which is often connected to the idea of mystery and power due to the size and strength of the huge bodies of water. This also ties in with the name of the fragrance, which includes the word 'ocean'.

5.2.3 Phantom Eau De Toilette (Paco Rabanne)

This mind-bending fragrance was born from the **daring** encounter of an energizing, green flash of lemon and vetiver with an **irresistible** creamy lavender and **woody** vanilla.

The image of success is presented with the use of the adjective 'daring', referring to doing something that takes courage, mental strength, and boldness. The type of man to wear this fragrance is daring to do something that other men won't, while being irresistible and attractive to people with his strong, earthy, unwavering presence. Another interesting use of words is the 'flash of lemon', even though it is not necessarily a gendered expression, the word 'flash' creates an idea of something that happens fast and suddenly, which could be linked to the already created strong minded male image with added unpredictability. The word *woody* was mentioned earlier in the nature section above, however in this example the use of the word is used to describe the undertones of another scent (vanilla). In this case the word might not be linked to strength, but a more down -to-earth personality type, which is a little contrasting to the image created by the other descriptive word choices.

5.2.4 Gentleman Eau de Parfum Réserve Privée (Givenchy)

This **intense** cologne is inspired by whisky that blends floral notes with **woody** depths. This men's cologne opens with a heady duo of iris and amber woods. The **whisky absolute** is crafted using barley from a refined Scottish distillery, infusing the fragrance with **smooth elegance** and **refinement**.

This description creates a very sophisticated and maybe even a little old-fashioned image of an elegant man who takes care of himself and lives a life of luxury. Even the name of the fragrance includes the word 'gentleman' which refers to something

refined and upper class. Givenchy creates a scene in the readers mind where a very sophisticated man sits on a leather armchair drinking expensive whiskey while smoking a cigar. The reason why this specific scene comes to mind is because whiskey is often mentioned in literature, most often in the works of Scottish writers due to its origin. Slowly whiskey has become the choice of drink for a specific type of person. The whiskey drinking, well established, but hard to take seriously type person became the detective archetype in many detective stories thanks to Dashiell Hammett (1894-1961) and Raymond Chandler (1888-1959), whose characters 'Sam Spade' and 'Philip Marlowe' needed whiskey to make through life (Hennigan, whiskeymag.com). Even though this fragrance description has nothing to do with actual whiskey products, the drink is linked to many iconic characters which is why many people make the connection. Some could also connect the mentions of whiskey and gentlemen to large British country houses, or gentlemen's clubs. The two types of whiskey drinking men, the British gentleman, and the American detective, both fit the image of this fragrance description.

5.2.5   Tobacco Vanille (TOM FORD)

> TOM FORD reinvents classic tobacco with creamy tonka bean, vanilla, cocoa, dry fruit accords, and sweet wood sap for a **modern**, **opulent**, and **heady** impression of **confidence** and **power**.

This description has a very clear structure to it, despite being more on the short side. First, the ingredients are listed without any verbal embellishments, and then the description turns into more abstract with the use of words that try to explain how the ingredients should make one feel. The underlined words give an obvious explanation of what is the goal for this product. It is to make a man feel powerful, confident, and wealthy.

5.3 Sensuality

5.3.1 Eros (versace)

> Love, passion, beauty, and desire are the key concepts behind the new men's fragrance by Versace. As Greek mythology and classic sculpture have characterized the Versace world since the beginning, so the **perfection of the male body** is evoked with an allusion to **Eros, the God of Love**. Versace Eros is a fragrance for **a strong**, **passionate man**, who is **master of himself**.

The description of this fragrance follows the theme of the actual name of the product. 'Eros' is the name of the Greek god of love, lust, desire, and sex. In Latin he is called Amor (love) or Cupid (desire). The products says that it will 'evoke the perfection of the male body' by making a connection to the Greek god, who in various art pieces is often presented as a handsome, muscular, strong young man. This could be used to attract men to use the scent in hope for having the same image as Eros, however unrealistic the male image might be to achieve. However, in some art pieces Eros is described as a mischievous small boy (Britannica, 2023), but considering the context in which Eros is mentioned here, it is safe to assume that this description is referencing to Eros as a young man due to the target audience of the product.

5.3.2 Eros Flame (Versace)

> Versace Eros Flame the new men's fragrance, strikes you right through the heart — a hesperidic, amber, **woody** fragrance to make the wearer feel **strong, passionate, self-confident**, and very Versace.

The scent is described to be a reflection on the brands overall image, hence the expression 'very Versace', meaning that strength, passion and giving confidence to the buyers are at the core of Versace's priorities. This gives a clear idea who the fragrance is targeted towards, a man who wants to come across as strong and confident, kind of like Eros himself. The expression 'strikes you right through the heart' could be a reference to Cupid, who is Eros' Roman counterpart, known for shooting arrows of desire (Britannica, 2023). Here the main goals here is not to describe the scent but the kind of

man who would wear this product. The adjectives such as strong, passionate, and confident are used as personality characteristics of the target audience.

5.3.3   Aqua di gio Profondo Eau de Parfum Spray (Armani Beauty)

A serene take on the classic Acqua Di Giò, this eau de parfum opens with salty marine notes before melting into **<u>invigorating</u>** cypress, lavender, and rosemary to create an aquatic fougère. Patchouli and musk notes form the **<u>woody</u>** base, leaving a lasting, **<u>mysterious</u>** trail.

The use of the word 'invigorating' refers to something that has a stimulating effect (merriam-webster.com), in this context it is the blend of different ingredients which create the scent. Stimulation can be linked to sensuality, sexuality, desire, and attraction, which give the reader a clear idea of what this fragrance offers to its wearer. The mention of leaving a 'lasting, mysterious trail' indicates that when the person wearing this scent walks past, people will turn to look and will remember him afterwards. The image of mystery is reinforced with the mention of marine notes and the word 'aquatic', since these refer to water, or ocean, which is often seen as a powerful and mysterious element due to the unexplored and scary dark depths.

5.3.4   The Most Wanted Parfum (Azzaro)

This men's cologne invites you to release your burning energy like never before. **<u>Irresistible</u>** toffee mixes with bourbon vanilla, sustainably sourced in Madagascar. These fragrance notes reveal a magnetic signature, raised by a **<u>spicy</u>** cocktail, red ginger, and **<u>woody</u>** accord for a **<u>fiery</u>** men's fragrance.

The idea of sensuality and desire is created through the mention of specific foods and environments that together create an image of the type of man who uses this fragrance. He has an aura of sexiness and desire around him. Both bourbon and ginger have a very strong burning taste and are scents that cannot be unnoticed, much like the man who wears this cannot be unnoticed by people around him. The mention of the word 'magnetic' is also linked to the idea of attraction. The feeling of 'releasing burning

energy' gives a sense of strength due to the destructive power of fire, and the spicy cocktails can be linked to the hot climate of Madagascar.

5.3.5 Oud Wood (TOM FORD)

A composition of **exotic, smoky** woods including rare oud, sandalwood, rosewood, eastern spices, and **sensual** amber — revealing oud's **rich and compelling power**.

This description creates a sensual atmosphere with the mentions of smoky woods and eastern spices, which are also linked to the mention of something exotic and rare. The setting is painted clearly, and the reader can almost image the hot evenings in an unfamiliar country where the air of mystery is forever present. This is a very romantic idea which enhances the feeling of desire.

5.4 Neutral

5.4.1 Dylan Blue (Versace)

New and exquisite qualities of natural citrus, aquatic notes, and violet leaves combine with modern hints of fig leaf to give an incisive, Mediterranean freshness.

Some fragrance descriptions did not include any obviously gendered language or masculine imagery. This example by Versace simply states the inspiration for the scent, and what the product consists of, without creating any type of identity for the wearer. However, one could argue that scents that include elements of citrus have a feminine association to them due to the idea of 'sweetness' that many (citrus) fruits possess.

5.4.2 Acqua di Gio Eau de Toilette Spray (Armani Beauty)

This clean and aquatic cologne for men opens with a splash of marine notes including Calabrian bergamot, neroli, and green tangerine. These light, aquatic nuances blend with rosemary, persimmon, and Indonesian patchouli to create a long-lasting, citrusy, and fresh scent.

This description also has a very neutral tone and does not create any strong masculine images or include any imagery that could be considered gendered. It simply lists the ingredients that the product consists of and where the inspiration for the scent comes from. In previous examples I mentioned that the words 'aquatic' and 'marine' could be linked to strength and mystery, but in those cases the imagery was strengthened by other masculine descriptions within the same text. Here the other descriptive choices are very neutral in tone, which is why the reference to water, ocean etc. do not have any obvious masculine association.

5.4.3   Angels Share Eau De Parfum (KILIAN Paris)

The Angels' Share Eau De Parfum contains the essence of cognac derived from the liquor to lend it a natural caramel color. It opens with cognac oil upon a blend of oak absolute, cinnamon essence, and Tonka bean absolute, and the scent 's long-lasting notes of sandalwood, praline, and vanilla make for a delicious finish.

Similarly, to the previous fragrances in this category, the description is quite neutral and simply lists ingredients that come together to create the scent. However, this one does include mentions of liquor, and tobacco, which could be linked to masculinity the same way as whiskey that I mentioned in an earlier segment, but because these ingredients are not surrounded by enhancing words that would reinforce the masculine associations. This description almost sounds more like a description of a baked good, the mentions of vanilla, liquor and caramel color create an image of a cake or candy, but not necessarily any gendered images.

6   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1   Results

It became clear that the brands had two goals, which they wanted to achieve with these fragrance descriptions. The first was to describe the scent in an attractive way, and the second, which to me seemed like the main goal, was to paint a picture of the type of man that would wear the fragrance. The scent itself was often described by using words that related to organic materials, such as 'smoky', 'fresh' and 'leather', and the most common word being 'Woody'. It is usually used to describe the base notes of the scent. The word 'woody' is used when the scent is derived from trees, resin, moss, bark, pinecones, bushes, and roots (Alpha Aromatics, 2021). These types of base notes are most common in men's fragrances, probably because the idea of a forest, and strong earthy martials are often linked to physical strength, which has been a key part in the idea of masculinity since the ancient times. 'Woody' can also be linked to woodwork and lumberjacks, which have been often described, for example in Canadian literature and folklore (Wikipedia contributors, 2023), as hyper masculine, strong men with big beards and axes on their shoulders. Even though the word 'woody' is mostly used to describe the scent, it still sends a message about the wearer due to the personality traits and physical looks that are associated with the word and the theme which surrounds it.

The names of the fragrances were not my focus; however, I want to mention that 9/15 of the fragrance names included either French, or a mixture of French and English. As Cook (2001) explained, companies keep the original names in foreign languages especially when the general meaning is widely enough known, for example 'Luna Rossa', 'Sauvage', 'Acqua', and 'Bleu' give an idea of the fragrance without needing to translate them to English, due to the linguistic similarities that these words have to other languages.

The lack of modals and intensifiers indicate that the descriptions were created in a masculine tone. As explained earlier by Lituchy & Wiswall (1991), the modals and intensifiers are used much more frequently by women and considered to be a part of 'feminine speech', so it is logical to not use feminine speech patterns in a text that is targeted for the male audience. When describing the protentional customer, the brands used adjectives that describe the customers character or personality, such as 'mysterious', 'independent' and 'irresistible'. As I mentioned, masculinity was also expressed through metaphors and by using imagery that related to the word choices, for example by using the word mysterious while bringing up aquatic topics and imagery. Words such as 'raw', 'opulent', 'irresistible', and 'invigorating' are very strong words, that in this context could be used to describe a very extreme type of person. A man who has no room for further developments, no flaws, or weaknesses in any aspects of life.

My thought was that most of the brands aim to use words that reinforce a stereotypical masculine image, by using words often associated with masculinity such as toughness, strength, sex, independence, and mystery. Eckert & McConnell-Ginet (2013) explained that being confident, having personal agency and having clear goals are assertive expressions, which are part of masculine discourse. I think the goal for each brand was to cater their products towards most of the male population, by using attractive and dramatic words even if it makes the description sound peculiar and does not really give an indication of the actual scent of the product. It has been found that using dramatic words is more common in masculine speech patterns, and thus it is natural that brands use words that fit the speech pattern of the target audience (Aries 1976: 13, as quoted by Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2013: 116). This makes the texts sound like the product is sold by men to other men, and this way making fragrances more approachable.

The fragrance descriptions that I picked for the analysis were the top 15 best-selling products on Sephora.com, which indicates that these products are very appealing to their target audience for variety of reasons. Based on my analysis and the study by

Kervin (1990), the need to be the 'perfect man' is what inspired the brands to use certain word choices and to use imagery that try to convince men to buy their fragrances. The main message is the feel that these products aim to give the wearer, and this type of advertising can be used to make customers feel like they are 'higher quality' compared to people who do not wear these products. Men become interested in these products when the brands showcase what their products can offer them, and the descriptions clearly rely heavily on the ideal male image and the desire to be the best a man can be.

Similarly to the results in the study by Kervin (1990), the brands mentioned in this study present their products in ways that convince customers that they can achieve the current ideal image of masculinity. I also think that because fragrances are technically 'cosmetics', brands need to really push masculinity in their products so that men don't feel like they are buying something 'feminine', which for many men is a very undesirable trait to have, and which they may even find insulting as explained by Kremin (2017). Cook (2001) also pointed out that cosmetics and self-care products such as perfumes are still heavily marketed towards women, which could be why this type of 'hyper masculine' image is needed to make men feel comfortable and interested in 'cosmetic' products such as fragrances. Cook (2001) explained how perfumes that are designed for men are often referred to as 'after-shave', since it makes it sound less feminine. Naturally, using language that resonates with men and enhances the idea of manliness is what attracts men to purchase goods. The motivation is to evoke emotions that create action, and in many cases the emotion that brands want to evoke is for the customers to say, 'I want to be this type of man', and then go and buy the product. This type of advertising can be used to make customers feel like they are 'higher quality' compared to people who do not wear the product. These descriptions create the feeling of desire, which can influence people to buy this product so they achieve that desired image that is described in the fragrance (Johannessen et al. 2010: 10).

In the 'Organic/Earthy materials' category the general image of masculinity focused on being rough and rugged, survivalist with almost animal like characteristics. The

descriptions of wide-open spaces and mentions of hard materials reflect the man's own strength and how he doesn't need a lot to survive because his own strong will and noble character are enough to get him through anything.

Many of the descriptions used words and imagery that pushed stereotypical gender roles, but this was especially visible in the 'Success' category. The adjectives which were used to describe the protentional customer, focused on creating a picture of a high-society man, in a well tailer suit with a high paying job who doesn't need to depend on others for his own success because he will work towards his goals in an unapologetic matter. For some people this visual can feel quite cold and unappealing, but due to the expectations for men to be the money makers, and the need to prove their worth by comparing achievements, this type of image can be very appealing to many men who relate to these needs. From the descriptions in this category and the feeling it gave me made me think of fictional characters such as Patrick Bateman (American Psycho) and Hercule Poirot, who are both very successful, competitive, and very charismatic. Perhaps this says something about the masculine ideal in which the descriptions in this category focused on because the only people who came to mind from the texts were fictional characters, and not any 'real life' men who would have achieved this ideal. This ties in what Knight et al. (2012), said about 'hegemonic masculinity'. That it is an ideal of masculinity, which is almost impossible to achieve, yet many men continue to try and work towards it.

The 'Sensuality' category focused on creating a feeling of excitement with mentions of spicy ingredients and hot environments which create an alluring atmosphere that draws you in. The type of man to wear these scents is charismatic and mysterious with a physique that resembles a greed god.

The 'Neutral' category did not point out any obvious masculine characteristics or create any vivid masculine images. The descriptions in this category focused on describing the freshness of the scent and the main goal was to accurately describe the scent for the potential customers without any unnecessary textual embellishments.

In the examples that I presented, the male images had some variety, which could indicate that nowadays there are no just one 'ideal' image of masculinity, but a variety of ideals, depending what aspects of life one focuses on. Being rich, powerful, and independent could be an ideal for a man whose own morals and goals align with the description, while being sensual, earthy, and elegant could be the ideal for others.

Giaccardi et al. (2016), explained that modern media tends to highlight hypermasculine stereotypes and traditional gender norms, which coincides with my own findings. The way these products paint pictures of men and masculine traits rely heavily on the same stereotypes that have been around since the 1800' as explained by Hughes (2014). The need to be the successful bread winner in family, and as Jobbins (2017) explained being physically strong and not showing signs of struggle seem to be very prevalent themes even in the men's cosmetic products genre. The lack of evolution of the expectations which are set in place for men is quite fascinating, and it will be interesting to continue to follow how the masculine presentations in differed media will (or will not) change.

6.2   Limitations

The biggest limitations in the current study were that my data included just 15 examples, which means that it is difficult to make any bigger generalizations from the results. Also, the website from which I collected my data was for the American & Canadian customers, which influenced what the best-selling products were since sales differ from each country's customer base. In addition to background theory, my own views on gender presentations and views on masculinity could have influenced my analysis. Even though my goal was to remain unbiased and do the analysis from a neutral standpoint, my own expectations and imagination could have limited the way I interpreted the descriptions. The data examples were very much up for interpretations, which makes it difficult to give only one certain explanation of the descriptions.

6.3 Further reserach

Further research could be concluded by collecting a larger amount of data from a wide variety of price points, websites, and stores. This way the results could offer a broader view into how fragrance brands present masculinity in their products. As I mentioned earlier, previous studies have been done on multimodal aspects of fragrance products and advertising, but the textual analysis on men's cosmetics is yet to be fully discovered. Therefore, further research could be done on more traditionally feminine cosmetic products, or gender-neutral cosmetics. It would be interesting to focus on how masculinity is presented in gender neutral eyeshadow/lipstick products and how the results would differ from the presentations in these fragrance products, which are a more socially accepted male cosmetic product.

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