

# ‘Boys will be ~~boys~~’

*A study on men’s perceptions of Gillette’s (2019) commercial*



MA Thesis – Intercultural Communication

English Track

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### **Abstract**

After the #MeToo movement began to spread globally in 2017, the representation of men has been deeply discussed in the media. The term 'toxic masculinity' gained mainstream media exposure. Subsequently, in January 2019, men's shaving brand Gillette came up with a commercial that interrogates the traditional or masculine depiction of men. This resulted in an ongoing discussion whether Gillette crossed a line regarding the representation of masculinity in its commercial. Although some men supported the commercial, many men felt offended and threatened to boycott the brand. The aim of the present study is to explore whether there is a difference in perceptions of Gillette's commercial between men in the Netherlands (feminine society) and Germany (masculine society), using Hofstede's dimension of masculinity versus femininity. The author endeavors to obtain a greater understanding of the perceptions of the commercial in masculine and feminine societies, and assesses the applicability of Hofstede's theory. To examine this, the researcher has created categories and questions based on Hofstede's distinction between the two types of societies, after which a survey was conducted among 16 Dutch and 16 German men. Two out of 24 questions/statements showed a significant difference between Dutch and German men, implying that this study does not represent Hofstede's distinction between feminine and masculine societies. The current study has been an essential step in assessing society-based perceptions of commercials and to determine whether Hofstede's theory and earlier research on masculinity and femininity within ads are applicable here.

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## 1. Introduction

Advertising plays an important role in influencing and shaping cultures (Lee, Kim, & Love, 2014; Bell & Garrett, 1998, p. 4), as “advertising both reflects and influences cultural values” (Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996, as cited in Odekerken-Schröder, De Wulf, & Hofstee, 2002, p. 408). Accordingly, brands should be aware of this while communicating their story as it has a great influence on their customers and therefore their sales. Much research has been carried out on the representation of men and women in commercials (e.g. Kaufmann, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010), and whether these representations fit within the customers’ culture (e.g. Nassif & Gunter, 2008). In addition, earlier research describes that the representation of gender roles in the media can influence one’s behavior and attitude (e.g. Bartsch, Burnett, Diller, & Rankin-Williams, 2000; MacKay & Covell, 1997).

However, gender-role is a complex term that has many definitions. For example, Scott (2007) defines gender as “a social category imposed on a sexed body” (p. 1056). A more detailed description comes from Holmes (2007), who argues that there is a difference between sex and gender. According to him, the term ‘sex’ consists of “biological differences between males and females”, whereas the term ‘gender’ could be described as “socially produced differences between being feminine and masculine” (Holmes, 2007, p. 2). Furthermore, there are different gender stereotypes. For example, men could be stereotyped as being strong, independent, aggressive, rational et cetera, whereas women could be stereotyped as appreciative, emotional, sentimental, talkative et cetera (Williams & Bennett, 1975, pp 330-331).

Nevertheless, there has been a development when it comes to feminine and masculine stereotypes. At the end of the year 2017, the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment began to spread. It started with a hashtag (#MeToo) on social media (especially Twitter and Facebook), which was used by victims of sexual harassment (Renkl, 2017). The group of

victims rapidly grew and consisted mainly of women who, inspired by predecessors, decided to let their voice be heard and tell their stories. According to Renkl (2017), within the first 24 hours, people intensively used the hashtag #MeToo on Twitter (more than 500,000 posts/shares) and Facebook (approximately 12 million posts/shares). The hashtag was picked up by the media and governments around the world, especially in the United States. This led to even more attention to the hashtag and hereby to the topics of sexual harassment and 'toxic' masculinity (McGinley, 2018, p. 108). The latter topic could be defined as "the need to aggressively compete and dominate others and encompasses the most problematic proclivities in men" (Kupers, 2005, p. 713).

The brand Gillette, which is known for its men shaving products, agrees with a new era of masculinity and created the commercial "The Best Men Can Be" on January 13, 2019 ("The Best Men Can Be", n.d.). The commercial focuses on the "positive, attainable, inclusive and healthy versions of what it means to be a man" ("The Best Men Can Be", n.d., para. 4) and challenges the contemporary "stereotypes and expectations" of men (para. 5). Through its commercial, Gillette aims to show people the valuable sides of being a man and that people should not try to justify certain kinds of behavior based on gender. Even though it is conceivable that Gillette's intentions were positive, the commercial has led to a discussion about the representation of masculinity and whether Gillette crossed a line regarding this representation. Many men felt offended by the commercial and labeled the commercial as 'sexist' and 'racist', and some even reacted using the hashtag #boycottgillette (<https://twitter.com/search?q=%23boycottgillette%20&src=typd>). Additionally, two Twitter-users who felt offended posted "Out with #Gillette and in with #Edge" (Conrad, 2019, n.p.) and "#Gillette has gone too far with this advertisement" (Sarah, 2019, n.p.), while another one who supports Gillette's commercial posted "#Gillette got it right" (Brown, 2019, n.p.).

Overall, approximately 785,000 people liked the commercial on YouTube, whereas 1.4 million people disliked the commercial.

The sensitivity of the subject of the commercial (representation of masculinity) has led to many different reactions. Keeping in mind Gillette's male target audience, it is crucial to examine whether there is a difference in perception of the commercial between masculine and feminine societies. Therefore, this study aims to investigate whether men's perceptions of Gillette's commercial differ between masculine and feminine societies. The distinction between these two societies has been analyzed by many scholars of whom Geert Hofstede is one of the best known in the field. The present study focuses on Germany (masculine society) and the Netherlands (feminine society), two neighboring countries that represent different societies and have been studied by Hofstede. This will be further discussed in the Theoretical Framework.

The remaining part of the study consists of five sections: 1) a review of previous observations in the field, 2) a detailed description of the methodology used in this study, 3) the obtained results, 4) a discussion of the findings, and 5) overall conclusion, the limitations of this study, and recommendations for further research.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Masculinity versus Femininity**

Geert Hofstede studied the cultural differences between countries. He examined more than 50 different countries by interviewing employees from the international company IBM (Hofstede 1983, 2001). Hofstede describes cultures according to six different dimensions: "Power Distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, Long/Short Term Orientation, and Indulgence/Restraint" (Hofstede, 2011, p. 2). The present research focuses on men in masculine and feminine societies, which is related to the

difference in values between men and women (Hofstede, 2011). Therefore, Hofstede's masculinity/femininity dimension is also called the "Gender of Nations" (De Mooij, 2011, p. 99).

According to Paechter (2006), there are changing definitions of the terms 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Paechter (2006) explains Connell's (1995) definition of masculinity and femininity as follows: "What this means is that in practice masculinity becomes 'what men and boys do', and femininity the Other of that" (Connell, 1995, as cited in Paechter, 2006, p. 254). Subsequently, one could argue that different values are important in masculine and feminine societies (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). For example, achievement is an important value in masculine societies, whereas caring is an important value in feminine societies (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). Moreover, the role difference between men and women is "small in feminine societies, large in masculine societies" (De Mooi & Hofstede, 2010, p. 89). However, Paechter (2006) argues that individuals form their identities in different ways and that some identities contain more masculine characteristics, while others contain more feminine ones. In other words, "not all masculinities are entirely masculine, or femininities feminine" (Paechter, 2006, p. 262), so "gender roles are not fixed, but constantly negotiated between individuals" (Sandstrom, Martin, & Fine, 2006, as cited in An & Kim, 2007, p. 183).

Hofstede (2011) makes a distinction between masculine and feminine societies, which are presented in Table 1 below. As can be seen from the table, in masculine societies men have more power than women and people are more competitive, strong and traditional, whereas in feminine societies people are more emotional, caring and men and women are more equal. This distinction between masculine and feminine societies of Hofstede (2011) corresponds to William and Bennett's (1975) description of stereotypes of men and women.



Table 1

*Differences Between Masculine and Feminine Societies (adapted from Hofstede, 2011, p. 12)*

<b>Masculine societies</b>	<b>Feminine societies</b>
Great difference in emotional and social roles between men and women	Not much of a difference in emotional and social roles between men and women
Men should be and women may be assertive and ambitious	Men and women should be modest and caring
Work dominates family	Balance between family and work
Great respect for the strong	Empathy for others
Men deal with facts, women with feelings	Both men and women deal with facts and feelings
Girls cry, boys do not; boys should fight back, girls should not fight	Both boys and girls may cry but neither should fight
Men decide on the family size	Women decide on the number of children
Few women in elected political positions	Many women in elected political positions
Religion focuses on God	Religion focuses on fellow human beings
Moralistic attitudes about sexuality; sex is a way of performing	Practical attitudes about sexuality; sex is a way of relating

Hofstede established a system which ranks countries on its masculinity; the higher the score, the more masculine the society concerned is ("Country Comparison", n.d. a). These scores are based on Hofstede's examined "database of employee value scores collected within IBM between 1967 and 1973" ("The 6 Dimensions", n.d., para. 20). For example, the Netherlands scores 14 points out of 100 on the masculinity scale, which means it is a feminine society, whereas Germany scores 66 points out of 100 on the masculinity, which means it is a masculine society ("Country Comparison", n.d. a). This great difference is interesting as these two countries are neighboring and are very different societies in regards to their masculinity and femininity (see Table 1 above). Therefore, it is challenging to analyze these two countries.

Although Hofstede's theory is a useful starting point for research among masculine and feminine societies, other scholars believe his theory is essentialist (e.g. Holliday, 2000; Trowler, 2014) and outdated (e.g. An & Kim, 2007; Drogendijk & Slangen, 2006). According to Holliday, Kullman, and Hyde (2017), having an essentialist view on culture means that one

assumes culture is homogeneous, universal, and “people belong exclusively to one national culture and one language” (p. 3). Hofstede's work indeed could be essentialist as he overgeneralized cultural differences between countries by interviewing employees of only one company. Many countries, and even individuals (Holliday et al., 2017), have multiple cultures (Dartey-Baah, 2013). In addition, as theory has stated, a culture is simply not universal (cf. Holliday et al., 2017). Moreover, Minkov (2018) argues that “the world has changed enormously since [Hofstede came up with his theory] and the amount of information about cross-cultural differences worldwide has increased manifold” (p. 253). For example, findings of Minkov's (2018) research show that German and Dutch people hate to compete and like to help people. These values are both feminine as, according to Hofstede (2011), people in feminine countries have empathy for others and are modest (see Table 1 above). Thus, Minkov's findings do not correspond to the aforementioned masculinity points that Hofstede granted to Germany. Possible reasons for this could be supported by earlier research about flexible gender roles and identities (cf. Paechter, 2006; Sandstrom et al., 2006).

However, Holliday et al. (2017) argue that “[non-essentialism] represent[s] more complex and perhaps obscure ideas than [essentialism]” (p. 4), and that “in this sense, essentialism is the ‘easy’ answer for culture, which has become popular, useable and marketable” (p. 5). In this case, using Hofstede's theory in marketing research could be an easy and accessible way for marketers to interact with their customers. Moreover, Hofstede's theory has often been used in research on global advertising (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2010). The purpose of this study is to examine Hofstede's masculinity/femininity dimension and to find out whether his theory is applicable in regards to the perceptions of Dutch and German men on a commercial that interrogates the stereotype of men.

## **2.2 Stereotypes**

The term 'stereotype' is repetitively used in this research, it is therefore of great importance to have a comprehensive understanding of the term. According to Bar-Tal (1997), stereotypes are "stored beliefs about characteristics of a group of people" (p. 491). Holliday et al. (2017) provide a more detailed definition and argue that stereotypes are "ideal characteristics of the foreign Other" (p. 26). By foreign Other, they mean "any group of people which is perceived as different" (e.g. with different gender) (p. 27). In this sense, a reason to stereotype one another could be that one does not match the 'ideal characteristics' of a particular sex. Thus, "stereotyping involves the assignment of a (usually negative) label to certain groups of people, based on a certain belief about how these people tend to behave" (Odekerken-Schröder et al., 2002, p. 410). The way in which individuals stereotype one another "is not universal, but is culturally and individually bound" (Bar-Tal, 1997, p. 492), and can be considered a problem when it causes certain expectations about or limitations for one another (Grau & Zotos, 2016, p. 761).

### **2.2.3 Gender Stereotypes**

Gender stereotypes have been discussed intensively within the academic context (e.g. Williams & Bennett, 1975; Odekerken-Schröder et al., 2002). Gender stereotypes involve "the constellation of psychological traits generally attributed to men and women respectively" (Williams & Bennett, 1975, p. 327), and are "concerned with the beliefs about why men and women differ" (Odekerken-Schröder et al., 2002, p. 410). For example, men are mostly being stereotyped as tough, strong, coarse (Williams & Bennett, 1975, p. 327), competitive, self-confident, and independent (Kite, Deaux, & Haines, 2008, p. 207). In contrast, women are mostly being stereotyped as emotional, gentle (Kite et al., 2008, p. 207), and caring (Joseph, Gray, & Mayer, 2013, p. 497).

Gender stereotyping could appear in several contexts, such as in literature (Kortenhaus & Demarest, 1993) or advertising (Grau & Zotos, 2016, p. 762). Previous research has shown for example that the way in which gender is represented in advertising in different cultures can be linked to Hofstede's dimension of masculinity/femininity (Wiles, Wiles, & Tjernlund, 1995, p. 47). The following section further presents earlier research on the portrayal of men within advertisements, using Hofstede's theory.

### **2.3 Hofstede's Masculinity/Femininity Dimension in Advertising Research**

The portrayal of men in advertisements and the cultural differences in perceiving commercials have been discussed intensively in academic literature. Earlier research has been carried out on differences in responses to advertisements in masculine and feminine societies (e.g. Nelson, Brunel, Supphellen, & Manchanda, 2006), gender role representation in commercials (e.g. Milner & Collins, 2000; Paek, Nelson, & Vilela, 2011), and cultural differences between countries in regards to Hofstede's dimension of masculinity/femininity (e.g. An & Kim, 2007).

Nelson et al. (2006) studied the effect that charity advertising has on the responses of men and women in masculine (the United States and Canada) and feminine (Denmark and Norway) societies, and used Hofstede's distinction of masculinity/femininity. They discovered that men in masculine societies "preferred the egoistic ad and women preferred the altruistic one" (p. 45). However, in feminine societies, it was the other way around. The striking part about their study is that they conclude men in feminine countries and women in masculine countries mainly shared the same opinion on the ads, and women in feminine countries and men in masculine countries mainly shared the same opinion on the ads. This shows that certain perceptions of ads are not only based on gender, but also on the type of society (masculine or feminine) the individuals live in.

Milner and Collins (2000) also used Hofstede's masculinity/femininity dimension as a framework for their study. They carried out research on the differences in gender-role portrayals in Japanese, Russian, Swedish and American commercials, and discovered that commercials from feminine countries show "more depictions of relationships for male and female characters than did masculine countries" (p. 67). However, this was contradictory to their expectations that masculine countries would show greater gender differences in commercials than feminine countries. In addition, research of Paek et al. (2011) supports Milner and Collins's (2000) findings. Paek et al. (2011) expected that countries with a higher score on masculinity would depict greater differences in gender roles in advertisements than countries with a low score on masculinity (p. 195). Their findings show that some differences in the depiction of gender roles could be explained by Hofstede's masculinity-scores on some countries, but not all of his scores could be explained (Paek et al., 2011, p. 202). Thus, findings of previous research show that Hofstede's masculinity-scores do not always correspond to reality.

Nevertheless, An and Kim's (2007) findings support Hofstede's theory. They studied cross-cultural differences in the representation of gender roles in Korean and American web advertisements, based on Hofstede's masculinity dimension. They discovered that Korean (which is a more feminine country than the United States) web advertisements appeal more to relationship themes, show more female main characters, and represent them in more "family and recreational roles" than the American web advertisements (p. 181).

The present study is relevant because earlier research does not focus on the differences between masculine countries and feminine countries in regards to responses to a commercial that goes against the traditional stereotype of men, and especially not a commercial of a brand which has a male target audience. In addition, the impact of the recent #MeToo discussion on

the stereotype of men and the currently ongoing discussion on the recently released commercial of Gillette makes this research even more relevant.

## **2.4 Research Question**

The theory and academic discussion have led to the following research question: *Is Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be" perceived differently by men in feminine and masculine societies, according to Hofstede's dimension?*

To answer the main question, the following two sub-questions have been formulated:

- How do men in the Netherlands perceive Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be"?
- How do men in Germany perceive Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be"?

## **3. Method**

To answer the research questions, the researcher conducted a survey to determine the perception of men in masculine and feminine societies on Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be". Brown (2001) describes a survey as "any written instrument that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers" (Brown, 2001, p. 6, as cited in Dörnyei, 2007, p. 102).

### **3.1 Participants**

To investigate whether the perception and understanding of men on Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be" are dependent on the type of society (masculine or feminine), two different groups of participants were examined. The initial groups consisted of 16 male

participants who grew up in the Netherlands and 16 male participants who grew up in Germany. These different groups were tested because when individuals grow up in the country concerned, they assumedly have “assimilate[d] to [the] dominant set of cultural norms and values” (Bauder, 2002, p. 89) of this country. However, 15 participants from each group were between 20 and 35 years old, and only one Dutch participant was 67 years old and one German participant was 60 years old. Because these two participants were of a much older age, the sample size was reduced to 15 men who grew up in the Netherlands and 15 men that grew up in Germany, in the ages of 20 to 35 (mean age 26.3 (Sd. 3.456)). In addition, according to Dörnyei (2007), the optimal sample size of accurate comparative research consists of “at least 15 participants in each group” (p. 99-100). Both groups mainly consisted of men with a white ethnicity, as only two participants had a mixed ethnicity. Furthermore, the educational background was unequally divided, and mainly of a higher level (i.e. pre-university education, applied sciences or university level).

The sample was a non-probability sampling of the target population because of the available time and resources, as stated by Kemper, Stringfield, & Teddlie (2003) in Dörnyei (2007, p. 99). The researcher used a convenience or opportunity sampling procedure to select participants (see Dörnyei, 2007, p. 98). According to Dörnyei (2007), within this type of sampling procedure the researcher's convenience is “an important criterion of sample selection” (p. 98), and participants are selected for the research “if they meet certain practical criteria, such as geographical proximity, availability at a certain time, easy accessibility, or the willingness to volunteer” (p. 98-99). However, as Dörnyei (2007) argues, convenience or opportunity sampling is not always “completely convenience-based” because “besides the relative ease of accessibility, participants also have to possess certain key characteristics that are related to the purpose of investigation” (p. 99). The participants of this research were gathered via the researcher's acquaintances, who were also asked to further share the survey

with other appropriate subjects. Dörnyei (2007) state that asking participants to further share the survey is often been called a “snowball sampling” (p. 98).

## **3.2 Material**

### **3.2.1 Commercial**

The commercial on which the current study was based, was taken from Gillette's official YouTube account (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koPmuEyP3a0>). The commercial has a total length of 1.48 minutes, approximately 30 million views, 785,000 likes, and 1.4 million dislikes on April 9, 2019 (Gillette, 2019). The commercial was created by the American advertising agency Grey and was only broadcasted through Gillette's official online media channels Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter (“Gillette, The Best Men Can Be”, n.d.). The United States is a masculine country and scores 66 out of 100 points on masculinity (“Country Comparison”, n.d. b). Although the commercial was targeted towards a global audience, it must be kept in mind that it was created in the United States, a country with a masculine society.

The commercial consists of two different parts. The first half is about the ‘bad’ behavior of men and that people often use the excuse of ‘boys will be boys’ for this ‘bad’ behavior. However, the second half of the commercial shows how men should ideally behave (according to Gillette), and that others need to follow this example.

### **3.2.2 Survey**

In order to gather a sufficient dataset, the researcher conducted a survey consisting of four sections. In section I of the survey, the researcher gave an introduction of the survey, and in section II, participants were asked to specify their age, gender, the country they have been raised in, ethnicity, and educational background through open and multiple-choice questions.



According to Dörnyei (2007), multiple-choice questions “are often used when asking about personal information” (p. 106). In section III of the survey, the participants were asked to watch the commercial in order to answer the questions in section IV. The latter section was focused on the participants' perception of the commercial.

The survey consisted of 30 questions in total and took approximately 10 minutes of the participants' time, which does not “exceed the 30-minute completion limit” (p. 10) that Dörnyei (2007) argues for. The structure of the survey consisted of a title, general introduction, specific instructions, main body (questions), additional information, and final ‘thank you’, as described in Dörnyei (2007).

The language of this survey was English as words in different languages could have different nuances or meaning, and could be used in different contexts (Clark, 1987, p. 1). Thus, it is more reliable to conduct the survey in one language that is familiar with both groups. Moreover, in the latest Education First English Proficiency Index (EF EPI, 2018), the Netherlands and Germany ranked second and tenth with a score of 70.31 and 63.74, and are labeled “very high proficiency” (p. 6). This confirms that the English language can be used in the survey. The complete survey can be found in Appendix A.

### **3.3 Procedure**

Earlier research mainly used categories to code commercials on their gender portrayal, and not necessarily to create questions for a survey measuring the perception of individuals on one specific commercial. The researcher, therefore, created categories by herself, which involve questions in section IV of the survey. These categories are ‘emotional roles’, ‘family/work’, ‘strong/empathy for others’, ‘power between men/women’, ‘gender roles’, ‘attitudes about sexuality’, and ‘offensive/respecting’ (see Table 2 below). The descriptions of these categories are based on Hofstede's (2011) division of masculine and feminine societies (see

Table 1 above on p. 5). As Hofstede's research was not focused on Gillette's commercial, the researcher linked his masculine/feminine distinctions to Gillette's commercial and added an extra category (Offensive/Respecting) to examine whether Dutch and German men perceive Gillette's commercial as offensive or not.

Table 2

*Coding Categories (partly adopted from Hofstede, 2011)*

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Description</b>
Emotional roles	In what emotional role are the men characters portrayed? (1) caring, (2) ambitious, (3) assertive, (4) modest, (5) aggressive, or (6) sensitive How does Gillette want men to be?
Family/Work	What is more important within the commercial, (1) family, (2) work, or (3) others? How does Gillette want men to be?
Strong/Empathy for others	The commercial depicts men as (1) being strong, (2) having empathy for others, or (3) others? How does Gillette want men to be?
Power between men/women	The commercial shows that (1) men have more power than women, (2) men and women are equal, or (3) women are more important How does Gillette want it to be?
Gender roles	Within the commercial there (1) is a clear difference or (2) are no great differences in gender roles How does Gillette want it to be?
Attitudes about sexuality	The male characters in the commercial act (1) out of practical reasons or (2) out of sentiment?
Offensive/Respecting	The commercial is (1) offensive to men, (2) respecting men, or (3) neither

After watching the commercial, participants were asked to give their perceptions of the commercial regarding seven different categories as presented in Table 2 above. These perceptions were gathered by asking participants to what extent they agreed or disagreed with

statements about these categories (see Appendix A for the complete survey). The closed-ended questions were mainly based on a Likert scale, which “consists of a characteristic statement” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 105), and partly on multiple-choice questions (the statement about the power between men/women). Participants could choose between seven possible answers: strongly disagree, disagree, sort of disagree, neutral, sort of agree, agree, and strongly agree.

The survey was created with Google Forms because of its ease of accessibility for the participants. Each of the participants completed the survey anonymously. In addition, the participants were not aware of the goal of the research, and were only asked to complete a survey about Gillette's commercial “The Best Men Can Be”. Furthermore, the researcher was not present when the participants completed the survey to not influence the answers.

Before it was shared with the participants, the survey was piloted to ensure the reliability and validity of the outcomes (Dörnyei, 2007). After the researcher created the survey, one male participant from the Netherlands and one male participant from Germany completed the survey and provided feedback. Based on this feedback, the researcher adjusted the survey, finalized it, and sent it to the participants. After the pilot, the researcher added two translations of English terms in Dutch and German. These were ‘zelfbewust/durchsetzungsfähig’ at question 16 and 17, and ‘bescheiden’ at question 18 and 19. Furthermore, the researcher changed the order of the survey to increase clarity for the target sample.

### **3.4 Analysis**

The outcomes of the survey were gathered from Google Forms and analyzed with the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (version 25), also known as SPSS, which is a commonly used program in applied linguistic studies (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 198). The first step of

analyzing data with the help of SPSS was “converting the respondents’ answers to numbers by means of ‘coding procedures’” (p. 199). Each variable was defined in order to make sure all numbers had a different meaning and could not be mistaken with each other (Dörnyei, 2007). To each question, numbers were assigned, except the questions about gender, age, ethnicity, and educational background because the present study did not focus on this information. The response options of the question about where the participants grew up, were assigned numbers as followed: 0 = The Netherlands, and 1 = Germany. Furthermore, the response options of the Likert scale questions were assigned numbers as followed: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = sort of disagree, 4 = neutral, 5 = sort of agree, 6 = agree, and 7 = strongly agree, as described in Dörnyei (2007). In addition, the response options of the question about whether the commercial shows that men or women have more power were assigned numbers as followed: 1 = men have more power than women, 2 = men and women are equal, and 3 = women have more power than men.

Before the results were analyzed, the number of missing values were examined. In addition, the researcher re-entered the data in a second data file and double checked this data in order to detect mistakes, as recommended in Dörnyei (2007). However, there were no missing values or mistakes detected.

The results on the different statements of the Dutch and German group were compared with each other by using Chi-square tests. According to Dörnyei (2007), with a Chi-square test, a researcher can see “whether there was a significant relationship between” two groups and their answers (p. 228). The researcher considered differences between these two groups significant when  $p < 0.05$ , as described by Dörnyei (2007, p. 210).

## 4. Results

The aim of the study was to examine whether there was a difference in how Dutch and German men in the age of 20 to 35 perceive Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be". After the participants watched the commercial concerned, they were asked to answer questions about their perceptions of the commercial. Answers of the Dutch and German group were compared regarding the different categories ('emotional roles', 'family/work', 'strong/empathy for others', 'power between men/women', 'gender roles', 'attitudes about sexuality', and 'offensive/respecting'), and are presented in the following sections.

### 4.1 Emotional Roles

#### 4.1.1 Caring

Two statements were shown regarding the term 'caring': (1) At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as caring, and (2) Gillette wants men to be caring.

As can be seen in Table 3 below, in the first statement, five participants respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (two from the Dutch and three from the German group); 15 answered 'disagree' (seven from the Dutch and eight from the German group); one answered 'sort of disagree' (from the German group); five answered 'neutral' (four from the Dutch and one from the German group); three answered 'sort of agree' (one from the Dutch and two from the German group), and one answered 'agree' (from the Dutch group).

A 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 4.40, p = 0.493$ .

Table 3

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Caring'*

At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as caring							
Group	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Total
The Netherlands	2	7	0	4	1	1	15
Germany	3	8	1	1	2	0	15
Total	5	15	1	5	3	1	30

As can be seen in Table 4 below, in the second statement, one participant respectively answered 'disagree' (from the German group); one answered 'neutral' (from the Dutch group); three answered 'sort of agree' (two from the Dutch and one from the German group); 16 answered 'agree' (nine from the Dutch and seven from the German group), and nine answered 'strongly agree' (three from the Dutch and six from the German group). Furthermore, the researcher detected two outliers: one Dutch participant who answered '4' (neutral), and one German participant is an extreme value who answered '2' (disagree).

A 2x5 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(4, 30) = 3.58, p = 0.465$ .

Table 4

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Caring'*

Gillette wants men to be caring						
Group	Disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
The Netherlands	0	1	2	9	3	15
Germany	1	0	1	7	6	15
Total	1	1	3	16	9	30

#### 4.1.2 Aggressive

Another two statements were shown regarding the term 'aggressive': (1) At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being aggressive, and (2) Gillette wants men to be aggressive.

As can be seen in Table 5 below, in the first statement, one participant respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (from the Dutch group); four answered 'disagree' (three from the Dutch and one from the German group); four answered 'sort of disagree' (two from both groups); three answered 'neutral' (from the German group); eight answered 'sort of agree' (four from both groups), and ten answered 'agree' (five from both groups).

A 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 5.00, p = 0.416$ .

Table 5

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Aggressive'*

Group	At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as aggressive						Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	
The Netherlands	1	3	2	0	4	5	15
Germany	0	1	2	3	4	5	15
Total	1	4	4	3	8	10	30

As can be seen in Table 6 below, in the second statement, 14 participants respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (seven from both groups); 12 answered 'disagree' (seven from the Dutch and five from the German group); two answered 'sort of disagree' (one from both groups); one answered 'neutral' (from the German group), and one answered 'agree' (from the German group). Furthermore, the researcher found two outliers here: one German

participant is an outlier who answered '4' (neutral), and one German participant is an extreme value (same participant as in paragraph 5.1.1) who answered '6' (agree).

A 2x5 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(4, 30) = 2.33, p = 0.675$ .

Table 6

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Aggressive'*

Group	Gillette wants men to be aggressive					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Agree	
The Netherlands	7	7	1	0	0	15
Germany	7	5	1	1	1	15
Total	14	12	2	1	1	30

#### 4.1.3 Sensitive

Two statements were also shown regarding the term 'sensitive': (1) At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being sensitive, and (2) Gillette wants men to be sensitive.

As can be seen in Table 7 below, in the first statement, seven participants respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (three from the Dutch and four from the German group); ten answered 'disagree' (two from the Dutch and eight from the German group); three answered 'sort of disagree' (from the Dutch group); eight answered 'neutral' (six from the Dutch and two from the German group); one answered 'sort of agree' (from the German group), and one answered 'agree' (from the Dutch group).

A 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 10.74, p = 0.057$ .



Table 7

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Sensitive'*

At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as sensitive							
Group	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Total
The Netherlands	3	2	3	6	0	1	15
Germany	4	8	0	2	1	0	15
Total	7	10	3	8	1	1	30

As can be seen in Table 8 below, in the second statement, four participants respectively answered 'disagree' (one from the Dutch, and three from the German group); three answered 'neutral' (from the Dutch group); eight answered 'sort of agree' (six from the Dutch and two from the German group); 12 answered 'agree' (four from the Dutch and eight from the German group), and three answered 'strongly agree' (one from the Dutch and two from the German group). Furthermore, the researcher found four outliers here, of whom one is the same participant as in paragraph 5.1.1 and 5.1.2). Three outliers are German participants and one outlier is a Dutch participant (all answered '2' (disagree)).

A 2x5 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(4, 30) = 7.67, p = 0.105$ .

Table 8

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Sensitive'*

Gillette wants men to be sensitive						
Group	Disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
The Netherlands	1	3	6	4	1	15
Germany	3	0	2	8	2	15
Total	4	3	8	12	3	30

#### 4.1.6 Assertive

Another two statements were shown regarding the term 'assertive': (1) At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being assertive (zelfbewust/durchsetzungsfähig), and (2) Gillette wants men to be assertive (zelfbewust/durchsetzungsfähig).

As can be seen in Table 9 below, in the first statement, two participants respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (from the Dutch group); eight answered 'disagree' (six from the Dutch and two from the German group); six answered 'sort of disagree' (two from the Dutch, and four from the German group); six answered 'neutral' (three from both groups); three answered 'sort of agree' (one from the Dutch, and two from the German group); four answered 'agree' (one from the Dutch and three from the German group), and one answered 'strongly agree' (from the German group).

A 2x7 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(6, 30) = 7.00, p = 0.321$ .

Table 9

*Crosstab of Participants Answers on Statement 1 'Assertive'*

Group	At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as assertive (zelfbewust/durchsetzungsfähig)							Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
The Netherlands	2	6	2	3	1	1	0	15
Germany	0	2	4	3	2	3	1	15
Total	2	8	6	6	3	4	1	30

As can be seen in Table 10 below, in the second statement, three participants respectively answered 'disagree' (two from the Dutch and one from the German group); one answered

'sort of disagree' (from the German group); five answered 'neutral' (one from the Dutch and four from the German group); three answered 'sort of agree' (one from the Dutch and two from the German group); 15 answered 'agree' (eight from the Dutch and seven from the German group), and three answered 'strongly agree' (from the Dutch group).

A 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 6.53, p = 0.258$ .

Table 10

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Assertive'*

Group	Gillette wants men to be assertive (zelfbewust/durchsetzungsfähig)						Total
	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
The Netherlands	2	0	1	1	8	3	15
Germany	1	1	4	2	7	0	15
Total	3	1	5	3	15	3	30

#### 4.1.7 Modest

Two statements were also shown regarding the term 'modest': (1) At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being modest (bescheiden), and (2) Gillette wants men to be modest (bescheiden).

As can be seen in Table 11 below, in the first statement, five participants respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (two from the Dutch and three from the German group); 15 answered 'disagree' (six from the Dutch and nine from the German group); four answered 'sort of disagree' (two from both groups); five answered 'neutral' (four from the Dutch and one from German group), and one answered 'agree' (from the Dutch group). Furthermore, the researcher found one outlier here who is a Dutch participant (answered '6' (agree)).

A 2x5 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(4, 30) = 3.60, p = 0.463$ .

Table 11

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Modest'*

At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being modest (bescheiden)						
Group	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Agree	Total
The Netherlands	2	6	2	4	1	15
Germany	3	9	2	1	0	15
Total	5	15	4	5	1	30

As can be seen in Table 12 below, in the second statement, four participants respectively answered 'disagree' (one from the Dutch and three from the German group); two answered 'sort of disagree' (one from both groups); 11 answered 'neutral' (seven from the Dutch and four from the German group); six answered 'sort of agree' (two from the Dutch and four from the German group); five answered 'agree' (two from the Dutch and three from the German group), and two answered 'strongly agree' (from the Dutch group). Furthermore, the researcher found five outliers here, of whom one is the same participant as in paragraph 5.1.1, 5.1.2 and 5.1.5. Three outliers were Dutch participants who answered once '2' (disagree), and twice '7' (strongly agree). Two outliers were German participants who answered both with '2' (disagree).

A 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 4.69, p = 0.456$ .

Table 12

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Modest'*

Group	Gillette wants men to be modest (bescheiden)						Total
	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
The Netherlands	1	1	7	2	2	2	15
Germany	3	1	4	4	3	0	15
Total	4	2	11	6	5	2	30

#### 4.1.8 Ambitious

Another two statements were shown regarding the term 'ambitious': (1) At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being ambitious, and (2) Gillette wants men to be ambitious.

As can be seen in Table 13 below, in the first statement, one participant respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (from the German group); eight answered 'disagree' (seven from the Dutch and one from the German group); four answered 'sort of disagree' (from the German group); seven answered 'neutral' (four from the Dutch and three from the German group); six answered 'sort of agree' (three from both groups), and four answered 'agree' (one from the Dutch and three from the German group).

A 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 10.64, p = 0.059$ .

Table 13

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Ambitious'*

Group	At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as ambitious						Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	
The Netherlands	0	7	0	4	3	1	15
Germany	1	1	4	3	3	3	15
Total	1	8	4	7	6	4	30

As can be seen in Table 14 below, in the second statement, one participant respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (from the Dutch group); one answered 'disagree' (from the German group); four answered 'sort of disagree' (two from both groups); nine answered 'neutral' (five from the Dutch and four from the German group); three answered 'sort of agree' (one from the Dutch and two from the German group); 11 answered 'agree' (six from the Dutch and five from the German group), and one answered 'strongly agree' (from the German group).

Here, a 2x7 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(6, 30) = 3.54, p = 0.739$ .

Table 14

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Ambitious'*

Group	Gillette wants men to be ambitious							Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
The Netherlands	1	0	2	5	1	6	0	15
Germany	0	1	2	4	2	5	1	15
Total	1	1	4	9	3	11	1	30

## 4.2 Family versus Work

One statement was shown regarding the category of family versus work: Gillette portrays that work is more important than family. As can be seen in Table 15 below, nine participants respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (six from the Dutch and three from the German group); 12 answered 'disagree' (seven from the Dutch and five from the German group); one answered 'sort of disagree' (from the German group); seven answered 'neutral' (two from the Dutch, and five from the German group), and one answered 'sort of agree' (from the German group).

A 2x5 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(4, 30) = 4.62, p = 0.329$ .

Table 15

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 'Family versus Work'*

Group	Gillette portrays that work is more important than family					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	
The Netherlands	6	7	0	2	0	15
Germany	3	5	1	5	1	15
Total	9	12	1	7	1	30

## 4.3 Strong/Empathy for Others

### 4.3.1 Strong

Two statements were shown regarding the term 'strong': (1) At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being strong, and (2) Gillette wants men to be strong.

As can be seen in Table 16 below, in the first statement, six participants respectively answered 'disagree' (four from the Dutch and two from the German group); six answered

'sort of disagree' (three from both groups); eight answered 'neutral' (six from the Dutch and two from the German group); six answered 'sort of agree' (one from the Dutch and five from the German group), and four answered 'agree' (one from the Dutch and three from the German group).

A 2x5 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(4, 30) = 6.33, p = 0.176$ .

Table 16

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Strong'*

Group	At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being strong					Total
	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	
The Netherlands	4	3	6	1	1	15
Germany	2	3	2	5	3	15
Total	6	6	8	6	4	30

As can be seen in Table 17 below, in the second statement, one participant respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (from the Dutch group); two answered 'disagree' (one from both groups); three answered 'sort of disagree' (two from the Dutch and one from the German group); eight answered 'neutral' (five from the Dutch and three from the German group); eight answered 'sort of agree' (three from the Dutch and five from the German group); seven answered 'agree' (two from the Dutch and five from the German group), and one answered 'strongly agree' (from the Dutch group).

Here, a 2x7 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(6, 30) = 4.62, p = 0.594$ .



Table 17

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Strong'*

Group	Gillette wants men to be strong							Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
The Netherlands	1	1	2	5	3	2	1	15
Germany	0	1	1	3	5	5	0	15
Total	1	2	3	8	8	7	1	30

#### 4.3.2 Empathy for Others

In addition, two statements were shown regarding 'empathy for others': (1) At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as having empathy for others, and (2) Gillette wants men to have empathy for others.

As can be seen in Table 18 below, in the first statement, two participants respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (from the Dutch group); 13 answered 'disagree' (six from the Dutch and seven from the German group); six answered 'sort of disagree' (two from the Dutch and four from the German group); four answered 'neutral' (two from both groups), and five answered 'agree' (three from the Dutch and two from the German group).

A 2x5 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(4, 30) = 2.94, p = 0.567$ .

Table 18

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Empathy for Others'*

Group	At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as having empathy for others					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Agree	
The Netherlands	2	6	2	2	3	15
Germany	0	7	4	2	2	15
Total	2	13	6	4	5	30

As can be seen in Table 19 below, in the second statement, one participant respectively answered 'disagree' (from the German group); one answered 'neutral' (from the Dutch group); 19 answered 'agree' (11 from the Dutch and eight from the German group), and nine answered 'strongly agree' (three from the Dutch and six from the German group).

Furthermore, the researcher found two outliers here. The outlier is a Dutch participant and answered '4' (neutral); the extreme value is a German participant (same participant as in paragraph 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.1.5 and 5.1.7) who answered '2' (disagree).

Here, a 2x4 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(3, 30) = 3.47, p = 0.324$ .

Table 19

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Empathy for Others'*

Group	Gillette wants men to have empathy for others				Total
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	
The Netherlands	0	1	11	3	15
Germany	1	0	8	6	15
Total	1	1	19	9	30

#### 4.4 Power between Men and Women

One statement was shown regarding the category of power between men and women: (1) The commercial shows that... For this statement, participants could choose between three options, namely: (1) men have more power than women, (2) men and women are equal, and (3) women have more power than men. As can be seen in Table 20 below, 11 participants respectively answered 'men have more power than women' (two from the Dutch and nine from the German group); 18 answered 'men and women are equal' (12 from the Dutch and six from the German group), and one answered 'women have more power than men' (from the Dutch group).

A 2x3 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was a significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(2, 30) = 7.46, p = 0.024$ .

Table 20

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on statement 'Power between Men and Women'*

Group	The commercial shows that...			Total
	Men have more power than women	Men and women are equal	Women have more power than men	
The Netherlands	2	12	1	15
Germany	9	6	0	15
Total	11	18	1	30

#### 4.5 Gender Roles

Two statements were shown regarding the category of gender roles: (1) At the beginning of the commercial, there is a clear difference in gender roles, and (2) Gillette questions traditional gender roles.

As can be seen in Table 21 below, in the first statement, two participants respectively answered 'disagree' (one from both groups); three answered 'sort of disagree' (two from the

Dutch and one from the German group); five answered 'neutral' (four from the Dutch and one from the German group); five answered 'sort of agree' (one from the Dutch, and four from the German group); 12 answered 'agree' (five from the Dutch and seven from the German group), and three answered 'strongly agree' (two from the Dutch and one from the German group).

A 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 4.60, p = 0.467$ .

Table 21

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Gender Roles'*

Group	At the beginning of the commercial, there is a clear difference in gender roles						Total
	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
The Netherlands	1	2	4	1	5	2	15
Germany	1	1	1	4	7	1	15
Total	2	3	5	5	12	3	30

As can be seen in Table 22 below, in the second statement, one participant respectively answered 'disagree' (from the Dutch group); five answered 'sort of disagree' (two from the Dutch, and three from the German group); four answered 'neutral' (two from both groups); five answered 'sort of agree' (one from the Dutch and four from the German group); 11 answered 'agree' (seven from the Dutch and four from the German group), and three answered 'strongly agree' (one from the Dutch and two from the German group).

Here, a 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 5.15, p = 0.398$ .

Table 22

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Gender Roles'*

Group	Gillette questions traditional gender roles						Total
	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
The Netherlands	2	2	2	1	7	1	15
Germany	0	3	2	4	4	2	15
Total	2	5	4	5	11	3	30

#### 4.6 Attitudes about Sexuality

Two statements were shown regarding the category 'attitudes about sexuality': (1) The male characters are acting out of practical reasons, and (2) The male characters are acting out of sentiment.

As can be seen in Table 23 below, in the first statement, one participant respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (from the German group); seven answered 'disagree' (five from the Dutch and two from the German group); five answered 'sort of disagree' (from the German group); nine answered 'neutral' (six from the Dutch and three from the German group); five answered 'sort of agree' (one from the Dutch and four from the German group), three ten answered 'agree' (from the Dutch group).

A 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was a significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 13.09, p = 0.023$ .

Table 23

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Attitudes about Sexuality'*

Group	The male characters are acting out of practical reasons						Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	
The Netherlands	0	5	0	6	1	3	15
Germany	1	2	5	3	4	0	15
Total	1	7	5	9	5	3	30

As can be seen in Table 24 below, in the second statement, one participant respectively answered 'disagree' (two from both groups); two answered 'sort of disagree' (from the German group); eight answered 'neutral' (seven from the Dutch and one from the German group); ten answered 'sort of agree' (three from the Dutch, and seven from the German group), and six answered 'agree' (three from both groups). Furthermore, the researcher found four outliers here. Two outliers were German participants and two outliers were Dutch participants, both answered '2' (disagree).

Here, a 2x5 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(4, 30) = 8.10, p = 0.088$ .

Table 24

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Attitudes about Sexuality'*

Group	The male characters are acting out of sentiment					Total
	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	
The Netherlands	2	0	7	3	3	15
Germany	2	2	1	7	3	15
Total	4	2	8	10	6	30

#### 4.7 Offensive/Respecting

In the final part of the survey, the participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they disagree or agree with the following two statements: (1) The commercial is offensive to men, and (2) The commercial respects men.

As can be seen in Table 25 below, in the first statement, seven participants respectively answered 'strongly disagree' (three from the Dutch and four from the German group); 12 answered 'disagree' (six from both groups); six answered 'sort of disagree' (one from the Dutch and five from the German group); four answered 'neutral' (from the Dutch group), and one answered 'agree' (from the Dutch group). Furthermore, the researcher found one outlier here who is a Dutch participant (answered '6' (agree)).

A 2x5 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(4, 30) = 7.81, p = 0.099$ .

Table 25

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 1 'Offensive/Respecting'*

Group	The commercial is offensive to men					Total
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Agree	
The Netherlands	3	6	1	4	1	15
Germany	4	6	5	0	0	15
Total	7	12	6	4	1	30

As can be seen in Table 26 below, in the second statement, one participant respectively answered 'disagree' (from the Dutch group); one answered 'sort of disagree' (from the Dutch group); three answered 'neutral' (two from the Dutch and one from the German group); nine answered 'sort of agree' (four from the Dutch and five from the German group); 12 answered 'agree' (six from both groups), and four answered 'strongly agree' (one from the Dutch and

three from the German group). Furthermore, the researcher found two outliers here. Both outliers are Dutch and answered '3' (sort of disagree), and '2' (disagree) (the latter is the same participant as the 'offensive' statement).

Here, a 2x6 Chi-square analysis revealed that there was no significant (significant =  $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between the country the participants grew up in and the extent to which the participants agree or disagree with this statement,  $\chi^2(5, 30) = 3.44, p = 0.632$ .

Table 26

*Crosstab of Participants' Answers on Statement 2 'Offensive/Respecting'*

Group	The commercial respects men						Total
	Disagree	Sort of disagree	Neutral	Sort of agree	Agree	Strongly agree	
The Netherlands	1	1	2	4	6	1	15
Germany	0	0	1	5	6	3	15
Total	1	1	3	9	12	4	30

The results in this chapter indicate that Dutch and German men generally perceive Gillette's commercial similarly, except the following two statements: 1) The male characters act out of practical reasons, and 2) The commercial shows that... a) men have more power than women, b) men and women are equal, or c) women have more power than men. Findings on these statements show that there were significant differences between the two groups. The next chapter, therefore, moves on to discuss the findings, and relate them to the theory.

## 5. Discussion

This study aims to assess the importance of Hofstede's dimension of masculinity/femininity in research on male stereotyping in Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be", by examining the perception of Dutch and German men through a survey. This section will discuss the results and link them to the theory, and is structured as follows: First, similarities



between the outcomes of the present study and Hofstede's theory will be discussed. Then, the current findings will be linked to previous observations on the connection between Hofstede's theory and advertisements, and discrepancies and possible explanations will be discussed.

### **5.1 Possible Similarities with Hofstede's Theory**

Taken together, this research shows that two out of 24 questions (statements) were significant and thus assumedly correspond with Hofstede's distinction between masculine and feminine societies. The first half of Gillette's commercial focuses on a masculine depiction and the second half shows more of a feminine depiction of men. Because "Country Comparison" (n.d. a) states that Germany is a masculine society and the Netherlands is a feminine society, it was expected that German men would agree more with the masculine depiction, whereas Dutch men would agree more with the feminine depiction of men within Gillette's commercial, because they can better identify themselves with these depictions.

Similarly, the current study found that there is a significant relationship between the examined Dutch and German men and their perception of the power between men/women within the commercial. This finding indicates that Dutch participants generally believe that the commercial intended to show that men and women are more equal, whereas German participants generally believe that the commercial mainly shows that men have more power than women. As Hofstede's (2011) distinction between masculine and feminine societies suggest, in masculine societies, men decide on the family size and therefore have more power, and in feminine societies, it is the other way around and men and women are more equal. Thus, the aforementioned finding supports Hofstede's theory on the depiction of masculine and feminine societies and are in line with the researcher's initial expectations that there is an actual difference between the perceptions of men in masculine and feminine societies on Gillette's commercial. Moreover, this result reflects those of Nelson et al. (2006) who also

found that men's perceptions of advertisements are different in both types of societies. However, the given answers were the participants' perception of the commercial and their opinion on what they thought the commercial shows, and thus do not measure their preference.

Another important finding is that there is a significant relationship between the two groups and their answers on whether the male characters within the commercial act out of practical reasons. As Hofstede's (2011) theory has shown, male characters acting out of practical reasons belong to a masculine society. Dutch participants have more of a 'neutral'/'agree' attitude towards this statement, which means they are more likely to be neutral or agree with this masculine statement. In contrast, German participants have more of a 'neutral'/'disagree' attitude towards this statement, which means they are more likely to be neutral or disagree with this masculine statement. In other words, Dutch participants somewhat perceive the male depiction in this statement as more masculine than German participants do. Although this outcome accords with our earlier observations, which showed that men in masculine and feminine societies perceive advertisements differently (cf. Nelson et al., 2006), it cannot be said with certainty that this outcome corroborates the findings of the previous work in Hofstede (2011). The reason for this is that the other question on whether the male characters are portrayed as acting out of sentiment, which according to Hofstede (2011) belongs to a feminine society, was not significant. Therefore, it is a one-sided view, i.e. if the question about sentiment was also significant, it could be assumed that there was a stronger difference in the perceptions of Dutch and German men. In this case, the current study assumedly could accord with earlier research of Hofstede (2011) and "Country Comparison" (n.d. a).

## 5.2 Discrepancies with Hofstede's Theory

Nevertheless, only two out of 24 questions (statements) revealed a significant relationship between the two groups, which means that the current research generally does not correspond with Hofstede's theory. German men do not specifically perceive Gillette's commercial that interrogates the masculine stereotype of men, differently than Dutch men. Therefore, this research could support the suggestion that Hofstede's theory is essentialist (see Holliday, 2000; Trowler, 2014) and 'outdated' (see An & Kim, 2007; Drogendijk & Slangen, 2006). In addition, this study supports evidence from previous observations (Milner & Collins, 2000; Paek et al., 2011; Minkov, 2018) which have suggested that Hofstede's masculinity scores do not always correspond with reality.

For example, the questions about whether the commercial shows a clear difference in gender or if Gillette questions traditional gender roles, were not significant. In other words, there was no significant difference in the perception of the Dutch and German participants on these statements. These findings are contrary to earlier research of Hofstede (2011) which has suggested that masculine countries show greater gender differences than feminine countries, and thus does not support the expectation that there would be a difference in the perception of men from masculine and feminine countries on the portrayal of gender differences within Gillette's commercial. Nevertheless, these outcomes accord with our earlier observations, which showed that masculine countries portray fewer gender differences in commercials (see Milner & Collins, 2000; Paek et al., 2011).

Moreover, the questions whether the participants believe that Gillette's commercial respects men or is offensive to men were not significant either. It has been suggested that there are differences between masculine and feminine countries (Hofstede, 2011), and thus the expectation was that Gillette's commercial would strike German participants as more

offensive and less respecting because the commercial interrogates the masculine depiction of men. However, this does not appear to be the case.

Although the two significant questions corroborate research of Nelson et al. (2006), this study generally does not accord with their findings that show a different perception of men in feminine and masculine countries on advertisements. In this sense, the current study does not support the idea that people's perceptions are based on the type of society they live in and is therefore contrary to Hofstede's (2011) depiction of masculine and feminine societies. As theory has stated, a possible explanation of the few significant relationships between the two groups and their perceptions, might be that gender roles are flexible and individuals form their identities in different ways, and thus they are non-fixed (cf. Paechter, 2006; Sandstrom et al., 2006). In this case, the perceptions of the participants on the commercial can be different and individually based. Another source of uncertainty is that not all masculine and feminine societies are completely masculine or feminine (Paechter, 2006). So theoretically, Dutch and German men could have both feminine and masculine mindsets, which possibly explains the current findings. This could for example also be linked to Minkov's (2018) findings that both German and Dutch people attach great value to femininity since he found that German and Dutch people hate to compete and like to help other people. Therefore, Minkov (2018) also questions the liability of Hofstede's theory on his masculinity/femininity dimension. In sum, the levels observed in this investigation are far below of those observed by Nelson et al. (2006) and Hofstede (2011).

## **6. Conclusion**

The purpose of the current study was to determine whether Dutch men perceive Gillette's commercial differently than German men. For this purpose, a survey which included 16

Dutch men and 16 German men was conducted and provided possible answers on the following research question and sub-questions:

Research question: *Is Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be" perceived differently by men in feminine and masculine societies, according to Hofstede's dimension?*

- How do men in the Netherlands perceive Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be"?
- How do men in Germany perceive Gillette's commercial "The Best Men Can Be"?

This study has identified two significant differences that correspond to earlier research which suggest that there is a difference between masculine and feminine societies. One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that Dutch participants rather than German participants, perceive Gillette's interrogation on masculine depictions of men as to how Gillette's wants men to perceive it. This is, that men and women are equal and men's behavior should not be explained by the excuse of boys will be boys.

Nevertheless, this study has found that generally, Hofstede's theory on feminine and masculine societies is not applicable on Dutch and German men's perception of Gillette's commercial. Due to the lack of significant correlations, the current study does not report how men in the Netherlands and Germany perceive Gillette's commercial differently, and thus cannot answer the research questions. Hofstede's cultural dimension of masculinity versus femininity is not a reliable theory to determine cultural perception of Gillette's commercial, which accords with earlier observations that suggest his theory is outdated and essentialist. Furthermore, the current investigations support the suggestion that men's opinion is not society-based, and that an individual is not entirely masculine or feminine, thus perceptions could be individually based and different.

### **6.1 Limitations & Future Research**

The current study has been an essential step in assessing society-based perceptions of commercials and to determine whether Hofstede's theory and earlier research on masculinity and femininity within ads are applicable here. Nevertheless, the generalizability of the current study's findings is subject to certain limitations that could have affected the outcomes. Firstly, the most important limitation lies in the fact that the study was based on a small number of participants per group. With a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be generalizable to all Dutch and German men. Secondly, although the researcher asked the participants about their ethnicity and educational level, these could not be examined as they were too similar or there were not enough respondents covering an answer. In addition, the lack of adequate questions could have influenced the current outcomes. For example, participants were not asked what kind of study they follow or completed. Personal matters could have played a role in this because, for example, if all participants follow a program (or are just interested) in gender studies they might have a strong opinion about masculine stereotyping. Further research should, therefore, be undertaken to investigate a larger sample size while considering ethnicity and educational background, as this could cause different outcomes. Thirdly, the researcher was not present when participants completed the survey, which means that the participants could not ask questions about it immediately. For example, several terms were used within the statements in the survey (e.g. strong, assertive, modest, ambitious), which could have been perceived differently by each of the participants. However, the researcher mentioned at the introduction of the survey that participants could contact her when having questions or comments. Fourthly, the current research did not assess whether participants have traveled or lived abroad in a feminine or masculine society that is different from that of the country they grow up in. This could have affected the participants' perceptions of masculinity and/or femininity depictions. Further

research should also consider this by adding a question about whether they have lived or traveled abroad for a certain period of time for example, and if so, in which country. Fifthly, participants completed the survey in English, which assumedly is their second language. In this case, they might have not fully understood what the statements were about or perceived them differently, which could have affected the outcomes of the present study. Future research should, therefore, consider creating a separate Dutch and German version of the survey with the help of an official translator, in order to obtain a translation of the survey that has the same meaning in both languages. Sixthly, the current research was solely focused on a survey because of limitations in time. A greater focus on a social media analysis or interviews with the participants could produce interesting findings that give a greater insight into how Dutch and German men perceive the commercial. In this case, it is possible to map how the two groups talk about the commercial online and through further in-depth interviews the underlying reasoning can be made more prominent. Further research should, therefore, consider a social media analysis and conducting interviews. Lastly, examining more men from different feminine and masculine countries could also produce interesting findings. Therefore, the results of this study need to be interpreted with caution. In spite of its limitations, the study certainly adds to our understanding of the different perceptions of a commercial in masculine and feminine societies, and the applicability of Hofstede's theory.

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## Appendix A: Survey

### Survey on Gillette Commercial

Dear participant,

Welcome to this Master thesis survey!

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research on how Dutch and German men perceive Gillette's 2019 commercial 'The Best Men Can Be' differently. The survey will take around 10 minutes (including watching the commercial).

Your answers will be completely confidential and anonymous. The gathered data will only be used in academic context of this research under the supervision of the Intercultural Communication program at Utrecht University (The Netherlands).

Please note that there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers to this survey, only you can define or decide what applies to you. If you have any comments, questions or would like to receive the results of this study, do not hesitate to send me an email to [l.j.schipper@students.uu.nl](mailto:l.j.schipper@students.uu.nl)

Thank you very much for your participation, I really appreciate your input!

Kind regards,  
Lisa Schipper  
MA Intercultural Communication - Utrecht University

\* Required

### General Section

1. **What is your age? \***

---

2. **What is your gender? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Male  
 Female  
 Other

3. **Where did you grow up? \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Germany  
 The Netherlands

4. **What is your ethnicity? (For example, White, Asian, Hispanic etc.) \***

---

5. **What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (Only for Dutch participants, if German go to the next question)**

*Mark only one oval.*

- VMBO
- HAVO
- VWO/Gymnasium
- MBO
- HBO
- WO
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

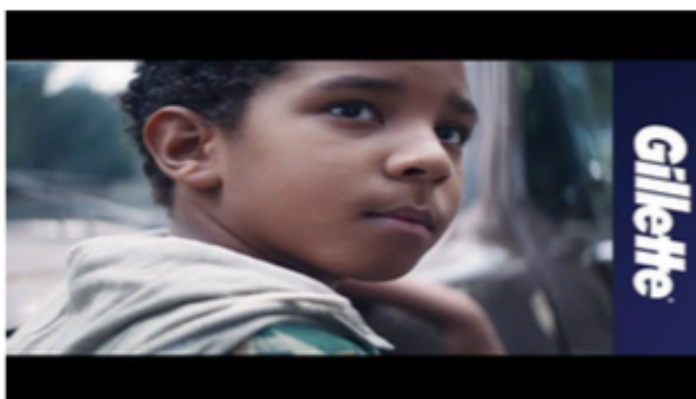
6. **What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (Only for German participants, if Dutch go to the next question)**

*Mark only one oval.*

- Hauptschulabschluss
- Realschulabschluss
- Fachhochschulreife
- Abitur
- Bachelor
- Master
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Gillette Commercial 'The Best Men Can Be'

Please watch the commercial below



<http://youtube.com/watch?v=koPmuEyP3a0>

**7. At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as caring \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**8. Gillette wants men to be caring \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**9. At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being aggressive \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree



**10. Gillette wants men to be aggressive \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**11. At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being sensitive \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**12. Gillette wants men to be sensitive \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**13. Gillette portrays that work is more important than family \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**14. At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being strong \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**15. Gillette wants men to be strong \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

16. **At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being assertive (zelfbewust/durchsetzungsfähig) \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Sort of disagree  
 Neutral  
 Sort of agree  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

17. **Gillette wants men to be assertive (zelfbewust/durchsetzungsfähig) \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Sort of disagree  
 Neutral  
 Sort of agree  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

18. **At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being modest (bescheiden) \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Sort of disagree  
 Neutral  
 Sort of agree  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

**19. Gillette wants men to be modest (bescheiden) \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**20. At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as being ambitious \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**21. Gillette wants men to be ambitious \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

22. **At the beginning of the commercial, the male characters are portrayed as having empathy for others \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Sort of disagree  
 Neutral  
 Sort of agree  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

23. **Gillette wants men to have empathy for others \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Sort of disagree  
 Neutral  
 Sort of agree  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

24. **At the beginning of the commercial, there is a clear difference in gender roles \***

*Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree  
 Disagree  
 Sort of disagree  
 Neutral  
 Sort of agree  
 Agree  
 Strongly agree

**25. Gillette questions traditional gender roles \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**26. The male characters are acting out of practical reasons \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**27. The male characters are acting out of sentiment \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**28. The commercial shows that... \****Mark only one oval.*

- men have more power than women
- men and women are equal
- women have more power than men

**29. The commercial is offensive to men \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

**30. The commercial respects men \****Mark only one oval.*

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Sort of disagree
- Neutral
- Sort of agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree