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Name: Jet de Ligny Student number: 6352510
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Framing Meat & Masculinities

An analysis on how Dutch television advertisements for meat and plant-based meat analogues relate to the prevailing representation of meat as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity

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Abstract

The idea that ‘real’ men need meat because it contributes to strength, power and virility is deeply ingrained in Western cultures, including the Dutch. This dominant view can be seen as an element that is inextricably linked to the model of hegemonic masculinity. It perpetuates power relations, which are harmful to humans, the environment and animals. Given the fact that meat consumption among Dutch men is still high, this thesis critically examines the extent to which Dutch television advertisements for meat products reflect the image of meat as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity. Through a juxtaposition with advertisements for plant-based meat analogues, it becomes clear how the current dominant representation in meat advertisements paints an image of meat that is associated with masculinity, male dominance and power relations. This thesis contributes to the existing field of research on gendered food by focusing on the framing of meat consumption through the lens of television texts. More research on food advertisements and their relation to hegemonic representations of food is recommended, as well as that criticism of and action against the provocative role of advertising – both in the academic and regulatory field – in the construction and maintenance of gender inequality also pays attention to gender stereotyped representation in the context of food promotion.

Acknowledgments

Gently blow and stir the fire,
Lay the mutton down to roast,
Dress it nicely I desire,
In the dripping put a toast,
That I hunger may remove:
Mutton is the meat I love.

On the dresser see it lie,
Oh! the charming white and red!
Finer meat ne'er met my eye,
On the sweetest grass it fed:
Let the jack go swiftly round,
Let me have it nicely browned.

On the table spread the cloth,
Let the knives be sharp and clean:
Pickles get and salad both,
Let them each be fresh and green:
With small beer, good ale, and wine,
O ye gods! how I shall dine.

Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745) – Mutton

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Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
Introduction	1
Theoretical Framework	4
<i>Men, meat & hegemonic masculinity</i>	4
<i>Men, flexitarianism/vegetarianism/veganism, femininity & masculinity</i>	7
<i>Advertisements & the construction of dominant ideas & ideologies</i>	9
Dutch context – politics, representation & historical developments	12
Positionality & relevance	14
Methodology	16
Analysis	18
<i>Who is in power? The articulation of hegemonic masculinity</i>	19
<i>Food choice & ‘emasculatation’</i>	23
<i>Maintaining & challenging the traditional nuclear family ideal</i>	26
<i>The art of cooking: indoor/ outdoor, duty/ leisure & the barbecue</i>	29
Conclusion	32

Introduction

It is summer, it is warm and the sun is bright. The screen switches to that of a few hamburgers, sausages, skewers and two pieces of red pepper cooking on a barbecue grill. Then to a man – white, middle-aged – who is in charge of the barbecue and proudly looks out over his family gathered in the garden. A woman puts a bowl of fruit on the table, the rest chatter away. The man behind the barbecue gets emotional seeing his family together. A few seconds later, the father of the man comes up to him and says, “Are you whining, boy?” (original: “Sta je nou te janken, jongen?”) to which the man replies, somewhat caught, “No, that’s just the smoke” (original: “Nee dat is de rook”). Meanwhile, the video is accompanied by a voice-over which, upon seeing a shot of meat, praises their “biggest barbecue line”. The foregoing concerns a brief description of an advertisement from the Dutch supermarket chain *Jumbo* that appeared on television in the summer of 2021 (Alfred International 2021).

The image of meat, the barbecue and a man repeatedly surfaces in the media, and in particular in advertisements. According to Jemál Nath (2011), this connection can be seen as an expression of the practice of *hegemonic masculinity* – a practice that legitimizes men’s dominant position in society and justifies the subordination of social groups whom are marginalized on the basis of gender, race, ability or sexuality and much more (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). Nath’s (2011) statement comes in the wake of a larger body of research that focuses on the link between gender and food, and in particular the link between meat and masculinity (Adams 1990/2016; Campos et al., 2020; Cavazza et al, 2015; Kiefer et al, 2005; Micha et al, 2015; Rothgerber 2013). Carol J. Adams (1990/2016), for example, demonstrated through a visual and discourse analysis on historical paintings and literature how – in the period 1400 – 1500 – products such as fat and (red) meat were associated with power, strength and prestige – aspects that were connected to a man. In the meantime, “second-class” food products such as vegetables, fruit and grain were associated with the “second-class citizen” – a woman. Given this, she argues that the association of meat with masculinity stems from patriarchal power structures and that these repeated representations have turned meat into a symbol of masculinity and a celebration of male dominance (Adams 1990/2016, 1 – 7). The idea that meat is a symbol of masculinity remains deeply rooted in many Western societies, including the Dutch. Among men – and women – for example, there is the dominant belief that eating meat can actually augment one’s masculinity (Campos et al. 2020; MacDonnell Mesler et al. 2022; Rothgerber 2012). On the other hand, the persistent association of vegetarian products with femininity, causes many men to be reluctant to switch to a plant-based diet out of fear of losing

their masculinity (Boffetta et al, 2010; Bogueva, Marinova, & Bryant 2022; Campos et al, 2020; Cavazza et al, 2015; Micha et al, 2015; Rothgerber 2013; Kiefer et al, 2005).

However, in view of the various negative consequences of meat consumption, such as a significant contribution to global warming and an increased risk of health complications such as heart disease and asthma, a switch to a diet with less meat consumption is necessary. (MacDonnell Mesler et al. 2022; Rothgerber 2012). As a counterpoint to the immense meat industry and in response to the growing need for a plant-based diet, plant-based meat analogues have increasingly appeared on the market in recent years (Kołodziejczak et al. 2021). This trend can also be observed on the Dutch market, where more and more plant-based meat analogues can be found in the supermarkets. For example, plant-based hamburgers, schnitzels and sausages from brands such as *Garden Gourmet*, *Beyond Meat* and *De Vegetarische Slager* can now be found in almost every Dutch supermarket. These products have similar “aesthetic qualities, such as texture, flavor, and color, and nutritional characteristics of specific types of meat” as real meat (Kyriakopoulou, Dekker & van der Goot 2019). However, despite their almost indistinguishable appearance and taste from real meat, the choice for real meat and reluctance to plant-based meat analogues remains high among Dutch men (Dagevos 2021; Schösler et al. 2015). Given this, the question arises as to how these products are presented to the public – and in particular how their presentation, due to their dual appearance, (i.e. meat is associated with masculinity and vegetarian products are associated with femininity) relates the hegemonic masculine conception of meat. Are there differences and similarities in the presentation of meat products and plant-based meat analogues in Dutch television advertisements, for example? For if advertising for meat adheres to and perpetuates the dominant idea of meat as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity, this may play a role in the persistence of large numbers of meat-eating men. On the other hand, the advertisements for the plant-based meat analogues can provide inspiration for dismantling the dominant association of vegetarian products as feminine and meat as masculine.

Advertising is a crucial communication tool to attract and retain consumers, but it can also convey, perpetuate or even challenge dominant ideologies and gender stereotypes (Grau & Zotos 2016). Several scholars point out the essential role that the media play in the construction and maintenance of hegemonic meat-as-masculine symbolism (Cavazza et al. 2015; MacDonnell Mesler et al., 2022; Rothgerber 2012). However, very little research has been done into how this symbolism is expressed in advertisements and to what extent and in what way advertisements thus contribute to the maintenance of this hegemonic symbolism. Moreover, even less research exists into how advertisements or media in general challenge this

dominant view. Therefore, elaborating on the statement by Stacy Landreth Grau and Yorgos C. Zotos (2016) that “it is important to continue to track changes in gender stereotypes in advertising” the question of *how Dutch television advertisements for meat and plant-based meat analogues relate to the prevailing representation of meat as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity?* will be discussed in this thesis. This research examines the extent to which Dutch advertisements for meat and plant-based meat analogues reflect dominant norms around masculinity and femininity. This research does not address consumer preferences nor the goals of the producers of the advertisements. Instead, this research focuses on how the product is promoted and how dominant discourses about gender and food – and in particular about meat and hegemonic masculinity – are conveyed through the representation in advertisements of meat and plant-based meat analogues. The aim is to explore how power relations function and are implicitly reproduced or challenged in advertisements for meat and plant-based analogues.

This thesis will begin with a discussion of the theoretical framework which will guide the analysis. In this chapter, the way in which food is historically sexualized and what this means for power relations will be further explored. In addition, this chapter will look at the role of advertising in the construction and maintenance of harmful cultural ideas and dominant ideologies. The theoretical framework chapter will be followed by a chapter in which the Dutch context will be explained. This means that the Dutch discourse on meat, masculinity, vegetarianism and femininity will be looked at in more detail. Both political and journalistic sources will be covered in this chapter. This is followed by a discussion on the positioning of the researcher and the methodology used. This section consists of both a self-reflective part and a more practical part, in which more clarity and justification are given about the methods used and the course of action. Finally, a media content analysis and a discourse analysis are conducted on seven Dutch advertisements – four related to the promotion of meat and three related to plant-based meat analogues. This analysis is divided into four themes – *Who is in power? The articulation of hegemonic masculinity, Food choice & ‘emasculatation’, Maintaining & challenging the traditional nuclear family ideal, and The art of cooking: indoor/ outdoor, duty/ leisure & the barbecue*. Finally, the thesis will be concluded with a summarize of the findings that resulted from the analysis.

Theoretical Framework

Men, meat & hegemonic masculinity

Food is an important part of our lives, which manifests itself in different ways, including a person's choice of food. The prevailing view on food choice is that it is purely a biological issue. However, scholars emphasise how a person's food choice is also strongly related to social, political and cultural factors (Adams 1990/2016; Arganini et al. 2012; Campos et al. 2020). As Claudia Arganini and others (2012) note, food choice plays a role in “identity expression, communication, social interactions, but also in delineating status and gender roles” (85). Given the latter, eating and food choice is an aspect closely linked to the construction and maintenance of power relations. It thus involves issues of class, race, age and gender. Such a link manifests itself in various ways; for example, an unequal class distribution may be reflected in food choice, as the middle or upper class has the opportunity to buy certain products that the lower class cannot afford. This is clearly visible, for example, in the case of meat consumption, of which Carol J. Adams (1990/2016) states in her book *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, that “people with power have always eaten meat” (4). According to Adams (1990/2016), this expression of power is not only related to classism, but also to sexism (4). Through a historical analysis from the fifteenth to the twentieth century, she examines how patriarchal discourses have constructed a mythology that “permeates all classes that meat is a masculine food and meat eating a male activity” (Ibidem, 4). Literature, biblical stories and visual imaginary constructed and maintained the assumption that meat is a male privilege and provides strength and virility. In contrast, vegetables, fruit and other non-meat foods were portrayed as “second-class foods” for the “second-class citizen” – i.e. the woman. In the course of hundreds of years of repetition, this narrative has made meat a symbol of masculinity, male power and male dominance. Eating meat as a man can thus be seen as a way of conforming to the model of *hegemonic masculinity* – a practice that legitimises the dominant position of men (mostly white, heterosexual middle- or upper-class men) in society and justifies the disadvantage of social groups marginalised on the basis of gender, race, disposition or sexuality and more – and a celebration of male dominance (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Nath 2011; Rothgerber 2012).

More recent studies confirm that the historical and dominant narrative of meat as a symbol of masculinity still prevails in many Western societies (Boffetta et al. 2010; Campos et al. 2020; Cavazza et al. 2015; Micha et al. 2015; Rothgerber 2013; Kiefer et al., 2005). The study by Lúcia Campos and colleagues (2020) in the Portuguese context, for example, indicates

that a person's masculinity is still often expressed through food, and specifically through meat consumption. They explore how hegemonic masculinity norms in Portugal affect the food choices men and women make, and how food becomes an indicator of one's masculinity or femininity (Campos et al. 2020, 1843 – 1844). They argue that the gender norms stemming from hegemonic masculinity “not only convey gendered representations of food but also influence our perceptions of others masculinity and femininity according to the content ... of their meals” (Campos et al. 2020, 1844). This argument is agreed upon by Rhiannon MacDonnell Mesler and others (2022) who argue that “beliefs that meat consumption can augment masculinity” continue to prevail among both men and women (1 – 2). These statements resonate with earlier research in which Hank Rothgerber (2012) discusses the phenomenon that men often eat meat because “it makes them feel like real men” (1). He argues, that the dominant idea that meat symbolises and augments virility, manhood, strength and power, plays an indispensable role in this (Rothgerber 2012, 2).

A similar belief about how masculinity and male dominance can be augmented or confirmed through meat-related activities is linked to the practice of barbecuing. Jémal Nath (2011) briefly discusses this issue in his study – set in the Australian context – and notes that the “Western barbecue is seen as one significant place where manliness is socially calibrated by the consumption of meat” (262). The dominant image of the barbecue is one as a space where male power, leadership and hegemonic masculinity rule, and contributes to the “real men eat meat” mentality (Nath 2011, 262). Barbecuing, and its link to man's responsibility, is often defined as something “natural”. In this respect, the era of the hunter-gatherer – in which man is supposed to have been the one who hunted animals and killed them to feed his family – is cited as evidence. This view still lives strongly in people's imaginations and is repeatedly touted in the media (Jennings 2019). For example, one of the participants in the study by Nath (2011) expressed a similar mindset when he noted that, “I daresay people think it's something primal and stereotypical to think men are the hunters you know, standing over the kill, cooking the kill” (268).

However, as Chris Dummitt (1998) argues, the dominant link between men and the barbecue, can actually be traced back to marketing strategies of the late 1940s and mid 1950s. Drawing on the Canadian context, he analyses the development in which the barbecue gained momentum in the post-war years and became a cultural phenomenon. He relates this increase in popularity to changing attitudes towards fatherhood – when men were expected to become more involved in the household (Dummitt 1998, 211). To make the connection between masculinity and domesticity, barbecue marketers responded by making barbecuing “one of a

number of post-war, male-oriented family leisure activities” (Ibidem, 210). Barbecuing was sold as a rustic practice, an age-old method of preparing meat and a natural task for men. Here, the activity of outdoor cooking – barbecuing – was associated with “symbols of virile masculinity and manly leisure” (Ibidem, 212). Men were encouraged to take charge and their historic “muscular and military masculinity” was appealed to (Ibidem, 215). According to Dummitt (1998), meat was a key element in conveying this narrative (215). He argues that through the symbolism of meat, the barbecue, masculinity and women in advertisements, “advertisers asserted a direct relationship between meat, masculinity and virile heterosexual masculinity” (Ibidem, 216). It also shifted the dominant definition of cooking, which used to refer to a task for women and something that takes place indoors. Research by Thomas Adler (1981), Marjorie DeVault (1994), Deborah Lupton (1996) and more recently Michelle Szabo (2013), shows that for many men, cooking is often a leisure activity and takes place outside the home.

This shift in gender roles is reflected in the visual image that went hand in hand with the sale of barbecues as a male leisure activity. In this image, the man is usually at the front and takes care of the barbecue. Meanwhile, the woman takes care of the children, drinks or salads – the feminine, light food (Higgs and Thomas 2016; Kiefer et al. 2005). This resonates with Francesco Screti’s (2019) statement about the representation of the father as the *pater familias*, when he is responsible for the “rough” work of cutting the meat during holidays (e.g. Thanksgiving or Christmas) (18). In addition, such images often portray a family doing things together, developing family intimacy, trust and mutual connection (Nash et al. 2018, 3). Such representations of a family can be related to the *traditional nuclear family ideal*, which refers to the dominant definition of a nuclear family being uniformly white, heterosexual and middle-class. This definition stems from an image of an ideal family in the 1950s and includes associations with traditional gender roles – that is, the man as independent, authoritarian and the breadwinner and the woman as dependent and the housewife (Cogswell 1975, 392; Grau & Zotos 2016, 767). The ideal family was transformed into a primary cornerstone of society and can be seen as a product of hegemonic masculinity. Although the man became more involved in the household – originally considered as a ‘woman's domain’ – in the post-war years, the balance of power shifted with him. Not only did the father remain the powerful figure in the family because of his role as breadwinner, the household tasks in which the man became involved were transformed into men’s leisure activities – such as the activity of barbecuing (Dummitt 1998; Grau & Zotos 2016). Thus, the division of power was maintained whereby the woman was dependent on the man and the man was kept as superior to the woman. Building

on Dummitt's (1998) conclusion, the emergence of the "post-war barbecue culture" created a new distinction between leisure and work and rearticulated and redefined existing hierarchies between men and women (221 – 223). This image of barbecuing thus also gave a new dimension to meat as a symbol of masculinity, in which barbecuing became an expression of male dominance as well. The image of the barbecue, the nuclear family, meat and masculinity can still be found in contemporary media (Jinek 2020; Nash et al. 2018). Media products such as 'men's' cookbooks and television advertisements for barbecue and food products still produce an image that appeals to the meat-as-masculine symbolism and the nuclear family ideal (Adams 1990/2016; Nash et al. 2018; Nath 2011).

The emphasis on enhancing and strengthening one's masculinity by eating meat, barbecuing or preparing meat in general are clear examples of how men want to conform to hegemonic masculine norms. In Western countries, the ideal hegemonic masculinity is an idea of a heterosexual man who conforms to socially prescribed norms of stoicism, pursuing dominance, being assertive, aggressive, powerful, strong, tough, invulnerable, courageous, self-sufficient, stoic towards emotions and dominant over the other sex (Campos et al. 2020; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). As R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt (2005) note, the majority of men do not fully adhere to this ideal, yet they are socially pressured to conform to it. It is a prescribed and *idealised* norm and not a reflection of the lived reality of men's lives (838 – 842). As they put it, the concept "embodied the currently most honored way of being a man, it required all other men to position themselves in relation to it, and it ideologically legitimated the global subordination of women to men" (832). If we trace the model of hegemonic masculinity back to meat consumption, scholars have shown that meat has become a symbol of this set of hegemonic male traits, social roles and behaviours (Adams 1990/2016; MacDonnell Mesler et al., 2022; Nath 2011; Rothgerber 2012). This symbolism even reaches to the point where feminine foods, such as vegetables, fruit, grain and other non-meat foods, are often undesirable for men (Adams 1990/2016, 4 – 6). How this reluctance to 'feminine' food choices – including vegetarianism and veganism – is expressed among men, will be discussed in more detail below.

Men, flexitarianism/vegetarianism/veganism, femininity & masculinity

The decision to eat less meat mainly stems from an awareness of animal suffering and/ or the harmful effects of the meat industry on the environment. When taking a gender-sensitive perspective on this decision, it appears that women are much more aware of these factors than

men (Rothgerber 2012, 2). This also means that a significantly larger number of women, in comparison to men, follow a flexitarian, vegetarian or vegan diet¹. A crucial aspect in the lack of men who switch to a vegetarian or vegan diet can be brought back to the ingrained historical narrative in which meat consumption is considered as an *essential* part of one's masculinity. Adams (1990/2016), found that it was in 1836 England, that vegetarian diets were already seen as a matter of *emasculatation* (17). She claims that this view is still very much alive in the year 1990, as men who become vegetarian or vegan are seen as choosing women's food and thus "challenge an essential part of the masculine role" (Adams 1990/2016, 17). Two decades later, Nath (2011) observes a similar mentality around meat consumption, vegetarianism and masculinity in the Australian context. According to a majority of his study's informants "the belief that meat provides strength and vigour to men and the associated enforcement of meat-eating as a social norm is ... a key reason why vegetarianism is not an appealing choice for men." (261). He connects this opposition towards vegetarianism to the image that prevails in the model of hegemonic masculinity, namely that meat is a "hegemonic masculine resource" which ensures that a man is considered a 'real' man (Nath 2011, 261, 274).

More recent research by Diana Bogueva and colleagues (2022) shows how, next to the meat-as-masculinity discourse, the association of vegetables, fruit and other non-meat products with femininity, continues to withhold men to switch to a flexitarian, vegetarian or vegan diet. Although the food choice of vegetables and fruits are often labelled as healthier, they are also labelled as more feminine and *less masculine* – which is claimed to have a negative influence on a person's masculinity (Kiefer et al., 2005; Rothgerber 2012). As Margaret A. Thomas (2016) argues, *choosing* to follow a vegetarian or vegan diet "impacts perceptions of the gender of others" and "leads to lower ratings of masculinity" (79, 85). This is consistent with the aforementioned Adams' (1990/2016) statement that because vegetarian foods were considered women's food it made them undesirable for men (4 – 6). This focus on not eating "feminine" – "second-class citizen" – food, in fear of jeopardising their powerful position as men, reflects how meat consumption goes hand in hand with patriarchal power systems (3 – 6).

The patriarchal system also underlies the difference in awareness of animal suffering between men and women. Adams' study (1990/2016) discusses how patriarchy encompasses the domination of humans over non-human animals. According to her, women are less inclined to eat meat because, among other things, they have a higher awareness of the suffering of

¹ A *flexitarian* refers to people that "mostly eat vegetarian but occasionally eat meat which includes red meat, poultry, seafood and fish." – A *vegetarian* refers to people that "abstain from the consumption of all animal flesh products, like red meat, fish and poultry." – A *vegan* diet refers to a diet that "eliminates meat, fish, poultry, eggs and dairy products, as well as other animal-derived products, such as honey." (McRae 2019).

animals (Adams 1990/2016, 144 – 148). This higher awareness comes from the fact that they know how oppressive systems work, and are therefore more aware of how these oppressive systems also affect animals (Ibidem, 52 – 56). This way of thinking – often called the feminist-vegetarian connection – suggests that the oppression of animals in the form of being slaughtered and consumed is “fused” to the oppression of women in a patriarchal society, and thus that there is a connection between feminism and vegetarianism (Ibidem, 27 – 29). Men are generally less familiar with and closely associated with this sense of “fused oppression”, which means that their awareness of animal suffering is often lower than that of women (Ibidem, 52 – 56).

The above shows that men are reluctant to switch to a diet that consumes less or no meat for three interrelated reasons. Firstly, the crucial role that meat plays in defining one’s masculinity means that many men see meat as an essential part of their masculinity. The idea that a diet without meat impairs one’s masculinity is widespread. Secondly, there is still an emphasis on the ‘femininity’ of plant-based, flexitarian, vegetarian and vegan diets. This means that men are often reluctant to switch to these types of diets because they are seen as feminine and therefore less masculine. Thirdly, the percentage of awareness on animal suffering is less high among men than women. This aspect stems from the feeling of mutual patriarchal oppression between animals and women that lives among many women and less among men. All aspects can be linked to the practice of hegemonic masculinity that prevails in many Western countries (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). For now, the discussion will turn to how advertisements can play a role in conveying such notions of hegemonic masculinity.

Advertisements & the construction of dominant ideas & ideologies

Adams’ (1990/2016) analysis on paintings and literature shows that the dissemination of meat as a symbol for masculinity goes back a long way (4). What the role of paintings and literature was in transmitting messages, ideas and images, in those days, media and advertisements are today. Popular media and food marketing continue to construct and maintain gendered notions of food (Cavazza, Guidetti, & Butera 2015; Nath 2011; Rothgerber 2012). As the study of Dummitt (1998) on the marketing around barbecues in post-war Canada shows, stereotypical gender roles were strongly emphasized. In those advertisements (red) meat and fat were associated with expressions of masculinity and salads, vegetables and fruit to femininity.

Many scholars have argued to what extent representations in the media and those who produce them play an important role in attaching meaning to people, objects or developments

(Hall 1997; Said 2008; Brooks & Hébert 2008; Steuter & Wills 2008). Stuart Hall (1997), for example, argues that things have no fixed and natural meaning, but how they are represented at a particular time and place constructs their meaning (1). He further argues that especially those who possess a lot of power are able to control meanings and how things are represented. For instance, in case of gender representation, women are often depicted according to the *male gaze* which refers to how women are portrayed from a heterosexual man's perspective (Mulvey 1989, 62 – 67). This results in the representation of women as sex objects, passive, emotional, and as “characters that are frequently co-dependent on males” (McIntosh & Cuklanz 2014, 264). Men on the other hand, are often depicted according to the traditional idea of masculinity, which is “strong, heroic, with the ability to outwit life's problems and survive against all odds” (BBC 2022; Ward & Grower 2020). This kind of representation of masculinity is often seen in action-adventure film characters such as *James Bond*, *The Avengers* and *Mission Impossible*.

The reproduction of dominant gender norms and ideologies is also reflected in advertising. Scholars have been discussing this topic for over fifty years – in particular of women – and have been examining what dominant ideas around gender have been portrayed (Grau & Zotos 2016; Patterson & Elliot 2002; Ward & Grower 2020). As with the portrayal of women in films, television and other visual media, women in advertising are mostly portrayed in “decorative roles” (i.e. grooming, appearance and beauty products), in more family-oriented roles, in less professional roles and in more subdued roles (Grau & Zotos 2016; Uray & Burnaz 2003). Men, on the other hand, are usually portrayed in the ‘breadwinner’ role, which includes a character which is more independent, authoritarian and professional (Grau & Zotos 2016; Reichert & Carpenter 2004). Yet, a shift in the representation of men and women in advertising can also be observed. In the case of European (EU) countries, this shift can be traced, among other things, to an increased level of legislation and regulation. Over the years, it became increasingly clear to regulatory bodies in the EU that advertisements provide powerful models of gender norms that construct and perpetuate harmful cultural ideas and dominant ideologies (Grau & Zotos 2016; Ward & Grower 2020). In 2008, for example, an EU resolution was adopted on how marketing and advertising affect gender equality. Stacy Landreth Grau and Yorgos C. Zotos (2016) argue that since the updating of ethical guidelines on gender portrayals by both self-regulatory bodies for advertising and the European Advertising Standard Alliance (EASA) combined with the adoption of anti-discrimination laws, there have been some changes in gender representation (767). Besides the role of the EU, shifts within traditional role patterns also play a role in changing gender representation. Especially the changes in male representation in advertisements have been of great interest in recent years (Ibidem, 767). For

example, more and more research focus on how men are nowadays increasingly portrayed in “softer” ways and in more egalitarian roles – such as in their interactions with their children (Grau & Zotos 2016, 761). Nevertheless, as Jens van Tricht (Spreksel 2020) and Dummitt (1998) point out, it is important to remain critical of these developments because such shifts within representation can nonetheless reproduce, rearticulate and redefine notions of hegemonic masculinity and existing hierarchies between male and female (221 – 223). Moreover, these powerful models of gender norms are by no means disappearing in the advertising world, especially in the case of the representation of men and boys (Grau & Zotos 2016, 767; Ward & Grower 2020, 177).

In addition, as Grau and Zotos (2016) point out, it is important – when discussing the research area of advertising and gender stereotypes – to point to the long-lasting “mirror and mold debate” (762 – 763). According to them, the ‘mirror’ view refers to advertising as something that reflects the “values that exist and are dominant in society” (Grau & Zotos 2016, 762). This view suggests that advertising works like an enlarged lens, providing a generalised image of a social phenomenon. It implies that in “the contemporary socio-economic and political environment which influences the value system of a society”, there are multiple factors that are intertwined and interrelated, which turns the influence of advertising as insignificant (Ibidem, 762). Opposite the ‘mirror’ view is the ‘mold’ view, in which advertising is seen as “a *reflection* of society and its prevailing values” (Ibidem, 762; emphasis original). It suggests that the perception of social reality is shaped by the media, and that people incorporate the stereotypes presented by the media into their own system of values, ideas and beliefs about life (Gerbner 1998; Zotos & Tschla 2014). Thus, advertisements, based on their images of the stereotypes of masculinity and femininity, have the potential to create and influence gender identity (Grau & Zotos 2016; Schroeder & Zwick 2004; Ward & Grower 2020). Elaborating on several feminist media scholars, this research will be led by the ‘mold’ view. As Heather McIntosh and Lisa Cuklanz (2014) point out, stereotypical gender representations in media can construct and maintain harmful cultural ideas and dominant ideologies in society (266). However, they also indicate, that these aspects can equally be used to dismantle such power structures, messages and meanings and to “break out of the traditional molds” (McIntosh & Cuklanz 2014, 267).

Although scholars in the field of meat-as-masculinity point out that media and advertising concerning meat consumption play an important role in reproducing the link between masculinity and meat, thus perpetuating hegemonic masculine norms, little research has been done on this topic (Cavazza et al. 2015; MacDonnell Mesler et al., 2022; Rothgerber

2012). However, research by Dummitt (1998), among others, shows that the advertising of meat (related) products has a history of dominant gender representations, which have the ability to construct and maintain power relations according to the model of hegemonic masculinity. Drawing on Monique Ward and Petal Grower's (2020) question of how regular exposure to content related to traditional masculinity and traditional gender roles contributes to boys' and men's expectations of what makes a man, this research aims to help fill this gap in knowledge in the field of representation of meat and hegemonic masculinity (191). From these motives, this research will explore how contemporary Dutch advertisements concerning meat and plant-based meat analogues relate to the prevailing representation of meat as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity. Let us now focus on the Dutch context to get a better understanding of how meat as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity is expressed in The Netherlands.

Dutch context – politics, representation & historical developments

The need to lessen meat consumption due to, among other things, its negative environmental impact is also present in the Dutch context (Godfray, et al. 2018; Xu, et al. 2021). The high quantity of animal-based products (e.g. meat and dairy) consumption is a key topic in the Dutch debate on the climate crisis (Rippin et al. 2021). This relation between meat products and the climate change has been pointed out for decades. Dutch climate activists and several politicians have been pushing for a more plant-based diet, with a reduced amount of meat. Nonetheless, despite activism for more plant-based diets and an increasing number of flexitarians², the consumption of meat remains to be relatively high in The Netherlands, with men as the largest consumers (Dagevos, et al. 2020; NOS 2021; Schösler et al. 2015). A research by the Dutch organisation *Het Voedingscentrum* (2018), for example, shows that despite the guideline of 500 grams of meat per week, men in The Netherlands ate an average of 900 grams of meat per week compared to the 600 grams eaten by women. This eventually led to their 2018 *Er is meer dan vlees* (translation: "there is more than meat") campaign which was mainly aimed at men (Voedingscentrum 2018). Although this campaign somewhat fuelled the discussion around the ingrained link between meat and masculinity in the Dutch news world, it was only short-lived (RTL Nieuws 2018; NU 2019). More recently the political debate on a research to a possible implementation of a meat tax for the sake of the environment sparked up the discourse around meat consumption in The Netherlands again. Several politicians – most of them male

² Someone whose diet mainly consists of plant-based meals and occasionally eats meat and fish.

politicians – argued that “the right for the meatball” should not be put in danger (VPRO 2021). A similar development took place in the climate consciousness campaign *Iedereen Doet Wat* (translation: “everyone does something”), in which a passage with the advice to eat less meat for the sake of the environment was erased of the original campaign (Dinther 2021; VPRO 2022). In short, the road to a plant-based diet in the Netherlands remains to be a slow and difficult process. This, among other things, raises the question how meat consumption is being represented in the media. Is the idea of meat as an essential part of one’s identity being conveyed, for example?

Throughout Dutch history a shift in the way meat consumption is promoted to consumers can be observed. Especially many meat advertisements from the post-war period 1940s – 1970s carry a narrative that propagates the link between meat consumption and masculinity, through a vocation on the woman. Like a 1973 Dutch advertising poster from the *Stichting Voorlichtingsbureau voor Vlees, Vleeswaren en Vleesconserven*, which reads: “Vlees mevrouw, u weet best waarom.” (original: “Meat madam, you know why”) (Vleesch Magazine 2019). In this case, the woman – in the role of the housewife, who cooks – is addressed in terms of handing out meat to her husband. A similar perspective is seen in advertisements from the 1970s to the early 2000s of meat products or products that depend on meat consumption (e.g. baking products and sauces). A 2005 *Croma* advertisement, for example, shows the image of a husband who comes home from work at six o’clock to find that his wife has made him meatballs (vleesbakjeincroma 2005).

Such visual imaginary around meat and masculinity is still present in today’s Dutch advertisements, albeit in a different form. Contemporary advertisements of meat products or products that depend on meat consumption now centralize men more directly. This means that it is no longer the woman who is addressed and who prepares the meat; the man has now taken over this position – e.g. behind the barbecue or in the role as father. This shift falls in line with what scholars have been studying about how gender representations in advertisements have been changing throughout time (Grau & Zotos 2016, 761). However, following Jens van Tricht, founder of *Emancipator* – a Dutch organisation dedicated to men and emancipation – it is important to be aware that patriarchal notions of hegemonic masculinity are not reproduced in these ‘new’ gender representations (Spreksel 2020). Van Tricht’s statement is part of an article by Dunja Spreksel (2020) in the Dutch newspaper *Trouw*, in which she discusses the meat and masculinity link and its representation in the media. She observes that “this link between masculinity and eating meat is cultivated and confirmed all around us by the consumer

industry”³ (Spreksel 2020). Regarding the promotion of shifting towards a vegetarian or vegan diet, van Tricht, points out that one should be careful that the image of vegetarianism and veganism is not adapted in such a way that it fits in with Dutch social views on masculinity. If that does happen, the underlying problem “that men in our society have to be “a real man”” is reproduced (Spreksel 2020).

Now that we have a better understanding of how the situation with regard to this topic has developed in The Netherlands and in what context this research will be located in, we will first focus on the positionality, relevance and methodology that will be used in this study to determine to what extent Dutch advertisements correspond to the idea that meat is a symbol of masculinity.

Positionality & relevance

In this section, I will discuss both my own positioning as a feminist researcher towards this research and that of this research within the academic field. I have come across a number of situations where food and drinks were gendered. For example, a man had once told a friend that he would not eat a quiche because it was too ‘feminine’, or women who did not want to drink beer because it made them appear ‘masculine’. However, throughout my studies in the field of feminism and women’s rights, I have barely come across work which discussed gendered food and men’s position towards this topic. In what ways could food be linked to gender? And most of all, what could these gendered links to food entail? This topic could be seen as an “unusual” research topic for a feminist researcher (Gordon 2008, 7). However, building on Avery Gordon’s (2008) belief in the importance of interdisciplinarity and breaking established conventions around research themes and the skill I have acquired in approaching themes from a critical feminist standpoint, I want to take a closer look at how gender norms and roles are expressed, reinforced or calibrated through food.

As discussed earlier, many scholars have researched the relation between the media and representation to map out the important role the former play in attaching meaning to people, objects or developments and reproducing negative stereotypes (Brooks & Hébert 2008; McIntosh & Cuklanz 2014; Hall 1997; Said 2008; Steuter & Wills 2008). A wide scope of research to this relation has been conducted in several academic fields, such as media studies, gender studies, critical race theory, conflict studies and postcolonial studies (Said 2008; Brooks

³ Original tekst: “Die link tussen mannelijkheid en het eten van vlees wordt overal om ons heen gecultiveerd en bevestigd door de consumptie-industrie.”

& Hébert 2008; Steuter & Wills 2008). As McIntosh and Cuklanz (2014) state, a lack of representation or misrepresentation in the media can contribute to the reinforcement or maintenance of unequal power relations and stereotypes – sexuality, gender, race, age – in a society (268 – 269). A similar dynamic can be seen in the representation of food in the media, which is often linked to dominant gender norms. This is, for example, clearly reflected in the link between meat-as-masculine and vegetarian-as-feminine. However, research to how the media reproduces and reflects this dominant view remains little.

Given the negative effects meat consumption entails it is important to dismantle the meat-as-masculine symbolism. Moreover, stepping away from this dominant ideology ensures that meat as an expression of hegemonic masculinity is no longer promoted in the media. Therefore, it is relevant to investigate how television advertisements in The Netherlands reflect this link and whether they contribute to the maintenance of this dominant idea. In addition, it is relevant to see whether this image can be challenged and how this can be achieved. Therefore, following Rhiannon MacDonnell Mesler and colleagues' (2022) statement that “future research should empirically assess the efficacy of leveraging reference groups to encourage more plant-based diets and increase the acceptance of healthy vegetarian or vegan eating practices”, advertisements for plant-based meat analogues are included in the analysis (9). How do they promote their products? Is this also influenced by the meat-as-masculine discourse, or does it dismiss the hegemonic division of meat-as-masculine and vegetarian-as-feminine?

My academic past in media & culture studies, gender studies and postcolonial studies covers a wide range of research in which I analysed visual representations, discourses and framings. These analyses were located within the field of feminist media research, which will also be the case with this research. As McIntosh and Cuklanz (2014) argue, feminist media research is a way to examine how gender and the uses of gender within mediated texts are constructed (265). Following this statement, to find out to what extent notions of hegemonic masculinity are reflected in advertisement texts of meat products and plant-based meat analogues, this research builds on previous research conducted in the American and Australian context. This research can serve as an example for other contexts to investigate to what extent media outlets and the food industry reproduce or challenge the notion of hegemonic masculinity through the promotion of meat and plant-based meat analogues.

Methodology

According to McIntosh and Cuklanz (2014), feminist media research “provides a method of delimiting, analyzing, and explaining the power and significance” of patterns of gender within mediated texts (265). They continue by stating that a feminist media analysis always begins with discourses. Taking this into consideration, throughout this research a total of seven television advertisements will be analysed through the conduct of a *media content analysis* and connected to a *discourse-analysis*. The case concerns four advertisements which advertise meat products – both directly in supermarket advertisements of the Dutch supermarkets *Jumbo* and *Plus* and indirectly in products dependent on meat; the assortment of barbecue sauces of the Dutch sauce brand *Remia* and the assortment of frying butter of the Dutch brand *Croma* – and three advertisements which advertise plant-based meat analogues of the brands *Unox* (a Dutch brand best known for its sales of smoked sausages and soups), *Garden Gourmet* (a British brand which sells only plant-based meat analogues) and *Iglo* (a Dutch brand mainly active in the sale of frozen food). The advertisements run from the period 2017 to 2021 and include a duration that varies between 0:15 – 0:50 minutes. For the sake of clarity, there will first be a brief description of the advertisements, starting with those promoting meat products and followed by those promoting the plant-based meat analogues.

The Dutch supermarket *Jumbo* advertisement was aired in the summer of 2021 and concerns the promotion of meat products in the context of barbecuing (Alfred International 2021). The video of this advertisement takes place in a garden, joint by family members. As regards to the *Plus* advertisement this concerns a similar purpose (PLUS Supermarkt 2021). Again, the focus is on the promotion of meat in the context of barbecuing and the family. In the case of the *Croma* advertisement, which aired in December 2020 and concerns the promotion of *Croma* backing butter, a father and daughter can be seen preparing meatballs together in the kitchen (vleesbakjeincroma 2020). During this time, the father’s mother is also part of the story via a video call. Finally, the *Remia* advertisement concerns the promotion of a new barbecue sauce line (Remia Sauzen 2017). This takes place on a film set in which a Dutch actor – Jan Kooijman – is criticised by an American actor – Sylvester Stallone – for his choice of food. This criticism is accompanied by a fight scene and ends with Sylvester Stallone serving Kooijman a large piece of meat to go with the *Remia* barbecue sauce.

As for the adverts for the plant-based meat analogues, the *Garden Gourmet* advertisement shows a moment when people gather in a greenhouse where they barbecue and eat *Garden Gourmet*’s plant-based meat analogues together (Garden Gourmet NL 2021). The *Iglo* advertisement includes an image of a group of friends (two men, two women) eating

together (Iglo Nederland 2020). One of the men is preparing a hamburger with the plant-based meat analogue of *Iglo*. Finally, the 2020 *Unox* advertisement focuses on a family, especially the daughter (Unox Nederland 2020). It shows how a daughter becomes aware of the importance of vegetarian food when she is eating a sandwich while looking out over a meadow with cows. She then, during dinner, replaces the smoked sausage with a vegetarian, plant-based one from *Unox*.

For the media content analysis, attention will be paid to aspects such as the degree of stereotypical representation (e.g. traditional sex roles), spoken text, screen time, activity, and the degree of emphasis on the link between food and gender and specifically meat and masculinity. The media content analysis of the advertisements will be interspersed, analysed and linked to the broader discourse on the link between meat consumption and masculinity and vegetarianism and masculinity, both in The Netherlands and Western countries in general. This means that the analysis pays attention to the dominant ideas around gender and food that circulate, such as the distinction between meat-as-masculine and vegetarian-as-feminine. Moreover, the analysis is guided by imagery – so what connotations do the images evoke? To what extent do they relate to the dominant characteristics about masculinity – i.e. virility; independence; toughness; and violence - and those about femininity – i.e. caring; emotion; passive?

It is important to note that these dominant gender characteristics stem from ingrained discourses. Following Michel Foucault (1970), a discourse can be seen as a formation of ideas, attitudes, beliefs and practices through which knowledge about a given subject is constructed (129). However, power plays a major role in the construction of this knowledge and is therefore often the cause of incomplete understanding of a certain phenomenon. McIntosh and Cuklanz (2014) indicate the importance of discourses within feminist media analyses as follows:

A discourse functions as a system of meanings created by a combination of texts and the social practices that inform them. By treating these systems as discourses, researchers are able to examine and question images and meanings that might otherwise go unexamined, and thus better understand how power operates through ideas and representations. (265)

It is crucial that discourses and knowledge surrounding a phenomenon are approached from a critical perspective. Types of knowledge and meanings are often considered ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ and might appear so in their construction. As McIntosh and Cuklanz (2014) argue, through the inclusion of some ideas and the exclusion of other ideas, media has the ability to

“define, convey and uphold what is normal” (266). For example, television advertisements often depict women using household products – vacuum cleaners, washing machines and kitchen appliances – which automatically makes the audience more likely to make the association between women, such products and domestic chores (Ibidem, 266). From this the connection between women and domestic chores is constructed as “normal” and “natural”. However, whenever real-life women ‘fail’ to follow up this connection, they are seen to ‘fail’ being a “normal” or “natural” woman (Ibidem). Therefore, media – especially mass media – have the ability to construct and maintain stereotypical gender norms and traditional power structures.

A feminist media content analysis thus makes it possible to expose incomplete knowledge and biased meanings. The aim of a feminist approach to understanding media communication is to uncover “power structures, their relationships, and the contradictions that inform them” (Ibidem, 268). Analyses of media texts provide an insight into which set of cultural, social, economic and political contexts the media are constructed, produced and received. If we draw this back to the meat-as-masculinity discourse in The Netherlands, the view of meat and non-meat products is incomplete and misleading because they are currently approached and framed from the perspective and narrative of the hegemonic masculinity model. Therefore, in order to expose the power dynamics at play in the backdrop of this understanding, a critical-discursive approach has been chosen. In addition to the academic texts, news articles and television fragments from the Dutch context were consulted in order to obtain more background information on how The Netherlands positions itself within this discourse. The depiction of meat in meat advertisements and that of the plant-based meat analogues was placed within this broader discourse and analysed to reveal the extent to which they correspond to or challenge the hegemonic notion of meat consumption. The analysis will be divided into four themes; *Who is in power? The articulation of hegemonic masculinity*, *Food choice & ‘emasculatation’*, *Maintaining & challenging the traditional nuclear family ideal*, and *The art of cooking: indoor/ outdoor, duty/ leisure & the barbecue* from which suggestions will be drawn. Having mapped out the methodology, we will now move on to the analysis.

Analysis

As Adams’ (1990/2016) and other scholars, have argued the switch to vegetarian food is still often viewed as a matter of emasculation and a way of damaging your masculinity among men

(Bogueva et al. 2022; Kiefer et al., 2005; Nath 2011; Rothgerber 2012). This dominant view also expressed by Jens van Tricht who states that:

If you order something on a terrace, for example, waiters almost always assume that the meat is for the man and the salad or vegetarian meal is for the woman. As a man, you then really have to say ‘that salad is for me’, and *thus actually come out of the closet as not very masculine*.⁴ (OneWorld 2019, emphasis added)

Van Tricht’s statement shows to what extent images of masculinity and meat consumption are deeply ingrained in The Netherlands. Deriving from van Tricht’s statement, analysing the framing of meat products and plant-based meat analogues in Dutch television advertisements will give us a better understanding of the extent to which notions of hegemonic masculinity are reproduced, conveyed or challenged through them. The moments when this issue is highlighted or denounced can be divided into four themes; *Who is in power? The articulation of hegemonic masculinity, Food choice & ‘emasculatation’, Maintaining & challenging the traditional nuclear family ideal, and The art of cooking: indoor/ outdoor, duty/ leisure & the barbecue*. A deeper and more detailed analysis of these themes follows below.

Who is in power? The articulation of hegemonic masculinity

The main purpose of advertising is to induce people to consume and to think of products in a positive light (McIntosh & Cuklanz 2014, 280). The creation of a visual imaginary plays an essential role in this (Dummitt 1998). By means of such a visual imaginary – often creating an ideal image around a product – people are supposed to get the idea that consuming a certain product, service or brand is indispensable, improves or strengthens their identity. To achieve this, dominant ideologies and cultural ideas are often invoked – a process which goes hand in hand with power relations. The way in which advertisements are constructed is closely related to Stuart Hall’s (1997) note about how those in positions of power – mostly white, heterosexual men – are able to control meanings and determine how certain things are represented. Hall’s (1997) conception of representation, in turn, is connected to Michel Foucault’s (1970) conception of discourse, in which power relations are equally identified as determining components. How these power relations are represented varies by medium, context and

⁴ *Original*: Als je bijvoorbeeld iets bestelt op een terras, gaan obers er vrijwel altijd van uit dat het vlees voor de man is en de salade of vegetarische maaltijd voor de vrouw. Je moet als man dan echt ‘die salade is voor mij’ zeggen, en zo eigenlijk uit de kast komen als niet erg mannelijk.

producer. In case of media texts, they rarely demonstrate power relations in “clear, neatly defined ways” (McIntosh & Cuklanz 2014, 268). They are, rather, often presented in a subtle way. As with visual media such as an advertisement, aspects such as the spoken text, screen time and activity of a character can contribute to the construction and maintenance of traditional power structures, hegemonic meanings and messages. However, as McIntosh and Cuklanz (2014) point out, these aspects can equally be used to dismantle such power structures, messages and meanings and to “break out of the traditional molds” (267).

This can also be seen in the Dutch advertisements for meat products, where a pattern of the portrayal of women as “passive” characters and men as “active” characters, can be observed. This subtle representation, in which gender-based power relations emerge, is realised by means of the three different elements mentioned above – spoken text, screen time and activity. First of all, this can be measured by the amount of *spoken text* of the characters. In the case of the meat product advertisements of *Remia*, *Plus* and *Jumbo*, for example, the male characters – although female characters are part of the advertisement – are the only ones with spoken text. In addition, its voice-over is narrated by what sounds as a male voice. The latter is also the case with the *Iglo* advertisement for a new “Green Cuisine Burger”. In this case, the narrator is a heavy male voice that is supposed to evoke connotations of roughness and strength as he announces that this is “the veg revolution” (Iglo Nederland 2020).

Secondly, the element of *screen time* reflects a significant imbalance of power between the male characters and the female characters. Not only do the male characters appear significantly more on screen, it also seems that the advertisements are played through the perspective of the male protagonist. This makes the male character both the protagonist and the narrator. This is, for example, clearly visible in the advertisement of *Jumbo*, which was already briefly explained in the introduction (Alfred International 2021). There, the man – the father behind the barbecue – is introduced as the main character. Moreover, the rest of the video and therefore the rest of the characters – mother, son and girlfriend, daughter and grandfather – are portrayed from his perspective. This also applies to the *Plus* advertisement, in which the father of the family is also the most prominent character (PLUS Supermarkt 2021). Here too, the other images in the video, which includes his wife and daughter, are projected from his perspective.

The latter brings me to the last element, which is *activity*. Just as there is an imbalance in the amount of spoken text and screen time, there is also an imbalance between the sexes in the level of activity. For example, in all advertisements relating to meat – *Plus*, *Jumbo*, *Remia* and *Croma* – it is men who are engaged in active activities and women who are engaged in

passive activities. This means that in these advertisements only the male characters engage in an activity such as barbecuing (*Plus* and *Jumbo*), fighting (*Remia*), cooking (*Croma*). The female characters, on the other hand, are depicted doing “passive” activities, such as sunbathing in the garden and reading. This imbalance in activity can be traced back to Laura Mulvey’s (1989) formulation of the “male gaze”, which is as mentioned earlier, the case in some advertisements as they are depicted from the male perspective. Mulvey’s (1989) argument is that the “male gaze” involves a media representation of female characters in which they are often depicted as sex objects and passive (63). This corresponds to the way women are often stereotyped in advertisements, namely in more subdued roles and according to “decorative roles”, which involve grooming and appearances (Grau & Zotos 2016; Uray & Burnaz 2003). Taking this into account, it could be argued that the male gaze in the advertisements for meat products entails similar representations of women. Such representations reproduce notions of hegemonic masculinity and dominant, traditional gender norms. Thus, a recurring point in meat advertising is that the man appears in a leading role based on the aspects of spoken text, screen time and activity. Moreover, this focus on the man means that the female characters are portrayed in a passive way, a development that reinforces the dominance and leading role of the male character.

In contrast, the advertisements for the plant-based meat analogues offer an alternative view. In these advertisements, the subtle way in which power relations are conveyed in the advertisements for meat products, is challenged. The balance of power is, as it were, decentralised, and the emphasis is no longer solely on the male character. Moreover, the dominant sex representation of female as “passive” and the male as “active” is much less present. The lesser amount of power relations can be seen in the amount of *spoken text*, for example. In all the advertisements for plant-based meat analogues – *Iglo*, *Garden Gourmet* and *Unox* – the characters in the advertisement do not talk. The only spoken element concerns a voice-over or music (as is the case in the *Unox* advertisement). In the *Garden Gourmet* advertisement this is done by what sounds like a woman’s voice. Although, the voice-over in the *Iglo* advertisement concerns a man’s voice, it can be seen as a decentralisation of power that the characters in the advertisement are not given spoken text.

The latter element, namely *activity*, also reflects a lesser imbalanced power division. The *Unox* advertisement for example – an advertisement for a new vegetarian smoked sausage – tells the story of a young girl whose father is a butcher (Unox Nederland 2020). During dinner with the family (which consists of a girl, boy, mother and father), she replaces the meat smoked sausage with a vegetarian one. Her father finds out and gives her a wink as a sign of approval,

while the family continues eating and the message “times change” (original: tijden veranderen) appears on the screen. The story of this advertisement revolves around the girl and the father. However, the emphasis in the advertisement is no longer on the male character alone. There is room for a female character, a young girl. More importantly, this female character is not portrayed as passive. On the contrary, she is the active character of the advertisement, for she undertakes all the actions that complete the story. One could say that the girl acts as a representation for the future. A generation that is more aware of the importance of vegetarian products for the environment and animals. This message is reinforced by the appearance of the statement “times change”, which implies that eating meat products is no longer a must-have during dinner. Moreover, an important observation to discuss here is the father’s wink to the girl. Although the girl is the active character, the father’s wink is an essential element in completing the message of the advertisement. This wink can be interpreted as an implication that a shift to a more vegetarian-oriented diet is not a radical problem for him, nor for his masculinity.

A similar, though less elaborated, narrative and shift in power division can be seen in the *Garden Gourmet* advertisement (Garden Gourmet NL 2021). It takes place in what appears to be a greenhouse, where people have gathered. It is not clear what the relationship – friends or family – between these people is. Be that as it may, the characters in the video – consisting of a man, two women and a girl – all get the same amount of screen time. Moreover, neither the women nor the men are portrayed passively. There is clearly more balance between those who have a function in the advertisement. This contrasts with the way power is divided between men and women in the advertisements for meat.

In view of the above, it can be argued that the presentation of meat products is intertwined with hegemonic notions of masculinity. As the examples of *Jumbo*, *Plus* and *Remia* show, the link between masculinity and meat consumption is made through the translation of power relations. This is expressed through the aspects of spoken text, perspective, screen time and activity. The way in which these aspects are characterized ensure that the man as the protagonist, and thus the one in a position of power, is constructed. The juxtaposition of the advertisements for the meat products and the plant-based meat analogues has emphasised how the meat products are promoted on the basis of notions of hegemonic masculinity. Although plant-based meat analogues provide a similar-looking product, the link between meat and masculinity is much more disconnected. The advertisements of the plant-based meat analogues show how the representation of meat can also be done in a different way. In these cases, the amount of spoken text, perspective, screen time and activity, is more balanced, which also

means that the link between meat and masculinity is not emphasised. Now that we have discussed the practical, basic elements of the advertisements and how power is distributed through it, we will look more closely at the content of the advertisements, i.e. the content of the spoken text and the activity. Let us begin with looking at how *food choice* is expressed and how this relates to the model of hegemonic masculinity.

Food choice & 'emasculatation'

As Claudia Arganini and others (2012) argue, food choice is linked to social, cultural and political factors and plays an important role in the expression of one's identity and in the definition of power and gender roles (85). Food and food choice can thus play a role in determining power relations and traditional gender roles (Adams 1990/2016; Arganini et al. 2012; Campos et al. 2020). This is strongly reflected in the way many men link their masculine identity to meat consumption. As Rothgerber (2012), MacDonnell Mesler and others (2020), and more recently Campos and colleagues (2022) point out, the idea that meat reinforces one's masculinity prevails. This perception can be traced back to a historical narrative that has shaped the image of the 'ideal man' that dominates in the model of hegemonic masculinity. Meat is seen as a "hegemonic masculine resource" that increases manhood, virility, power and strength and ensures that a man is considered a 'real' man (Nath 2011, 261, 274). In contrast, vegetarian products such as fruits, vegetables and grain are labelled as feminine and "second-class foods" (Adams 1990/2016, 4). There is a perception that choosing a vegetarian or vegan diet is an expression of female identity and therefore a weakening of male identity (Thomas 2016; Kiefer et al. 2005). Given this, *choosing* meat – and insisting on it because it is believed to reinforce one's masculinity – can be seen as an activity that expresses and reinforces male dominance and hegemonic power relations. Moreover, it can be seen as an activity that delineates gender roles and norms. The emphasis on food choice and meat as masculine and vegetarian as feminine thus perpetuates gender power relations.

Similar dynamics can be observed in the analysed Dutch television advertisements for meat products. In particular, the *Remia* advertisement for the "Real American BBQ" sauce line presents an image that emphasises the meat-as-masculine and the vegetarian-as-feminine food choice distinction (Remia Sauzen 2017). In this advertisement, a male Dutch actor – Jan Kooijman – is seen passing a meat barbecue stand where several men are standing. He walks on and ends up at the vegetarian stand, where he joins two women who are already standing there while holding a plate with salad. After taking a vegetarian skew, Kooijman is grabbed by

Sylvester Stallone – a male American actor – and is told by Stallone that “when you gotta fight like a tiger, don’t eat like a rabbit”. Not much later the screen is switched to an image of a large piece of steak which is placed in front of Kooijman while Stallone tells him “you wanna act like a man, eat like a man” (Remia Sauzen 2017).

Several things can be drawn from the above. Firstly, the comments relate to the food choice Kooijman has made – namely the vegetarian skewer. This vegetarian food choice is criticised by Stallone and then replaced with a piece of meat – emphasizing that this is the food a man is supposed to eat. Here, the assumption that meat is a part of one’s masculinity and is needed to be a “real” man is conveyed (Campos et al. 2020; Rothgerber 2012; Nath 2011). It reflects how a man’s choice for a vegetarian dish is portrayed as something that “impacts perceptions of the gender of others” and “leads to lower ratings of masculinity” (Thomas 2016 79, 85). Vegetarian food is thus portrayed as something which is not masculine and is therefore discouraged. This message echoes what Nath (2011) argues on how meat is often seen as a “hegemonic male resource” that makes man to be considered as a ‘real’ man (261, 274). The message conveyed in the *Remia* advertisement aligns with this statement. Kooijman is only seen as a real man once he eats meat and leaves the vegetarian diet. This representation follows and thereby reproduces the dominant image of an “ideal” image on manhood and how meat consumption plays an essential role in achieving it. Indeed, the narrative of the advertisement suggests that it is necessary to eat meat instead of vegetarian food to become a real man. In this case, vegetarian food (which carries feminine connotations) is depicted as inferior to meat (which carries masculine connotations). The narrative in the *Remia* (Remia Sauzen 2017) advertisement contributes to the idea that a man’s “identity is threatened” (Spreksel 2019). This mindset, is part of a widespread backlash among meat-eating men in which vegetarian men are portrayed as soy boys, as wimps (Levie 2019; Spreksel 2019).

The matters of inferiority and feelings of being under ‘threat’, lead to the second observation, which regards the reference to animals. In the first quote Stallone comments that “when you gotta fight like a tiger, don’t eat like a rabbit”. Based on the previous scene, it can be concluded that in this context the “tiger” refers to the gender male and the “rabbit” refers to the gender female. As mentioned, in the previous scene there were a number of men at the barbecue stand where meat was prepared and two women at the vegetarian stand where Kooijman eventually gets his vegetarian dish. “Don’t eat like a rabbit” refers to Kooijman’s original vegetarian food choice – as rabbits are herbivores. A food choice that, apart from Kooijman, the viewer only sees women making. In this context, the naming of the animal rabbit can be seen not only as an equivalent for making a vegetarian food choice, but also for making

a feminine food choice. Besides, the gender-stereotypical notions of women as caring, vulnerable and compassionate are in many ways similar to the way rabbits are often used as symbols of fertility, rebirth, vulnerability and innocence, or depicted as prey animals (Clifford 2021). Thus, the statement “don’t eat like a rabbit” becomes a reference to the fact that a man should not eat like an animal that symbolises such ‘feminine’ characteristics.

In contrast to the rabbit, the animal “tiger” (carnivores) is used to indicate the eating of meat – and thus the male gender. In comparison to the rabbit, the tiger symbolises aspects such as strength, fearlessness and military competence (Clifford 2021). These aspects correspond to the gender stereotypes of the male gender – which also include the aspects of strength, toughness and courage. The latter aligns with the setting of the advertisement, which is the set of a war film. This ensures that a connection between the stereotypical image of men as being strong, tough and courageous and meat consumption is made (Campos et al. 2020; Connell & Messerschmidt 2005). This is, for example, very well reflected in the later comment “you wanna act like a man, eat like a man”, which shows how the assumption that meat “provides strength and vigour” is translated in this advertisement (Nath 2011, 261). By making this hierarchal power relation based on food choice, the message is conveyed that making a vegetarian food choice as a man makes you less masculine and puts you on an equal footing with a woman – a development that is portrayed as negative (Thomas 2016, 79). This falls in line with what scholars point out on how making vegetarian food choices as a man are often viewed as a matter of emasculation (Adams 1990/2016; Bogueva et al. 2022; Kiefer et al. 2005; Nath 2011; Rothgerber 2012). Moreover, it can be related to Adams’ (1990/2016) statement on how vegetarian foods were considered “second-class foods” for the “second-class citizen” woman (4). The remarks made by Stallone to Kooijman can thus be seen as references to male dominance through the comparison with animals and food choice.

This example of *Remia* – in which the emphasis on meat as a symbol of masculinity is strongly visible – is an exceptional case in the analysed advertisements. Although, some of the other advertisements show similar characteristics as in the *Remia* advertisement, it is not emphasised so explicitly, but often appears in a subtler way. In the *Jumbo* advertisement (Alfred International 2021), for example, the man is seen taking care of the preparation of the meat and the women are the ones responsible for the salads and dishes with fruit. This also applies to the *Plus* (2021) and *Croma* (2021) advertisements, in which the man is the one responsible for the meat.

This image – that the man is closely related to meat – is also expressed to some extent in the advertisements for the plant-based meat analogues. In the advertisements of both *Garden*

Gourmet and *Iglo*, for example, it is the man who is responsible for preparing the plant-based hamburger. Yet all the characters subsequently consume this hamburger. So, there is no male/female distinction in the characters' choice of food. A slightly different, but overall similar representation is seen in the case of the *Unox* advertisement. In this video, the female character – the little girl – makes the decision to replace the meat smoked sausage with a plant-based smoked sausage. Although, this choice is in first instance made without the consent of the rest of the family, the wink of the father hints that he follows this choice. Therefore, in the plant-based meat analogues the choice for food is presented as a *joint* choice, and not only by the man as in the case of the *Plus* and *Remia* advertisements.

It can be deduced from this that there is more balance in the distribution of power in the advertisements for the plant-based meat analogues based on the depiction of food choice. The male and female characters make the same eating choices and no distinction is made between what is considered male or female food. The decentralised perception and unanimous decision-making shows that there is a shift within the meat-as-masculine to vegetarian-as-feminine mindset and thus power division. Consuming plant-based meat analogues is neither depicted as masculine nor feminine. By doing this these advertisements step away from the model of hegemonic masculinity regarding food, in which meat is considered a “hegemonic masculine resource” and vegetarian food as feminine “second-class foods” that damage one’s masculinity (Adams 1990/2016; Nath 2011). Having discussed the extent in which the hegemonic masculine fear of emasculation through a vegetarian food choice and the “real men eat meat” mentality is articulated, we will now dive deeper into the how the *nuclear family* is represented in the advertisements and how this relates to the model of hegemonic masculinity.

Maintaining & challenging the traditional nuclear family ideal

In the process of constructing and maintaining stereotypical gender norms, cultural norms and dominant ideologies, media play an essential role (Grau & Zotos 2016; McIntosh & Cuklanz 2014; Schroeder & Zwick 2004; Ward & Grower 2020). As McIntosh and Cuklanz (2014) have pointed out for example, recurring images of women using household products in advertisements has helped to construct and maintain the stereotypical idea of the housewife (266). A similar tendency can be observed in the *nuclear family ideal*, whose dominant definition refers to a heterosexual family consisting of a father, mother and children and in which the traditional division of roles between men and women predominates (i.e. unequal distribution of power between men and women).

The repeated conveyance of this image has contributed to the construction and maintenance of the traditional family ideal, and its associations with hegemonic masculinity. Although the nuclear family is increasingly being questioned and contemporary societies are mostly consisted of blended families, divorced families or single parents, this ideal image is still the norm in many Western societies (Arganini et al. 2012; Saggars & Sims 2005). Advertising is one of the factors that is involved in the maintenance and construction of this view. As Cathriona Nash, Lisa O'Malley and Maurice Patterson (2018) argue, the representation of the family in advertisements has hardly changed since the 1950s (1). This also applies to Dutch society, where the idea of the traditional nuclear family as a primary unit of society is still often adhered to (Jinek 2020). The nuclear family is also an important target group for marketers, including the promotion of food products. In this case not only the food products are promoted, but in combination with the ideal of the nuclear family, advertisements – and other media – construct “images of the good, desirable life” (Nash et al. 2018, 1). As Kees de Graaf frames it, “commerce is cleverly exploiting the human tendency to create an identity by eating”⁵ (Spreksel 2020). This is, for example, clearly shown in the case of rise of the barbecue in the 1950s, when the link between meat consumption and the ideal family was brought to the public, constructing images of a desirable and good life (Dummitt 1998; Nash et al. 2018).

A similar trend is evident in the Dutch advertisements for meat, which mainly focus on a nuclear family that meets the traditional definition – white, heterosexual and middle-class. This image is strongly emphasised in the *Plus* (PLUS Supermarkt 2021) and *Jumbo* (Alfred International 2021) advertisements. In the *Jumbo* advertisement, for example, a family is seen barbecuing together. The family laughs together, all while the father – who is barbecuing – looks over his kin. As mentioned earlier, the female character is depicted in a passive way – sitting in a chair. The images evoke connotations of warmth, connection and intimacy. This image is consistent with the argument of Nash and colleagues (2018), in which they indicate how the ideal family is often depicted in a way that expresses emotions such as intimacy, trust and interconnectedness (3). A somewhat similar picture is painted in the *Croma* (vleesbakjeincroma 2021) advertisement, which shows a father preparing meatballs with his daughter. In the meantime, the man's mother – the girl's grandmother – is joining through a video call. The mother guides her son, as it were, in preparing the meatballs. This guidance can be seen as a representation of the historical shift in the division of gender roles. For example,

⁵ *Original*: “De commercie speelt slim in op de neiging van de mens zich een identiteit aan te meten door te eten.”

a 2005 *Croma* advertisement repeatedly showed the woman preparing the meatballs for the man, now it is the man who prepares them himself (vleesbakjeincroma 2016). In addition, the image in the 2020 *Croma* advertisement, evokes feelings of intimacy, trust and warmth. It could be argued that this representation renounces hegemonic traditional ideals of masculinity and fatherhood, as they are portrayed in “softer” roles in an interaction with their children (Grau & Zotos 2016, 761). Nevertheless, as Jens van Tricht (Spreksel 2020) and Dummitt (1998) point out, it is important to remain critical of these developments because such shifts within representation can nonetheless reproduce, rearticulate and redefine notions of hegemonic masculinity and existing hierarchies between male and female (221 – 223). For example, the man in the 2020 *Croma* advertisement can now be seen in a softer and more supportive role – because he cooks and interacts with the children – but he is nevertheless, as in the 2005 *Croma* advertisement, the protagonist of the advertisement and thus the person with whom the link to meat consumption is made (vleesbakjeincroma 2005; vleesbakjeincroma 2020).

Building on these observations, the use of an image of the traditional nuclear family can also be seen as a way of reproducing, rearticulating and redefining traditional, hegemonic gender roles. As Grau & Zotos (2016), among others, point out, media and advertisements that repeatedly promote stereotypical gender roles may have the potential to reinforce hegemonic male attitudes in society (Schroeder & Zwick 2004; Ward & Grower 2020). It raises the question of how the proliferation of the nuclear family in relation to food in advertisements affects our understanding of what masculinity and femininity represent, as the traditional image of the nuclear family evokes associations with traditional, unequal power relations and gender roles – where women are subordinate to men and the man is the ‘leader’ of the household (Cogswell 1975). The *Jumbo* advertisement thus conveys an idea of the man as the pater familias, the one in charge, in power (Screti 2019, 18). Given that a strong link is made with the consumption of meat in this context, it can be said that the connection between meat consumption and male power is implied. It is not just the consumption of meat that is promoted, but the whole picture of the “good and desirable life”, in which the consumption of meat is combined with the nuclear family ideal – a family in which the man is the most dominant (Nash et al. 2018, 1). Through such a visual representation, the promotion of meat is thus closely linked to traditional, unequal gender roles. Following Rothgerber’s (2012) assertion that men are more likely to be pro-meat the more they endorse to traditional masculine roles, it can be argued that the advertisements of the *Jumbo*, *Plus* and *Croma* appeal to, reinforce and potentially perpetuate this interconnectedness (4 – 6). Such a representation only makes it more

difficult to distance oneself from the dominant idea that meat is a symbol of hegemonic masculinity and an essential part of one's masculine identity.

As far as the advertisements of the plant-based meat analogues are concerned, both *Garden Gourmet* and *Iglo* contain a picture of a mixed group of people. The former appears to be a mixed group of friends and family, the latter a group of friends. This calls into question the dominant idea of the traditional nuclear family. One could say that the composition in the advertisements for the plant-based meat analogues better reflects the actual composition of today's society and thus distances itself from the hegemonic masculine ideal of the nuclear family (Arganini et al. 2012; Jinek 2020; Saggars & Sims 2005). Although the *Unox* advertisement contains an image of the nuclear family, it should be noted that in this case, as discussed earlier, the balance of power has shifted. Unlike the advertisements for *Plus*, *Jumbo*, *Croma* and *Remia*, the man is not the main character of the story. It can be argued that this shift in the distribution of power calls into question the traditional associations that the image of the nuclear family brings with it. Based on the composition of the group of people, the advertisements of the plant-based meat analogues can therefore be seen as representations that distance themselves from the dominant hegemonic masculinity discourse in which masculinity is linked to meat consumption and vegetarian products to femininity.

The advertisements of the plant-based meat analogues thus deviate from this traditional idea of the nuclear family. This not only undermines the image of the nuclear family, but also that of meat as masculine or vegetarian as feminine and the associated power relations it entails. In contrast, the advertising of meat products emphasises the nuclear family and the man responsible for the meat. Given that the traditional definition of the nuclear family implies associations with unequal gender roles and its appearance in the advertisements – in which the man has a leading and controlling role – it can be argued that the representation of such a family in combination with the promotion of meat contributes to the construction and maintenance of the link between meat consumption and notions of hegemonic masculinity. As the advertisements of *Jumbo* and *Plus* show, the promotion of meat and the nuclear family is often closely associated with barbecuing. This interrelation will be further explored below.

The art of cooking: indoor/ outdoor, duty/ leisure & the barbecue

As Michelle Szabo (2013) and others (Adler 1981; DeVault 1994; Lupton 1996) have demonstrated, cooking among men is often a leisure activity which mainly takes place outdoors. In contrast, cooking indoors and during the week as a consistent part of the household

is still often an activity linked to women's responsibility. Therefore, the activity of cooking can be studied through a lens of power relations.

A men's 'leisure cooking', includes the activity of barbecuing, which according to Nath (2011) and Dummitt (1998), is closely linked to both meat consumption and the idea of masculinity, power and strength. There is a view that barbecuing is a practice that is "naturally" intended for men, and would contribute to the augmentation of one's masculinity. Dummitt's (1998) analysis of post-war barbecue advertisements in Canada, for example, shows that barbecuing was considered as a symbol of virile masculinity and manly leisure. The masculine, rugged and rustic image of barbecuing was reinforced by the addition of meat (Dummitt 1998, 215). This fact can still be seen in today's media, as well as in Dutch advertisements for meat (Jennings 2019). The role of the man as the person responsible for the barbecue continues to predominate, which establishes the close link between meat, masculinity and power.

As for the advertisements for meat products, this connection comes forward in the advertisements for *Jumbo*, *Plus*, and *Remia*. In the *Jumbo* advertisement, for example, the image of the 'father behind the barbecue', referred to earlier, is strongly present (Alfred International 2021; Dummitt 1998, 211). Here the viewer is presented with an image of a man – white, middle-aged – who is preparing meat on the barbecue while proudly looking out over his family gathered in the garden. The context in which the story takes place is one of leisure and confirms that men's cooking – including barbecuing – is primarily a leisure activity (Adler 1981; DeVault 1994; Lupton 1996; Szabo 2013). This also applies to the *Plus* advertisement, which shows a father who takes every opportunity to organise a barbecue (PLUS Supermarket 2021). This is under the nom de guerre of his daughter's lace certificate and the fact that he and his wife have been married for four years and 27 days. The male protagonist is thus represented as an engaged father, which contributes to the household by a form of cooking – barbecuing.

This narrative aligns with what Dummitt (1998) argues, on how barbecuing became a new expression of the meat-as-masculine symbolism in the post-war years, because fathers were expected to be more involved in the household (211). To make it an attractive activity for men, the marketing around barbecuing created a visual imaginary, in which the "muscular and military masculinity" of men was appealed to (Dummitt 1998, 215). The barbecue was formed into a space where male power, leadership and hegemonic masculinity are strongly present (Nath 2011). The advertisements of *Jumbo* and *Plus* show how this image is still very present in the Dutch visual image of barbecuing. The assumption that the father is responsible for the barbecue and thus for the preparation of the meat reinforces the link between meat, masculinity and male power. Indeed, it reflects and constructs a hegemonic image of the "virile" man as

responsible and in charge of preparing the meat, doing the “rough” work (Screti 2019). Moreover, as the barbecue is portrayed as a man’s responsibility and occupation, this resonates with what Nath (2011) notes about how the barbecue is seen as a “significant place where manliness is socially calibrated by the consumption of meat” (262). The advertisements’ link of the barbecue and men may thus trigger the “real men eat meat” mentality (Nath 2011, 262). This linkage is confirmed by the given that, in both advertisements, meat is an indispensable ingredient and is advertised in large quantities.

Regarding the advertisements for the plant-based meat analogue products, the men’s cooking is less represented as an outdoors and more as an indoors activity. This is apart from the advertisement of *Garden Gourmet*, in which the man is depicted as the one responsible for the barbecue (Garden Gourmet NL 2021). In this case, the dominant view of the barbecue as a male space is followed and continued. This implies a degree of unequal power relations, in which the male character retains a position of leadership. However, as for the advertisements of *Iglo* and *Unox*, cooking is taking place indoors. What is notable is that the men’s cooking seems to be normalised. In the case of the *Iglo* advertisement, for example, this takes place in a group of friends consisting of two men and two women, from which one man is cooking the plant-based hamburger. No emphasis is placed on the fact that the man cooks as part of a household task, something that is, for instance, mentioned in the *Croma* advertisement (vleesbakjeincroma 2020). This also applies to the *Unox* advertisement, in which the father of the family also prepares the evening meal, and thus the plant-based smoked sausage (Unox Nederland 2020). Here, too, the course of events can be interpreted as normalised, no emphasis is placed on it.

The above shows that – as far as the barbecue theme is concerned – Dutch advertisements do indeed emphasise the meat-as-masculine link and that preparing the barbecue is the responsibility of the man. Moreover, in the *Croma* advertisement, the activity of cooking indoors is emphasised and highlighted by the male character. This emphasis makes it clear that the man’s cooking is a remarkable event, which again puts the male character in the leading role. In this case, therefore, the male character remains the protagonist and the power relations can be considered as merely shifted (Dummitt 1998; Grau & Zotos 2016; Spreksel 2020). Nevertheless, the *Croma* advertisement can also be seen as a movement in the right direction, because the man is indeed presented in a contributing role, which does not take place in the context of leisure. This leads to the advertisements of *Iglo* and *Unox*, which paint an even more contrasting picture. In this case, the emphasis is no longer on the barbecue, nor on the importance of the man’s cooking. Although here the man is also responsible for the

preparation of the plant-based meat analogues, the fact that a man cooks can be considered normalised. This shows that advertising for plant-based meat analogues gradually challenges the dominant images around indoor and outdoor cooking and its link to meat, masculinity and male power.

Conclusion

This research started with the motivation to investigate to what extent Dutch television advertisements presented meat as a symbol of hegemonic masculinity. This was done in order to gain a better understanding of the extent to which Dutch advertisements regarding meat perpetuate the meat-as-masculine image and thus construct and perpetuate the expression of hegemonic power relations. As a possible counterweight to the meat advertisements, advertisements of plant-based meat analogues were consulted. From the outside, plant-based meat analogues can hardly be distinguished from meat products and can therefore evoke associations with masculinity. However, since they consist of vegetarian products – products generally associated with femininity – it was interesting to investigate whether these products are presented to the public in a different way. And if so, in what way do they renounce the hegemonic male notion of meat consumption. The analysis showed that there were indeed differences between the advertising of meat products and that of plant-based meat analogues. These differences could be observed on the basis of four themes: *Who is in power? The articulation of hegemonic masculinity*, *Food choice & 'emasculatation'*, *Maintaining & challenging the traditional nuclear family ideal*, and *The art of cooking: indoor/ outdoor, duty/ leisure & the barbecue*.

The analysis showed that most advertisements for meat products emphasised and reflected the symbolism of meat-as-masculine. This was reflected, for example, in the subtle distribution of power, with the male character receiving significantly more spoken text, screen time and actions. This creates the impression that the advertisement is aimed at men and that the one who is supposed to eat and prepare meat – is the man. This was particularly clear in the *Remia* advertisement, which explicitly stated that choosing vegetarian food was not masculine, and then advised the male character to eat meat to fulfil his masculinity. This message is consistent with the dominant idea of meat-as-masculine and vegetarian-as-feminine. The portrayal and conveyance of this message can provoke the idea that a vegetarian choice on the part of a man can contribute to “emasculatation”.

Moreover, the dominant image of the barbecuing man – an activity closely associated with meat consumption – has been used repeatedly in advertisements for meat products. Barbecuing is here associated with roughness, masculinity and responsibility. This activity stems from the notion of hegemonic masculinity and its portrayal triggers the link between meat eating, masculinity and power. As already shown, the image of barbecuing often goes hand in hand with the representation of a traditional nuclear family. This is another representation of an element that evokes associations with traditional role patterns and power relations. These elements, both in combination and separately, construct and perpetuate the dominant idea that eating meat is a symbol of masculinity, power and strength and that eating vegetarian helps to diminish these aspects to some extent.

The advertisements of the plant-based meat analogues, on the other hand, offer an alternative view. All in all, these advertisements abandon the dominant idea – derived from the model of hegemonic masculinity – of meat-as-masculine and vegetarian-as-feminine. This is reflected in various aspects, such as the replacement of the nuclear family by the representation of a group of friends. There is also a shift in the distribution of power, i.e. the story is no longer led by the male character. This shift in power also translates into the way the choice of food is made, namely that everyone makes the same choice instead of the man being meat and the woman being vegetarian. In this way, the story moves away from the dominant idea of meat-as-masculine and vegetarian-as-feminine and no longer refers to making a food choice as an expression of power.

The findings show that the repetition of a dominant image or ideology can perpetuate dominant ideas about, in this case, food. The idea that eating meat is part of masculinity perpetuates power relations, which are harmful to humans, the environment and animals. Considering Rothgerber's (2012) assertion that men are more likely to be pro-meat the more they subscribe to traditional masculine roles, it can be argued that when meat advertising explicitly invokes this, it only reinforces, possibly perpetuates, this bond and makes it harder to distance oneself from the dominant idea that meat symbolises hegemonic masculinity.

Nevertheless, the analysis also shows that these dominant ideas can and are being challenged by a new branch of meat-related products, namely the plant-based meat analogues. It is recommended that more research be conducted into food advertisements and their relationship to hegemonic representations of food. For example, further research could focus on how fruit is depicted in advertisements. Does it appeal to the female viewer or does it challenge this image and try to distance itself from the dominant female/fruit connection? And what about adverts aimed at children? To what extent do they reflect gender-specific views on

food that may contribute to a continuation of the views of meat-as-masculine and vegetarian-as-feminine? Moreover, it is highly recommended that criticism of and action against the provocative role of advertising – both in the academic field and regulatory field – in the construction and maintenance of gender inequality also pays attention to gender stereotyped representation in the context of food promotion.

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