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GENDER, PRODUCTS & MARKETING

**A study of product gender perception and the need for
product gender congruency in Generation Y**

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ABSTRACT

- Title:** GENDER, PRODUCTS & MARKETING - A study of product gender perception and the need for product gender congruency in Generation Y
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- Key Words:** Gender Marketing, Gendered Products, Product Gender Congruence, Generation Y
- Thesis purpose:** The purpose of this study is to explore Generation Y's consumer perception of product brand's gender and the degree to which different nationalities seek product gender congruence in the marketing mix.
- Methodology:** A cross-sectional research design using a survey to examine multiple constructs such as product gender perception, the need for product gender congruency and receptivity to product gender cues at a single point in time.
- Theoretical perspective:** The main theories that the study is based upon are theory concerning product gender perception and the need for product gender congruency.
- Empirical data:** A quantitative study of 200 self-completion questionnaires administered online to 100 German and 100 Swedish respondents.
- Conclusion:** This study contributes to existing theory by underlining that product brands do have a gender. In addition, the results of this study show that the need for product gender congruence is minimized in Generation Y. Therefore, rethinking the traditional gender stereotyping of products may have more consumer appeal by being marketed to both sexes, or at least to emphasize more of the products attributes and how they can fulfill the needs of the Generation Y consumers. This study further demonstrates a practical method for evaluating the gender of a product brand.

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1. Introduction

Finding gender differences has been a strategy long held sacred by marketers, advertisers, manufactures and other cultural gatekeepers. Traditionalist views of male-female gender differences define the product, gendered images and products in marketing and advertising have become normative with traditional interpretations of masculine and feminine (Milner & Fodness, 1996). Gender marketing has always seemed to focus on issues working in tandem to encourage a consumption ethic where women consume and men produce (Kacen, 2000). However, according to Kacen (2000), in the postmodern era, the ascendance of a culture of consumption has destroyed masculine-feminine differences by making everyone a consumer and thus consumption plays more of a central role in the construction of consumer identities.

This research study uses a theoretical framework that draws from Consumer Marketing, Social Psychology, Gender Studies and Intercultural Business Dimensions. The theoretical framework will be utilized to analyze the diverse range of biological, behavioral, and social processes that impact upon gender development firstly on an individual level, secondly on a social level, and finally in the field of gender marketing. The empirical work will be based upon a relativist and social epistemology approach using pre-constructed scales to measure gender perceptions of product brands in Generation Y. Finally significant findings of the research study will be analyzed within a post-modern discourse to offer insight and understanding of the results.

1.1 Theoretical Research Gap

Although there is substantial research in the field of gender marketing, there is very limited research specifically in the field of product gender perception and product gender congruence. The most definitive article on product gender congruence was published in 1996, when Milner and Fodness found that certain **product categories** innately have a sex-type, but could be marketed to specifically appeal to a certain gender or also be broadened to both genders. Following this, Fugate and Phillips in 2010 replicated and extended the earlier work on product gender perceptions to reassess the data generated during the 1990's and explore the sensitivity to current product gender perceptions and the antecedents of product gender congruence. Based on the literature review, the authors of this research study were unable to find any existing current research addressing product gender identity within specific **product brands**.

In addition, after investigating the literature concerning gender marketing, the researchers of this study found that a theoretical gap exists when addressing the issue of product brand's gender particularly when concerned with younger target audiences born after 1981. The literature has a major time lapse with product gender perceptions among a maturing Generation Y (1981-1999), and the general consensus after reviewing the literature is that this generational group has a different upbringing with more tolerant cultural and social values than previous generations (Alreck, 1994; Kacen 2000; Morton, 2002; Fugate & Phillips, 2010). According to Morton (2002), Generation Y is recognized as a generational group that is now participating as independent consumers, spending money on products and services in the marketplace, and is transforming the marketplace due to its spending power and sheer size. Younger consumers tend to be more open to gender-equality and are less likely to see gender differences in product categories (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). Therefore, understanding the need for product gender congruence in Generation Y is of great interest for researchers and practitioners.

1.2 Problem formulation

Societal changes regarding gender-equality, acceptable cross-gendered social behavior, non-traditional households, metro sexuality, the gay rights movement, and attitudinal changes regarding gender stereotypes determining if there is indeed a contribution to suggest a fundamental shift regarding product gendering with Generation Y. Due to the paradigm shift in societal attitudes towards gender today the deliberate product gendering approach that is so popular with marketers may no longer be a productive marketing strategy in the future. Rethinking the traditional gender stereotyping of products may actually have more consumer appeal by being broadened and marketed to all genders, since the concept of gender identity in Western societies is undergoing radical transformation. Traditionalist views of gender and gender identity may no longer be credible, and masculinity and femininity is seen to have shifting significances. With the advent of technology, gender identity, which depends on socially created and agreed upon distinctions, has become abstract and disembodied (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). In this consumer's environment is there still a role for gender? Are typical, old-fashioned stereotypes of males and females even perceived within the new development of modern sex role perceptions, self-congruency and gender congruity? These issues led to the development of the research questions of this study.

1.3 Research questions

- 1) Do product brands have a gender and if so, does Generation Y's perception of the product brand's gender differ across cultural groups?*
- 2) How important is it for Generation Y to correspond their gender identity with a product's gender?*

1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore Generation Y's consumer perception of product brand's gender and the degree to which different nationalities seek product gender congruence in the marketing mix.

All in all, the theoretical contribution of this research study is to add to existing theory regarding product gender congruence in Generation Y across specific cross-cultural groups, and it is practically relevant as it will explore the perception of a product brand's gender, the need for product gender congruence and the receptivity of product gender cues within this important demographic group.

It is important to note that this thesis will only consider consumer attitudes and perceptions and therefore demarcate against consumer buying behaviors.

2. Literature Review

The following chapter intends to provide the readers with a deeper reasoning and understanding about the relevance of the research subject especially in the interdisciplinary field of gender marketing. Literature on gender, gender marketing, gender stereotypes and gender roles in society was examined and investigated, using the research findings of Bem (1974), Hofstede (1983), Debevec and Iyer (1986a, 1986b), Alreck (1994), Milner and Fodness (1996), Kacen (2000), and Fugate and Phillips (2010). However, for the purpose of this research study, only relevant information was selected to offer insights about the difference between sex and gender, the relationship between generational groups and stereotypes pictured in advertising, as well as gender marketing in order to describe the way of gendering products. This should provide a clear roadmap for the reader to outline the theoretical gap in the current literature which will be addressed by the research questions.

2.1 Difference between Sex and Gender

To understand the trend of gender marketing it is appropriate to clarify the terms of sex and gender which are both fundamental to the existing social construct in which everybody lives. While sex and gender are often used interchangeably in practice to signal if a person is biologically male or female, both terms have different etymologies, meanings and implications (Torgrimson & Minson, 2005). In essence, sex is biologically determined while gender is culturally regulated (Torgrimson & Minson, 2005).

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (1989) the noun Sex (*Latin: sexus*) is defined as “the sum of those differences in the structure and function of the reproductive organs on the ground of which beings are distinguished as male and female, and of the other physiological differences consequent on these; the class of phenomena with which these differences are concerned”. Therefore, the biological construct of sex is using the terms male and female and refers to biological differences such as hormonal profiles, chromosomes and internal and external sex organs.

In contrast, gender (*Latin: genus*) is defined as “a kind, sort, or class referring to the common sort of people” (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). Behavioral, psychological or cultural traits

typically associated with one sex refer to the interpretation of men and women within one society (Torgrimson & Minson, 2005). By using the terms masculine and feminine, gender incorporates meanings and connotations that includes attitudes, characteristics, activities and feelings appropriate for one's sex category which contains the reinforcement of existing social norms and status differences between the two sexes (Gentry & Harrison, 2010). Furthermore, gender describes a person's self-representation as male or female, gender role behavior and how persons are "responded to by social institutions on the basis of individual's gender presentation" (Torgrimson & Minson, 2005). In other words, societies concur that females should have certain characteristics that would classify them as feminine, and males should have certain characteristics that are masculine.

2.2 Gender identity

Masculinity and femininity and the extent to which individuals create an image of themselves as male or female persons, encompass the fundamental core of gender identity. In most cases people have a clear imagination and understanding about their gender identity even if they are not feeling comfortable with the body they live in, e.g. a woman can feel unpleasant with her female body because her gender perception is more masculine than feminine. Kacen (2000) argues that the psychological construct of gender identity is determined by the cultural context and social environment people are born and live in. While sex is a biological factor that is the same in every culture, the perception of gender and gender roles can be totally different across cultures. Gender roles in cultures are determined by specific behaviors and characteristics which differ from one cultural society to another one. Moreover, Kacen (2000) argues that attributed images of men and women depend on social circumstances, the surrounding people and their behavior. Individuals become gendered and develop an own gender identity by dealing with roles, stereotypes and socio-cultural institutions like their own family, education systems, language and mass media (Kacen, 2000). The understanding of being a boy or a girl, and therefore the construct of gender identity, emerge early in the human development by the age of two and shows the essential characteristics of one or the other sex, as determined by the society (Kacen, 2000). The definition of masculinity in different societies is related to occupation-related factors like material success, assertiveness and achievement (Milner & Collins, 1998; Milner, 2005). In contrast, Peak et al. (2011) mention that femininity is often equated with an orientation of relationships, quality of life

and modesty. In many Western cultures being a ‘real man’ means that typical masculine traits such as authority, aggression and power are shown, and being a ‘real woman’ is defined by feminine characteristics like sensitivity, intuition, and compassion.

2.3 Generational groups and their role stereotypes pictured in advertising

Research which focuses on sex roles in advertising campaigns has grounds in societal as well as marketing appeal (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a). Debevec and Iyer (1986a) mention marketer’s special interest in consumer’s perceptions of products within their sex roles. Moreover, gender roles in society and their portrayal in advertising in decentralized mass-media consumer societies are interrelated with each other due to advertising playing “an increasingly important role in the construction of reality and the maintenance of social hierarchy” (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). Many demographic changes have occurred in families since the 1970’s. Decreases in the size of families, coupled with increases in divorce, a casual way of living together and increases of double-income households have changed the picture, structure and image of families by altering the traditional roles of men as the breadwinner and women as the housewife (Robinson & Hunter, 2008). With the aim to sell products to a target audience of males or females, the use of depictions of gender stereotypes in advertising still continues (Robinson & Hunter, 2008). In summary, the researchers of this study deemed this background information as important in order to investigate whether selected factors may lead Generation Y to be less influenced by product gender. Due to the rapid social, demographic and environmental changes within the past decades, the researchers of this study will outline in the following paragraphs the changes of gender roles in advertising, as well as the generational and social environment over time.

2.3.1 The interrelation of gender in society and advertising

The focus on sex roles in advertising evolved from societal concerns, and societal criticisms have concentrated mainly on women's stereotypical roles in advertising and how this is affecting the children’s socialization and the perpetuation of a women’s ‘place’ within a society (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a). Moreover, advertising reflects social roles and typical life situations such as how people live, enjoy their lives, are related to each other and what they think and feel. The literature suggests that the basic social roles assigned to female and male characters by storytellers are tremendously important contributors to the construction and maintenance of gender stereotypes

(Lauzen, Dozier, & Horan, 2008). Gentry and Harrison (2010) mention different media representations of individuals are influencing the audience's perception and reaction to the represented group members in advertisements. The perpetuation of stereotypes and presentation of male and female behavior affect audience responses and the "society stage of gender development and equality relate to its advertising content" (Paek, Nelson, & Vilela, 2011). Summarized, gender roles and stereotypes of a society can emerge or be solidified, as the audience is educated about conventional modes of gender perception by portraying 'the real world' in commercials.

2.3.2 Generational groups

Commonalities among consumer groups have become increasingly important as marketers seek to homogenize the target audience, which has thus led marketing strategies to segment and target different generational groups (Ramsey, Marshall, Johnston & Deeter-Schmelz, 2007). The sociological definition of a generation refers to a group of people born in the same era in a typical time span of approximately fifteen years, who are united by age, life stage, events, social conditions, and experiences (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2010). The generational perspective of values including self-enhancement (egotistic) and self-transcendence (altruistic) are some of the possibilities that relate to the combination of psychological states that might exist at a particular point in time and may endure, increase or decrease with the circumstance (Urien & Kilbourne, 2010). Living through world events, global trends, and socio-economic development, such as social upheaval, political shifts, or technological advances shapes and creates a collective persona that becomes embedded in the social generation's psyche and worldview (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2010; Urien & Kilbourne, 2010). Thus, trends among generational groups across the world can be compared and are found to share a parallel likeness.

2.3.3 Baby Boomers and the 1970's

Numbering 80 million, the generational group called Baby Boomers were born into the post World War II economic boom (1946-1964) and are considered the most influential group in the adult majority of people over age forty (Wolfe, 2004). Baby Boomers are considered to be the first demographic generational group that was targeted by marketing efforts (McCrinkle & Wolfinger, 2010). As young adults in the 1970's, they faced social and political issues such as the

civil rights movement (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010). They grew up in a time where traditional gender roles of men and women were pictured in advertisements, for example, the independent role of men as professional, celebrity, worker or narrator/ interviewer which was prominent in the 1930's, were still popular five decades later (Kervin, 1990; Gentry & Harrison, 2010). Moreover, men were shown as independent authorities while women were portrayed as parent, housewife and spouse using products at home (Gentry & Harrison, 2010; Paek et al., 2011.). Products like food, home appliances, and cleaning suppliers were more likely demonstrated by women than men (Robinson & Hunter, 2008). In summary, women were still underrepresented and stereotyped with the role of housewives in television commercials.

2.3.4 Generation X and the 1980's

Generation X (1965-1980) was born into a period of awakening classified by the 1970's, in a period of relative peace and prosperity (McCrindle & Wolfinger, 2010). Because of the feminist movement in the 1970's and changes in women's social and economic status, their comprehensive role in society are better grasped in advertisements in the 1980's. The picture of women changed into feminine consumers who are on the one side active, confident and liberated "supermoms" who entered the "paid labor force without adequate support from their husbands" and on the other side, they were primarily responsible for children and household (Robinson & Hunter, 2008). Despite picturing women in family settings less often, the new motherhood role spawned a new stereotypical and ideological role as family woman with a slightly pictured development of a career woman. While the role of women was to some extent modified in society, men in advertising did not take responsibility for the housework (Robinson & Hunter, 2008). Gentry and Harrison (2010) mention an increase of men portrayed as aggressive, competitive, possessive and antagonistic in the 1980's. Men were pictured in auditory roles and prominent visuals as well as in many occupations while women rarely appear as authorities or announcers and were "three times more likely than men to be shown inside the home" (Wartella, 1985; Peak et al., 2011). In summation, advertisements in the 1980's showed slight, but few changes in ways women and men are pictured compared to the 1970's.

2.3.5 Generation Y in the 1990's and today

At 76 million, Generation Y (1981-1999), also known as the Millennials, are the next demographic boom and possess consumer power that is unmatched by any of the previous generations (Wolfe, 2004). As young adults Generation Y's worldview is shaped since they are growing up post-September 11th, which makes them more concern about the quality of life (Wolfe, 2004). In addition, they have an emerging visibility of same sex affiliates of gay people along with increasing attention to their rights (Robinson & Hunter, 2008) Having grown up in the Internet Age, Generation Y-ers are extremely comfortable with technology and have a love of social networking (Palmer, 2010).

The shift of gender ideologies in the 1990's were recognized in society and advertising. Robinson and Hunter (2008) point out that men and their masculinity were downgraded and pictured more as in need of fixing and incompetent, plus less likely to be represented as the "king of the castle." However, men's image in advertising today is out of touch with reality. Gentry and Harrison (2010) state those male portrayals are far more limited in advertising than women's, e.g. men in commercials are not usually shown in the role of a father, and especially in advertisements which are more likely seen by men, fathers are not portrayed accurately when weighed against their roles within families. The involved family man and its thoroughly positive image is infrequently seen in commercials (Kaufman, 1999). By giving the example of asking a number of students "how many of them have fathers who cook better than their moms" Gentry and Harrison (2010) found out that one-third of them responded positively while this behavior of a father cooking or baking for his family is not really common in commercials. Despite the development of a picture of less violent men, men shopping for food or eating at home are not shown as "new age parents" in television commercials, but just as having fun in their father role without any involvement in household tasks or child care (Robinson & Hunter, 2008; Gentry & Harrison, 2010). This follows traditional stereotypes but does not actually convey reality.

At the same time, the ways women were pictured as less systematic than decades ago when the female businesswoman successfully managed the household, kids and career, and can be grounded to the altered role of males in society, e.g. housework became a gendered activity (Robinson & Hunter, 2008). Robinson and Hunter (2008) as well as Gentry and Harrison (2010) mention that being in charge of health and the provider of loving resources, women are still

clearly identified as family members today. Additionally, work, child care and body care are the main areas where females are currently pictured in advertising (Robinson & Hunter, 2008).

While the previous research shows that advertisements are beginning to reverse the traditional stereotypes of men and women, however, much of the current images of men and women tend to trivialize the social changes of the past few decades (Robinson & Hunter, 2008). The demonstration of gender stereotypes of the past, where responsibilities of the household was depicted as solely a woman's responsibility, is reduced. However, the real social development of gender-equality is only slightly portrayed by marketers in current advertising images.

2.4 Gender Marketing

As gender roles of men and women within societies were changed, marketers and advertisers began to assess their strategies in advertising and communication and tried to establish gender images for products and brands, e.g. advertisements for cosmetic and diet sodas were traditionally targeted to women but with the aim of market expansion, manufacturers directed their communication also towards male consumers (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a; Debevec & Iyer, 1986b). As Coltrane and Messineo (2000) point out, most advertisements were targeted to a diverse, broad audience, the so called mass-market, before the 1980's. However, with increased technology and social and environmental changes, marketers accentuated "divisions between subpopulations, borrowing techniques from direct mailing, consumer tracking, and relationship marketing" and tried to find new, more specific target audiences through market extrapolation (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). These marketing and advertising developments led to a separation of audiences, whereby highlighting differences make consumers feel more comfortable by addressing and speaking in different ways, with the intention that marketers could target and market their products more efficiently (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). These new marketing efforts differentiated on a basis of ethnic and cultural differences, as well as gender distinctions.

As Darley and Smith (1995) point out, the use of gender as a segmentation strategy meets several prerequisites for effective implementation such as: gender segments are reachable, measurable and responsive to the marketing mix, as well as they are easy to identify, huge and profitable. The emphasis on target groups of male and/or female consumers is one of the critical factors in developing a marketing strategy with the use of advertising messages (Wolin, 2003). However,

out of the different ethnic, cultural and religious groups and different consumer needs, the strategy to gender products towards specific men's and women's needs was a logical consequence (Flocke, 2006). With the use of gender strategies, **gender marketing** was developed out of a diversity approach in the United States 20 years ago (Flocke, 2006). Gender Marketing implies a strategic market and consumer orientation from a masculine and feminine point of view whereby instead of unisex or gender-neutral approaches, gender specific differences are taken into account (Kreienkamp, 2007). To implement men's and women's needs into the development, price setting, distribution and communication of products and services under consideration of different product evaluations, different consumption desires as well as distinctive purchasing intentions and procedures is the main aim of gender marketing (Flocke, 2006). Moreover, gender marketing can be seen as an alliance between an open picture of genders including the resultant change and challenges from the market perspective, and a dialog with consumers as well as employees from a company perspective (Kreienkamp, 2007). Due to gender being increasingly implicated in consumer behavior, it is likely that marketers benefit from gendered communication (Wolin, 2003). This linkage between the market and consumers enables the development, production and promotion of gender specific products and services.

2.5 Gendering Products

The increase of more individualistic consumers in developed markets shows "how important congruence between a product and one's self is in consumption decisions" (Quester, Karunaratna & Goh, 2000). This phenomenon is accompanied by the desire for products and brands which matches individual and unique styles and preferences (Govers & Schoormans, 2005). The consumption of products and services is connected to the personal lifestyle which is in turn influenced by society and culture.

2.5.1 Does a product like a person have a gender?

The receptivity of gender cues in product categories and products is a typical phenomenon today. Bem's (1974) gender theory claims that a lot of products are perceived to have a gender, or rather a sex-typed identity with relatively little ambiguity, which can be classified as masculine or feminine. Moreover, consumers buy products which they are familiar with and which match to their own identity, thereby the gender of the consumers can be seen as one of the most

influencing factors for marketers (Milner & Fodness, 1996). Moreover, buying decisions of both sexes are determined by gender specific attributes and the consumer's own gender identity (Milner & Fodness, 1996). After so many years of gender marketing and the specific orientation and targeting of products or product groups to one audience, male or female consumers of a specific age group, product categories developed a gender (Milner & Fodness, 1996; Fugate & Phillips, 2010).

To gender a product implies that it is given a masculine or a feminine identity to develop a gender image by modifying visible designs, advertising and promotion to include features which classify them exclusively with one sex, either male or female, while the essential characteristics and attributes of the products or services are acceptable by both sexes (Alreck, 1994). For instance, selling a fountain pen to girls attending elementary school, manufacturers would rather use the color pink and a flowery design, than configure the pen in blue with footballs on it. Marketers or advertisers use color, logos, graphics, sounds, texture, shape, packaging and names to gender a product or brand (Wolin, 2003). Summarized, by adapting the product towards typical gender images with certain advertising and sales promotion, gender associations can be evoked.

Furthermore, gendering products involves creating a gender image due to strong associations with contemporary masculine or feminine sex role stereotypes through promotion and advertising (Alreck, 1994). Advertisements, in particular in TV and print, show men or women as testimonials who use and promote different products, which generates a typical picture of the product and its users in the consumer's minds (Alreck, 1994). Furthermore, to gender a product, modifications and design should be appealing and attractive to the stereotypical man or woman of the culture and society to which the product will be sold (Alreck, 1994). In addition, Govers and Schoormans (2005) mention that product nature and variants in presentation, size, and color are seen as an important issue to the consumer's self-concept, e.g. a product which is sold as 'family-size' differs from the same product sold as 'single-size'. According to Feasey (2009), advertising not only helps solidify a products masculine or feminine image, but in addition, it also serves to influence the wider understanding of sex and gender roles in the society, since it has the power to promote culturally acceptable social relations, define sex role norms, and common understandings of gender identity for the contemporary audience.

Milner and Fodness (1996) point out that consumers purchase products with a gender identity which is congruent with their own identity. Therefore, the communication of gender images through mass media is accompanied by the development of gender identities for consumers and products used by the consumer (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). Furthermore, Peak et al. (2011) mention that products can be associated with a gender image which at the same time illustrates the prevailing gender role in society. In summation, the congruence of gender role portrays, gender of the product user, as well as the gender of the product itself matters.

2.5.2 Gender identity and self-congruence

The development of a person's gender identity as well as gender specific needs and behavior commences early in life. Gender identity is in essence a core sense of self ("I am a boy"), whereas gender role involves the adaptation of socially constructed markers such as clothing, mannerism, and behaviors, which are traditionally thought of as masculine and feminine ("I like wearing boy's clothing") (Lev, 2004). Later on, gender identity and consumption behavior are consistent with each other due to the circumstances in which consumers grow up. Moreover, males and females develop certain expectations about products which they consume, and therefore, different products and services should be presented to them in a variety of forms to fulfill specific gender expectations (Govers & Schoormans, 2005). In other words, males and females want masculine or feminine products fitting with their gender identity.

Past research of Milner and Fodness (1996) showed that both genders feel uncomfortable using products and services which do not seem to fit to their gender specific features and requirements. This implies that males and females want to know, buy and use what is made for them because they feel psychologically uncomfortable using products or services which are not 'theirs' (Milner & Fodness, 1996). Therefore, the concept of self-congruity mentioned by Quester et al. (2000) can be seen as the combination of self-image and product image, which impacts on product preferences and purchase intentions of consumers. Self-congruence is seen as an important factor for consumer's preferences because products and brands which coincide with the self-concept are preferred, for example many men feel unpleasant when asked that they buy pink nail polish or sanitary pads, while women do not consider lawnmowers as a possible product for their own (Govers & Schoormans, 2005). Furthermore, human characteristics are attributed to products and brands whereby a "product-personality congruence" emerges which has a positive impact through

the self-congruence effect on the choices that consumers make (Govers & Schoormans, 2005). In summary, consumers favor products and services with a certain personality that suits their own self-identity.

2.5.3 Marketer's intention for gendering products

There are different intentions for marketers to gender products and to target them to a specific target group of male or female consumers. Marketers take an active position while gendering products with the effort to target new customer groups as well as to develop new market segments (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a). By segmenting the market, the issue of gender is usually one of the first items marketers refer to which makes gender significantly important (Alreck, 1994). According to Darley and Smith (1995) gender as a segmentation strategy is used due to three reasons, (1) gender is easy to identify, (2) gender segments are large and profitable and (3) gender segments are accessible. Milner and Fodness (1996) mention that the understanding of gender relevance is important to position or reposition a product due advertising and promotion strategies, preferably being based on product gender perceptions of consumers. Comprehending the linkage between products and gender stipulates “whether products must be positioned with respect to gender, and if so, whether they are directed to men, to women, or to both” (Milner & Fodness, 1996). Alreck (1994) mentions that a relatively high level of advertising and promotion over a long period of time is needed to build a masculine or feminine image of the product and to gain “enough sales to women to more than compensate for the loss of potential sales to men”. To gender and target a product or brand which appeals strongly to only one sex modification, appliances and product creation resources are needed (Alreck, 1994). Marketing strategies such as target marketing and product differentiation can be seen as the main approaches of manufacturing companies with the aim to sell the produced goods as effectively as possible to one gendered audience.

Target marketing has the aim to gain market penetration with a specific segment which can be seen as the part of a market that includes the potential customers (Ghauri, 2010). The choice of the target segment needs to compensate the loss of potential sales of a broader targeting of the market. This target marketing strategy of gendering products is strategic since it implies long-term commitment to markets and products to increase profits and competitiveness (Ghauri, 2010).

While positioning and repositioning products, marketers often try to create a product gender image and build up a relationship of congruence between the product and its user (Debevec & Iyer, 1986b). Relating to Alreck (1994), gendering a new product brand or changing and targeting an existing one to a specific audience is a “tempting way to differentiate it from other, closely similar brands in a sometimes crowded and rather homogeneous product class”. The change of the product itself or the image of the product, in other words both physical or psychological changes are strategic actions of a manufacturer (Alreck, 1994). In order to distinguish products in the minds of consumers, marketers use a product differentiation strategy to persuade the consumers and market that the offered product is different to that of competitors (Ghauri, 2010).

Both approaches of gendering products are strategic rather than tactical. Ghauri (2010) points out that strategic planning deal with products, firm’s capital and market research in order to develop long- and short-term goals of the company. Moreover, it is a systematized way of relating to the future and managing external, uncontrollable factors and their effects, while tactical planning is conducted to the local level and concerns specific actions (Ghauri, 2010). Nevertheless, even if marketers manage to provide a gender to a product they should have in mind that it can be difficult in an international, global context. Ghauri (2010) claims that a global marketing strategy which use global marketing concepts while making marketing decisions should be considered carefully due to the fact that different stereotypes, gender roles and gender perceptions are disseminated in different countries and cultures.

3. Theoretical Framework

The following section will illustrate a model developed by Fugate and Phillips (2010) which shows the influencing items on receptivity to product gender cues, followed by relevant theories upon which hypotheses are formulated. The hypotheses are formulated to test if Generation Y perceives product brands as having a gender, if the gender of a product brand is the same across cultural groups, and to examine the degree to which different nationalities seek product gender congruence.

3.1 Conceptual Model of Fugate and Phillips

This research study closely follows upon the work established by Fugate and Phillips (2010), whose aim was to extend earlier work on product gender perceptions to understand if social change altered product gender perceptions and to explore the relationship between how consumers view the perception of their gender against the perception of the product category's gender. The structure of the study by Fugate and Phillips (2010) and the variables used are similar to this research study. However, this research study is substantially different in nature. Fugate and Phillips (2010) investigated gender congruence in product categories, whereas this research study examines gender congruence of specific product brands in the Coca-Cola range. Using Hofstede's framework of cultural dimensions theory to compare cross-cultural groups, this research study will test the conceptual model established by Fugate and Phillips (2010), using pre-existing scales and variables as discussed in the methodology chapter.

Based on their research aims, Fugate and Phillips (2010) developed a conceptual model, which illustrates the influence of gender, self-congruency, untraditional role models, and modern sex role perceptions on the need for product gender congruity, which further has an impact on the receptivity to product gender cues.

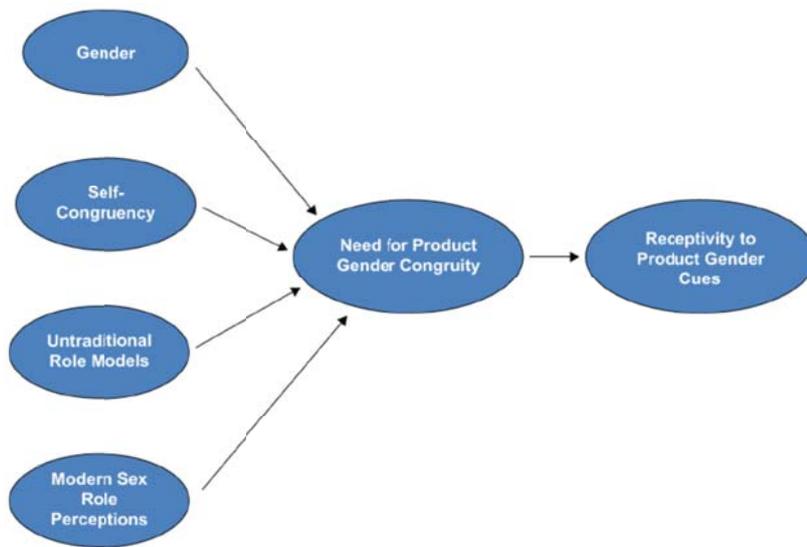


Figure 1: Conceptual model (Fugate & Phillips, 2010)

This model helps to understand the relationships between different individual and social factors on product gender perception, and it demonstrates the correlations between these items. These causal factors play a role in the need for product gender congruity and the receptivity to product gender cues amongst consumers and can possibly be issues which predict shifts in product gender perceptions. Therefore, several constructs established by Fugate and Phillips (2010) were used in this research study to evaluate the need for product gender congruity, modern sex role perception and the receptivity to product gender cues in Generation Y.

3.2 Product gender differences of masculine and feminine countries

This study will investigate consumer's perception of product brand's gender compared across cultural groups using Hofstede's dimension of Masculinity/ Femininity in order to explore Generation Y's product gender congruence across several countries. In the late 1970's, Geert Hofstede studied culture systematically in a business and management context by collecting more than 11 600 questionnaires of IBM employees in over than 50 countries (Ghauri, 2010). Hofstede (1983) developed four multivariate statistical and theoretical dimensions for describing national culture of collective programming which can be conceptually linked to human societies throughout the world. These dimensions are named Individualism/ Collectivism, Power Distance,

Masculinity/ Femininity and Uncertainty Avoidance followed later by a fifth dimension called long-term orientation/ short-term orientation (Geert Hofstede, 2011).

The dimension of Masculinity/ Femininity involves the division of social sex roles which would involve the typical tasks that men or women carry out from one society to the other (Hofstede, 1983). Some societies allow men and women to take on many different roles, while other societies are more rigid when concerned with what men and women should and should not do. In societies where there is a sharp division of sex roles, men are usually more dominant and assertive, while women adopt the caretaker and service roles (Hofstede, 1983). Hofstede (1983) categorized societies on their minimization or maximization of the sex role division, whereby the societies that maximize the social sex role division are classified as Masculine and the societies that do not divide the sex roles as rigidly are classified as Feminine. Furthermore, Hofstede (1983) declares that traditional masculine social values of masculine societies also influence women's thinking and perception of the sex roles in those countries. In addition, Hofstede (1983) developed a Masculinity-Femininity dimension index scale of 100 points and rated 50 countries with a high score meaning the country is masculine, and a low score meaning that the country is feminine. A masculine society for example favors earning money, perseverance, showing off possessions and caring little for others, while feminine societies has opposite characteristics (Ghauri, 2010). According to Hofstede (1983) and Ghauri (2010), Germany has an index score of 66 (masculine) while Sweden is the most feminine country with the lowest index score of 5 (feminine) of all countries.

Moreover, the conceptualization of masculinity and femininity in society and psychology has a long history as "bipolar ends of a single continuum; accordingly, a person has had to be either masculine or feminine, but not both" (Bem, 1974). During her studies in 1974, Bem developed a scale called Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) which includes personality characteristics divided into masculine and feminine attributes where for example masculinity is associated with a cognitive focus on "getting the job done" and an instrumental orientation, while femininity has been connected with an affective concern for the welfare of others and an expressive orientation (Bem, 1974). Furthermore, the BSRI was used to study whether products are sex-typed as masculine or feminine, as well as androgynous or undifferentiated. Equal authorization of both, masculine and feminine cues, is represented by the term androgynous while the complete lacking a gender attributes is represented as undifferentiated. Relating to Debevec and Iyer (1986a),

androgynous products are used equally by men and women while products which have not formed a specific gender image can be called undifferentiated. This classification of product's sex-type within the four dimensions is used in this research study to evaluate if the chosen representative Coca-Cola product brands are perceived as masculine, feminine, androgynous or undifferentiated by younger target audiences of Generation Y. Previous studies have only tested product categories on Bem Sex Role Inventory-scale (1974); consequently it is important to test the gender of product brands which is foundational for this research study, since this has been identified as the research gap.

Therefore, respondents from Germany and Sweden were selected for this research study to compare their perceptions of product gender according to Bem Sex-Role Inventory, in a masculine versus a feminine society.

H1: Measures of product brand's gender will show no difference between masculine and feminine countries.

3.3 Self-congruency and gendered products

Past research by Milner and Fodness (1996) concluded that the consumption behavior of men and women are determined by their own gender perception and the product gender perception, which should be consistent with a person's gender identity. Therefore a consumer's gender can be seen as one of the most important issues which are concerning marketers (Milner & Fodness, 1996). Govers and Schoormans (2005), also supports this view and points out that in previous generations, there was a more prevalent need to fit into the social gender constructs of the society and conform to the expected gender identity. They conclude that consumers need to match their product purchases with their individual self-concepts in what is considered to be "product-personality-congruence" (Govers & Schoormans, 2005). In other words, consumers prefer products with a specific personality that fits their own self-identity.

In contrast, Sebor (2006) mentions that Generation Y desires instant gratification for their needs and has a solid sense of self-identity which is no longer influenced by traditional gender stereotypes of the society. Furthermore, Sebor (2006) concludes that Generation Y's desire to express themselves through the product's ability to satisfy their needs is favorable. Additionally, the modern world of economic growth has given rise to more opportunities for both sexes

therefore, as self-expression values become more dominant within societies this process tends to have a low compatibility with traditional gender roles for Generation Y (Aboim, 2010). Due to contradictory views on the need to seek product gender congruency, the second hypothesis states:

H2: Males and females of Generation Y prefer to use product brands which are congruent with their own gender characteristics.

3.4 Men's acceptance of feminine gendered products

Utilizing the theory of Hofstede (1983), the dimension of Masculinity/ Femininity concerns the division of social sex roles and involves the typical tasks that men or women carry out from one society to the other. For example, Hofstede (1983) mentions that masculine societies are more rigid about what they consider appropriate regarding what men and women should and should not do, whereas in feminine societies, men and women can take on many different roles.

Furthermore, Alreck (1994) states males tend to reject product brands with a feminine gender, while women often feel comfortable and are more likely to use products with a masculine image. However, it is not socially acceptable for men to use products or brands which are considered to be feminine, e.g. women are wearing men's underwear but men will not wear women's underwear (Alreck 1994). In contrast, Fugate and Phillips (2010) found that with social changes, especially in the last two decades, a modification in the perception of product gender took place and although individuals still classify products by gender characteristics, product gender congruence is not that important anymore to some individuals. Given these contrasting views on acceptability of using products that are meant for the opposite sex, hypothesis three is formulated.

H3: For men from a feminine country it is more acceptable to use feminine products brands than for men from a masculine country.

3.5 Indicator for a product's gender

Gendering a product or brand includes presenting symbols, images and models using society's ideal image of men or women (Alreck, 1994). The two most basic psychological connotations of gender are masculine strength and feminine gentleness (Alreck, 1994). The man must be strong, tough, the leader, and financially independent, whereas the woman must be nurturing, modest and

ladylike (Alreck, 1994). Together with advertising and promotion, the physical and psychological product differentiation strategy uses characteristics which include visible modified design features and symbols to identify it mainly or exclusively with one sex (Alreck, 1994). More subtle gender cues such as shape, size, form, textures and patterns all have gender connotations (Alreck, 1994). Femininity is associated with light colors, soft surfaces, smooth rounded shapes, smaller sizes and lighter weight, whereas in contrast masculinity is associated with deep colors, hard surfaces, solid patterns, angular shapes, large sizes, and heavier weights (Alreck, 1994). Therefore, hypothesis four evaluates the form and shape of a product brand as well as the brand characteristics and the brand name.

H4: A product brand's form and shape will be the strongest indicator of receptivity to product gender cues.

4. Methodological Considerations

The purpose of the methodology chapter is to provide evidence for reliability, validity and generalizability of the designed research method in a systematic and meaningful manner. The section will begin with a description of The Coca-Cola Company product brands which are used to test if product brands have a gender. Further on, the research method and why it has been chosen will be presented, followed by underlying assumptions outlining the philosophical position taken. The ontological and epistemological considerations will be addressed, followed by a presentation of the research design, including the questionnaire design, sampling, data collection techniques and procedures used for data analysis, and finally the chapter ends with a reflection on the limitations of the chosen method.

4.1 Background of The Coca-Cola Company

The Coca-Cola Company is the world's largest beverage company and is recognized as the world's best-known brand (The Coca-Cola Company, 2005). Established in 1886 in the USA, the Coca-Cola Company refreshes consumers with more than 500 sparkling and still product brands and is the No. 1 provider of sparkling beverages, including light and diet soft drinks, waters, juices and juice drinks, sports drinks, coffees and ready-to-drink teas (The Coca-Cola Company, 2010). Moreover, the brand awareness of Coke is so strong that the product can sell itself (2006).

4.1.1 *'Love it light' – Coca-Cola Light*

The launch of Diet Coke, known as Coca-Cola Light in the countries of this research study, took place in 1982 and was the first extension of the Coca-Cola range and the Coca-Cola trademark (Diet Coke, 2011). At the time of the launch, Coca-Cola Light was the first diet product on the beverage market and established a trend which is seen in different product categories today (Coca-Cola History, 2011). After becoming the top diet soft drink in the world, today Coke Light is the No. 3 and still satisfying the needs of people who want plenty of taste and almost no calories (Diet Coke, 2011). Nevertheless, the majority of men were not attracted to Coke Light which can be reasoned by the word 'diet' and its implication of an older, female group of consumers (Elliot, 2007). In 1994, a successful campaign pictured a handsome construction worker being admired by female office workers while taking a 'Coca-Cola Light-break'. After

that overnight sensation, people saw Coke Light even more as a healthy soft drink with feminine cues and a female-skewed brand personality (Alarcon, 2008). According to Marketing Manager Andreas Johler, Coca-Cola Light was from the beginning more targeted to women since this target audience had always been nutrition-conscious (Ramerstorfer, 2007). The female communication of Coke Light is well-conducted until today, where the individuality and uniqueness of young females has priority. Coca-Cola Light's advertising centers the idea of perfect moments for 'Coke Light Breaks' where women are independent, cheeky and pleasure seeking, which is in contrast to Coke Zero's young, blokey image (Alarcon, 2008).

4.1.2 'Life As It Should Be' - Coca-Cola Zero

In March 2005, The Coca-Cola Company announced the launch of a new Coke named Coca-Cola Zero or Coke Zero (The Coca-Cola Company, 2005). To meet consumers demand for real Coke taste and zero calories, Coca-Cola Zero joined the portfolio of Coca-Cola Classic and Diet Coke to "form a perfect trio of brands offering a choice to anyone seeking great cola taste" (The Coca-Cola Company, 2010). This new zero-calorie supports the flagship Coke brand and is targeted to young adults, particularly males, who do not want to compromise on flavor or calories (The Coca-Cola Company, 2005; Alarcon, 2008). The word "diet" is substituted by the term "zero" because it implies especially to younger men, rather than a consumer group of older, female consumers (Elliot, 2007).

With this innovation, The Coca-Cola Company managed to launch a product which meets the needs and demands of health-aware consumers who were increasingly turning to low calories (2006). Dan Dillon, vice president, Diet Portfolio, of Coca-Cola North America publicized "Coca-Cola Zero is exactly what young adults told us they wanted – real Coca-Cola taste, zero calories and a new brand they can call their own" (The Coca-Cola Company, 2005). The target audience of young male adults with the wish for a soft drink with zero calories is an untapped consumer group The Coca-Cola Company understood at the right time. The target audience can be described as young health conscious males who are concerned about reduced sugar intake, within the age 18-34, a demographic group that usually avoids diet drinks (Kleinman, 2006). Furthermore, the company used an innovative marketing strategy for Coca-Cola Zero by using humorous, impious communication, showed in television, radio, online and out-of-home campaigns, sampling programs, social media marketing on Facebook to create a cool, youthful,

edgy image and in the end established a strong connection with young adult males (The Coca-Cola Company, 2010).

“Coca-Cola presents... A taste of life as it should be” – is the slogan used in above-the-line and below-the-line activities and advertising campaigns of Coke Zero (Alarcon, 2008). To catch the young twenty-first century male’s attention, TV spots for example, are shot in the style of a Hollywood action movie and illustrate a young man turning into an action hero after drinking Coke Zero (Alarcon, 2008). With this concept Coke Zero shows more old-fashioned stereotypes of men as an action or super hero in its communication campaigns, which is out of touch with men’s reality today.

Thus Coke Zero, the Coca-Cola Company’s greatest hit since the launch of Diet Coke in 1982, is one of the top 10 most popular U.S. sparkling soft drinks (The Coca-Cola Company, 2010). The success of the company's most popular new sparkling soft drink in a generation, Coca-Cola Zero, can be measured by five years of straight double-digit sales and strong growth in the U.S. market and in 130 countries around the world (The Coca-Cola Company, 2010).

4.1.3 Coke Zero vs. Coke Light?

The cannibalization effect on Coke Light was one critical aspect which accompanied the launch of Coke Zero, but its launch stopped consumers buying another brand, and thus this defensive move of The Coca-Cola Company was taken (Alarcon, 2008). However, due to the target groups of Coke Zero and Coke Light being different, The Coca-Cola Company (2005) mentioned that there will be not impact on America’s No. 1 diet soft drink Coca-Cola Light. Besides the different target audiences, one clear distinctive issue between Coke Zero and Coke Light is the taste. The new option for Cola lovers with zero calories is sweetened with a blend of aspartame and acesulfame potassium to protect the real Coca-Cola taste (The Coca-Cola Company, 2005) and can be seen as a no-calorie version of Coke Classic (Elliot, 2007). Coca-Cola Light is sweetened only with aspartame and has a less sweet-tasting than regular Coke Classic and has its own flavor (Diet Coke, 2011).

4.2 Research Method

In order to gain an understanding of the goals of this study, the philosophical stance taken by the researchers will be explained to elaborate on the processes that underlie the results and the conclusions. This study adopts a relativist and social constructionist epistemological approach, with a combination using the relativist approach of quantitative data provided by a survey, and social constructionism to explain causation out of previously presented theories. The methodological implications of a relativist epistemology are quite suitable for exposing the proposition that a modern sex role perception will affect the need for product gender congruity (Easterby-Smith, 2008). The research method is quantitative in nature, therefore the researchers assume a relativist approach, since a relativist epistemology¹ assumes there are regular patterns in human behavior which may be measured and correlated to understand underlying relationships (Easterby-Smith, 2008). Furthermore, the relativist position of this study is pointed out with the ontological² assumption that there are gender roles based on the influence of society and advertising regarding the receptivity of product gender cues.

Aspects of social constructionism will be utilized using previously developed theories as presented in the theoretical framework to explain causation. Ontologically, constructionism views the world as created by those within the system who are inter-dependent, in contrast with objectivism that states the world exists and the actors have no influence on the nature of things (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Since this research study examines socially constructed phenomena such as ‘gender’, ‘masculinity’, ‘femininity’ and ‘traditional gender roles’, it is difficult to take an objectivist viewpoint which conventionally fits better with quantitative data. Therefore, this research study applies social constructionism because it is centered on human interest and aims to increase general understanding of the previously stated socially constructed aspects of gender perceptions through theoretical abstraction (Easterby-Smith, 2008).

¹ “An epistemology issues concerns the question of what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline.” (Bryman & Bell, 2007)

² “Questions of social ontology are concerned with the nature of social entities.” (Bryman & Bell, 2007)

4.3 Research Design

This research study utilizes a cross-sectional design consisting of a survey which examines multiple constructs developed by Fugate and Phillips (2010) such as Self-Congruency, Untraditional Role Models, Modern Sex Role Perception, Need for Product Gender Congruity and Receptivity to Product Gender. Bryman and Bell (2007) claim a survey research as a cross-sectional design where quantitative data is collected at a single point in time through questionnaires on more than one case. Furthermore, the aim of a survey is to bring more than two variables in connection with the collected data to find patterns of association (Bryman & Bell, 2007, Easterby-Smith, 2008). According to Easterby-Smith (2008), this relativist research design involves analysis of several factors using simultaneous measurements that will be included in order to gain multiple perspectives based on different experiences. Therefore, the proposed data collection method is a quantitative survey using a self-completion questionnaire to compare two different cultural groups.

4.3.1 Reliability, replication and validity

The issues of reliability, replication and measurement validity are the main areas of concern with quantitative data (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Reliability involves if the results of a study are repeatable, and whether the measures used are consistent (Bryman & Bell, 2007). To ensure reliability, the measures of the concept should be stable over time, and the multiple-item measures that make up the scale should be dependable (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The reliability of this study will be assured using the variables based on previously constructed scales developed by Fugate and Phillips (2010) who were contacted via electronic mail for access and permission to use their questionnaire in this research study (see Appendix I). All items and scales were subjected to Confirmatory Factor Analysis and reported good fit with items and their loadings, construct reliability and average variance extracted ($\chi^2 = 71.73$, $df = 53$; $CFI = 0.949$, $TLI = 0.952$, $RMSEA = 0.044$, $p < 0.005$) in the original study by Fugate and Phillips (2010). Furthermore, because there were two items in the constructs Modern Sex Role Perceptions and Untraditional Role Models, correlations between the two items in each of these constructs were reported by Fugate and Phillips (2010). By using Fugate and Phillips' constructs and scales, internal reliability is assured because the indicators that make up the scales have been tested and are consistent; therefore, respondent's score on any one scale should be related to their scores on

the other scales (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The scales and item constructs (Need for Product Gender Congruity, Untraditional Role Models, Modern Sex Role Perceptions, Self-Congruency and Receptivity to Product Gender Cues) were not altered in any way for this research study, therefore the reliability of the measures is assured.

The issue of replication is addressed by using Fugate and Phillips' research instruments whose procedures as well as method of analysis were disclosed and followed as closely as possible. Replicability is likely presented because survey-repetition under same framework conditions will lead to similar results due to the disclosure of procedures, e.g. sample selection, administration of research instruments, analysis of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

Validity concerns the correctness of the conclusions generated from the research, with measurement validity specifically addressing whether the measure that is devised actually reflects the concept that it denotes (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Fugate and Phillips (2010) previously tested for validity and reported evidence of discriminant validity. Moreover, face validity is the establishment of a measure that accurately reflects the content of the concept in question (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Face validity is established in this research study due to the use of measures that have been previously tested in order to reflect the content of the concept in question (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

4.3.2 Questionnaire design

To evaluate the data under reliability and validity, a research design developed by Fugate and Phillips (2010) was used to measure the gender of product brands and the need for product gender congruency, modern sex role perceptions, self-congruency, untraditional role models and receptivity to product gender cues. The original study of Fugate and Phillips (2010) was based on testing gender identity in product categories such as athletic shoes, cars, frozen vegetables, and lawnmowers. However, for the purpose of this research study, this part of the questionnaire was slightly modified to test Generation Y's gender congruence for specific product brands within the Coca-Cola range.

Using a self-completion questionnaire with an easy-to-follow and easy-to-answer structure lowers the risk of "respondent fatigue" (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The previously stated conceptual model as well as multiple-items scales and variables were developed by Fugate and Phillips

(2010) and adjusted from measuring product categories to measure product brands of the Coca-Cola range. Furthermore, not all previously asked questions are borrowed to conduct the survey for this section of this research study (see Appendix II & III).

To test **H1** respondents from Germany, a masculine country, and Sweden, a feminine country, were instructed to indicate their perception of masculinity and femininity on two separate Likert scales from 0 equals “None” to 3 equals “High”. There was one scale for masculinity of the product brand and one scale for femininity of the product brand, since previous research has indicated that masculinity and femininity are two separate constructs and therefore should not be measured on the same scale (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). The respondents were given a list of chosen products from the Coca-Cola range, including the feminine targeted product Coca-Cola Light and the masculine targeted product Coca-Cola Zero. The product brand Coca-Cola Classic was used as a control variable. The product brands Sprite, Sprite Zero, Fanta and Fanta Zero were also used as control variables to make it less discernible to the respondents that the researchers were only interested in the results for Coca-Cola Light and Coca-Cola Zero. However, the results from Sprite, Sprite Zero, Fanta and Fanta Zero are not reported in the results chapter since the researchers of this study specifically wanted to test the highly gender targeted product brands Coke Light and Coke Zero.

Significant statistical differences between Masculinity and Femininity indicate whether the product has a masculine or a feminine gender. Following Bem Sex Role Inventory (1974) and the previous research of Fugate and Phillips (2010), a high score on Masculinity judged the specific product brand to be masculine, while greater score on Femininity shows the product brand to be feminine. For no statistical difference a cut-off-point of 1.5 (= midpoint of the rating scales) was used to decide the product brand’s gender. If both means were greater than 1.5 the product brand was categorized as Androgynous which indicates that the product brand has both masculine and feminine cues. If the mean of a product brand was scored under 1.5 on both, Masculinity and Femininity, it was categorized as Undifferentiated.

To examine **H2**, **H3** and **H4** respondents from Germany and Sweden were asked to rate their agreement with 13 different statements which were developed and tested for validity by Fugate and Phillips (2010). The original questionnaire from Fugate and Phillips (2010) consists of 15 statements but the researchers of this study only used the 13 of them that were reported as having

been tested for Confirmatory Factor Analysis in the article. Therefore, since Fugate and Phillips (2010) only tested these particular questions on reliability to build the constructs and scales (Need for Product Gender Congruity, Untraditional Role Models, Modern Sex Role Perceptions, Self-Congruency and Receptivity to Product Gender Cues) only these 13 items were used in the same way. These statements were put in order according to Fugate and Phillips' constructs which will be presented below. A 5-point Likert scale where 1 equals "strongly disagree" and 5 equals "strongly agree" was given to the respondents to measure their perceptions and agreement.

The following statements belong to the construct "Need for Product Gender Congruity" and were utilized to examine **H2**:

- 1) *I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself.*
- 2) *I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender.*
- 3) *I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs.*

To analyze **H3**, only one out of two statements from the construct "Modern Sex Role Perceptions" was used:

It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine.

To investigate **H4**, the following three statements out of the construct of "Receptivity to Product Gender Cues" were administered:

- 1) *A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine.*
- 2) *A product's brand characteristics often indicate whether it is masculine or feminine.*
- 3) *A product's form, shape or packaging often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine.*

The researchers of this study decided not to include the third and fourth part of Fugate and Phillips' questionnaire, since none of the four hypotheses concerned stereotypes in advertising. Therefore, this section of the original questionnaire was not considered as relevant in this

particular research study. However, three questions concerning the demographics (“nationality”, “country of residence” and “occupation”) were added to fit into the demographic requirements that were being evaluated in this research study, such fitting the criteria of born between 1981 and 1999, and being German or Swedish.

4.4 Sampling

Within the relativist research design surveys are the common method since large samples are required to convey to reality (Easterby-Smith, 2008). The population of interest to answer the research questions is limited to young people who are born between 1981 and 1999, also called Generation Y.

The sampling of this research study consists of young adults (n=200), 100 from Sweden and 100 from Germany which are studying (73%) or working (27%). According to Hofstede (1983), Germany rates high on masculinity while Sweden is ranked as a feminine country; therefore, respondents from these countries were chosen to determine and compare any significant differences in their product gender perceptions.

The average age of the entire sample is 24,2 years (German: 24,8 years; Sweden: 23,5 years) with 104 male (52%) and 96 female respondents (48%). The split of males and females is fairly equivalent across the two nationalities with 43 male and 57 female German respondents as well as 61 male and 39 female Swedish respondents.

To collect respondents for the survey snowball sampling was used. This sampling starts with respondents who meet the criteria and were then asked to network with others who would also be eligible (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Easterby-Smith, 2008). This form of convenience sampling was used as the fastest and most efficient method to collect data from as many Germans and Swedes as possible given the researchers of this study’s current location.

4.5 Data and Data Collection

The online-questionnaire was administered in English, spread by social networking website www.facebook.com with the link to the questionnaire available at www.thesistools.com, so the data collection could be completed within a two week time frame. With www.thesistools.com,

students who are writing a thesis can create and publish a questionnaire which is available under a specific link.³ There are certain advantages of using an online-questionnaire to complete this research study, such as being cheaper and quicker to administer, absence of interviewer effects, no interviewer variability and convenience for respondents (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

4.6 Data Processing

Computer assisted analysis using S.P.S.S. was used to analyze the findings and employed to evaluate the significance. Independent and dependent variables were identified and coded followed by the administration of t-tests to all responses. Further on, the output data was separated by nationality (German, Swedish), sex (Male, Female), then nationality and sex (German Male and German Female, Swedish Male and Swedish Female). Independent samples t-tests, either 1-tailed or 2-tailed, were utilized to establish the difference between two independent (or different) groups, e.g. males vs. females and/ or German vs. Swedish respondents. Means were compared and Levene's Test for Equality of Variances and Pearson's Correlation were used to determine significance.

4.7 Limitations of this research study

While conducting the study there are some limitations due to the methodology used and its implementation. There are four main sources of error that have been identified in social survey research; Sampling Error, Sampling-Related Error, Data Collection Error, and Data Processing Error (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

4.7.1 Sampling Error

Sampling Error is "the difference between a sample and the population from which it was selected" (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The use of a random probability sample would be preferable to strengthen external validity of this research study by making the sample as representative of the population as possible. However, due to the researcher's geographical location and the aim to get

³ The questionnaire of this master thesis is available until 01.07.2011 under:
<http://www.thesistools.com/web/?id=189377>

as many respondents as possible from different countries fitting the demographic requirements, a non-probability snowball sample was used. The online-questionnaire was spread over social media and the sample frame consisted of fellow students and their acquaintances.

4.7.2 Sampling-Related Error

Sampling-Related Error is associated with the differences between the sample and the population due to an inadequate sampling frame, non-response, poor question wording, or flawed data processing (Bryman & Bell, 2007). A possible source of sampling error could occur due to the survey only being distributed in English, to German and Swedish respondents. The model situation would have been to have native language questionnaires to avoid any misunderstanding of the questions. Another sampling related error that can result from using online survey software is that there is no control that all respondents answer all questions on the questionnaire.

4.7.3 Data Collection Error

Data Collection Error refers to the implementation of the research process, and includes such factors as flaws in the administration of the research instrument (Bryman & Bell, 2007). One of the central aspects of this research study relied on data collection using online survey software available at www.thesistools.com which is susceptible to flaws in the administration of the research instrument, for example there is no control if respondents cannot open the link to the questionnaire, or have accessibility problems if the Internet server is down.

4.7.4 Data Processing Error

Data processing error concerns the improper management of data, specifically dealing with the coding of answers (Bryman & Bell, 2007). This research study relied on S.P.S.S. as a data processing instrument whereby all responses had to be coded. Particular care was taken to ensure that the two researchers of this study were present at all times when entering and coding the data to monitor that the inserted values were entered correctly during the coding processes. In addition, inserted values were double-checked in order to ensure accuracy. All constructs were also designated with a specific numeric name which matched with the hypothesis that it was related to, in order to avoid mismanagement of the data.

5. Results

In this chapter the results of the study are explained. The data gathered to support or reject the four hypotheses is presented, examined and analyzed one by one, including notable results that were found during the course of this research study.

5.1 Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis investigated whether specific product brands have a gender and the perception of the product brand's gender for masculine and feminine societies.

H1: Measures of product brand's gender will show no difference between masculine and feminine countries.

To test ***H1***, an equal amount of respondents from Germany, a masculine country, and Sweden, a feminine country, was selected to compare product gender perceptions in a masculine versus a feminine society. An independent samples t-test was used to investigate if the product brand's gender was masculine, feminine, androgynous or undifferentiated, and whether the perceived gender of the product brand had no difference between masculine and feminine countries.

As shown in Table 1 (p. 39) the overall results including German and Swedish respondents (n=200) showed that the feminine targeted Coca-Cola Light scored a significant mean of 2.32 on the femininity scale. Therefore, Coke Light is classified as a feminine product brand.

Coca-Cola Zero which is targeted to young men is classified as masculine, but with the two means close to the cut-off-point of 1.5 (masculine mean = 1.69; feminine mean = 1.41) and these ratings show that Coke Zero is not perceived as highly masculine despite the black packaging and the clearly male targeted communication. However, even though the means are close to the cut-off-point the results are significant with a Pearson's correlation of $p < 0.01$ (2-tailed).

A notable result of this test for product brand's gender is that the control variable, Coke Classic, which the researchers anticipated would be undifferentiated or androgynous was also classified as a masculine product brand. However, the results according to the Pearson's Correlation were not significant.

Product	Masculinity Score		Femininity Score		Classification
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Coke Classic	1.88	0.92	1.17	0.83	Masculine
Coke Light *	0.82	0.74	2.32	0.81	Feminine
Coke Zero *	1.69	0.94	1.41	0.95	Masculine

* Correlation is significant at p < 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 1: Gender perception of Coca-Cola product brands

Hypothesis 1 (in null form) stated that current measures of product brand’s gender will show no difference between masculine and feminine countries. As illustrated in Table 2 (p. 39), both countries rate Coca-Cola Light as feminine, Coca-Cola Zero as masculine as well as Coca-Cola Classic as masculine. The results for Coke Light and Coke Zero were significant with a Pearson’s Correlation at p < 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The respondents of both countries, Germany and Sweden, found Coke Classic to be masculine. However, as mentioned before, the results for Coke Classic were not significant with the Pearson’s Correlation.

Product	Germany					Sweden				
	Masculinity Score		Femininity Score		Classification	Masculinity Score		Femininity Score		Classification
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Coke Classic	1.90	0.95	1.23	0.85	Masculine	1.85	0.90	1.11	0.80	Masculine
Coke Light *	0.75	0.70	2.43	0.76	Feminine	0.88	0.77	2.21	0.84	Feminine
Coke Zero *	1.77	0.95	1.34	1.01	Masculine	1.61	0.93	1.47	0.89	Masculine

* Correlation is significant at p < 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 2: Product gender perception of a masculine and feminine country

Based on these results, the researchers of this study can concur that there is no difference in the perception of the Coca-Cola product brands between Germany, a masculine society, and Sweden, a feminine society, and thus ***H1: Measures of product brand’s gender will show no difference between masculine and feminine countries, is accepted.***

In analyzing the results, the researchers can concur that product brands do have a gender, with personality characteristics that are sex-typed according to Bem Sex-Role-Inventory conceptualization of masculinity and femininity. Coca-Cola Light has significantly been classified as feminine and Coca-Cola Zero has significantly been classified as masculine by the respondents. Furthermore, the researchers of this study can concur that Generation Y is evaluating product gender as masculine or feminine rather than as androgynous or undifferentiated. The dimension of Masculinity/ Femininity developed by Hofstede in the 1970's was utilized to examine if there will be no difference in the perception of the product brand's gender for Generation Y in masculine and feminine countries. By comparing answers of respondents from the masculine country Germany with the feminine country Sweden there is no difference in the perception of product brands between masculine and feminine societies. These results show that Hofstede's Masculinity/ Femininity aspect does not impact upon Generation Y's perception of gender in a product.

5.2 Hypothesis 2

In order to test the product gender congruence in Generation Y, the second hypothesis investigates the preference of males and females for using products which are gender congruent.

H2: Males and females of Generation Y prefer to use product brands which are congruent with their own gender characteristics.

An independent samples 2-tailed t-test was used when comparing the male (n=104) against the female respondents' (n=96) need for product gender congruity. The results are illustrated in Table 3 (p. 40) and the raw data shows that male respondents favor products that have the same gender characteristics and feel more unpleasant to buy products that are targeted to the opposite gender compared to female respondents. Female respondents care less about a product's gender as long as the product fulfills their requests.

Need for Product Gender Congruity	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself.	Females	96	2.88	1.049	0.107
	Males	104	3.12	0.988	0.097
I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender.	Females	96	2.56	1.263	0.129
	Males	104	2.86	1.280	0.126
I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs.	Females	96	4.29	1.015	0.104
	Males	104	3.75	1.275	0.125

Table 3: Need for product gender congruity in Generation Y

When tested for significance and equality of variances, the results for the first two statements out of the “Need for Product Gender Congruity”-construct developed by Fugate and Phillips (2010) were not significant. However, a significant result when comparing male and female consumers is recognized for the third statement (“I don’t care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs”) with equal variances not assumed since Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances failed; $t(3.336) = 193.871, p = 0.001$.

Need for Product Gender Congruity - German and Swedish; Males and Females	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the		
								Lower	Upper	
I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs.	Equal variances assumed	11.293	0.001	3.306	198	0.001	0.542	0.164	0.219	0.865
	Equal variances not assumed			3.336	193.871	0.001	0.542	0.162	0.221	0.862

Table 4: Need for product gender congruity in Generation Y (Significance)

The researchers of this study concur that Generation Y males and females do not prefer to use product brands which are congruent with their own gender identity, since the only significantly significant statement indicates that they do not care about the gender of a product as long as it satisfies their needs.

Therefore, ***H2: Males and females of Generation Y prefer to use product brands which are congruent with their own gender characteristics, is rejected.***

In analyzing the results of this study, although Generation Y likes products with the same gender characteristics, men and women of this generation do not feel uncomfortable to buy products that are specially targeted to the opposite gender. According to Fugate and Phillips (2010), Generation Y differs from previous generations in their need to seek gender congruence because of more open, tolerant lifestyles and exposure to non-traditional role models, and this was evident in the results of this research study. Further on, according to Sebor (2006), Generation Y has a solid sense of self-identity which is no longer influenced by traditional gender stereotypes of the society. The researchers of this study found that both male and female consumers do not care about the gender of a product as long as the product satisfies their needs. According to Govers and Schoormans (2005), with previous generations, there was a more prevalent need to fit into the social gender constructs of the society and conform to the expected gender identity. However, individualism is an important aspect of society in the twenty-first century, therefore self-expression values are prevalent so new forms of social organization become more apparent (Aboim, 2010). Consequently, this process tends to have a low compatibility with traditional gender roles for Generation Y. All in all, this study found that the desire to “express myself” through the product’s ability to satisfy “my needs” is more favorable than the gender of a product with Generation Y in conformity with the findings of Sebor (2006).

Some notable results of this study arose when the researchers investigated the different perceptions of masculine and feminine societies. Therefore, the chosen countries, Germany and Sweden, were compared to each other in the need for product gender congruity in line with Hofstede’s dimension of Masculinity/ Femininity. The results comparing the mean of the significant statement showed no difference in the need for product gender congruity divided by masculine and feminine societies. Therefore, both nationalities do not care about the gender of the product if it gratifies the requirements. These results show that the seriousness of Hofstede’s Masculinity/ Femininity dimension in Western societies is minimized, and that many societal changes took place within the last few decades which have contributed to the shaping of Generation Y’s need for product gender congruity.

5.3 Hypothesis 3

The responses of males from Germany and Sweden were compared and examined to find how acceptable it is for men from a masculine country (Germany) and men from a feminine country (Sweden) to use feminine gendered products.

H3: For men from a feminine country it is more acceptable to use feminine products than for men from a masculine country.

An independent samples 2-tailed t-test was used to compare and test **H3**. The results, illustrated in Table 5 (p. 43), show that it is acceptable at a similar level for German males to use a feminine products as it is for Swedish males.

Table 5: Modern Sex Role Perception of males from Germany and Sweden

Modern Sex Role Perception		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine.	German Males	43	3.53	0.984	0.150
	Swedish Males	61	3.51	1.178	0.151

Equal variances are not assumed since Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances failed; $t(98.98) = 0.125$, $p = 0.900$ as showed in Table 6 (p. 43).

Modern Sex Role Perception - German and Swedish Males		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine	Equal variances assumed	4.197	0.043	0.122	102	0.903	0.027	0.219	-0.409	0.462
	Equal variances not assumed			0.125	98.98	0.900	0.027	0.213	-0.396	0.449

Table 6: Modern Sex Role Perception of males from Germany and Sweden (Significance)

These results indicated that it is not more acceptable for men from a feminine country to use feminine product brands than for men from a masculine country. Thus, ***H3: For men from a feminine country it is more acceptable to use feminine products than for men from a masculine country, is rejected.***

By analyzing the acceptance of males from a masculine and feminine country for the use of feminine targeted products, the researchers of this study found out that it is adequate for men from both societies to use feminine products. Therefore, the strong sex role division, pointed out by Hofstede (1983), changed in the last decades in both societies, masculine as well as feminine. By rejecting **H3**, the researchers of this study found additional support that the shift of cultural and social circumstances in masculine and feminine societies in the last decades has an impact on the modern sex role perceptions for Generation Y in line with Fugate and Phillips (2010).

A further notable result of this study shows support for Hofstede's declaration with stricter sex role divisions in masculine societies, often influence women's thinking and sex role perception about what men and women should and should not do. German females found it less acceptable for males to use highly feminine products than Swedish females. By comparing the German answers divided by sex, even German men scored a higher acceptance for the men's use of feminine targeted products than German women. Thus, some of Hofstede's theories and ideas on masculine and feminine societies continues to have an effect and are supported in this research.

By analyzing and summarizing all results given by the respondents to test **H3**, the researchers of this study found that Generation Y find it acceptable for men and women to use highly masculine or highly feminine products even if it is targeted towards the opposite sex.

5.4 Hypothesis 4

In accordance with Alreck (1994), gender connotations of products are often derived from its characteristics, name, color, texture, size, pattern and shape; therefore the fourth hypothesis will investigate the strongest indicator of gender cues.

H4: A product brand's form and shape will be the strongest indicator of receptivity to product gender cues.

The results, illustrated in Table 7 (p. 45), show that a product's form, shape or packaging is the highest indicator of gender cues, followed by the brand characteristics and then a product's brand name.

Receptivity of product gender cues		A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine.*	A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine.*	The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine.*
N	Valid	200	200	200
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		3.32	3.58	3.70
Std. Deviation		0.955	0.823	0.968

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 7: Receptivity of product gender cues

The Pearson's Correlations for all tested statements shows a significance of $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed), with a product's form, shape or packaging having the highest mean. Therefore, ***H4: A product brand's form and shape will be the strongest indicator of receptivity to product gender cues, is accepted.***

Due to some products being inherently gendered, the researchers of this study analyzed what product features and attributes are the most important indicators for product gender cues for Generation Y. The findings of this study illustrate that a product brand's form, shape, or packaging is the strongest indicator of gender cues. Therefore, Alreck's (1994) previous research that subtle gender cues such as size, texture, form and shape are highly receptive by consumers is supported by the findings of this research study.

A further notable result of this study arose from the question if men would be more receptive to product gender cues than women. The results indicated that product gender cues are visible and the level of importance for both sexes denoting whether a product is masculine or feminine is similar. This directly refutes Alreck's (1994) findings that men are more receptive to product gender cues than women. However, all in all, this study concurs that if a product's gender is going to be highlighted, the form, shape and packaging are important items which should be considered when developing a product.

6. Discussion

In this section, the results of this research study will be discussed in relation to existing theory in order to answer the research questions which are: “Do product brands have a gender and if so, does Generation Y’s perception of the product brand’s gender differ across cultural groups?” and “How important is it for Generation Y to correspond their gender identity with a product’s gender?”. Referring back to the conceptual model developed by Fugate and Phillips (2010), the researchers of this study can examine the variables which affect Generation Y’s product gender perceptions, their modern sex role perceptions, and their need for product gender congruity and in turn the receptivity to product gender cues. The relevant factors that are influencing Generation Y’s need for product gender congruence will be discussed in the context of the results of this research study, and throughout the discussion the findings will be linked to similar research.

6.1 Generations Y’s product gender perception in different countries

Hofstede’s model of cultural differences has often been used for exploring aspects and attitudes of cultures and societies. The researchers of this study evaluated if Hofstede’s dimension of Masculinity/ Femininity is still applicable in Generation Y by examining whether specific product brands have a gender and if it there will be no difference in the perception of the product brand’s gender for masculine and feminine countries. By analyzing the results the researchers of this study can summarize that **Generation Y evaluated the product brands as having a gender** which is classified as masculine or feminine rather than as androgynous or undifferentiated. By comparing answers of respondents from the masculine country Germany with the feminine country Sweden **there is no difference in the perception of the product brands gender between masculine and feminine countries**. The results of this research study implies that marketing efforts to gender a product brand are effective, and uniform, even if the gender of the product brand is compared across masculine feminine societies as defined by Hofstede (1983). For example, Coca-Cola Light was perceived and classified as feminine in Germany and Sweden due to marketing campaigns and communication specifically focusing on female soft drinks consumers. While gender is a fluid construct which may differ between societies and cultures, when marketers attempt to classify a gender to product brands, their approach and process of assigning a gender seems to be successful.

Culture is charted by Hofstede (1983, 1991) as “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. A culture’s characteristics are formed, raised and shared by a group of people and there are as many single cultures as there are social groups or systems. However, Spencer-Oatey (2000) defines culture differently as a fuzzy construct of beliefs, attitudes, values, behavior and expectations that are shared by a group of people, and mentions the complexity of a person being multicultural which implies that a person is likely to have different cultures at the same time. The “fuzzy construct” of culture can be seen in the twenty-first century and its new generations where no sharp borders exists due to different occurrences such as globalization, societal changes and modifications in family structures and media. Thereof, culture and societies become indistinct and Generation Y is growing up in a multicultural context. Moreover, cultural and social changes generate other cultural changes, e.g. the introduction of a technological innovation such as laptops or smartphones can induce a whole series of related changes such as the possibility of social networking across the globe. The oversimplification of cultural differences by Hofstede is not considering the flexible and changing nature of culture in the twenty-first century (Signorini et al., 2009). All in all, the results of this research study confirms that in a global context, **product brands can be perceived as having the same gender in masculine and feminine societies in the twenty-first century.**

6.2 Conceptual model applied to gender perception in Generation Y

There are many societal changes within the last few years, which have contributed to the shaping of Generation Y’s gender identity and need or lack thereof, to seek product gender congruity. Referring back to the conceptual model developed by Fugate and Phillips (2010), the variables Gender, Self-Congruency, Untraditional Role Models, and Modern Sex Role Perceptions all have an impact on the Need for Product Gender Congruity, which in turn influences the Receptivity to Product Gender Cues.

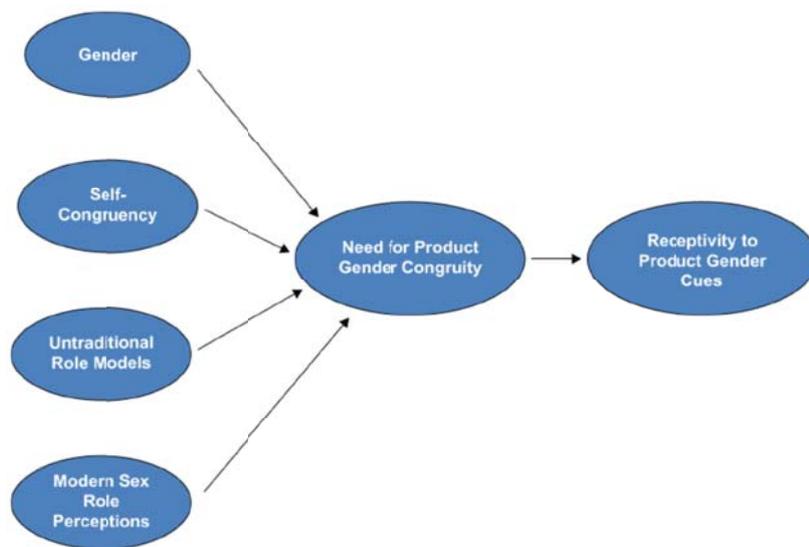


Figure 2: Influencing variables on the Need for Product Gender Congruity

The first three variables of the conceptual model will be examined within a post-modern discourse to offer a deeper understanding of the factors that shape Generation Y and their need for product gender congruity. Although only the modern sex role perception was specifically tested in this research study, it is relevant to illustrate the importance that gender, self-congruency, and untraditional role models play in shaping this generation's attitudes and perceptions of receptivity to product gender cues.

6.2.1 Gender, Self-Congruity, Untraditional Role Models and Modern Sex Role Perceptions within a post-modern discourse

Generation Y's **concept of gender**, the first variable in the Fugate and Phillips (2010) conceptual model, is shaped in a more open view because of their constant exposure to a more fluid expression of gender in modern day society. Differences in the attitude towards the 'ideal gender role' are not only due to age, religion or education, but also due to values and manners which are mainly shaped by the family unit (Aboim, 2010). In addition, gender roles are also learned from multiple sources including the society and media, thus, the post-modern society with less traditional gendered roles and more liberal views shapes the attitude toward gender roles for Generation Y. Western societies point out gender-equality between men and women in everyday life and at work as promoted by the principles of gender mainstreaming. In essence, gender

mainstreaming is described as the consideration of male and female interests in all social purposes and different life situations since no gender-neutral reality exists in the first place (Gender-Mainstreaming, 2011). Consequently, gender-equality in all levels of society enables men and women to have a self-determined life without compelling adaptation to stereotypical ideas, yet at the same time understanding different male and female needs and demands, which is the more prevalent idea of Generation Y's concept of gender.

Self-congruency, the second variable of the conceptual model by Fugate and Phillips (2010), refers to the combination of self-image combined with the product's image, which influences the preferences of specific products (Quester et al., 2000). Generation Y's self-congruency relates to a self-image that differs from the previous generations in that Generation Y's men and women like to express themselves and want to be in charge of their own destiny and choices (Minnini, 2005). The self-image of Generation Y is a result of being raised on the premise that "I am special" and this gives this generation a solid sense of self-identity which is hardly influenced by traditional gender stereotypes of the society (Sebor, 2006). This can be described as how important it is for the individual to use products that reflect who they are and how they see themselves.

The third variable developed by Fugate and Phillips (2010), **Untraditional Role Models**, refers to one sex performing tasks that are considered to be traditionally performed by the other sex. Present trade and industry development emphasizes the need for sustained economic growth, which promotes a modern worldview corresponding to a shift from traditional to secular-rational values and from survival to self-expression, giving rise to gender-equality consistent with post-modern societies (Aboim, 2010). Within the present day society, as individualism and new forms of social order become more prevalent the transformation tends to have more incompatibility with traditional gender roles. Thus, Generation Y's exposure to non-traditional role models and attitudes implies that overall they have a more open and liberal view to gender roles. For Generation Y, growing up in dual income families, it is quite common to see mother's performing 'traditionally masculine chores' in the household such as mowing the lawn and assembling their own furniture, and fathers often do cooking and cleaning which can be classified as 'traditionally female chores'. Furthermore, the acknowledgement of 'alternative family structures' whereby same-sex households can adopt and rear children, and the increase of single-parent families is changing the view towards traditional role models (Lev, 2010). Generation Y

individuals may grow up in alternative family structures where a single parent performs all household tasks, or where same-sex parents do not divide the household work into masculine and feminine chores. Therefore, exposure to untraditional role models by children raised in alternative family structures, tend to shape their gender development that is uniquely formed by the experience of more fluid interpretations of gender with little pressure to conform to societal stereotypes (Kovalanka & Goldberg, 2009; Aboim, 2010; Lev, 2010).

The last variable in the model developed by Fugate and Phillips (2010), **Modern Sex Role Perceptions**, is the acceptability of one sex using products which are designed and targeted for the opposite sex. Hofstede's Masculinity/ Femininity dimension, suggests that feminine societies would accept the use of products which are targeted to the opposite sex more than masculine countries. The researchers of this study specifically examined the variable Modern Sex Role Perceptions within Generation Y. By testing and analyzing the acceptance of males from a masculine and feminine country for the use of specifically feminine targeted products, the researchers of this study found out that **it is adequate for men from masculine and feminine societies to use highly feminine products**. The results of this research study offers additional support that changes in cultural and social circumstances in masculine and feminine societies, as well as shifts in families and media representations in the last years, had, and still continues to impact the modern sex role perceptions of Generation Y and upcoming generations. For example, conventional masculine norms are being abandoned by 'metrosexual' males in what can be considered a more feminine custom of being fashion conscious, wearing jewelry, accessories, and using cosmetic products. Thus, the researchers of this study found less discomfort in Generation Y using products that are specifically targeted to the opposite sex.

Fugate and Phillips (2010) presume that societal changes have altered the need for product gender congruity, and this is supported by the findings of this research study. All in all, less constricting shifting gender roles in the post-modern environment of Generation Y influences the interpretation of Gender, Self-Congruency, Untraditional Role Models and Modern Sex Role Perceptions.

6.2.2 Need for product gender congruity in Generation Y

Relating to the conceptual model designed by Fugate and Phillips (2010), the variables of Gender, Self-Congruity, Untraditional Role Models and Modern Sex Role Perceptions are all influencing the **Need for Product Gender Congruity**. According to previous research, the consumption behavior of men and women is coherent with the perception of a product's gender and their own gender identity; in other words, consumers choose product brands and services with certain characteristics that harmonize with their own self-identity.

The researchers of this study examined whether or not Generation Y prefers to use product brands which are congruent with their own gender characteristics. Linking the results back to the conceptual model, the findings of this research study demonstrate that men and women of Generation Y do not feel uncomfortable to buy products that are specially targeted to the opposite gender and they do not care about the gender of a product as long as the product satisfies their needs. Therefore, **the correspondence of gender identity with a product's identity is limited in Generation Y and the gender of a product is less important for them**. Thus, the researchers of this study point out that Generation Y differs from previous generations in their need to seek gender congruence because of more open, tolerant lifestyles and exposure to non-traditional role models. With previous generations, there was a more prevalent need to fit into the social gender constructs of the society and conform to the expected gender identity (Govers & Schoormans, 2005). In the twenty-first century, self-expression and self-identity values that relate to self-congruency became more dominant within society, and individualism, liberation and new forms of social organization became more evident, and this process tends to have a low compatibility with traditional gender roles for Generation Y (Aboim, 2010). This can be confirmed by the results of this research study which concurs that the products ability to satisfy "my needs" and the ability to "express myself" is more important than the gender of the product. For example, a Generation Y female wearing men's suspenders will not care about the product being a male gendered one, only that she wants to wear it to express her personal sense of style and this satisfies her needs.

These findings go against the findings of Milner and Fodness (1996) as well as Govers and Schoormans (2005) who argued that both genders feel uncomfortable using and buying products which do not suit to their gender specific requirements, and that the gender of a product is a more

important issue than the fulfillment of expectations and gratification. The findings of this research study may be as a result of the shifting societal changes including family structures and changing media portrayals of gender that are evident for Generation Y.

6.2.3 Receptivity to product gender cues in Generation Y

Relating to the Fugate and Phillips' (2010) conceptual model the Need for Product Gender Congruity is influencing the **Receptivity to Product Gender Cues**. Product gender cues are often derived from its characteristics, name, color, texture, size, pattern and shape (Alreck, 1994). By presenting symbols, images and models using society's ideal image of the man or woman a product brand can emphasize gender connotations like masculine strength or feminine gentleness. Some products are characteristically gendered, e.g. sanitary products for women, therefore the researchers of this study examined what product attributes are the most notable cues which denote masculinity and femininity. **A product brand's form, shape, or packaging was identified as the strongest indicator of gender cues** by the findings of this research study. Therefore, when marketer's decide to gender products in certain circumstances, instead of focusing on a products brand characteristics and its name, the results of this research study suggest that more emphasis should be placed on a product's form, shape or packaging. In addition, Alreck (1994) mentions that subtle gender cues such as form and shape are highly receptive for gender cues by consumers and support the findings of this research study.

Furthermore, Alreck (1994) states that men are more receptive to product gender cues than women. Therefore, the results for the question if men of Generation Y would be more receptive to product gender cues than women were notable findings of this study. The results indicate that product gender cues are important for both sexes at the same level to denote whether a product is masculine or feminine. The statements by Alreck (1994) on men's receptivity to product gender cues directly goes against the findings of this research study. This may be as a result of Alreck's findings being made 17 years ago, and within this time frame, the need for product gender congruency which affects the receptivity to product gender cues, has changed as described above.

Referring to the conceptual model by Fugate and Phillips (2010), Gender, Self-Congruency, Untraditional Role Models and Modern Sex Role Perceptions all influence the Need for Product Gender Congruity, and as discussed previously, Generation Y tends to have more open

interpretations of gender identity and less desire to adhere traditional stereotypes. Therefore the researchers of this study can deduce that males and females of Generation Y are receptive to masculine and feminine product gender cues; however relating back to the limited need for product gender congruity in Generation Y, they care less about masculine or feminine cues for products.

6.3 Why target Y?

In discussing the relevance of this research study, it is important to justify the need for marketers to target Generation Y. Generation Y has fewer financial responsibilities, tends to be impatient, needs instant gratification, have an excellent eye for new products, and are in possession of a purchasing power unlike previous generations before them (Sebor, 2006). In addition to this, Generation Y is not only in a position to make their own purchases, but also tend to influence the purchases of their parents (Mininni, 2005). While this may appear at first to be a marketer's dream, Generation Y is a more challenging segment compared to previous target audiences.

In reality, Generation Y is an intricate target group to capture, since it has been found that they are notoriously brand disloyal since they are technologically savvy, research a potential purchase online and have no problems switching to a competitor (Mininni, 2005). Due to their need to express themselves and their perceived gender identities, Generation Y wants to be in charge of their own destiny and choices (Mininni, 2005). As the children of Baby Boomers, Generation Y has been raised on the premise that 'you are special' which is a concept taken with them into adulthood and gives them a solid sense of self-identity (Sebor, 2006). Furthermore, media saturation makes it challenging to catch the eye of Generation Y since it is approximated that they see 23 million media messages by the age of 21 (Sebor, 2006). Marketers must understand that as young adults growing up post-September 11th, Generation Y is more concerned about the quality of life than income, and is seen as more responsible, independent and skeptical when compared to the previous generations at the same age (Wolfe, 2004). In addition to this, they have experienced the latest recession and financial crisis so they have learnt more about the economy, do more research, and tend to be more informed consumers than preceding generations (Palmer, 2010). Palmer (2010) mentions that Generation Y tends to be more mindful of making purchases for long-term investment since they have set a priority to save money rather than

portray a certain 'lifestyle' by wearing designer labels, as they tend to feel accomplished at finding the lowest price rather than following the latest fashion trends.

However, marketers should not be discouraged by this information, but instead use it to target this lucrative generational group in the right way. By understanding the likes and dislikes, challenges and opportunities Generation Y offers, companies can use their potential to tap into this target group who will have even more financial power in the future, and can also potentially have a means of targeting the Baby Boomers through Generation Y's influence on their parents. Generation Y's limited need for product gender congruency can aid marketers in developing, positioning and targeting their products and services to these savvy consumers. One instrumental factor to understand is that societal shifts and attitudinal changes regarding gender stereotypes, which are often depicted in marketing campaigns, is perceived differently by Generation Y.

This research study shows that gendering product brands and targeting them to only one specific sex may no longer be a feasible marketing strategy for Generation Y. While gender marketing is using psychological insights as well as brain research about different needs and preferences of men and women to create business ideals, this research study shows that traditional gender marketing can have some difficulties to reach this specific target group of male or female consumers in the future. This research study shows that Generation Y individuals do recognize the gender of product brands, but does not actively seek product gender congruence. When individuals in a masculine society are compared with a feminine society this study has demonstrated Generation Y found it acceptable for both genders to use highly masculine or highly feminine products that are originally marketed to the opposite sex. In summary, Generation Y may still classify product brands as gendered due to marketing efforts, however the culturally tolerant views on gender is an important consideration for marketers in whether or not they should underline product gender with this target audience.

7. Conclusion

The final chapter serves to summarize the findings of the results in relation to the research questions and the purpose of this research study that were presented in the beginning. The purpose of the study was to explore Generation Y's consumer perception of product brand's gender and the degree to which different nationalities seek product gender congruence in the marketing mix. Based on the purpose of this research study, the empirical data was examined and analyzed and this led to the conclusions outlined in this chapter. Further on, the relevance of the findings of this research study is highlighted in theoretical and practical contributions, and finally the chapter will offer suggestions for further research that could potentially contribute to this research area.

7.1 Findings of this research study

The research questions presented in this study were answered since according to the respondents, product brands do have a gender and there is no difference in the perception of the gender between masculine and feminine countries. Furthermore, although Generation Y perceives a product's gender, they have a limited need for product gender congruence. For this generation self-congruency is relevant as it is more important to satisfy needs through the use of a product, rather than gender congruency, therefore product brands that resonate and provide value, as well as gratify their requirements are preferred. All in all, in order to establish and market a product brand towards Generation Y in the twenty-first century, marketers should focus more on the characteristics, opinions and perceptions of this generational group and implement these attitudes to their products and services rather than emphasizing gender as a main differentiator, as concluded by the findings of this research study.

Moreover, the findings of this study show that it is acceptable for men of Generation Y to use highly feminine products and for women to use highly masculine products. Due to economic development in the last decades, a modern worldview brought about a corresponding shift from traditional gender stereotypes to gender-equality and gender mainstreaming. The findings of this research study that examines modern sex role perceptions prove to be true that even for men in a masculine society like Germany; it is acceptable to use products that are targeted to the opposite

sex. Therefore, the researchers of this study can conclude that gender-equality and the lack of need for product gender congruence is relevant in Generation Y.

While acknowledging that some products are naturally gendered and so gender neutrality might not be appropriate for all products, this research study investigated what product attributes are the most important indicators for product gender cues. If gender is going to be emphasized when marketing and targeting a product, this research study has established that a product brand's form, shape, or packaging is the strongest indicator of gender cues, followed by brand characteristics, then brand name. Thus, this research study concludes that if a product's gender is going to be highlighted, these are important factors to be considered when developing, launching or re-launching a product.

7.2 Theoretical and practical contributions

The main contribution of this research study is to illustrate that product brands do have a gender and the perceived gender of a product can be determined using the test for product gender that has been established by previous research. This research study has successfully demonstrated a practical method for testing the gender of a product brand, using certain products from The Coca-Cola Company. Credibility can be added since this research study has also contributed by showing that the gender of product brands are consistent among countries that have been defined as masculine and feminine according to Hofstede's research in the 1970's and 1980's.

The study contributes to existing theory by helping to understand the perception and lack of importance of product gender congruity in Generation Y, by proving that Generation Y does not specifically care about the gender of a product as long as it satisfies their needs.

This research study eliminates the theoretical gap in previous studies regarding gender marketing and its appropriateness as a marketing strategy for Generation Y. It should be noted that the scale of this study was limited to seven soft drink product brands with a low level of involvement, whereby three of the product brands were analyzed and discussed. However, the results of this research study are meaningful, since it offers a comparisons between two societies on opposite ends of Hofstede's Masculinity/ Femininity continuum, and used a range of product brands from one of the most successful and widely known brands in the world.

The method presented makes it possible for researchers and practitioners to replicate this study and gather more information on the perceived gender of other product brands that can be tested. In addition, it can be adapted and replicated to test the need for the product brand to have gender characteristics which are congruent to the target audience. For some products the need for product gender congruity may be high, while for others, it might not be as important. With this information, marketers can decide if they will focus on gendering a product to only one sex in their marketing strategy, or perhaps take a more gender-neutral approach. Knowing that the products shape, form or packaging is the attribute that signifies the gender, marketers who decide to gender a product should take this into consideration.

7.3 Suggestions for further research

The results of this research study demonstrate that Generation Y is more receptive and open-minded to alternative cultures and lifestyles, however, further studies are suggested to test the actual buying behavior including the purchasing decision process. Generation Y's attitude towards gender is more open and tolerant, it is not known if they seek gender congruence through their buying behavior when purchasing products for themselves. Future research is suggested to investigate whether Generation Y's buying behavior matches with the attitudes that were observed in this research study which demarcates against consumer and buying behavior.

This study focused on comparing Generation Y males and females in two different countries with their need for product gender congruity and how acceptable they found it is to use products that are targeted to the opposite sex. Future research might explore what are the underlying relationships and factors which influence the findings that Generation Y is more open to gender neutrality. For example, future research can follow Fugate and Phillips' (2010) study and test if there are correlations between Generation Y's modern sex role perception and their need for product gender congruity, or if there are correlations between exposure to untraditional role models, their modern sex role perception and receptivity to product gender cues.

Future research is also suggested to compare Generation Y with previous generational groups such as Generation X and the Baby Boomers to determine if there is a significant difference in these age cohorts regarding their need for product gender congruity. If there are significant differences regarding product perception, need for product gender congruity and receptivity to

product gender cues when these generational groups are compared, then researchers and marketers have more support to justify that social change has transformed how product gender is perceived in different age groups. Thus, marketers can adapt their gender marketing campaigns accordingly depending on the demographic age cohort that is identified as the target audience.

This study identified the most indicative product attributes that denote gender for Generation Y. If gender is not important and marketers are going to adapt their marketing strategies to target Generation Y, then future studies are suggested to determine the most appealing product attributes for this generation. Previous research has suggested that Generation Y is most interested in the brand, quality, and value of the product. Therefore, future research is suggested to specifically ascertain which aspects of the product attributes are important to Generation Y.

Past research has shown that Generation Y is a generation where self-expression is highly valued. For products with high involvement, or for products which are highly public, then product gender cues may be of greater consequence than those that are not typically used for self-expression. Future research is suggested to test the need for gender congruity with high and low involvement products, and identify how important gender congruence is with these product brands. This may be of particular importance for marketers since product brands which are used for self-expression may require more or less product gender cues than those that are not.

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Subject: RE: Research question concerning your article on product gender congruence

Insert: Attachments Office docs Photos From Bing Emoticons

Tahoma 10 B I U

From: jhemlee@hotmail.com
 To: douglas.fugate@wku.edu
 Subject: RE: Research question concerning your article on product gender congruence
 Date: Thu, 24 Mar 2011 03:05:37 -0400

Prof. Fugate,

Thank you for your quick reply and for forwarding our email to Dr. Phillips. We are really excited to hear from her and we appreciate your assistance.

Congratulations on your retirement!

Yours Sincerely,
 Janine Hem Lee and Annett Hellwig

Subject: RE: Research question concerning your article on product gender congruence

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Total size: 143.5 KB of 25.0 MB

newsurvey.doc (143.5 KB) x

Tahoma 10 B I U

From: joanna.phillips@wku.edu
 To: douglas.fugate@wku.edu; jhemlee@hotmail.com
 Date: Sun, 27 Mar 2011 12:23:04 -0500
 Subject: RE: Research question concerning your article on product gender congruence

Janine (and Annett),

First of all, let me apologize for the delay in responding. I have a newborn at home and finding time to get to my office is difficult in these early days!

Secondly, attached please find a copy of the survey instrument used in our 2010 study. Feel free to use it, and I'd be glad to answer any questions you have. Much of the research we reviewed indicated that masculinity and femininity were two separate constructs, rather than opposite ends of one continuum, which is why products received separate scores for masculinity and femininity.

I am excited to hear that our research has piqued your interest and wish you the best of luck on your project! It sounds very interesting! I'd love to know how everything turns out with your study!

Best,
 Joanna Phillips

-----Original Message-----
 From: Fugate, Douglas
 Sent: Wednesday, March 23, 2011 10:25 PM
 To: Janine Hem Lee
 Subject: RE: Research question concerning your article on product gender congruence

II. Questionnaire Fugate and Phillips (2010)

Instructions: In the first part of this survey you will be given a list of common products. Please indicate for each product category the degree to which you believe the product itself (not the user) is feminine and the degree to which you believe each product is masculine. Note that you will circle two scores for each given product; one score for masculinity and one score for femininity. We are interested in your opinions only; there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers are completely anonymous. This survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. An example appears to the right. Thank you for your time!

For example, for the category of Television sets, if you believed that TV sets should score high on Masculinity and low on Femininity, you might circle a "3" for masculinity and a "1" for femininity.

TELEVISION SETS

TELEVISION SETS	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

ATHLETIC SHOES	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

BAR SOAP (BATH)	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

POTATO CHIPS	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

BEER	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

BOTTLE WINE	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

MICROWAVE OVEN	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

CAR	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

FROZEN VEGTABLES	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

DIGITAL CAMERA	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

REGULAR COFFEE	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

FACIAL TISSUE	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

FOOD PROCESSOR	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

SUV	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

HAIRSPRAY	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

INSTANT COFFEE	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

LAWN MOWER	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

BOX WINE	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

BATH GEL SOAP	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

CANNED SOUP	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

TOOTHPASTE	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

WALL PAINT	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

Please continue to the next section.

Please rate your agreement with the following statements by circling the number that most closely reflects how you feel:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I notice when characters on television programs/movies use products I am familiar with.	1	2	3	4	5
The color of a product's packaging often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine	1	2	3	4	5
A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine.	1	2	3	4	5
A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine	1	2	3	4	5
It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine.	1	2	3	4	5
My mother often performed traditionally "masculine" chores in the household I grew up in.	1	2	3	4	5
My father often performed traditionally "feminine" chores in the household I grew up in.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important for me to use products that are consistent with how I see myself.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important for me to use products that reflect who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important for me to feel that people similar to me use the products I use.	1	2	3	4	5
The form, or shape, of a product's packaging often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine.	1	2	3	4	5
It is acceptable for women to use products that are highly masculine.	1	2	3	4	5
I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself	1	2	3	4	5
I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs	1	2	3	4	5

Please continue.

Take a moment and think about advertising you have seen for the following product categories. For each of the products below, please circle whether you believe primarily male, primarily female, or equally male and female spokespeople are featured in ads for this product category. Circle your answer.

Athletic Shoes	Male	Female	Both	Digital Camera	Male	Female	Both
Bar Soap (Bath)	Male	Female	Both	Regular Coffee	Male	Female	Both
Potato Chips	Male	Female	Both	Facial Tissue	Male	Female	Both
Beer	Male	Female	Both	Food Processor	Male	Female	Both
SUV	Male	Female	Both	Box Wine	Male	Female	Both
Hairspray	Male	Female	Both	Bath Gel (liquid soap)	Male	Female	Both
Canned Soup	Male	Female	Both	Instant Coffee	Male	Female	Both
Bottled Wine	Male	Female	Both	Lawnmower	Male	Female	Both
Microwave Oven	Male	Female	Both	Toothpaste	Male	Female	Both
Car	Male	Female	Both	Frozen Vegetables	Male	Female	Both
				Wall Paint	Male	Female	Both

For each of the following product categories, please list the top brand or brands that come to your mind.

For example: Television Set: Samsung, Sony.

Athletic Shoes	
Bar Soap (Bath)	
Potato Chips	
Beer	
SUV	
Hairspray	
Canned Soup	
Bottled Wine	
Microwave Oven	
Car	
Digital Camera	
Regular Coffee	

Facial Tissue	
Food Processor	
Boxed Wine	
Bath Gel (liquid soap)	
Instant Coffee	
Lawnmower	
Toothpaste	
Frozen Vegetables	
Wall Paint	

Your Gender: _____ Male _____ Female

Your Age: _____ years

III. Questionnaire for this research study (adapted from Fugate & Phillips, 2010)

In the first part of this survey you will be given a list of common soft drink products. Please indicate for each product the degree to which you believe the product itself (not the user) is feminine and the degree to which you believe each product is masculine. Note that you will click two scores for each given product; one score for masculinity and one score for femininity.

Coca-Cola Classic	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

Coca-Cola Light	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

Coca-Cola Zero	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

Sprite	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

Sprite Zero	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

Fanta	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

Fanta Zero	None	Low	Medium	High
Masculinity	0	1	2	3
Femininity	0	1	2	3

In the following section we are interested in your perceptions. Please rate how you feel about the following statements. Please rate your agreement with the following statements by clicking the number that most closely reflects how you feel.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself.	1	2	3	4	5
I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender.	1	2	3	4	5
I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs.	1	2	3	4	5
My mother often performed traditionally "masculine" chores in the household I grew up in.	1	2	3	4	5
My father often performed traditionally "feminine" chores in the household I grew up in.	1	2	3	4	5
It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine.	1	2	3	4	5
It is acceptable for women to use products that are highly masculine.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important for me to use products that are consistent with how I see myself.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important for me to use products that reflect who I am.	1	2	3	4	5
It is important for me to feel that people similar to me use the products I use.	1	2	3	4	5
A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine.	1	2	3	4	5
A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine.	1	2	3	4	5
The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine.	1	2	3	4	5

Finally, please fill out some basic demographic information. Of course, everything will remain anonymous and will be used for analysis purpose only.

Sex: Male Female

Nationality: _____

Age: _____

Country of residence: _____

Occupation: _____

IV. SPSS Results

Hypothesis 1

Statistics															
		Coca-Cola Classic - masculin	Coca-Cola Classic - feminin	Coca-Cola light - masculin	Coca-Cola light - feminin	Coca-Cola Zero - masculin	Coca-Cola Zero - feminin	Sprite - masculin	Sprite - feminin	Sprite Zero - masculin	Sprite Zero - feminin	Fanta - masculin	Fanta - feminin	Fanta Zero - masculin	Fanta Zero - feminin
N	Valid	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200	200
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		1,88	1,17	,82	2,32	1,69	1,41	1,38	1,42	,84	1,81	1,14	1,86	,82	1,78
Std. Deviation		,924	,827	,737	,807	,943	,952	,876	,828	,728	,932	,857	,845	,807	,964

Statistics															
Nationality		Coca-Cola Classic - masculin	Coca-Cola Classic - feminin	Coca-Cola light - masculin	Coca-Cola light - feminin	Coca-Cola Zero - masculin	Coca-Cola Zero - feminin	Sprite - masculin	Sprite - feminin	Sprite Zero - masculin	Sprite Zero - feminin	Fanta - masculin	Fanta - feminin	Fanta Zero - masculin	Fanta Zero - feminin
German	N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1,90	1,23	,75	2,43	1,77	1,34	1,39	1,46	,80	1,91	1,03	1,86	,68	1,89
	Std. Deviation	,948	,851	,702	,756	,952	1,007	,852	,784	,711	,944	,834	,899	,737	,942
Swedish	N	Valid	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1,85	1,11	,88	2,21	1,61	1,47	1,36	1,37	,87	1,71	1,25	1,86	,96	1,66
	Std. Deviation	,903	,803	,769	,844	,931	,893	,905	,872	,747	,913	,869	,792	,852	,977

Statistics															
Sex		Coca-Cola Classic - masculin	Coca-Cola Classic - feminin	Coca-Cola light - masculin	Coca-Cola light - feminin	Coca-Cola Zero - masculin	Coca-Cola Zero - feminin	Sprite - masculin	Sprite - feminin	Sprite Zero - masculin	Sprite Zero - feminin	Fanta - masculin	Fanta - feminin	Fanta Zero - masculin	Fanta Zero - feminin
Male	N	Valid	104	104	104	104	104	104	104	104	104	104	104	104	104
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1,88	1,15	,78	2,25	1,59	1,37	1,43	1,44	,84	1,80	1,23	1,83	,86	1,82
	Std. Deviation	,910	,845	,775	,821	,972	,946	,868	,810	,752	,896	,815	,818	,818	,818
Female	N	Valid	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96	96
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1,88	1,19	,85	2,40	1,80	1,45	1,31	1,39	,83	1,82	1,04	1,90	,78	1,73
	Std. Deviation	,943	,812	,696	,788	,902	,961	,886	,851	,706	,973	,893	,876	,797	,989

Statistics															
Germany Sex		Coca-Cola Classic - masculin	Coca-Cola Classic - feminin	Coca-Cola light - masculin	Coca-Cola light - feminin	Coca-Cola Zero - masculin	Coca-Cola Zero - feminin	Sprite - masculin	Sprite - feminin	Sprite Zero - masculin	Sprite Zero - feminin	Fanta - masculin	Fanta - feminin	Fanta Zero - masculin	Fanta Zero - feminin
Male	N	Valid	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43	43
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1,84	1,21	,74	2,30	1,70	1,28	1,49	1,44	,81	1,86	1,14	1,81	,65	1,95
	Std. Deviation	,949	,888	,790	,832	,989	,908	,827	,765	,794	,915	,743	,880	,752	,844
Female	N	Valid	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57	57
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1,95	1,25	,75	2,53	1,82	1,39	1,32	1,47	,79	1,95	,95	1,89	,70	1,84
	Std. Deviation	,953	,830	,635	,684	,928	1,082	,869	,804	,647	,971	,895	,920	,731	1,014

Statistics															
Sweden Sex		Coca-Cola Classic - masculin	Coca-Cola Classic - feminin	Coca-Cola light - masculin	Coca-Cola light - feminin	Coca-Cola Zero - masculin	Coca-Cola Zero - feminin	Sprite - masculin	Sprite - feminin	Sprite Zero - masculin	Sprite Zero - feminin	Fanta - masculin	Fanta - feminin	Fanta Zero - masculin	Fanta Zero - feminin
Male	N	Valid	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61	61
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1,90	1,11	,80	2,21	1,51	1,43	1,39	1,44	,85	1,75	1,30	1,84	1,00	1,72
	Std. Deviation	,889	,819	,771	,819	,960	,974	,900	,847	,727	,888	,863	,778	,837	1,002
Female	N	Valid	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39	39
		Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	1,77	1,10	1,00	2,21	1,77	1,54	1,31	1,26	,90	1,64	1,18	1,90	,90	1,56
	Std. Deviation	,931	,788	,761	,894	,872	,756	,922	,910	,788	,959	,885	,821	,882	,940

Descriptive Statistics							
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N				
Coca-Cola Classic - masculin	1,88	,924	200				
Coca-Cola Classic - feminin	1,17	,827	200				
Coca-Cola light - masculin	,82	,737	200				
Coca-Cola light - feminin	2,32	,807	200				
Coca-Cola Zero - masculin	1,69	,943	200				
Coca-Cola Zero - feminin	1,41	,952	200				

Correlations							
		Coca-Cola Classic - masculin	Coca-Cola Classic - feminin	Coca-Cola light - masculin	Coca-Cola light - feminin	Coca-Cola Zero - masculin	Coca-Cola Zero - feminin
Coca-Cola Classic - masculin	Pearson Correlation	1	,048	,143	,270**	,215**	,081
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,503	,043	,000	,002	,256
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Coca-Cola Classic - feminin	Pearson Correlation	,048	1	,167	,264**	,094	,199**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,503		,018	,000	,187	,005
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Coca-Cola light - masculin	Pearson Correlation	,143	,167	1	-,382**	,423**	-,029
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,043	,018		,000	,000	,686
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Coca-Cola light - feminin	Pearson Correlation	,270**	,264**	-,382**	1	,019	,361**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000		,792	,000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Coca-Cola Zero - masculin	Pearson Correlation	,215**	,094	,423**	,019	1	-,274**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,002	,187	,000	,792		,000
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200
Coca-Cola Zero - feminin	Pearson Correlation	,081	,199**	-,029	,361**	-,274**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,256	,005	,686	,000	,000	
	N	200	200	200	200	200	200

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Hypothesis 2

Statistics				
		I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)
N	Valid	200	200	200
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		3,00	2,72	4,01
Std. Deviation		1,022	1,277	1,186

Statistics				
Nationality		I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)
German	N	100	100	100
	Valid			
	Missing	0	0	0
	Mean	3,08	2,69	4,01
Std. Deviation	,918	1,169	1,185	
Swedish	N	100	100	100
	Valid			
	Missing	0	0	0
	Mean	2,92	2,74	4,01
Std. Deviation	1,116	1,383	1,193	

Group Statistics					
	Sex	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself.	Females	96	2,88	1,049	,107
	Males	104	3,12	,988	,097
I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender.	Females	96	2,56	1,263	,129
	Males	104	2,86	1,280	,126
I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs	Females	96	4,29	1,015	,104
	Males	104	3,75	1,275	,125

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself.	Equal variances assumed	,539	,464	-1,669	198	,097	-,240	,144	-,524	,044
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,665	194,216	,098	-,240	,144	-,525	,044
I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender.	Equal variances assumed	,003	,954	-1,629	198	,105	-,293	,180	-,648	,062
	Equal variances not assumed			-1,630	197,111	,105	-,293	,180	-,648	,062
I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs	Equal variances assumed	11,293	,001	3,306	198	,001	,542	,164	,219	,865
	Equal variances not assumed			3,336	193,871	,001	,542	,162	,221	,862

Statistics						
			I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	
Germany Sex						
Male	N	Valid	43	43	43	
		Missing				0
	Mean		3,28	2,81	3,67	
	Std. Deviation		,797	1,180	1,248	
Female	N	Valid	57	57	57	
		Missing		0	0	0
	Mean		2,93	2,60	4,26	
	Std. Deviation		,979	1,163	1,078	

Statistics						
			I like products to have the same gender characteristics as myself. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	I am uncomfortable buying items that I know are specifically sold to the opposite gender. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	I don't care about the gender of a product if it satisfies my needs. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	
Sweden Sex						
Male	N	Valid	61	61	61	
		Missing				0
	Mean		3,00	2,89	3,80	
	Std. Deviation		1,095	1,355	1,302	
Female	N	Valid	39	39	39	
		Missing		0	0	0
	Mean		2,79	2,51	4,33	
	Std. Deviation		1,151	1,412	,927	

Hypothesis 3

Statistics			
		It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine. (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)	It is acceptable for women to use products that are highly masculine. (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
N	Valid	200	200
	Missing	0	0
Mean		3,61	4,03
Std. Deviation		1,098	,844

Statistics				
			It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine. (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)	It is acceptable for women to use products that are highly masculine. (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
Nationality				
German	N	Valid	100	100
		Missing	0	0
	Mean		3,44	3,93
	Std. Deviation		,998	,769
Swedish	N	Valid	100	100
		Missing	0	0
	Mean		3,77	4,13
	Std. Deviation		1,171	,906

Statistics				
			It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine. (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)	It is acceptable for women to use products that are highly masculine. (Strongly Disagree - Strongly Agree)
Sex				
Male	N	Valid	104	104
		Missing	0	0
	Mean		3,52	3,91
	Std. Deviation		1,097	,860
Female	N	Valid	96	96
		Missing	0	0
	Mean		3,70	4,16
	Std. Deviation		1,097	,812

Group Statistics					
	sex + nationality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine	german males	43	3,53	,984	,150
	swedish males	61	3,51	1,178	,151
It is acceptable for women to use products that are highly masculine	german males	43	3,84	,721	,110
	swedish males	61	3,97	,948	,121

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine	Equal variances assumed	4,197	,043	,122	102	,903	,027	,219	-,409	,462	
	Equal variances not assumed			,125	98,983	,900	,027	,213	-,396	,449	
It is acceptable for women to use products that are highly masculine	Equal variances assumed	2,430	,122	-,757	102	,451	-,130	,172	-,470	,210	
	Equal variances not assumed			-,794	101,357	,429	-,130	,164	-,455	,195	

Group Statistics					
	sex + nationality	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine	german females	57	3,37	1,011	,134
	swedish females	39	4,18	1,048	,168
It is acceptable for women to use products that are highly masculine	german females	57	4,00	,802	,106
	swedish females	39	4,38	,782	,125

Independent Samples Test											
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	
It is acceptable for men to use products that are highly feminine	Equal variances assumed	,268	,606	-3,803	94	,000	-,811	,213	-,1,235	-,388	
	Equal variances not assumed			-3,777	79,842	,000	-,811	,215	-,1,238	-,384	
It is acceptable for women to use products that are highly masculine	Equal variances assumed	2,258	,136	-2,332	94	,022	-,385	,165	-,712	-,057	
	Equal variances not assumed			-2,343	83,146	,022	-,385	,164	-,711	-,058	

Hypothesis 4

Statistics				
		A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)
N	Valid	200	200	200
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		3,32	3,58	3,70
Std. Deviation		,955	,823	,968

Statistics					
Nationality			A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)
German	N	Valid	100	100	100
		Missing	0	0	0
	Mean		3,37	3,64	3,61
	Std. Deviation		,991	,718	,920
Swedish	N	Valid	100	100	100
		Missing	0	0	0
	Mean		3,27	3,51	3,78
	Std. Deviation		,920	,916	1,011

Statistics					
Sex			A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)
Male	N	Valid	104	104	104
		Missing	0	0	0
	Mean		3,38	3,48	3,63
	Std. Deviation		,988	,847	1,015
Female	N	Valid	96	96	96
		Missing	0	0	0
	Mean		3,25	3,68	3,76
	Std. Deviation		,918	,788	,915

Statistics					
Germany Sex			A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)
Male	N	Valid	43	43	43
		Missing	0	0	0
	Mean		3,58	3,60	3,49
	Std. Deviation		1,029	,660	,910
Female	N	Valid	57	57	57
		Missing	0	0	0
	Mean		3,21	3,67	3,70
	Std. Deviation		,940	,764	,925

Statistics					
Sweden Sex			A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)
Male	N	Valid	61	61	61
		Missing	0	0	0
	Mean		3,25	3,39	3,74
	Std. Deviation		,943	,954	1,079
Female	N	Valid	39	39	39
		Missing	0	0	0
	Mean		3,31	3,69	3,85
	Std. Deviation		,893	,832	,904

Descriptive Statistics			
	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	3,32	,955	200
A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	3,58	,823	200
The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	3,70	,968	200

Correlations				
		A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)
A product's brand name often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	Pearson Correlation	1	,449**	,275**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000	,000
	N	200	200	200
A product's brand characters often indicate whether the product is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	Pearson Correlation	,449**	1	,360**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000		,000
	N	200	200	200
The form, or shape, of a product often indicates whether it is masculine or feminine. (Strongly disagree - Strongly agree)	Pearson Correlation	,275**	,360**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	
	N	200	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).