Understanding the Impact of Gender Neutral Communication on Brand Image

Trend or Tool?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the impact of gender neutral communication on brand image.

Methodology – This study was conducted using the experimental design framework of pre-post random group. The respondents were assigned into two groups: control and intervention. In the control group the respondents were shown a gender stereotyped advertising and the intervention group respondents were shown a gender-neutral advertising from the same brand. Pre-test was conducted to select the stimuli followed by a pilot study before final data collection. Selection criteria for the respondents were set to age 18-34 years, residing in Sweden and aware of the brand. Non-probability convenience sampling was done and respondents participated in the study through an online self-completion questionnaire. The respondents were randomly assigned in the respective groups. Total 154 respondents' data was used in the study out of which 81 respondents belonged to the control group and 73 respondents belonged to the intervention group.

Findings – The experiment confirmed that gender neutral communication has a positive impact on brand image compared to gender stereotyped communication. Our overall results implicate that respondents had positive attitude, clear brand association and positive brand image towards gender neutral communication. Based on our empirical results three key insights emerged: 1) there is a change in gender role ideologies in advertising from male/female dichotomy to inclusiveness and equality, 2) there is a gap in marketing literature on how target marketing is defined and hence the theory could be expanded to include the concept of gender neutral communication and 3) gender-neutral communication is the future of marketing and can be an effective tool for marketers is designing brand communication.

Practical implications – The findings from our research demonstrate the effectiveness of gender neutral communication that can be a potential tool used by marketers to design communication targeting the millennials.

Originality/value – Gender neutral communication is a nascent phenomenon in advertising which has not been explored in academic literature. Previous researches looked into gender and advertising from the context of gender stereotyping as the main theme and predominantly focused on the portrayal of female in advertisement. This is the first study to investigate and understand the impact of gender neutral communication from a male targeted brand like Axe.

Keywords: *gender, gender-neutral, gendered, advertising, communication, brand image, brand association, brand personality, target marketing*

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This thesis has been a long time in the making, which we believe makes it a more comprehensive work. During our Research Strategy course last year, we first came up with the idea of working on this topic. We would like to thank *Sofia Ulver* for her inspiration in the initial stages of working on the research proposal. We are vastly indebted to *Marcus Klasson* for his enthusiasm, support, guidance and valuable comments on our proposal during that period as our supervisor. Not only he regarded our proposal very highly with constructive feedback, he was the one who actually saw the spark of this topic and recommended us to work on this during our master thesis. In addition, a very special gratitude goes out to our friend *Jasira Zondervan*, who was a part of our team while we worked with our proposal.

We have continued to build on the same research proposal in our Quantitative Research Methods course, where *Antonio Marañon* guided us in formulating our methodological and analysis approaches and paved way for us to finalise this as our thesis topic. We would like to extend our gratitude to him for inspiring us with his valuable feedback. We would also like to acknowledge the contribution from *Johan Jansson* for his insights on our research methods.

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1 Introduction

The proliferation of gender neutral communication is significantly altering the configuration of brands and disrupting the landscape of advertising and marketing. This opening chapter introduces the reader to this contemporary phenomenon that brands are acclimatising these days and the necessity of studying the impact of this phenomenon. It furthermore introduces the aim of this study, leading to the formulation of research questions. The chapter ends with a holistic outline of the overall thesis.

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The Rise of Gender Non-conformity & Fluidity

Society is in constant flux. The new generation is more open minded towards societal rules and drifting away from ubiquitous and traditional norms and values. This tectonic shift is evident when it comes to gender and sexuality as people are increasingly expanding and experimenting the boundaries of traditional gender identities and expression (e.g., transgender, cisgender, genderqueer, agender, intergender, nonbinary, gender fluid, etc.) and sexual orientation (e.g., bisexual, pansexual, omnisexual, polysexual, queer) (Johnson, 2016; Jourian, 2015). In 2014, Facebook introduced a custom list of 58 gender options for users to choose from and added a 'gender neutral' option for each possible relationships to describe family members as nonbinary (Goldman, 2014; Molloy, 2014).

Celebrities and "high profile transgender people are leading a more general social rejection of prescribed gender roles, challenging typical gender tags, clothing, toys and labels" (Kasriel-Alexander, 2016, p.18) and in the process spreading awareness. Bruce Jenner's public transition to Caitlyn (when she changed her name and gender and identified herself as transgender) with a "confident smile in the cover of Vanity Fair, signalled the coming out of an acceptance of gender fluidity" and received a lot of media attention and reactions from everyone starting from "President Barack Obama to Miley Cyrus" (Beemyn & Eliason, 2016; Bissinger, 2015; Garbarino, 2015; Kasriel-Alexander, 2016). When Miley Cyrus claimed she does not want to be labelled as a boy or girl and identified herself as pansexual, it became a top searched term in Google (Belous & Bauman, 2016). In addition, other celebrities like Laverne Cox, Jaden Smith and Ruby Rose are also further "pushing the gender envelope" (Dua, 2016) and consolidating the voice of the LGBTQ community (Zapinsky, 2015). Genderless/unisex/agender clothing is trending, as fashion designers are blending men's and women's collections from New York Fashion Week to Mumbai Fashion Week, as models are

eschewing gender lines and challenging stereotypes by donning interchangeable clothes and using models who "do not conform to any normative gender roles" (Chira, 2017; Nichols, 2016; Shiware, 2017). Emma Watson recently won the first gender-neutral MTV Movie & TV Award, showcasing the first genderless award category for best actor (BBC Newsbeat, 2017; Time Staff, 2017). To make it more meaningful, the award was presented by Asia Kate Dillon, who plays Taylor in the TV series *Billions*, the first gender-nonbinary character in the history of mainstream television (Abidor, 2017; Jung, 2017; Mumford, 2017).

The stereotypical models of gender have become more culturally complex, resulting in a broader identity position of masculine and feminine characteristics (Klasson & Ulver, 2015). A person's gender identity, their "internalised, deeply felt sense of being male, female, both, or neither", is personal and might not be "congruous with their anatomical sex" (Brill, 2008, p.4). On the contrary, gender expression is "how we externalise our gender. It encompasses everything that communicates our gender to others: clothing, hairstyles, mannerisms, how we speak, how we play, and our social interactions and roles" (Brill, 2008). The umbrella term 'non-binary' or 'genderqueer' refer to those who "disrupt the gender dichotomy […] challenging its very ontology", and has overlaps of gender identity (pangender), more than one gender (androgynous/ mixed-gender), no gender (agender/ non-gendered/ genderless), fluctuating gender identity moving between genders (genderfluid) or a third-gender (Brill, 2008; Richards et al., 2016, pp.95–96).

This shift towards gender inclusiveness appears to be an organic outgrowth of a changing perception in society at large (Garbarino, 2015), particularly amongst the Millennials (Berelowitz, 2013) and Homelanders. Demographers Howe and Strauss (2007) delineated the Millennial Generation (or more commonly known as Generation Y) as those born between 1982 and 2005 and Homeland Generation (or also known as Generation Z) as those born from 2005 onwards. "Young Millennials are more likely to support a brand" with equality-themed communication (Snyder, 2015). Fusion's Massive Millennial Poll, revealed that half of Millennials believe that gender is on a spectrum, rather than being a simple binary 'male' or 'female' (Rivas, 2015). Another survey conducted by the Innovation Group and JWT Intelligence illustrated that 74% of Millennials and 78% of Homelanders believe that they are not "defined" by their gender (Laughlin, 2016). A recent survey revealed that 54% of Millennials and 44% of Homelanders shop for wardrobe tailored for their own gender (Thomas, 2016). These suggest that the society is moving away from the entrenched male/female dichotomy.

1.1.2   The Phenomenon of Gender-neutral Communication

Traditional rules of gender are changing and gender lines, especially in fashion, are blurring. Companies have started tapping in on this new trend and changing their way of communiqué and advertising to appeal to this "*Zeitgeist*" by focusing on individual interest and passions regardless of the gender (Thomas, 2016). We have identified that marketers blur gender lines in two ways, either by labelling brands as unisex or by challenging gender stereotypes, both of which has become a trend in recent times.

Firstly, some brands are embodying themselves as 'agender' or 'unisex' in their communication. Luxury fashion brands are spearheading this genderless revolution as *Zara* (Allwood, 2016; Claveria, 2016; Dua, 2016), *American Apparel*, *Gap* (Stiller, 2016), *Diesel* (Binkley, 2016), *Spanx* (Berelowitz, 2013), *Guess* (Monllos, 2016), *Red Hourani*, *Gucci*, *Marc Jacobs*, *Hermès* (Dua, 2016) and many other brands are "blurring" the gender line with 'gender neutral' couture. *Selfridges* has launched a new "Agender pop-up department store" where shoppers can shop based on their "self-expression" (Tsjeng, 2015), indicating that "personalities trump gender" (Monllos, 2016). This development is also evident in children's toys and merchandises industry as *Target* and *Toys "R" Us* have discarded "gendered labels, signage and aisles" in toys and merchandises in their stores (Dua, 2016). Jim Silver, the editor in chief of TTPM, a toy review website, mentioned that "the gender barriers are breaking down, and both manufacturers and retailers are not labelling toys…for a specific gender. There are so many girls who want to be Iron Man and Captain America, and boys who want to play with Easy-Bake" (Tabuchi, 2015). *Hasbro* is now using "gender-neutral design and packaging" for their Easy-Bake Oven for boys (Berelowitz, 2013). *Calvin Klein* has been pioneer in this industry, when they launched 'ck One' in 1994 and 'ck2' in 2016 as gender-neutral perfumes, refusing to conform to gender stereotypes (Torgerson, 2016). Others are also following suit, for example, *Kenzo* launched a unisex perfume Totem (Zapinsky, 2015) and *Georgio Armani* inaugurated their gender-neutral lip-balm named Him/Her Lipcare (Reimel, 2017). Communication of *Axe* has recently undergone a seismic shift in terms of their interpretation of masculinity, representing a change in their gender-focus (Allan, 2016). Furthemore, *Diet Coke* also repositioned itself as 'gender neutral' (Datamonitor, 2005).

Secondly, some brands are challenging traditional gender stereotypes in their communication. Fashion brands are customarily leading the way by unveiling "gender non-conforming clothing lines" (Stiller, 2016). With their 'Break the Clothing Power Structure' campaign, Swedish fashion brand *Åhléns*, inspired people to dress "without conforming to gender stereotypes" as they sported women outfits on male models and vice versa (Kollo, 2016; Rough Studios, 2016). "The trend has ushered in a new crop of indie clothing lines" such as *Gender Flux* and *Tilly and William*, that disrupts the traditional gender rules (Monllos, 2016). Alpha-males like Jaden Smith (Friedman, 2016), David Beckham and Kanye West (Garbarino, 2015) all have donned skirts. Other industries have also started to defy traditional gender roles such as cosmetics (Monllos, 2016), diet soda, sports merchandise, tools (Sanburn, 2013) and many more. *Covergirl* believes that they are "in the gender fluid space", as the beauty brand introduced the 17-year old Instagram make-up vlogger James Charles as their first male spokesperson and model for their make-up line (Chan, 2016; Fasanella, 2016; Monllos, 2016). Instagram influencer and beauty vlogger Manny Gutierrez followed suit, when he starred in a Maybelline campaign (Reimel, 2017). In addition, brands such as *Milk Makeup* and *Anastasia Beverly Hills* featured guys in their advertising campaigns (Reimel, 2017). Pharrell Williams starred in the Chanel's new Gabrielle bag campaign and became the first man to do so (Rodulfo, 2017). Even *Mattel* featured a boy in their advertisement of limited edition Moschino Barbie (Claveria, 2016; Dua, 2016). *Coca Cola*'s 'Dude or Diva' campaign, that looked beyond the traditional stereotypes (Claveria, 2016; Dua, 2016), was enthused by research that teens dislike traditional gender labels (Claveria, 2016). Recently, as a part of their 'Taste the Feeling' campaign, they launched a commercial where it is shown that an entire family, including a brother, sister and their mother, lusts after a handsome pool

boy, vibrating with gender inclusiveness and diversity overtones (Birkner, 2017).
Furthermore, *Chevrolet*'s commercial for 2014 Silverado featured a "female rodeo competitor" (Berelowitz, 2013). Smyth Toys was recently commended when they broke gender stereotypes by airing a commercial that featured an animated boy imagining his life if he was a toy, which included him dressing up as a queen (Mann, 2016).

1.1.3   The Prevalence of Gendered Communication

Everything in our society distinguishes between men and women in every conceivable issue (Kacen, 2000). Bem's (1974) gender schema theory explicated how individuals are gendered. Throughout history, our consumer culture and "consumption has been gendered" (Avery, 2012; Kacen, 2000; Peñaloza, 1994).

Gender remains a cornerstone in marketing narratives (Avery, 2012) despite the gender fluidity of Millennial and Homeland generations (Sandhu, 2016), in this post-gender era (Patterson & Elliott, 2002). Gendering a brand, which Alreck (1994, p.6) defined as "imbuing a product with masculine or feminine image and identity", has been a major segmentation and targeting device for marketers (Gavett, 2014; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Milner & Fodness, 1996). Gender enables companies to segment heterogeneous "needs in marketplace" into "distinct groups" with "similar needs and preferences" and "profile" them based on their differences (Gavett, 2014; Kotler & Keller, 2012, p.10). The distinctive roles of men and women in the society and the traits commonly associated with them help marketers to create "typology of products along gender dimensions which may provide insight into how classes of products may be characterised" (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a, p.211). And researches have validated that gendered products are more successful than gender-neutral products (Lieven et al., 2014; Milner & Fodness, 1996; Sandhu, 2016; Till & Priluck, 2001), as it helps consumers categorise products and speeds up their buying decisions (Fugate & Phillips, 2010; Peñaloza, 1994; Sandhu, 2016).

Advertising shapes gender identity of consumers (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998). Most advertisements still exhibit "conventional modes of gender interaction and sex roles" and sexual stereotyping (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998, p.173). Consumers develop gender identities for themselves and products aided by marketing communication and buy products whose gender identity is "congruent" with their own (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). Products are designed to appeal to the stereotypical male/female and are ingrained with a gender image by strongly associating it with the masculine/feminine sex role stereotype through marketing communication (Alreck, 1994).

Advertising has always been laced with symbols and images, especially gender elements to create clear brand associations (Till & Priluck, 2001). Previous empirical studies (Lieven et al., 2014, 2015; Till & Priluck, 2001) have demonstrated strong correlation in how clear gender association in a brand creates clear positioning and increases brand equity, which translates to increased likelihood of purchase. The findings of Lieven et al. (2014, 2015) and Till and Priluck (2001) indicate that using concrete gender identity in brands helps with clear positioning.

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1.1.4 Gender Neutral Communication: A Trend or Tool?

Based on previous assumptions, brands have used gender as a framework to construct brand identities even in generic product categories like soap (Till & Priluck, 2001). This distinction was relevant when binary genders were the dominant representation in society.

Notwithstanding most researches exhibiting positive impact of gendered brands (Lieven et al., 2014, 2015; Till & Priluck, 2001), in recent times, marketers are going "beyond a demographic" to fabricate "gender-neutral marketing" (Monllos, 2016). This relevant and contemporary phenomenon clearly contradicts with existing discourses. Kacen (2000) highlights that in post-modern society gender identity is an "instrument of self-expression" and consumers are actively constructing and deconstructing masculinity and femininity, to create self-identity rather than combining socially constructed traits of masculinity and femininity to forge identities. Gender identity has expanded from two distinctive forms of masculinity and femininity to a wide spectrum (Rivas, 2015). Gender talks do not limit itself to egalitarianism any more - it is more about inclusiveness. And this is only growing, as we have seen examples in previous sections of a multitude of companies that are designing gender neutral communication. In fact, Euromonitor identified "gender blurring" as one of the top ten consumer trends in 2016 (Kasriel-Alexander, 2016). Traditional marketing focused on creating gendered brands and designing communications to distinctly define the target consumers. However, modern marketers are increasingly adopting gender blurring elements in their communication and disrupting traditional gender perceptions. Brands targeting Millennials and Homelanders refrain from identifying to a particular gender and therefore use gender neutral communication to enable these consumers to appropriate meanings (Sassatelli, 2007) and create unique identities of the brand.

While Lieven et al. (2014, 2015) and Till and Priluck (2001) have explored the effect of brand gender from various lenses, the implications of gender neutrality on brands has largely remained unexplored. In these discourses the variable gender was constructed in the male/female dichotomy. The effect of using gender neutral communications on overall brand is ambiguous as there is a paucity of discourses that addresses the impact of this phenomenon. The question is whether these new gender blurring examples is just another trend or if it can be a valuable tool for marketers. This necessitates the need to explore the implications of gender neutral communication as opposed to traditional gendered communications on brand perception. It is imperative to understand whether this uncharted phenomenon is actually creating any ripples in both academic and practical backdrops. This is a monolithic contrast, a tension that needs to be investigated.

1.2   Research Purpose

Looking into the numerous examples mentioned in the previous section there is clear indication that the traditional gender beliefs are going through an evolution and society is changing its lens on the role of gender, but there is no scholarship on understanding the impact of gender revolution on brand.

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate the impact of gender neutral communication on brand image. Through our research, we aim to contribute to marketing management theory by investigating if gender neutral communication can create strong brand image. Lieven et al. (2014, 2015) and Till and Priluck (2001) have specifically focused on gendered communication in advertising and established a positive correlation between gendered brand communication and strong positioning, leading to high brand preferences. However, the studies' limitation was that it did not encapsulate the impact of gender neutral communication on brands, failing to monitor its impact on brand positioning and perception. Our research delves deep into this burgeoning phenomenon of gender fluidity and how it impacts brand image. This research is different from previous discourses because we look specifically into brands that has opted for gender neutral communication and gauge the impact to ascertain the implications of using gender neutral elements on brands. We assessed if the discourses on brand image and segmentation can be expanded to create a new branch of literature encapsulating the gender neutrality phenomenon and its effect on brands.

1.3   Research Questions

This research project seeks to address the following questions:

- What is the implication on the overall brand image due to the shift from gender stereotype communication to gender neutral communication?
- Are brands able to position themselves clearly if they disassociate themselves from gender stereotypes?
- What is the overall attitude of consumers towards gender neutral communication vis-à-vis gender stereotyped communication?

1.4   Outline of the Thesis

The overall structure of the study takes the form of five chapters. The first section of this paper has examined the phenomenon of gender neutral communication and established the aim of this study. The next chapter begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the research, looks at the literature streams relevant to this study and establish testable hypotheses. Chapter Three describes the research design and methodology used for this study. The fourth chapter analyses the results of this research and discusses our findings, focusing on three key themes. The last chapter draws conclusions to this study and paves pathways for future studies. The outline of the thesis is sketched in Figure 1.1.

Outline of the Thesis

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The Impact of Gender Neutral Communication on Brand Image

Introduction

provides a background of the phenomenon and importance of conducting this study. It also presents the aim and research questions of the study.

Literature Review

provides an exhaustive review of existing literature related to brand image and gender effects in advertising. The review leads to the formulation of hypotheses.

Methodology

describes the methodological approach in data collection, presenting the research philosophy, approach and design blueprint of the pre-post random group experimental study. It concludes with limitations encountered during the study.

Analysis & Discussion

presents and analyses the empirical results of the study and discusses the three key findings in regards to the theoretical framework, hypotheses and the research questions.

Conclusion

summarises the key findings of the study and draws conclusion in relation to the aim of the study. It further insinuates theoretical contributions and practical implications of the research. It concludes with the limitations of the study and envisage pathways to future studies.

Figure 1.1 Outline of the Thesis

2   Literature Review

Before exploring the impact of gender neutral communication on brand image, it is imperative to conduct an in-depth review of previous literature. However, no previous study truly covers this relatively nascent phenomenon, leading us into an uncharted territory. It is, therefore, vital to dissect the area of interest of this research and provide an extensive theoretical backdrop of relevant themes to grasp a comprehensive understanding of this field. In this chapter, we delved deep into previous literature streams relevant to our study. The two fundamental themes were brand image and gender effects in advertising. The chapter ends with a summary of the review, leading to the formulation of hypotheses.

2.1   Brand Image

2.1.1   Brand

Before exploring brand image, we would first of all like to explain the concept of brand and its relevant dimensions. "The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Kotler & Keller, 2012, p.241). Because brand image is not an isolated concept, it is important to understand the other brand elements that are inextricably woven into the same configuration. We would take a funnel approach and move from brand to its equity and knowledge to brand image, and subsequently break down brand image to even smaller elements.

2.1.2   Brand Equity

Brand image drives brand equity (Biel, 1992; Keller, 1993, 2013), and hence before diving into brand image, it is imperative to take a closer look at the ultimate objective of developing brand image. "Customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand" (Keller, 1993, pp.2, 8, 2013, pp.69, 97; Kotler & Keller, 2012, p.244). This study would elicit consumer's differential response to marketing communication of a brand, in terms of perceptions, preferences and behaviour. This would lead to an understanding of the effect it has on brand knowledge, or its component brand image.

Keller (2013, p.73) aptly summed up the relationship between brand awareness, image and equity: "Customer-based brand equity occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favourable, and unique brand associations in memory". At times, brand awareness is adequate to elicit positive consumer responses, especially if the brands are low-involvement. However, most of the time consumers make their decisions based on more than mere recognition and that is when "the strength, favourability, and uniqueness of brand associations play a critical role in determining the differential response that makes up brand equity" (Keller, 1993, p.3, 2013, p.73). Thus, to differentiate the brand from others in the category, it is imperative to build both brand awareness and an auspicious brand image, with strong, favourable, and unique brand associations, which would lead to high brand equity.

2.1.3   Brand Knowledge

Brand knowledge is the cornerstone for developing brand equity. Without knowledge about the brand, consumers would not be able to react to any marketing activity. Brand knowledge is a function of brand image. To explain the relationship between the concepts of brand knowledge, awareness, image, association and equity, Keller (1993, 2013) has adapted the associative network memory model used by Srull and Wyer (1989). The model insinuates "semantic memory or knowledge" "as a network of nodes and connecting links", where nodes embodies "stored information or concepts, and links represent the strength of association between the nodes" (Keller, 1993, p.2, 2013, pp.71–72). Using this model, he postulated brand knowledge as comprising "a brand node in the memory" to which an assortment of associations are linked (Keller, 1993, p.3, 2013, pp.72, 97). He established that brand knowledge encompasses brand awareness and brand image and goes on to explain the distinction in terms of the memory model. Keller (1993, p.3, 2013, p.72) argued that brand awareness "is related to the strength of the brand node or trace in the memory, as reflected by consumer's ability to identify the brand under different conditions". On the other hand, he asserted that "brand associations are the other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers" (Keller, 1993, p.3, 2013, p.72). Brand image is perception about a brand, manifested by these associations consumers have in their memory. The dimensions of brand knowledge are depicted in Figure 2.1.

2.1.4   Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is the degree to which consumers can identify a brand under various conditions (Kotler & Keller, 2012). According to Keller (1993, 2013), brand recognition and brand recall makes up brand awareness. Keller (1993, p.3, 2013, pp.73, 76) defines brand recognition as the "consumers' ability to confirm prior exposure to the brand when given the brand as a cue". Brand recognition can be shaped by improving consumer's familiarity through reiterated exposure. It is crucial when purchase decisions are made at point-of-purchase. Keller (1993, p.3, 2013, pp.73, 76) delineates brand recall as "the consumer's ability to retrieve a brand from memory when given the product category, the needs fulfilled by the category, or a purchase or usage situation as a cue". Eliciting a brand name from

memory, unaided and spontaneous could enable consumers to make a favourable brand choice. It can be created by moulding strong associations with the relevant product category or other cues.

Keller (2013, p.76) argued that building brand awareness is a stepping stone to creating brand equity and when necessary degree of awareness is in place, marketers should focus on crafting brand image. We can conclude that brand awareness means that the consumer has some preconceived impression about the brand. Being exposed to the brand, the consumer has developed some associations towards the brand. This would help us gauge the difference in perception from pre-exposure to post-exposure of an advertisement. In this study, we have used the concept of brand awareness as a screening gate, before capturing the responses of the participants. If a consumer lacks awareness and has limited knowledge about a brand, there is no point in testing brand image.

2.1.5   Brand Image

When exploring the influence of gender neutral communication on brand image, we would need to first understand the conceptualisation of brand image. To elucidate brand image, we have journeyed through the realms of history and present a summary (please see *Appendix A* for a detailed version of the table) of numerous definitions of brand image, as defined by scholars, throughout history, in Table 2.1.

The first mention of 'brand image' can be traced back to Gardner and Levy (1955), as they pointed out that consumers purchase brands for reasons beyond the mere physical and functional attributes associated with it, for the "meanings connected with the brand" (Levy & Rook, 1999). However, the multifarious definitions of brand image, as illustrated in Table 2.1, indicates an emergence of several contrasting themes amongst different schools of thought, as some used "the same terminology to refer to diverse conceptualisations of brand image, while others created phrases to refer to similar or identical concepts" (Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Keller, 1993; Lee, James & Kim, 2014, p.5). During the early years, brand image was delineated as the accumulation of a customer's cognitive and emotive perception as well as the brand's physical characteristics (Gardner & Levy, 1955; Herzog, 1963; Levy, 1978; Newman, 1957; Pohlman & Mudd, 1973).

Table 2.1 Brand Image Definitions: Adapted and modified from Dobni and Zinkhan (1990, pp.112–114), Lee, James and Kim (2014, pp.2–5) and Patterson (1999, pp.414–415)

Authors	Definitions
(Gardner & Levy, 1955, pp.34–35)	The image of a product associated with the brand, …the social and psychological nature of products, …contribute to the customer's deciding whether or not the brand is the one "for me". These sets of ideas, feelings and attitudes that consumers have about brands are crucial to them in picking and sticking to ones that seem most appropriate.
(Martineau, 1957)	…the product or brand image is a symbol of the buyer's personality …the total set of attitudes, the halo of psychological meanings, the association of feeling, the indelibly written aesthetic messages over and above the bare physical qualities.
(Newman, 1957, p.101)	Brand images may have several dimensions: functional, economic, social, psychological…The limits are set by the brand image built through styling and advertisements as well as other product attributes.
(Levy, 1959, pp.118–119)	People buy things not only for what they can do, but also for what they mean. …The things people buy are seen to have personal and social meanings in addition to their functions.
(Herzog, 1963)	Brand image is the sum total of impressions the consumer receives from many sources…All these impressions amount to a sort of brand personality…although different consumer groups may have different attitudes toward it.
(Reynolds, 1965, pp.69–70, 75)	Product and brand images are the mental construct[s] developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions; …Different people will have different images of the same product. …brand images arise out of a complex interaction between marketer messages and consumer creativity.
(Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967, p.22)	The psychic…[or]…symbolic value of goods purchased in the marketplace
(Bird, Channon & Ehrenberg, 1970, p.307)	[Brand image is the] …attitude towards a brand
(Pohlman & Mudd, 1973, p.167)	...symbolic value (i.e., image) is the extent to which a purchase enhances the worth of the person in his own eyes (self- esteem) and in the eyes of others (status).
(Levy, Frerichs & Gordon, 1973) in (Levy & Rook, 1999, pp.233, 236)	The concept of brand image…aptly summed up the idea that consumers buy brands not only for their physical attributes and functions, but also because of the meanings connected with the brands. …In addition to the physical realities of the product, brand, or corporation, the image includes their meanings, that is, the beliefs, attitudes, and feelings…attached to them.
(Levy, 1978)	A brand image is a constellation of pictures and ideas in people's minds that sum up their knowledge of the brand their main attitudes towards it.
(Gensch, 1978, pp.384–385)	… [brand] "image"…is an abstract concept incorporating the influences of past promotion, reputation, and peer evaluation of the alternative. Image connotes the expectations of a consumer.
(Bettinger, Dawson Jr. & Wales, 1979, p.36)	… [brands have] an "adult" image and a "child" image of the product
(Frazer, 1983, p.38)	[The] positioning strategy requires giving the product a place in the consumer's mind relative to competition. …[Without] the relationship to competition…this the strategy becomes a…brand image (if based on psychological differentiation).
(Bullmore, 1984)	A brand's image is what people think and feel about it: and those thoughts and feelings will not be universally identical. …[It] lies in the mind of the beholder and is conditioned at least as much by the nature of the beholder as by the nature of the object itself.
(Reynolds & Gutman, 1984, p.29)	… stored meanings that an individual has in memory, personal and social meanings. …the set of meanings and associations that serve to differentiate a product or service from its competition.
(Snyder & DeBono, 1985, p.586)	Practitioners…create ads that appeal to the images associated with the use of the product, images that one may gain and project by using the product. …Typically, the copy associated with these ads emphasizes the image of the product.
(Hendon & Williams, 1985, p.66)	Also, known as "brand personality"…it involves nothing more than describing a product as if it were a human being. This is an effective way of generating interest because people favor products that match their own self-image or personality.
(Sirgy, 1985, p.195)	Products…are assumed to have personality images, just as people do. … These personality images are…[determined] by a host of other factors such as advertising, price, stereotype of the generalized users, and other marketing and psychological associations.
(Dichter, 1985, p.75)	The concept of [product] "image"…describes…the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others. It is a most powerful influence in the way people perceive things, and should be a crucial concept in shaping our marketing, advertising, and communications efforts. …An image…is the configuration of the whole field of the object, the advertising, and…the customer's disposition and the attitudinal screen through which he observes.
(Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986, pp.135–136)	…a brand image…is the understanding consumers derive from the total set of brand-related activities engaged in by the firm. …The image is a perception created by marketers' management of the brand.

(Debevec & Iyer, 1986b, p.12)	In positioning and repositioning products, advertisers often work to create a gender image for a brand by featuring the targeted gender in an advertisement as a "typical" user of the product.
(Friedmann & Lessig, 1987, pp.267, 269)	The consumer…reacts to product related stimuli and creates his/ her own mental position of the product. …The product's psychological meaning is a function of the consumer's perceptions of the tangible and the intangible attributes which he or she…associates with the product. The end result is a set of attributes manifested through a bundle of components which represent the consumer's understanding and evaluation of the product and result from direct and/or vicarious experiences, images, feelings, and associated behavioral responses that have accumulated over time.
(Durgee & Stuart, 1987, p.16)	in order to differentiate itself, each brand has to rely heavily on what it connotes or means symbolically in the eyes of consumers. …the meaning profile [of a brand or product category] refers to the complex of meanings that are associated with a given category.
(Runyon & Stewart, 1987)	…a brand image…is simply the way consumers perceive that product. It reflects the language that consumers use to talk about it, their emotional responses to it, and all of the numerous factors that influence the perceptual process.
(Nöth, 1988, pp.173–174)	…commodities are studied as signs whose meaning is the consumer's 'brand image'. Semantic components of a brand image… include 'technical matters', 'product characteristics', 'financial value', or 'social suitability'.
(Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990, p.118)	Brand image is the concept of a brand that is held by the consumer…[and] is largely a subjective and perceptual phenomenon that is formed through consumer interpretation, whether reasoned or emotional. Brand image…is affected and molded by marketing activities, by context variables, and by the characteristics of the perceiver.
(Aaker, 1991)	A brand association is anything "linked" in [consumer's] memory to a brand. A brand image is a set of associations, usually organized in some meaningful way.
(Biel, 1992, p.RC-8)	…the image of a brand [i]s that cluster of attributes and associations that consumers connect to the brand name. These evoked associations can be "hard" or "softer". …The image of a brand can be described as having three contributing subimages; the image of the provider of the product/service, … the user, and …the product/service itself.
(Keller, 1993, p.3)	Brand image is defined…as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory.
(Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994, p.60)	Brand image refers to the organised set of perceptions consumers have formed about the brand.
(Aaker, 1996)	Knowledge of the brand image (how customers and others perceive the brand) provides useful and even necessary background information when developing a brand identity.
(Patterson, 1999, p.419)	Consumer perceptions of brand attributes and associations from which those consumers derive symbolic value.
(Riezebos et al., 2003, p.67)	Brand images are networks of knowledge elements stored in long-term memory.
(Gustafsson, 2005, p.522)	…consumers' view of what the brand values are
(Ross, James & Vargas, 2006, p.262)	Brand associations are the thoughts and ideas that an individual hold in his or her memory for a particular good or service
(Kapferer, 2008, p.174)	The [brand] image refers to the way in which these groups decode all of the signals emanating from the products, services and communication covered by the brand.
(Ghodeswar, 2008, p.5)	Brand image is the perception in the mind of the customers about the brand and its associations. … [It is] the brand's current associations.
(Kotler & Keller, 2012, p.G1)	the perceptions and beliefs held by consumers, as reflected in the associations held in consumer memory.
(Wijaya, 2013, p.58)	Brand image is a representation of the overall perception formed from information and knowledge on the brand. …[It] is actually what consumers think and feel when they heard or saw a brand identity. …brand image is often defined as the perception and preference of consumers towards brand, reflected by the various associations that live in the memory of consumers about the brand.
(Keller, 2013, pp.72, 77)	Creating a positive brand image takes marketing programs that link strong, favorable, and unique associations to the brand in memory. …brand image is consumers' perceptions about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory.
(Arai, Ko & Kaplanidou, 2013, p.384)	Brand image involves the consumer's perceptions about the brand as reflected by a set of brand associations held in consumer's memory.
(Shank & Lyberger, 2014, p.608)	[Brand image is] consumers' set of beliefs about a brand, which shape attitudes
(Roy & Banerjee, 2014, p.209)	Brand image relates to the perception of a brand that is being formed in the process of decoding brand identity facets.
(Anselmsson, Bondesson & Johansson, 2014, p.91)	Brand image…has been defined as any information linked to the brand in the customer memory, meaning the associations and beliefs that the customer has regarding the brand.
(Lee, James & Kim, 2014, p.8)	[Brand image is] the sum of a customer's perceptions about a brand generated by the synthetic interaction of the cognitive, affective, and evaluative processes in a customer's mind.

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Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) investigated streams of literature on brand image and classified these diverse definitions into different categories based on their emphasis on: 1) symbolism, 2) meanings and messages, 3) personification, and 4) cognitive or psychological elements. In his *Theory of Leisure Class*, Veblen (1994, orig. 1899) introduced symbolic meaning of products, beyond functional meaning. Several discourses (Frazer, 1983; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Kapferer, 2008; Levy, 1959; Nöth, 1988; Patterson, 1999; Pohlman & Mudd, 1973) emphasised symbolism and semiotics while describing brand image, ranging from referring to the product as mere symbols to reflecting self-imagery of customers. While exploring brand image connotations, researchers (Durgee & Stuart, 1987; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967; Levy, Frerichs & Gordon, 1973; Reynolds & Gutman, 1984; Sommers, 1964; Swartz, 1983; Wijaya, 2013) also highlighted the significance of the meaning consumers ascribe to brands and the messages that stems from their interpretation. During the 1980s, personification of brands and its corresponding image with human traits became popular among scholars (Bettinger, Dawson Jr. & Wales, 1979; Debevec & Iyer, 1986b; Hendon & Williams, 1985; Sirgy, 1985), ranging from describing brands as humans to projecting consumer's personality to brands. Numerous discourses (Bird, Channon & Ehrenberg, 1970; Bullmore, 1984; Friedmann & Lessig, 1987; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Gensch, 1978; Levy, 1978; Martineau, 1957; Park, Jaworski & Maclnnis, 1986; Reynolds, 1965) have accentuated that cognitive or psychological components, such as ideas, feelings, attitudes, mental constructs, understandings or expectations, triggers brand image.

Based on our exploration of previous literature (see Table 2.1), we have identified three recurring themes across literature streams.

Firstly, brand image has incessantly been associated with consumer's mind. Reynolds (1965) described brand image as a 'mental construct', which was supported by Levy (1978), who believed it as an assemblage of 'pictures and ideas in people's mind'. In their work Friedmann and Lessig (1987) referred to it as 'consumer's understanding and perception' and 'mental position'. Similarly, Frazer (1983) and Dichter (1985) highlighted consumer's mind', while Bullmore (1984) defined it as consumer's thoughts and feelings. The seminal work of Dobni and Zinkhan (1990) concluded that brand image is perceptual and 'held by the consumer'. In the same vein, Aaker (1991, 1996), Keller (1993, 2013) and much of the current literature streams (Anselmsson, Bondesson & Johansson, 2014; Arai, Ko & Kaplanidou, 2013; Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994; Ghodeswar, 2008; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Lee, James & Kim, 2014; Patterson, 1999; Riezebos et al., 2003; Ross, James & Vargas, 2006; Roy & Banerjee, 2014; Shank & Lyberger, 2014; Wijaya, 2013) explicates brand image as a perception held in mind (or memory) of the consumer. This is the most consistent view of brand image held among researchers. It should be noted that different people would have different image for the same brand, as no individual's thoughts, feelings or perception are identical (Bullmore, 1984; Gensch, 1978; Reynolds, 1965).

Secondly, researchers (Bird, Channon & Ehrenberg, 1970; Bullmore, 1984; Dichter, 1985; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Gustafsson, 2005; Herzog, 1963; Levy, 1978; Martineau, 1957; Park, Jaworski & Maclnnis, 1986; Wijaya, 2013) explained brand image as the consumer's ideas, beliefs, thoughts, feelings, understanding and attitude towards a brand. Friedmann and Lessig (1987) highlighted that brand image stems from consumer's aggregated 'behavioural responses' over time such as their 'experiences, images and feelings'.

And finally, brand image is moulded by marketers through marketing communication and activities (Kapferer, 2008; Keller, 2013; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Meenaghan, 1995; Newman, 1957; Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986) and by consumers through logical and emotional interpretation. Conversely, brand image also helps shape the "marketing, advertising and communication efforts" of a brand that entice "the images associated with the use of the product" (Dichter, 1985, p.75; Snyder & DeBono, 1985, p.586).

Based on the above mentioned common themes and adapting form various sources (Aaker, 1991; Anselmsson, Bondesson & Johansson, 2014; Arai, Ko & Kaplanidou, 2013; Bird, Channon & Ehrenberg, 1970; Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990; Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994; Friedmann & Lessig, 1987; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Ghodeswar, 2008; Keller, 2013, 1993; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Lee, James & Kim, 2014; Levy, 1978; Levy, Frerichs & Gordon, 1973; Patterson, 1999; Reynolds, 1965; Shank & Lyberger, 2014; Wijaya, 2013), we have defined brand image as:

> *the overall perception, impression, ideas, feelings, attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, understanding and set of associations that the consumers have about a brand and its personalities in their minds, shaped by interaction between marketer's messages and consumer's interpretation and experiences.*

Based on numerous definitions from Table 2.1, we have identified two important aspects of brand image: brand association and brand personality.

Several researchers (Aaker, 1996; Anselmsson, Bondesson & Johansson, 2014; Arai, Ko & Kaplanidou, 2013; Biel, 1992; Ghodeswar, 2008; Keller, 1993, 2013; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Martineau, 1957; Reynolds & Gutman, 1984; Reynolds, 1965; Riezebos et al., 2003; Ross, James & Vargas, 2006; Sirgy, 1985; Wijaya, 2013) defined brand image as a perception, reflected by a set of associations in the consumer's memory. Keller (1993, 2013) highlighted that brand associations can define a brand's image. Aaker (1991, 1996), Ross, James & Vargas (2006) and Kotler & Keller (2012) defined brand association as the perception held in consumer's mind, similar to brand image. Ghodeswar (2008, p.5) indicated that it is the "brand's current association".

As explained before, some researchers (Bettinger, Dawson Jr. & Wales, 1979; Biel, 1992; Debevec & Iyer, 1986b; Gardner & Levy, 1955; Hendon & Williams, 1985; Herzog, 1963; Martineau, 1957; Meenaghan, 1995; Sirgy, 1985; Wijaya, 2013) defined brand image using brand personality. Some (Bettinger, Dawson Jr. & Wales, 1979; Hendon & Williams, 1985; Meenaghan, 1995; Sirgy, 1985) explicated that brands are imbued with human-like personality traits as if they were a human being, while others (Martineau, 1957) argued that it represents the consumer's personality. Debevec and Iyer (1986b) accentuated that products have gender images and how they can be influenced using cues in advertising.

Since both brand association and brand personality are good representations of brand image, in this study we would use both of these to gauge the image of a brand.

2.1.6 Brand Association

As discussed above, brand image is "reflected by brand associations held in consumer memory" (Keller, 1993, p.3). Keller (2013, p.77) argued that "creating a positive brand image requires marketing programs that integrate strong, favourable, and unique associations to the brand in memory." So, the associations about a brand that comes to our mind, makes up the brand image for that brand. Keller (2013, p.77) highlighted the importance of understanding, acknowledging and managing the various ways consumers can forge brand associations in designing marketing communication. Hence, for the purpose of this study, to measure brand image and any changes that might incur due to advertising, we would use brand association.

Depending on the level of abstraction, brand associations can be classified as brand attributes, benefit or attitudes towards the brand (Keller, 1993, 2013; Low & Lamb, 2000). Keller (1993, p.4, 2013, p.77) delineated brand attributes as "those descriptive features that characterise a product or service – what a consumer thinks the product or service is or has" and brand benefits as "the personal value and meaning that consumers attach to the product or service attributes". Attributes can be product related and non-product related, while benefits can be functional, experiential and symbolic (*see Figure 2.1*). Brand attitudes are a consumer's holistic assessment of a brand that shapes their purchase decision, i.e., their beliefs and 'evaluative judgements' about a brand's attributes and benefits (Keller, 1993; Wilkie, 1986).
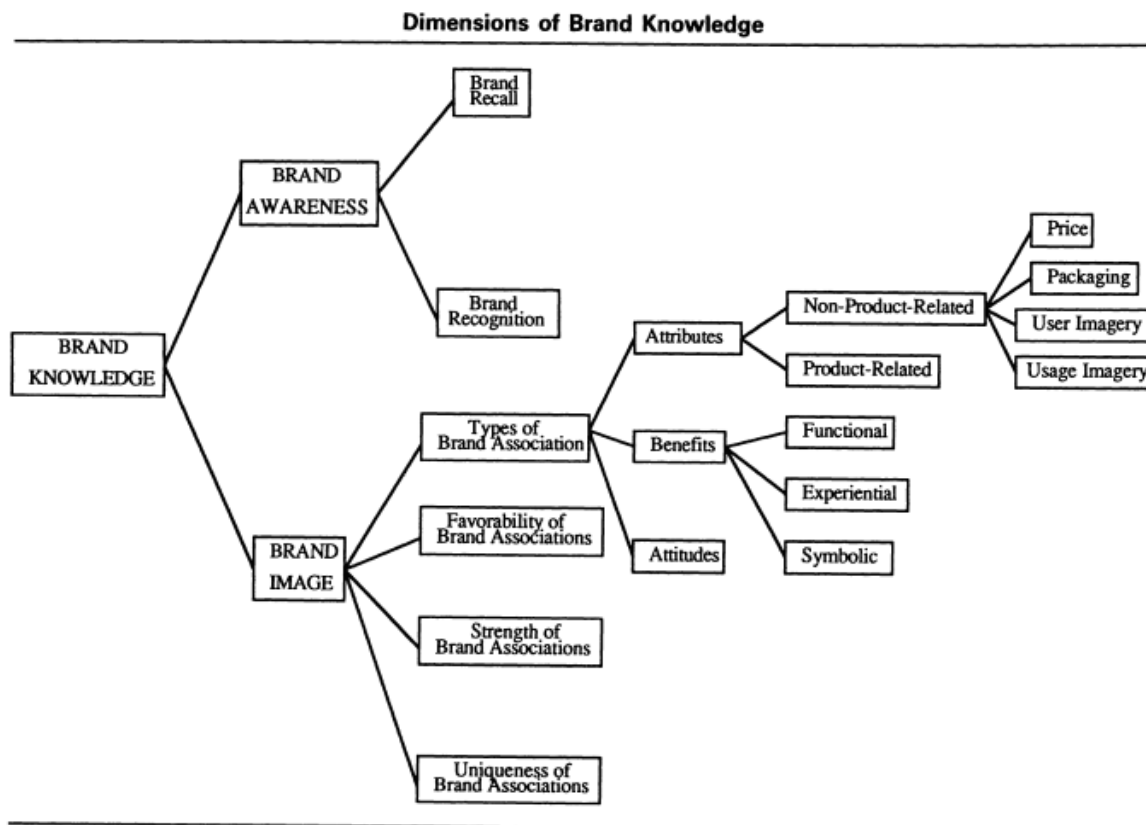

Figure 2.1 Dimensions of Brand Knowledge (Keller, 1993, p.7)

Keller (1993, 2013) argued that to generate the differential response, that in turn makes brand equity, marketers must ensure these strongly held brand associations are favourable and unique. The strength of these associations depends on the extent to which consumers deliberate information about the brand and connects it with their incumbent brand knowledge. Favourable brand associations can be formed by persuading consumers that the offering has relevant attributes and benefits to satiate their needs. The uniqueness of a brand's association stems from its positioning in the market, through unique selling proposition or sustainable competitive advantage. Category associations, such as certain beliefs or attitudes, can also drip to the brand (or vice versa).

Hence, we can conclude that advertisement "states exactly what associations" a brand can "evoke in the consumer" (Gustafsson, 2005, p.524). In this study, to measure brand association we would elicit consumer's associations with different attributes, benefits and attitudes of a particular brand, both before and after they are exposed to a marketing communication.

2.1.7   Brand Personality

Brand image comprises of a plethora of elements and brand personality is one of them (Batra, Lehmann & Singh, 1993; Wijaya, 2013). Aaker (1997, p.347) delineates brand personality as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand". Traits are designed and instilled in brands by firms and advertisers to infuse brands with distinct and ingrained human-like attributes. This enables consumers to identify and differentiate a brand (Aaker, 1997), relate to and aspire about a brand (Batra, Lehmann & Singh, 1993) and influence the meaning of a brand to the consumer (Levy, 1959). In addition to marketer-imbued traits (Grohmann, 2009), 'personification' of brands can also occur because consumers view brands as "relationship partner" (Fournier, 1998) or as an "extension of self" (Belk, 1988). Analogous to personality attributes, consumers also project demographic attributes, such as gender, onto brands (Levy, 1959).

Aaker (1997) redefined brand personality in her seminal work, where she identified (using confirmatory factor analysis) fifteen personality traits along five dimensions of brand personality – sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication and ruggedness. This brand personality scale received notable acclamation in the academic sphere (Tunca, 2014). A more multi-cultural scale was proposed by Geuens, Weijters and De Wulf (2009) that can reliably test brand personality between brands (both within and between category) and between respondents. Their scale comprised of twelve traits representing five factors: activity, responsibility, aggressiveness, simplicity and emotionality. While, both these scales and personality dimensions are widely accepted and validated by other studies, such as Tunca (2014), these dimensions are not associated with any particular gender. This led us to the seminal article of Grohmann (2009), who defined the gender dimensions of brand personality.

Grohmann (2009, p.106) delineates "the gender dimensions of brand personality as the set of human personality traits associated with masculinity and femininity applicable and relevant to brands". Different components in the configuration of a brand exert different influence on consumers' perception of brand personality (Batra, Lehmann & Singh, 1993) and hence on

"brand masculinity and femininity perceptions" (Lieven et al., 2015). Consumers are used to the concept of gender in their everyday life and project this concept to permeate a brand with personality (Grohmann, 2009). Consumers uses the 'masculine and feminine personality traits associated with a brand' to augment their own masculinity or femininity, especially for those brands with high 'symbolic value' and used for 'self-expressive purposes', such as perfumes or clothing (Fournier, 1998; Grohmann, 2009). And traditionally, marketers used and fuelled this 'need for self-expression' by fabricating 'masculine and feminine brand associations' (Grohmann, 2009). Grohmann (2009) constructed a scale to measure the gender dimension of brand personality and understand the gender positioning of the brand through male brand personality and female brand personality scale. This scale makes it possible to demonstrate that congruence between self-concept and brand personality leads to favourable brand attitude, predict the gender of brands and quantify the effect of spokesperson gender to brand gender association. Using this scale, we would be able to differentiate between male and female personality traits in brands, which is essential for our study.

2.1.8   Advertising and Brand Image

A number of scholarship (Debevec & Iyer, 1986b; Dichter, 1985; Frazer, 1983; Keller, 2013; Meenaghan, 1995; Newman, 1957; Park, Jaworski & Maclnnis, 1986; Sirgy, 1985; Snyder & DeBono, 1985) highlights the impact that marketing communication has on brand image. Meenaghan (1995) and Dichter (1985) acknowledged advertising as one of the major force behind creation of brand image, as it can be used to express innate vales and further augment by instilling more values. Debevec and Iyer (1986b) explained how marketers use advertising as a tool to craft stereotypical gender images for brands.

Based on consumer's approach to decision making, there are two schools "of advertising effects and consumer behaviour" – cognitive (functional) and behavioural (value-expressive or symbolic) (Johar & Sirgy, 1991; Meenaghan, 1995; Park, Jaworski & Maclnnis, 1986; Snyder & DeBono, 1985). Meenaghan (1995, p.29) argues that the cognitive school regards consumers as rational beings journeying through logically sequential stages towards their purchase decisions, whereas the brand image school takes "a more symbolic, intuitive and emotional view of products and advertising" while making decisions. The proponents of this approach argue that advertising constructs symbolic meaning and imagery around a brand and consumers make their decisions based on this image, meaning and the emotive feelings they have for the brand, to fulfil their emotional needs. In reality, consumer decision making is complex and both approaches coexist in a continuum and the fusion of these dichotomous components concurrently forge brand image (Cooper, 1989; Meenaghan, 1995; Rossiter, Percy & Donovan, 1991; Wicks, 1989).

Hence, we can conclude that one of the major roles of advertising is to craft brand image by infusing a brand with symbolic and human-like values, and thereby creating personality for brands and an image of the consumer (Frazer, 1983; Johar & Sirgy, 1991; Meenaghan, 1995; Sirgy, 1985). Therefore, in this study we would assess the impact an advertising can have on brand image by observing how these incumbent symbolic and personality values, held by a consumer, change when exposed to an advert.

2.2   Gender Effects on Advertising

Distinct brand gender has been linked to strong brand association and higher equity, which has been a strong framework for brands to create a clear positioning in the market (Lieven et al., 2014). However, in recent times there is a generational shift in blurring the gender spectrum and is evident particularly in Millennials and Homelanders cohort, who are more open with gender dimensions and does not want their gender to be defined by brands (Dua, 2016; Laughlin, 2016). Coeval with this, some firms are taking quantum leaps, especially "fashion and clothing leading the way", in terms of infusing brands with specific gender cues, to avoid being myopic and cater to this generation (Laughlin, 2016). This new phenomenon is challenging the way that numerous previous literature (Alreck, 1994; Avery, 2012; Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998; Grohmann, 2009; Hess & Melnyk, 2016; Kolman & Verćić, 2012; Lieven et al., 2014, 2015; Moore & Wurster, 2007; Ourahmoune & Nyeck, 2007; Till & Priluck, 2001; Worth, Smith & Mackie, 1992; Wu, Klink & Guo, 2013) articulated brand image, perception or equity in terms of gender specific association.

To understand the implications of this phenomenon of gender neutral communications on brand image we primarily look into the relationship of gender and brand from five aspects, which is relevant to grasp an understanding of this phenomenon: gender roles in advertising, effect of brand gender perception on brand equity (Lieven et al., 2014), effect of brand design elements on brand gender perceptions (Lieven et al., 2015), gender perception effects on brands (Till & Priluck, 2001) and non-traditional advertising (Angelini & Bradley, 2010; Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998; Um, 2014).

2.2.1   Gender Roles in Advertising

Advertising frequently uses gender stereotype roles in society to promote a brand (Eisend, 2010). Research on gender stereotyping in advertising spans for over five decades. These researches have provided a clear understanding on the differences between male and female portrayal in advertising and in society.

American Psychological Association (APA, 2012, p.2) defines gender as follows:

> **Gender** refers to the attitudes, feelings and behaviours that a given culture associates with a person's biological sex. Behaviour that is compatible with cultural expectations is referred to as gender-normative; behaviours that are viewed as incompatible with these expectations constitute gender non-conformity.

This definition implies gender is not a biological trait of male and female but rather personality traits which is derived through social interactions creating values leading to acceptable and expected behaviours in society (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). This highlights that the notion of gender is highly influenced by societal perception of expected type of behaviour in society (Fowler & Thomas, 2015). The expectation of certain behaviour in society and personality traits specific to sex is called *gender stereotyping* (Vinacke, 1957). Deaux and

Lewis (1984) have identified four components of gender stereotyping: trait descriptors, physical characteristics, role behaviour, and occupational status which define gender roles.

The seminal work of Erving Goffman in the book *Gender Advertisements* (Goffman, 1987), analyses gender relations in advertisements and elaborates on sex differences in terms of non-verbal cues such as posture, gesture, touch and gaze (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998). Goffman's (1987) main finding was that non-verbal and symbolic cues in advertising communicate power and position in relation to gender stereotyping. The study highlights that men are depicted in superior position compared to women which conforms to the gender stereotyped components (Deaux & Lewis, 1984). To understand posture in advertisement, Goffman (1987) suggests women are often depicted in lying down position which implies the vulnerability of the women and the position of male power in the advertisement, where they are portrayed as larger and in a more authoritarian role compared to the submissive women. According to Goffman (1987), gesture is depicted through the power play of interaction between male and female, such as men engaged in actions like carrying women or grabbing them symbolises the men's ability to dominate the women in the mould of "fun" or "play". Touch also depicts sex differences which is explained by Goffman (1987) through the concept of "feminine touch", where the women touch a product rather than hold or grasp it. Through this ceremonial function of gentle touch, the act of touching becomes an object of beauty depicting submissiveness as opposed to men who "grasp" objects showing authoritarian stance. He concludes that women are depicted as more submissive and dependent whereas men are depicted as being more dominating and responsible. Another non-verbal cue in advertising as explained by Goffman (1987) is of gaze which he explains by analysing the women looking up on men and their expression. At a symbolic level, this implies dependence, submissiveness and trust of the women for the men and for men depicts control and dominance. These non-verbal cues conforms to the social stereotypes as defined by Deaux and Lewis (1984) and depicted in advertising. Advertising holds the power to construct gender identities in society through imagery which typically reinforces traditional differences in the sexes (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998).

To understand the relationship of gender roles in advertisement, it is necessary to delve into the long-standing unresolved debate depicting two school of thoughts: the "Mirror" (Holbrook, 1987) versus the "Mold" (Pollay, 1986, 1987) argument. This argument highlights the consequence or antecedent of advertising depicting gender roles/stereotypes. The "mirror" argument highlights that advertising portrays the existing values and cultural expectations of gender through a magnified lens (Holbrook, 1987). Advertising content adapts to the changing social rules to correspond to the changing value system and promote a brand rather than challenging them (Eisend, 2010; Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014; Holbrook, 1987; Knoll, Eisend & Steinhagen, 2011). On the other hand, the "mold" argument discusses that the depiction of gender roles in advertising shapes the beliefs and value system in the society (Pollay, 1986, 1987). This argument is built on the cultivation theory which assumes that long and repeated exposure to media has a lasting effect that is cumulative and has the ability to alter values and belief systems in society (Gerbner, 1998). Despite the continuing argument on what influences gender roles in advertising, the argument strengthens the importance of advertising in influencing the value and belief system in society.

Despite the changing role of gender in society and their depiction in advertising, there is still prevalence of gender stereotyping in advertising (Eisend, 2010; Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014; Knoll, Eisend & Steinhagen, 2011). The history of research of gender roles in advertising is long but the last six years has seen some ground-breaking addition to the literature of gender and advertising. A study by Grau & Zotos, (2016) reviews all the current literature on gender and advertising from which various themes have emerged (*see Table 2.2 below*).

Table 2.2 Gender Stereotypes in Advertising – Research since 2010, adapted from Grau and Zotos (2016)

Research	Theory	Key Findings
Baxter, Kulczynski & Ilicic (2016)	Gender Role Ideologies	Consumers perceive in-ad gender role portrayals of males as caregivers as atypical of the current advertising environment. Those holding more egalitarian gender role ideology have more positive attitudes about advertising that challenges traditional roles.
Chu, Lee & Kim (2016)	Non-stereotypical gender role (NSGR), self-construal, need for uniqueness, perceived novelty, cognitive resistance	The overall effect of NSGR advertising depends on the self-construal and need for uniqueness. The authors found dual mediation effect of novelty perception and cognitive resistance.
Eisend (2010)	Mirror vs. Mold Theory	The results show empirical support for the mirror argument over the mold argument.
Fowler & Thomas (2015)	Traditional and contemporary gender roles	Some aspects of male depictions are counter to the changing gender roles in society while others are reflective of these changes.
Gentry & Harrison (2010)	Hegemonic Masculinity	The research found that male portrayals still reflect a very traditional masculine perspective. They have not become more gender neutral.
Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel (2014)	Information processing theories	The research finds that they way that women and men are stereotyped in advertising is dependent on humour. Specifically, traditional male stereotypes are more prevalent in humorous ads where female stereotypes are more prevalent in non-humorous ads.

Knoll, Eisend & Steinhagen (2011)	Stereotyping and gender equality	This research provides a measure for the degree of stereotyping in advertising. It still prevails in German TV and there is a difference between public and private channels.
Lee (2014)	Gender stereotypes; resonance theory, negative bias, expectancy-disconfirmation theory	Examined gender stereotypes in political advertising context. It examines the persuasive impact of a campaign theme that is congruent or incongruent with gender stereotypes and a positive vs. negative ad style
Marshall et al. (2014)	Hegemonic Masculinity	Family related advertising in women's magazines does little to challenge traditional roles of paternal masculinity. But is some broadening of breadwinner roles.
Rubie-Davies, Liu & Lee (2013)	Cultivation Theory	Men and women are less often depicted in stereotypical roles than previously reported but they found differences between white and Maori/Pacific Island people.
Shao, Desmarais & Kay Weaver (2014)	Mirror vs. Mold Theory	This research examines how Chinese ad professionals' culture perceptions of gender influence on their work.
Van Hellemont & Van den Bulck (2012)		Examines differences in adherence of three sectors to 2008 EU Parliament Resolution on marketing and advertising equality. Results suggest a degree of tolerance that varies according to sector, language, gender and age.
Zawisza & Cinnirella (2010)	Stereotype content model & stereo content hypothesis	The paternalistic ad strategies were more effective than envious ones. This supported the predictions the stereotype content model.
Tuncay Zayer & Coleman, (2015)	Institutional theory	Research shows professionals' perceptions about women's vulnerability and men's immunity to the negative consequences of advertising. Four themes are derived.

Recent literature in gender and advertising (Baxter, Kulczynski & Ilicic, 2016; Chu, Lee & Kim, 2016; Eisend, 2010; Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014; Fowler & Thomas, 2015; Gentry & Harrison, 2010; Knoll, Eisend & Steinhagen, 2011; Lee, 2014; Marshall et al., 2014; Rubie-Davies, Liu & Lee, 2013; Shao, Desmarais & Kay Weaver, 2014; Tuncay Zayer & Coleman, 2015; Van Hellemont & Van den Bulck, 2012; Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010) indicates change in the role of gender in society however, there is still presence of traditional gender stereotyping in advertising. These studies indicate that the role of women and male

went through a major revolution in terms of meterosexuality, men in more caring persona while women being portrayed as independent and authoritarian. Regardless of these changes traditional gender stereotyping still persists in advertising widely as their preference is still high amongst consumers.

Based on these recent studies, a framework of gender stereotypes used in advertising was proposed by Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou (2016) from a longitudinal study of gender representation in Superbowl commercials. Categories for stereotypes of male and female was proposed in this study (*see Tables 2.3 and 2.4*).

Table 2.3 Categories for female stereotypes in advertising, adapted from Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou (2016)

Stereotypes	Description
Dependency	Dependent on male's protection
	In need of reassurance
	Making unimportant decisions
Housewife	Women's place is in the home
	Primary role is to be a good wife
	Concerned with tasks of housekeeping
Women concerned with physical attractiveness	To appear more appealing (e.g., youthful)
	Concerned with cosmetics and jewellery products
	Concerned with fashion
Women as sex objects	Sex is related to product
	Sex is unrelated to product
Women in non-traditional activities	Engaged in activities outside the home (e.g., buying a car)
	Engaged in sports (e.g., golf, tennis, skiing, swimming)
Career-oriented	Professional occupation
	Entertainer
	Non-professional (e.g., clerical, bank teller)
	Blue collar
Voice of authority	The expert
Neutral	Woman shown as equal to man
None of the above category	

Table 2.4 Categories for male stereotypes in advertising, adapted from Hatzithomas, Boutsouki and Ziamou (2016)

Stereotypes	Description
The theme of sex appeal	Macho man (e.g., physical strength, prowess, 'cool')
	Womanizer (e.g., physical attractiveness, active seeker)
Dominant over women	Man protects woman
	Man is in control
	Man offers reassurance to woman
Authority figure (product representative)	Provides the expertize (i.e., the expert)
	Celebrity
	Voice of authority
Family man	Activities at home
	Conventional activities
Frustrated male	Frustrated in work
	Frustrated in life
Activities and life outside the home	Concerned about his own needs
	Shown in activities and sports (e.g., golf, hunting)
	Seeking gratification outside the home
Career-oriented	Professional career orientation
Non-traditional role	Showing men in non-traditional activities (e.g., washing dishes, changing baby's clothes)
Neutral	Man shown as equal to woman
None of the above category	

These studies confirm the prevalence of gender stereotyping in advertising and its effectiveness. However, the societal representation of gender is shifting to a more fluid state and advertisers are increasingly adopting this phenomenon.

The core idea of gender neutrality is to avoid distinction based on gender roles and norms in the society and embrace inclusiveness. Oxford Dictionaries (n.d.) defines gender neutrality as "suitable for, applicable to, or common to both male and female genders". For the purpose of this research, we have defined gender neutral communication as:

> *communications where brands do not use gender specific stimulus by promoting products to all sexes, i.e. unisex, or by blurring gender lines and challenging gender stereotypes.*

Previous studies have focused on gender stereotyping or non-traditional advertising but there is a gap in understanding the effect of gender neutral advertising on the consumer and the brand.

2.2.2   Brand Gender Perception and Brand Equity

The seminal work of Lieven et al. (2014), *The Effect of Brand Gender on Brand Equity*, validated the positive effects of gendered brands on brand equity by testing masculine and feminine brands (i.e., brands with a strong positioning in terms of brand gender), undifferentiated brands (i.e., brands low in both masculinity and femininity) and androgynous brands (i.e., brands high in both masculinity and femininity). The study corroborated that brands with strong positioning and clear gender associations, enjoys stronger brand equity compared to both undifferentiated brands, due to their weak link to masculinity and femininity, and androgynous brands, due to their confused positioning arising from fusion of both high masculinity and femininity elements. Lieven et al. (2014) further investigated to understand the psychological process that results in positive effect of brand gender. The results suggested that gendered brands have higher brand equity because it is easier for consumers to categorise sex-typed (i.e., highly masculine and highly feminine) stimuli, including brands. Undifferentiated and androgynous brands, which are more difficult to categorise due to more ambiguous gender positioning, are unable to capture higher share of mind or brand equity. These findings strongly correlate to previous researches (Alreck, 1994; Avery, 2012; Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998; Grohmann, 2009; Hess & Melnyk, 2016; Kolman & Verćić, 2012; Moore & Wurster, 2007; Ourahmoune & Nyeck, 2007; Till & Priluck, 2001; Worth, Smith & Mackie, 1992; Wu, Klink & Guo, 2013) but contradicts with the approach of gender neutral communications that marketers are increasingly adopting in recent times. This research focused specifically on gendered communications to understand the impact on brand association and perception but our research would focus on gender neutral communications and assess the impact on brand perception, which would contribute to the current literature by expanding the theoretical scope of the issue.

2.2.3   Gender Perception and Brand Design

The same authors (Lieven et al., 2015) conducted another research, *The Effect of Brand Design on Brand Gender Perceptions and Brand Preference*, which demonstrated the effects of brand design elements on brand gender perceptions. In this research, they conducted four experiments to understand the impact of the change in brand design elements on the brand perceptions. Experiment 1 unearthed that angular, bold logo shapes increase brand masculinity perceptions, whereas round, slender logo shapes enhance brand femininity perceptions. Experiment 2 demonstrated that type fonts and brand names affect brand masculinity/femininity perceptions. Brand masculinity/femininity, in turn, increases brand preferences, particularly when brand gender more closely matches the gender associated with the product category. Experiment 3 found limited effect of colour on brand gender but strongly supports that brands enjoy higher preference if there is congruence between the brand and product gender. Experiment 4 discovered that design elements embedded in brand

communications change brand masculinity/femininity perceptions for existing brands which has an impact on overall brand equity, even if other brand personality dimensions are considered. Brand design elements facilitate not only initial brand positioning in terms of masculinity and femininity but also repositioning of existing brands (e.g. to attract new consumer segments). These findings point towards strong gender association, which creates clear positioning. However, the question remains that what is the impact on brand perception if the communication route used by brands uses gender neutral elements. Through our research, we would challenge the current practice of gender stereotyping for stronger association and preference by using gender neutral communication stimuli in our data collection to assess the impact on brand perception.

2.2.4 Advertising and Brand Personality

The seminal work of Till and Priluck (2001), *Brand Gender Perception Effects*, attributed similar findings as those of Lieven et al. (2014, 2015). The study highlights the importance of advertising in creating brand personality and how gender meaning plays a key role (Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998). This study, using classical conditioning, tries to understand if gender perception can be conditioned independently of overall brand attitude and found that men are more likely to purchase products they perceive to be masculine and women are more likely to purchase products that they perceive to be feminine. In addition, the study also discovered that brands with neutral names and messages are more likely to be purchased by women than men, however, preference is significantly higher for gendered associations. This research was successful in establishing that classical conditioning is an effective tool for transferring meaning in brands (Kim, Allen & Kardes, 1996; Kim, Lim & Bhargava, 1998). Another study conducted by Debevec and Iyer (1986b) discusses the ability of a spokesperson to alter the gender image of a product through advertising. The research uses theories of gender perception of products, effectiveness of promotional cues in creating brand personality and preference of gender stereotypical depiction that is congruent with their self-image. The study found that the gender of the spokesperson affects the gender and personification of the brand. For example, a dishwashing liquid which is usually perceived as a feminine product when endorsed by a man is perceived to be more masculine. Debevec and Iyer (1986b) also finds that cross gender advertising stimulates greater attention and interest due to their uniqueness, but the attitude towards the ad is dependent on the consumer's openness towards the subject matter.

2.2.5 Non-traditional Advertising and Brand Attitude

To estimate the impact of gender neutral communication we have explored literature on non-traditional advertising and its impact on brand. By non-traditional advertising we mean advertising that portrays homosexuality or ethnic minorities. This stream of literature will provide a basic foundation on understanding how consumers react to communication that challenges their frame of reference in society.

Marketing literature on homosexual advertising (Angelini & Bradley, 2010; Bhat, Leigh &

Wardlow, 1998; Borgerson et al., 2006; Oakenfull, 2007; Um, 2014) are primarily focused on understanding the impact on heterosexual consumers and its impact on the brand. IKEA in 1994 changed the advertising industry by explicitly showing a gay couple in their advertising in mainstream media (McMains, 2014). This advertising caused an uproar in the media with protests calling for banning the advertising as it portrayed "atrocious" content. Much has changed since 1994 as marketers have identified the LGBTQ community as an upcoming target segment with higher spending power, more brand loyalty and a market worth over USD$800 billion (Fuller, 2013). However, marketers scarcely use the homosexual imagery in their advertising as they assume this will leave their heterosexual consumers behind which is still a large consumer segment (Angelini & Bradley, 2010). Bhat, Leigh and Wardlow (1998) were the pioneer researchers to test the effect of homosexual imagery in advertising and concluded that homosexual imagery ilicits strong negative emotions amongst heterosexual consumers. This negativity is the result of prior prejudices held by respondents on the issue of homosexuality. This is explained by self-identity and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) which advertisers capitalise on when creating content for the communication to maintain congruency.

Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory explains how affiliation on an individual in a social group enables increase of social position. This affiliation increases self-esteem by comparing and distinguishing themselves with members from the outgroup. This means that majority of the members of society identify themselves to the societal group of heterosexuals and are likely to disapprove communication which is incongruent with their self-concept and social identity. A study conducted by Angelini and Bradley (2010) on understanding homosexual imagery in print advertising found that homosexual imagery elicited more negative emotions amongst respondents compared to heterosexual imagery in advertising. This resulted in a more negative attitude towards the ad and the brand although the ad enjoyed higher recall among the respondents.

Another study conducted by Um (2014) supports the findings by Angelini and Bradley (2010) but also incorporates tolerance towards homosexuality in understanding the impact on brand attitude. Um's (2014) study findings suggest that heterosexual consumers with high tolerance towards homosexuality has a positive attitude towards the ad and the brand compared to consumers with low tolerance. The combination of social identity theory and tolerance towards homosexuality used in Um's (2014) study supports that heterosexual consumers have negative attitude towards gay-themed advertising. Another interesting finding of the study was that heterosexual female are less likely to have a negative attitude towards gay themed advertising than heterosexual male. This is supported by gender role theory which suggests that men are more likely to support traditional gender role beliefs than women (LaMar & Kite, 1998). Men's belief on what encompasses traditional or appropriate gender role may lead them to reject gender role deviants, in this case homosexual male, than women who are more flexible regarding gender roles (LaMar & Kite, 1998).

A qualitative study that evaluated consumer response to non-traditional advertising introduced the concept of "straightening up", which is an interpretive strategy for heterosexual consumers to normalise gay imagery in advertising (Borgerson et al., 2006). The study used a blend of explicit gay imagery advertisement and implicit gay imagery advertisement termed as 'gay-vague' communication to suggest that explicit use of gay imagery in advertising

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creates negative attitude towards the brand while using gay vague communication leads to normalising the message of the ad and creates positive attitude towards the brand.

These studies provide evidence that non-traditional advertising elicit negative emotions based on the affiliation in a social group, tolerance and gender beliefs. This supports our previous findings that traditional stereotypical gender roles in advertising leads to clearer association and higher brand equity.

2.3   Summary of Literature Review and Formulation of Hypotheses

Our research aim and question was the guiding path for our literature review. We aim to ascertain that gender-neutral communications are able to create positive brand image and strong association for the brand eventually leading to high brand equity.

From our literature review, we have observed a radical transformation in social construction of gender and advertisers are adopting to the transformation through storytelling. However, the impact of how brands are being perceived is still unknown and this research is the first step towards exploring its effect on brands. We have looked into different streams of literature to understand dimensions of brand, advertising and the relationship of gender with brands and advertising. We have evaluated literature in branding, marketing, consumer behaviour, advertising, psychology, gender studies, sociology and consumer culture to build a framework for our hypothesis. The figure below summarises the key concepts we have evaluated in our literature review to operationalise our hypotheses.

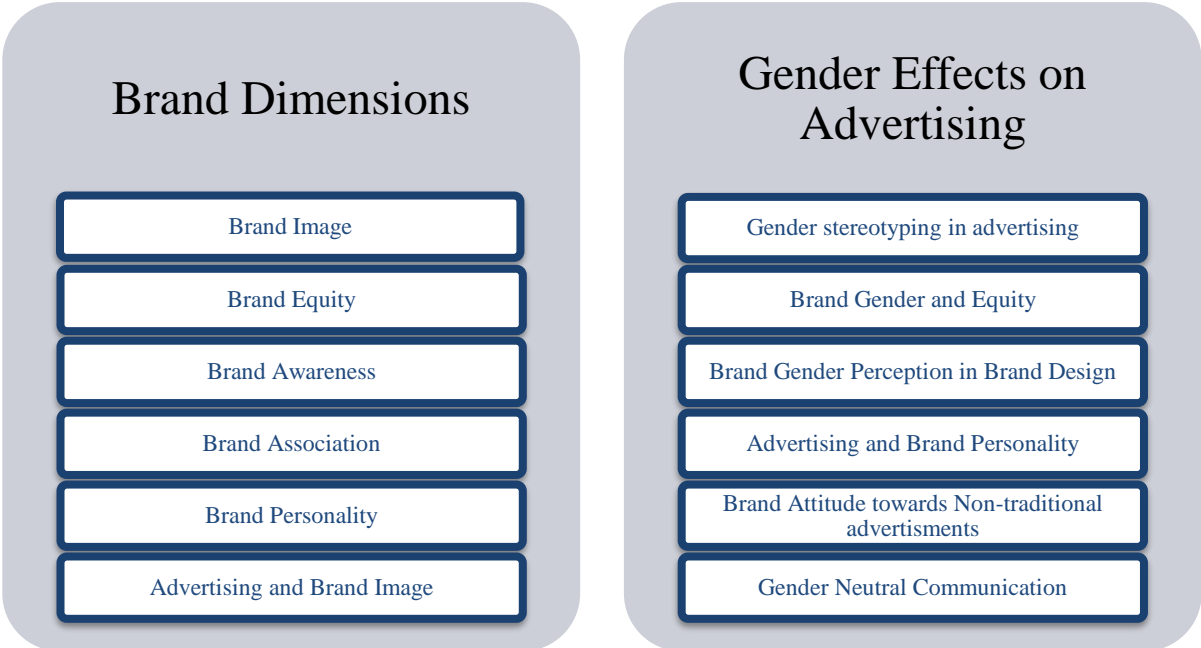| Brand Dimensions	Gender Effects on Advertising
Brand Image	Gender stereotyping in advertising
Brand Equity	Brand Gender and Equity
Brand Awareness	Brand Gender Perception in Brand Design
Brand Association	Advertising and Brand Personality
Brand Personality	Brand Attitude towards Non-traditional advertisments
Advertising and Brand Image	Gender Neutral Communication

Figure 2.2 Summarising Literature Review

The key concepts evaluated in our literature review is interrelated in setting up our research construct. Gender has been used rigorously in brand identity construction in the past. Multitude of studies (e.g., Lieven et al., 2014, 2015; Till & Priluck, 2001) empirically proved the positive correlation between clear brand gender perceptions and how it influences positioning which triggers strong brand associations. Moreover, advertisements have used gender cues for decades since it is the root of self-identification and clear gender meanings influence brand preference. Therefore, consumers are actually conditioned to seek gender signals about brands in communication to assess the product relevance.

Based on the literature review, we have defined brand image as the overall perception, ideas, attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, understanding and set of associations that the consumers have about brands in their minds, shaped by interaction between marketer's messages and consumer's interpretation and experiences. Hence, we can conclude that advertisement gives a brand visual identity and characteristics that helps create a clear brand image which builds strong brand equity (Aaker, 1996; Goffman, 1987; Keller, 1993; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Levy & Rook, 1999; Lieven et al., 2014; Moore & Wurster, 2007; Till & Priluck, 2001). Therefore, our first hypothesis to be tested is:

Hypothesis 1

H0: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand does not have any effect on the brand image*

H1: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand impact the brand image*

Through our literature review we have established that traditional advertising elicits positive attitude towards the brand compared to non-traditional advertising, which challenges the frame of reference of the consumer, leading to lower preference and decreased purchase intention (Angelini & Bradley, 2010; Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998; Eisend, 2010; Fowler & Thomas, 2015; Hatzithomas, Boutsouki & Ziamou, 2016; Kacen, 2000; Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010). Even though there is a change in gender roles in society, traditional stereotyped advertising still garners more positive response compared to non-traditional advertising (Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998; Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010). Gender neutral communication is all about inclusiveness, equality and challenging gender roles in society which is being adopted by marketers in their communication strategy. Hence, it is imperative to understand how adopting gender neutral communication affects consumer attitude towards the brand which leads us to our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2

H0: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand does not have any effect on the consumer's attitude towards the communication*

H2: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand impact the consumer's attitude towards the communication*

In marketing literature it is theorised that clear brand associations create strong brand identity eventually leading to strong brand equity (Keller, 1993, 2013; Kotler & Keller, 2012). Previous studies (Fugate & Phillips, 2010; Keller, 1993; Lieven et al., 2014, 2015; Till & Priluck, 2001) have established that clear association is created through self-congruence with the product. This resonance helps brand keep a top position in the consumer consideration set leading to high purchase intention and preference. Unique and favourable association helps brand create immaculate image and defines the target segment of the product and imbuing them with qualities specific to gender helps create strong brand identity. Therefore, understanding the impact on association of brands adopting gender neutral communication strategies which were once perceived as gender stereotyped is important leading us to our third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3

H₀: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand does not have any effect on the brand associations*

H₃: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand impact brand associations*

Brand personification imbues brands with human like characteristics which helps create a portrait of the brand as a human (Aaker, 1997; Grohmann, 2009). These human like characteristics are derived from the defined gender stereotypes in the society to categorise the products and create target segment. Gender positioning of brands is a reflection of the expected behaviour of gender in society and explains the relationship of sexes. Gender positioning also helps consumers build emotional connection with the brand due to brand resonance which aids in building brand loyalty. Hence, this is a contradiction with gender neutral communication which is either defying gender norms or merging gender characteristics as unisex. Gender neutral communication leads to strong interest as it challenges gender norms but runs the risk of losing emotional attachment with the consumers leading to confused positioning. Hence, it is important to understand how brand personality is affected in gender neutral communication leading to our final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4

H₀: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand does not have any effect on the consumer's perception of brand personality*

H₄: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand impact consumer's perception of brand personality*

3   Methodology

This chapter describes and evaluates the methodological approach undertaken for data collection to address the research questions. Firstly, how the research philosophy was translated to the research approach is explicated. Then a conceptual framework is depicted, leading to the construction of the theoretical framework and the analytical model of the study. Subsequently, research design blueprint is presented explaining in details the steps undertaken to conduct the study, starting from data collection to analysis. This section ends with the methodological limitations we encountered during the study.

3.1   Research Philosophy

3.1.1   Ontological Reflection

Ontology depicts the basic assumptions about the nature of reality (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). For the purpose of this study, we believe that facts are real and exist independent from human-mind and their observation, and it can be objectively measured. The assumption that we made in our research takes a position in the ontological continuum between realism and internal realism. The cornerstone of our research is that there is "single truth" and "facts exist and can be revealed", signifying a realist position (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). On the other hand, we are also close to an internal realist position, because gender neutral communication is a real phenomenon within social sciences, which exist independently of us, the researchers, and might have real consequences for success and failure of brands in building a sustainable long term equity in the future. It is often difficult to agree the meaning of concepts such as gender neutral communication or brand image, and how to gauge them, but these differences do not change the reality of their consequences, i.e., communication, be it gendered or gender-neutral, would always impact brand image in some way or the other.

3.1.2   Epistemological Reflection

Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015, p.51) defined epistemology as the study of "theories of knowledge" and "ways of enquiring into the physical and social worlds", that focuses on "how we know what we know". In this research, we have taken a positivist epistemological departure. Our view of positivism is based on our internal realist ontology of

an existing outside social world, which can be gauged through objective methods and empirical verification.

The effect of 'gender neutral communication' on 'brand image' clearly signposts causality in our study. This resulted in a process of hypothesising (refer to our four hypothesis mentioned in the previous chapter) and deduction to reveal "the truth or falsity of these hypotheses", which is a quintessential marker of positivism (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). Our choice of what to study (the impact of gender neutral communication on brand image) and how to study it, is ascertained by objective criteria. In order to achieve our objective, we have measured the difference in effect between gender stereotypical and gender neutral communication on brand image. Hence, have conducted a quantitative research implementing an experimental research design.

In addition, we have clearly defined our concepts e.g., brand image and gender neutral communication and in the next section (Research Approach), reduced "them into the simplest possible elements" e.g., brand association and brand personality to quantitatively measure them (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). This operationalisation of concepts insinuates a positivism approach.

3.1.3   Methodological Implication

Our research approach, design and methods are consistent with our epistemological departure. The implication of a paradigm of realism and positivism has been documented by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015) and is reproduced in Table 3.1, along with how it was relevant for our study. Our research philosophy steered our choice of research methods.

Table 3.1 Methodological implications of our research philosophy, adapted and modified from Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2015, p.54)

| Methodology	Implication	Relevance to our research
Aims	Discovery	Whether gender neutral communication have any differential impact of brand image
Starting points	Hypothesis	Four testable hypotheses: *"Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand affect:* *brand image* *consumer's attitude towards the communication* *brand associations* *brand personality*
Designs	Experiments	Experimental research design
Data types	Numbers and facts	Quantitative research
Analysis/ interpretation	Verification/falsification	Testing four hypotheses as either true of false
Outcomes	Confirmation of theories	Our study confirms our research question

3.2   Research Approach

3.2.1   The Quantitative Scientific Research Method

The positivist paradigm, that we used as a springboard to view the world, coincides with our use of scientific research method with deductive reasoning (Burns & Burns, 2008). The deductive approach generally corresponds with scientific quantitative research methods. Using the deductive process was appropriate for this study, because we started with a potential theory and four hypotheses and tested them using observations to either confirm or reject the hypotheses. The inductive process usually uses observations to identify patterns and develop theories, which clearly did not correspond with our requirements. Our decision to select quantitative methods was primarily because it allowed us to construct statistical models to explain observations and test a proposed theory (Burns & Burns, 2008). To test our hypotheses, we have carefully designed the research, developing questionnaires with appropriate scales and garnered numerical data. Unlike qualitative research, quantitative research data are more efficient and facilitated us to test our hypotheses.

Our research exhibits all the features of a quantitative scientific research method: "control, operational definitions, replication and hypothesis testing" (Burns & Burns, 2008, p.15). Our research purpose requires us to 'test' the difference of gendered and gender-neutral communication from a brand on its image. We administered control in our experiment to help us discern the causes of our observations. In order to test our four hypotheses, we need to control the environment and remove any potential environmental and human variables to pinpoint the causation we seek to understand. In the next section of our chapter, we define our variables in an operational way to ensure they can be properly measured. Our study has been designed in a way that can be easily replicated. In addition, the scales that we have used to measure brand image are replicated from three previous studies.

3.2.2   Conceptual Framework

In our literature review (*see 2.1.5, 2.1.8 and 2.3*), we have substantiated that marketing communication, or advertising, has substantial impact on brand image, and hence marketers use it as an instrument to craft brand image, association and personality. Based on our literature review, research purpose and research questions, therefore, we introduce the following Conceptual Model, shown in figure 3.1.
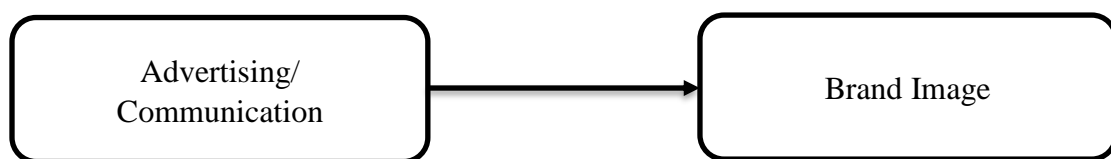
Figure 3.1 Conceptual Framework

The model unambiguously depicts the proposed relationship between the abstract concepts (Burns & Burns, 2008) that defines our problem. The direction of the arrow in the model specifies that we want to understand the effect of advertising on brand image. Hence, the model clearly exhibits the causality of relationship that we want to demonstrate.

3.2.3   Theoretical Framework

In the review of literature (*see 2.2.5 and 2.3*), we have established that traditional gender stereotyped communication still evokes a more positive attitude towards the brand compared to non-traditional communication. Hence, testing gender neutral communication, which is non-traditional in nature, necessitates us to understand consumer's attitude or their emotional response to the communication. This helps us fathom the impact the communication has on the consumer's attitude and hence lead to a favourable or unfavourable brand image. Therefore, we have used consumer's attitude towards the communication as a measurement.

Our literature review (*see 2.1.5, 2.1.6 and 2.3*) has also established that brand image is reflected by the brand associations that consumers have in their memory about the brand. We have also argued, with sufficient evidence, that brand image can be measured through brand association. Thus, we have used the associations consumers have about a brand as a measurement of brand image.

In our literature review (*see 2.1.5, 2.1.7, 2.1.8, 2.2.4 and 2.3*), we have also corroborated that advertising imbue brands with human personality traits to construct brand image. We have also established that these personality traits could be masculine or feminine and can articulate brand gender. Hence, we have used brand personality to gauge brand image.

Based on the discussion above, we can conclude that brand image is a function of three quantifiable variables: emotional response towards advertising, brand association and brand personality. Grounded in this discussion, we have augmented our conceptual framework into the following Theoretical Framework for conducting our study, shown in figure 3.2.
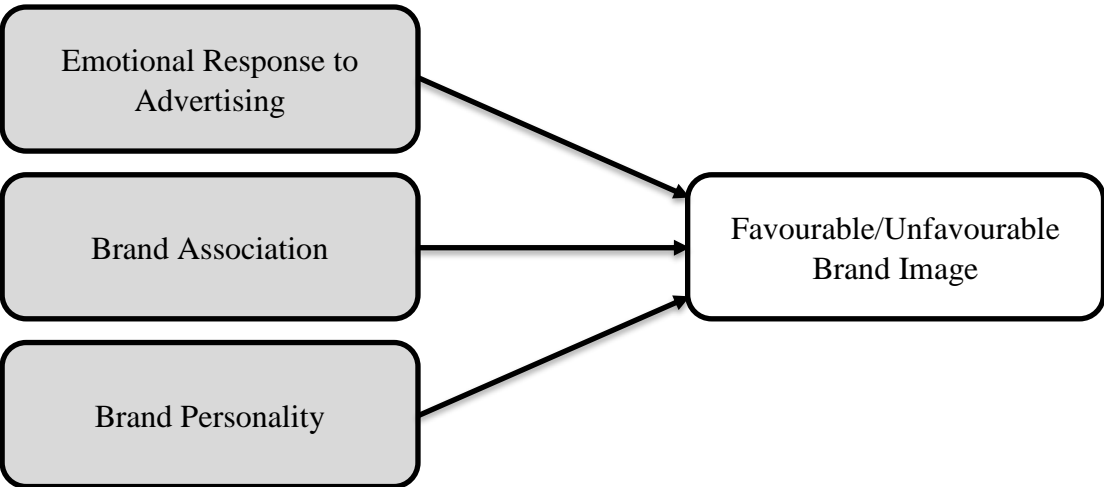

Figure 3.2 Theoretical Framework

3.2.4   Analytical Model

The next step in refining our research purpose is using the operationalised theoretical model and break it down further into measurable variables (Malhotra, 2010). The dependent variable (DV), that is "measured or observed to detect changes due to the variation of the independent variables" (Burns & Burns, 2008, p.77) "on the test unit" (Malhotra, 2010, p.221)", is '*brand image*', since our objective is to measure the impact on brand image.

We have already defined that attitude towards advertising, brand association and brand personality yields brand image and hence can be considered as independent variables (IV), that we can manipulate. However, since it is inconvenient to manipulate these variables individually, we have further broken down these three variables.

To test consumer's emotional responses to non-traditional (or homosexual in this instance) imagery in advertising, Bhat, Leigh and Wardlow (1998) developed the Emotional Response Scale. They adapted a previous list of emotions and pretested them to generate a list of 165 emotions and subsequently selected 2 items for 12 emotional categories. Afterwards, they have conducted an exploratory factor analysis, with high statistical reliability, which have generated three factors with eigenvalues more than one. They concluded that 'approval', 'disapproval' and 'surprise' are three holistic emotional factors that can measure emotional response towards an advertising. Hence, we have used 'approval', 'disapproval' and 'surprise' as independent variables, that impact 'attitude towards advertising'.

In our review of previous literature (*see section 2.1.6 and figure 2.1*), we have mentioned that Keller (1993) identified three major types of brand associations as attributes (product related and non-product related such as price, packaging, user imagery and usage imagery), benefits (functional, experiential and symbolic) and attitudes. Therefore, we have used 'attributes', 'benefits' and 'attitudes' as independent variables, that impact 'brand association'.

Grohmann (2009) developed a scale to measure gender dimensions of brand personality. From an initial list of 184 masculine brand personality (MBP) and 202 feminine brand (FBP) personality traits, they have identified 40 MBP and 32 FBP. Subsequently, they have administered an exploratory factor analysis, which have generated a two-factor solution. This resulted in an attribute list of 6 MBP and 6 FBP. Henceforth, we have used 'Masculine Brand Personality' and 'Feminine Brand Personality' as independent variables, that impact gender dimensions of 'brand personality'.

Based on this discussion, we can treat 'attitude towards advertising', 'brand association' and 'brand personality' as mediating variables, since they lie "between the effect of the IV[s] on the DV" (Burns & Burns, 2008, p.77). The deviations in the independent variables ('Approval', 'Disapproval', 'Surprise', 'Attributes', 'Benefits', 'Attitudes', 'Masculine Brand Personality' and 'Feminine Brand Personality') impact the effect of the mediating variables ('attitude towards advertising', 'brand association' and 'brand personality') on the dependent variable (brand image). Figure 3.3 depicts the analytical model that illustrates the relationships between these variables.
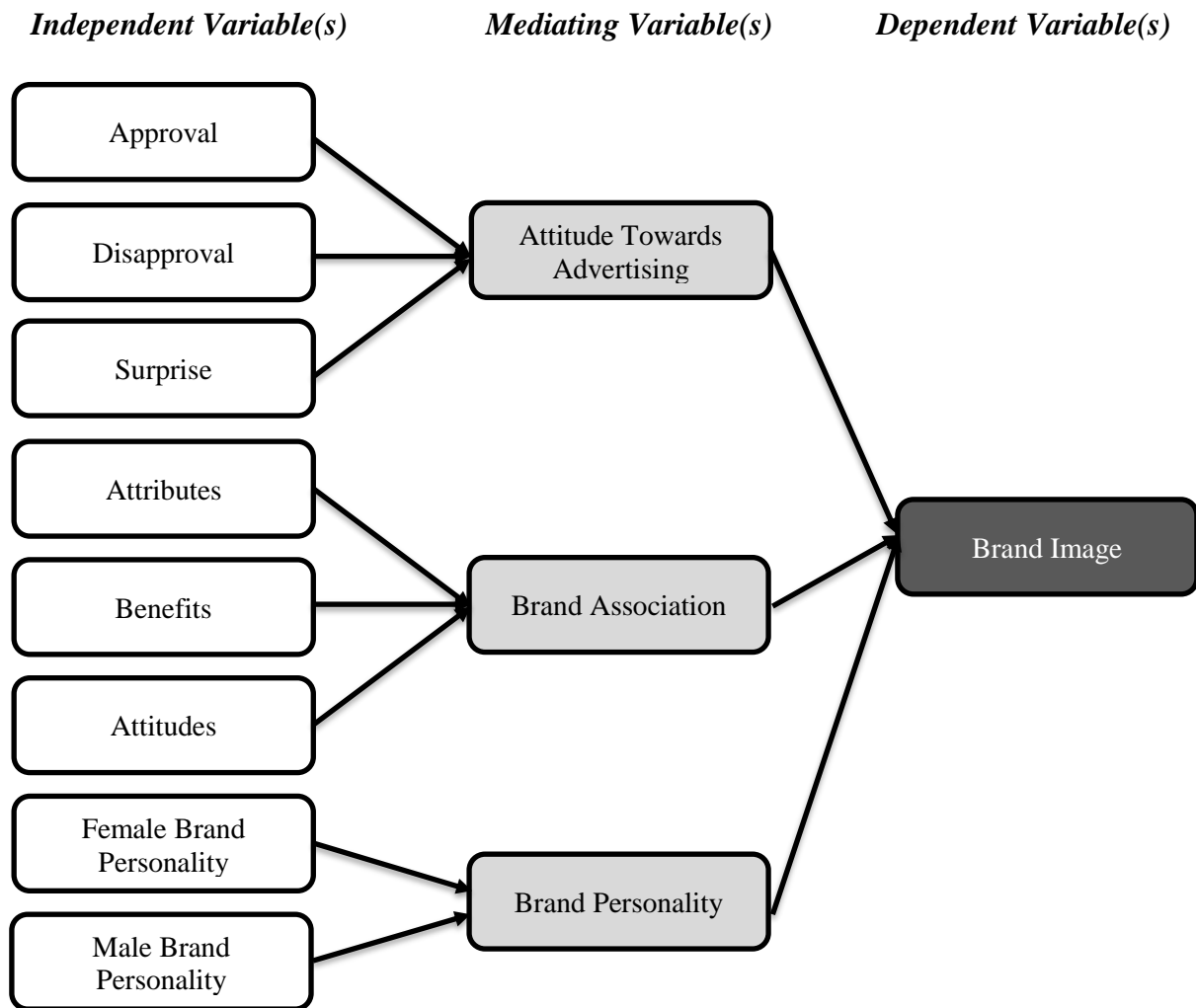
Figure 3.3 Relationships between Independent, Mediating and Dependent Variables

3.2.5 Specification of Information Needed

By focusing on individual component of our problem and the analytical model and hypotheses, we have ascertained our information requirement for this study. We have undertaken this exercise for every component of the problem and derived the following list of information (as shown in Table 3.2) that needs to be garnered from the respondents selected for the study (Malhotra, 2010). Using the specification what information needs to be collected, we have formulated our research design.

Table 3.2 Specification of Information Needed

Stimuli	Communication materials from brands that has exhibited both gendered and gender-neutral advertising needs to be selected. A wide range of selection is necessary to ensure resonance with respondents.
Brand Awareness	Information on brand recall and recognition should be obtained from the respondents to test the respondent's pre-existing perception of the brand.

Attitude towards Advertising	Detailed emotional responses concerning their disapproval, approval and surprise, towards the communication should be obtained from the participants.
Brand Association	Information on consumer's response to the communication of different types of brand associations (attributes, benefit and attitudes) should be obtained from the respondents.
Brand Personality	In order to understand the brand personality of the communication used, standard set of male and female brand personification characteristics needs to selected. The respondents should be asked to what extent the personality types resonate with the brand.
Demographic	Information on the standard demographic characteristics should be obtained from the respondents.

3.3   Research Design Formulation

3.3.1   Causal Research

Research designs can be exploratory, descriptive or causal (Malhotra, 2010). Exploratory design was not considered because it aims to discover ideas and insights and by nature correlate with qualitative research approaches. The objective of conducting descriptive research is to describe something, which once again did not satiate our research needs. Therefore, we have selected causal research, that enables researchers to "obtain evidence of cause-and-effect (causal) relationships" (Malhotra, 2010, p.81). Causal research was appropriate for this study because it can gauge the nature of the relationship between the causal variables and the effect to be predicted. It was ideal in our case, as we seek to determine the causal impact of gender neutral communication on brand image.

3.3.2   Experimental Study Design

To investigate the differential impact of a gender-neutral communication compared to a gendered communication, we needed to manipulate the levels of independent variables and observe corresponding changes on the dependent variable, brand image. This controlled environment to ascertain a causal relationship and garner validation to support or refute our hypotheses, requires the use of experimental or laboratory studies (Burns & Burns, 2008). Experimental design is defined as:

> a set of procedures specifying (1) the test units and how these units are to be divided into homogeneous subsamples, (2) what independent variables or treatments are to be manipulated, (3) what dependent variables are to be measured, and (4) how the extraneous variables are to be controlled (Malhotra, 2010, p.221).

Experimental design enables us to eliminate the likelihood of any alternative relationships, ramifications and causes and prevent external factors interfering with the study, "leaving only

the actual factor of interest as the measured effect and provide clear unambiguous results" (Burns & Burns, 2008, p.83). A laboratory experiment would offer high degree of control, minimise effects of history and high degree internal validity (Burns & Burns, 2008). However, any uncontrolled variables would affect both experimental and control groups in a similar way.

One of the core reasons for using experimental design is to administer different stimuli to different set of participants, to manipulate the independent variables and observe the changes in our dependent variable. We have identified the need to use 'control groups' to actually compare the differences in responses between gender-neutral and gendered communication stimuli. The experiment entails assignment of participants into two equivalent groups that we labelled as '**intervention group**' and '**control group**'. In the intervention group, we manipulated the independent variables with gender-neutral communication stimuli, while holding conditions constant and equivalent for the control group, exposing them to traditional gendered communication stimuli. Using the results from the control group as "baseline", we gauged "the treatment effect" on the intervention group (Burns & Burns, 2008, p.84). We could then juxtapose the results of the changes in brand image from the intervention group with the control group, to ascertain the probability that the independent variables instigated any such deviations. Thus, using two groups helped us discern the difference between the impact of a gendered communication on the image of that brand and the impact of a gender-neutral communication on the image of the same brand.

Delving deep into the framework of the design, we conducted a laboratory experiment implementing a pre-test/post-test design, where the intervention group "is exposed to the treatment, but the control group is not" (Malhotra, 2010, p.228). A pre-test measure is taken in both groups before they are exposed to the treatment, and a post-test measure is taken after the exposure. This experimental design is known as **pre-post random group design** (Burns & Burns, 2008) or **pretest-posttest control group design** (Malhotra, 2010). To ensure similarity of the groups, before the treatment, we assigned participants into the two experimental groups in a randomised fashion. To ensure internal validity of the responses between the groups, we used similar profile of respondents in each group based on certain selection criteria. Hence, we administered the stimuli by using randomised control group to deal with the effect of maturation in respondents (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2015). In both the groups (intervention and control) we pre-tested the brand image and exposed them either to gendered communication (in control) or gender neutral communication (in intervention) followed by the post-testing of the brand image to assess the change in perception post stimuli exposure. Figure 3.4 visually depicts our design framework.

The pre-test brand image measurement acted as a check by allowing us to match the degree of comparability between the groups before the treatment. The post-test brand image measurement enabled us to find whether brand image has changed from the pre-test brand image (for both the groups) and subsequently juxtapose this change between groups. Consequently, we were able to isolate the differential impact of gender neutral communication.
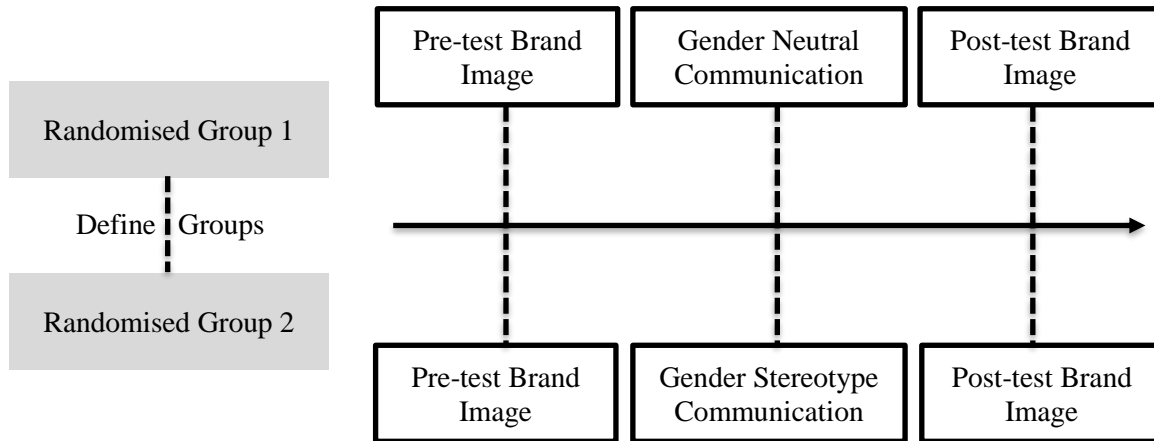
Figure 3.4 Pre-post Randomised Control Group Design

3.3.3   Measurement and Scaling Procedures

To measure our variables, we have used interval scale of measurement since it is used to rate and compare differences between objects (Malhotra, 2010). Variables in this scale are numerically gauged, so the measurements are on a numerical scale, where the value of 'zero' is arbitrary but the interval between the consecutive points in the scale are equidistant (Burns & Burns, 2008). Interval scale permitted us to perform a wide array of descriptive and inferential statistical analysis.

To rate our selected variables, we used the most commonly employed and recognised nonparametric itemised rating scale, known as the Likert scale. The Likert scale entails the respondents to select their degree of agreement or disagreement in a continuum of usually five categories, for a series of statements about a stimulus (Burns & Burns, 2008; Malhotra, 2010). The respondent's scores are computed by allocating a numerical value to each answer, from 1 to usually 5 (depending on the choice options), and then aggregating values from all the responses to generate a total score. The categories on the scale can vary in both choice statements and numbers. We have used a 7-point Likert Scale, instead of the more common 5-point Likert scale, as it mimics the behaviour of a normal distribution. Moreover, in an experimental design, which has a small sample size, a 7-point Likert scale provides more variation in response than a 5 point Likert scale. Symonds (1924) argued that 7 is the optimum number of class intervals, leading to higher reliability. This notion was also supported by Churchill Jr. and Peter (1984). The 7-point rating scale is treated as interval as it has the characteristics of description, order and distance (Burns & Burns, 2008; Malhotra, 2010).

We have used the Likert scale because it offers a homogenous scale and improves the probability that a unitary variable is measured, which in turn, improves the validity and reliability of the data collected (Burns & Burns, 2008). Also, it was easy to administer, since it was easier for the respondents to understand and respond (Malhotra, 2010). However, we acknowledge that it was time consuming for respondents to answer on a 7-point scale.

3.3.4 Questionnaire Design

We have developed a closed-ended response questionnaire and used 7-point Likert scale to measure our variables. Based on the operationalisation of our variables, we have itemised that we need to measure attitude towards advertising, brand association and brand personality to ascertain change in brand image. However, we also needed to capture additional information in the questionnaire. Based on the specification of information needed (*see 3.2.5*), the following figure shows the information that was captured from the questionnaire.
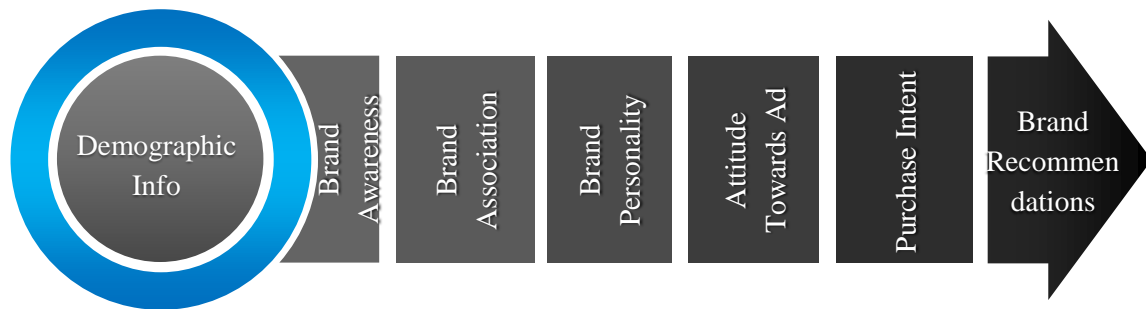
Figure 3.5 Information to be captured from questionnaire

The survey started with basic demographic information such as gender, age and country of residence. Respondents were given three gender options to choose from – male, female and others. They were also provided with six age brackets to choose from – Below 18, 18-22, 23-26, 27-30, 31-34 and 35 or older. Age was the first screening question, because if the respondents were less than 18 years old or above 35, they would not be able to further participate in the survey, which ensured the participation of only millennials.

Demographic information was followed by a simple brand awareness question to check whether the respondent is familiar with the brand. Respondents were asked to answer in a 7-point familiarity scale from 1 to 7 (Not familiar at all, Not very familiar, Slightly familiar, Somewhat familiar, Moderately familiar, Very familiar and Extremely familiar). This was the second screening question. If the respondents selected code 1 or 2 they would not be able to continue partaking in the survey, because they are unfamiliar with the brand. If the respondents are not well acquainted with the brand, we cannot capture their brand association and brand personality in the pre-test stage before being exposed to the stimuli.

The questionnaire then captured brand association in the pre-test stage before exposure to any stimulus. From previous literature review and our analytical model, we have established that brand attributes, brand benefits and brand attitudes are variables that are used to measure brand association, as formulated by Keller (1993, 2013) in his construction of brand equity. In their seminal work, Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995) developed a scale to measure customer-based brand equity. Through four studies they have systematically reduced 83 measurement items to 17 questions in five dimensions of brand equity - performance, social image, value,

trustworthiness and attachment. All the 17 scale measurement items of Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995) together reflects the three variables of brand association of Keller (1993, 2013). Table 3.3, lists these 17 scale items from Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995) and subsequent type of brand association identified by Keller (1993, 2013). The table also exhibits that we have adapted 13 scale measurement items from this scale and discarded 4. We discarded all three items in the dimension 'value', because we have not relayed any information pertaining to pricing. We have also discarded the item 'After using this brand, I am very likely to grow fond of it', because the respondents do not necessarily have to be a user of the brand. Similar to Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995), we have measured these statements on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 to 7 (Strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, Neither agree not disagree, Somewhat agree, Agree, Strongly agree). We used this scale (Lassar, Mittal & Sharma, 1995) because of its concurrent simplicity and robustness. The scale comprises of a limited number of items, which was easier to administer and, at the same time, incorporates comprehensive dimensions of brand equity and brand association.

Table 3.3 Brand Association Measurement Scale, adapted and modified from Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995)

Scale proposed by Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995)		Type of Brand Association proposed by Keller (1993, 2013)	Use or Discard the scale item in the survey
Dimensions	*Scale measurement items*		
Performance	I can expect superior performance from this brand	Product-related attribute/ Functional Benefits	Use
	During use, this brand is highly unlikely to be defective	Product-related attribute/ Functional Benefits	Use
	This brand is made so as to work trouble free	Product-related attribute/ Functional Benefits	Use
	This brand will work very well	Product-related attribute/ Experiential Benefits	Use
Social image	This brand fits my personality	Non-product-related user imagery attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Use
	I would be proud to own this brand	Non-product-related usage imagery attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Use
	This brand will be well regarded by my friends	Non-product-related user imagery attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Use
	In its status and style, this brand matches my personality	Non-product-related user imagery attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Use

Value	This brand is well priced	Non-product-related price attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Discard
	Considering what I would pay for this brand, I will get much more than my money's worth	Non-product-related price attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Discard
	I consider this brand to be a bargain because of the benefits I receive	Non-product-related price attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Discard
Trustworthiness	I consider the company and people who stand behind the brand to be very trustworthy	Non-product-related attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Use
	In regard to consumer interests, this company seems to be very caring	Non-product-related attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Use
	I believe that this company does not take advantage of consumers	Non-product-related attribute/ Symbolic Benefits	Use
Attachment	After using this brand, I am very likely to grow fond of it	Product-related attribute/ Experiential Benefits	Discard
	For this brand, I have positive personal feelings	Overall Brand Attitude	Use
	With time, I will develop a warm feeling toward this brand	Overall Brand Attitude	Use

The final step before the respondent was exposed to the stimulus, was asking about their opinions on brand personality in the pre-test stage. As discussed previously, Grohmann (2009) articulated the need for consumers to demonstrate their masculinity and femininity through their choice of brands. He identified masculinity and femininity human personality dimensions of brands that consumers use to augment or reinforce their own masculinity and femininity for self-expression. Grohmann (2009) reduced 184 masculine brand personality (MBP) and 202 feminine brand personality (FBP) to 6 MBP (adventurous, aggressive, brave, daring, dominant and sturdy) and 6 FBP (expresses tender feelings, fragile, graceful, sensitive, sweet and tender). Conducting several studies, he constructed and validated a two-dimensional, MBP/FBP scale that lists these 12 human personality traits. Table 3.4 depicts the scale developed by Grohmann (2009) to measure these gender dimensions of brand personality. This scale differs from the more popular brand personality scales developed by Aaker (1997) or Geuens, Weijters and De Wulf (2009). However, the scale developed by Grohmann (2009) is more relevant for our study, since it allowed us to identify whether respondents identify a brand (before and after an advertising) with masculine or feminine personality traits. Using this scale, we were able to identify the different impact gender-

neutral and gendered communication has on brand personality. Similar to Grohmann (2009), we have measured these attributes on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 to 7 (Not descriptive at all, Not very descriptive, Slightly descriptive, Somewhat descriptive, Moderately descriptive, Very descriptive, Extremely descriptive). To reduce bias, we have displayed the personalities by randomising the attributes in the questionnaire without any mention of 'Male Brand Personality' or 'Female Brand Personality'.

Table 3.4 Brand Personality Scale (Grohmann, 2009):

Male Brand Personality								
Adventurous	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Adventurous**
Aggressive	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Aggressive**
Brave	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Brave**
Daring	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Daring**
Dominant	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Dominant**
Sturdy	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Sturdy**
Female Brand Personality								
Expresses Tender Feelings	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Expresses Tender Feelings**
Fragile	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Fragile**
Graceful	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Graceful**
Sensitive	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Sensitive**
Sweet	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Sweet**
Tender	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Tender**

In the post-test stage, after exposing the respondents to the stimuli, we have captured their attitude towards the advertising in both groups. As we have mentioned before, Bhat, Leigh and Wardlow (1998) constructed the Emotional Response Scale to measure consumer's emotional responses to homosexual advertising, which is an instance of non-traditional advertising. From 165 emotions expressed initially, they identified 12 emotional categories (with 2 emotions in each category). An exploratory factor analysis, enabled them to categorise 21 factors along three dimensions – disapproval (scornful, irritated, disgusted, angry, revolted, contemptuous, uneasy, distrustful, worried and sceptical), approval (excited, wishful, envious, interested, stimulated, loving, happy, involved and curious) and surprise (astonished and surprised). Table 3.5 depicts the Emotional Response Scale, used in our study. We believe this scale is an archetype to measure the effects of an inclusive advertising. It allowed us to observe the difference in emotions prompted when an advertising employs gendered and gender-neutral imagery. Once again, a 7-point Likert scale was used, which is similar to the scale Bhat, Leigh and Wardlow (1998) used in their study. Replicating Bhat, Leigh and

Wardlow (1998), the task was presented as "The ad left me feeling", followed by the list of emotional responses with anchors ranging from 1 to 7 (Not at all, Not very, Slightly, Somewhat, Moderately, Very and Extremely). To reduce bias, we have displayed the emotions in an alphabetical manner in the questionnaire, without any mention of 'approval', 'disapproval' or 'surprise'. Unlike brand association and brand personality, this measure was however not tested twice, since it cannot be tested in the pre-test phase.

Table 3.5 Attitude Towards Advertising Scale (Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998):

Disapproval								
Scornful	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Scornful**
Irritated	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Irritated**
Disgusted	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Disgusted**
Angry	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Angry**
Revolted	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Revolted**
Contemptuous	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Contemptuous**
Uneasy	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Uneasy**
Distrustful	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Distrustful**
Worried	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Worried**
Sceptical	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Sceptical**
Approval								
Excited	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Excited**
Wishful	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Wishful**
Envious	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Envious**
Interested	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Interested**
Stimulated	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Stimulated**
Loving	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Loving**
Happy	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Happy**
Involved	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Involved**
Curious	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Curious**
Surprise								
Astonished	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Astonished**
Surprised	Not at all	2	3	4	5	6	Very	**Surprised**

After capturing the respondent's attitude towards the ad, the questionnaire asked them to evaluate brand association with the exact same scale used in the pre-test stage, based on the advertisement they viewed. This was followed by a similar replication for brand personality, where they were asked to once again describe the personality traits based on the advertisement they watched.

The objective of this study entails us to ascertain the overall holistic impact gender neutral communication can have on consumer's perception about the brand. Hence, we believe it was important to unearth consumer's key brand judgement and feelings. Therefore, we checked the consumer's 'purchase intent' and 'likelihood to recommend' based on the communication to understand favourability of the brand image. Keller (2013, pp.344–345) argues that "purchase intentions are most likely to be predictive of actual purchase when there is correspondence between the two in the following dimensions: action, target, context, time". Frederick Reichheld of Bain & Company advocates that "a customer's willingness to recommend [a brand] results from all aspects of a customer's experience" (Keller, 2013, p.345). He devised the Net Promoter Score® (NPS) metric, that we have used to measure both purchase intent (how likely are you to purchase this brand in the future?) and likelihood to recommend (how likely are you to recommend this brand to your friends and family?). The NPS is a 11-point scale that allows respondents to select from 0 to 10.

We have conducted a pre-test and a pilot on a sample of subjects to ensure reliability of the questionnaire. The full questionnaire can be found in *Appendix B*.

3.3.5   Sampling Process & Sample Size

We conducted the study in Sweden and participants outside of Sweden were removed from the analysis. The target population of the study was 18- 34-year-old (Millennials) students and young professionals who are active on social media. We selected 500 people and randomly divided them equally into two groups (control and intervention groups). The control group were sent out the questionnaire with a gendered stimulus, whereas the intervention group were sent out the survey with a gender-neutral stimulus for the same brand. To conduct our experimental design study, a total of 500 respondents were randomly invited, out of which, we received 237 responses, generating a 47.4% response rate. Among these 237 responses, 130 respondents were exposed to a gendered communication (control group) and 107 were exposed to a gender-neutral communication (intervention group) respectively. Only the respondents who indicated awareness of the brand and fall within our defined age group, qualified to proceed with the questionnaire. In addition, some respondents failed to complete the full questionnaire. Screening out these unusable and partial responses, the final sample was 154, with 81 participants in the control group and 73 participants in the intervention group. We have administered sampling without replacement. Table 3.6 summarises the sampling design and procedures of this study.

Table 3.6 Sample Distribution

Target Population	Age: 18 – 34 years (Millennials)
	Location: Sweden
	Occupation: Student and young professionals
	Active in Social Media
Sampling Frame	List of members in Facebook Group "Lund University Students"
Sampling Technique	Non-probability convenience sampling
Sample Size	237 (154 accepted)
Sampling Execution	Online Self-Completion Survey

We have administered the survey on social media, using Facebook Messenger and Facebook Groups. Using the Facebook Group "Lund University Students", a list of members was generated, which served as the sampling frame of the study. In our pre-test – post-test randomised group design, the sample was randomly assigned in a group (control or intervention) using the sampling frame, as we randomly selected members from the Facebook Group and invited them to participate in the survey using Facebook Messenger.

This is a trait of non-probability convenience sampling as we have selected a sampling frame convenient to us, that itself cannot be generalised to the entire population of Millennials residing in Sweden (our defined population). Our rationale for selecting non-probability convenience sampling was two-fold. Firstly, the sampling frame or the population list for our study was not available to us, neither it was possible to reach them randomly, making it unfeasible for us to use the more desirable probability sampling techniques such as simple random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified sampling or cluster sampling. Secondly, unlike other non-probability sampling techniques (such as judgement sampling, quota sampling, purposive sampling or snowball sampling), convenience sampling enabled us to collect reasonably large amount of data within a very brief period of time, at a low cost (Burns & Burns, 2008).

We acknowledge that using this sampling technique, not all members of the population had an equal chance of being selected. Because the chance of selection is unknown, this technique suffers from the problem that the sample may not be representative of the population and, hence, cannot be generalised. However, we adopted several measures to improve the representativeness. We sprinkled convenience sampling with flavours of probability by using randomisation while selecting members from the Facebook Group, as well as while assigning these members to control and intervention groups. Although not every millennial in Sweden had a chance to be selected, at least everyone in the sampling frame was. However, the sampling frame remains an incorrect representation of the population. In addition, we have also imposed quotas in our convenience sampling, to improve the representativeness further by excluding age groups, which are not relevant for our study (below 18 and above 34). To further elude sampling errors, we have controlled "the pool from which the respondents" (Malhotra, 2010, p.360) were chosen, as we selected only students from a Swedish university.

Furthermore, we have also ensured that one respondent would not be able to respond more than once. The web-based survey application tool that we used (Qualtrics) facilitates this. By enabling 'Prevent Ballot Box Stuffing' option in the application settings, we restricted people from making multiple responses.

3.4 Data Collection Method

3.4.1 Experimental Stimuli Selection

The design of our experimental study necessitated us to conduct a literature search and identify brands from multiple industries, who have produced both traditional gender-stereotypical ads and gender-neutral ads, has high brand awareness and primarily target the Millennials. During our search, we decided to select a video communication and not a print (or pictorial) communication, because video evokes "stronger and more accurate emotional reaction than pictures" (Horvat, Kukolja & Ivanec, 2015). After an extensive literature search, we identified twenty audio-visual communication materials pertaining to ten brands, who have created both gendered and gender-neutral advertising. Table 3.7 shows this list of twenty advertising for ten brands, where one ad campaign exhibited gender-stereotyped communication and the other exhibited gender-neutral communication.

Table 3.7 Stimuli Search Results

Brand	Gender Neutral Communication	Gender Stereotyped Communication
Covergirl	So Lashy! BlastPRO Mascara by COVERGIRL featuring James Charles	Katy Perry: Longer Eyelashes with Full Lash Bloom Mascara
	Duration: 31 seconds	Duration: 31 seconds
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wS_wDhnxSmE)	*(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tymN92Os5hA)*
Maybelline	That Boss Life Pt. 1 ft. MannyMua and Makeupshayla	Maybelline The Falsies - "Push Up Drama" Mascara TV Commercial
	Duration: 54 seconds	Duration: 29 seconds
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfJD5i3yIdM)	*(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjhT6kE7XUE)*
Selfridges	Selfridges Agender commercial	Selfridges Love Thyself ad
	Duration: 3 minutes 33 seconds	Duration: 28 seconds
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmMdBhNFxVA)	*(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rqe5-pmK8z0)*

Chanel	CHANEL's Garbrielle Bag campaign starring Pharrell Williams	Train de Nuit - CHANEL N°5 with With Audrey Tautou and Travis Davenport
	Duration: 1 minute 29 seconds	Duration: 2 minutes 22 seconds
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EsrSVuY6Fto)	*(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f5r5PXBiwR0)*
Calvin Klein	ck2 commercial featuring Victoria Brito, Dakota	Reveal from Calvin Klein commercial featuring Doutzen Kroes and Charlie Hunnam
	Duration: 1 minute	Duration: 30 seconds
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQTDDeJCL1s)	*(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enzT6uBZgZO)*
Barbie	Moschino Barbie campaign	Barbie Fashionistas Glam And Sporty Dolls Commercial
	Duration: 30 seconds	Duration: 15 seconds
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TULVRlpsNWo)	*(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yH5IhJ3Zaag)*
Axe	Axe - Find Your Magic campaign	Axe Excite "Even Angels Will Fall" campaign
	Duration: 1 minute 1 second	Duration: 1 minute 31 seconds
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzTSE6kcLwY)	*(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q9w72ZqK18g)*
Coca-Cola	Pool Boy commercial from Coca Cola 'Taste the Feeling' campaign	Diet Coke 'Gardener' commercial
	Duration: 1 minute	Duration: 1 minute
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWBQP-bxfX0)	*(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJqkHL95JZs)*
Louis Vuitton	Louis Vuitton Presents Series 4: The Heroine by Bruce Weber featuring Jaden Smith	Loius Vuitton L'Invitation au Voyage commercial
	Duration: 1 minute	Duration: 2 minutes 2 seconds
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vmcAWiAw	*(Available on: https://vimeo.com/53361975)*

	WUE)	
Smyths Toys	Smyths Toys Superstores UK commercial "If I were a Toy"	Minnie Dress up Dolls commercial
	Duration: 40 seconds	Duration: 23 seconds
	(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8y7tUOuoqH0)	*(Available on: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQz3buxUbfI)*

3.4.2 Pre-test

Before the experiment began, we conducted a pre-test. The objective of the pre-test was twofold: to fine-tune the questionnaire and select appropriate stimuli. The pre-test involved face-to-face cognitive interviewing to understand the underlying thoughts of respondents regarding the questionnaire and the proposed stimuli. The respondent's opinions were collected for each question, including the clarity of the survey brief, wording of the questions, survey layout and flow and their overall perception of the questionnaire. The pre-test resulted in minor modifications in the questionnaire. For example, in the Brand Association Measurement scale the measurement item 'After using this brand, I am very likely to grow fond of it' was used, as adapted from Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995). However, respondents raised questions regarding the problem of answering for this attribute statement, if they never owned the brand. We discarded this item going forward in the pilot phase.

During pre-testing, we tested the 20 adverts of 10 brands who adopted gender-neutral elements in their communication and moved away from traditional gender stereotyped communication. The pre-test was done amongst 15 respondents. We gauged their awareness on the brands and tested if they perceived the ads as gendered or gender-neutral. Based on the results, we selected the communications of Axe and Cover Girl, as these two brands had a distinct change in marketing communication strategy from being gendered to gender-neutral. Moreover, these brands are primarily masculine and feminine brands respectively.

3.4.3 Pilot Study

After our stimuli selection, we conducted a pilot study to test the final version of the questionnaire among 15 respondents and tested the feasibility and quality of responses. It was crucial to conduct a pilot before the main study to ensure that no problems are encountered during the fieldwork. The pilot was conducted in the last week of April 2017, in a face-to-face setting, where we tested our questionnaire with 2 ads that we selected in the pre-test phase. The respondents were asked for their feedback after they completed the questionnaires using a set of pre-determined questions, including evaluative questions such as the respondent's opinions regarding the length and difficulty of the questions and their overall satisfaction. Based on their verbal response, they were probed further to extract insights into their entrenched thoughts and opinions regarding the questionnaire and the stimuli.

One of the major findings in the pilot phase was that the response time exceeded 20 minutes on average and respondents lost interest in the survey leading to poor quality responses. We have also received feedback that the questionnaire was deemed as too repetitive and at times difficult to focus with responses for 2 ads of two separate brands per questionnaire. Hence, we decided to move ahead with only one ad per questionnaire as stimulus for the main data collection phase. We selected two communications of Axe, since it had higher awareness amongst all gender group compared to Covergirl which was less familiar among male respondents.

The two advertisements of Axe – *Axe Excite* and *Axe Find Your Magic*, used in the study reflects a stark change in communication strategy for the brand. Axe is perceived as a masculine brand that portrays characteristics of an alpha male: attractive, strong, dominating, aggressive and confident. Axe Excite "Even Angels Will Fall" advertisement insinuates the theme of a macho man in their advertising. This advertisement thematises gender stereotyping by using symbolism of sex appeal, where women leave their identity, or in this case angels, to be with the a 'macho man'. This reflects the gender power relation in the advertisement where the women are submissive, whereas the man has dominance over the women. On the other hand, Axe "Find Your Magic" campaign is a reflection of neutrality and inclusiveness. The communication thematises acceptance and openness rather than the need to gain power over the other gender. The "Find Your Magic" advertisement has elements of homosexuality, cross-dressing, gender equality and men in non-traditional roles. This advertisement challenges the traditional gender roles in society and symbolises a fluid identity excluded from gender norms. Hence, these communications are accurate stimuli for this study to understand the true impact in the brand image. *Appendix C* contains some visual snapshots of both the communication stimuli used.

In general, the survey brief and information provided were also adequate, as the respondents found it easier to understand the questionnaire. The pilot phase ensured the internal reliability of the administered questionnaire.

3.4.4   Empirical Data Collection

To understand the effects of gender neutral communications on brand image and also the key changes in these perceptions pre-and post-exposure of stimuli, we have designed two online self-completion surveys, based on our questionnaire design. The survey method was structured data collection with fixed-alternative questions. Online self-completion survey was suitable for our study because the questionnaires were mainly closed-ended, with requiring only selection of different options in 7-point Likert scales. In addition, it was the fastest and the most economical way to garner a good amount of responses within a short period of time (Burns & Burns, 2008). We have targeted our sample by sending them invitational messages on social media. Also sometimes generalisability of findings might improve while using Internet surveys, because of its access to a wide range of sample (Burns & Burns, 2008). Furthermore, online surveys save time and effort in coding and collecting data and subsequently lowers the probability of errors while data transfer, processing and analysis. Respondent's data were electronically stored and directly imported into SPSS (the software package suite that we used for statistical analysis), reducing any potential errors. Conducting

pre-test and pilot allowed us to counteract any potential problems with online surveys. For example, average response time was reduced significantly from the pilot stage resulting in lower respondent fatigue and incomplete surveys.

Both surveys were similar, with only differing in the stimuli. The respondents were invited with a link that led to the survey website. Since no interviewer was present while administering the survey, there was no interviewer bias. This anonymity allowed respondents to respond with sufficient time at their disposal and without any social bias. Figure 3.6 depicts the data collection flow.
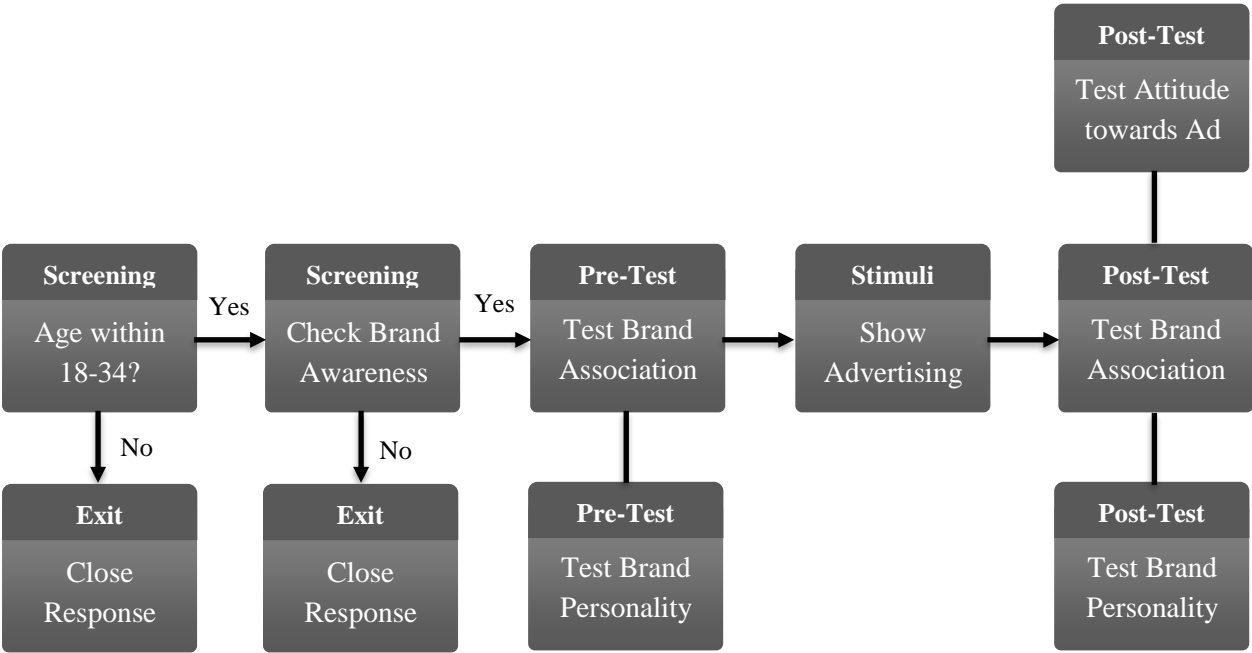

Figure 3.6 Data Collection Flow

The survey began with a compelling introduction that stated the purpose of the research to some extent. Although we clearly mentioned that the survey would evaluate the impact of an advertisement on a brand's image, there was no mention of core rationale or the nature of the ad (i.e., gender-neutral or gendered). This was intentionally done to reduce the respondent's bias towards the ad.

Before administering the stimuli, we captured their brand image from a list of pre-determined attributes in association and personality, and then subsequently exposed them to the stimuli. Post exposure we showed them the attribute statements again with an additional variable of attitude towards the advertising to check whether they approve, disapprove or was surprised by the communication from the brand. This helped us understand if the communication created a positive attitude towards the brand. The order of the brand association personality and attitude towards advertising scales were randomised to reduce bias in their responses.

The surveys were created using the web-based survey application by Qualtrics. The application platform allowed us to create aesthetically beautiful surveys that we could be

delivered across multiple touchpoints, with optimised UI for both desktop and mobile. The application allowed us to embed rich multimedia content, as we have shown two advertising videos. It also recorded the time taken by participants in responding to each question. The respondents were automatically screened on the basis of their age and brand awareness. They were only allowed to participate in the study if they were within the pre-defined age group we wanted to test (i.e., Millennials from 18-34) and familiar with Axe. Respondents were reminded that all questions were mandatory, in case they tried moving forward without eliciting all required responses. The surveys had the capability to incorporate automatic skip logic, display logic, consistency checks and other smart features. The surveys were distributed on May 05, 2017 and was closed after May 14, 2017.

3.5   Data Analysis

Once the survey responses were recorded, all the data were directly exported from our data collection application, Qualtrics, to our statistical data analysis application, IBM SPSS Statistics. SPSS enabled us to run different analysis on the data.

Based on our study design and methodology, we adopted the following tools for analysis, as shown in figure 3.7. The basic measures of central tendency e.g. mode, median and mean and variability e.g. range, variance, standard deviation were the building blocks of our analysis. This complemented the fundamental analytical method of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), both one-way and repeated measures, that was used in this study for rigorous data analysis.
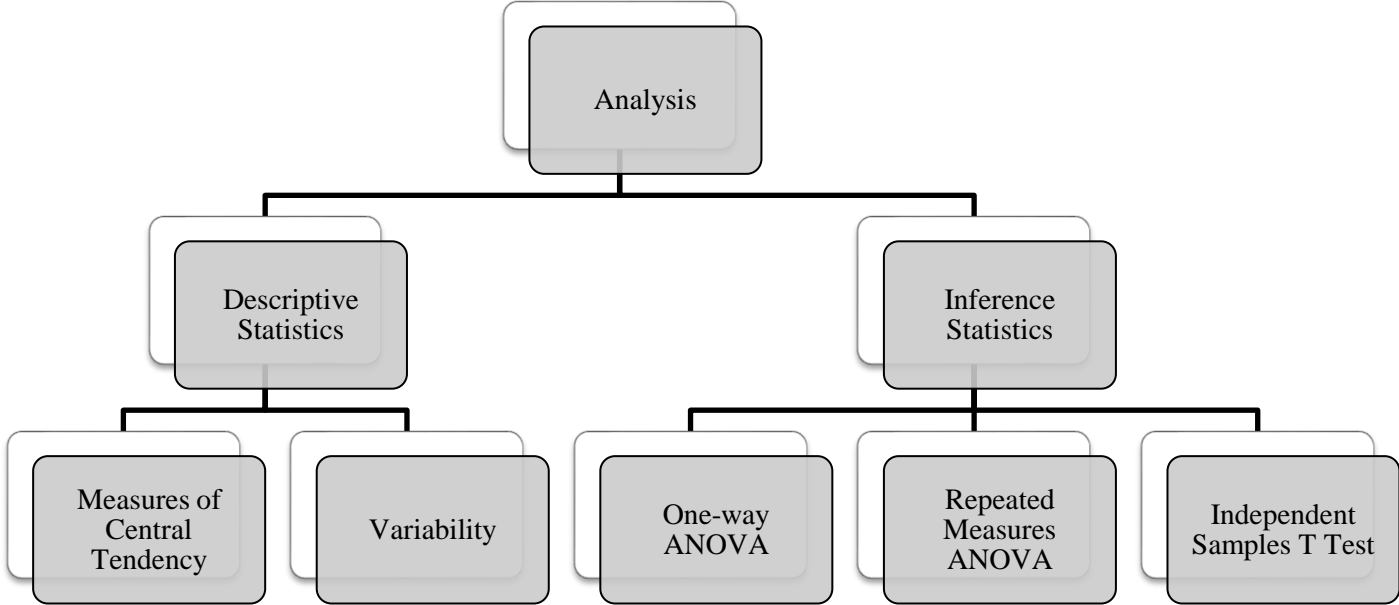

Figure 3.7 Data Analysis

We measured the mean differences for two groups - control group and intervention group for variables. One way ANOVA was used to analyse the experimental data from our causal design. This analytical tool enabled us to identify which of our (conditions or) levels of independent variable created significant mean differences on our dependent variable. Our objective of conducting one way ANOVA was to ascertain the probability that any difference in our dependent variable sample means for different levels of the grouping variable represents an actual difference in the population means. To understand the difference within the group in terms of pre-exposures vis-à-vis post exposure to advertising, we conducted repeated measures ANOVA on parameters of brand association, brand personality and brand image. We also conducted Independent Samples T Test to understand the variability between the group sample and also response towards advertising among the male and female respondents.
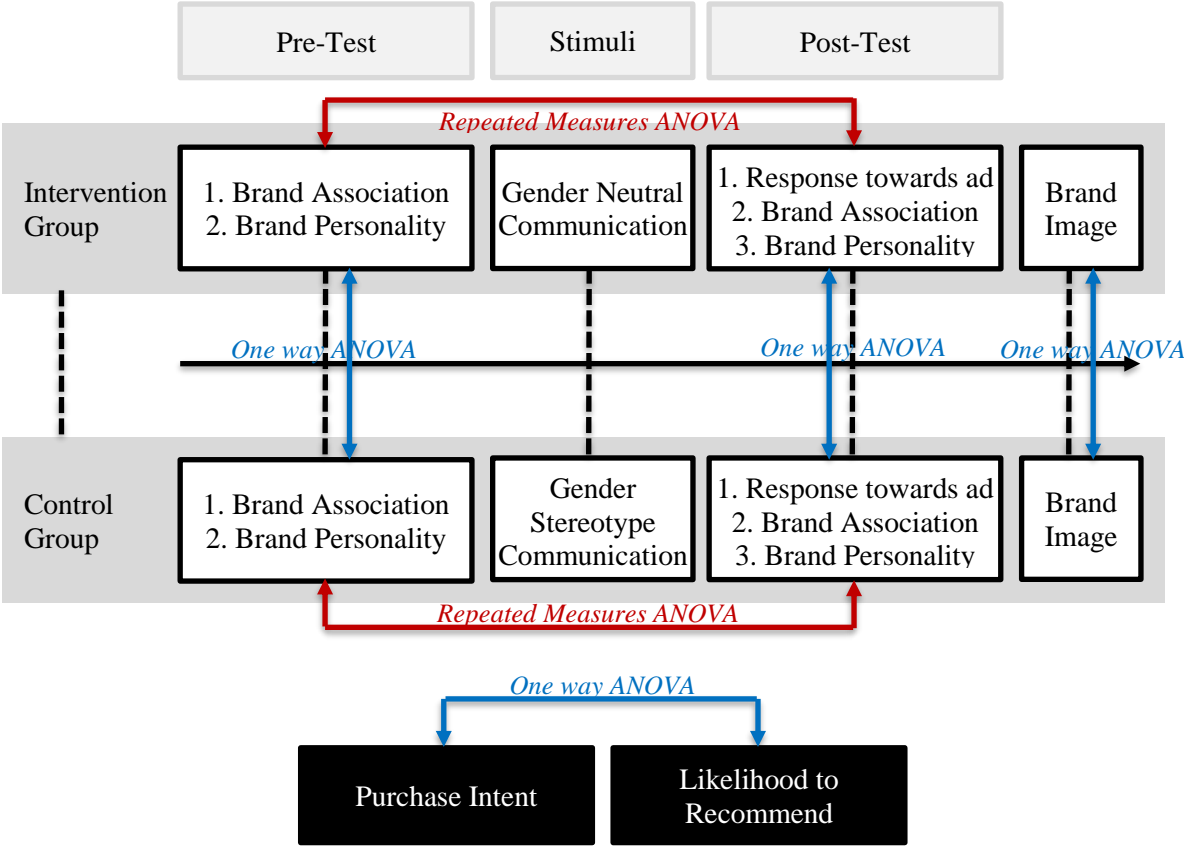

Figure 3.8 Choice of Analytical Method

3.6 Validity & Reliability

3.6.1 Experiment Evaluation

"Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of findings that enables [the] findings [of a study] to be replicated" (Burns & Burns, 2008, p.410). This study can be easily replicated in

parts, i.e. using only one of brand association or personality, or in whole. The scale items used in this study are in themselves a combined replication from previous discourses. However, because we have used a convenience sampling, the stability of the findings might be inconsistent.

Internal validity is the degree to which the condition in an experiment is controlled to ensure that the manipulation of the independent variables, and not any other external variables, has truly caused the observed effects on the dependent variable (Burns & Burns, 2008; Malhotra, 2010). If the experiment is influenced by any other outside factors, the inferences drawn about the causal relationship between the independent and test unit would be flawed, and hence, the experiment and its resulting conclusions would be fallacious (Malhotra, 2010). To ensure the internal validity of the experiment, we exerted some control to impede the influence of extraneous factors by introducing randomisation in sample selection from the sampling frame, while assigning respondents into experimental groups. This reduced our selection bias, hence, the age distribution of respondents in control and intervention groups were similar, eliminating any influence due to age. We have also used the communication stimuli of the same brand (Axe) in both control and intervention group to limit external influence. Furthermore, we did not disclose the objective of the study or the nature of the stimulus to the participants, which made sure that their perception about gender neutrality and their own gender identity did not exert any influence on their responses. Hence, our study demonstrated sound internal validity.

External validity is about whether the results of the experiment can be generalised to the entire population (Malhotra, 2010). External validity includes population and ecological validity (Burns & Burns, 2008). The findings from this study cannot be generalised with conviction beyond this experiment because of the control exerted in the experiment. Experimental studies suffer from privation of ecological validity because they do not reflect reality (Burns & Burns, 2008). In addition, the use of convenience sampling curbs the generalisability of any study, since the sample was not representative of the population, indicating lack of population validity. However, the treatment was not accompanied by any personal interaction, since it was conducted through online self-completion questionnaire, indicating some validity. Internal and external validity are, at times, inversely correlated. To ensure internal validity by controlling extraneous variables would lead to a simulated experiment, which is not a reflection of the population and hence would have poor external validity (Malhotra, 2010). Therefore, this study demonstrated poor external validity.

3.6.2   Scale Evaluation

In this study, we have used three scales: an adaptation of brand equity measurement scale developed by Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995), brand personality scale developed by Grohmann (2009) and emotional response scale constructed by Bhat, Leigh and Wardlow (1998). To ensure accuracy and applicability, these multi-scale items needs be assessed in terms of reliability, validity and generalisability (Malhotra, 2010).

Reliability is "the extent to which a scale produces consistent results if repeated measurements are made on the characteristic" (Malhotra, 2010, p.286). Random fluctuating

errors, that stems from arbitrary fluxes or differences in respondents or measurement situations, can affect the reliability of a scale. The most popular approach to measure reliability is the internal consistency reliability, where numerous items are summated to derive a total score (Malhotra, 2010). A coefficient or Cronbach's alpha (α) value of 0.7 or above indicates good internal consistency reliability (Burns & Burns, 2008). Table 3.8 lists the Cronbach's alpha values of different scale items of three scales used in this study. Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995) computed the coefficient alpha value of their scale, where all the scale items that we replicated in this study, exhibited good internal reliability. In the scale constructed by Grohmann (2009), the coefficient alpha of both *Male Brand Personality* and *Female Brand Personality* exceeded 0.89 across several studies, demonstrating good reliability. Similarly, the scale developed by Bhat, Leigh and Wardlow (1998) also have high reliability. Therefore, we can conclude that all the scale items used in this study have exhibited high internal reliability.

Table 3.8 Reliability of Scale items replicated in this study

Scale	Scale items replicated in this study	Coefficient/ Cronbach's alpha (α)
Brand Equity Measurement Scale by Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995)	Performance	0.75
	Image	0.77
	Trust	0.79
	Attachment/feeling	0.83
MBP/FBP Scale by Grohmann (2009)	Male Brand Personality	0.91, 0.89, 0.90, 0.91, 0.91
	Female Brand Personality	0.90, 0.90, 0.91, 0.93, 0.90
Emotional Response scale constructed by Bhat, Leigh and Wardlow (1998)	Approval	0.893
	Disapproval	0.933
	Surprise	0.836

The validity of a scale is "the extent to which differences in observed scale scores reflect true differences among objects on the characteristic being measured, rather than systematic or random errors" (Malhotra, 2010, p.288). A scale can be validated in terms of content, criterion and construct. Content validity is a subjective and methodical assessment that gauges how adequately the content of a scale represents the measuring task (Malhotra, 2010). On the other hand, construct validity is concerned about what construct the scale is measuring and encompasses convergent, discriminant and nomological validity. Discriminant validity evaluates the extent to which a measure is dissimilar from other similar constructs, whereas nomological validity assesses whether a measure correlate, as predicted by theory, with different associated constructs (Malhotra, 2010). Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995) exhibited good content and discriminant validity. Grohmann (2009) conducted a "series of studies [that] provided support for each scale's internal consistency, unidimensionality, content validity, predictive validity, discriminant validity, and nomological validity" (Bruner II, 2015, p.160). Table 3.9 lists the evidence of validity in these scales, identified by the respective scholars.

Table 3.9 Validity of scales replicated in this study

Scale	Type of Validity	Evidence of Validity exhibited
Brand equity measurement scale by Lassar, Mittal and Sharma (1995)	Content Validity	Measurement items and construct definitions were validated by three expert marketing professors, who used a content-based screening process by assigning items to a construct category that fits best and eliminating the rest.
	Discriminant Validity	The set of measurement items related to each theoretical scale construct was initially assessed by item-to-total correlations and exploratory factor analysis. Subsequently, the remaining set of items was subjected to confirmatory factor analysis to confirm discriminant validity. The overall model fit is satisfactory with a chi-square of 161.17 (df = 109; $p < 0.001$) and Bentler's comparative fit index (CFI) = 0.87.
Brand personality scale by Grohmann (2009)	Content Validity	Four consumer researcher rated the MBP and FBP items as a poor, fair, good, or very good representation of respective constructs. The experts removed items that were poor representation of its respective construct or introduced relevant items they felt were needed.
	Discriminant Validity	Two studies were undertaken to ascertain the validity of MBP and FBP with respect to masculinity and femininity as human personality traits and other brand personality dimensions. In the first study, three criteria (chi-square difference test, confidence intervals, comparison of AVE and squared correlations) were applied that revealed that the MBP/FBP scale is discriminant with regard to the BSRI. In a similar way, the second study revealed that the gender dimensions of brand personality are different from the ruggedness and sophistication dimensions of brand personality and can be administered to complement Aaker's (1997) five dimensions.
	Nomological Validity	Three separate studies were conducted to establish the nomological validity of the scale.

3.7 Limitations

3.7.1 Data Collection

An interviewer-administered face-to-face survey would have been more accurate and garnered better responses compared to the online self-completion survey we have used. In addition, in our pilot we already observed 'respondent fatigue' because they became tired due to repetitive questions with several choice options (7-point scale). Although this lessened during the main study, but then we noticed some respondents left the survey without completing the whole questionnaire. There could also be timing bias, with certain people might not be available during the data collection period. One of the fundamental drawbacks of using Internet sampling is lack of representativeness because only active social media users would have a higher chance of being selected (Malhotra, 2010).

3.7.2 Generalisability

One of the major pitfalls with surveys administered on the Internet is that the population is unknown. The sample also excludes the population that are not frequent users of social media. Internet-based surveys, therefore, raises the question of generalisability of the data. Online self-completion surveys insinuate the use of non-probability sampling techniques. Sampling frames of online population of Millennials in Sweden are mostly unavailable. To elicit a good amount of responses within temporal limitations, steered us towards using convenience sampling. This weakens our statistical inferences about the general population.

3.7.3 Sampling Error

Malhotra (2010) states that there is always a chance that the sample selected does not properly represent the population of interest. Hence, there is always a probability of random sampling error, which is the difference between the true mean value of the sample and the true mean value of the population. We have attempted to reduce the possibility of this error by garnering a large sample in a structured way.

3.7.4 Non-Sampling Error

"Errors in problem definition, approach, scales, questionnaire design, interviewing methods, and data preparation and analysis" results in non-sampling errors (Malhotra, 2010, p.85). There were non-response errors, which transpired because of those members who were invited but did not respond, which resulted in a different sample size from initial anticipation. There could also be other errors such as sampling frame error (the difference between the population defined and sampling frame is substantial), respondent selection error (there can be members who does not live in Sweden), recording error (some respondents complained that their interface froze resulting in incomplete response), inability error (some respondents

might not be capable to answer the questionnaire properly), unwillingness error and so on. We have, however, taken many steps to prevent these sort of errors, as previously discussed. For example, to reduce respondent selection error, we have discarded responses of those who live outside Sweden.

3.7.5 Type I and Type II Error

Burns and Burns (2008) states that the probability of a type I error, which means that a null hypothesis is rejected despite being true, is equivalent to the significance (alpha) level. On the contrary, the probability of a type II error, which means that a false null hypothesis is accepted, is equivalent to beta. They are inversely related, and hence, there is always a possibility that there would be type I and type II errors. In our analysis, we assume a significance level of 95%, meaning there is still a 5% chance type I error might occur.

3.7.6 Budgetary and Temporal Constraints

One of the major constraint underlying this study is time. A study of this magnitude demands more time. Unfortunately, this temporal constraint impacted the quality of the study in terms of stimuli selection, data collection, sampling technique, sample size, data analysis technique and some other areas. Similarly, budgetary constraints restricted us from designing a perfect research study with high external and internal validity. However, we have tried to ensure reliability and validity of our study within these constraints, with relatively good sample size, high-quality questionnaire, robust data analysis techniques and stimuli selection.

4 Analysis and Discussion

This chapter describe the results and outlines the key findings of the study through analysis and discussion. First, we present the overview of data collected that illustrates the result, analysis and discussion within the control and intervention group. Followed by the analysis of the control and intervention group, the hypothesis formulated in Chapter 2 is tested to answer the research questions. The chapter concludes by discussing the key findings in relation to the review of previous literature.

4.1 Overview of Data Collected

We tested five components in the questionnaire to check the impact of gender neutral communication on the brand and they were brand association, brand personality, consumer reaction to advertising, intention to purchase and brand recommendation. To analyse the impact of communication on brand image within the group, we ran *One-way Repeated Measures ANOVA* on brand association and brand personality to identify any significant change in the respondents' perception. In addition, we also ran *Independent Samples T-Test* to see if there were any differences in how male and female respondents reacted to the advertising.

4.1.1 Control Group

Results and Discussion

In the control group, respondents were exposed to the gender-stereotyped communication of Axe. Total 133 respondents from Sweden participated in the study amongst which 114 respondents completed the questionnaire. From these 114 respondents, 27 respondents did not meet the age quota of 18-34 years and 6 respondents were unaware of the brand, hence, data from 81 respondents were used for final data analysis. Out of these 81 respondents, 33.33% were female and 66.67% were male, who were concentrated in the age group 23 – 34 years. See figure 4.1 for age distribution of respondents.

We have only considered respondents who were aware of the brand and Axe had 54% awareness in the Top 2 box (extremely familiar + very familiar). The respondents proceeded to the main questionnaire after they met the quota criteria of age, country of residence and brand awareness.
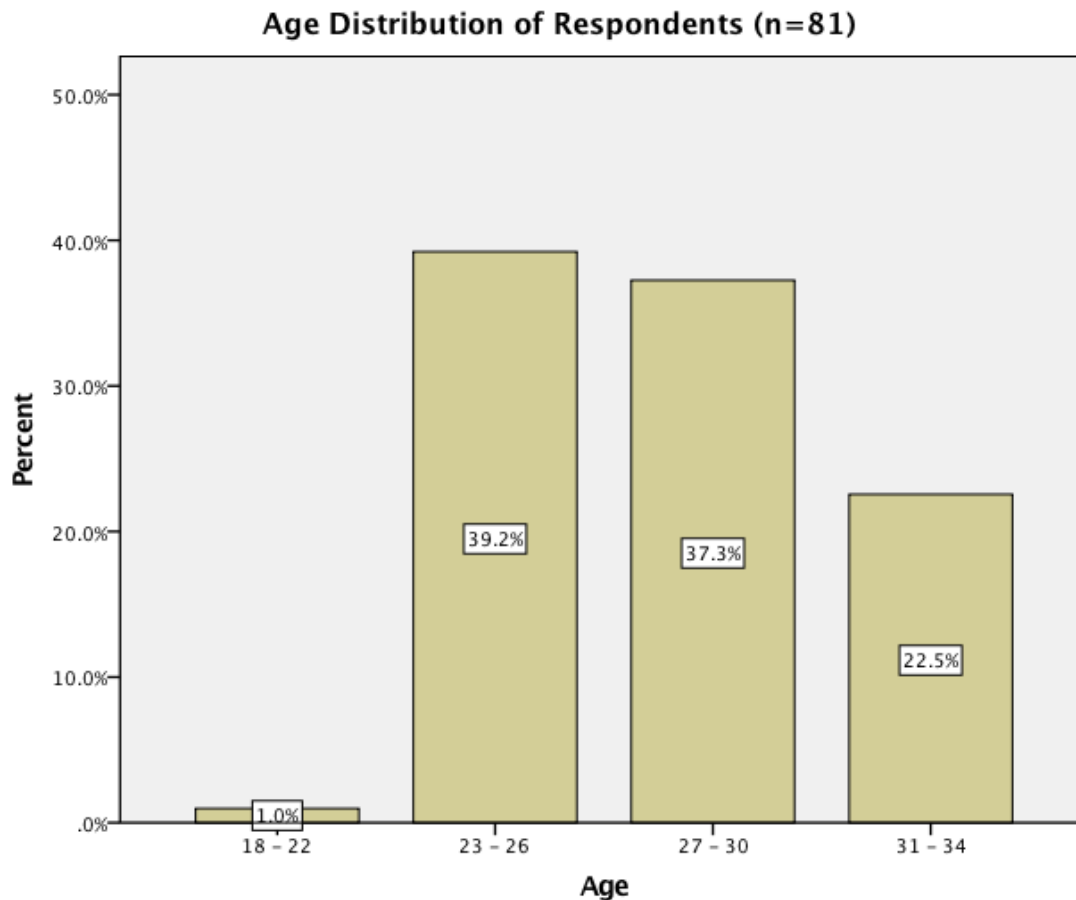
Age Distribution of Respondents (n=81)

Figure 4.1 Age Distribution of Respondents from Control Group

Brand Association

For brand association, the variance ratio was 1.39 which is less than 3, hence the homogeneity of variance assumption has not been violated. A *one-way repeated measures ANOVA* showed a significant change in brand association for the two occasion of testing. (F (1,1) = 17.943, *p* < 0.05, partial ETA^2 is .183 and observed power .987). *Post hoc paired t test* between pre-exposure to advertisement and post-exposure to advertisement suggested there were significant difference in brand association (*p*=.000). Before exposure to the advertisement, the mean score was 52.27 and after the advertisement it was 47.72 which indicates a decrease in the brand association rating. This fall was due to the decrease in scores in social image and attachment with the brand.

This result contradicts with the seminal work of Lieven et al., (2014), whose study found that brands with clear brand gendering are easy to be categorised leading to clear brand association. However, our results indicate that advertisements using gender stereotyped elements decreased the association especially in terms of social image. Analogous to the concept of congruence and gender identity (Alreck, 1994; Fugate & Phillips, 2010), the results point to egalitarian respondents who has negative association towards gender stereotyping.

Brand Personality

For brand personality, the variance ratio was 1.73 which is less than 3, hence the homogeneity of variance assumption has not been violated. A *one-way repeated measures ANOVA* showed no significant change in brand personality for the two occasions of testing. (F (1,1) =1.087, *p* = 0.300, partial ETA^2 is .013 and observed power .178). Before exposure to the advertisement, the mean was 42.98 and after the advertisement it was 42.12. *Post hoc paired t test* between pre-exposure to advertisement and post-exposure to advertisement suggested there was no significant differences in brand personality (*p* = .300).

An overall brand personality does not indicate gender association, hence we split the brand personality scale into male brand personality and female brand personality, as used by Grohmann (2009), to understand which gender personality scale group had significant impact. *A one-way repeated measures ANOVA* showed significant change in male brand personality (F (1,1) = 4.845, *p* = 0.031, partial ETA^2 is .057 and observed power .585) but no change in female brand personality (F (1,1) = .682, *p* = 0.411, ETA^2 is .008 and observed power .129). Before exposure to the advertisement, the mean for male brand personality was 28.06 and after the advertisement it was 26.70. Pre-exposure to the advertisement, the mean for female brand personality was 14.92 and after the advertisement it was 15.41. *Post hoc paired t test* between pre-exposure and post-exposure to advertisement suggested there was significant differences in brand personality in male (*p*=.031) but not in female (*p*=.411).

Axe is perceived predominantly as a masculine brand with very low association to female brand personality characteristics. However, post advertisement exposure led to a decrease in male brand personality characteristics especially in items like dominating, aggressive and daring. The advertisement used gender stereotype theme of sex appeal (Hatzithomas, Boutsouki & Ziamou, 2016) and the decrease in male brand personality may be implicated to how male and female process information. As Fournier (1998) and Grohmann (2009) suggests that consumers use gender personality traits to augment their own gender identity, female respondents found less relevance with the masculine brand. Moreover, since we tested the study amongst the millennials, whom we have established through our literature review as a group who are reframing gender norms, gender stereotyping loses relevance with this target group.

Consumer Attitude to Advertising

To understand consumer reaction, we combined the statements used in the questionnaire into three groups: Disapproval, Approval and Surprised. The mean scores for Disapproval ($\overline{x}$ = 26.64, s =0.53), Approval ($\overline{x}$ = 27.82, s =11.87) and Surprised ($\overline{x}$ = 2.8, s =1.33) indicate that the advertisement garnered mixed reaction amongst the respondents. *An independent-samples t test* was conducted to check if male and female differ significantly in their reaction towards the advertisement. Because the variances for the two groups were significantly unequal for disapproval (F = 4.227, *p* = .043), approval (F = 4.238, *p* = .043) and equal for surprised (F = 1.748, *p* = .190) in the *Levene's Test for Equality*, the output line for equal variances not assumed was used for disapproval and approval scale items. The mean *disapproval score* of male ($\overline{x}$ = 25.64, s =9.05) was not statistically significantly different (*t* = -.970, df = 54.825, two-tailed *p* = .336) from that of female ($\overline{x}$ = 28.09, s =12.38). The mean *approval score* of male ($\overline{x}$ = 30.94, s =12.18) was statistically significantly different (*t* = 3.09, df = 76.62, two-

tailed $p = .003$) from that of female ($\bar{x} = 23.30$, s $= 9.93$). The mean *surprised score* of male ($\bar{x} = 2.81$, s $= 1.4$) was not statistically significantly different ($t = .081$, df $= 79$, two-tailed $p = .936$) from that of female ($\bar{x} = 2.78$, s $= 1.19$).

At an overall level, there was mixed reaction to the advertisement with half the respondents approved of the advertisement while the other half disapproved it. In terms of group difference in reaction, there was a significant difference in the approval score as more male approved of the advertisement than female respondents. This is supported by gender role theory (LaMar & Kite, 1998), which suggests that men support traditional gender stereotyping. However, the interesting finding is the proportion of respondents disapproving the gender stereotyped advertisement. Traditionally, advertisers have created content to maintain congruency as that garners more positive attitude towards the brand (Angelini & Bradley, 2010; Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998; Till & Priluck, 2001). Gender stereotyping elicits more approval since it is congruent with gender roles in society, however the findings suggest otherwise as the stereotyped communication had higher disapproval in a group where more than 60% of the sample was male.

Intention to Purchase and Brand Recommendation

Intention to purchase for Axe was low as the central tendency scores ($\bar{x} = 3.77$, Median $= 3.00$ and Mode $= 0$) show that in a 10-point scale respondents opted for not intending to purchase the brand. Net Promoter Score (NPS) rating for brand recommendation were calculated to gauge the loyalty and feelings towards the brand. Brand recommendation shows 79% detractors, 14.8% passives and only 6.2% promoters.

At an overall level, the results indicate mixed reaction for the gender stereotyped ad with the female respondents disapproving the ad, which led to the decrease in brand association and brand personality. Intention to purchase and brand recommendation scores suggest that the respondents does not have strong brand feeling towards Axe. The findings within the control group points towards a changing consumer frame of gender roles in society. The decrease in brand association and negative reaction to the communication contradicts with previous studies (Lieven et al., 2014, 2015; Till & Priluck, 2001) which implicates that strong gender segmentation leads to clear brand association resulting in high brand equity.

4.1.2   Intervention Group

Results and Discussion

In the intervention group, respondents were exposed to the gender-neutral communication of Axe. Total 107 respondents from Sweden participated in the study amongst which 89 respondents completed the questionnaire. From these 89 respondents, 11 respondents did not meet the age quota of 18-34 years and 5 respondents were unaware of the brand Axe, hence, data from 73 respondents were used for final data analysis. Out of these 73 respondents, 61% were female and 39% were male, who were concentrated in the age group 23 − 30 years.
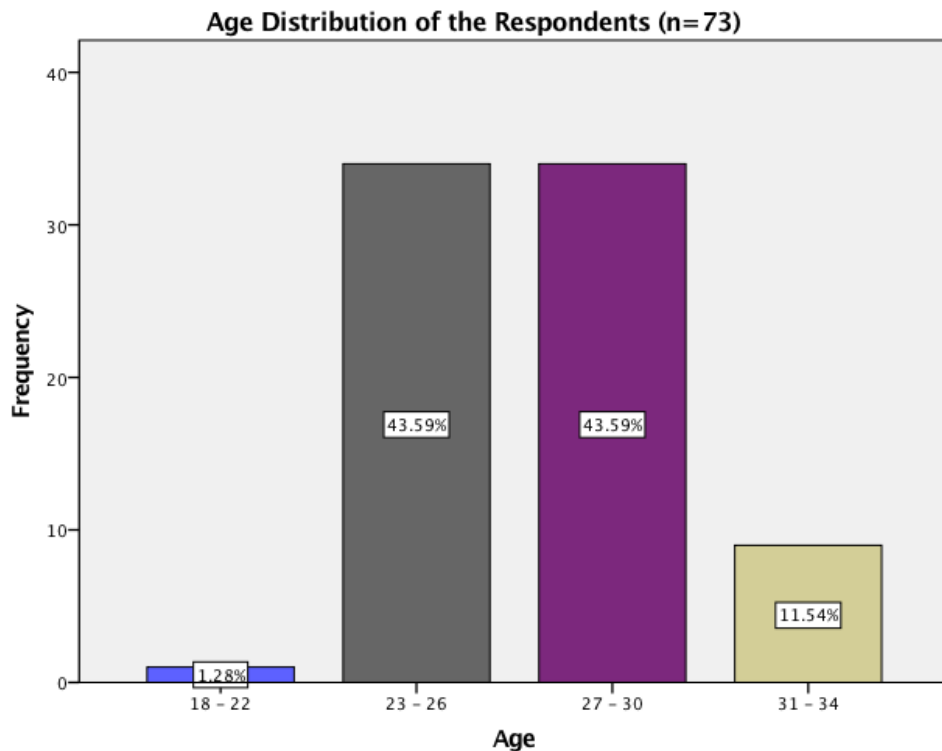
Figure 4.2 Age Distribution of Respondents from Intervention Group

We have only considered respondents who are aware of the brand and Axe has 60% awareness in the Top 2 box. The respondents proceeded to the main questionnaire after they met the quota criteria of age, country of residence and brand awareness.

Brand Association

For brand association, the variance ratio was 1.37 which is less than 3, hence the homogeneity of variance assumption has not been violated. A *one-way repeated measures ANOVA* did not show a significant change in brand association for the two occasions of testing. (F (1,1) =.896, p = .347, partial ETA^2 is .012 and observed power .154). Before exposure to the advertisement, the mean was 51.4 and post exposure it was 52.54 which indicates insignificant increase in brand association. *Post hoc paired t test* between pre-exposure and post-exposure to advertisement suggested there was no significant difference in brand association (p=.347).

Based on previous studies on brand association (Alreck, 1994; Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998; Levy & Rook, 1999; Lieven et al., 2014; Till & Priluck, 2001), the results contradict the finding since exposure to gender neutral communication is supposed to lower the overall brand association score. Studies conducted by Lieven et al. (2014) and Till and Priluck (2001) concluded that neutral elements in advertising are difficult to categorise which creates confused positioning and therefore low brand association. However, the results from our study suggest that there was no difference in the brand association pre-and post-exposure to the advertisement. The gender-neutral advertisement contains elements of homosexuality and

non-traditional roles portrayed by men and yet there was no significant difference in the way respondents perceived the brand.

Brand Personality

For brand personality, the variance ratio was 1.28 which is less than 3, hence the homogeneity of variance assumption has not been violated. A *one-way repeated measures ANOVA* showed a significant change in brand personality for the two occasions of testing. ($F_{(1,1)} = 20.325$, $p = 0.00$, partial ETA^2 is .220 and observed power .994). Before exposure to the advertisement, the mean was 41.1 and post exposure it was 45.89. *Post hoc paired t test* between pre-exposure and post-exposure to advertisement suggested there was significant difference in brand personality.

We split the brand personality scale into male brand personality and female brand personality, as used by Grohmann (2009), to understand which item had significant change in the study. A *one-way repeated measures ANOVA* showed a significant change in both male and female brand personality ($F_{(3,1.805)} = 75.252$, $p = 0.00$, ETA^2 is .511 and observed power 1.00). Pre-exposure to the advertisement, the mean for male brand personality was 26.04 and post exposure it was 28.06. The mean score for female brand personality was 15.06 before the advertisement and after it was 17.82. *Post hoc paired t test* between pre-exposure and post-exposure to advertisement suggested there were significant differences in brand personality in both male ($p=.001$) and female ($p=.000$) brand personality as well. This implies that respondents perceived the advertisement to have both masculine and feminine elements that was not associated with the brand previously.

Gender has been a foundation for creating marketing strategy and segmentation (Avery, 2012) and it helps marketers profile groups based on similarities and differences (Gavett, 2014; Kotler & Keller, 2012). This means the verbal and non-verbal cues used in advertising are predefined beliefs and values of masculinity or femininity, symbolically imbued in the communication to humanise the brand (Aaker, 1997; Alreck, 1994; Avery, 2012; Goffman, 1987). The 'Axe Find Your Magic' advertisement rejected social norms and communicated fluidity of self-expression leading to a message that does not confine the brand into gender stereotyped personality. Hence, it elicited elements of both masculine and feminine characteristics post exposure to the advertisement, which was significantly different in the pre-exposure stage when Axe was perceived as a strong masculine brand.

Consumer Attitude to Advertising

To understand consumer reaction, we combined the statements used in the questionnaire into three groups: Disapproval, Approval and Surprised. The mean scores for Disapproval ($\bar{x} = 22.71$, s =11.51), Approval ($\bar{x} = 31.38$, s =11.60) and Surprised ($\bar{x} = 2.98$, s =1.51) indicate that the advertisement had positive reaction from the respondents. An *independent-samples t test* was conducted to check if male and female respondents differ significantly in their reaction towards the advertisement that is outside their frame of reference. The output line for equal variances assumed was used in the *independent samples t test* because in *Levene's Test for Equality* the variances for the two groups were significantly equal for disapproval ($F = 2.140$, $p = .148$), approval ($F = 1.915$, $p = .171$) and surprised ($F = 0.004$, $p = .948$). The mean *disapproval score* of male ($\bar{x} = 21.75$, s =9.84) was not statistically significantly different ($t = -.572$, df = 71, two-tailed $p = .569$) from that of female ($\bar{x} = 23.34$, s =12.57). The mean

approval score of male (x̄ = 29.79, s =12.55) was not statistically significantly different (*t* = -.950, df = 71, two-tailed *p* = .345) from that of female (x̄ = 32.43, s =10.95). The mean *surprised score* of male (x̄ = 2.72, s =1.5) was not statistically significantly different (*t* = -1.205, df = 71, two-tailed *p* = .232) from that of female (x̄ = 3.15, s =1.5).

The gender-neutral advertisement received positive reaction from both male and female respondents. This implies more openness towards communications that challenge traditional gender beliefs and values. This finding contradicts with previous studies (Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998; Lieven et al., 2015; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Till & Priluck, 2001; Um, 2014), which shows gender segmentation and gender stereotyping leads to positive brand attitude, especially for male who prefer stereotyped communication that boosts their idea of masculinity. This shows that gender stereotyping does not necessarily lead to positive attitude.

Intention to Purchase and Brand Recommendation

Intention to purchase for Axe was low as the central tendency scores (x̄ = 4.05, Median = 5.00 and Mode = 0 and 5) show that in a 10-point scale respondents opted for not intending to purchase the brand. Net Promoter Score (NPS) ratings for brand recommendation were calculated to gauge the loyalty and feelings towards the brand. Brand recommendation shows 72.6% detractors, 21.9% passives and only 5.5% promoters. Even though the reaction to the advertisement was positive, this did not translate to purchase intention and recommendation for the brand. This may be due to the pre-conceived feeling towards the brand as it takes time to develop brand loyalty.

The results within the group demonstrates the positive impact of gender neutral communication on the brand. There is no change in brand association but there is noteworthy change in the brand gender perception. Axe has typically always been associated as a strong masculine brand and their previous communications are considered heavily gender stereotyped. However, this advertisement has taken a drastically different communication route. The increase in both male brand personality items and female brand personality items, along with the positive reaction to the advertisements, shows the society embracing themes of inclusiveness and neutrality in communication.

4.2   Hypothesis Testing

We conducted One-way ANOVA to test if there was significant difference between the groups in terms of brand image, brand association, consumer reaction towards the advertisement and brand personality. Before investigating the impact of the communication, we did an Independent Samples T Test to check if the groups were different or similar in characteristics. Less variability amongst the groups is ideal as it would ensure that the accuracy of results is improved, increased validity of the response and less biasness. The *Independent Samples T Test* revealed that there was no significant difference between the groups (*t* = .877, df = 152, two-tailed *p* = .382) and assumes normality of distribution in the sample. The effect size (*d* = 0.14) implies low effect and difference between the groups.

4.2.1   Hypothesis 1: Brand Image

Hypothesis 1

H₀: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand does not have any effect on the brand image*

H₁: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand impact the brand image*

We defined the brand image variable as encompassing brand association and brand personality. We tested brand image in the pre-exposure and post-exposure to advertisement in both the control and intervention groups. Before exposure to the advertisement, there was no significant effect on the overall brand image between gender stereotyped and gender neutral communication (F (1, 152) = .769, p = .382). The sample groups had similar perception about the brand which means low variability between the groups. There was significant difference on the overall brand image between gender stereotyped and gender neutral communication (F (1,152) = 4.680, p = .032) post exposure to the advertisement. Further, Cohen's effect size value (d=0.584) suggested moderate practical significance. The mean score differences in brand image between the groups in the pre-stage (M$_{Control}$ = 95.25, M$_{Intervention}$ = 92.52) and the post-stage (M$_{Control}$ = 89.85, M$_{Intervention}$ = 98.43) indicate higher positive effect on brand image in the intervention group compared to the control group. Post Hoc tests could not be performed since there were fewer than three groups. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis, and accept the alternative hypothesis H₁.

> ***We reject the null hypothesis that gender stereotyped communication and gender neutral communication from the same brand does not have any impact on the brand image.***
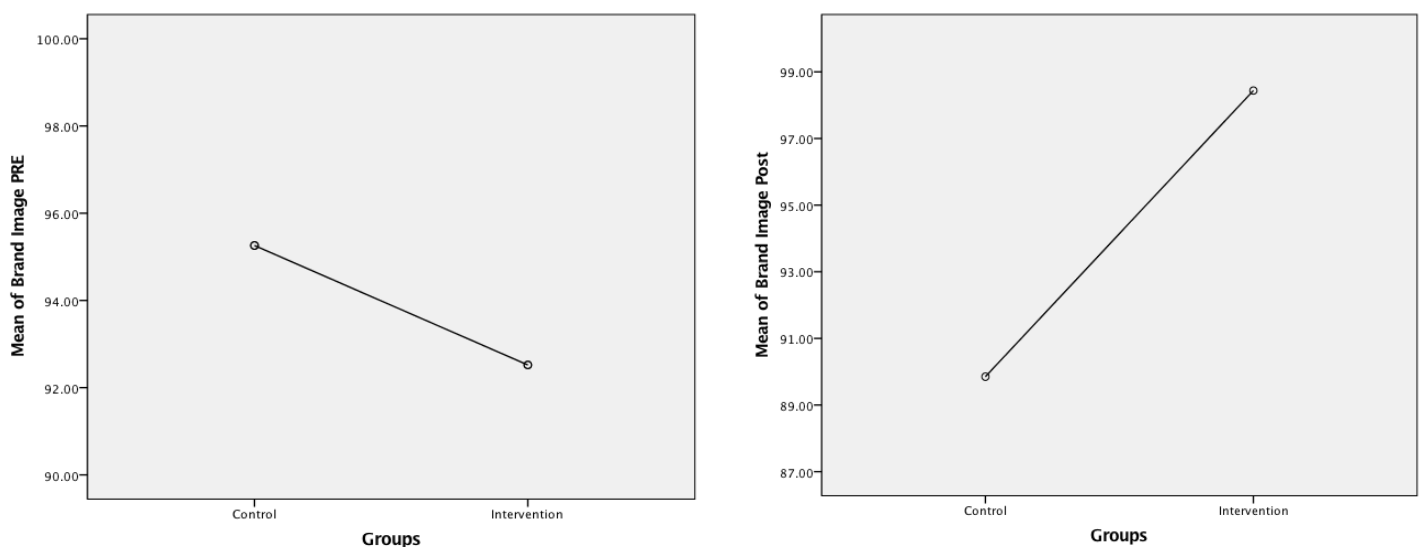

Figure 4.3 Mean Plots for Brand Image: Pre- and Post

Our findings challenge decades of research (e.g. Aaker, 1997; Goffman, 1987; Grohmann, 2009; Lieven et al., 2014) that substantiated a positive correlation between gender and brand image. These studies have empirically proved that gender stereotyping leads to positive brand image as the association is clear and brands are seen as an extension of self-concept through personification. Advertising is the building block of brand image as it is a magnified reflection and expression of values (Dichter, 1985; Meenaghan, 1995). Advertising gives a brand visual identity and creates personality by infusing human like characteristics through story telling (Frazer, 1983; Johar & Sirgy, 1991; Meenaghan, 1995). This means a brand enjoys strong brand image which is congruent with self-expression. In the past, this meant a brand with a strong image was defined by the set beliefs of gender in society, and any deviation from it had the risk of negative attitude from the consumers. However, our results show that amongst the millennials, an advertisement that defies gender rules can have stronger brand image than gender stereotyped advertising. This supports our findings on millennial's changing mind-set on how they define gender and how it is not a dichotomy anymore but rather a spectrum.

4.2.2 Hypothesis 2: Consumer Reaction to Advertisement

<div align="center">Hypothesis 2</div>

H₀: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand does not have any effect on the consumer's attitude towards the communication*

H₂: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand impact the consumer's attitude towards the communication*

The consumer reaction to advertisement variable is divided into three reaction items: approval, disapproval and surprise as used in the scale by Bhat, Leigh and Wardlow (1998). To calculate the overall consumer reaction, we recoded the values of Disapproval scale items from 7 to 1 meaning 7 is 'not at all' and 1 being 'very'. For example, in rating of scornful item in the scale, 1 would indicate very scornful and 7 would indicate not at all scornful. Therefore, a higher mean score for disapproval means low disapproval towards the advertisement.

Consumer reaction to advertising shows there was a significant effect on the overall consumer reaction between gender stereotyped and gender neutral communication ($F_{(1,152)} = 6.697$, $p = .011$). Cohen's effect size ($d = 0.41$) implies moderate effect size. These data show that the respondent reaction towards gender-neutral communication increased since there was an increase in the mean score ($M_{Control} = 81.18$, $M_{Intervention} = 88.67$). Post Hoc tests could not be performed since there were fewer than three groups.

We further investigated to see if this difference in reaction to communication is positive or negative. Disapproval scale suggested that there was significant difference between the groups ($F_{(1,152)} = 4.890$, $p = .029$). The results indicate that disapproval rating in the gender-neutral communication decreased ($M_{Control} = 53.35$, $M_{Intervention} = 57.2$), which means the respondents reacted more positively towards the gender-neutral communication than the

gender stereotyped communication. Approval scale suggested that there was no significant difference between the groups (F (1,152) = 3.51, p = .063). However, the results indicate that approval rating in the intervention is higher ($M_{Control}$ = 27.82, $M_{Intervention}$ = 31.38). Respondents were not surprised by either communication as the result suggests that there was no significant difference between the groups (F (1,152) = .641, p = .425). Overall findings indicate that there is a significance difference in terms of reaction between the groups and the neutral communication elicited more positive response than the stereotyped communication. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis H_2.

> *We reject the null hypothesis that gender stereotyped communication and gender neutral communication from the same brand does not have any impact on the consumer's attitude towards the communication.*

This is an interesting finding as previous researches on non-traditional advertising, that challenges gender stereotyping, established that consumers have negative reaction leading to disapproval of the brand (Angelini & Bradley, 2010; Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998; Borgerson et al., 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Um, 2014). Our reaction to an advertisement can be explained by the social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which describes the idea of social group affiliation and how we react to ideas, individuals outside our social group or outgroups (Angelini & Bradley, 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Hence, communication whose content is designed within the beliefs and values of the social group is perceived positively and any deviation from it causes disapproval. However, our result indicates there is a significant decrease in disapproval in gender neutral communication compared to gender stereotyped communication leading to a more positive attitude towards the brand. This could be explained by Um's (2014) study which concludes that consumers with high tolerance has more positive attitude towards the ad. The millennials are dubbed as more open and disregard gender as an expression of identity, hence they were more positive towards the gender-neutral advertisement compared to the gender stereotyped one, resulting in a positive brand image.

The positive reaction of the consumers also points towards the decreasing acceptance of gender stereotyping. The stereotyped Axe communication was laced with sexual themes and portrayed the women as submissive characters whereas male as a dominating and authoritative figure (Hatzithomas, Boutsouki & Ziamou, 2016), which in the past made this hugely successful, but in the present this same communication garnered disapproval among the target group of Axe. This shows how the value system is changing rapidly leading to higher tolerance towards issues outside the frame of reference of individuals, eventually resulting in more positive attitude towards the brand.

4.2.3   Hypothesis 3: Brand Association

<table>
<tr><td>Hypothesis 3</td></tr>
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H$_0$: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand does not have any effect on the brand associations*

H$_3$: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand impact brand associations*

In the brand association variable, we tested the perception of Axe in terms of performance, social image, attachment and trustworthiness. There was no significant effect on the brand association pre-exposure between gender stereotyped and gender neutral communication (F $(1,152) = .175$, $p = .676$) and the effect size is $d = 0.06$. This indicates less variability in brand association which implies that the respondents had similar association about the brand. Post Hoc tests could not be performed since there were fewer than three groups.

There was significant effect on the brand association post exposure between gender stereotyped and gender neutral communication (F $(1,153) = 3.990$, $p = .048$) and the effect size is $d = .323$. The findings suggest that mean score in the control group decreased (M$_{pre}$= 52.27, M$_{post}$ = 47.72) from pre to post exposure within the group but increased in the intervention group (M$_{pre}$= 51.41, M$_{post}$ = 52.55), especially in social image and attachment variable. This implies that brand association decreased in the control group after exposure to the communication, compared to the intervention group, which indicates that consumers are less willing to associate themselves with brands that objectifies women. Hence, we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis H$_3$.

> *We reject the null hypothesis that gender stereotyped communication and gender neutral communication from the same brand does not have any impact on the brand associations.*

Attributes associated with a brand is a major determinant of the brand image and hence building strong, favourable and unique associations is imperative to building a strong brand image (Keller, 1993, 2013; Kotler & Keller, 2012). A strong brand association is a point of differentiation for a brand and a pre-cursor to high brand equity, which is built by creating offering that is relevant to the consumer's functional and emotional needs. Hence, advertising is a medium that defines how a brand wants to associated by its target segment (Gustafsson, 2005). Congruency to self-identity and brand association are correlated as strong brand association is not only built by the message the brand communicates, but also how relevant it is with the social group, experience and knowledge of the target segment. Our results show that gender neutral communication can also elicit clear association especially in attribute groups of social image and attachment. Before exposure to the advertisement, both groups had similar association about the brand. However, post-exposure in the intervention group brand association related to social image and attachment increased. This reflects that respondents could relate more to the message of the gender-neutral communication of Axe

rather than the gender stereotyped communication. Moreover, the Axe 'Find Your Magic' campaign is very different and unique from the brand's past communication strategy which may be the reason why the association increased. Debevec and Iyer's (1986b) study stipulates that unique advertising stimulates greater attention.

Axe is a very salient brand which has been heavily stereotyped in the past but their new communication strategy is a step towards redefining themselves as an inclusive brand. Their communicated target segment was heterosexual stereotypical masculine persona which created a brand with high awareness, clear association and strong brand equity in the past. Our results show that even though Axe has been a heavily gendered brand their move towards being a gender-neutral brand led to a stronger brand association that is congruent with the millennial's idea of self-expression.

4.2.4   Hypothesis 4: Brand Personality

Hypothesis 4

H$_0$: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand does not have any effect on the consumer's perception of brand personality*

H$_4$: *Gender Stereotyped Communication and Gender Neutral Communication from the same brand impact consumer's perception of brand personality*

In the brand personality variable, we tested the male brand personality and female personality of Axe. We checked if Axe is perceived as a masculine brand or a feminine brand and if there was any change based on the type of communications the groups were exposed to. There was no significant effect on the brand personality pre-exposure between gender stereotyped and gender neutral communication ($F_{(1,152)} = 1.363$, $p = .245$) and the effect size is $d = 0.18$. Results indicate that there was no significant difference in male brand personality associations ($F_{(1,152)} = 1.363$, $p = .084$) and female brand personality ($F_{(1,152)} = .019$, $p = .891$) between groups in the pre-exposure stage. The mean scores suggest that Axe is perceived as a more masculine brand (M$_{Control}$ = 28.06, M$_{Intervention}$ = 26.04) than a feminine brand (M$_{Control}$ = 14.92, M$_{Intervention}$ = 15.06). Post Hoc tests could not be performed since there were fewer than three groups.

There was no significant effect on the brand personality post exposure between gender stereotyped and gender neutral communication ($F_{(1,152)} = 3.698$, $p = .056$). The effect size was d = .31 implying low treatment effect. Results in terms of male brand personality ($F_{(1,152)} = 1.116$, $p = .292$) and female brand personality ($F_{(1,152)} = 3.606$, $p = .059$) post exposure to the advertisement suggest no significant change in the perception of brand personality amongst the respondents. The mean scores suggest that Axe is still perceived as a more masculine brand (M$_{Control}$ = 26.70, M$_{Intervention}$ = 28.06) than a feminine brand (M$_{Control}$ = 15.4, M$_{Intervention}$ = 17.82). Although there is an increase in the mean scores in female brand personality in the intervention group, there is no significant difference. Hence, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternate hypothesis H$_4$.

> *We accept the null hypothesis that gender stereotyped communication and gender neutral communication from the same brand does not have any impact on the consumer's perception of brand personality.*

Brand personification helps consumers identify and differentiate a brand (Aaker, 1997) by viewing it as a "relationship partner" (Fournier, 1998) and "extension of self" (Belk, 1988). Hence, consumers are conditioned to project demographic attributes onto brands along with the associated characteristics related to gender. However, the challenge with gender neutral communication is to project demographic attributes to a brand and categorise based on biological sex. Moreover, gender elements and gender associations aid in developing relationship with the brand. Our result suggests, that there is no difference between the control group and intervention group in terms of personification. This could be due to the fact that although the symbolism used in the communication challenges stereotyped gender roles, Axe is still targeted towards male consumers. The design elements used in the advertisement can still be categorised as a product for male consumers, but the traditional definition of masculinity has been disregarded in the gender-neutral communication. Our literature review established the importance of clear brand gendering and without a clear brand personality it is difficult to visualise a brand which is supported by our findings in post exposure to advertisement. In the intervention group, the results showed that post exposure both the masculine and feminine scores increased in brand personality. This is because the advertisement has been imbued with design elements that reflect both masculine and feminine personality.

Contrary to previous findings (Grohmann, 2009; Lieven et al., 2014; Till & Priluck, 2001) about the advantage of brand gendering, our results show that gender neutral communication can elicit positive attitude towards a brand and have stronger brand image despite not having a clear brand personality.

4.3   Summary of Results

The results show that there are significant differences between the control and intervention group in brand image, brand association and consumer reaction but no significant change in brand personality. Our final test was to check if these significant differences in brand image, association and reaction led to an increase in purchase intention and brand recommendation for Axe.

There was no significant effect on the intention to purchase between gender stereotyped and gender neutral communication ($F_{(1,152)} = .363$, $p = .548$) The effect size $d = 0.09$ implies low treatment effect. Brand recommendation for Axe did not have any significant impact between the groups as well ($F_{(1,152)} = 1.313$, $p = .254$). There has been a nominal increase in the purchase intention scores ($M_{Control} = 3.77$, $M_{Intervention} = 4.05$) and brand

recommendation scores ($M_{Control} = 3.54$, $M_{Intervention} = 4.08$). Positive effect of gender neutral communication did not translate to higher purchase intention and brand recommendation for Axe. In the following tables, we present a summary of our results.

See *Appendix D* for detailed data tables.

Table 4.1 Summary of Within Group Result (95% Confidence Interval)

	Control Group (*p* Value)	Intervention Group (*p* Value)
Sample size	*n*=81	*n*=73
Brand Association	.000	.347
Brand Personality	.300	.000
Male Brand Personality	.031	.001
Female Brand Personality	.411	.000
Consumer Reaction to Advertising		
Approval	.003	.345
Disapproval	.336	.569
Surprised	.936	.232

Table 4.2 Summary of Between Group Result (95% Confidence Interval)

	p Value	Result
Hypothesis 1: Impact on Brand Image	.032	Reject Null Hypothesis
Hypothesis 2: Impact on Consumer Reaction to Advertisement	.011	Reject Null Hypothesis
Hypothesis 3: Impact on Brand Association	.048	Reject Null Hypothesis
Hypothesis 4: Impact on Brand Personality	.056	Accept Null Hypothesis
Intention to Purchase	.548	No Impact
Brand Recommendation	.254	No Impact

The result of our study shows that there is a positive effect in the overall brand image due to shift from gender stereotype communication to gender neutral communication. It also shows that gender stereotyped brands like Axe are able to position themselves better even after they disassociate themselves from gender stereotypes. These results contradict with the findings of previous literature which has talked about the benefits of gendering a brand. Moreover, this point to something much bigger about the current marketing practices. Our findings suggest that there is a change in the gender role ideologies in advertising which supports the grey

literature on blurring gender lines in communication. Another major finding is that the theory of brand image is broadening to encapsulate this changing gender role ideologies and recalibrating itself. Lastly, our findings empirically show that gender neutral communication can be a tool for marketers to position themselves as a brand that is devoid of gender and yet enjoy positive attitude from the consumers.

4.4 Key Findings & Discussions

4.4.1 Redefining Gender Role Ideologies in Advertising

Our research findings support the assumptions in grey literature that millennials are more tolerant towards fluid gender expression and support brands with equality-themed communication. Millennials do not prefer brands that tries to label them with traditional gender roles. Millennials' and Homelanders' attitude towards gender and their relationships with brands have not been previously explored in academic literature from the context of gender neutrality. However, the past two years have seen an explosion of grey literature talking about concepts of gender neutrality, gender queer and gender blurring.

Gender has always been a critical point of categorisation for brands and traditionally marketers have worked to establish the ideal portrait of male and female in advertising and in society. Research on gender role in advertising has bound itself by stereotypes defined by Deaux and Lewis (1984) through traits, physical characteristics, role behaviour and occupational status. Moreover, Goffman (1987) in his book Gender Advertisements explains gender relationships in advertisement and defines how this is portrayed through non-verbal cues of posture, gesture, gaze and touch. Further defining gender role stereotyping in advertising, Hatzithomas, Boutsouki & Ziamou (2016) categorised male and female stereotypes based on their character portrayal in advertising. More than five decades of research confirms the effectiveness of gender stereotyping in advertising. Gender stereotyping is a pre-cursor to effective segmentation, clear personality and stronger association leading to higher brand equity. Moreover, studies show that non-traditional advertising, that is beyond the frame of reference for the consumer, elicits negative attitude towards the brand especially among men (Angelini & Bradley, 2010; Bhat, Leigh & Wardlow, 1998). However, the definition of gender and its role in advertising is going through a revolution which the marketers are adapting in their communication.

Recent literatures in gender point towards the increase in portrayal of non-traditional roles of masculinity and femininity (Baxter, Kulczynski & Ilicic, 2016; Chu, Lee & Kim, 2016; Fowler & Thomas, 2015; Knoll, Eisend & Steinhagen, 2011; Rubie-Davies, Liu & Lee, 2013; Zawisza & Cinnirella, 2010). These researches conclude that the acceptance of these non-traditional roles is dependent on the consumers' openness towards the idea and their societies' beliefs and values regarding gender. This is a reflection of the change in society which can be explained by "Mirror" (Holbrook, 1987) theory, which affirms that advertising depicts the existing values and cultural expectations of gender through magnified lenses. This is supported by the seminal work of Eisend (2010) where a meta-analysis of advertising leads to

the conclusion in support of "mirror" theory. This means marketers adopting non-traditional advertising or gender neutral marketing purports that society is changing towards a more redefined role of how gender is perceived by individuals.

The change is society now penetrates much faster due to the rise in connectivity and freedom of expression. The fashion industry started the concept of gender-neutrality through unisex fashion which represented the idea of equality and inclusiveness. This idea became much more mainstream after the society became much more open to homosexuality and androgyny. Especially in 2014, when Facebook decided to introduce 58 gender options and celebrities came out in public embracing their sexuality and ideas of equality. This change was perceived positively by the millennials which led to increasing number of brands jumping on the bandwagon of gender neutrality to not only relate to the next generation of consumers but also cater to the growing target groups of homosexuals and transgenders. The millennials do not view gender as a dichotomy but rather as spectrum where their biological sex does not determine their personality and characteristics. The theme that drives the millennials inclusiveness and equality and brands reflecting this in their communication enables them to stay ahead in the consideration set of their consumers. Therefore, the concept of gender neutrality and gender neutral communication cannot be treated as a trend but rather a marketing strategy to connect with the next generation of consumers.

4.4.2   Reconceptualising Brand Image Dimensions

The implications of our findings in this study expands the theory of brand image in terms of brand association and brand personality. Through our study we established that gender neutral communication can elicit positive attitude and improve brand image for a brand which has been contradicted by previous researches (Lieven et al., 2014, 2015; Till & Priluck, 2001) in marketing management literature. However, through our literature review we have found that the concept of gender neutrality has not been explored, hence, the findings from our study is the first to establish the effect of gender neutral communication on brand image.

In the past, brands have created human-like personas to build a relationship with their target segment which means demographic was a big part of this personification. This helped them categorise a product for a male or female and build clear association with the relevant gender and build brand equity. Based on our definition of brand image, the associations created by consumers is the result of their interaction between the brand message and their interpretation which is driven by their value and belief system. As society defined the idea of personality and characteristics in binary form of masculinity and femininity, a large group of consumers who did not identify themselves solely to these concepts were left out as they were outgroups in the society. This affected the way communication was designed to build brand identity. Hence, brands that were perceived to be undifferentiated did not enjoy strong association and marketers struggled to create segmentation for these brands. The end goals for brands to use gender based association and personification were to build brand equity and increase sales.

However, our thesis proposes a new segmentation tool that shows that brands devoid of gender can still have positive brand image and clear association. Our research result shows a significant change in brand image, association and positive attitude towards a brand that

challenges gender stereotypes. This means that the concept of brand personification needs to expand its attributes list from masculinity and femininity to include elements that describes personality and characteristics not limited by gender. The theory of segmentation is conceptualised with gender as a primary criterion, hence, there is a gap on how to segment brands that does not want to be associated as masculine and feminine brands. Therefore, branding literature needs to broaden the brand image elements to theorise the new branding strategy.

4.4.3   Gender Neutral Communication: The Next Era of Advertising

Our research result validates the effectiveness of gender neutral communication for gender stereotyped brands like Axe. This shows that marketers shifting their strategy from gender stereotype communication to gender neutral communication can be a successful shift towards building a strong brand. For brands catering to specific gender does not necessarily need to use the gender stereotyping components to position their product but rather use elements that connect with the consumers. The changing mentality of the millennials require brands to tailor their communication imbued with elements that connects with the new generation. Previous researches have shown that gendered communication is the best route for brands to succeed but our results show otherwise. Gendered communication is still relevant and prevalent as well, but gender-neutrality is the future of advertising.

Societal rules are reshaping itself to make room for the generation of millennials, hence, traditional communication will be ineffective with this target group. In the last two years, more and more brands are joining the crusade to include gender neutrality in their communication. Our research confirms the benefit of moving to gender-neutral communication route as millennials does not want the traditional rules of society to define them but rather they want to carve their own path. This is the theme of gender neutrality, which is about inclusiveness and equality. Gender neutrality is not about products that cater to both men or women, but rather the core value of neutrality is inclusiveness which is reflected in the communication. These changing communication style reflect that today's advertising is not about portraying unrealistic images of male and female but rather about embracing individuality. Gender neutrality means showing it is alright to be what they want to be without judgement and that is the value that society is reflecting. Hence, gender neutrality is the future of advertising and marketers adopting this late will be left behind.

5 Conclusion

Gender-neutral communication can be dubbed as the future of advertising. This chapter summarises the findings of this study through answering the research purpose and provide key insights. We conclude by stating the theoretical contribution and practical implication of the study and suggest the avenues for future research direction to further develop the concept of gender neutral communication.

5.1 Tool Transcending Trend

Our research validated that gender-neutral communication is a tool that can be used by marketers to position their brand. The purpose of our research was to investigate the impact of gender neutral communication on brand image. Our results confirmed that compared to gender stereotyped communication, gender neutral communication has a positive impact on the brand image amongst the millennials. Our hypotheses proved that brand image, brand association and consumer reaction to advertisement had a positive increase compared to gender stereotyped communication. We can conclude that brands are able to dissociate themselves from gender stereotyping and also build strong brand image by developing positive attitude from the consumers.

Through our research, we embodied the contemporary phenomenon of gender inclusiveness and its implication on brand communication and derived three main findings. First and foremost, the concept of gender is ongoing a radical overhaul as more Millennials and Homelanders, the consumers of tomorrow, are embracing self-expression rather than adhering to gender norms. This means the gender ideologies in society and advertising is changing, and therefore, marketers need to embrace this phenomenon to survive. Secondly, the positive effect of gender neutral communication on brand image identifies a gap in marketing. Segmentation and brand personality have always been defined by gender but the effectiveness of gender neutral communication requires recalibrating traditional theories to include the concept of gender neutral communication. Our last finding is that gender neutral communication can be an effective tool for marketers who wants to position themselves as gender neutral. Gender ambiguity is becoming the new marketing norm (Claveria, 2016).

This study investigated the reaction of consumers to gender neutral communication and the relevance of the tool and found a positive impact. The current trend of brands adopting this communication style is an indication of its success that companies are bold enough to reposition their existing brand image and ingrain neutrality. For example: Axe has changed their marketing strategy from The Axe Effect which was notorious for being extremely

stereotypical to Find Your Magic, which talks about inclusiveness. After the positive response from the LGBT inclusive 'Find Your Magic' campaign they have extended the theme and just recently launched a new masculinity redefining campaign 'Is it ok for guys?' (Voss, 2017; Wong, 2017), which more transparently communicates about equality and inclusiveness. Therefore, the findings for this study have significant implications for the understanding of how the gender-neutral communication tool is disrupting the traditional marketing assumptions and extending the theory of gender in marketing literature.

5.2   Theoretical Contributions

This research extends our knowledge of target marketing as the findings show that brands can still have positive brand image and clear association even after they disassociate themselves from gender targeting. The contribution of this study has been to confirm that gender-neutral communication can have a positive impact on brand image and create positive attitude towards the brand. Our research contradicts the theory of brand positioning and target marketing by challenging its assumption. Our findings corroborated that not only gendered brands enjoy high brand equity but brands using gender neutral communications can also attain high brand equity. The findings of the investigation contradict with those of earlier studies that shows a positive correlation of gender targeted marketing and building strong brand image. These findings enhance our understanding of the changing gender role ideologies in advertising and the way marketers can benefit by adapting gender neutral communication strategies. Taken together these findings suggest that gender neutral communication can be a tool to design communication strategies and also enjoy clear positioning. From a broad perspective, our research constituted a theoretical contribution to marketing management literature with a focus on building brand image using gender neutral elements in communication.

Previous researches looked into gender and advertising from the context of gender stereotyping as the main theme and mainly focused on the portrayal of female in advertisement. Moreover, studies on advertising and gender have been done mostly through qualitative research especially content analysis. But what differentiates this research from any studies done previously is that it tests the effect of gender neutral communication, especially for a brand that has changed their communication strategy. This study used a brand targeted towards male consumers, which has not been explored in the research world frequently until very recently. Moreover, we adopted quantitative research method as it enabled us to be able to generalise the findings to a sub-population, in this case the millennials. Therefore, this is the first study to investigate and understand the impact of gender neutral communication from a male targeted brand like Axe.

5.3 Practical Implications

This study has significant practical applications for managers and different industries as it confirms the effectiveness of gender neutral communication on brand image. The study provides validation that this concept is worth exploring in designing marketing communication as this new phenomenon is relevant to the millennial segment. Furthermore, our research indicates the change in the gender role ideologies in advertising especially among the millennials and homelanders. For brands targeting this segment, the marketing managers need to redesign the communication elements in advertising to incorporate target marketing without a particular gender in mind. This study denotes that using gender neutral elements can be a point of differentiation for brands and an effective tool for advertisers to make the brand unique, strong and favourable. Therefore, marketers not understanding the importance and necessity of gender neutrality in this era might lose their position in the market in the long run.

Advertising is about connecting with consumers to create an image of the brand. This connection is built through developing messages congruent to their target segment. The mentality of millennials and homelanders is changing rapidly and it is difficult to keep track of which trend to address and which to let go. Our study has demonstrated that this trend of gender neutrality, seen in the last two years, can be an effective tool for marketers to reposition their brand.

This study provides a foundation that brand managers can base on to go "beyond Millennials and shifting focus to Generation Z" (Claveria, 2016), as these Homelanders, the consumers of the future, are even more fluid with gender.

5.4 Limitations and Future Research

Gender neutral communication is a relatively nascent phenomenon, that has emerged in recent times but is burgeoning at an accelerated rate. This is the first study to investigate the effect of gender neutral communication, because no researches have tapped into understanding the influence of this trend. However, as the trend propagates more into the very fabric of our lives, further studies need to be conducted to truly understand why this trend is growing and how it can help marketers achieve their branding and marketing objectives. This research has opened up new avenues for researchers to explore in-depth into the impact of the gender neutrality movement on the different aspects of branding.

Since our study used validated scales from three different studies, it can easily be replicated. However, the scope of this study was limited in terms of a single brand and one advertising stimulus in each experiment groups. Further experimental investigations, with more stimuli and brands and less temporal constraints, are needed, because basing the findings on only one brand and one communication stimulus is not adequate and conclusive. In addition, it would be interesting to observe the influence across product category. Furthermore, all incumbent

scales that we encountered across discourses (see Bruner II, 2015), that have been constructed to test gender elements, are focused on masculinity and femininity only. Hence, comparing gender-neutral elements in binary measurement scales is not appropriate and may not reflect the true impact of treatment effects. Therefore, it is recommended that further research needs to be undertaken to reconstruct new scales that are not gender binary.

A number of possible future studies using the same experimental set up are apparent. The major limitation of this study is its lack of generalisability, arising owing to the use of convenience sampling, due to resource and time limitations. Because we administered the research using online surveys, our sampling frame did not reflect the characteristics of the population. More research is required to determine the efficacy of this study, with larger samples, using probability sampling techniques and randomisation in the experiment, along with the use of a good representative sampling frame. Future trials should validate the findings of our study by wielding more control in the experiment, for example by inviting respondents to a location and administering the questionnaire face-to-face and stringently controlling extraneous factors influencing the causal relationship of the findings, making it a true laboratory experiment.

The generalisability of these results is subject to certain limitations because experimental research designs exert too much control and might not reflect the reality. A future descriptive research describing the consumer perception of using gender-neutral cues in advertising would be interesting. Using a longitudinal design, a descriptive research would be able to glean these consumer insights over a period of time.

An and Kim (2007) used Hofstede's masculinity dimension to investigate gender role portrayals in advertising across 53 countries and identified Sweden as the most feminine country with the lowest masculinity index score of 5. In the same vein, Klasson and Ulver (2015) argued how hegemonic masculinity in Sweden is shifting to feminised masculinity. They underscored that Sweden is "infused with ideologies of egalitarianism", ranked high in Gender equality index and has low gender gap (Klasson & Ulver, 2015, pp.1655, 1659). The findings from our study can be attributed to low masculinity in Swedes. Tunca (2014) highlighted the importance of cross-cultural replicability of scales measuring brand dimensions, such as personality. What is now needed is a cross-national study to understand the applicability of this study.

Gender roles in society, reflected in advertising, are changing and a deeper understanding is essential to further develop the concept of gender neutrality. A natural progression of this work is to use qualitative studies to harness insights into this issue at hand. The findings from our research provide insights for future research. Our research explored the quantitative impact of gender-neutral communication, but since this is a new-fangled trend, further researches are needed to elucidate the gender-neutral segmentation in marketing and its elements. Qualitative studies can also help define attributes of this phenomenon, and make theoretical conceptualisation of this trend, which is slowly transmuting into a tool.

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Appendix A: Brand Image Definitions

Brand Image Definitions: Adapted and modified from Dobni and Zinkhan (1990, pp.112–114), Lee, James and Kim (2014, pp.2–5) and Patterson (1999, pp.414–415)

Authors	Definitions
(Gardner & Levy, 1955, pp.34–35)	The image of a product associated with the brand, …the social and psychological nature of products, …contribute to the customer's deciding whether or not the brand is the one "for me". These sets of ideas, feelings and attitudes that consumers have about brands are crucial to them in picking and sticking to ones that seem most appropriate. … a character or personality that may be more important for the over-all status (and sales) of the brand than many technical facts about the product.
(Martineau, 1957)	…the product or brand image is a symbol of the buyer's personality …the total set of attitudes, the halo of psychological meanings, the association of feeling, the indelibly written aesthetic messages over and above the bare physical qualities.
(Newman, 1957, p.101)	A brand can be viewed as a composite image of everything people associate with it. These impressions determine how a prospective buyer feels about it and influence his selection. Brand images may have several dimensions: functional, economic, social, psychological…The limits are set by the brand image built through styling and advertisements as well as other product attributes.
(Levy, 1959, pp.118–119)	People buy things not only for what they can do, but also for what they mean. …The things people buy are seen to have personal and social meanings in addition to their functions. …To ignore or decry the symbolism of consumer goods does not affect the importance of the fact. …It will suffice to say that in casual usage symbol is a general term for all instances where experience is mediated rather than direct; where an object, action, word, picture, or complex behavior is understood to mean not only itself but also some other ideas or feelings. A symbol is appropriate (and the product will be used and enjoyed) when it joins with, meshes with, adds to, or reinforces the way the consumer thinks about himself.
(Herzog, 1963)	Brand image is the sum total of impressions the consumer receives from many sources…All these impressions amount to a sort of brand personality which is similar for the consuming public at large, although different consumer groups may have different attitudes toward it.

(Sommers, 1964)	…the meaning that a product has…perceived product symbolism
(Reynolds, 1965, pp.69–70, 75)	Product and brand images are created by consumers… It is the mental construct developed by the consumer on the basis of a few selected impressions among the flood of total impressions; it comes into being through a creative process in which these selected impressions are elaborated, embellished, and ordered.
	Images are not isolated empirical beliefs about a product or brand but are systems of inferences which may have only a tenuous and indirect relationship to fact.
	People differ in the prior information at their disposal and in their creative ability to elaborate an image. A product or brand is a combination of attributes, and one person might construct his image on the basis of one feature and another person on another. … Different people will have different images of the same product.
	Images are ordered wholes built by consumers from scraps of significant detail in much the same way that writers and artists use significant detail to illumine complex totalities.
	Product and brand images arise out of a complex interaction between marketer messages and consumer creativity.
(Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967, p.22)	The psychic…[or]…symbolic value of goods purchased in the marketplace
(Bird, Channon & Ehrenberg, 1970, p.307)	[Brand image is the] …attitude towards a brand
(Pohlman & Mudd, 1973, p.167)	The purchased item is conceptualized as having two kinds of value for the owner, one for its concrete functional utility and the other for its utility as a prestige symbol. According to this conceptualization, functional value is that which is conventionally meant by utility as a good, while symbolic value (i.e., image) is the extent to which a purchase enhances the worth of the person in his own eyes (self-esteem) and in the eyes of others (status).
(Levy, Frerichs & Gordon, 1973) reprinted in (Levy & Rook, 1999, pp.233–234, 236)	The concept of brand image…aptly summed up the idea that consumers buy brands not only for their physical attributes and functions, but also because of the meanings connected with the brands.
	…imagery is a mixture of notions and deductions, based on many things. …At times, imagery is indeed largely an illusion.
	An image is an interpretation, a set of inferences and reactions. It is a symbol because it is not the object itself, but refers to it and stands for it. In addition to the physical realities of the product, brand, or corporation, the image includes their meanings, that is, the beliefs, attitudes, and feelings that have come to be attached to them.

(Levy, 1978)	A brand image is a constellation of pictures and ideas in people's minds that sum up their knowledge of the brand their main attitudes towards it.
	A mixture of the physical reality of the product and the beliefs, attitudes and feelings that have come to the attached to it meaning as being learned or stimulated by the component experience that people have with the product
(Gensch, 1978, pp.384–385)	…brand preference is a function of the perception space associated with the alternatives. …perception consists of two components, the individual's ability to obtain measures of the brand attributes on factors he considers important, and the "image" of each brand. The term "image"…is an abstract concept incorporating the influences of past promotion, reputation, and peer evaluation of the alternative. Image connotes the expectations of a consumer. The interaction of these two variables, individual attribute measurements and image, is assumed to vary across product types and across individuals.
	In marketing theory, image generally is assumed to have a more significant role in product situations in which the individual has difficulty obtaining objective measures on the important product attributes.
(Bettinger, Dawson Jr. & Wales, 1979, p.36)	… [brands have] an "adult" image and a "child" image of the product
(Frazer, 1983, p.38)	… the advertiser formulates a claim of superiority or distinction based on factors extrinsic to the product. Often products are associated with symbols, either socially extant or created by or for the advertiser. …[The] effort to differentiate the product…is psychologically rather than physically based.
	[The] positioning strategy requires giving the product a place in the consumer's mind relative to competition. …[Without] the relationship to competition…this the strategy becomes a…brand image (if based on psychological differentiation). The element "consumer's mind" is noteworthy as well.
(Swartz, 1983)	In symbolic consumer, interest lies in investigating the role of products as "messages" or "nonverbal communication" transmitted by the user/owner. Attention needs to be given to differentiating the message the product sends as a marketing strategy.
(Bullmore, 1984)	A brand's image is what people think and feel about it: and those thoughts and feelings will not – cannot – be universally identical. …The image lies in the mind of the beholder – and is conditioned at least as much by the nature of the beholder as by the nature of the object itself.
(Reynolds &	Product imagery- stored meanings that an individual has in memory,

|	
Gutman, 1984, p.29)	personal and social meanings
	…the set of meanings and associations that serve to differentiate a product or service from its competition
	The real key to understanding image lies in understanding linkages or connections between the levels that define the perceptual lens through which the consumer views the world and subsequently develops preferences for products. Effective linkages can be established for products only when we can gain a perspective on how the product relates to the personal value system of consumers. By viewing means-end chains as entities, we can achieve this perspective.
(Snyder & DeBono, 1985, p.586)	Practitioners of the soft-sell approach typically create ads that appeal to the images associated with the use of the product, images that one may gain and project by using the product. …Typically, the copy associated with these ads emphasizes the image of the product or, more specifically, the images associated with the use of the product.
(Hendon & Williams, 1985, p.66)	Also, known as "brand personality" or "brand character," it involves nothing more than describing a product as if it were a human being. This is an effective way of generating interest because people favor products that match their own self-image or personality.
(Sirgy, 1985, p.195)	Products…are assumed to have personality images, just as people do. … These personality images are not determined by the physical characteristics of the product (e.g., tangible products, suppliers, and services) alone, but by a host of other factors such as advertising, price, stereotype of the generalized users, and other marketing and psychological associations.
(Dichter, 1985, p.75)	The concept of "image" can be applied to…a product. …It describes not individual traits or qualities, but the total impression an entity makes on the minds of others. It is a most powerful influence in the way people perceive things, and should be a crucial concept in shaping our marketing, advertising, and communications efforts.
	An image is not anchored in just objective data and details. It is the configuration of the whole field of the object, the advertising, and, most important, the customer's disposition and the attitudinal screen through which he observes.
(Park, Jaworski & MacInnis, 1986, pp.135–136)	…a brand image is not simply a perceptual phenomenon affected by the firm's communication activities alone. It is the understanding consumers derive from the total set of brand-related activities engaged in by the firm.
	The image is a perception created by marketers' management of the brand. Any product theoretically can be positioned with a functional, symbolic, or experiential image.
(Debevec & Iyer, 1986b, p.12)	In positioning and repositioning products, advertisers often work to create a gender image for a brand by featuring the targeted gender in

	an advertisement as a "typical" user of the product.
(Friedmann & Lessig, 1987, pp.267, 269)	The consumer… reacts to product related stimuli and creates his/ her own mental position of the product. The product's psychological meaning is a function of the consumer's perceptions of the tangible and the intangible attributes which he or she…associates with the product. The end result is a set of attributes manifested through a bundle of components which represent the consumer's understanding and evaluation of the product and result from direct and/or vicarious experiences, images, feelings, and associated behavioral responses that have accumulated over time.
(Durgee & Stuart, 1987, p.16)	…in order to differentiate itself, each brand has to rely heavily on what it connotes or means symbolically in the eyes of consumers. …the meaning profile [of a brand or product category] refers to the complex of [key] meanings that are associated with a given [brand or product] category.
(Runyon & Stewart, 1987)	A particular product position is also referred to as a product or brand concept if the product does not yet exist, or a brand image if the product does exist. …A product's positioning in the market is simply the way consumers perceive that product. It reflects the language that consumers use to talk about it, their emotional responses to it, and all of the numerous factors that influence the perceptual process.
(Nöth, 1988, pp.173–174)	From this [semiotics of the commodity in brand image research] perspective commodities are studied as signs whose meaning is the consumer's 'brand image'. Semantic components of a brand image… include 'technical matters', 'product characteristics', 'financial value', or 'social suitability'. Semiotically, such components constitute the signified (or content) of the product, while the material object is the signifier of the commodity as a sign.
(Dobni & Zinkhan, 1990, p.118)	Brand image is the concept of a brand that is held by the consumer…[and] is largely a subjective and perceptual phenomenon that is formed through consumer interpretation, whether reasoned or emotional. Brand image is not inherent in the technical, functional or physical concerns of the product. Rather, it is affected and molded by marketing activities, by context variables, and by the characteristics of the perceiver.
(Aaker, 1991)	A brand association is anything "linked" in [consumer's] memory to a brand. A brand image is a set of associations, usually organized in some meaningful way.
(Biel, 1992, p.RC-8)	…the image of a brand [i]s that cluster of attributes and associations that consumers connect to the brand name. These evoked associations can be "hard" [tangible/functional attributes] or "softer" [emotional

|	attributes].
	The image of a brand can be described as having three contributing subimages; the image of the provider of the product/service, or corporate image; the image of the user; and the image of the product/service itself. …the user component of brand image can be described in terms of imputed personality.
(Keller, 1993, p.3)	Brand image is defined…as perceptions about a brand as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory. Brand associations are the informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers.
(Foxall & Goldsmith, 1994, p.60)	Brand image refers to the organised set of perceptions consumers have formed about the brand.
(Aaker, 1996)	Knowledge of the brand image (how customers and others perceive the brand) provides useful and even necessary background information when developing a brand identity. Brand identity is a unique set of associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain.
(Patterson, 1999, p.419)	Consumer perceptions of brand attributes and associations from which those consumers derive symbolic value.
(Riezebos et al., 2003, p.67)	Brand images are networks of knowledge elements stored in long-term memory. The core of such a network is a brand name, which is linked to a number of other knowledge elements (and/or associations)
(Gustafsson, 2005, p.522)	consumers' view of what the brand values are
(Ross, James & Vargas, 2006, p.262)	Brand associations are the thoughts and ideas that an individual hold in his or her memory for a particular good or service
(Kapferer, 2008)	The [brand] image refers to the way in which these groups decode all of the signals emanating from the products, services and communication covered by the brand.
(Ghodeswar, 2008, p.5)	Brand image is the perception in the mind of the customers about the brand and its associations. … [It is] the brand's current associations.
(Kotler & Keller, 2012, p.G1)	the perceptions and beliefs held by consumers, as reflected in the associations held in consumer memory.
(Wijaya, 2013, pp.56–58)	…brand image is not formed solely for the purpose of purchasing the product, but more than that, brand image also related to how consumers as a target audience of communication interpret (decode) brand messages and actualize it in their life and become part of how they construct their self-concepts and reality.
	As time went on and intensively communication, the consumer then has a certain perception or something to associate to form a certain

	image about the brand in the consumers' mind (that is called brand image).
	Brand image is a representation of the overall perception formed from information and knowledge on the brand. Brand image is closely related to attitudes and beliefs that form choice (preference) to a brand.
	In certain conditions, brand can be described by certain characters as human beings.
	Brand image refers to the framing of memory about a brand, which contains the results of interpretation (decoding) by consumer to the messages through the attributes, benefits and advantages of the product, the use, the atmosphere created or used in the communication, the users of the product, and through the attitude and character of marketers or sales person and/ or brand owner. In simple term it can be said that brand image is actually what consumers think and feel when they heard or saw a brand identity.
	…brand image is often defined as the perception and preference of consumers towards brand, reflected by the various associations that live in the memory of consumers about the brand.
	…brand image is assumed as a set of associations that consumers receive, within a certain period, as a result of the contiguity of consumers with the brand, directly or indirectly.
(Keller, 2013, pp.72, 77, 342)	[Brand image is] reflected by the associations that consumers hold for it.
	Creating a positive brand image takes marketing programs that link strong, favorable, and unique associations to the brand in memory. Brand associations may be either brand attributes or benefits. Brand attributes are those descriptive features that characterize a product or service. Brand benefits are the personal value and meaning that consumers attach to the product or service attributes.
	Although marketers have not always agreed about how to measure it [brand image], one generally accepted view is that, consistent with our associative network memory model, brand image is consumers' perceptions about a brand, as reflected by the brand associations held in consumer memory. In other words, brand associations are the other informational nodes linked to the brand node in memory and contain the meaning of the brand for consumers. Associations come in all forms and may reflect characteristics of the product or aspects independent of the product.
(Arai, Ko & Kaplanidou, 2013, p.384)	Brand image involves the consumer's perceptions about the brand as reflected by a set of brand associations held in consumer's memory.
(Shank & Lyberger, 2014,	[Brand image is] consumers' set of beliefs about a brand, which shape attitudes

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p.608)	
(Roy & Banerjee, 2014, p.209)	Brand image relates to the perception of a brand that is being formed in the process of decoding brand identity facets.
(Anselmsson, Bondesson & Johansson, 2014, p.91)	Brand image (or sometimes brand knowledge or brand description) has been defined as any information linked to the brand in the customer memory, meaning the associations and beliefs that the customer has regarding the brand.
(Lee, James & Kim, 2014, p.8)	[Brand image is] the sum of a customer's perceptions about a brand generated by the synthetic interaction of the cognitive, affective, and evaluative processes in a customer's mind.

Appendix B: Sample Questionnaire
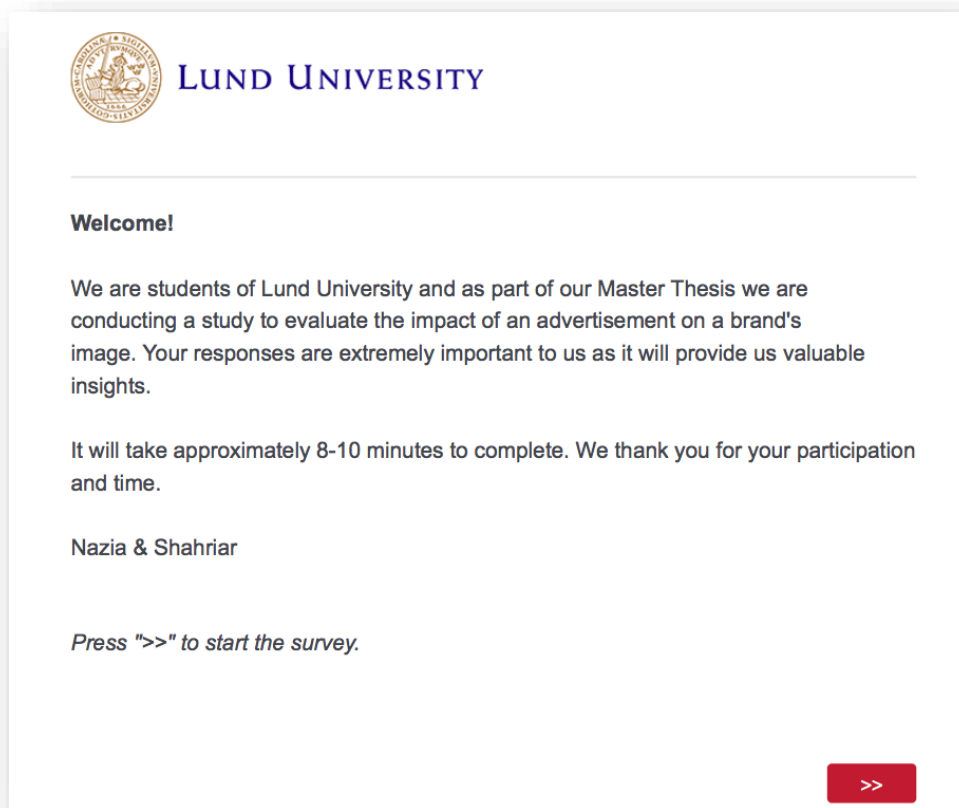
Welcome Page
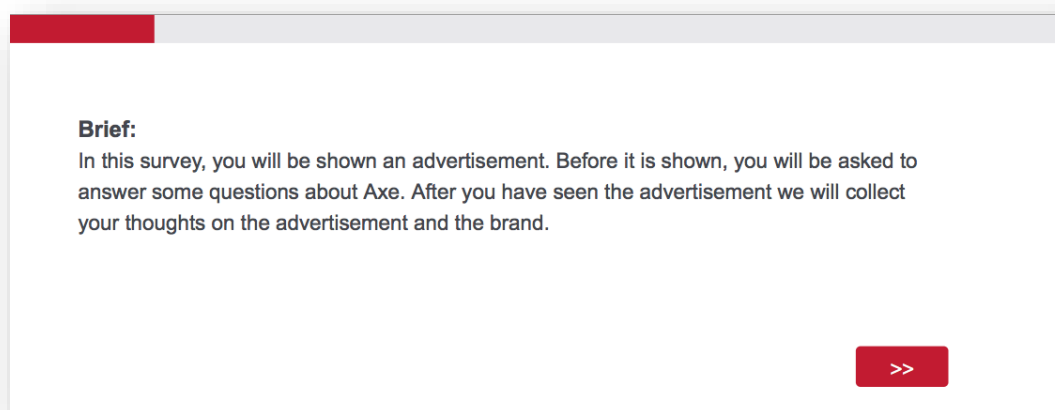
Survey Brief

Demographic Questions: Gender & Age

Demographic (Country of Residence) & Brand Awareness Questions

To what extent do you agree with the following statements about "Axe"? Please select an appropriate response for each statement. Please note that it is not necessary for you to use the brand, we just want to know your opinion based on your interaction with/impression of the brand.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I expect superior performance from this brand	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
During use, this brand is highly unlikely to be defective	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand is made so as to work trouble free	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand will work very well	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand fits my personality	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I would be proud to own this brand	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
This brand will be well regarded by my friends	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In its status and style, this brand matches my personality	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I consider the company and people who stand behind the brand to be very trustworthy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
In regard to consumer interests, this company seems to be very caring	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
I believe that this company does not take advantage of consumers	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
For this brand, I have positive personal feelings	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
With time, I will develop warm feeling toward this brand	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Pre-test Stage: Measure of Brand Association

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Below you will see a list of characteristics that may or may not describe the brand "Axe". We are interested in your opinion on which characteristics describe the brand accurately. Please select an appropriate response for each characteristic that you feel describes the brand.

	Not descriptive at all	Not very descriptive	Slightly descriptive	Somewhat descriptive	Moderately descriptive	Very descriptive	Extremely descriptive
Adventurous	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Tender	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Brave	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Graceful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sturdy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sweet	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dominant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Fragile	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Aggressive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sensitive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Daring	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Expresses Tender Feelings	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Pre-test Stage: Measure of Brand Personality

Exposure to Stimuli for Control Group *(Gender Stereotyped Communication)*

Exposure to Stimuli for Intervention Group *(Gender Neutral Communication)*

Below you will see a list of emotions. Please select the appropriate response that accurately describe your feelings towards the advertisement.

The ad left me feeling...

	Not at all	Not very	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Very	Extremely
Angry	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Astonished	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Contemptuous	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Curious	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Disgusted	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Distrustful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Envious	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Excited	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Happy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Interested	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Involved	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Irritated	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Loving	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Revolted	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Scornful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Skeptical	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Stimulated	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Surprised	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Uneasy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Wishful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Worried	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Post-test Stage: Measure of Attitude towards Advertising

We would like you to evaluate the brand "Axe" based on the advertisement you have just seen. Please select an appropriate response for each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
I expect superior performance from this brand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
During use, this brand is highly unlikely to be defective	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This brand is made so as to work trouble free	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This brand will work very well	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This brand fits my personality	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would be proud to own this brand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
This brand will be well regarded by my friends	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
In its status and style, this brand matches my personality	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I consider the company and people who stand behind the brand to be very trustworthy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
In regard to consumer interests, this company seems to be very caring	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe that this company does not take advantage of consumers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
For this brand, I have positive personal feelings	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
With time, I will develop warm feeling toward this brand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Post-test Stage: Measure of Brand Association

Below you can see a list of characteristics that may or may not describe the brand "Axe". Please select an appropriate response for each characteristic that you feel describes the brand based on the advertisement you have just viewed.

	Not descriptive at all	Not very descriptive	Slightly descriptive	Somewhat descriptive	Moderately descriptive	Very descriptive	Extremely descriptive
Adventurous	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Tender	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Brave	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Graceful	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sturdy	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sweet	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Dominant	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Fragile	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Aggressive	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Sensitive	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Daring	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
Expresses Tender Feelings	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

Post-test Stage: Measure of Brand Personality

On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to purchase this brand in the future?

Not at all likely   Extremely likely
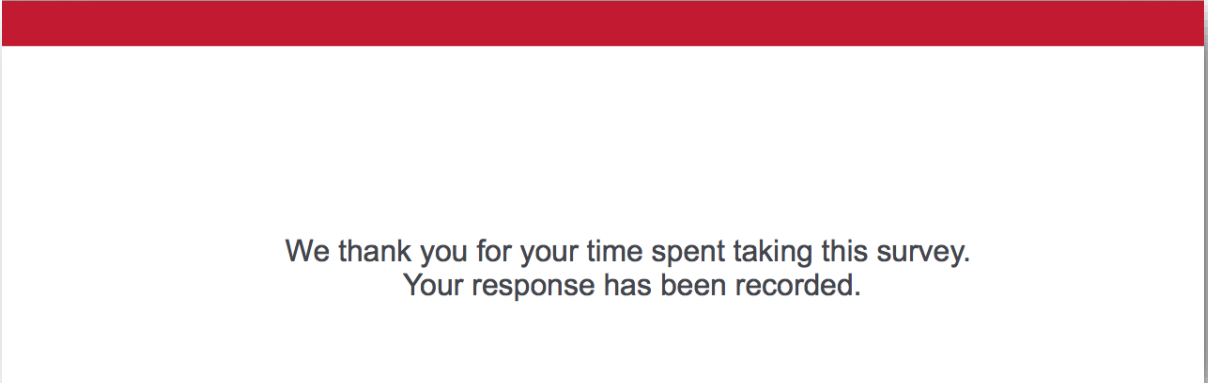
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend this brand to your friends and family?

Not at all likely   Extremely likely

| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |

Purchase Intent & Likelihood to Recommend Questions

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

Thank You Page

Appendix C: Stimuli Snapshots

"Even Angels Will Fall" commercial from Axe Excite campaign

Gender Stereotyped Communication for Control Group

"Axe – Find Your Magic" campaign commercial

Gender Neutral Communication for Intervention Group
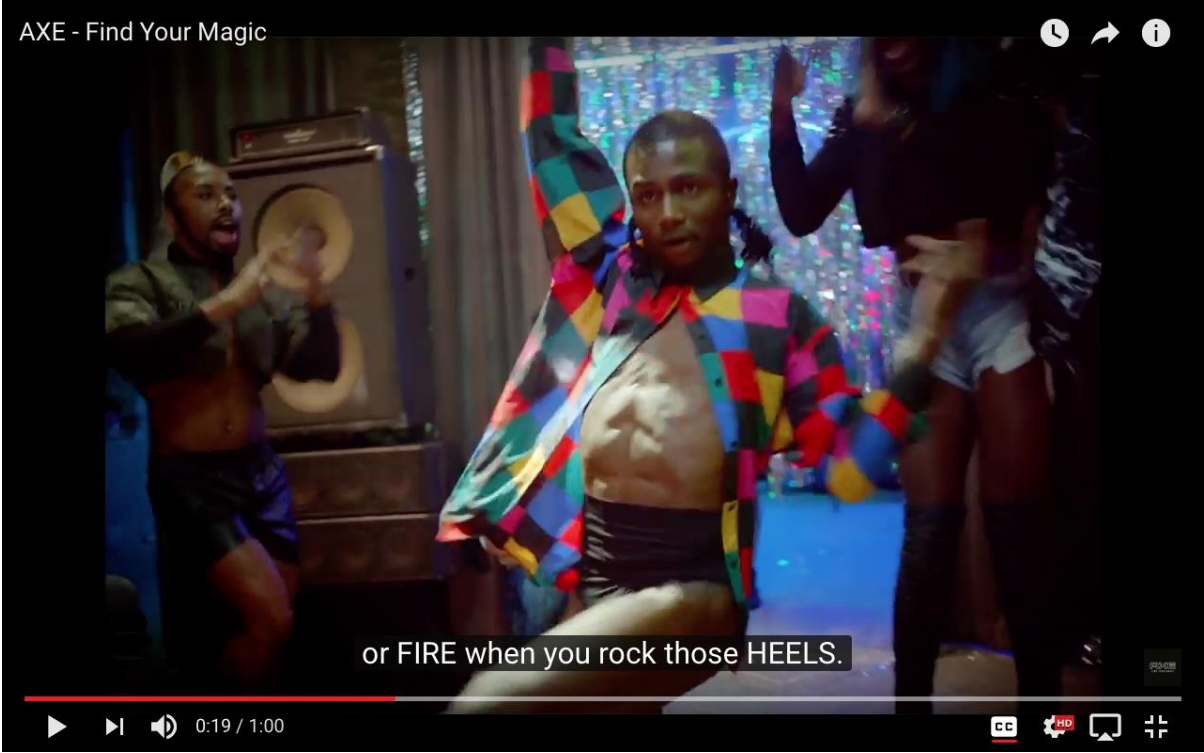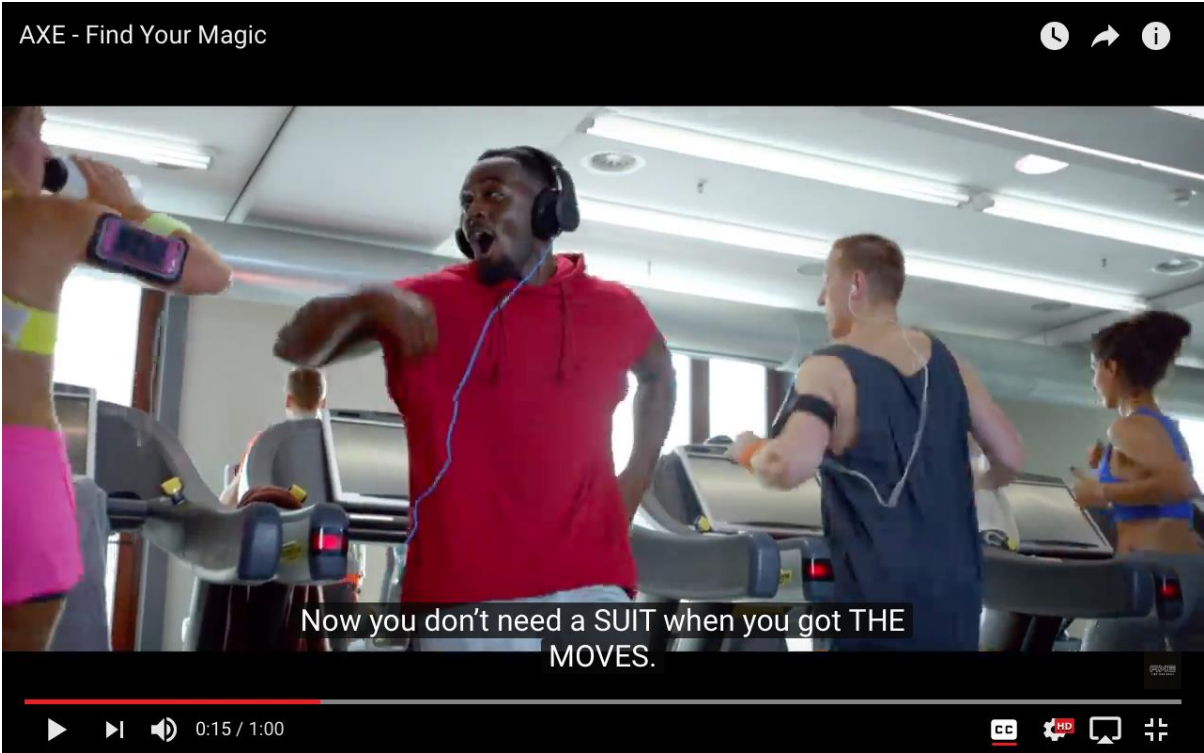
AXE - Find Your Magic

Or books when you got some balls.

0:30 / 1:00

AXE - Find Your Magic
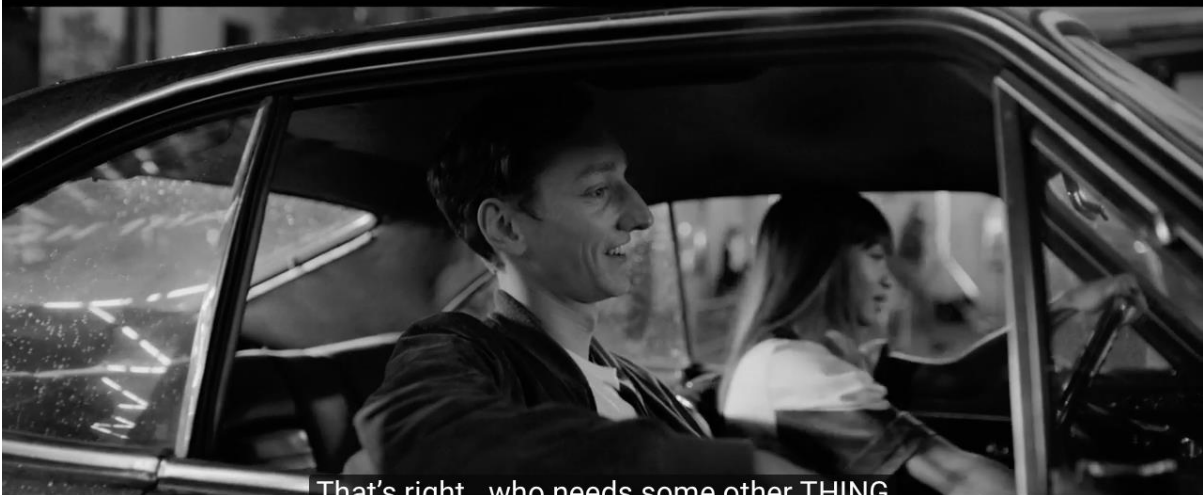
That's right...who needs some other THING
When you got... YOUR THING.

0:46 / 1:00

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Appendix D: Data Tables

Control Group: Data Table

Brand Association

Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Brand Association Pre	52.2716	13.25709	81
Brand Association Pro	47.7284	15.63731	81

One Way Repeated Measures ANOVA: Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts

Source	BA2	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
Brand Association	Linear	835.951	1	835.951	17.943	.000	.183	17.943	.987
Error(BA2)	Linear	3727.049	80	46.588					
a. Computed using alpha = .05									

Post Hoc: Paired Samples Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Brand Association Pre - BAPOSTS	4.54321	9.65278	1.07253	2.40880	6.67762	4.236	80	.000

Brand Personality

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Brand Personality PRE	81	18.00	70.00	42.9877	9.10425	82.887
Brand Personality Post	81	15.00	77.00	42.1235	12.00873	144.210
Valid N (listwise)	81					

One Way Repeated Measures ANOVA: Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts									
Source	BP2	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
Brand Personality	Linear	30.247	1	30.247	1.087	.300	.013	1.087	.178
Error(BP2)	Linear	2226.753	80	27.834					
a. Computed using alpha = .05									

Post Hoc: Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	BPPRE - BPOST	.86420	7.46115	.82902	-.78560	2.51399	1.042	80	.300

Male Brand Personality

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
MBPPRE	81	11.00	42.00	28.0617	6.57333	43.209
MBPPOST	81	6.00	42.00	26.7037	7.93480	62.961
Valid N (listwise)	81					

One Way Repeated Measures ANOVA: Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts									
Source	MBP	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
MBP	Linear	74.691	1	74.691	4.845	.031	.057	4.845	.585
Error(MBP)	Linear	1233.309	80	15.416					
a. Computed using alpha = .05									

Post Hoc: Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	MBPPRE - MBPPOST	1.35802	5.55272	.61697	.13022	2.58583	2.201	80	.031

Female Brand Personality

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
FBPPRE	81	6.00	35.00	14.9259	6.20036	38.444
FBPOST	81	6.00	41.00	15.4198	8.05584	64.897
Valid N (listwise)	81					

One Way Repeated Measures ANOVA: Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts									
Source	FBP	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
FBP	Linear	9.877	1	9.877	.682	.411	.008	.682	.129
Error(FBP)	Linear	1159.123	80	14.489					
a. Computed using alpha = .05									

Post Hoc: Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	FBPPRE - FBPOST	-.4938	5.38313	.59813	-1.68413	.69648	-.826	80	.411

Consumer Attitude Towards Advertising

Descriptive Statistics				
		Disapproval	Approval	Surprised
N	Valid	81	81	81
	Missing	33	33	33
Mean		26.6420	27.8272	2.8025
Median		25.0000	26.0000	3.0000
Mode		27.00	18.00[a]	3.00
Std. Deviation		10.53365	11.87307	1.33622
Variance		110.958	140.970	1.785
a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown				

Group Statistics					
	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Disapproval	Male	48	25.6458	9.05654	1.30720
	Female	33	28.0909	12.38034	2.15514
Approval	Male	48	30.9375	12.18546	1.75882
	Female	33	23.3030	9.93568	1.72958
Surprised	Male	48	2.8125	1.43892	.20769
	Female	33	2.7879	1.19262	.20761

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
Disapproval	Equal variances assumed	4.227	.043	-1.027	79	.308	-2.44508	2.38120	-7.1847	2.29459
	Equal variances not assumed			-.970	54.825	.336	-2.44508	2.52059	-7.4968	2.60667
Approval	Equal variances assumed	4.238	.043	2.980	79	.004	7.63447	2.56167	2.53560	12.73334
	Equal variances not assumed			3.095	76.618	.003	7.63447	2.46676	2.72214	12.54680
Surprised	Equal variances assumed	1.748	.190	.081	79	.936	.02462	.30406	-.58059	.62984
	Equal variances not assumed			.084	76.163	.933	.02462	.29366	-.56023	.60948

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Intention to Purchase

Statistics		
On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to purchase this brand in the future?		
N	Valid	81
	Missing	33
Mean		3.77
Median		3.00
Mode		0
Std. Deviation		3.071

Brand Recommendation

Statistics		
On a scale from 0-10, how likely are you to recommend this brand to your friends and family?		
N	Valid	81
	Missing	33
Mean		3.54
Median		3.00
Mode		0
Std. Deviation		2.979
Variance		8.876

Intervention Group: Data Table

Brand Association

Descriptive Statistics	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Brand Association Pre	51.4110	12.14820	73
Brand Association Post	52.5479	14.15101	73

One Way Repeated Measures ANOVA: Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts									
Source	BA2	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
BA2	Linear	47.185	1	47.185	.896	.347	.012	.896	.154
Error(BA2)	Linear	3792.315	72	52.671					
a. Computed using alpha = .05									

Post Hoc: Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Brand Association Pre - Brand Association Post Total	-1.1369	10.2636	1.2012	-3.5316	1.2577	-.946	72	.347

Brand Personality

Descriptive Statistics							
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic
Brand Personality PRE	73	14.00	63.00	41.1096	1.26938	10.84558	117.627
Brand Personality Post	73	14.00	68.00	45.8904	1.43737	12.28093	150.821
Valid N (listwise)	73						

One Way Repeated Measures ANOVA: Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts									
Source	BP	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
BP	Linear	834.253	1	834.253	20.325	.000	.220	20.325	.994
Error(BP)	Linear	2955.247	72	41.045					
a. Computed using alpha = .05									

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Post Hoc: Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Brand Personality PRE - Brand Personality Post	-4.7808	9.06036	1.06044	-6.8947	-2.6668	-4.508	72	.000

Male Brand Personality

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
MBPPRE	73	8.00	39.00	26.0411	7.83234	61.346
MBPPOST	73	7.00	42.00	28.0685	8.08003	65.287
Valid N (listwise)	73					

One Way Repeated Measures ANOVA: Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts									
Source	MBP	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
MBP	Linear	150.027	1	150.027	11.666	.001	.139	11.666	.921
Error(MBP)	Linear	925.973	72	12.861					
a. Computed using alpha = .05									

Post Hoc: Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	MBPPRE - MBPPOST	-2.0274	5.07163	.59359	-3.2107	-.8441	-3.415	72	.001

Female Brand Personality

Descriptive Statistics						
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
FBPPRE	73	6.00	29.00	15.0685	6.65693	44.315
FBPPOST	73	6.00	33.00	17.8219	7.59082	57.621
Valid N (listwise)	73					

One Way Repeated Measures ANOVA: Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts									
Source	FBP	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
FBP	Linear	276.719	1	276.719	13.743	.000	.160	13.743	.955
Error(FBP)	Linear	1449.781	72	20.136					
a. Computed using alpha = .05									

Post Hoc: Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	FBPPRE - FBPPOST	-2.7534	6.34600	.74274	-4.2340	-1.2727	-3.707	72	.000

Consumer Attitude Towards Advertising

Statistics				
		Disapproval	Surprised	Approval
N	Valid	73	73	73
	Missing	16	16	16
Mean		22.7123	2.9863	31.3836
Median		20.0000	3.0000	33.0000
Mode		10.00	2.00	24.00[a]
Std. Deviation		11.51868	1.51376	11.60655
Variance		132.680	2.291	134.712
a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown				

Group Statistics

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Disapproval	Male	29	21.7586	9.84035	1.82731
	Female	44	23.3409	12.57340	1.89551
Surprised	Male	29	2.7241	1.50941	.28029
	Female	44	3.1591	1.50878	.22746
Approval	Male	29	29.7931	12.55951	2.33224
	Female	44	32.4318	10.95530	1.65157

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
Disapproval	Equal variances assumed	2.140	.148	-.572	71	.569	-1.58229	2.76808	-7.1016	3.93711
	Equal variances not assumed			-.601	68.804	.550	-1.58229	2.63287	-6.8349	3.67042
Surprised	Equal variances assumed	.004	.948	-1.205	71	.232	-.43495	.36094	-1.1546	.28474
	Equal variances not assumed			-1.205	60.061	.233	-.43495	.36097	-1.1569	.28708
Approval	Equal variances assumed	1.915	.171	-.950	71	.345	-2.63871	2.77801	-8.1779	2.90049
	Equal variances not assumed			-.923	54.242	.360	-2.63871	2.85781	-8.3676	3.09026

Intention to Purchase and Brand Recommendation

Statistics		Purchase Intention	Brand Recommendation
N	Valid	73	73
	Missing	16	16
Mean		4.05	4.08
Median		5.00	4.00
Mode		0ª	0ª
Std. Deviation		2.867	2.842
a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown			

Sample Variability: Data Table

Summary T-Test

Summary Data				
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Stereotype	81	3.780	.784	.087
Neutral	73	3.650	.699	.079

Independent Samples Test					
	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Equal variances assumed	.130	.118	1.102	157.000	.272
Equal variances not assumed	.130	.118	1.105	156.087	.271
Hartley test for equal variance: F = 1.258, Sig. = 0.1547					

Hypothesis Testing: Data Table

Hypothesis 1: Brand Image

Descriptives

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Brand Image PRE	Stereotypes	81	95.2593	19.31371	2.14597	90.9886	99.5299	54.00	150.00
	Neutral	73	92.5205	19.39366	2.26986	87.9957	97.0454	52.00	128.00
	Total	154	93.9610	19.33701	1.55822	90.8826	97.0394	52.00	150.00
Brand Image Post	Stereotypes	81	89.8519	25.09089	2.78788	84.3038	95.3999	43.00	148.00
	Neutral	73	98.4384	24.02949	2.81244	92.8319	104.0449	37.00	141.00
	Total	154	93.9221	24.88786	2.00552	89.9600	97.8842	37.00	148.00

One way ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Brand Image PRE	Between Groups	287.992	1	287.992	.769	.382
	Within Groups	56921.775	152	374.485		
	Total	57209.766	153			
Brand Image Post	Between Groups	2830.870	1	2830.870	4.680	.032
	Within Groups	91938.195	152	604.857		
	Total	94769.065	153			

Hypothesis 2: Consumer Attitude to Advertising

Descriptives

Reaction to Advertising

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Stereotypes	81	81.1852	18.62398	2.06933	77.0671	85.3033	33.00	114.00
Neutral	73	88.6712	17.11404	2.00305	84.6782	92.6642	29.00	119.00
Total	154	84.7338	18.25529	1.47105	81.8276	87.6400	29.00	119.00

One way ANOVA					
Reaction to Advertising					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2151.753	1	2151.753	6.697	.011
Within Groups	48836.332	152	321.292		
Total	50988.084	153			

Descriptives									
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Disapproval	Stereotypes	81	53.3580	10.53365	1.17041	51.0288	55.6872	19.00	70.00
	Neutral	73	57.2877	11.51868	1.34816	54.6002	59.9752	20.00	70.00
	Total	154	55.2208	11.15034	.89852	53.4457	56.9959	19.00	70.00
Approval	Stereotypes	81	27.8272	11.87307	1.31923	25.2018	30.4525	9.00	51.00
	Neutral	73	31.3836	11.60655	1.35844	28.6756	34.0916	9.00	51.00
	Total	154	29.5130	11.84388	.95441	27.6275	31.3985	9.00	51.00
Surprised	Stereotypes	81	2.8025	1.33622	.14847	2.5070	3.0979	1.00	7.00
	Neutral	73	2.9863	1.51376	.17717	2.6331	3.3395	1.00	6.00
	Total	154	2.8896	1.42141	.11454	2.6633	3.1159	1.00	7.00

One way ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Disapproval	Between Groups	592.917	1	592.917	4.890	.029
	Within Groups	18429.576	152	121.247		
	Total	19022.494	153			
Approval	Between Groups	485.634	1	485.634	3.519	.063
	Within Groups	20976.841	152	138.006		
	Total	21462.474	153			
Surprised	Between Groups	1.298	1	1.298	.641	.425
	Within Groups	307.826	152	2.025		
	Total	309.123	153			

Hypothesis 3: Brand Association

Descriptives		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Brand Association Pre	Stereotypes	81	52.2716	13.25709	1.47301	49.3402	55.2030	24.00	89.00
	Neutral	73	51.4110	12.14820	1.42184	48.5766	54.2453	21.00	74.00
	Total	154	51.8636	12.70946	1.02416	49.8403	53.8870	21.00	89.00
Brand Association Post	Stereotypes	81	47.7284	15.63731	1.73748	44.2707	51.1861	15.00	83.00
	Neutral	73	52.5479	14.15101	1.65625	49.2463	55.8496	18.00	77.00
	Total	154	50.0130	15.09707	1.21656	47.6096	52.4164	15.00	83.00

One way ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Brand Association Pre	Between Groups	28.440	1	28.440	.175	.676
	Within Groups	24685.696	152	162.406		
	Total	24714.136	153			
Brand Association Post	Between Groups	891.867	1	891.867	3.990	.048
	Within Groups	33980.107	152	223.553		
	Total	34871.974	153			

Hypothesis 4: Brand Personality

Descriptives		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Brand Personality: Pre	Stereotypes	81	42.9877	9.10425	1.01158	40.9745	45.0008	18.00	70.00
	Neutral	73	41.1096	10.84558	1.26938	38.5791	43.6401	14.00	63.00
	Total	154	42.0974	9.97891	.80412	40.5088	43.6860	14.00	70.00
Brand Personality: Post	Stereotypes	81	42.1235	12.00873	1.33430	39.4681	44.7788	15.00	77.00
	Neutral	73	45.8904	12.28093	1.43737	43.0251	48.7558	14.00	68.00
	Total	154	43.9091	12.24497	.98673	41.9597	45.8585	14.00	77.00

One way ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Brand Personality: Pre	Between Groups	135.428	1	135.428	1.363	.245
	Within Groups	15100.111	152	99.343		
	Total	15235.539	153			
Brand Personality: Post	Between Groups	544.839	1	544.839	3.698	.056
	Within Groups	22395.889	152	147.341		
	Total	22940.727	153			

Male Brand Personality

Descriptives		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Brand Personality: Male Pre	Stereotypes	81	28.0617	6.57333	.73037	26.6082	29.5152	11.00	42.00
	Neutral	73	26.0411	7.83234	.91671	24.2137	27.8685	8.00	39.00
	Total	154	27.1039	7.24471	.58380	25.9506	28.2572	8.00	42.00
Brand Personality: Male Post	Stereotypes	81	26.7037	7.93480	.88164	24.9492	28.4582	6.00	42.00
	Neutral	73	28.0685	8.08003	.94570	26.1833	29.9537	7.00	42.00
	Total	154	27.3506	8.00697	.64522	26.0760	28.6253	6.00	42.00

One way ANOVA		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Brand Personality: Male Pre	Between Groups	156.770	1	156.770	3.026	.084
	Within Groups	7873.568	152	51.800		
	Total	8030.338	153			
Brand Personality: Male Post	Between Groups	71.519	1	71.519	1.116	.292
	Within Groups	9737.546	152	64.063		
	Total	9809.065	153			

Female Brand Personality

<table>
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<tr>
<td></td><td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td colspan="2">95% Confidence Interval for Mean</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>Maximum</td>
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<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
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<tr>
<td rowspan="3">Brand Personality: Female Pre</td>
<td>Stereotypes</td><td>81</td><td>14.9259</td><td>6.20036</td><td>.68893</td><td>13.5549</td><td>16.2969</td><td>6.00</td><td>35.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td><td>73</td><td>15.0685</td><td>6.65693</td><td>.77913</td><td>13.5153</td><td>16.6217</td><td>6.00</td><td>29.00</td>
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<td>Total</td><td>154</td><td>14.9935</td><td>6.40006</td><td>.51573</td><td>13.9746</td><td>16.0124</td><td>6.00</td><td>35.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td rowspan="3">Brand Personality: Female Post</td>
<td>Stereotypes</td><td>81</td><td>15.4198</td><td>8.05584</td><td>.89509</td><td>13.6385</td><td>17.2010</td><td>6.00</td><td>41.00</td>
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<td>Neutral</td><td>73</td><td>17.8219</td><td>7.59082</td><td>.88844</td><td>16.0508</td><td>19.5930</td><td>6.00</td><td>33.00</td>
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<td>Total</td><td>154</td><td>16.5584</td><td>7.90548</td><td>.63704</td><td>15.2999</td><td>17.8170</td><td>6.00</td><td>41.00</td>
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<td></td><td></td>
<td>Sum of Squares</td>
<td>df</td>
<td>Mean Square</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
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<tr>
<td rowspan="3">Brand Personality: Female Pre</td>
<td>Between Groups</td><td>.780</td><td>1</td><td>.780</td><td>.019</td><td>.891</td>
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<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td><td>6266.213</td><td>152</td><td>41.225</td><td></td><td></td>
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<td>Total</td><td>6266.994</td><td>153</td><td></td><td></td><td></td>
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<tr>
<td rowspan="3">Brand Personality: Female Post</td>
<td>Between Groups</td><td>221.561</td><td>1</td><td>221.561</td><td>3.606</td><td>.059</td>
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<td>Within Groups</td><td>9340.413</td><td>152</td><td>61.450</td><td></td><td></td>
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<td>Total</td><td>9561.974</td><td>153</td><td></td><td></td><td></td>
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Intention to Purchase

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<tr><td colspan="10" align="center">Intention to Purchase</td></tr>
<tr>
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<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>Std. Error</td>
<td colspan="2">95% Confidence Interval for Mean</td>
<td>Minimum</td>
<td>Maximum</td>
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<td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td>
<td>Lower Bound</td>
<td>Upper Bound</td>
<td></td><td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotypes</td><td>81</td><td>3.77</td><td>3.071</td><td>.341</td><td>3.09</td><td>4.44</td><td>0</td><td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neutral</td><td>73</td><td>4.05</td><td>2.867</td><td>.336</td><td>3.39</td><td>4.72</td><td>0</td><td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td><td>154</td><td>3.90</td><td>2.970</td><td>.239</td><td>3.43</td><td>4.38</td><td>0</td><td>10</td>
</tr>
</table>

One way ANOVA					
Intention to Purchase					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.215	1	3.215	.363	.548
Within Groups	1346.324	152	8.857		
Total	1349.539	153			

Brand Recommendation

Descriptives								
Brand Recommendation								
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Stereotypes	81	3.54	2.979	.331	2.88	4.20	0	10
Neutral	73	4.08	2.842	.333	3.42	4.75	0	9
Total	154	3.80	2.918	.235	3.33	4.26	0	10

One way ANOVA					
Brand Recommendation					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	11.154	1	11.154	1.313	.254
Within Groups	1291.606	152	8.497		
Total	1302.760	153			