Congruity in gender-neutral advertisement

A comparative cross-sectional study

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Abstract

Title	Congruity in gender-neutral advertisement: A comparative cross-sectional study
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Authors	Tatiana Najem and Emmi Puolakka
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Keywords	Gender identity, self-concept, gender congruency, gender-neutral product, skincare
Thesis purpose	The purpose of this thesis is to study the impact the gender congruency between an individual and an advertisement has on the attitudes towards the advertisement of gender-neutral skincare product, while taking into consideration the potential cultural differences.
Methodology	This study used a quantitative approach to conduct a descriptive approach and cross-sectional research design. Non-probability convenience sampling was conducted, and the online survey encompassing of 13 questions was distributed.
Theoretical perspective	The conceptual framework of the research is structured based on the previous literature and consist of three main theoretical parts of attitude, gender identity theories and skincare industry. The literature concerning gender congruency between an advertisement and individual has been researched through the lens of a gendered product advertisement, our research contributing to the non-gendered advertisement.
Empirical data	A total of 750 participants aged between 18-39 were chosen to be a part of this study, out of which 375 studied in Finland and 375 studied in Lebanon.
Findings	This research concluded that gender identity has an impact on the gender congruency between the individual and the advertisement of the gender-neutral skincare product. This in turn has an impact on the attitudes towards the advertisement, leading to purchase intention. To specify, country of studies has a moderating effect on the relationship between gender identity and gender congruency. Furthermore, there is a relationship between gender congruency and attitudes towards the advertisement of the gender-neutral skincare product.
Practical implications	The findings of our research explain that a lot of importance and understanding should be given to the gender identities of consumers and the masculinity/femininity levels of the country in order to promote a gender-neutral skincare product.

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1   Introduction

Society is constantly fluctuating into becoming more advanced. As it is striving for gender equality, stereotypical gender roles are diminishing and the rise of gender-neutrality is evident. As a result, the gender-neutral product industry is developing and becoming a considerable market industry. There is an increase in gender-neutral products which is apparent among the other fields especially in skincare industry. As the gender-neutral industry grows, it is important to understand the factors relating to the gender-identities of consumers and products to deliver efficient advertisements. This first section will introduce the reader to a brief overview of gender portrayal in stereotypical and traditional advertising and its development over the years, the gender identities and marketing along with gender congruency, and the gender-neutral skincare industry. The purpose of the research will also be specified, and an outline of the thesis will be presented.

1.1   Background

With society being in constant progress, beliefs and values have been significantly changing as a major development from changing gender-images has risen and provided an opportunity to the diminishing of old stereotypical gender roles. Several authors have explained that the change of women taking part in work-life modified the already existing sex roles around the '80s (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a; Lindner, 2004). The stereotypical gender roles of men have started changing due to the acceptance of having two providers in the family, as both participants might have the possibility to work and earn (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a). Kacen (2000) emphasizes that in the postmodern world, the image of gender roles is seen as a way for individuals to express themselves. The postmodern era has reformulated the consumption culture, enabling both females and males to become considered as equal consumers (Kacen, 2000).

Advertising has been described as one of the reasons for maintaining the stereotypical gender concepts (Frith, 2016), however, the current gender stereotypes are shifting towards more fragmented ones, as cross-gender product advertising has increased (Chu, Lee and Kim, 2016). Males have been depicted in advertisements in increasing amounts in a way that does not follow the common path of gender stereotyping (Lien, Chou & Chang, 2012), rather than oozing from masculinity (Hakala, 2006), nowadays, the masculinity depicted in the advertisement can be seen as fragmented. Thus, researchers (Elliott & Elliott, 2005) are suggesting that men could relate more to advertisements when seeing images reflecting a person resembling more average Joe, even though advertisements depicting athletic alpha males were viewed with admiration, this was not something they related to. In addition to men, (Del Saz-Rubio 2019) women's gender role portrayed in the advertisement has shifted

from the portrayal of the very domestic goddess to depicting women as part of what could be considered as male-dominant roles.

Due to the gender-identities shifting from the old stereotypes to more liberal ones, and as the gender stereotypes are depicted in more adverse ways in the advertisements, the demand for gender-neutral products has risen. Showing non-stereotypical advertisements could cause small changes in how society views gender stereotypes, thus providing the marketers to take part in social responsibility (Chu, Lee & Kim, 2016). In the European Union, ethical guidelines have been updated to prevent the extensive usage of gender stereotyping in advertising and marketing (Grau & Zotos, 2016). This emphasizes the need for researching gender-neutral advertisements since the traditional gender stereotypical advertisements are diminishing due to increased legislation and public pressure (Grau & Zotos, 2016). The majority of the prior research done for cultural effects on advertising is content analysis based instead of experiments, thus, there is a need for more experimental studies since the content analysis cannot explain all the potential patterns emerging from cultural differences in advertising (Saleem, 2017).

1.1.1 Gender identity and marketing

Frith (2016) states that advertisements and media have a role in influencing the experienced gender roles in society. According to Eisend (2019), there has been an increase in research studying the portrayals of men and women in advertisements because it was assumed that the advertisements usually present a male viewpoint of the world, leading to positive and negative consequences for marketers, consumers, and society. There is a difference in how men and women are portrayed in advertisements depending on whom the communication is being directed to (Harrison & Gentry, 2010). The stereotypical portrayal of gender roles may be used to highlight the product features, such as how easy it is to prepare or consume the product (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a). Higher degrees of gender stereotyping in advertisements may be seen more positively by men, however, only to a certain extent by women (De Meulenaer, Dens, De Pelsmacker & Eisend, 2018). Due to feminist movements, more research driven by the interest towards how women were depicted in the advertisements was conducted compared to research concerning men, thus there is less research conducted on masculinity and how men are being portrayed and stereotyped (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). Nonetheless, the postmodern era brought light to the previously mentioned concepts bringing in multiple aspects of research involving males, different genders, and advertising (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019).

Individuals express and construct themselves through their consumption behavior (Bocock, 1993 cited in Kacen, 2000). We define ourselves through the purchases we make and the items we own and different authors such as Belk (1988) have agreed to this theory, along with other authors stating that individuals are drawn to use products that are part of who they are as people (Reed, Forehand, Puntoni & Warlop, 2012). One of the authors in the marketing field explains that what we consume directs the path of our consumer identities (Kacen, 2000), whereas another author stresses that the most significant identity is one's gender identity (Connel, 1990 cited in Fugate & Philips, 2010). Contrary to the emerging demand for gender-neutral oriented products, some of the older research supports the idea of gendered products.

Alreck (1994) explains that a product or a brand must be designed or adjusted to attract the stereotypical man or woman and to give it a gender image, hence the advertising and promoting of a product must be done in a manner that shows the masculine or feminine sex-role stereotype. According to Kacen (2000), during the postmodern era, the advertisements and products can be seen as an opportunity for individuals to build their gender identity.

The majority of products are labeled as female or male (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a; Fugate & Philips, 2010) hence the companies that are promoting a product's gender for desired target market do so by using visual design elements, such as colors and shapes (Schnurr, 2018). Different aspects of a product such as brand name, product shape, and packaging play a role for an individual seeking a gender congruent product (Fugate & Philips, 2010). All these product characteristics have an impact on the perception of whether the product is seen as masculine or feminine (Lieven, Grohmann, Herrmann, Landwehr & Van Tilburg, 2015). These product characteristics construct the gender cues in the advertisements which affect the viewers' perception of an advertised product. (Sandhu, 2018). When a company assigns a product a masculine or feminine image, it requires a relatively high level of advertising and promotion over a significant period to create such an image. (Alreck, 1994).

1.1.2 Gender congruency in advertising

According to Baughman (1962, p. 342), "the self-concept a person develops usually provides for flexibility in behavior". To understand consumer behavior more clearly, the psychological constructs of an individual's self-concept are linked to the symbolic value of the goods purchased by that individual (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). The image an individual has of himself is a motivator of human behavior and ultimately, consumer behavior in the marketplace (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). Self-congruity is a strong predictor of purchase intention (Ahmad, Rizwan, Sandhu & Usman, 2018). Self-congruity allows marketers to position themselves and segment consumer markets (Bosselman, Kang, Tang and Lee, 2012). The self-congruity theory explains that individuals buy goods that relate to their self-concept, to the way they see themselves. It is suggested that the marketers understand and study how much their customers identify, express, or enhance their self-image and the social groups to which they belong to and design the symbolic image based on the values that these groups follow to create efficient marketing for their product (Bosselman et al. 2012).

According to Orth and Holancova (2003), gender congruity refers to the structural correspondence between the entire configuration of a sex-role portrayal in an advertisement and the configuration specified by a person's schema or beliefs. The sex-role portrayals in advertisements that are consistent with consumer's self-schema and beliefs tend to produce more favorable attitudes than those that are incongruent (Orth & Holancova, 2003). Consumers are involved in gender congruency when it is related to their self-concept (Fugate & Philips, 2010). Previous studies have been conducted to show that individuals prefer products that are congruent with their gender such as studies from Worth, Smith and Mackie (1992), or with advertisements such as from Feireisen, Broderick and Douglas (2009), in which advertisements that were congruent with the self-concept of the individual were more effective than the ones that were not (Chang, 2006; Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). According to

Basfirinci (2014), consumers might not favor advertisements if their image is not consistent with their stereotypes of their potential user of the product.

Research related to the congruency tends to be done by dividing the genders into women and men such as the study of Orth and Holancova (2003) and Hong and Zinkhan (1995). The gender researcher Sandra Bem (1974) developed a BSRI scale where the gender identities of individuals are divided into four categories based on their masculinity and femininity levels. As a result, the gender consists of two dimensions: masculinity and femininity and it can be defined into different categories such as masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated (Schnurr, 2018). Bem (1974) defined the androgynous self-concept as an individual being a part of both stereotyped "masculine" and "feminine" behaviors. Hogg and Garrow (2003) state that the consumers' responses to advertisements differ according to their psychologically based self-schemas of gender identity.

1.1.3   Gender neutral industry and skincare products

Cambridge Dictionary (2020a) describes gender neutral as "relating to people and not especially to men or women". Skincare products are described by Schmitt (1992) as products that consist of wide functional attributes, some of the products providing pharmacological benefits and functions more than cosmetic needs. Thus, gender-neutral skincare products could be described as skincare products including functional features such as pharmacological qualities that are not targeted especially to women or men.

According to Larissa Jensen, a senior beauty analyst at a market research firm, current beauty products are more inclusive, sustainable, clean, and genderless, which are important factors to younger consumers (Carefoot, 2020). According to NPD Group, makeup revenue sales have declined, but skin-care sales have increased, and that may be because men do have less of a barrier to try skincare products. After all, the skincare industry lacks the "gendered focus" that makeup has traditionally carried (Carefoot, 2020). The shift from the traditional gender roles towards more open ones can also be observed from the way male models are promoting the products that have a feminine identity (Chu, Lee & Kim, 2016). Research done by Mintel revealed that, with the emergence of Gen Z, nearly two-thirds of US men aged 16-24 are interested or have used genderless beauty products (Arnett, 2019).

Brands like Kenzo, Yves Saint Laurent, and Karl Lagerfeld have presented unisex styles and practiced mixing of stereotypical gender roles in their advertisements. In addition to that, more mainstream brands have offered unisex clothing lines to their selection (Kasriel-Alexander, 2011). The fragrance industry has also experienced the trend towards unisex products, as the product offered can be the same for men and women consumers, just the package varying which supports the idea that selection of the cosmetic product should be based on personal preferences instead of gender (Kasriel-Alexander, 2011). Dr. Mahto, who is a dermatologist at Harley Street's Skin 5, suggests that the skincare industry should not be segmented by gender, but rather by individual skin type (Simon, 2018).

The fact that there are barely any neutral options is a problem, along with restrictive binary categorization (Simon, 2018). There is a huge business opportunity identified once

organizations decide to respond to this shift as it is a chance to develop products and experiences for a growing target audience that no longer buys into the traditional conceptions of gender and the stereotypical, binary classifications related to it (Kenney, 2020). This concept of identifying products as feminine or masculine may lead to potential losses of customers as it excludes whoever might be interested (Kenney, 2020). The beauty industry has always differentiated between gender in its product offerings and relied heavily on gender marketing (Simon, 2018).

According to Simon (2018), the way we shop and how we consume has changed drastically over the past few years shifting in a non-binary direction. Beauty brands are taking a step towards more gender-neutral products presented in unisex packaging by advertising in a way to reflect diversity in race and gender, by avoiding the old stereotypes (Carefoot, 2020). Simon (2018) mentions that stereotypes are on the verge of disappearing since this kind of gendered marketing begins to look outdated and out of touch.

Market research company Mintel forecasted gender neutral beauty to be a trend back in 2018 as the face of the beauty industry was changing (Simon, 2018). They mentioned that consumers are shifting away from the traditional gender stereotypes and expectations and expect brands to introduce gender-neutral concepts in their products and their marketing campaigns (Simon, 2018). This shift is a significant aspect in the market that cannot be ignored by companies: it is important to understand how gender is approached, from market research to customer experience to the products you sell (Kenney, 2020).

Dipanjan Chatterjee, a principal analyst at Forrester, mentions that male-targeted marketing will not completely disappear, but it will become of less importance as portrayals of extreme masculinity will be phased out (Arnett, 2019). Studies and previous company performances have shown that traditional male marketing is not doing the job anymore for grooming products as only a third of contemporary US male consumers care about looking manly, according to Margaux Caron, a global beauty analyst at Mintel (Arnett, 2019). Caron mentioned that appearing healthy is more valuable for male consumers than being manly (Arnett, 2019). For example, John Lewis, the brand, has recently removed gender labels from its children's clothes and global brands such as H&M have been releasing unisex collections (Simon, 2018).

We are Fluide, a gender-neutral makeup brand founded in 2018, explained that their goal is to create a space for people to authentically express themselves (Carefoot, 2020). They also mentioned that they have tried to make their product and packaging not extremely masculine or feminine because they believe that gender is a more of a constellation rather than an extreme of one or the other (Carefoot, 2020). Another company that has gone all-in on genderless products is Ursa Major, which is a skincare brand co-founded by Oliver Sweatman and Emily Doyle (Carefoot, 2020). This company has been running its business successfully over 10 years, the line includes face, hair, and body products containing natural ingredients, and it was started in 2009 (Carefoot, 2020). The couple founders believe that the products can be used equally by any gender, and the aim is a healthier product that delivers nourishment in a non-gendered way (Carefoot, 2020). Along the same lines, Natural Spa Factory (2010) mentions that the beauty industry has witnessed a shift towards inclusivity in the past few

years. The company believes that the beauty industry has some catching up to do, as there are still brands categorizing products "for women" or "for men" (Natural Spa Factory, 2020).

1.1.4 Problem summary

Based on previous research, gender identity plays a significant role in marketing and advertising specifically. Its role has evolved from the traditional binary and stereotypical gender roles to a more fluid definition where individuals cannot be classified in old stereotypical ways. From the authors' point of view, the shift from the stereotypical gender roles has made most of the older research around gender congruity a bit outdated as these have based their research mostly on the traditional gender identity definitions and used more stereotypical portrayals on the researched advertisements. As the general trend has been the emergence of gender equality, gender-neutral products have received great attention, and assumptions claim that this trend will continue in the future. Due to the development of these recent phenomena, the authors of this thesis see that more information and research is needed specifically around gender-neutral products and non-stereotypical gender identities as it could be an important aspect and knowledge for future marketing when more and more gender-neutral products and advertisements will enter the market.

1.2 Research Purpose

The objective of this research is to study the gender-congruity effect on advertisements. The gender identities of the youth are developing into more fragmented directions; thus, individuals do not see themselves anymore based on the pure stereotypical gender-identities which they are born with. Due to the media being one of the major tools that carry the old gender-identities and as the new wave in the advertising and media have increased portrayal of less typical gender-identities stereotypes shown in the advertisements, the arrival of the wider categorization of gender-identities is becoming more as a standard.

From the consumers' perspective, individuals are reaching towards more individually tailored products and seeking quality. Rather than using products that are targeted based on gender, consumers have increased their interest in searching for products that are not targeted to them based on their gender. Individuals consider the information provided about products and their quality the most important.

There is a limited amount of academic literature surrounding the gender-neutral topic. Thus, it was considered vital to produce new knowledge in this field, as we see the field emerging into mainstream popularity and being a more prominent field in the upcoming years. We based our reasoning for this according to the findings discovered by the extensive literature review we conducted. It was discovered that some products are not dependent on gender, nor could the consumers separate the gender of the products in all product categories.

There is academic literature involving gender-congruity as a way to research advertisements. However, there is a gap in the literature involving the research of gender-congruity and how it affects attitude formation towards gender neutral advertisements. The purpose of this research is to investigate whether the individual's gender-identity affects how they perceive the gender identity of the advertisement, and by this, the thesis is researching the gender-congruity between the individual and the gender-neutral advertisement, and its effect on the attitudes towards the advertisement.

Because of the increasing gender-neutral advertisements and wide expansion of social media, the shifting of gender identities away from more stereotyped ones cannot be seen only as a western phenomenon, but as a global one. As media and advertising are stated as one of the reasons for keeping the old gender stereotypes and as the gender portrayals of advertisements are shifting towards depicting more fragmented masculinity and femininity, the gender neutral phenomena and fragmented gender identities can be seen to reach all around the world. Multiple articles are stating the importance of country comparison as a way to increase the understanding of the researched phenomenon. As this thesis conducted new research, we considered it valuable to add knowledge to the marketing field by conducting a comparative study researching two different countries, one being from Northern Europe and one from Western Asia (The Middle East). Thus, we concluded on two important research questions:

RQ1: Does gender-congruity affect the attitudes towards the gender-neutral advertisement?

RQ2: Do the attitudes towards the gender-neutral advertisement of participants differ between the countries?

To solve the defined research questions, the study identifies suitable gender-neutral advertisement from the skincare industry. Consequently, the results will be collected utilizing the descriptive research design to discover the possible effects between the gender identity and gender identity of the gender-neutral advertisement. Likewise, the moderating variable of country studies will be investigated. In sum, the results will clarify that researching gender-congruency can benefit current marketing practices.

1.3   Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is constructed of six chapters, each contributing to the description and analysis of the research. The first chapter introduces the topic of the thesis by describing the overall topic, the purpose and aim of the study. By explaining briefly, the purpose of this research is to discover whether gender-congruence affects attitudes towards the gender-neutral advertisement further including the country of studies as a moderating factor. In the second chapter, an extensive literature review is conducted, thus the theoretical framework is divided into three distinctive headings. Considering our research topic, attitudes, gender-identity, and skincare industry are considered vital for explaining and structuring the study. This part is corroborating the study by ensuring a solid base for our research. Furthermore, the defined hypotheses are introduced in the end part of this chapter. The third chapter serves as a section for the research design and the methodology used for the study. The chapter will explain our

research approach, design, data collection methods as well as data analysis. The analysis of the key findings is presented in the fourth chapter; thus, the analysis will be done at the aggregated level as well as comparing the results between the countries. Chapter five presents the discussion of the analyzed data, whereas the final chapter, concludes the study and reveals how this study may be used for future research.

Introduction

Literature review

Methodology

Findings and Analysis

Discussion and Key findings

Conclusion

Figure 1.1 Structure of thesis

2   Literature Review

The literature review chapter outlines the existing literature following the theoretical fields considered the most relevant for structuring our study. Concerning the purpose of the thesis, an overview of the literature about attitudes studies and gender-identity presence in advertisements is provided. Gender-identity congruity and skincare industry will be presented. Thus, the purpose of the chapter is to present a broader understanding of the research problem.

2.1   Attitudes

Thurstone (1946, cited in Edwards, 1994, p. 2) defined attitudes as "the level of negative or positive affect connected with some psychological object". Psychological objects were seen as an idea or ideal towards factors that individuals can experience differences, which could vary depending on the effects experienced, this being negative or positive (Edwards, 1994). The stated psychological objects were described as people, institutions, symbols, slogans (Edwards, 1994), and events (Ajzen, 2005). Fazio (1990, cited in Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005) defines attitudes as a learned association in memory between an object and its positive or negative evaluation, and that the strength of this association corresponds to the strength of the attitude. Attitudes can be described as hiding characteristics that are drawn from observable factors, such as cues, which is why they are not directly observable but rather can be gathered in measurable forms (Ajzen, 2005). Ajzen (2005) also defined attitudes as one's habit of reacting and replying unfavorable or favorable towards an object.

Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) explain that psychology was originally defined as a scientific study of attitudes. Watson (1925 cited in Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005) stated that attitudes were considered vital for receiving knowledge concerning the behavior of individuals. There has been controversy towards the attitude theories because individuals do not always act in the same manner as they express themselves verbally (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Furthermore, researchers started to question the functionality of the attitude studies, due to finding attitudes indicating only slightly the actual behavior (Blumer, 1955; Campbell, 1963). There have been differences in how exact the results of the attitude studies are; thus, these may depend on respondents' predisposed interest towards the researched topic (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005) and that individuals may not be ready to portray their opinions honestly in direct interviews (Edwards, 1994). Despite the issues relating to measuring attitudes, these were discarded as there was still great interest in studying why attitudes shift and how they are formulated (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005).

According to Ajzen (2005), theories are lacking a common formal definition of attitudes. However, among social psychologists, there is an agreement that the main common feature is the attribute of evaluation of attitudes (Ajzen, 2005). To specify the common denominator of attitude studies, the evaluation processes are done by scales of opposite attitudes (Ajzen, 2005). To clarify, these opposite ends may be, for example, evaluating an object in a scale between pleasant and unpleasant, meaning evaluating the negative and positive expressions (Edwards, 1994).

There are two important ways of researching attitudes' effect on behavior and the first one is researching the attitudes towards a behavior, the focus being either some specific target or object and the second is studying basic attitudes involved with objects that are concrete, such as events or groups (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Essentially, attitudes are a level of affect or reaction that is positively or negatively evaluated towards psychological constructs such as people, institutions, symbols, or slogans. Attitudes may be considered important for the prediction of behavior stated that the individual is interested in the topic researched. As attitudes are continuous, their measurement includes scales between negative and positive statements.

2.1.1 Attitudes and advertisement

Advertising plays a significant role in shaping and constructing our attitudes as the audience and consumer (Hidayah & Milal, 2016). Advertisements are a way for producers to motivate consumers to purchase their products (Hidayah & Milal, 2016). A positive or negative response to an advertisement stimulus describes the attitude towards the advertisement (Akkaya, Akyol & Simsek, 2017). Consumers possessing a positive attitude towards an idea or a product are easily influenced by advertisements that can be used to strengthen the positive attitudes, change negative attitudes, and persuade consumers (Akkaya, Akyol & Simsek, 2017). Conversely, consumers develop negative attitudes towards an advertised product whose advertising message caused strong negative emotions (Jovanovic, Kostic & Vlastelica, 2016).

In a study conducted by Mehta (2000), findings suggest that individuals who like advertising and feel that advertisements provide useful information recall, notice, and give attention to more advertisements than those who do not feel this way. Different advertising appeals, whether rational or emotional, have different effects on the consumers' attitudes and the purchase intention (Jovanovic, Kostic & Vlastelica, 2016; Shimp, 1981) which happens through developing positive attitudes of individuals towards the advertised product or service (Abu Bakar, Mohamad & Raza, 2019; Mehta, 2000). According to Jovanovic, Kostic and Vlastelica (2016), emotional appeals have a stronger effect on women whereas rational appeals have a stronger effect on men.

To maintain positive attitudes toward an advertisement, advertisers need to make sure that their content should be entertaining, truthful, and informative at the same time (Mehta, 2000) as well as match consumers' values and beliefs (Abu Bakar, Mohamad & Raza, 2019). It is important to gain an understanding of the cultural background of consumers in terms of norms

so that the advertisements can be more successful and relevant, and with this, develop positive attitudes and appeal to consumers' behaviors (Abu Bakar, Mohamad & Raza, 2019).

Overall, attitudes may be constructed with exposure to an advertisement, which may lead to positive or negative feelings. Additionally, negative or positive feelings towards the advertisement may impact the attitudes towards the advertised product. Advertisements may be different from a culture to another due to the different beliefs and values.

2.1.2   Attitudes towards advertisement

Lutz (1985) has defined attitudes towards advertisement as the "propensity to respond in a positive or negative manner to a particular advertisement stimulus during a particular exposure occasion". Mitchell and Olson (1981) describe the majority of the attitudes towards advertising models being based on the earlier research of Fishbein. Few of the most commonly known and prevalent attitudes towards advertisement theories are derived from the following authors (MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986; Mitchel & Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981).

The theory of general attitudes towards advertisement was first introduced by Shimp (1981), which was called ATT_a -model. Shimp (1981) stated that the ATT_a -model could be used instead of ATT_b when the brand researched is similar to other brands, thus equivalent to others. The ATT_a -model enables research of advertisement without affecting consumers' thoughts about the brand, neither focusing on any particular product benefit nor attribute (Shimp, 1981). Shimp's (1981) research promotes an idea where the attitude towards the advertisement can be conceptualized as a general attitude towards the ad itself, which is slightly different from attitudes towards brands approach where ads are seen as a way to promote product beliefs and influence brand choice. With ATT_b, attitudes towards the brand theories, consumers are expected to be rational and choose the best product based on product beliefs whereas with ATT_a, it is expected that consumers generally want to feel good and as such, an ad that leaves a positive feeling for the consumer can affect the choice of the brand (Shimp, 1981). In the case of a known brand, consumer beliefs and evaluations contribute to the attitude towards the brand (ATT_b) along with the attitude towards the ad itself (Shimp, 1981). Shimp (1981) explains that in the case of unknown brands, it is possible that the attitude toward the ad can elicit such strong affective feelings that people transfer that to the attitude towards brands. Shimp (1981) explains this transfer through the learning theory where people learn to have a positive attitude towards objects that are associated with nice or good things. In this case, the analogy can be seen as an advertisement in general, being the thing the brand is associated with (Shimp, 1981). Indicating that ads creating a positive attitude can lead potential consumers to learn to like the brand in question (Shimp, 1981). As such it can be seen that for unknown brands, advertising might need to focus more on eliciting positive feelings rather than trying to emphasize certain product beliefs (Shimp, 1981).

The article by Mitchell and Olson (1981) states that it is important to understand the causal relationships and formations behind attitudes to develop an effective marketing strategy. Mitchell and Olson (1981) researched whether differences in attitudes toward advertisement would create change in brand beliefs. Since they used fictional brands in their experiments, all the changes towards the brand attitude could be seen as an effect of the advertisement

(Mitchell & Olson, 1981). Results of the study indicate that the general construct of A_{ad} consisting of four items was a significant predictor of the brand attitude which indicates that the ad itself might affect the brand attitude, not just the brand product beliefs (Mitchell & Olson, 1981).

MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) conducted research to compare different hypotheses from considering the relationships of A_{ad} and attitudes towards brands. MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) described the model researched by Gardner (1985) and Mitchell & Olson (1981), Affect Transfer Hypothesis (ATH), as A_{ad} having a direct causal relationship with A_b. In ATH-model the effect of A_{ad} to A_b varies based on whether there is a high or low cognitive involvement when exposed to the advertisement. In the case of high cognitive involvement, the A_{ad} does not have a significant effect on A_b but in case of low involvement, it has a significant effect (MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986). The model developed by Lutz and Swasy (1977), Dual mediation hypothesis (DMH), was described by MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) as the A_{ad} having an indirect causal relationship to A_b through brand cognitions in addition to the direct effect.

Burke and Edell (1984), as well as Messmer (1979), studied the reciprocal mediation hypothesis (RMH) which differs from previous models through it expecting the causal relationship to not just be one-directional from A_{ad} to A_b rather bi-directional so that A_b affects A_{ad} and the nature of those relationships varying in different situations. In RMH when considering mature brands, it can be seen that previous experience on brand affects the A_{ad}, however for novel brands, it can be seen that since there is no previous experience of the brand, casual flow is more from A_{ad} to A_b (MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986). Howard's (1977) model of independent influences hypothesis (IIH) differs compared to the previous models in a way that it expects that there is no causal relationship between A_{ad} and A_b rather they both are independent constructs determining the purchase intention.

Table 2.1 Attitudes towards advertising theories

Author(s)	Attitudes towards advertisement
Shimp (1981)	Theory promotes an idea where attitude towards an advertisement can be conceptualized as a general attitude towards the ad itself. This varies slightly from the attitudes towards brands approach where ads are seen as a way to promote product beliefs and influence brand choice.
Mitchell and Olson (1981)	The theory argues that the general construct of A_{ad} consisting of four items was a significant predictor of the brand attitude. This suggests that ad itself might have an effect on the brand attitude, not just the brand product beliefs.
Gardner (1985)	Affect Transfer Hypothesis (ATH), describes A_{ad} having a direct causal relationship with A_b and that A_{ad} to A_b varies based on whether there is high or low cognitive involvement when exposed to advertisement.

Lutz and Swasy (1977)	Dual mediation hypothesis (DMH), argues the A_{ad} having an indirect causal relationship to A_b through brand cognitions in addition to the direct effect.
Burke and Edell (1984), Messmer (1979)	The reciprocal mediation hypothesis (RMH) considers the causal relationship to be not just one directional from A_{ad} to A_b rather bi-directional. An addition, the A_b affects A_{ad} and the nature of those relationships varying in different situations.
Howard (1977)	The model of independent influences hypothesis (IIH) differs contrasted to the other models as it expects that there is no causal relationship between A_{ad} and A_b. Both are independent constructs determining the purchase intention.
MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986)	DMH model was considered as an optimal choice of model compared to the other A_{ad} models.

Several authors have studied attitudes (Ajzen, 2005; Edwards, 1994; Blumer, 1955; Campbell, 1963) and some researchers have highlighted the importance of attitudes in advertising (Abu Bakar, Mohamad & Raza, 2019; Akkaya, Akyol & Simsek, 2017; Hidayah & Milal, 2016; Jovanovic, Kostic & Vlastelica, 2016; Mehta, 2000) as well as argued for attitudes affecting the purchasing intention (Burke & Edell, 1984; Gardner, 1985; Howard, 1977; Lutz & Swasy, 1977; MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986; Mitchel & Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981). Thus, it could be concluded that while conducting studies concerning advertising, understanding the attitudes as part of the research is considered important. Furthermore, the importance of including the aspect of the attitude studies in advertising can be found essential, as attitudes are affecting the purchasing intention. Hence, attitudes affect how individuals perceive the advertisement, thus, marketers should consider what kind of attitudes they want to provoke while creating the advertisement, as positive attitudes could be considered as an influence on the purchasing intention.

When the brand advertised is known, the attitudes towards the advertisement are affected by consumers' product beliefs and previous evaluations whereas if the brand is unknown, the attitudes towards the advertisement may predict the attitudes towards the brand. The level of involvement also has a reversed influence on the positive and negative attitudes towards the advertisement. Marketers must understand this relationship to develop an effective marketing strategy.

2.2   Gender identity

The term "identity" refers to "what and where the person is in social terms" (Stone, 1962, pp. 142-143). It is the construct that defines who a person is (Gordon, 1968 cited in Cheek & Cheek, 2018). One's identity is defined when others place this person as a social object by

assigning him the same words of identity that he assumes or announces for himself (Stone, 1962). Identity is defined as "any category label to which a consumer self-associates, either by choice or endowment, that is amenable to a clear picture of what the person in the category looks like, thinks, feels, and does" (Reed et al. 2012, p. 310). Not only do people use traits or characteristics to describe themselves as unique individuals, but they also locate themselves in a social context through their claims to social categories (Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi & Ethier, 1995). People's views of their identity may include any combination of expressions of individual uniqueness, personal relationships, labels that refer to social roles, group memberships (Gordon, 1968 cited in Cheek & Cheek, 2018), and demographic categories (Deaux et al. 1995).

Consumers associate themselves with products, brands, and consumption behaviors that are related to their category labels (Reed et al. 2012). At some point, identity becomes a meaning of oneself with the help of placements and announcements which are aroused by apparent symbols (Stone, 1962). Individuals may give greater attention to identity-related stimuli and prefer brands that are linked to the identity (Reed et al. 2012). They may also demonstrate positive reactions to advertisements with spokespeople who possess the desired identity and select media relating to the identity as well as adopt behaviors linked to identity (Reed et al. 2012).

The self-identity consumers have of themselves predicts their purchase intentions (Bai, Gong & Wang, 2019; Carfora, Cicia, Caso, Cavallo, De Devitiis, Del Giudice, Nardone & Visceccia, 2019; Han, Hua, Hu & Prentice, 2019), which is why companies need to understand the identities consumers give to themselves as a mean to market their products (Carfora et al. 2019). Also, when consumers identify with some specific community and members of that community, it leads to customer engagement, impacting purchase intentions (Bai, Gong & Wang, 2019; Han et al. 2019). Identities may change over time due to cultural or social factors (Reed et al. 2012). According to Connel (1990 cited in Fugate & Phillips, 2010), the most significant social identity is one's gender identity.

Individuals identify themselves with their surroundings such as their relationships with other people. The identity is developed through various purchases of products from brands that are seen as similar to the individual's identity which is why the purchase intention may be predicted based on the identity of consumers. Companies must recognize the identities to which their consumers associate with along with the people they relate to.

2.2.1 Self-congruity theory

Self-congruity is explained as a subjective experience generated by the interaction between a product-user image and a consumer's self-concept (Sirgy, Grewal, Mangleburg, Park, Chon, Claiborne, Johar & Berkman, 1997). "Consumers express their self-concept to others by purchasing and consuming brands with particular associations, which refers to the symbolic benefits of a brand" (Kim, 2015, p. 349). The self-concept of an individual is considered important, as it is the way he sees himself, therefore, his behavior will be directed in a way that will enhance his self-concept (Ahmad et al. 2018; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). When consumers buy a product that does not appeal to their present self-image, they sense that their

identities are hurt which is why consumers prefer products and brands that are congruent with their actual self-image (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995; Kim, 2015). Consumer goods serve as symbolic communication devices between an individual and others, and these goods communicate the meaning of the individual to his references (Bosselman et al. 2012; Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967) to reduce the risk of conflict with others (Kim, 2015). This is because there is a strong tendency for individuals to like others who are identifiable with them for example in terms of demographics, culture, and personality (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). The authors explain further that beliefs and attitudes can be considered identifiable factors between individuals along with religion, race, and nationality (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995).

When consumers feel unsatisfied with their actual self-concept and seek to enhance their identity, they try to build their self-esteem by purchasing products that appeal to their ideal self (Kim, 2015). Self-congruity allows marketers to position themselves and segment consumer markets (Bosselman et al. 2012), for example segmenting markets into groups of consumers who perceive congruence with the product-user image versus those who do not (Sirgy et al. 1997). Marketers should implement a marketing or branding strategy in advertising that shows particular personality attributes making it easy for consumers to match a brand with their self-concept (Ahmad et al. 2018; Bosselman et al. 2012).

Feiereisen, Broderick, and Douglas (2009) revealed that the congruency between the gender of an individual and the perceived gender of the advertisement was found to be positively related to the attitude towards the advertisement and purchase intention. According to Chang (2006), masculine ad-self congruency has an impact on masculine participants but not feminine ad-self congruency, whereas for feminine participants, feminine ad-self congruency had an impact on attitudes towards advertisements but not the masculine ad-self congruency. Hong and Zinkhan (1995) explained that respondents preferred advertisements similar to their self-concept, as it created stronger purchase intentions towards the product advertised than advertisements that were dissimilar or incongruent with the self-concepts.

The self-congruity theory is expressed as a relationship between the image of the product and the self-concept of the individual. The self-concept is the way the individual sees himself and his behavior focuses on displaying and enhancing oneself. Congruency may happen between an advertisement and the individual and has shown to lead to more positive attitudes towards the advertisement than incongruency.

Table 2.2 Self-congruity literature summary

Author(s)	Key findings
Ahmad, Rizwan, Sandhu and Usman (2018)	This study reveals that self-congruity has a strong impact on brand attitude. Individuals prefer to use brands/products that are consistent with one's own perceived self-concept in a way to preserve their self-image and consumers tend to place a huge importance on using those products/brands that match with one's perceived self. Self-congruity is a strong predictor of purchase intention.

Bai, Gong and Wang (2019)	Factors affecting the formation of purchase attitudes are social influences. Factors that have an impact on purchase intentions are the perceived trustworthiness and identity expressiveness. The research provides an understanding of identity expressiveness. Consumers identify with a certain market and purchase products that other people of this market buy as well.
Bosselman, Kang, Lee and Tang (2012)	Findings of this study revealed that self-congruity has an impact on customer attitude which influences repurchase intention. The researchers suggest that marketers identify the primary social groups to which their customers belong to because focusing on the characteristics of target customers allows marketers to efficiently segment the market and design practical marketing strategies.
Carfora, Cicia, Caso, Cavallo, De Devitiis, Del Giudice, Nardone and Visceccia (2019)	A positive attitude predicts intentions, past behavior influences intentions and future purchase. The self-identity consumers have of themselves determines their purchase intentions which shows that it is important for companies to understand the identities consumers give themselves as a means to market their products. Consumer trust is another factor affecting the intention.
Chang (2006)	This study reveals that there is a relationship between the self-concepts of masculinity/femininity of the individual and the responsiveness to advertising appeals. Congruency between the ad-portrayal and self-concept of masculinity/femininity is linked to positive attitudes towards the advertisement.
Feiereisen, Broderick and Douglas (2009)	The congruity between the gender of the individual and the one of an advertisement was found to be positively associated with advertising involvement, which was in turn positively related to attitude towards the advertisement and purchase intention, by eliciting positive consumer responses to advertising appeals.
Grubb and Grathwohl (1967)	An individual will direct their behavior to maintain and enhance their self-concept. The possession of consumer goods helps communicating meaning about himself to his references, once again enhancing and reinforcing his self-concept.
Han, Hua, Hu and Prentice (2019)	This study researched whether customer's social identification impacts their purchasing behavior. It revealed that once people identify with a member of a certain community, they identify with the community, and

	this leads to customer engagement which in turns leads to the purchase.
Hong and Zinkhan (1995)	This study is conducted to research the impact of consumer's self-concept on advertising effectiveness. Findings revealed that self-congruency of an ad has an effect on brand preference and purchase intention, and ideal-self congruency has a bigger impact than actual self-congruency. Findings revealed that self-congruent ad appeals are the most recommended as respondents preferred these.
Kim (2015)	Consumers express their self-image through purchases with particular associations. When consumers buy a product that they do not feel is congruent with their present self-image, they feel that their personal identities are hurt.
Reed, Forehand, Puntoni and Warlop (2012)	People are motivated to behave according to their identities. The surrounding environment of the individual with the people and objects in it are evaluated in respect to the identity. An individual will think, feel and behave consistently with his identity.

2.2.2   Gender and gender identity

Gender is the extent to which an individual identifies with masculine or feminine personality traits (Deaux, 1985). When gender is conceptualized as an identity, it is about the meaning of male or female for persons when they are reflexive, and how this self-meaning guides behavior in interaction (Stets & Burke, 1996). According to Stets and Burke (1996, p. 193), "gender as an identity comes from the viewpoint of individuals". Based on Kacen (2000), the modern image of gender roles consists of the traditional ones that are attached to us since we were born, whereas the postmodern image of gender roles is formed based on how individuals want to express themselves.

An individual's way of perceiving themselves as a woman or a man is one of the main factors when it comes to building a gender identity, which is modified by how one experiences the concepts of masculinity and femininity (Kacen, 2000). It is structured in a psychological manner and perceived as an individual achievement, which can change based on time and context (Kacen, 2000).

2.2.3   Gender Schema theory

The Gender Schema Theory developed by Sandra Bem is a social cognitive theory explaining how gendering happens from an early age and discussing the impact it has on cognitive and categorical processing throughout the lifetime (Starr & Zurbriggen, 2017). This theory suggests that the self-concept gets assimilated into the gender schema resulting in sex-typing (Bem, 1981). Children learn the contents of the gender schema and which attributes are related to their sex, therefore, with themselves (Bem, 1981) and categorize information, make decisions and regulate behavior accordingly (Starr & Zurbriggen, 2017).

One of the most accomplished gender researchers, Sandra Bem (1981) described that self-concepts become sex-typed and that the two sexes become different in degree and in kind. Sex-typed individuals differ from other non sex-typed individuals not by how much masculinity or femininity they possess but how much they let masculinity or femininity regulate their behavior and self-concepts (Bem, 1981). The culture's definitions of masculinity and femininity is a factor impacting the behavior of the individual (Bem, 1981). The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) is an instrument identifying sex-typed individuals by allowing them to rate their self-concepts based on 60 given personal attributes (Bem, 1981). The BSRI examines how well do these personal attributes describe the respondents, on a 7-point scale (Bem, 1981). These attributes consist of the culture's definition of masculinity and femininity even though it may not be noticeable for the respondent, who eventually receives a femininity, masculinity score, and androgynous score (Bem, 1981). Individuals scoring above the median on the sex-congruent scale and below the sex-incongruent scale are defined as sex-typed. Respondents who score above the median on both scales are identified as androgynous; and those who score below the median on both scales are undifferentiated (Bem, 1981).

Bem (1974) explains that the meaning of androgynous derives from individuals being both masculine and feminine. As a masculine self-concept may prevent behaviors that are stereotyped as feminine, and a feminine self-concept may prevent behaviors considered as masculine, the androgynous self-concept allows an individual to be a part of both masculine and feminine behaviors (Bem, 1974). Originally, a masculine characteristic is qualified as such because it is more desirable for a man than for a woman in the American society and vice versa (Bem, 1974). The difference between the endorsement of masculine and feminine personality characteristics is what helps the BSRI to identify an individual as masculine, feminine, or androgynous (Bem, 1974). The androgynous score reveals the relative amounts of masculinity and femininity that individuals describe themselves as (Bem, 1974).

Various researchers such as Bhagat and McQuaid (1982) and Sondergaard (1994) have explained Hofstede's cultural dimension being a beneficial way of researching cultural effects between countries, and additionally it is widely used in research conducted in the field of marketing research. Agreeing to the previous, Soares, Farhangmehr and Shoham (2007) explain Hofstede's frameworks being a practical, yet clear way of including the culture into the research. In addition, Hofstede's frameworks can be considered suitable when conducting comparative cross-country studies (Soares, Farhangmehr & Shoham, 2007), because as the modern, fast and extensive communication of gender portrayals in media and advertisements is reaching continuously wider audiences even researching with cross-national comparison

has gained greater emphasize among the marketers (An & Kim, 2007). An and Kim (2007) describe the model having five different dimensions, of which the masculinity dimension is used to interpret the underlying differences of the gender roles in various cultures. The cultural dimensions of masculinity/femininity are the most dominant dimensions of the Lebanese culture along with the power distance dimension (Hofstede Insight, 2019a). Whereas, in Finland, the dimension of masculinity/femininity and the power distance have lower values compared to Lebanon (Hofstede Insight, 2019b). Due to the focus of the thesis being researching gender-identity's effects on the perceived image of the advertisements, the thesis is focusing on researching the dimension of masculinity and femininity as moderating factors. Due to the opportunity to use given masculinity/femininity scores from secondary sources, the writers of this thesis are utilizing the framework of the cultural dimensions by Hofstede to discover an overview of the Lebanese and Finnish culture.

Fundamentally, the Gender Schema Theory presents a description of gender and how it is expressed through degrees of masculinity and femininity based on the understanding of the culture. These levels of masculinity and femininity get integrated into the self-concept of the individual and may predict his behavior. This theory presents a scale to measure these levels and group individuals into different gender groups. Additionally, the Hofstede framework gives an outline of the masculinity/femininity dimensions to understand the manifestation of the gender roles of a certain culture.

2.2.4   Gender identity of the products

According to Allison, Golden, Mullet and Coogan (1980), a product's gender may be determined by the user group that is using it most. The gender identity of a product can be created by placing the model similar to the company's target consumer into the advertisements (Chu, Lee & Kim, 2016). Debevec and Iyer (1986b) were inspired by the gender schema theory mentioned previously, which led them to develop a study about the gender of products. In their study participants were asked to describe whether a product was sex-typed as masculine or feminine, androgynous, or lacking a gender identity completely, hence categorized as undifferentiated (Debevec & Iyer, 1986b). Their results revealed that most participants assigned a gender to products and that most products have sex-typed identities (Debevec & Iyer, 1986b) which can originate from cultural factors, such as cultural norms (Morris & Cundiff, 1971). The assignment of a gender to a product was also confirmed by Fugate and Philips (2010).

To maintain gender integrity, consumers buy products that have gender identities similar to theirs (Fugate & Philips, 2010). Consumers prefer products that match the gender attributes that they perceive as both characteristic and important (Worth, Smith & Mackie, 1992) and brands that are associated with their gender identities (Neale, Robbie & Martin, 2016). It is suggested that when presenting a new, feminine product to market to men, it may be beneficial to present it in a more masculine manner to increase the acceptance of it and avoid target consumers' rejection of it (Morris & Cundiff, 1971), for instance, men tend to more often look for their gender identity in the products they buy (Alreck, Settle & Belch, 1982; Fugate & Philips, 2010). Consumers are interested in gender congruence when it is aligned

with their self-concept (Fugate & Philips, 2010) because when purchasing a product, the consumer is also assessing the image they relate to (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a).

Essentially, a product may be seen as having a gender which depends on the gender of the individuals most using it. People usually buy a product that is perceived as having the same gender as them to maintain gender integrity and self-congruency. However, the perception of the gender of the product may depend on the culture's understanding of masculinity and femininity.

2.2.5   Gender roles, masculinity and femininity in advertising

The research of sex roles used in advertising started due to the concern of how portraying women in a stereotypical manner can impact the perceptions of women in society (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a). The gender stereotyping in advertisements is highly dependent on developments in the society related to gender equality (Eisend, 2010), and the reason why gender is still used to implement segmentation strategies is because it is easily identifiable, the gender segments are accessible and large enough to be profitable (Darley & Smith, 1995). In addition, the stereotypical portrayal of gender roles in advertisements may be used to highlight the product features, such as how easy it is to use it (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a). Venkatesh (1980) discovered also that highly educated women had a habit of experiencing stereotypical presentations more critically. Lull, Hanson and Marx (1977, cited in Debevec & Iyer, 1986a) revealed that men experience stereotyping with less sensitivity than women. During the 70s and 80s, there had been a lot of research resulting in conflicting results, thus it was discovered that whereas some of the respondents found stereotypical portrayals of genders in advertisements offensive (Debevec & Iyer, 1986a), other respondents found the liberal ones' offensive (Bettinger & Dawson, 2016). The media plays a significant role in modern society and advertisements impact the information of gender stereotypes because they force an image of what is expected from an individual based on their gender (Lindner, 2004), so the unnatural perception of gender identity impacts young consumers (Frith, 2016).

A study conducted by Elliott and Elliott (2005) suggested that male consumers perceived that gender specific advertisements influence the female audience more compared to males. Also, the male participants of the research speculated that women would more likely change their appearance based on the advertisements, whereas men would be less impacted by this (Elliott & Elliott, 2005). Advertisements presenting products that make men look feminine are perceived as unpleasant, which reflects a fear of letting their self-image turn more feminine (Kimmel & Tissier-Desbordes, 1999). There are differences between male and female consumers in the way they see themselves, their self-concept (Bem Oumlil & Erdem, 1997), and advertisements appealing to the self-concept and ideal-self produce stronger purchase intentions than those that do not (Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). Advertisers must appeal to the gender identity of the consumers by promoting similar gender cues to the advertised product (Sandhu, 2018).

Gender identity is formed by one's cultural environment which is influenced by advertisement and media (Kacen, 2000). Individuals who seek products that are in line with their gender identity are more aware and focused on the marketing mix variables (Fugate & Philips, 2010).

Gender advertisements exist when values regarding gender congruency still exist (Eisend, 2010). However, Del Saz-Rubio (2019) mentioned that marketing and the media have a significant impact on an individual's behavior and how they build themselves as women or men. Wolin (2003) states that the individuals who obtain masculine and feminine gender identities prefer to follow cultural definitions of gender appropriateness, whereas those who do not belong to these gender-identities might act differently than cultural definitions and norms would imply.

The need for product gender congruence in consumption situations has a positive relationship with the receptivity of the product gender cues such as the marketing variables (Fugate & Philips, 2010). Morris and Cundiff (1971) explained that the anxiety level towards products considered as feminine can vary among the individuals, due to this, while creating promotional campaigns and advertisements, the anxiety level should be kept as low as possible. It is necessary for marketers to understand the cultural values behind beliefs of gender stereotypes to be able to adapt the marketing of the product, for instance, products with feminine identity to the consumers in a successful manner (Morris & Cundiff, 1971).

Table 2.3 Gender identity literature summary

Author(s)	Key findings
Allison, Golden, Mullet, and Coogan (1980)	This study revealed that products are sex-typed, and the degree of femininity and masculinity of the product depends on the stereotypical sex of the person using the product. In general, males perceive more masculinity in the products whereas females perceive more femininity. Femininity and masculinity are perceived as separate constructs.
Alreck, Settle and Belch (1982)	Women prefer feminine brands and are accepting of masculine brands whereas men do not readily accept feminine brands. Men are more sex-role specific than women and men tend to look more for the sexual identity in the products they buy or define themselves in them.
Bem (1974)	This article presents the BSRI scale to characterize individuals as feminine, masculine, or androgynous based on their masculinity and femininity levels.
Bem (1981)	This study revealed that sex-typing derives from the fact that the self-concept itself gets assimilated into the gender schema. Hence, the behaviors of each sex also depend on the way masculinity and femininity is seen in the culture.
Bem Oumlil and Erdem (1997)	This study revealed that there are differences between the self-concepts, both the actual-self and the ideal-self, of male and female consumers as males want to see themselves as more complicated and more of a leader

	while females want to see themselves as more graceful and interesting. This is important for marketers to understand so they can advertise the products in a way to make them appealing and interesting for each self-concept.
Darley and Smith (1995)	Gender segmentation is still existent because gender is easily identifiable, gender segments are accessible, and they are large enough to be profitable.
Debevec and Iyer (1986a)	This study explains the influence sex roles have on individual's perceptions of promotion, products and themselves. Women are more sensitive when it comes to the sex role stereotyping of females than men, and the study explained that this type of stereotyping is used in order to highlight the product features. Featuring women in a more progressive role in advertisements will generate more attention than traditional roles.
Debevec and Iyer (1986b)	The gender of the spokesperson in the advertisement influences the respondent's perception of the gender of the product. The gender of the product can be altered with the spokesperson and may even be evaluated more positively.
Chu, Lee and Kim (2016)	Non-stereotypical gender role advertising aims to increase public attention, interests and sales. This study revealed that individuals with a high tendency to stereotype gender roles tend to decrease their stereotyping after being exposed to non-stereotypical gender role advertising.
Eisend (2010)	Gendered advertisements exist according to how advanced the society is when it comes to gender equality and the values of that particular society. The degree of stereotyping has decreased over the years due to developments in high masculinity countries. Marketers use the existing values in the society to promote instead of trying to alter these values.
Elliott and Elliott (2005)	This research studies the responses of participants to advertisements using a range of sexual explicitness. Findings revealed that both sexes found the objectification of women and the sex-role stereotyping unacceptable. Women experience more dissatisfaction. The respondents in this study disassociated themselves from images that did not fit the masculine image. Males identified consumption and body consciousness as female traits.
Fugate and Philips (2010)	Consumers still classify products as a certain gender, males are more focused on buying products that are gender-

	congruent than females. Products are purchased according to self-congruence where gender congruence is important. Individuals who seek gender congruence focus more on the gender cues in marketing mix variables.
Kacen (2000)	This paper explained the concepts and traditions that have helped understand gender identity when gender was limited in the past, and predetermined at birth. Consumers use products to express their gender and gender identity within the postmodern consumer culture. It also suggests that this identity process may lead to an unstable sense of self.
Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes (1999)	This study revealed that men may have a fear of admitting their feminine side and that products and brands may be an important aspect of their self-image, however, they do not like to admit it. Men fear the condoning of traditional attitudes about males and females' roles and becoming a minority.
Lindner (2004)	This study reveals that stereotypical images are found quite frequently in magazines and has remained fairly constant throughout the years despite the changes in the actual roles women occupy, and considering the impact advertising has on values and beliefs. Differences in the portrayal of women were found from a magazine to another.
Morris and Cundiff (1971)	This study reveals that males are quite sensitive when it comes to the usage and purchase of products classified as feminine, contributing further to the understanding of male sex role behavior. A male's identification with feminine products resulted in anxiety.
Neale, Robbie and Martin (2016)	Consumers are more aligned with brands that are associated with their gender identity. The study shows that there is a positive relationship between an individual's gender identity and their loyalty towards gender congruent brands and feminine individuals were more accepting of gender incongruent brands than males.
Sandhu (2018)	The gender of the advertised product may be shown through gender cues in the advertisement and to appeal to the consumers, advertisers must promote gender cues similar to the gender identity of the consumer in the advertisement. Also, women and men perceived the same gender-typing cues in advertisements differently.
Venkatesh (1980)	This study showed that feminists were younger, more educated, and more independent. According to feminists,

	women are still portrayed as sexual objects in advertisements, and the social changes taking place are not shown in the advertisements. However, traditionalist women do not agree with this.
Worth, Smith and Mackie (1992)	The study revealed that a product matching the gender attributes that consumers perceived as characteristic and important was preferred.

2.3   Skincare industry

The cosmetic industry can be divided into five main categories; fragrances, personal hygiene, hair care, makeup, and skin care (Khan, Dongping, Abdullah, Ahmad, Ghauri & Ghazanfar, 2017; Kumar, 2005). Based on the report of Beauty's Top 100 (2008) the overall revenue of the industry was approximately 154.07 billion US dollars in 2007. however only a small proportion of the manufacturers control and play a major role in the industry (Kumar, 2005). The difference between the cosmetic and skincare products based on Schmitt (1992) is that the skincare products consist of wide functional attributes, some of the products serving for pharmacological purposes, not only serving for cosmetic needs. The industry has offered products for women for decades and along with this, it has received the stigma of being for women (Khan et al. 2017). However, there is a growing demand as well as a rise in the sales of male grooming products (Souiden & Diagne, 2009).

The skincare industry can be divided into different categories which are the following: body care, facial care, and skincare sets or kits as well as hand care (Euromonitor, 2020a). The products under the skincare category include products for example moisturizers, anti-aging products, and exfoliating products (Liao, Lee, Lai & Wang, 2018). The average lifespan increase has created an opportunity for the emergence of new markets such as skincare products for the aging population (Searing & Zeilig, 2017). Science is becoming more advanced when it comes to the process of aging, and more and more anti-aging products and treatments are being developed. It is expected that the rise of skincare products sales will come from anti-aging products as older people are becoming one of the major market drivers (Searing & Zeilig, 2017).

The average revenue of the world's total skincare industry was 140 billion US dollars during 2019 (Euromonitor, 2020b). The skincare industry is predicted to be one of the most important segments in the beauty industry that can be sold as a premium segment (Euromonitor, 2014). The skincare industry has recently been acquiring a larger market share and has been mainly seen as a feminine market. This rise is mainly due to the rise of scientific knowledge which supports the development of products, especially anti-aging products. However, with the growing demand for male grooming products, the stigma is slowly disappearing.

2.3.1 Feminine skincare products

As women have been the main target of the beauty industry for several decades, there has been an overflow of the variety of products developed and offered for women (Bloch & Richins, 1992). The beauty industry and advertising that we know of today emerged at the start of the 20th century with l'Oreal, Elizabet Arden, and Helena Rubinstein (Searing & Zeiling, 2017) and by providing a wide range of products developed to what is known today as a multibillion-dollar global industry (Frith, 2016; Whitmer, 2015). Ever since the first World War, cosmetics have been cheaper (Whitmer, 2015) and there has been a steady increase in cosmetic advertising (Searing & Zeilig, 2017).

There is a lot of stress on appearance and sexuality since women age and are less subject to the male gaze, which is why there is an emphasis on how women can resist age andretain their looks (Searing & Zeilig, 2017). Bayer (2005) explains that the reason why many American women feel the need to maintain youthful appearances is because of the changes in economic and employment patterns, the rise of image-based mediation [television, films, ads], and the growing significance of consumer identities: each of these leading to a cultural desire for youth and negative feelings towards looking old.

Women's decision about the purchase of cosmetics is important for their personal and social life (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2017). According to the study conducted by Capitant de Villebonne and Weber (2002), it was revealed that the factors intervening in the purchase behavior process in the cosmetic industry were the price and quality in addition to advertising and promotion. Furthermore, the local recognition top of the opinions towards particular firms or products and the knowledgeable salesperson affected the purchase behavior process (Capitant de Villebonne & Weber, 2002).

The purchase behaviors of multiple generations may differ from one another (Eze, Tan, & Yeo, 2012). Motivations and personalities develop differently from a culture to another, which is why different cultures behave differently (Capitant de Villebonne & Weber, 2002). Age influences the preferences in the cosmetics industry, along with the skin tone of the consumers (Haddara, Hsieh, Fagerstrom, Eriksson & Sigurosson, 2020).

2.3.2 Feminine skincare products and advertising

Self-identity has been found to have a positive relationship with attitude, and women pay considerable attention to their appearance to create an expression of individuality (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2017). For that reason, it is essential that the image women have of themselves is focused on by marketers, so marketing strategies are accordingly designed, to foster a positive attitude towards cosmetic brands (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2017).

The language of cosmetic advertising has changed throughout the years by emphasizing more on scientific words and phrases to promote the medical effects of the products (Searing & Zeilig, 2017). Bai (2018) mentions that cosmetic advertising has its unique characteristics compared to other types of advertising languages. Advertisements are a constant reminder that wrinkles, and sagging are not only unacceptable signs of aging, but they should be

prevented and corrected (Bayer, 2005; Searing & Zeilig, 2017). The female characteristics in the language are obvious, adjectives are used, and many colored words exist in the language (Bai, 2018). An example is the following of a shampoo brand: "Expose your glamorous side, your stunning, luminous, brunette goddess side" (Bai, 2018, p. 843). Cosmetic advertisements "make the language concise, interesting, more informative, and euphemistic" (Bai, 2018, p. 846).

The research of Liao et al. (2018) explains that regardless of cultural differences, approximately half of the skincare products used white color as the products base color, yet the skincare products such as moisturizers also included blue color, thus consumers associate the color blue to water and as being moisturizing. Colors such as pink and red are also favored in skincare products, as they are related to youthfulness and firm skin (Liao et al. 2018). The labels' shape such as round and slender in the packaging of a product improves the association to femininity (Lieven et al. 2015).

2.3.3   Male grooming products

Liu (2019) has defined grooming based on previous articles as a body language, which can be considered as a practice of paying attention to one's appearance, including also one's body. To clarify, Cambridge Dictionary (2020b) has defined grooming as an action that one conducts to be able to have a neat and clean presence. Based on Euromonitor (2020c), the men's grooming products can be categorized into two groups: men's toiletry products and men's shaving products. The toiletry products include products such as bathing and skincare products while the shaving category consists of shaving related products and razors among other products (Khan et al. 2017). In 2019, the worldwide revenue from the men's grooming products was evaluated approximately to be 51 billion US dollars. (Euromonitor, 2020d). The male roles shifted during the 80s due to men participating increasingly into consumption practices, widening the consumption role previously considered for women only (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). In addition, viewing males differently than earlier eras, after the mid-80s, could have been a result of a new manner to measure individuals through their consumption along with how they looked (Hakala, 2006).

When it comes to keeping their appearance, men might be considered to be more interested in comfort instead of being interested in taking care of their bodies and looks (Liu, 2019). However, a substantial increase in the industry of men's toiletries has demonstrated an increase in the general interest of men towards skincare products (Tuncay & Otnes, 2008). The male skincare and cosmetic products, such as fragrances have increased their popularity among the consumers steadily already for around 20 years (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). Due to the shift of the perceptions concerning the gender stereotypes of female and male, large cosmetic companies such as L'Oréal and Nivea started to target skincare products for men (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019).

The article by Del Saz-Rubio (2019) explains the phenomenon of male grooming and how using the products can construct individuals' identities. The relationship between males and the cosmetic products targeted to them has changed due to the increased consumption of male cosmetic and skincare products (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). It can be hard to sell feminine

products to males, due to the general confusion overlying on the more flexible gender identities (Byrnes, 2006). Marketers are putting a great effort to introduce and integrate the grooming industry to male consumers' purchasing habits (Byrnes, 2006). The male grooming industry has recently seen a rise due to the increase in demand and more accepting perceptions of skincare products for men. However, as the products may still be seen as feminine, it requires a great effort to develop a marketing strategy to integrate these male consumers into this industry.

2.3.4 Male grooming products and advertising

Selling skincare products such as creams and moisturizers are exceeding the regular comfort zone of male consumers, therefore the products might be labeled under the concepts of fitness and health as well as appealing to an increase of male desirability (Byrnes, 2006). Byrnes (2006) explains that it is challenging to address all the male consumer groups at the same time, thus utilizing humor in the marketing campaigns and appealing to the inner geek of the male consumers can be a safe plan. Tuncay and Otnes (2008) support the idea that men might feel vulnerable when purchasing a product that is not aligned with their understanding of masculinity that is predominated in their cultural beliefs or social groups. To make advertising more complicated to marketers, Entwistle (2000) states that all cultures have their own grooming rituals, which might include colors to emphasize their body and other cosmetic products. Furthermore, the identities and lifestyles surrounding these items might be a reason why male consumers experience vulnerability when considering purchasing the item (Tuncay & Otnes, 2008).

The research of Del Saz-Rubio (2019) discovered four main themes relating to the male grooming advertisements as; "sexual power through product consumption, reaffirming manpower through manly activities, the gender divide and lastly the savvy modern young man" (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019, p. 200). Presenting the males' sexual power through using the grooming product is apparent in the advertisements and is targeted to communicate that the products will help to attract women as well as how to please them (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). Moreover, these advertisements contain the message that by consuming these products you will get rewards, the women. One of the major themes of the advertisements was the reaffirming manpower through manly activities (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). The gender divide, to specify, is seen when marketing products with masculine and feminine features are handled as opposite polar ends, thus marketing communication based on the idea that male grooming is different from the one which women practice (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). Lastly, the main theme of the savvy modern young man shows men being capable of thinking original solutions to problems, being resourceful just like using a skincare lotion when wanting (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019).

The research of Del Saz-Rubio (2019) discovered that based on the researched commercials, the current social changes had not reflected in the male grooming advertisements. In fact, more masculine males compared to the general male image are shown when the products promoted are considered as feminine (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). The advertisement presented in the article expresses also that there is a science of looking good similarly providing guidance for it (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). There are only a few male grooming advertisements that focus

on the aging of males, as they have a more positive outlook of aging compared to women (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2003). Famous marketer Leo Burnett (n.d. cited in Byrnes, 2006) had stated that 79% of the men in a study conducted in America could not see the models presented in the advertisement representing themselves.

The grooming products targeted to men may vary from the ones offered to women as Cheong and Kaur (2015) discovered that creating masculine product images can be conducted through changing the visual as well as verbal attributes of the product. Thus, the image presented in the male grooming products can, for example, obtain features expressing competence and ruggedness by having bigger and bolder fonts along with darker colors (Cheong & Kaur, 2015). The researchers Lieven et al. (2015) agree with the bold logos increasing the brand masculinity, thus specifying also angular text improving the masculinity of the text.

Table 2.4 Skincare industry literature summary

Author(s)	Key findings:
Ajitha and Sivakumar (2017)	Women's decision to purchase luxury cosmetics is important for their social and personal life. The values the consumers have towards these products influence attitude and usage behavior. Self-identity has a positive relationship with attitude, so women express their individuality and identity through their appearance.
Bai (2018)	The advertising language for cosmetics affects consumers' consumption and buying behavior. The advertisements for cosmetics are different from other advertisements, as the female characteristics in the language are obvious, plenty of adjectives are used and many color words exist. These make the advertisement interesting and more informative.
Bayer (2005)	Many Americans want to maintain a youthful look because of the negative feelings towards looking old the changes in economic and employment patterns, the rise of image-based mediation, and the importance of customer identities.
Bloch and Richins (1992)	It was revealed in this study that adornments can lead to satisfaction by making a person feel more attractive thus higher self-esteem and positive mood, and when that is successful, the user satisfaction is increased, which is important for the advertisement to be marketed effectively.
Byrnes (2006)	This study divides male consumers into different subgroups with different purchasing behavior requiring different marketing strategies. It also explains that men may still be reluctant to go to the extreme in the grooming of their body, and that it may be hard to market feminine products

	to males because of the confusion on the freer gender identities.
Capitant de Villebonne and Weber (2002)	Findings of this study reveal that factors affecting the purchase intention of cosmetics are: price, quality, advertising, promotion, local recognition, opinions towards the product and the knowledgeable person. The motivations of purchase along with personalities differ from culture to another.
Cheong and Kaur (2015)	This study analyzes how packaging of a grooming product communicates masculinity through social interactions within the packaging.
Del Saz-Rubio (2019)	The use of cosmetic and skincare products targeted for men has increased in popularity due to the shift of the perceptions of gender stereotyping. The advertisements were not representative of the different male identities and still illustrate traits of hegemonic masculinity. Males are supported to consume grooming products but are warned to avoid doing it in a "feminine" manner.
Eze, Tan and Yeo (2012)	Product quality has a big impact on consumers of cosmetics, so they are willing to pay more for higher quality. The image of the brand and product knowledge are important to the purchase, and purchase behavior differs from generation to another.
Haddara, Hsieh, Fagerstrom, Eriksson and Sigurosson (2020)	Color is the main focus on lipsticks for customers. They dislike lipsticks with a strong smell or taste. Age influences preferences in the cosmetics industry along with the skin tone of consumers.
Khan, Dongping, Abdullah, Ahmad, Ghauri and Ghazanfar (2017)	This study revealed that for Chinese and Pakistani male consumers, self-image, social beliefs, health care and aging are the most influencing factors to purchase grooming products. Lifestyle is also a factor for Chinese consumers but not Pakistani, and physical attractiveness is the vital motivating factor for cosmetic products usage. It is shown that the consumers from both of these countries have different intentions, motives, and drivers affecting the attitude towards consumption of grooming products.
Kumar (2005)	This study reveals that the key drivers of cosmetics are fashion trends, greater demand for convenience and multi-functional products, and a higher demand among specific consumer segments.

Liao, Lee, Lai and Wang (2018)	The results of this study show that the color associated with a skin care product depends on who the customers are, what kind of product it is, the cultural background, the gender and the benefits of the product.
Lieven, Grohmann, Herrmann, Landwehr and Van Tilburg (2015)	Logo shapes influence the masculine and feminine perceptions of the product, along with the type fonts and brand names. Brand masculinity/femininity increase brand preferences.
Searing and Zeilig (2017)	Cosmetics became cheaper after the first World War. The skincare market is expected to increase and expected to come from anti-aging products. Anti-aging advertisements focus on how signs of aging are seen as unacceptable and should be prevented. Findings of this study revealed that there is a great emphasis on scientific language in advertisements.
Souiden and Diagne (2009)	This study revealed that French and Canadian men have different motivations when it comes to the purchase of grooming products. Advertising and attractiveness were found to have a positive impact on the consumption, and ageing, image consciousness, purchase situation and lifestyle have a varying impact.
Tuncay and Otnes (2008)	Men may not be comfortable purchasing products that are not in line with their perception and understanding of masculinity in fear of appearing homosexual or feminine.

2.4   Summary of the literature and hypothesis formulation

Based on our literature review, we have found a gap in the gender-neutral product advertisement. We have studied attitudes towards gendered advertisements and how individuals relate their self-concepts and identity to these advertisements. There is a limited amount of literature concerning the attitudes of consumers when it comes to gender-neutral product advertisements, on the other hand, there is extensive literature involving gendered advertisements. We have reviewed different streams of literature to understand the concept of attitudes, advertising, gender, identity, self-congruency, and all the relationships between them. Our framework was built upon literature in marketing, social sciences, psychology, advertising, gender studies, consumer behavior, and management.

Our aim in this thesis is to study whether the perceived gender congruity of the individual and the advertisement has an effect on the attitudes towards the advertisement of a gender-neutral product while taking in consideration the masculinity and femininity levels of the national culture in Finland and Lebanon.
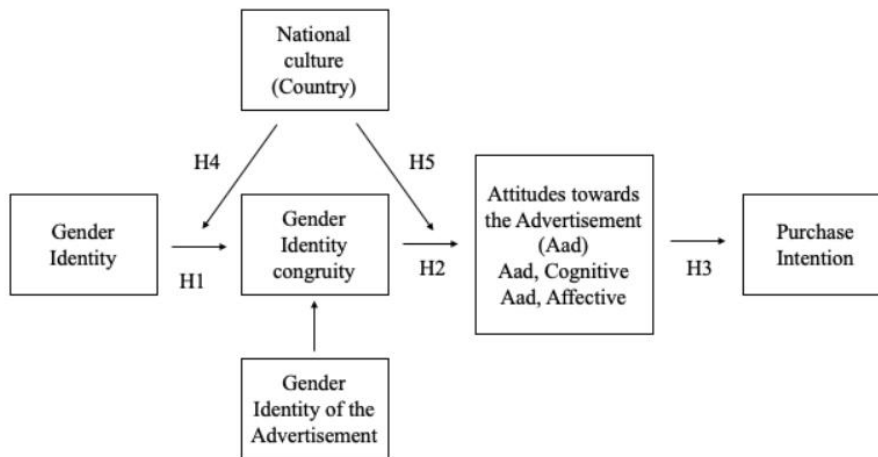
Figure 2.1 Proposed framework

Different studies have shown the way gender has an impact on an advertisement (Bai, 2018; Byrnes, 2006; Jovanovic, Kostic & Vlastelica, 2016) which in turn leads to the purchase intention of a product (Ahmad et al. 2018). Furthermore, individuals are involved in advertisements matching their self-concepts and identities (Ahmad et al. 2018; Fugate & Philips, 2010; Hong & Zikhan, 1995; Kim, 2015; Reed et al. 2012) and may perceive an advertisement differently than each other (Chang, 2006; Feireisen, Broderick & Douglas, 2009; Kolbe & Langefeld, 1993).

We have defined gender identity as the extent to which an individual identifies with masculine or feminine personality traits (Deaux, 1985). We have also investigated studies where advertisements tend to be targeted towards different genders, discovering the aspect that perceptions of the advertisement might vary from gender to another (Bai, 2018; Byrnes, 2006; Jovanovic, Kostic & Vlastelica, 2016). We have recognized that individuals who seek products that are gender congruent are influenced by the marketing mix variables (Fugate & Philips, 2010) and that the reason gendered and stereotyped advertisements exist is because values regarding gender still exist (Eisend, 2010). Hence, we can conclude that the gender identity of an individual plays a role in the perception of the gender of the advertisement. However, as there is a limited amount of academic literature about gendered advertisements, the authors of this thesis were aspired study as well the perception individuals have of the gender of a gender-neutral advertisement. Therefore, the defined first hypothesis is the following:

H1: *The respondents' gender identity group has an effect on the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral advertisement.*

Through our literature review, we have established that women and men are portrayed differently in advertisements in magazines (Conley & Ramsey, 2011) and different cues or characteristics exist in advertisements depending on the gender (Bai, 2018). It has also been shown that advertisements appealing to oneself have different outcomes than those who do not (Hong & Zikhan, 1995). We have also revealed that ad-self congruency has an impact on the attitudes towards the advertisement (Chang, 2006) and advertisers must promote in a way that appeals to the gender identity of the individual (Sandhu, 2018). The way advertisements are perceived depends on the person watching, which is why the advertisements are portrayed in a way to match the gender of the individual. Accordingly, our second hypothesis to be tested is the following:

H2: *The gender identity congruency affects the attitude towards the advertisement of gender-neutral skincare products.*

Based on our literature review, we have mentioned that attitudes may predict behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005; Sherman & Fazio, 1983). We have also researched that the attitudes an individual develops towards an advertisement may affect the attitude towards the advertised product (Akkaya, Akyol & Simsek, 2017; Hidayah & Milal, 2016; Jovanovic, Kostic & Vlastelica, 2016), in turn leading to the purchase intention of the product (Abu Bakar, Mohamad & Raza, 2019; Mehta, 2000; Shimp, 1981). The attitudes towards the advertisements have a relationship with the purchase intention, therefore, we present our third hypothesis to be tested:

H3: *There is a relationship between the attitude towards the advertisement of a gender-neutral product and the purchase intention.*

Other findings in our literature review include the relative difference of masculinity and femininity levels in the countries Lebanon and Finland that we plan to focus on (Hofstede Insight, 2019a; Hofstede Insight, 2019b), as Hofstede's framework is considered suitable for our study (Soares, Farhangmehr & Shoham, 2007). We have found that a person's masculinity and femininity level may be influenced by the culture (Bem, 1981; Kacen, 2000) and may impact the behavior of the individual (Bem, 1981) and that the assignment of genders to different items may originate from cultural factors (Morris & Cundiff, 1971). As we have mentioned that gender affects the perceived gender of the advertisement, we also conclude that as gender identity may be affected by the culture, then the culture has an effect on the gender congruity, thus our fourth hypothesis is:

H4: *The country of studies has a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity group and the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral skincare advertisement.*

We have established that cultures behave in a certain way because motivations and personalities develop differently (Capitant de Villebonne & Weber, 2002). Some researchers have explained that advertisements should differ from a culture to another as there are differences that should be taken into consideration (Abu Bakar, Mohamad and Raza, 2019), such as the different levels of masculinity and femininity in each country and individual (Bem, 1981; Hofstede Insight, 2019a; Hofstede Insight, 2019b; Kacen, 2000). We conclude

that, as masculinity and femininity levels differ from a country to another, so will the gender congruency between the individual and advertisements, which should be done differently from a culture to another to appeal to the consumers. Therefore, our fifth and last hypothesis to be tested:

H5: *The country of the studies has a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity congruity and the attitudes towards an advertisement.*

3   Methodology

This methodological chapter will cover six main sections beginning with the research approach, then the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis. Following these, the next section will explain the research quality criteria and lastly, the limitations. The first section will cover how the thesis has been developed from the research approach point of view and encompasses a section of which information will be needed from the research to be able to conduct our study. The next chapter explains the research design of this thesis, which was selected as cross-sectional. Additionally, the experimental study design is covered and lastly, the measurement and scaling procedures are discussed. The section after this is the data collection, which covers the topic of experimental stimuli selection, pilot study, and empirical data collection. Following this section comes the data analysis section, followed by the sections of research quality criteria and data limitations, which is divided into topics of data collection and measurement and statistical errors.

3.1   Research Approach

3.1.1   The quantitative research approach

Our thesis was constructed based on selecting the quantitative research method. Thus, from the selection of the two research methods quantitative and qualitative, a quantitative research method was selected. The purpose of our research was to study the population of university students in Finland and Lebanon and we chose the quantitative method as we wanted to create information that could provide a more generalized overview of the phenomena. A quantitative method was considered suitable since it applies some form of statistical analysis while quantifying the data, whereas qualitative research seeks insights and understanding of the problem setting (Malhotra, 2010) and tries to reach a theory that explains the behavior observed (Lowhorn, 2007). However, we wanted to validate a theory by conducting the experiment and analyzing the results numerically, which is why this study was quantitative. A qualitative method was not selected due to the fact that it seeks to explain a current situation and only describes that situation for the specific groups' point of view (Lowhorn, 2007), researching a usually small number of cases (Malhotra, 2010).

The quantitative research method belongs to the positivist paradigm; thus, it was considered an appropriate method as our research is aiming for producing objective results that investigate relationships among variables with hypothesis testing. Positivism supports the research of human behavior and events in a manner that is based on statistical analysis which results in objective representations of the phenomenon (Burns & Burns, 2008). Both quantitative and qualitative studies can be used to establish relations, however, qualitative

shows less external validity (Lowhorn, 2007). Our research can be considered as a deductive process as it has started from researching the existing theory and from there moved to the formulation of the hypothesis, which brought us a confirmation with the distributed and analyzed questionnaire. Furthermore, the research process in this thesis was deductive because the positivist research method is used to study the topic and the research process started with collecting the previous literature which supported the creation of the hypothesis (Burns & Burns, 2008).

Our research followed the guideline attributes relevant in scientific research methods (Burns & Burns, 2008, p. 15) "control, operational definitions, replication, and hypothesis testing". As we were studying how gender identity affects the perceived attitudes of the advertisement, and which gender-identity type has the most positive attitudes towards the advertising, we were controlling the variable of the country. To cover the operational definitions, the variables selected for our study were measured and explained, including also the criterion level for categorization, which according to Burns and Burns (2008), improves the communication and meaning of terms. The replicability of our research was validated as the scales used are established by multiple researchers and the questionnaire as well as the details of our research are provided in the thesis. The hypotheses testing conducted in this thesis was systematically developed and processed, for example avoiding stereotyping in the testing of the attitudes towards advertising, gender-identity was labeled into four categories instead of two.

3.1.2   Information needed for the research

The information collected through the literature review and drawing the hypotheses clarified which concepts are required to be discovered with the help of the questionnaire. The information required for researching whether the perceptions of gender-neutral skin care advertisements vary based on the gender-identity of the respondent. In addition, the information needed helped us to discover whether the country of the studies has an effect on the perceived attitudes towards the advertisement. This required information has been discovered to be as following:

Table 3.1 Summary of the information required

Information	Description
Stimuli	Stimuli is needed to be able to measure the respondents' reactions to it, thus gender-neutral advertisements were selected to be shown in the questionnaire.
Demographic characters	To be able to conduct the comparison between and within the groups general information of respondents were asked to validate that participants are fitting for the requirements of target group researched.
Gender-identity of respondent	It is required to discover the gender identity of an individual.

Awareness of gender-neutral products	To find out general knowledge among the consumers towards the topic researched.
Purchasing attention	It is required to collect information about does the consumers purchasing intention change from before seeing the stimuli and after that, to be able to discover whether the advertisement has effect to the purchasing intention.
Attitudes	The attitudes are researched to be able to measure the consumers' reaction to the selected advertisement. Attitudes towards the gender-neutral product are measured after stimuli.
Gender-identity of the advertisement	It is required to discover how the respondent evaluates the gender identity of an advertisements of the gender-neutral product.
Gender-identity congruity	It is required to discover whether the gender identity of an individual affects the perception of advertisements of the gender-neutral product.
The biological sex	The biological sex is collected to ensure to obtain factor which helps to conduct the analysis if the grouping of the gender-identity would not form all four groups, thus it would work as guarantee for having comparative factors representing the sex of the respondent.

3.2   Research Design

3.2.1   Descriptive study

In the thesis, a descriptive study method was used as the objective of this study was to describe potential markets of gender-neutral products and attitudes relating to it. Descriptive research design is commonly used when researching market characteristics, consumers' attitudes towards both products and advertisements. The research design enabled to discover the following factors:

> 1) It provided a possibility to describe the characteristics of the sample, which could be utilized for example to develop a customer segmentation. 2) It provided a tool to estimate the percentage of units in a specified population expressing specific behaviors, for example, groups that could be considered as a major user group of the product. 3) It can be utilized to determine product features and how the consumers view those. 4) Furthermore, it can be used to determine the degree to which marketing variables are associated, for example, the extent of the relation between two factors. 5) Additionally, it allowed us to create specific

predictions, for example from product categories and regions (Malhotra, 2010, pp. 73-74).

The descriptive research design usually requires a large number of samples; therefore, as the research was planned to be conducted in two countries and as there were four independent variables, it was preplanned that the sample collected should be relatively large. One of the benefits of the descriptive research design is that it is pre-planned and thoroughly structured. Previous academic literature collected from Bem (1974), Chang (2006) and Feireisen, Broderick and Douglas (2009) have addressed the research methods required and provided measurements that were considered as a solid base for our research. Based on these measurements the authors of this thesis were able to construct their own research in the field involving gender-neutral products as well as comparing the two selected countries, Finland and Lebanon. One of the supportive reasons to select the descriptive research design was that it required the hypotheses being formulated in advance and that the information needed for the research was clearly stated. Besides, descriptive research can be conducted by utilizing a survey, which was aligned with our research plan.

A clear specification is needed when constructing a descriptive research design. This includes taking the six specifications into consideration. Malhotra (2010, p.74) explains: "--who, what, when, where, why, and way--" should be defined. In our research, the "who" were the respondents, these being university students currently (2020) enrolled in universities in Finland and Lebanon. What covers the information needed from the respondents for conducting the research that should be clarified beforehand is seen in table 3.1. It was also decided when the approximated collection period for the data was, as well as where the respondents were contacted. The respondents of this study were contacted through the educational channels and social media; thus, the respondents were free to select the time most suitable for them to fill in the questionnaire. The authors of this research determined the possible reasons, where the information outcomes could improve the current state of gender-neutral advertising. In addition, the questionnaire was considered a suitable way of collecting the information.

3.2.2   Cross-sectional study

In order to study the attitudes of the gender-neutral products through the respondents' perception of the advertisement and based on the gender congruency, we needed to analyze the attitudes of different groups such as participants from different genders and countries. The cross-sectional design is the most popular one for many topics studied in organizational research and other fields relying on survey methods (Spector, 2019). At the early stages of research, to establish relationships between environmental, perceptual, and outcome variables, the cross-sectional design is the most useful (Spector, 2019). It is usually conducted to assess the prevalence of the outcome of interest for a given population (Levin, 2006).

A cross-sectional study can be either descriptive or analytical. When it is descriptive, the study's objective is to estimate for example "... people's attitudes, traits, knowledge, or health behavior" (Kesmodel, 2018, p. 389). However, when it is analytical, its objective is to evaluate associations between different parameters (Kesmodel, 2018). Cross-sectional studies,

when descriptive, focuses on providing estimates of prevalence in the entire population that is studied, whether by gathering data from that entire population or a representative sample (Kesmodel, 2018).

The cross-sectional study comprises "taking a cross-section of a population with different groups such as age groups or ethnic groups, and measuring the value of one or more variables", and then, this data is used to measure norms for each group (Burns & Burns, 2008, p. 486). In other terms, a cross-sectional study is a study "conducted once at a particular time across a range of groups" (Burns & Burns, 2008, p. 487). The cross-sectional study allowed us to create the relationships between the variables. In marketing research, the cross-sectional study can be considered as beneficial research designs when conducting descriptive studies, thus the data is collected only once from the target population (Malhotra, 2010). Due to our research studying two different countries, and having two samples, the research conducted in this thesis was a multiple cross-sectional study. To justify the suitability for our research, the research design supports the purpose of this thesis, which is to collect and analyze data comparing the overall respondents and the groups constructed based on independent variables rather than the individual level of the respondents.

3.2.3   Measurement and scaling procedures

One of the most vital stages of conducting a research is the selection of the right measurement procedures for the research, thus classifying which variables would be best measured under which procedure (Burns & Burns, 2008). In fact, the two main measurement scales used in the thesis were Likert-scale and semantic differential scale. These different scales provided us with a tool to evaluate the respondents' attitudes towards gender-neutral products' advertisements. With these different scales, we were able to find the relationships between gender identity, perceived gender identity of the advertisement, attitudes towards the advertisement, and country of studies.

First, we started with multiple-choice questions to gather the demographics of the participants. A nominal scale was used for variables such as gender, age, country of studies, and level of education thus as Burns & Burns (2008, p. 115) stated, the "names or classifications are used to divide data into separate and distinct categories". In addition, in the research, an interval scale was used as a measurement scale for the variable clarifying the age of the respondents after the collection of the data.

We continued with the use of Likert-scales, which generally consists of asking respondents to indicate to which extent they agree or disagree with given statements (Check & Schutt, 2012). The items of the scale were put in random order and could be positive or negative, with the scoring being reversed for negative items, and assigning numerical values to each answer (Burns & Burns, 2008). Thus, a high overall score may be taken as a positive attitude whereas a low overall score may be understood as a negative attitude (Burns & Burns, 2008). As the Likert-scale is entirely based on empirical data when it comes to the responses rather than subjective opinions, it increases the probability of a unitary attitude, leading to more reliability and increasing validity. According to Symonds (1924), the optimum number of class intervals for rating traits of personality is seven, in addition, Mitchell and Olson (1981)

stated that a 7-point bipolar scale to be suitable while measuring purchasing intention. Therefore, we used a 7-point Likert scale for different questions to recognize the gender identity of the participant, the perceived gender identity of the advertisement, and the purchase intention.

The semantic differential scales were used to measure the attitudes in the thesis. The scale consists of bipolar scales with different rating points between each end of the scale, and they are called bipolar because each end has an antonym of the other end (Burns & Burns, 2008). With the use of a semantic differential scale, it is more possible to separate the measurements of an attitude's affective and cognitive components (Burns & Burns, 2008), which is why we used a 5-point semantic differential scale. The semantic differential scale is a quick and efficient way to get quantifiable responses of the intensity and direction of opinions and attitudes towards a concept (Mindak, 1961). It is repeatable and reliable; it avoids stereotyped responses and allows for individual frames of references. It eliminates the ambiguity and makes it easier to collect data from the participants as they may have otherwise a difficult time articulating their reactions (Mindak, 1961).

3.2.4   Questionnaire design

The questionnaire was structured in a manner that allowed us to assess the information needed for the research (see table 3.1) and fulfilled the information needed for us to complete the analyzing of our hypotheses. The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions and included scales to research gender-identity (Bem, 1974), purchasing intention (Mitchell & Olson, 1981), gender-identity of advertisement (Bem, 1974) and attitudes towards advertising (Burton & Lichtenstein, 1988).
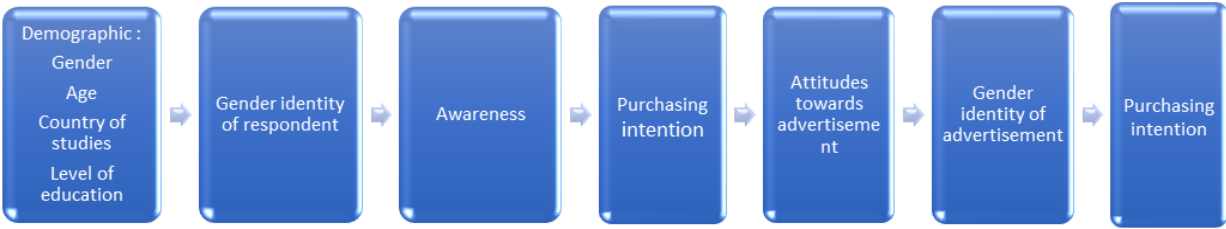
Figure 3.1 Overview of the questionnaire design

The questionnaire began with an introduction, which was followed by demographic questions, these being in the following order: gender, age, the country of the studies, and level of education. The first demographic question being the respondent's gender, the options being male, female, and prefer not to answer. After this, the age of the participant was asked as an open-ended question. Open-ended questions were chosen as suitable, due to the expected target group consisting of respondents coming from a highly similar age background. The age groups of the participants were grouped during the analyzing stage into four different

categories, from 18-20, 21-23, 24-26 years old as well as 27 years of age and older. Following the demographic question of age, a question about the respondents' country of studies was presented, the response options being Finland, Lebanon, and others. This question was working as a screening question, due to it limiting the participation of the university students studying in other countries than Finland or Lebanon. After the previous question, another question to screen out the possible respondents outside of our target group was introduced. Hence, the respondents were asked which educational level they were currently enrolled in, the selected options being undergraduate degree, graduate degree, and doctorate degree with an addition of examples clarifying these degree levels. The purpose of this question was to exclude the students, which were not potentially university students providing them an option to end the questionnaire, and by this to verify that the respondents who continued were qualified for our target group.

Following the demographic section, a question aimed to discover indirectly the respondent's gender-identity was represented by measuring it with BSRI short version, using the 10 items of masculinity and 10 items from femininity (see table 3.2 and 3.3). Respondents were asked, how would you describe yourself instead of asking them to define their gender identity. Formulating and presenting the question indirectly created a possibility to research gender-identity in an objective manner simultaneously decreasing the chance of bias. The scales measuring the masculinity and femininity traits of the respondents were presented in two separate questions obtaining 10 items each. To improve the objectivity of the research, randomization was used, each question containing five masculinity and five femininity adjectives.

Table 3.2 Masculinity items for BSRI (short) scale

Masculinity adjectives:		Scales	
Defends own beliefs	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Independent	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Assertive	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Strong Personality	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Dominant	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Willing to take a stand	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Aggressive	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Forceful	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Has leadership abilities	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Willing to take risks	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true

Table 3.3 Femininity items for BSRI (short) scale

Femininity adjectives:		Scales	
Affectionate	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Sympathetic	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Sensitive to the needs of others	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Tender	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Loves children	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Gentle	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Understanding	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Compassionate	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Eager to soothe others	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true
Warm	Almost never	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	Almost always true

After this, a short introduction question was presented in the questionnaire. This was to assess the awareness of the gender-neutral products by asking are you aware of the gender-neutral products, the options being "yes", "no" and "I do not know". To dive back to the more relevant questions, the next one was formulated to measure the purchasing intention of the gender-neutral skincare products, in which (Mitchell & Olson, 1981) bipolar 7-scale items displayed the options ranging from not at all likely to buy to very likely to buy. The respondents were asked; would you consider purchasing a gender-neutral skincare product. Following the introductory and purchasing intention questions, a stimulus presenting the gender-neutral advertisement video was shown to the respondents.

The questionnaire design continued to present a question measuring respondents' attitudes towards the shown advertisement by asking directly, how they feel about the advertisement. The attitudes were evaluated by measuring them with scales from Burton and Lichtenstein (1988) that consist of cognitive and affective components of attitudes. The affective components composed of six items, while the cognitive components were formatted into five items, both sharing identical five ranges. Burton and Lichtenstein (1988) explain that a general attitude towards advertisement is achieved by measuring and combining both scales. The questions measuring the attitudes towards the advertisement were located immediately after exposing the respondents to the stimuli for the respondents to provide objective answers as they had the advertisement freshly in mind. This was supported by the fact that questions involving measuring the affective state should be positioned right after the exposed stimuli.

Table 3.4 Items for affective component of attitudes scale

Affective factors:	Scales	
Not soothing	1 2 3 4 5	*Soothing*
Coldhearted	1 2 3 4 5	*Warmhearted*
Depressing	1 2 3 4 5	*Uplifting*
Unpleasant	1 2 3 4 5	*Pleasant*
Unattractive	1 2 3 4 5	*Attractive*
Not affectionate	1 2 3 4 5	*Affectionate*

Table 3.5 Items for cognitive component of attitudes scale

Cognitive factors:	Scales	
Uninformative	1 2 3 4 5	*Informative*
Ineffective	1 2 3 4 5	*Effective*
Non persuasive	1 2 3 4 5	*Persuasive*
Unbelievable	1 2 3 4 5	*Believable*
Not convincing	1 2 3 4 5	*Convincing*

After the questions measuring the attitudes towards advertisement were presented, two questions measuring the gender-identity of the advertisement were presented. The scales and questions used were identical to the ones measuring gender-identity of the respondents, consequently the BSRI short version, with 10 items representing masculinity traits and 10 items representing femininity traits. The items were represented in a similar manner and randomization was used equally to the questions asked to measure the gender identity of the respondent. However, the question asked was different; how you would describe the typical user of the advertised product. The decision to ask the BSRI questions in an indirect manner rather than directly derived from the fact that it would enhance covering the true purpose of the research and arriving objective and representative result when measuring the gender congruity. The purpose of measuring the gender-identity of the respondent and gender-identity of the gender-neutral product advertisement with the identical scales was to be able to research the gender congruity. Similar ways to generally measure the gender-congruity have been written in previous research (Chang, 2006; Feiereisen, Broderick & Douglas, 2009), therefore the method to ask the scales of BSRI questions twice was considered as right for our research.

After completing the question, a closing question was asked to measure whether the respondents would be willing to purchase a gender-neutral skincare product after exposure to the stimuli: would you consider purchasing a gender-neutral skincare product? The question and scales being identical to the one shown before the stimuli. The last question was followed by the final words to express gratitude for the respondents for participating in the questionnaire.

3.2.5 Sampling process and sampling size

The population of the research is all university students studying in Lebanon and Finland in 2020. Based on the report of EACEA (2017) there were approximately 190 186 university students in Lebanon 2016, whereas in Finland the corresponding figure of 2018 was 153 429 (Official Statistics of Finland, 2019), thus the target populations were rather similar sizes, with slight differences. The predefined distinct characteristics of our target population were the following: aged between 18-39 and studying in the universities in either of the selected countries. As our identified individual variables were gender-identity and country of studies there should be an approximately equal amount of gender-identity groups: masculinity, femininity, androgynous and undifferentiated among respondents in each country to be able to research the differences of the aggregated level of IV, gender-identity. To be able to conduct a comparative study, the two samples had to be comparable. Therefore, we chose an

approximately similar number of people belonging to each independent variable among the two countries, and matched both samples with each of their different variable groups, the dependent variable being attitudes towards the gender-neutral skincare products advertisement.

Non-probability sampling was selected as a sampling method, because as Burns and Burns (2008) explain, it is a suitable way to reach the target population groups and we were conducting the study in two geographically differently located countries. When using a non-probability sample, the results derived from it can make suggestions about the target sample, although they are not generalizable to the population (Burns & Burns, 2008). Thus, it is expected that the sampling conducted with convenience sampling is able to produce indications of the general attitudes on gender-neutral skincare products among consumers. One of its benefits includes also the possibility to access respondents that were representative of our target population and collect the required amount of responses in a limited amount of time. While using the non-probability method, the distributed questionnaire was formatted in a manner in which each participant was able to fill it in once. The approximated minimum amount of the correctly filled questionnaires was calculated as 240 responses. The results were calculated based on the given guideline of a minimum of 30 responses for each variable provided, thus having four independent variables per country, this research aimed to collect at least 240 responses divided by approximately equally among the respondents from Lebanon and Finland.

The survey was distributed to the academic channels of Finnish and Lebanese universities, as well as their student organization websites. The questionnaire was sent to multiple Finnish student organizations located in different cities and coming from different fields of science, to be able to collect data that would represent a sampling from Finland, rather than being representative of a specific city or study field. Among others, the following student organizations distributed the questionnaire to the university students in Finland; The Student Union of the University of Turku, Kaplaari Ry from Lappeenranta, Lipidi Ry from Helsinki, Chemical Engineering guild, KeTeK from Lappeenranta and Chemistry Guild of Helsinki. In Lebanon, the survey was distributed among the users of Facebook websites whose main user groups were university students studying in Lebanon.

3.3   Data Collection Method

3.3.1   Experimental stimuli selection

One of the requirements for us to conduct the research was to format a questionnaire studying the attitudes of the participants towards a gender-neutral skincare product advertisement, and the congruency between the gender identity of the participant and the gender-identity of the advertisement. The stimulus presented in the questionnaire was inspired by our literature review, which included both articles about advertisements shown in magazines and television advertisements. Some of the most famous companies in the field were researched to receive a general impression on the gender-neutral skincare industry and advertisements used to market

the products. After extensive research and collection of the possible stimuli, an advertisement of gender-neutral skincare products was selected as the stimulus of the research.

Multiple researchers have conducted marketing studies investigating the gender portrayal in advertisements (Elliott & Elliott, 2005; Kolbe & Langefeld, 1993,) and several research studied gender congruency in advertising (Chang, 2006; Feiereisen, Broderick & Douglas, 2009) which inspired us to conduct a study researching the gender congruency between the individual and the gender-neutral advertisement. Our decision to show an advertisement as the stimuli was supported by the article of Feiereisen, Broderick and Douglas (2009) in which it was discovered that congruence between the gender of the individual and advertisement was positively associated with the attitudes towards the advertisement. Thus, we decided to incorporate a similar strategy in our research as Feiereisen, Broderick and Douglas (2009) by modifying the research as suitable for our purpose, and we showed a gender-neutral skincare product advertisement and studied the different responses based on gender identities.

One important reason to why a video advertisement was selected as the stimuli exposed to the response groups was to increase the accuracy of the correlations and interest of the respondents. Moreover, the video advertisement allowed us to research a wider range of possible advertisement stimuli compared to electronic printed pictures. To support our selection of a video advertisement, the research of Lou, Sarkhel, Mitra and Swaminathan (2018) has explained that video advertisements are often more enjoyable and are preferred over display advertisements, which is why the number of advertisements tested in marketing research articles has grown significantly over the years. The stimulus was selected from a company that produces gender-neutral skincare products. The advertisement shows a variety of genders, different personalities, and consumers as individuals with individualized needs. In fact, no specific scale of color is shown in the advertisement, but a variety of different colors.

3.3.2   Pre-test

A test was conducted to select the suitable stimuli for the questionnaire and to verify that the advertisements were considered as gender-neutral advertisements. 10 individuals participated in the pre-test in which they were asked to rate the gender-neutral advertisement based on a short version of the Bem's Sex-Role Inventory scale (Kolbe & Langefeld, 1993). The pre-test group was exposed to the following advertisements and were verified by most of the participants as gender-neutral advertisements. Hence, the advertisements were evaluated to belonging to non-sex typed groups, which implied the advertisements were perceived in a gender-neutral manner. The following gender-neutral skincare advertisements were evaluated by the respondents:

Table 3.6 Reviewed gender-neutral skincare advertisements

Gender Neutral Skincare Product Advertisement
Brand: Malin+Goetz   *Look who's back in stock. Formulated with light botanical oils, our advance renewal moisturizer provides milky, featherweight hydration for these hot summer days.*   Duration: 0,05 minutes   *Available on:*   https://www.facebook.com/MALINandGOETZ/videos/644449276031124/?v=644449276031124
Brand: Curology   *#TreatYoSkin to Curology, Mixed Just for You*   Duration: 0,53 minutes   *Available on:*   *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_WCcpeLiqQ&feature=emb_logo*
Brand: Natural Spa Factory   *Capsule Collection Facial - Gender Neutral Skincare*   Duration:0,42   *Available on:*   *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRD_my9rG20*

After the participants were exposed to the stimuli, they evaluated the perceived gender-identity of the advertisement. Additionally, the pre-test group was asked to evaluate the fit of the advertisement to the questionnaire, hence the group evaluated the advertisement by using a 7-point Likert-scale. From the stimuli evaluated, the advertisement from the brand Curology was selected as the most suitable for the questionnaire as it received the most positive feedback and was perceived as gender neutral.

3.3.3 Pilot study

To improve our respondent rate and receive an accurate completion, a pilot study was conducted after the overall structure and content of the questionnaire were approved by our supervisor. The pilot study was completed by approximately 15 members of the target population as a purpose to evaluate their feedback and to access possible improvement areas

relating to the questionnaire and chosen stimuli. One of the benefits of the selected platform SosciSurvey was the possibility to distribute the pretest to the test audience in a manner that allowed the pilot group to report their feedback directly to the questionnaire platform next to each question.

The assessment concerning the possible improvements was performed, and the following updates were processed. Resulting from the pilot study, the grammar of the gender identity scales (Bem, 1974) was modified from the 7-point scale being 1 is "almost never true" and 7 is "almost always true" equivalently to 1 being "never true" and 7 "being always true". In addition, as few of the participants were wondering the absence of a typical demographic question of: "what is your gender?", the question was added to the final version of the questionnaire even though it was first planned to conduct the study without it. A reason for the original plan was that our study relates to a gender-neutral topic and gender identities and we were not necessarily utilizing the responses of biological sex anywhere, however, as the respondents felt it should be in the questionnaire, it was added to improve the user experience. On the other hand, this discovery validated our aim that the questions concerning gender-identity which were asked indirectly as how would you describe yourself, did not expose our true purpose behind the questions which was to measure gender-identity of the respondents.

The feedback from the pilot study was positive as the respondents considered the questions as easily understandable and the questionnaire easy to navigate in, making sure the quality of the responses was validated by going over the questionnaire completion rate. Furthermore, positive feedback was received from the stimulus shown, optimal questionnaire completion time, and from the research point of view, the purpose of collecting data about gender-identity indirect manner was established as it was not noticed by the respondents. It was concluded that the questionnaire was feasible for distribution.

3.3.4   Empirical data collection

An online survey was selected as a way of collecting the data because it enabled us to reach our target groups in the two separate countries, which was vital for our comparative study. Collecting data with surveys is considered a suitable manner to research attitudes and studying topics that have not been researched before (Neuman, 2014). Additionally, according to Malhotra (2010), a questionnaire allows quantitative data to be collected in a standardized way so that it is internally consistent and coherent for analysis. A self-completion survey with the stimulus was distributed to the target population of the university students in Finland and Lebanon. Due to this standardization and because the questionnaire was distributed in the English language, as it excludes the possible nuances resulting from participants answering in their native language. In addition, the questionnaire was set up so that the majority of the response options were fixed, with one exception of age, in which respondents were able to freely enter their age in numbers. Another benefit of questionnaire usage in research is that it increases the speed and accuracy of data collection, and facilitates data processing (Malhotra, 2010).

To receive stronger correlations, the participants were advised to consider the topic carefully, in fact, the researchers could be explaining how the topic could relate personally to their life

(Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Thus, the questionnaire presented questions about the awareness of the gender-neutral products as well as definitions of gender-neutral skincare products to increase respondents' interest towards the topic. The completion rate of the questionnaire and respondents' general completion experience along with the satisfaction was increased by this.

A web-based software called SosciSurvey was selected as the platform to conduct the study due to the program's clear user experience and multiple touchpoint views, enabling the collection of the data simultaneously from two different countries, especially populations using various mobile devices. Additionally, the online data collection method was chosen because online surveys enabled the questionnaire to reach a wide and relevant target population. One of the many benefits of the selection of the SosciSurvey platform was the possibility to download videos and personalize the questionnaire as well as conduct a pilot study in the same software, which allowed us to eliminate possible issues relating to the survey. Another reason for using the SosciSurvey platform was that it allowed the data to be directly transferred to SPSS, which reduced the possible errors relating to transferring and analyzing the data. The survey was created in a way that respondents were reminded to respond to all the questions in case they tried to proceed without completing all of it. The finalized questionnaire was distributed to the target population via various student organizations and social media platforms as Facebook.

Furthermore, a questionnaire was selected as a collection method due to questionnaires providing measurable data that can be analyzed statistically and provide statistically significant results. The quantitative method was used to conduct the research to receive a general overview of the research topic. The data collection period was during 8.5.2020-14.5.2020.

3.4   Data Analysis

The responses were gathered on SosciSurvey and the data was exported to the IBM SPSS statistics software for analysis. To conduct our study and analyze our data, we used the measures of central tendency and variability such as the mode, mean, median, range, variance, and the standard deviation as a way to compare the different answers and determine the findings. Our analysis included the one-way ANOVA to discover whether there is a significant difference between the groups. Means were calculated in order to link the groups and attitudes from different countries, allowing us to determine relationships with the independent variable and moderating variable. The median was used to classify the different groups. A one-proportion z-test score and comparison of proportions on MedCalc (2020) were conducted in order to define the significance of the total gender congruency as well as to compare the significant difference in the countries.

3.5 Research quality criteria

3.5.1 Experiment evaluation, internal and external validity

Reliability refers to "research processes, practices, and methods that have a degree of stability in outcomes according to different reviewers and assessment practices, and in varied research contexts" (Lindhult, 2019, p. 27). Reliability makes sure that the process of analysis is on a safe road to valid and intended results with limited risks of unexpected negative consequences (Lindhult, 2019). Reliability and validity are linked to each other in a way that they both support trustworthiness, however, reliability is normally an indicator of validity and is seen as a validity dimension in itself (Lindhult, 2019).

According to Campbell (1957), internal validity is evaluated by asking: "did the experimental stimuli make some significant difference in this specific instance?". Internal validity indicates that whatever differences occur are derived from the independent variables, and no other factors, by controlling the conditions within the experiment (Burns & Burns, 2008). Among the various factors affecting the internal validity can be unwanted variables as well as the administrative actions controlling the processes of the study (Burns & Burns, 2008). Internal validity can encompass issues relating to the explanation of the causal relationship which the researchers are working on (Burns & Burns, 2008). To reduce any bias or extraneous factor affecting the results, it was researched that the measurements used were adequate for our results by using established scales for example from Burton and Lichtenstein (1988) and Kolbe and Langefeld (1993). Furthermore, a thorough examination was conducted when formatting the questions as their purpose was to cover the results we are trying to achieve, moreover, with careful planning, the correlations between the variables and criterions were accurate at this point in time.

External validity is the criteria of representativeness, or generalizability, which can be addressed by responding to what population, settings, and variables can this research be generalized (Campbell, 1957). To specify, external validity refers to the degree to which the results of the sample are generalizable to the population (Burns & Burns, 2008). For a sample to be generalized, the observed measurement, the conditions, and the treatments must be representative of the population: such as the subjects studied being a representative random sample, making sure there is nothing specific to influence the measurement and whether there was any personal interaction during the completion of the questionnaire (Burns & Burns, 2008). We provided a complete description of the subjects of our sample, along with the methodology used, to show that our results can be generalized to the statistical population.

3.5.2 Scale evaluation

Burns and Burns (2008) state attitude measurement as being a beneficial way of investigating and discovering what thoughts and perceptions consumers have towards a new product and advertising. The data scales used in attitude studies are formatted to obtain various statements related to the subject of the study, thus studying the respondents' attitudes or favorability

related to the studied object (Burns & Burns, 2008). These scales can be structured and customized based on the research topic as not all are suitable for a specific study (Burns & Burns, 2008). While searching the most suitable scales for studying attitudes towards advertisement, an article by Bruner (1998) about standardization and justifications of the A_{ad} scales was investigated. He criticized conducting research which modifies and combines scales without stating the origin of them and argues for the usage of scales that have been standardized and justified to be able to conduct a valid research.

In the thesis, the selection of the scales was conducted by selecting a whole set of scale items used in the previous literature, and by this, justifying the reliability of the scales by avoiding adapting and modifying the scales selected. As Burns and Burns (2008) describe, while conducting attitude studies, researchers are not interested in the individual items in the statements, "...the interest is normally located in the total score or sub-scores to sets of items grouped on the basis of factor analysis or Cronbach alpha reliability" (Burns & Burns, 2008, p. 469). Therefore, as we had the opportunity to see the Cronbach Alpha or Coefficient from the previous research and calculate them using SPSS IBM Statistics, it allowed us to see the reliability of the scales and disregard the possible pilot study relating to the reliability of used scales in the questionnaire.

The scales from Mitchell and Olson (1981), Madden, Allen and Twible (1988) and Burton and Lichtenstein (1988) were considered as having the most potential for measuring attitudes, due to being used in previous attitude studies. These scales were considered as suitable for our research because they are verified by the previous researchers, as for example Bruner (1998). From these, the A_{ad} scale used by Burton and Lichtenstein (1988) was selected based on the value of Coefficient alpha of 0.86 and 0.73 as mentioned in the article, as well as based on the suitability of the items for our research. Whereas the Cronbach Alpha was 0.862 and 0.876 in our calculations.

The previously conducted attitude studies have stated that studies including only a few item options result in lower significance in results (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005), and as the thesis was aiming to produce statistically significant and strong results, the questionnaire included scales with multiple items in them. In addition, while creating the questionnaire, scales measuring the attitudes towards the advertisement were selected to be comparable with each other. For example, while conducting attitude-behavior research, the ones using aggregate measures can have strong correlations results (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). Therefore, using scales that have multiple options, for example, three actions can improve the possibility to gain results correlating higher than ones with only one action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2005). The previous statement supported our selection of the A_{ad} scales from Burton and Lichtenstein (1988), thus the scale created an opportunity to research attitudes constructed by a total of 11 items, from two separate components, cognitive and affective, that could be combined as one. To enhance reliability and validity, the questionnaire was constructed in a way that the items in the scales were shown in random order, although it was acknowledged that this might take more time for the participants to complete the questionnaire. Likewise, it was acknowledged that it might decrease the clarity of the questionnaire structure.

There are arguments against and for how to measure attitudes. It is not proved that indirect attitude measurements would be more efficient compared to direct ones (Kidder & Campbell,

1970, cited in Ajzen, Fishbein 2005). However, as the topic we were researching could be considered as new, it was acknowledged that the respondents may have difficulties responding directly to the topic. Thus, to improve the aspect of the truthfulness of the responses, the question was set up to measure the attitudes indirectly. By measuring the attitudes of the respondents towards the selected advertisement, the research was also able to indirectly study how the respondents feel about the product by asking the respondents their purchasing intention.

Table 3.7 Attitude scales internal consistency

Scale	Author	Potential scale items	Coefficient / Cronbach´s alpha
Attitude towards advertisement (A$_{ad}$)	Mitchell and Olson (1981)	Good-Bad, Like-Dislike Irritating-Not irritating Interesting-Uninteresting	0.87
Attitude towards advertisement (A$_{ad}$)	Madden, Allen and Twible (1988)	Pleasant-Unpleasant Likeable-Unlikeable Interesting-Boring Tasteful-Tasteless Artful-Artless Good-Bad	0.89
Attitude towards advertisement (A$_{ad}$) = A$_{ad\text{-}affective}$ and A$_{ad\text{-}cognitive}$	Burton and Lichtenstein (1988)	**A$_{ad\text{-}affective}$** Soothing-Not soothing Warmhearted-Coldhearted Uplifting-Depressing Pleasant-Unpleasant Attractive-Unattractive Affectionate-Not affectionate	0.86
		A$_{ad\text{-}cognitive}$ Informative-Uninformative Effective-Ineffective Persuasive-Nonpersuasive Believable-Unbelievable Convincing-Not convincing	0.73

The scales selected to study the gender identity of the respondents and the gender-identity of the advertisement were versions from the longer form of the gender-identity scale of Bem (1974). The short-form BSRI from Bem (Kolbe & Langefeld, 1993) was considered as appropriate as the intention was to ask indirectly what the respondent gender-identity was and what was the considered gender-identity of the potential user of the advertisement shown. Several researches involving the longer or shorterform of BSRI obtained Cronbach's or Coefficient alpha values approximately between 0.80-0.95 (Chang, 2006; Feiereisen, Broderick & Douglas, 2009; Kolbe & Langefeld, 1993), which also supported the selection of the scale. Due to the short-forms of BSRI providing as reliable answers as the long version,

and because the neutral subscale items did not provide additional information in the previous research of Kolbe and Langefeld (1993), the scales of masculinity and femininity were included, excluding the neutral subscale items. Thus, the same scales used were selected as the short-form of BSRI provided Cronbach's alphas of 0.95 and 0.80 in the research of Kolbe and Langefeld (1993) and as we calculated it in SPSS IBM Statistics, we received Cronbach's alphas of 0.852 and 0.867.

Table 3.8 Gender identity scale (BSRI) internal consistency

Scale	Author	Potential scale items	Coefficient / Cronbach´s alpha
Short-form BSRI	Kolbe and Langefeld, (1993)	Masculinity Femininity	0.95 0.80
20 masculine items and 20 feminine items based on Bem (1974) Sex Role Inventory	Chang (2006)	Masculinity Femininity	0.90 0.84
Gender identity, Bem (1974) and Barak and Stern (1986)	Feiereisen, Broderick and Douglas (2009)	Masculinity and Femininity	0.85

3.6 Limitations

3.6.1 Data collection

The limitations involved with data collection could derive from a range of reasons. While conducting the data collection by utilizing online questionnaires, the research lacks the aspect of being conducted in a monitored environment. However, due to the topic researched being new and somewhat sensitive, the respondents might not feel comfortable expressing their true opinions, thus, the questionnaire was distributed online so that the respondents can answer anonymously. Additionally, although the questionnaire was pretested with a pilot study before the official distribution period, there might always be a chance that some participants interpret it differently due to personal reasons.

Non-probability sampling was selected as a sampling method because according to Burns and Burns (2008), it is a suitable way to reach the target population groups as well as due to possible limitations of the research period and budget. However, when using a non-probability sample, the results derived from it are not generalizable to the population (Burns & Burns, 2008). Instead of being able to generalize the findings, the research can only provide suggestions about the researched phenomena. Due to the momentary limitations, the researchers were not able to conduct the probability sampling method that would have provided generalizable results, as they were not able to conduct the research physically in the

selected countries. From the timing and budgetary point of view, the research was restricted. In fact, the first research design contained a plan of participating in the collection of the data physically in both countries. However, due to the current global situation with the pandemic, the travel possibilities to the target countries were limited.

3.6.2 Measurement and statistical error

Based on Burns and Burns (2008), sampling errors always occur because the sample population is rarely the same as the whole population in focus, as some elements may unknowingly misrepresent the population. We have made the effort to decrease the sampling bias as much as possible, by having an accurate representative proportion of the respondents based on their population size of the target groups. To specify, the university students of each country. The questionnaire was also designed to exclude those that do not complete all questions in the survey. Some non-sampling errors that could come up in questionnaires are the phrasing of questions, the order in which they have been asked, non-response and editing, coding, and analysis (Artingstall, 1977). We attempted to exclude any unclarity and ambiguity in the questions, as well as biases in the interpretation and analysis of the results. During the analysis of the results, a type I error occurs when there is no significant difference, but the results of the research depict otherwise (Burns & Burns, 2008). This type of error happens when the level of significance alpha was set too high, therefore leading to the rejection of a true null hypothesis (Burns & Burns, 2008). While conducting the analysis, a type II error might occur if the hypothesis I is accepted when in reality, the null hypothesis should be accepted. As we were using mainly the 0,05-significance level in our statistical analysis conducted in SPSS, this implies that there is always a five percent chance that our selected hypothesis is wrong.

4   Analysis and findings

In this section an analysis of the of the results of the data collected are presented first explaining the overview of the main components researched. After this the general out view of the data collected is described, providing information about the demographic of the respondents. Following this, the hypotheses are analyzed separately in equivalent order.

4.1.1   Components of the analysis

In our thesis, we tested five components to research the gender congruity between the respondents and the advertisement shown along with general consumer attitudes towards gender neutral product advertisement. The components utilized to research these were the following: gender identity of the groups, gender identity of the advertisement, gender congruity, consumers' attitudes towards advertising, and purchasing intention.

To discover these components, the following measurements and scales were used (see table 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5). The most substantial topic in our research lies upon the congruency, therefore, after discovering that there was a gap in the current analyzing methods of the congruency and categorizing these measurement levels between two countries, the researchers of this thesis developed an index to be able to measure the congruency of the selected sample (see table 4.3). Additionally, to be able to compare and classify the various levels of congruency, a threshold value for the levels of congruity was formulated as there was no existing congruity index. Thus, the developed congruency index named as Najem-Puolakka was utilized to measure and analyze the data derived from the respondents. To prove the validity of the index, an analysis with SPSS was conducted to support its development.

To analyze gender congruity, we categorized the gender identity groups of the respondents into four different categories. The respondents were categorized into four groups: masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated based on their masculinity and femininity scores. These were constructed based on the method of Spence and Helmreich (1978, cited in Chang, 2006) in which the masculinity and femininity scores were calculated for each respondent. After this, a median of the scores was calculated and each respondent was categorized as low or high in terms of masculinity and femininity based on whether the actual score was lower or higher than the median value. The groups that belonged to the masculine group had a high masculine score, whereas the respondents belonging to the feminine group had a high level of femininity. The participants obtaining low scores in both scales were grouped as undifferentiated whereas the ones obtaining high scores in both scales were grouped as androgynous.
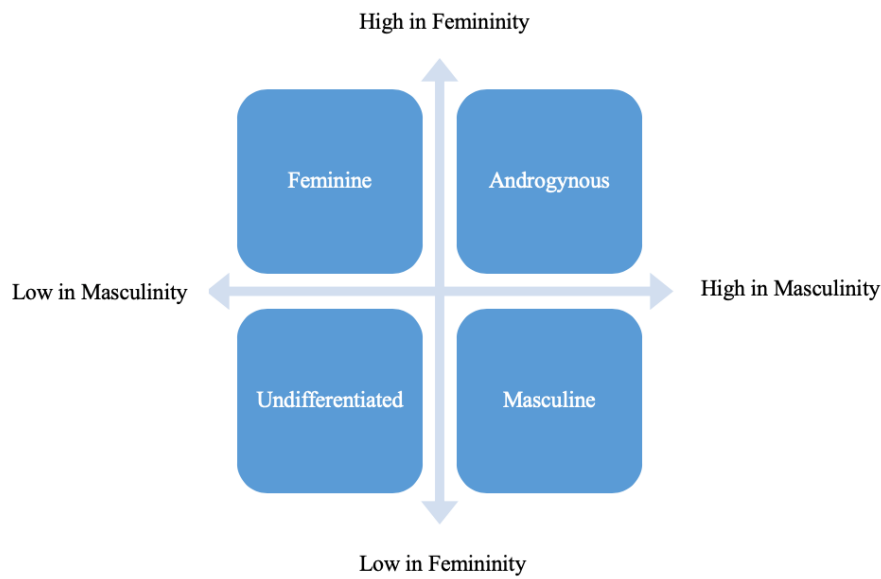
High in Femininity

Feminine	Androgynous

Low in Masculinity ← → High in Masculinity

Undifferentiated	Masculine

Low in Femininity

Figure 4.1 Matrix of gender identity categorization

Self-congruity is explained as a subjective experience generated by the interaction between a product-user image and a consumer's self-concept (Sirgy et al. 1997). To be able to measure the relationship between the gender-identity of the respondent and the gender identity of a typical user of the advertisement, a cross-tabulation was used. Congruency between both gender identity group and gender identity of the advertisement group received a number 1 whereas the incongruence received zero. Summing up these values provided us with the overall number of respondents with congruence. The Najem-Puolakka index was calculated as the proportion of the congruent respondents compared to the overall number of respondents. This index can be calculated to specific gender groups, countries, or overall sample.

The Najem-Puolakka index can and was utilized to produce country comparison results. The Najem-Puolakka index was utilized to analyze the attitudes towards gender neutral advertisements and the impact of the country based on the gender congruency between the participants and the advertisement. In addition, the index was utilized to discover the overall proportion congruity level of the sample researched.

4.2   Overview of the data collected

The total amount of the responses our questionnaire received was 835, of which the total responses analyzed were 750. To be able to improve the validity of the responses, the screening question was set out. To specify, when asking the country of studies, it included the option of "other", thus excluding these response options. After the outliers had been browsed through a total of 85 responses were disqualified. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 39 years.

Table 4.1 Descriptive statistics of demographics

Variable	Response Categories	Proportion
Gender	Male	26
	Female	73
	Prefer not to answer	1
Age	18-20	26
	21-23	42
	24-26	20
	>27	12
Country of studies	Finland	50
	Lebanon	50
Level of education	Bachelor's degree	67
	Master's degree	30
	Doctorate degree	3

The data consisted of 375 participants from Finland and 375 participants from Lebanon. The collected data were divided into four age categories, the age groups being 18-20, 21-23, 24-26, and 27 or older. The dispersion among the respondents was balanced towards the age groups of 21-23 years old, the majority, 318 of the respondents belonging to this category. On the contrary, the minority, 87 of the respondents were grouped in the category of 27 or older. In terms of the educational background, most of the respondents, 504 were bachelor students, whereas 226 respondents were master students, a small number of 20 respondents studying for a doctorate degree. As for the biological sex of the respondents, a total of 197 males and 543 females, and 10 respondents preferring not to say their sex took part in the research.

Table 4.2 Measured internal consistency for used scales

Scale	Scale Items	Coefficient/ Cronbach's alpha
Short-form BSRI by Kolbe and Langefeld (1993)	Masculinity – Gender Group (10 items)	0.852
	Femininity – Gender Group (10 items)	0.867
Attitude towards advertisement (A_{ad}) = $A_{ad\_Affective}$ and $A_{ad\_Cognitive}$ by Burton and Lichtenstein (1988)	Attitudes towards advertisement – Affective (6 items)	0.862
	Attitudes towards advertisement – Cognitive (5 items)	0.876

4.3   Hypothesis testing

4.3.1   Hypothesis I: Gender Identity and gender congruity

Hypothesis I

H0: *The respondents' gender identity group has no effect on the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral advertisement.*

H1: *The respondents' gender identity group has an effect on the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral advertisement.*

GENDER_GROUP * ADGROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		ADGROUP				Total
		1,00	2,00	3,00	4,00	
GENDER_GROUP	1,00	15	36	48	60	159
	2,00	26	30	41	52	149
	3,00	19	22	119	34	194
	4,00	55	39	25	129	248
Total		115	127	233	275	750

Figure 4.2 Crosstabulation of gender identity group and perceived advertisement gender identity group

The following gender groups were constructed based on the method described for the Najem-Puolakka index. The Najem-Puolakka index representing the proportion of congruity was calculated for each gender group as well as for the total sample. Hence, the participants were divided into different gender-identity groups as well as the advertisement and its perceived gender identity. The total number of congruence among the respondents in each group was for the masculine 15, feminine 30, androgynous 119, and undifferentiated 129. The indexes measuring the congruity for the specified groups had the following values: the masculine group had a congruity value of 0.094, whereas the feminine group had a congruity value of 0.201. Equivalently, the androgynous group was valued as 0.613 and undifferentiated was 0.520. The total index containing all gender groups was 0.395.

After measuring the gender congruity for each group separately, the total of the congruency among the respondents was calculated. We divided the participants into different groups as

well as the advertisement and its perceived gender identity. We identified 39.06% of congruence between the gender identity of the participants and the perceived gender of the advertisement.

Another stage in this hypothesis analysis was to test the z-score. We tested for one proportion z-score to see the confidence interval and level of significance for the gender congruence with the platform MedCalc (2020). As it is not possible to test the z-score against zero since it will be undefined, the z-score was tested against the lowest possible value which is one percent. According to MedCalc (2020), Z (104.757) = 0.0001 and with a confidence interval of 35.55% to 42.66%. Since the confidence interval did not include zero and the p-value was below the level of significance 0.05, it was significant. To indicate how strong the 39.06% congruence was, the researchers of this thesis constructed a qualitative description of the Najem-Puolakka index which defines the levels of congruence.

Table 4.3 Level of congruence

Percentage	Level of congruence
0% to 25%	Weak congruence
26% to 50%	Fair congruence
51% to 75%	Strong congruence
76% to 100%	Very strong congruence

According to the Najem-Puolakka index, the total level of congruence was 39.06% indicating a fair level of congruence. Thus, the null hypothesis was discarded, and the alternative hypothesis was approved: the gender identity group affects the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral advertisement.

Our results were supported by conducting a one-way ANOVA analysis (Figure 4.3) between the congruent participants and the four different gender groups of the participants. The results showed a significant p-value below 0.05 between groups. Adding to that, the results were significant between the gender groups masculine and androgynous, masculine and undifferentiated, feminine and androgynous and feminine and undifferentiated, with p-values way below 0.05 and confidence intervals that did not include zero. This further supports our results that we accept the alternative hypothesis.

Descriptives

CONGRUENT

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
MASCULINE	159	,0943	,29322	,02325	,0484	,1403	,00	1,00
FEMININE	149	,2013	,40236	,03296	,1362	,2665	,00	1,00
ANDROGYNOUS	194	,6134	,48823	,03505	,5443	,6825	,00	1,00
UNDIFFERENTIATED	248	,5202	,50060	,03179	,4576	,5828	,00	1,00
Total	750	,3907	,48823	,01783	,3557	,4257	,00	1,00

ANOVA

CONGRUENT

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	33,086	3	11,029	56,565	,000
Within Groups	145,449	746	,195		
Total	178,535	749			

Figure 4.3 One-way ANOVA between gender identity groups

Our findings support the different studies stating that advertisements are perceived differently from gender to another (Bai, 2018; Byrnes, 2006; Jovanovic, Kostic & Vlastelica, 2016) and that gender-congruent product seeking individuals are influenced by the advertisements (Fugate & Philips, 2010). This means that advertisements may still be seen as gendered and it depends on the individual watching though the advertisement of a gender-neutral product was mostly seen with non-sex typed gender identity such as androgynous or undifferentiated.

4.3.2 Hypothesis II: Gender congruity and attitude towards the advertisement

Hypothesis II

H0: *The gender identity congruency does not affect the attitude towards the advertisement of gender-neutral skincare products.*

H2: *The gender identity congruency affects the attitude towards the advertisement of gender-neutral skincare products.*

Two different components were constructed for the attitudes. The affective component consisted of the mean of six items presenting the affective dimensions of attitude and the cognitive component consisted of the mean of five items representing the cognitive dimensions of attitude towards the advertisement. An additional combined component was constructed consisting of the mean of all 11 items.

Based on the gender identity groups and advertisement's perceived gender identity group, a dichotomous variable was constructed that defined whether the two groups were equal or not.

In case the groups were equal, that variable defined respondents as congruent and in the opposite case, respondents were defined as not congruent. After the grouping, a one-way ANOVA was performed for all the previously mentioned attitude components using the congruent variable as the factor.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ATTITUDE_AFFECTIVE	Between Groups	2,309	1	2,309	4,022	,045
	Within Groups	429,380	748	,574		
	Total	431,689	749			
ATTITUDE_COGNITIVE	Between Groups	1,182	1	1,182	1,657	,198
	Within Groups	533,788	748	,714		
	Total	534,970	749			
ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Between Groups	1,751	1	1,751	3,252	,072
	Within Groups	402,639	748	,538		
	Total	404,389	749			

Figure 4.4 One-way ANOVA test of within- and between subjects

Results of the analysis indicated that while there was no significant difference in the cognitive component (*ATTITUDE_COGNITIVE*) of the attitudes, there was a significant difference in the means for the affective component (*ATTITUDE_AFFECTIVE)* at a level of significance five percent and a significant difference in the total attitudes at a level of significance 10%. With F-value of 4.022 and significance $p = 0.045 < 0.05$, the means between the congruent group (M = 3.703) and non-congruent group (M = 3.589) for the affective component of attitude and an F-value of 3.252 and significance p= 0072 < 0.1, the results indicated that the alternative hypothesis was confirmed. Therefore, it could be concluded that gender identity congruity has a significant effect on the affective component of the attitude towards advertisement and the total attitude at a significance level of 10%.

Our findings support previous research that ad-self congruency affects the attitudes towards the advertisement (Chang, 2006). However, one interesting finding in our study was that there was not much difference between congruent and non-congruent individuals in the total attitudes towards the advertisement, which was not the case in the study of Hong and Zinkhan (1995) in which it was revealed that the advertisements that appeal to oneself produced different attitudes than those that do not. Another interesting finding in our study were the different attitudes components as the gender congruency did not have an impact on the cognitive component of the attitude but on the affective component.

4.3.3 Hypothesis III: Relation of attitudes towards the advertisement and purchase intention

Hypothesis III

H0: *There is no relationship between the attitudes towards the advertisement of a gender-neutral product and the purchase intention.*

H3: *There is a relationship between the attitude towards the advertisement of a gender-neutral product and the purchase intention.*

A bivariate correlation analysis was performed with the variables of total attitude, the affective and cognitive component, and the purchase intention. Based on the results of this analysis, the Pearson correlation coefficient 0.348 was significant with a p-value close to zero which is below the level of significance 0.05. For the affective component, the Pearson correlation coefficient 0.328 was significant with a p-value close to zero and a Pearson correlation of 0.311 for the cognitive attitude with a significant value, also close to zero.

This analysis was also supported by Spearman's correlation test which showed a correlation coefficient of 0.289 for the cognitive component with a p-value close to zero and a correlation coefficient of 0.313 for the affective component with a p-value close to zero. Additionally, it was discovered that the correlation coefficient of 0.327 for the total attitude had a p-value close to zero.

Based on this analysis, the results showed a significant difference, meaning the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This urges us to believe that there is a positive relationship between the total attitude and purchasing intention. This may imply that, in practice, the respondents who have a positive attitude towards the advertisement are more likely to purchase the product.

Correlations

		PI: Not at all likely to buy/Very likely to buy	COGNITIVE_ATTITUDE	AFFECTIVE_ATTITUDE	ATTITUDE_TOTAL
PI: Not at all likely to buy/Very likely to buy	Pearson Correlation	1	.311**	.328**	.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	750	750	750	750
COGNITIVE_ATTITUDE	Pearson Correlation	.311**	1	.694**	.914**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	750	750	750	750
AFFECTIVE_ATTITUDE	Pearson Correlation	.328**	.694**	1	.926**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	750	750	750	750
ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	.348**	.914**	.926**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	750	750	750	750

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

Figure 4.5 Pearson correlations between attitude towards advertisement and purchase intention

Our findings were in line with previous research by Ajzen and Fishbein (2005) and Sherman and Fazio (1983) stating that attitudes predict behavior. Another finding that supported previous research was that the attitudes an individual develops towards an advertisement lead to purchase intention (Abu Bakar, Mohamad & Raza, 2019; Mehta, 2000; Shimp, 1981). An interesting finding of ours was that both cognitive and affective components of attitude affected the purchase intention.

4.3.4   Hypothesis IV: Moderating effect of country of studies on gender identity group and gender congruity

Hypothesis IV

H0: *The country of studies does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity group and the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral skincare advertisement.*

H4: *The country of studies has a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity group and the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral skincare advertisement.*

PARTICIPANT_GROUP * AD_GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		AD_GROUP				
		Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	Undifferentiated	Total
PARTICIPANT_GROUP	Masculine	8	13	9	31	61
	Feminine	19	13	15	36	83
	Androgynous	12	4	17	14	47
	Undifferentiated	46	22	13	103	184
Total		85	52	54	184	375

Figure 4.6 Crosstabulation comparison between gender identity groups and the gender identity of advertisement in Finland

The following groups were constructed based on the method described for the Najem-Puolakka index. The Najem-Puolakka index representing the proportion of congruity was calculated for each gender group as well as for the total sample for Finland. The total number of congruence among Finnish university students in each group was for the masculinity 8, femininity 13, androgynous 17 and undifferentiated 103. The indexes measuring congruity for each group received congruency values, hence the masculine group received a value of 0.131 and feminine group 0.157. Additionally, the androgynous group was 0.362 while on the other hand, undifferentiated was 0.559, this being the largest congruity group in Finland. The total index containing all gender groups was 0.376. Based on the principle described for Najem-Puolakka index, the level of congruence in Finland 37.6% was perceived as fair. The following groups were constructed based on the method described for the Najem-Puolakka index. The Najem-Puolakka index representing the proportion of congruity was calculated for each gender group as well as for the total sample for Lebanon. The total number of congruence among the respondents in each group was for the masculinity 7, femininity 17, androgynous 102, and undifferentiated 26. In Lebanon, the indexes for the different groups were the following: the masculine group received an index value of 0.071, and the feminine group 0.258. Similarly, the androgynous group received an index value of 0.694 and the undifferentiated index was 0.406. The total index containing all gender groups was 0.405.

PARTICIPANT_GROUP * AD_GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		AD_GROUP				
		Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	Undifferentiated	Total
PARTICIPANT_GROUP	Masculine	7	23	39	29	98
	Feminine	7	17	26	16	66
	Androgynous	7	18	102	20	147
	Undifferentiated	9	17	12	26	64
Total		30	75	179	91	375

Figure 4.7 Crosstabulation comparison between gender identity groups and the gender identity of advertisement in Lebanon

Based on the principle described for the Najem-Puolakka index, the level of congruence in Lebanon 40.5% is perceived as fair. To study the hypothesis, a comparison of proportions between the two countries was conducted. According to MedCalc (2020), the confidence of interval was [-4.0678;9.8283] with a p-value of 0.4160. As the confidence of interval includes zero and the p-value is above the significance level 0.05, it is not significantly different. However, we also conducted a one-way ANOVA analysis for both countries to further support our results and get a significant difference between the four different groups. In Finland, the ANOVA test revealed a p-value close to zero between the groups, and a significant difference between masculine and androgynous, masculine and undifferentiated, feminine and undifferentiated and androgynous and undifferentiated at a five percent significant level.

In Lebanon, the ANOVA test also revealed a p-value close to zero between the groups. However, the significant differences differed from Finland as they were present masculine and feminine, masculine and androgynous, masculine and undifferentiated, feminine and androgynous and androgynous and undifferentiated. The means plot showed a lower feminine, masculine, and androgynous congruity in Finland than Lebanon, but a higher undifferentiated congruity. Thus, we partially accepted the null hypothesis and rejected the alternative hypothesis. The country of studies does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity group and the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral skincare advertisement. Our results were supported by different studies such as Morris & Cundiff (1971) that researched the assignment of genders to different items being impacted by cultural factors, and Bem (1981) and Kacen (2000) who stated that the level of masculinity and femininity of an individual may be affected by the culture, as well as the Hofstede framework (Hofstede Insights, 2019a; Hofstede Insights, 2019b) that revealed different masculinity and femininity levels to Lebanon and Finland.

4.3.5 Hypothesis V: Moderating effect of country of studies on gender congruity and attitudes towards the advertisement

Hypothesis V

H0: *The country of the studies does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity congruity and the attitudes towards an advertisement.*

H5: *The country of the studies has a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity congruity and the attitudes towards an advertisement.*

In order to find out whether the country of studies has a moderating effect on the relationship between gender identity congruity and the attitudes toward the advertisement, a separate one-way ANOVA analysis was performed for both countries. The analysis contained the same dependent variables as described in hypothesis II and the factor was the same dichotomous variable that described whether the respondent was congruent or not based on the gender identity group and perceived advertisement gender identity group.

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Between Groups	1,587	1	1,587	4,033	,045
	Within Groups	146,792	373	,394		
	Total	148,379	374			
ATTITUDE_AFFECTIVE	Between Groups	1,199	1	1,199	2,837	,093
	Within Groups	157,625	373	,423		
	Total	158,824	374			
ATTITUDE_COGNITIVE	Between Groups	2,125	1	2,125	3,955	,047
	Within Groups	200,390	373	,537		
	Total	202,515	374			

Figure 4.8 One-way ANOVA of attitudes among Finland

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Between Groups	8,538	1	8,538	13,893	,000
	Within Groups	229,221	373	,615		
	Total	237,758	374			
ATTITUDE_AFFECTIVE	Between Groups	8,977	1	8,977	14,136	,000
	Within Groups	236,876	373	,635		
	Total	245,853	374			
ATTITUDE_COGNITIVE	Between Groups	8,025	1	8,025	9,519	,002
	Within Groups	314,431	373	,843		
	Total	322,456	374			

Figure 4.9 One-way ANOVA of attitudes among Lebanon

Results revealed that for Finland, the total attitude component and the cognitive component were significantly different ($p < 0.05$) but for affective component of attitude, there was no significant difference between the congruent and non-congruent respondents at a significance level of 0.05. However, there was a difference between the congruent and non-congruent respondents at a 10% significant level. For Lebanon, results revealed that the affective, cognitive component, and the total attitude were significantly different and had a p-value of close to zero, which is below the level of significance 0.05. To further verify these results, we compared the different means, standard deviations, and sample size to analyze the significant differences on the MedCalc platform. The comparison of means between the affective attitudes of non-congruent participants in Lebanon of Finland showed a 95% confidence interval of [0.0749;0.3409] and a significance level p=0.0023 which is below the 0.05 level of significance. For the congruent participants, the 95% confidence interval [0.4711;0.8085]

depicted a significant p-value< 0.0001 which implies that the country of studies has an effect on the affective attitudes of the congruent and non-congruent participants.

The comparison of means between the cognitive attitudes of non-congruent participants in Lebanon of Finland showed a 95% confidence interval of [-0.1017;0.2051] and significance level p=0.5081. Whereas for the congruent participants, the 95% confidence interval [0.3152;0.6950] displayed a significant p-value< 0.0001, which implies that the country has an effect on the cognitive attitudes of congruent participants but not on the non-congruent participants. Finally, the comparison of means between the total attitudes of non-congruent participants in Lebanon and Finland showed a 95% confidence interval of [0.0063;0.2675] and significance level p= 0.0400, and for the congruent participants, a 95% confidence interval of [0.4153; 0.7419] and a significant p-value<0.0001. This implies that the country has an effect on the total attitudes of the participants.

Based on these results, as the countries not only had differences in significance levels between the different attitude components but also major differences in the patterns between congruent and non-congruent groups, the null hypothesis was rejected and alternative hypothesis H5 was accepted. The country of studies has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between gender congruity and attitudes towards the advertisement. As our results showed that the country affects the relationship between the gender congruity and attitudes towards the advertisement, this further supports the previous studies that advertisements should be different when advertising from a country to another (Abu Bakar, Mohamad & Raza, 2019). This difference may be from the different levels of masculinity and femininity in each country according to Hofstede's framework (Hofstede Insight, 2019a; Hofstede Insights 2019b) and also explained in the study of Kacen (2000) and Bem (1981).

4.3.6   Summary of results

The results derived from the analysis suggested that the majority of the alternative hypotheses were accepted, only the fourth hypothesis was rejected. Thus, it was discovered that the respondents' gender identity has an effect on the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral advertisement. In addition, the results implied that gender identity congruency affects the attitude towards the advertisement of gender-neutral skincare products. The results of the third hypothesis indicated that there is a relationship between the attitudes towards the advertisement of a gender-neutral product and the purchasing intention. However, as in hypothesis IV the null hypothesis was accepted, it implied that the country of studies does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity group and gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral skincare advertisement. Nonetheless, the analysis indicated that the country of studies has a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender congruity and the attitudes towards the gender-neutral advertisement.

Our results indicated that the role of gender identity congruency is significant when considering how people perceive gender-neutral advertisements. This result is in previous literature supported for traditional gender roles and portrayals of those on advertisements but based on the findings in this study, it is also true for gender-neutral portrayals and products. In the case of gender-neutral context, it is important to notice that gender groups that seem to be

most congruent based on the results are the non-sex typed groups consisting of androgynous and undifferentiated gender groups. While the country of studies did not seem to influence the relationship between gender groups and gender identity congruency, it did have a significant moderating effect on the attitudes towards gender neutral advertisement when comparing gender congruent and non-congruent groups. This could imply that the importance of gender congruency in gender neutral advertisement varies between different countries and could be possibly explained by countries' different masculinity levels.

Table 4.4 Summary of hypothesis testing results

Hypothesis	Type of analysis	Results
Hypothesis I: The respondents' gender identity group has no effect on the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral advertisement.	Z-score tests One-way ANOVA	Accept alternative hypothesis
Hypothesis II: The gender identity congruency does not affect the attitude towards the advertisement of gender-neutral skincare products.	One-way ANOVA	Accept alternative hypothesis
Hypothesis III: There is no relationship between the attitudes towards the advertisement of a gender-neutral product and the purchase intention.	Bivariate correlation analysis	Accept alternative hypothesis
Hypothesis IV: The country of studies does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity group and the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral skincare advertisement.	Z-score tests One-way ANOVA	Accept the null hypothesis, however partial support for accepting the alternative hypothesis was found
Hypothesis V: The country of the studies does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity congruity and the attitudes towards an advertisement.	One-way ANOVA	Accept alternative hypothesis

5 Discussion

In this chapter, the final results will be explained with a connection to the theoretical framework. The chapter is divided into three different sections with the first one explaining the effect of gender identity to gender congruity. The second section consists of discussions about implications of gender congruity for gender-neutral advertisement, while the third section is discussing the role of country as a moderating variable.

5.1 The effects of gender identity to gender congruity

The results from hypothesis I suggested that respondents' gender identity group has an effect on the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral advertisement. The purpose of this hypothesis was to discover whether the gender-identity group of the respondent has an impact on how they perceive the advertisement. Hence, whether the respondents see the advertisement similar to their gender-identity or not was researched.

Our findings revealed that there is a fair gender congruency between the gender identity of the participant and the perceived gender identity of the advertisement. Individuals in both countries assumed the advertisement had a different gender identity, even though it was a gender-neutral advertisement. Some individuals perceived it as having a different gender identity than theirs, and some perceived it as having the same gender identity as them. The advertisement was seen as being high in masculinity, some saw it as being high in femininity, others high in both, and low in both as well. This has shown that it is difficult for an advertisement to market a gender-neutral product as it may always be seen by some as gendered, which is also supported by Debevec and Iyer (1986b) and Fugate and Philips (2010) as they mentioned most individuals assign a gender to products. However, most of the respondents in this study assigned a non-sex typed gender identity to the advertisement implying that the traditional view of gender identity might be too narrow for categorizing gender-neutral products. The identity of an individual and their self-concept plays a role in the way the advertisement is perceived, and this is revealed by individuals from different gender identities seeing the advertisement differently from one person to another.

Our research results were supported by the findings of the article of Chang (2006) which discovered that among the participants the group categorized as androgynous had more results compared to the groups consisting of masculine and feminine gender identities. In our research, among the 750 participants, the largest gender identity group was undifferentiated, which consisted of 248 respondents, the second largest group being the androgynous group consisting of 194 respondents. Hence, the androgynous group was larger compared to the masculine group obtaining 159 responses and feminine group, forming of 149 responses.

Referring to Chang's (2006) article, the results of our research also imply that the level of femininity and masculinity could be a more important factor than dividing and targeting the consumers strictly based on biological sex. The dispersion between the groups could imply further, that the stereotypical gender identities are shifting to more fragmented ones. This can be noticed from the way stereotypical images of advertisements are integrating more unconventional gender stereotypes into their advertisements (Chu, Lee & Kim, 2016; Lien, Chou & Chang, 2012) and for example, males are depicted more in a non-masculine manner than previously (Hakala, 2006). The research of Ludwig, Hattula and Kraus (2016) explains that nowadays androgynous consumers can be considered as a large consumer group, which supports the findings of androgynous being the second largest gender identity group among respondents.

Based on the article of Wolin (2003), the individuals that obtain masculine and feminine gender identities prefer following cultural definitions of gender appropriateness, whereas those who have androgynous or undifferentiated gender-identity have a tendency to act beyond these cultural defined gender roles/definitions. This theory supports our findings because while exposing the target respondents to the gender-neutral advertisement, the most gender congruent groups were the undifferentiated and androgynous. Gender-neutral skincare can be seen as a product that does not follow the typical gender roles. According to our results, the majority, 67,7%, of the respondents associated the gender identity of the advertisement as undifferentiated (n=275) or androgynous (n=233).

Kolbe and Langefeld (1993) failed to find any differences between gender identity groups and perceived gender identities of the character of advertisement, but our results suggest that by using gender identity groups and the median split method, significant differences between different groups and their perceived advertisement gender identity were found. Thus, the results are supporting the usage of gender identity groups instead of the masculinity and femininity scores and challenging the need for such granularity when measuring the gender identity.

5.2 Implications of the gender congruity for gender-neutral advertisement

The results from hypothesis II suggest that the gender identity congruency affects the attitude towards the advertisement of gender-neutral skincare products. The purpose of this hypothesis was to discover whether the congruency or non-congruency of the respondent affects how the respondent views the advertisement. The analysis discovered that there is a significant difference between the attitudes of the congruent and non-congruent respondents.

Ludwig, Hattula and Kraus (2016) found that gender identity congruity was high among the androgynous gender identity group when products used unisex labeling instead of traditional sex-typed labeling. Opposite to androgynous, masculine and feminine gender groups had higher congruity when products used traditional sex-typed labeling (Ludwig, Hattula & Kraus, 2016). Our results showed that the congruity was significantly higher in the

androgynous gender identity group compared to masculine and feminine groups when showing the gender-neutral advertisement. Since the advertisement did not contain any sex-typed labeling, the findings of Ludwig, Hattula and Kraus (2016) further validate our results.

Van den Hende and Mugge (2014) described that congruity between promotional messages and a person's gender identity is more important than congruity with the product category. Overall, approximately 36% of the male respondents and 39,6% of the female respondents were found gender congruent with the gender-neutral advertisement, thus implying that while skincare products can be seen as a feminine product type, there was almost the same proportion of congruency among the male and female participants. This finding is aligned with the study of Van den Hende and Mugge (2014).

Out of all the participants, masculine and undifferentiated participants had less positive total attitudes than the rest. A reason for why the masculine participants may have a less positive attitude towards the advertisement may be because the product advertised may be seen as more feminine and men may reject feminine products if it is not marketed as masculine (Morris & Cundiff, 1971) as they tend to look for their gender identity in the products they buy (Alreck, Settle & Belch, 1982; Fugate & Philips, 2010). The article of Feiereisen, Broderick and Douglas, (2009) implies that the congruency between the respondent and the advertisement can lead to an improvement in its effectiveness. The results from Van den Hende and Mugge (2014) further support this as the authors found that gender congruity among both males and females affects positively to product evaluation.

An interesting finding was also revealed when analyzing the affective and cognitive component of the attitudes. Feminine and androgynous groups had a high positive affective attitude, whereas it was less positive for the masculine and undifferentiated participants. For the cognitive component, the attitudes were considered to be positive in all the groups. This may be explained by the different levels of femininity and masculinity in these groups and may be supported by Jovanovic, Kostic and Vlastelica (2016) who suggested that rational advertisements are more appealing for male consumers and emotional ones are more appealing for female consumers, as feminine and androgynous participants are both high in femininity. For the total and affective attitude, the gender-congruent participants had a slightly higher and more positive attitude than the non-congruent participants, whereas it is the opposite for the cognitive component.

The hypothesis III was set to investigate the relationship between the attitudes towards the advertisement of a gender-neutral product and the purchase intention. It was discovered that there was a positive relationship between the attitudes and purchasing intention. The purchase intention was higher for congruent participants than for non-congruent participants and that may be supported by the study conducted by Hong and Zinkhan (1995) where they revealed that advertisements related to the self-concept of the individual are preferred and create a stronger purchase intention. This was also reinforced by Kim (2015). According to Reed et al. (2012), individuals adopt behavior based on media that is linked to their identity. Feiereisen, Broderick and Douglas (2009), as we have previously mentioned, also revealed that the congruency between the gender of an individual and the advertisement is positively related to the purchase intention. Additionally, Fugate and Philips (2010) explained that consumers maintain their gender integrity by purchasing products that are similar to their gender identity.

An interesting finding is that the individuals with the highest purchase intention were the feminine participants, whereas the ones with the lowest purchase intention are the masculine participants. This finding may determine that masculine participants found this product to be too feminine which is why they would not consider purchasing it as much as the feminine participants. This could be supported by Kimmel and Tissier-Desbordes (1999) who state that men may have a fear of admitting their feminine side. In addition, the research of Morris and Cundiff (1971) enforces this by revealing that masculinity may be linked to a higher sensitivity to the usage and purchase of products classified as feminine. In general, it is important for marketers to understand the identities of the consumers when making an advertisement (Ahmad et al. 2018; Bosselman et al. 2012; Carfora et al. 2019; Sandhu, 2018). According to Reed et al. (2012), individuals give more attention to advertisements that are related to their identities.

5.3   The country of studies as a moderating variable

The hypothesis IV implies that the country of studies does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between gender identity group and the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral skincare advertisement, however results from another analysis method indicated that such moderating effect might still exist. In Lebanon, the congruent respondents had a more positive attitude towards the advertisement than the non-congruent respondents. On the contrary, in Finland, the respondents having congruency had a less positive attitude towards the advertisement than non-congruent respondents.

According to the gender researcher Bem (1981), the individual tends to adjust his or her behavior in accordance with the culture's definitions of masculinity and femininity. Bem (1981) mentioned that the society in which one is born teaches the individual that the contrast between masculinity and femininity is extensively and intensively related to almost every aspect of life. Debevec and Iyer (1986b) discovered that the assignment of gender to a product is very prevalent, further other researchers collaborated this by explaining that this may originate from cultural factors (Morris & Cundiff, 1971). In both countries Finland and Lebanon, individuals assigned from different gender groups assigned various genders to the advertisement. However, the assignment of gender to the advertisement was not similar from one country to another as most individuals in Finland perceived the advertisement as undifferentiated whereas in Lebanon, most individuals perceived the advertisement as androgynous. Additionally, the masculine and feminine assignments to the advertisement differed from Finland to Lebanon. Our findings revealed that the relationship between gender identity and gender identity congruity is not affected by culture, however, the relationship between gender identity and the assignment of gender to the advertisement is.

Since Allison et al. (1980) determined that the gender of a product may be assigned by looking at the user group most using it, this explains how the advertisement of the gender-neutral skincare product was seen differently from culture to another. In a more masculine culture, a skin-care product, whether gender-neutral, for men, or women, may be seen as more

feminine, and only women use such products, which was the case in Lebanon, as they mostly saw the product as high in femininity, contrary to Finland.

Lindner (2004) mentioned that advertisements impact the information concerning gender stereotypes as they force an image of how an individual is expected to act based on their gender. Moreover, Eisend (2010) depicted that gender stereotyping in advertisements is related to how advanced the culture and society in terms of gender equality is. As Lebanon is a country that is not quite as advanced in gender equality, gender stereotyping still happens in advertisements, and advertisements related to skincare products target women, which plants the idea that skincare products are to be used by feminine individuals, which may not be the case in Finland. We conclude that this is a reason why gender identity affects the perceived gender of the advertisement from a culture to another. More masculine participants in Lebanon saw the advertisement as high in femininity than in Finland. According to Reed et al. (2012), identities change over time and this may be due to cultural factors.

The hypothesis V signals that the country of the studies does have a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity congruity and the attitudes towards an advertisement. In masculine cultures, the positive effect of gender congruity towards the advertisement is found to be greater than in less masculine cultures (Feiereisen, Broderick & Douglas, 2009). This theory supports our findings due to the gender congruent respondents in Lebanon having significantly more positive attitudes towards the advertisement compared to Finland. Additionally, this aligns with Hofstede's cultural dimension, which portrays Lebanon as having a masculine dominated culture, contrary to Finland, which can be perceived as a feminine culture.

In the case of Finland, the gender congruent participants did not have a significantly more positive attitude towards the advertisement than those who were not congruent. This might be explained by the findings of Basfirinci (2014) which imply that consumers might not see advertisements favorable in case its image is not consistent with their own stereotypes of their potential user. Lieven et al. (2015) found that products classified as undifferentiated received a lower score from the affect attitude and purchase intention. The largest congruency group in Finland consisted of undifferentiated gender-identity and among that group, actual advertisement and its product were seen as undifferentiated. Therefore, the less positive attitudes towards advertisement among this group could result from the general view of the product being undifferentiated and as the theory by Lieven et al. (2015) suggests, undifferentiated products could receive a less positive attitude towards the advertisement. Potentially, there could also be subconscious reasons for the women responding less positively towards the advertisements, due to the theory by Feiereisen, Broderick and Douglas (2009) indicating that women having more masculine gender-identity might try to hide their true gender-identity to depict more a feminine image of themselves.

The research of Feiereisen, Broderick and Douglas (2009) could support the findings, which revealed the Lebanese congruent respondents having a more positive attitude towards advertisement since at least the females in masculine cultures are shown to have a stronger need for gender congruity than females in less masculine cultures. Firstly, in Finland the advertisement was mostly perceived as undifferentiated (low masculine and feminine levels) as for Lebanon, the advertisement was mostly perceived as androgynous (high masculine and

feminine levels). In Finland, almost 23% of the respondents saw it as masculine whereas in Lebanon the proportion was only 8%, implying that the amount of people who saw the advertisement as feminine is higher in Lebanon than in Finland. We determine that this may be due to the higher levels of masculinity in Lebanon than in Finland (Hofstede Insights, 2019a; Hofstede Insights, 2019b). Individuals in Lebanon may see the product in the advertisement as more feminine because a skincare product is for women, which is why the amount of people who saw it as masculine is relatively low compared to Finland, who is a country low in masculinity (Hofstede Insights, 2019a; Hofstede Insights, 2019b). As Tuncay and Otnes (2008) mentioned, men may feel vulnerable about a product that does not fit their understanding of masculinity that is predominated in their cultural beliefs. The anxiety level towards feminine products varies from an individual to another, so when promoting an advertisement, marketers must understand the cultural values behind the beliefs of gender stereotypes to be able to market the product in a successful manner (Morris & Cundiff, 1971). Most participants in Finland had positive cognitive attitudes, whereas the affective attitudes towards the advertisements were less positive. However, in Lebanon, the participants had positive affective and cognitive attitudes. In all, the positive attitudes were higher in Lebanon than in Finland. This is an interesting finding as Finland is a more developed country, we expected the contrary.

6   Conclusions

This study has revealed that the gender identity of an individual has an effect on the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral advertisement. A gender-neutral skincare product advertisement was seen differently from a participant to another as having different masculinity and femininity levels. The perception of the advertisement is affected by the culture's understanding and definition of masculinity and femininity. This study also revealed that gender identity congruency between an individual and the advertisement has an impact on the attitudes towards the advertisement. Higher positive attitudes towards the advertisement were linked to the purchase intention of the product, whereas the individuals with the highest purchase intention are feminine. Finally, this study revealed that the country of studies has an effect on the relationship between the gender identity group and the gender identity congruity, and the relationship between the gender congruity and attitudes towards the gender-neutral skincare product advertisement. The assignment of gender to the advertisement differed from one country to another, and so did the attitudes for the gender-congruent participants. The aim of our research will be discussed in this section, as well as the theoretical implications and practical implications that may help in the development of future studies.

6.1   Research aim

The purpose of our thesis was to research whether gender identity has an effect on the attitudes towards a gender-neutral skincare product advertisement and whether gender identity congruity has an effect on how the advertisement is perceived. To achieve the research aim, an extensive literature review was conducted to gather knowledge involving the attributes contributing to the formation of attitudes, gender identity, and gender identity congruity. In addition, systematic research involving the gender-neutral products and skincare industry was conducted. Our theoretical framework and results have proved that gender identity has an effect on gender identity congruity which in turn plays a role on the attitudes towards the advertisement leading to the purchase intention. The moderating variable, the country of studies, was researched and was found to have a moderating effect on the relationship between gender congruency and the attitudes towards the gender-neutral skincare product. Additionally, the levels of affective and cognitive dimensions of the advertisement were seen differently from a country to another, hence these findings are affected by the cultural aspects of the individuals. Thus, it was confirmed that a different level of femininity and masculinity dimension in the culture has a major impact on the way a gender-neutral advertisement is perceived, along with the development of the gender identity of an individual. Conclusions offer a detailed description of the main findings following the theoretical and practical implications considering the research outcomes.

6.2   Theoretical implications

From the theoretical contributions, the authors of the thesis validated that the gender identity group has an impact on the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral advertisement. This suggests that the way the respondents identify themselves in terms of gender directs the way they view the gender identity of the advertisement. Thus, implying that the advertisement that was perceived by the majority as a gender-neutral advertisement had also gender-identity that could be considered as non-sex-typed. The implications of this support the findings of (Bai, 2018; Byrnes, 2006; Jovanovic, Kostic & Vlastelica, 2016) that gender-identity has an effect on how the advertisement is perceived. As a conclusion, the input derived extend the current academic literature by presenting that the way respondents identify themselves in terms of gender impacts the way they view the gender identity of the gender-neutral advertisement.

Another theoretical contribution of the research was discovering that gender identity congruency influences the attitude towards the advertisement of gender-neutral skincare products. This finding highlights the importance of researching the relationship between the congruent and non-congruent individuals when measuring the attitudes towards the advertisements. It was discovered that among all the respondents, the congruent individuals had more positive attitudes towards the gender-neutral advertisement compared to the non-congruent. This research supports the theories previously found, which state that the individuals that are congruent with the advertisement are more likely to view the advertisement in a more positive manner (Chang, 2006; Feiereisen, Broderick & Douglas, 2009; Hong & Zinkhan, 1995). The findings are supported by the previously conducted research addressing the gender identity congruency has an effect on the attitudes towards the advertisement. However, our research is extending this and contributing to the theories by researching gender-neutral advertisements.

In terms of theoretical contribution, one of the aims was to research the gender-identity and gender-identity congruency's impact on attitudes towards the gender-neutral skincare product advertisement. There is a firm base of research investigating the relationship between the attitudes towards the advertisement and purchasing intention. In terms of this research, as there is a gap in the academic literature involving gender-neutral products, the research wanted to verify whether the same principles applying to general attitude-purchasing intention research would apply also to the gender-neutral products. The results suggested that there is a relationship between the attitudes towards the gender-neutral product advertisement and the purchase intention. The research outcomes are aligned and in support of the previous theories (MacKenzie, Lutz & Belch, 1986; Mitchel & Olson, 1981; Shimp, 1981) providing a simultaneously small new extension to the literature involving gender-neutral products.

The country of studies does not have a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity group and the gender identity congruity with the gender-neutral skincare advertisement. In terms of theoretical contribution, the impact of the country of studies as a moderating variable was researched to push the study performed in this thesis a bit deeper. It was proved that country of studies has a moderating effect on the relationship between the gender identity congruity and the attitudes towards an advertisement. In Lebanon, the

congruent respondents had a more positive attitude towards the advertisement than the non-congruent respondents. On the contrary, in Finland, the respondents having congruency had actually less positive attitude towards the advertisement than non-congruent respondents. As there was a considerate amount of the data collected from each country, the pattern depicted by the results can be considered as reliable.

To describe the results of the congruent and non-congruent groups, the patterns of their attitudes related to the gender-neutral advertisement were mirror images of each other in the two countries. Therefore, the findings of the opposite patterns involving the attitudes towards advertisement among the two groups in the two countries can be considered as our theoretical input. To clarify and sharpen our contribution, the results imply that in a country that has a dominant masculine culture, the congruent group had more positive attitudes towards advertisement. On the other hand, in a country that has a dominant feminine culture, the non-congruent respondent group had more positive attitudes towards the advertisement. Therefore, one of our major and most interesting contribution to the literature can be considered the finding: in masculine and feminine cultures, the attitude pattern of congruent and non-congruent individuals is reversed. Furthermore, research promotes the importance of studying the possible moderating effect which reflects the individuals' behavior when formulating attitudes towards advertisements. Our research which was conducted between Finland and Lebanon further reflects the importance of the country-comparative studies. In fact, in our research, the selection of the countries from two different cultures was based on Hofstede's masculinity dimension, which enables us to discover the large-scale differences between countries, thus, our research could possibly be utilized as a base to structure further research based on our current discoveries.

6.3   Practical implications

Our research has provided us with new knowledge involving outcomes concerning the gender-neutral skincare products and their advertising. As gender-neutral products are expected to have a larger market in the near future and as there is a limited number of academic literature concerning gender-neutral products, the authors of this study consider the practical implications derived from this research important for the marketers and managers. The results revealed that the stereotypical gender-identities of females and males are shifting towards more fragmented gender-identities as the majority of the 750 respondents belonged to the gender-identity groups of androgynous and undifferentiated. Thus, marketers should be ready to reconsider their segmentation strategies involving the gender labeling of the product, because individuals are drawn to products and advertisements that match to their own identities. As the consumers' gender-identities have shifted towards more androgynous and undifferentiated groups, when conducting marketing research, a testing of the target segment groups based on their gender-identity could have greater importance. The importance of understanding the identity consumers have of themselves and their self-concept plays a major role in the advertisement developing process. To be able to discover and explain the connections between consumers and the advertisement, an index measuring the congruency level of the target consumer group can be utilized. The authors of this thesis would suggest

integrating the usage of the Najem-Puolakka index to the marketers' segmentation processes, because it creates the possibility to access the gender congruity proportion addition the congruity level of the target sample. Hence, the gender identity of the individual is associated with the way the advertisement is perceived.

The practical implications specific to the gender-neutral skincare industry are the following. Most of the respondents perceived the shown gender-neutral advertisement as gender-neutral. Despite that gender-neutral product advertisement was seen by many as non-sex-typed, some of the respondents perceived it also as gendered. The findings of this study reveal that the identity consumers have of themselves is what should always be taken into consideration when creating advertisements and targeting different segments. Thus, when marketing gender-neutral products, the marketers should verify whether there is a congruency among the target audience and the advertisement developed. It was discovered that congruence might cause the opposite reaction towards the attitudes towards the advertisement based on the cultural level of masculinity and femininity. Therefore, gender-neutral advertisement should be tested based on the target countries' level of masculinity dimension.

6.4   Limitations and future research

While conducting the research, the authors encountered research limitations. Due to the current pandemic, the data collection turned out to be more challenging than expected, since multiple student organizations had addressed the issue by not distributing the questionnaires coming from students from other universities, thus prioritizing their own university students. However, this issue was overcome by contacting various student organizations and some universities directly. Furthermore, the questionnaires were distributed on social media platforms such as Facebook, which was approved to a be functional tool to gather responses. Another challenge that came up during the stage when searching for the stimuli was the limited amount of commercial advertisements in the gender-neutral skincare industry. On contrary to what was expected, the variety of audiovisual advertisements was quite limited, despite that there is an increasing number of gender-neutral skincare companies and a wide range of electronic print advertisements. This might originate from the fact that the gender-neutral industry might be lacking a commonly established marketing procedures when it comes to creating and presenting gender-neutral audiovisual advertisements. Among the found audiovisual advertisements, a set of high-quality gender-neutral skincare advertisements were found, which allowed the researchers to select the stimuli as well as pre-test those.

While conducting the research, the challenges faced consisted of the limitations relating to the time and budgetary aspects. Regardless of this, the research was able to collect remarkable number of respondents that compensated the budgetary aspects of not being able to collect the responses face to face situations in the research countries. While having a slightly longer research time, it would have been interesting to research how other factors in culture, such as the economic development level, the standard of living or similar effects could potentially moderate relationships derived from gender congruity.

Another aspect which could be considered as a limitation was that the research was conducted using a non-probability sample. Despite the sampling method, the authors of this thesis consider that the large sample size in addition to the questionnaire design were able to reduce the possible error inside the sample. Thus, the questionnaire design was constructed in a manner which screens off the non-valid response groups and presented the items in a randomized order in the questionnaire. Further ensuring the validity, the potential outliers were removed based on factors such as age and completion time of the questionnaire. While the research method was selected as probability sampling, the results of this research are not generalizable. However, as previously stated, the authors of this thesis collected a large sample size and utilized various tactics to improve the validity of the result.

The future research conducted of this topic should further continue to study whether there would be similar congruency patterns in other Nordic countries as well as Western Asian countries. Thus, it would be important to validate whether the opposite patterns between the gender-identity congruency and the attitudes towards advertisements extend to national regions near of the test countries. In addition, a research could be conducted in more controlled environment, such as laboratory settings to enhance the results resulted from this research.

One way to advance the current contribution could be to extend the current research testing by investigating whether the result is similar when showing print advertisement instead of audiovisual advertisement. As a future contribution to the academic literature involving gender-neutral advertisements, a research worth considering could test specifically gender neutral created advertisements to discover whether the gender neutral-advertisement work or not as even though the advertisement used in this research was found to be gender-neutral, it was not specifically designed to be such.

This research extends the limited present literature on gender-neutral products by clarifying that they may still be seen as gendered products. It also explained that the identities of consumers are still major leaders of attitudes and purchase intention. Additionally, it showcased the different impact the cultural effect has on gender identity/gender congruity and attitudes. Further studies should be conducted with different countries to verify the cultural effects founds in this research. Additionally, the study could be conducted by using various different advertisements to discover the various characteristics of advertisements that contribute to perceived gender identity of advertisement of the gender-neutral product.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire Sample

Welcome Page

LUNDS UNIVERSITET

Dear respondent,

We are two master's students from Lund University studying International Marketing and Brand Management and currently undertaking our thesis. The aim of our thesis is to assess attitudes towards advertisement in relation to gender-neutral skincare products among university students in Finland and Lebanon.

The questionnaire will consist of 13 questions and the answering will take approximately 5 minutes. All information provided will be strictly anonymous, handled with confidentiality, and used for the sole purpose of analysis and research.

We thank you in advance for your time and cooperation. This will help us clarify the attitudes and awareness in Finland and Lebanon.

Kind regards,

Emmi and Tatiana.

Demographic Questions: Gender, Age and Level of Studies

1. What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

○ Prefer not to answer

2. How old are you?

[   ]

3. In which country do you study?

(the main country of the studies)

○ Finland

○ Lebanon

○ Other

4. Which level of education are you currently enrolled in?

○ Undergraduate degree (e.g. Bachelor's degree)

○ Graduate degree (e.g. Master's degree)

○ Doctorate degree (e.g. PhD degree)

Gender Identity of the Individual Questions

5. How would you describe yourself?

	Never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Always true
Affectionate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Tender	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Independent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sympathetic	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Strong personality	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Defends own beliefs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sensitive to the needs of others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dominant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Assertive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Loves children	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6. How would you describe yourself?

	Never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Always true
Willing to take a stand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Has leadership abilities	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Aggressive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Warm	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eager to soothe others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Compassionate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gentle	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Forceful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Willing to take risks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Gender-Neutral Skincare Product Awareness and Purchase Intention Questions

A gender-neutral product is a product used by people regardless of gender. It is not specifically targeted to one gender only, but for all consumers.

7. Are you aware of gender-neutral products?

○ Yes

○ No

○ I don't know

Skincare products are used for taking care and improving the quality of the skin (e.g. moisturizers, anti-ageing creams). Because of their functional features, they can be considered as different from cosmetic products.

Gender-neutral skincare products are described as products that have health benefits and are targeted to all genders.

8. Would you consider purchasing a gender-neutral skincare product?

Not at all likely to buy ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Very likely to buy

Exposure to the Stimuli

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Please watch the video to answer the following questions.

If the video does not open, use this link to access it: www.youtube.com/watch?v=N_WCcpeLiqQ&feature=emb_logo (Please open the link in a new tab to be able to continue with the responding).

Affective Attitude Question

9. How do you feel about the advertisement?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not soothing	○	○	○	○	○	Soothing
Coldhearted	○	○	○	○	○	Warmhearted
Depressing	○	○	○	○	○	Uplifting
Unpleasant	○	○	○	○	○	Pleasant
Unattractive	○	○	○	○	○	Attractive
Not affectionate	○	○	○	○	○	Affectionate

Cognitive Attitude Question

10. How do you feel about the advertisement?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Uninformative	○	○	○	○	○	Informative
Ineffective	○	○	○	○	○	Effective
Non persuasive	○	○	○	○	○	Persuasive
Unbelievable	○	○	○	○	○	Believable
Not convincing	○	○	○	○	○	Convincing

Perceived Gender Identity of the Advertisement Questions

11. How would you describe the typical user of the advertised product?

	Never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Always true
Sensitive to the needs of others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Dominant	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Assertive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Defends own beliefs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sympathetic	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Independent	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Affectionate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Strong Personality	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Tender	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Loves children	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

12. How would you describe the typical user of the advertised product?

	Never true	Usually not true	Sometimes but infrequently true	Occasionally true	Often true	Usually true	Always true
Willing to take a stand	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Warm	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Willing to take risks	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Aggressive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eager to soothe others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Compassionate	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gentle	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Has leadership abilities	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Forceful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Purchase Intention Question

13. Would you consider purchasing a gender-neutral skincare product?

Not at all likely to buy	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	Very likely to buy

LUNDS
UNIVERSITET

Thank you for completing this questionnaire!

We would like to thank you very much for helping us and contributing to our research.

Your answers were transmitted, you may close the browser window or tab now.

Tatiana Najem & Emmi Puolakka, Lund University – 2020

Appendix B: Stimuli Snapshots

"#TreatYoSkin to Curology, Mixed Just for You" advertisement from the brand Curology
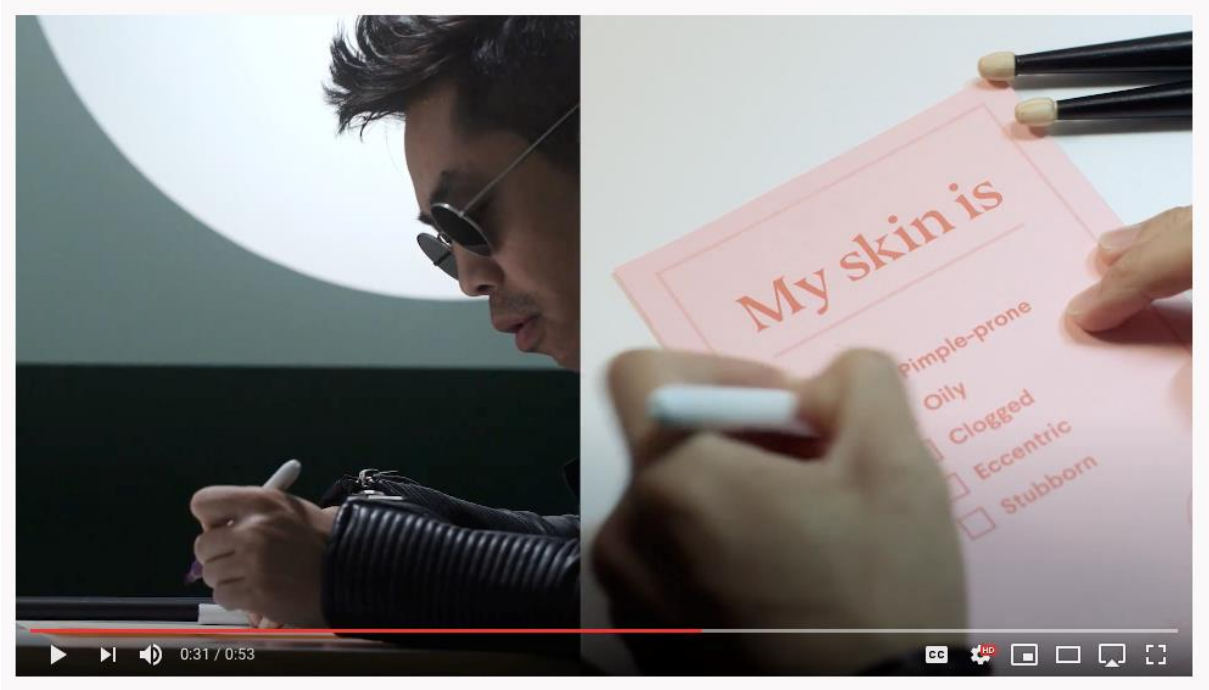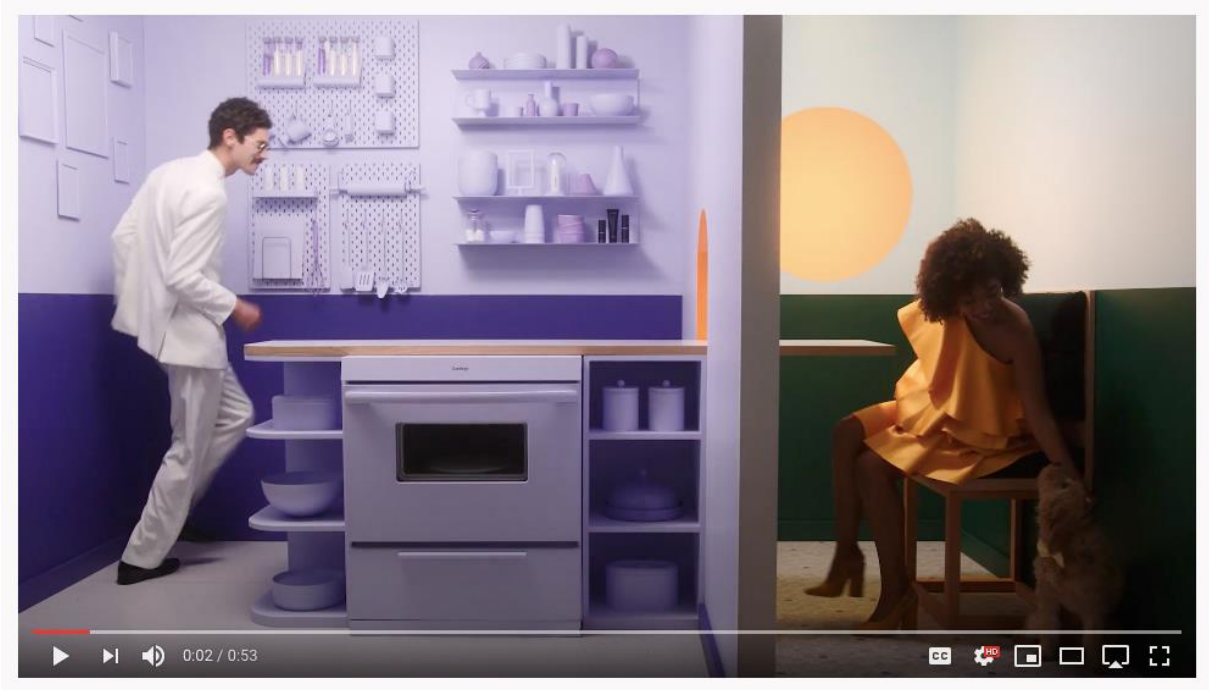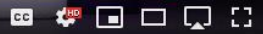
Appendix C: SPSS Tables

Hypothesis I: Gender Identity and Gender Congruency

ADVERTISEMENT GROUPS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Masculine	115	15.3	15.3	15.3
	Feminine	127	16.9	16.9	32.3
	Androgynous	233	31.1	31.1	63.3
	Undifferentiated	275	36.7	36.7	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

PARTICIPANT_GROUP * AD_GROUP Crosstabulation

Count

		AD_GROUP				Total
		Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	Undifferentiated	
PARTICIPANT_GROUP	Masculine	15	36	48	60	159
	Feminine	26	30	41	52	149
	Androgynous	19	22	119	34	194
	Undifferentiated	55	39	25	129	248
Total		115	127	233	275	750

CONGRUENCY

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NOT CONGRUENT	457	60.9	60.9	60.9
	CONGRUENT	293	39.1	39.1	100.0
	Total	750	100.0	100.0	

ANOVA

CONGRUENT

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	33.086	3	11.029	56.565	.000
Within Groups	145.449	746	.195		
Total	178.535	749			

Homogeneous Subsets

CONGRUENT

Tukey HSD[a,b]

		Subset for alpha = 0.05	
PARTICIPANT_GROUP	N	1	2
Masculine	159	.0943	
Feminine	149	.2013	
Undifferentiated	248		.5202
Androgynous	194		.6134
Sig.		.099	.187

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.

a. Uses Harmonic Mean Sample Size = 180.281.

b. The group sizes are unequal. The harmonic mean of the group sizes is used. Type I error levels are not guaranteed.

Post Hoc Tests

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: CONGRUENT
Tukey HSD

(I) PARTICIPANT_GROUP	(J) PARTICIPANT_GROUP	Mean Difference (I–J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Masculine	Feminine	-.10700	.05035	.146	-.2366	.0226
	Androgynous	-.51906*	.04724	.000	-.6407	-.3974
	Undifferentiated	-.42582*	.04486	.000	-.5413	-.3103
Feminine	Masculine	.10700	.05035	.146	-.0226	.2366
	Androgynous	-.41206*	.04810	.000	-.5359	-.2882
	Undifferentiated	-.31882*	.04577	.000	-.4367	-.2010
Androgynous	Masculine	.51906*	.04724	.000	.3974	.6407
	Feminine	.41206*	.04810	.000	.2882	.5359
	Undifferentiated	.09324	.04232	.123	-.0157	.2022
Undifferentiated	Masculine	.42582*	.04486	.000	.3103	.5413
	Feminine	.31882*	.04577	.000	.2010	.4367
	Androgynous	-.09324	.04232	.123	-.2022	.0157

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Means Plots
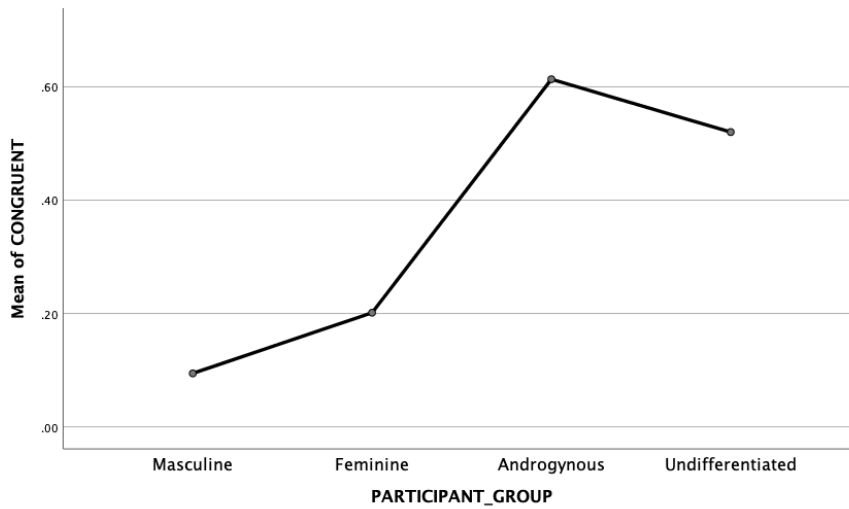
Hypothesis II: Gender congruency and Attitudes towards the Gender-Neutral Skincare Product Advertisement

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
AFFECTIVE_ATTITUDE	Between Groups	2.309	1	2.309	4.022	.045
	Within Groups	429.380	748	.574		
	Total	431.689	749			
COGNITIVE_ATTITUDE	Between Groups	1.182	1	1.182	1.657	.198
	Within Groups	533.788	748	.714		
	Total	534.970	749			
ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Between Groups	1.751	1	1.751	3.252	.072
	Within Groups	402.639	748	.538		
	Total	404.389	749			

Hypothesis III: Attitudes towards the Gender-Neutral Skincare Product Advertisement and Purchase Intention

Correlations

			AFFECTIVE_ATTITUDE	COGNITIVE_ATTITUDE	ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Purchase Intention
Spearman's rho	AFFECTIVE_ATTITUDE	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.664**	.914**	.313**
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
		N	750	750	750	750
	COGNITIVE_ATTITUDE	Correlation Coefficient	.664**	1.000	.901**	.289**
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.000	.	.000	.000
		N	750	750	750	750
	ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Correlation Coefficient	.914**	.901**	1.000	.327**
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
		N	750	750	750	750
	Purchase Intention	Correlation Coefficient	.313**	.289**	.327**	1.000
		Sig. (2–tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.
		N	750	750	750	750

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

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Correlations

		AFFECTIVE_ATTITUDE	COGNITIVE_ATTITUDE	ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Purchase Intention
AFFECTIVE_ATTITUDE	Pearson Correlation	1	.694**	.926**	.328**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	750	750	750	750
COGNITIVE_ATTITUDE	Pearson Correlation	.694**	1	.914**	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	750	750	750	750
ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Pearson Correlation	.926**	.914**	1	.348**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	750	750	750	750
Purchase Intention	Pearson Correlation	.328**	.311**	.348**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	750	750	750	750

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

Hypothesis IV: Gender Identity and Gender Congruency with the Country of Studies as a moderating variable

PARTICIPANT_GROUP * AD_GROUP Crosstabulation Finland

Count

		AD_GROUP				Total
		Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	Undifferentiated	
PARTICIPANT_GROUP	Masculine	8	13	9	31	61
	Feminine	19	13	15	36	83
	Androgynous	12	4	17	14	47
	Undifferentiated	46	22	13	103	184
Total		85	52	54	184	375

CONGRUENCY FINLAND

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NOT CONGRUENT	234	62.4	62.4	62.4
	CONGRUENT	141	37.6	37.6	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	

CONGRUENCY LEBANON

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	NOT CONGRUENT	223	59.5	59.5	59.5
	CONGRUENT	152	40.5	40.5	100.0
	Total	375	100.0	100.0	

Post Hoc Tests

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable: CONGRUENT
Tukey HSD

(I) PARTICIPANT_GROUP	(J) PARTICIPANT_GROUP	Mean Difference (I–J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Masculine	Feminine	−.02548	.07537	.987	−.2200	.1690
	Androgynous	−.23055*	.08674	.041	−.4544	−.0067
	Undifferentiated	−.42864*	.06603	.000	−.5990	−.2582
Feminine	Masculine	.02548	.07537	.987	−.1690	.2200
	Androgynous	−.20508	.08159	.059	−.4156	.0055
	Undifferentiated	−.40316*	.05910	.000	−.5557	−.2506
Androgynous	Masculine	.23055*	.08674	.041	.0067	.4544
	Feminine	.20508	.08159	.059	−.0055	.4156
	Undifferentiated	−.19808*	.07305	.035	−.3866	−.0096
Undifferentiated	Masculine	.42864*	.06603	.000	.2582	.5990
	Feminine	.40316*	.05910	.000	.2506	.5557
	Androgynous	.19808*	.07305	.035	.0096	.3866

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

PARTICIPANT_GROUP * AD_GROUP Crosstabulation Lebanon

Count

PARTICIPANT_GROUP		AD_GROUP				Total
		Masculine	Feminine	Androgynous	Undifferentiated	
PARTICIPANT_GROUP	Masculine	7	23	39	29	98
	Feminine	7	17	26	16	66
	Androgynous	7	18	102	20	147
	Undifferentiated	9	17	12	26	64
Total		30	75	179	91	375

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Hypothesis V: Gender Congruency and Attitudes towards the Gender-Neutral Skincare Product Advertisement with Country of Studies as a moderating variable

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
AFFECTIVE_ATTITUDE	Between Groups	1.199	1	1.199	2.837	.093
	Within Groups	157.625	373	.423		
	Total	158.824	374			
COGNITIVE_ATTITUDE	Between Groups	2.125	1	2.125	3.955	.047
	Within Groups	200.390	373	.537		
	Total	202.515	374			
ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Between Groups	1.587	1	1.587	4.033	.045
	Within Groups	146.792	373	.394		
	Total	148.379	374			

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
AFFECTIVE_ATTITUDE	Between Groups	8.977	1	8.977	14.136	.000
	Within Groups	236.876	373	.635		
	Total	245.853	374			
COGNITIVE_ATTITUDE	Between Groups	8.025	1	8.025	9.519	.002
	Within Groups	314.431	373	.843		
	Total	322.456	374			
ATTITUDE_TOTAL	Between Groups	8.538	1	8.538	13.893	.000
	Within Groups	229.221	373	.615		
	Total	237.758	374			