The visual construction of gender roles in advertising for 'gender-neutral' and 'gender-specific' fashion products

A semiotic comparative analysis of adverts published in Dutch women's lifestyle magazines between 2015 and 2018

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ABSTRACT

The topic of this thesis concerns two contrasting marketing strategies that are presented by marketing reports as growing trends, which are 'gender-specific products' and 'gender-neutral products'. Existing literature highlights that these trends are closely related to specific gender representations, but the existing academic literature lacks empirical research on how these gender representations are practically visualized in advertising for gender-neutral and gender-specific products. Therefore, this thesis investigates gender role portrayals in advertising for these two types of products. More specifically, as gender-related marketing trends such as 'gender blurring' are especially present in the fashion industry, the research of this thesis focuses on fashion advertising. As a result, this thesis answers the central research question 'How did fashion brands portray gender roles in advertisements for 'gender-neutral' and 'gender-specific' products in Dutch women's lifestyle magazines between 2015 and 2018?'. After collecting 100 fashion adverts from multiple Dutch women's lifestyle magazines that were published between 2015 and 2018, a qualitative research method that consisted of a semiotic analysis was carried out. During this analysis, several aspects from academic theories about multimodal meaning-making were used to be able to analyze power relationships between men and women in advertising. After structuring the results, the first finding was that only a small amount of fashion advertisements promoted gender-neutral products. Secondly, the research indicated that most adverts include non-traditional gender roles by portraying men and women as equal or by showing women as more dominant than men. However, when it comes to the visual appearance of the models, fashion brands mainly seem to include models that have a look which conforms with stereotypical masculinity or stereotypical femininity, which goes against the trend of gender blurring and gender-neutral marketing. Moreover, the research indicated that the changing conceptualization of 'gender' in society as well as the presence of ambiguous themes in fashion advertising ask for a revision of academic theories on the visual analysis of gender roles within contemporary (fashion) advertising.

KEYWORDS: 'advertising', 'gender-specificity', 'gender blurring', 'gender-neutral', 'semiotics'

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1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction to the topic of gender representations in fashion advertising

"When I buy clothes, I simply walk past the products and I pick what I like … I do not care whether it is meant for men or women" (quote in Outshoorn, 2017).

The above are the words from a 17-year-old boy who filed a complaint about an act of discrimination by the fashion retailing company Zara in 2017. The young man stated that the store employees stopped him when he wanted to try on women's clothes in the ladies' fitting room at a Zara store in Breda, the Netherlands. After being mocked at the pay desk, the boy decided to leave the store and file a complaint (Outshoorn, 2017).

The previously mentioned conflict reflects the various societal debates that have taken place in fashion with regard to the topic of gender roles and gender equality in the past few years. However, before contextualizing current debates and introducing the topic of this thesis, it is important to consider the concept of 'gender'. 'Gender' is not a fixed concept, but a socially and culturally constructed part of people's identity that can be changed or adapted (Shields, 2013). This implies that the notion of what gender entails can change over time and differ between people in multiple cultural contexts. As Shields (2013, p. XI) states: "we gender ourselves to convey information to others about our gender identities, how we continuously regard ourselves as men and women". Thus, someone's 'gender identity' explains how people personally perceive themselves with regard to their gender (Timke & O'Barr, 2017). Naturally, in a world where the meaning of gender is not only highly diverse between people, but also changeable over time (Shields, 2013), it is not surprising that debates around this topic are constantly emerging and developing.

One example of a current social debate on the expression of gender is the debate on the prevalence of gender in language (Bradley, Schmid & Lombardo, 2019). According to Bradley et al. (2019), not everybody in society identifies as 'female' or 'male', which is why the use of pronouns and phrases such as 'he' and 'she' in the English language have been criticized. Therefore, the authors discuss the development of 'gender-neutral' pronouns to "refer to generic persons whose genders are unknown, or those who reject binary male or female identities" (Bradley et al., 2019, p. 41), which could also be the case for the previously discussed person who visited the Zara fashion store. A practical example of a company which consciously decided to implement gender-neutral language in its communication is the Dutch

national railway company NS. Whereas the NS originally approached its customers with "ladies and gentlemen" in all external communication, the company officially announced in 2017 that they would change this to "dear travelers". The company argues that the reason behind this decision was that they want every person with every gender identity to feel welcome on their trains (Middelkoop, 2017).

This discussion around the expression of gender in communication is not only related to written or spoken language, but it is also related to visual communication. A form of visual communication in which this is highly evident is advertising, as discussed by Timke and O'Barr (2017), who compared gender representations in advertising between 2006 and 2016. These authors highlight that advertisers within the retailing industry, especially in the field of fashion and beauty, are also aware of the different meanings that consumers can attach to their own gender identity and that this influences the consumers' point of view on the expression of gender in adverts. Whereas brands within this industry used to focus on 'gendered advertising', which refers to a segmentation strategy that is used within the field of marketing to target people of one gender in particular (Wolin, 2003), Timke and O'Barr (2017) state that advertisers within the fashion and beauty sector are shifting towards 'gender-neutral advertising' in order to reach an audience that goes beyond the group of people that solely identify as 'male' or 'female'. However, gender-neutral content could be complicated to embed in visual advertising. Namely, the previous example of gender-neutral communication as carried out by the NS represents a solid implementation of gender-neutral language. Advertising, however, is likely to include images of models. Timke and O'Barr (2017) describe that adverts with a gender-neutral concept seem to be less clear about whether the models in the adverts are males or females, which is why viewers are more flexible to assign a certain gender identity to the models themselves - depending on the cultural perspective of the viewer. However, this theory does suggest that viewers of the adverts are still likely to form an idea about whether the models in the adverts are men or women, according to the appearance of the models. Also, Timke and O'Barr (2017) do not provide clear patterns of how a gender-neutral concept was embedded in the adverts that they included in their research. Hence, not only the highly diverse range of gender identities in society makes it difficult for advertisers to find a suitable advertising strategy that is appealing to their target audience, but also adverts that include images of models seem to be more complicated in order to present as gender-neutral.

As the above discussion explains, the representation of gender in advertising is both an important as well as a complex matter for brands. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to gain

insight into the contemporary manifestations of gender in fashion advertising. More specifically, since a marketing report by Canadean (2015a, p. 11) states that "consumers are either defying gender-related stereotypes when it comes to product consumption or [they are] emphasizing traditional traits associated with their sex", this thesis investigates two marketing trends that were designed to meet these contrasting attitudes of consumers. Namely, as a result of this contradiction, Canadean (2015b) and Simões (2016) suggest that the expression of gender in marketing can be translated into two different targeting strategies. On the one hand, brands can promote 'gender-specific products', which are separate products for men and women in order to target one specific gender (Canadean, 2015b). 'Gendering' a brand or product means to imbue it with a 'feminine' or 'masculine' identity or image (Alreck, 1994), by showing symbols or words that refer to stereotypical gender roles. More specifically, 'gender stereotypes' emphasize differences between men and women that are believed to be 'typical', by categorizing certain features or traits to either men or women (Ellemers, 2018) and 'gender roles' can be described as the employment roles and family roles which are held by men or women in a society (Eagly & Wood, 2016). The exact definitions of gender stereotypes and gender roles that are associated with men or women will be further explained in the theoretical framework of this thesis. In short, gender-specific products are promoted in advertising as separate products for men and women and they are related to stereotypical representations of masculinity and femininity. On the other hand, according to Canadean (2015b) and Simões (2016) brands could avoid 'unnecessary' customer segmentation by promoting 'gender-neutral products' in advertising. In contrast to gender-specific products, gender-neutral products are not designed for or linked to a specific gender (Simões, 2016). This means that gender-neutral products are marketed as being suitable for males, females as well as people who do not identify with these binary gender identities. Therefore, gender-neutral products are not limited to consumers who identify themselves as male or female, but they are targeted towards all people in general (Simões, 2016).

The aim of this thesis is to investigate how these two marketing trends are currently used by fashion brands by answering the central research question *'How did fashion brands portray gender roles in advertisements for 'gender-neutral' and 'gender-specific' products in Dutch women's lifestyle magazines between 2015 and 2018?'*

This research focuses on gender roles as depicted in advertisements for gender-neutral as well as gender-specific fashion products by carrying out a comparative semiotic analysis of signs, as proposed by Rose (2007). Moreover, theories by Bell and Milic (2002) and Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) regarding the analysis of gender roles in images were incorporated

within the semiotic analysis in order to expand on the meanings of the signs that were included in the adverts. Furthermore, several aspects of a qualitative content analysis as explained by Blair (2015) were used to structure the results of the 100 semiotic analyses that were carried out to answer the research question of this thesis.

1.2. Scientific and social relevance

Drawing on existing academic literature as well as marketing reports that were retrieved from Passport and GlobalData, two highly contrasting types of marketing strategies have been detected that are both presented as growing marketing trends, namely 'gender-specific' marketing and 'gender-neutral' marketing, as mentioned earlier in this chapter. It is interesting that whereas some recent academic works and marketing reports present the trend of gender-specific marketing as a successful advertising strategy (cf. Canadean, 2016; Fugate & Philips, 2010; Grohmann, 2009; Morrison & Shaffer, 2003; Wolin, 2003), other authors argue that promoting a gender-neutral product seems to be the most effective way to reach a broader audience (cf. Canadean, 2015a; Canadean, 2015c; Kasriel-Alexander, 2013; Parker, 2016). Thus, the existing academic literature already discusses why both kinds of marketing are valuable for companies within the industry of fast moving consumer goods. Chapter 2 of this thesis explains for which types of consumer goods these marketing strategies are especially valuable according to these authors. Also, a wide range of academic literature has already focused on the analysis of gender representations in advertising in general, as can be seen in different meta-analyses by Wolin (2003), Eisend (2010), and Grau and Zotos (2016), which will also be discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

However, existing empirical research that explicitly includes advertising for gender-specific products as well as advertising for gender-neutral products – and what these categories actually entail – is limited. Therefore, the research of this thesis is not only scientifically relevant because it analyzes recent trends in contemporary advertising in particular, it also contributes to existing knowledge about the patterns of gender-related expressions for these specific types of products. In addition, the social relevance of this research is not only related to the societal debates that were mentioned earlier in this chapter, but it also lies in the fact that advertising plays a highly important role in propagating certain gender roles within society (Sheehan, 2014; Shields, 2013). As the study of gender roles and power relationships between men and women is included in the analysis that is carried out to answer the research question of this thesis, the results of this research can also be used to gain knowledge about the current representations of gender roles and power relationships in advertising.

Furthermore, several marketing reports that were published between 2015 and 2018 show that recent gender-related marketing trends of 'gender blurring' and 'gender-neutral products' – which will be discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis – are influential within the market for fashion (cf. Kasriel-Alexander, 2016; Kissane, 2016; Simões, 2016; Walker, 2015). Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to understand how different gender roles are communicated in advertising by fashion brands in particular.

In addition to the above discussions, the Netherlands offers an interesting scope for this research as this country has one of the highest scores within the Gender Equality Index from the European Institute for Gender Equality (2017), together with the Scandinavian countries, Belgium, the UK and France (Image 1.1). Moreover, results from a global survey by Global-Data, which was presented in a marketing report by (Simões, 2016), shows data on whether consumers in each country agree with the statement that they are more likely to buy products that are specifically developed for their gender (Image 1.2). The results show that Dutch consumers have the second highest score of all countries to disagree or be indifferent with the statement, which suggests that consumers in the Netherlands are relatively more open to products which are not targeted towards people of a particular gender compared to consumers from other countries. Thus, as this country seems to be one of the frontrunners with regard to gender-related issues, the research of this thesis focuses on adverts that were published in the Netherlands.
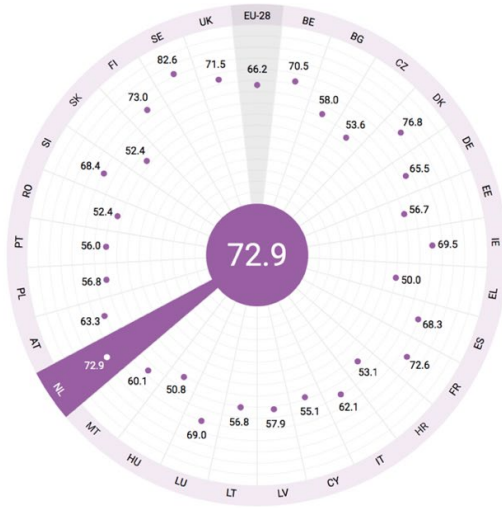
Image 1.1: Gender Equality Index[1]

Image 1.2: Results of GlobalData's Q3 Global survey on countries that have a high or a low percentage of consumers who are open to more gender-neutral products[2]

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[1] *Source:* European Institute for Gender Equality (2017). Retrieved from: https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2015/NL

[2] *Source:* Simões, H. (2016) *TrendSights Analysis: Blurring Gender Boundaries. Breaking gender conventions.* Retrieved from: https://consumer-globaldata-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/Analysis/details/trendsights-analysis-blurring-gender-boundaries

1.3. Thesis outline

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical concepts that were important to take into account when carrying out the gender role study of this thesis. Also, the historical, social, and cultural developments that influenced gender role portrayals in advertising will be discussed, as well as changes that took place with regard to gender roles within fashion. Moreover, Chapter 2 explains how the marketing trends of 'gender-specific' and 'gender-neutral' marketing emerged and why these strategies are useful for marketeers. Furthermore, by discussing previous academic research that is related to the topic of this thesis, Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework which informed the empirical research of this thesis.

Subsequently, Chapter 3 describes in detail how the magazine adverts that form the data of the research were retrieved, what the final composition of the data was, how the semiotic analysis was carried out and how the results were structured in order to answer the research question of this thesis. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research by explaining which gender representations were recognized in the sample with regard to multiple themes. Finally, Chapter 5 provides an answer to the research question as well as a discussion of the limitations of this research and ideas for future research on the topic.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical approaches and concepts that were used within the research of this thesis by including academic literature and marketing reports that are related to the topic of the research. Firstly, a discussion of the general concepts that are important in gender studies, including 'gender roles' and 'gender stereotypes' is provided. Secondly, the theoretical approaches that have been specifically important for the visual analysis of gender roles within advertising in previous academic studies are discussed. Thirdly, this chapter discusses literature on the social movements, including gender activism, which led to a decrease in gender stereotypes in ads. In addition, this chapter discusses how these social and cultural developments allegedly created a shift from gender-specific advertising towards more gender-neutral advertising. Subsequently, an explanation is provided on why the concepts of 'gender-neutral' marketing and 'gender-specific' marketing are interesting to study within the fashion industry. Lastly, this section includes an elaborate discussion of previous empirical research on gender representations in (fashion) advertising. As a result, the literature that is discussed within this chapter provides a theoretical framework that helped guide the research and enables a better discussion of the results in order to answer the central research question of this thesis.

2.2. Defining gender representations: 'gender roles' and 'gender stereotypes'

Within the research of this thesis, there are a few theoretical concepts that guide the analysis of gender representations in advertising. Firstly, it is important to understand the meaning of 'gender roles'. The introduction chapter of this thesis already touched upon the definition of this concept, by stating that gender roles are related to the employment roles and family roles of men and women (Eagly & Wood, 2016). More specifically, Eagly and Wood (2016) state that traditional gender roles are constituted as follows: women are engaged in domestic activities such as cooking, sewing, and childcare. This is due to the belief that women have a character that is suitable for communal activities (Eagly & Wood, 2016), which will be explained later on in this sub-chapter. In contrast, the traditional gender role of men is that men are engaged in activities in the paid economy, which is related to the idea that men show more assertive behavior (Eagly & Wood, 2016). In addition, previous literature by Ham-

burger, Hogben, McGowan and Dawson (1996) emphasizes the structure of power relationships that is related to gender roles. Namely, according to these authors, traditional gender roles represent a non-egalitarian ideology by showing men as more important than women and present men as the dominant gender. In contrast, contemporary gender roles represent an egalitarian ideology by showing women and men as 'equals' and reject the idea of one gender dominating over the other (Hamburger et al., 1996). As this theory by Hamburger et al. (1996) is relatively outdated, the meanings of traditional and non-traditional gender roles within this thesis are defined according to a mix of the previously mentioned literature by Eagly and Wood (2016) and Hamburger et al. (1996).

It is important to note, however, that the gender roles which were previously explained are mostly representative for Western societies and there may be cross-cultural differences in the meanings of gender roles. Moreover, gender roles in society today can be different from these traditional gender roles, which is why the next sub-chapter explains how gender roles have changed due to social and cultural developments.

The concept of gender roles is closely related to another, equally important, concept which is 'gender stereotyping'. The traditional and general definition of 'stereotypes' can be defined as beliefs about the behaviors, characteristics and attributes of members of certain social groups (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996). More specifically, gender stereotypes "inform us about what women and men are *like* and also lay ground rules for how men and women *should be*" (emphasis in original) (Kite, Deaux & Haines, 2008, p. 208). Hence, gender stereotyping divides men and women into two separate groups by determining what is 'masculine' and what is 'feminine' (Hamburger et al., 1996). Thus, gender stereotypes communicate gender-specific characteristics and behaviors that are believed to belong to 'masculinity' and 'femininity', which are important concepts to take into account within the analysis of gender representations in this thesis.

Several authors have examined how masculine and feminine stereotypes are represented in contemporary society. According to Kite et al. (2008) a 'stereotypical woman' is 'emotional', concerned with other people's wellbeing, 'understanding', 'gentle', 'graceful' and 'physically attractive' (Kite et al., 2008). Furthermore, according to Gill (2007) stereotypical portrayals of femininity in advertising include models who have 'long hair' and 'wear makeup'. In contrast, Gentry and Harrison (2010) describe that stereotypical representations of males in television commercials often show one or more of the following characteristics: an emphasis on violence, men display an aversion to all things 'feminine', men are portrayed without emotions and/or men are associated with competition and success. Furthermore, the

authors define stereotypical men as 'independent', 'tough', 'heterosexual' and as 'risk-takers' (Gentry & Harrison, 2010). Likewise, Kite et al. (2008) describe that a 'stereotypical man' is 'assertive', 'competitive', 'independent', 'active', 'self-confident', 'athletic', 'broad-shouldered' and 'physically strong'.

However, for the research of this thesis it is important to note that the construction of someone's gender identity in practice is not only restricted to 'masculinity' or 'femininity', but it can also be a mixture of those identities (Shields, 2013). Therefore, other sub-chapters later on in Chapter 2 discuss gender identities that are different from traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes. Before diving into these theories, the next sub-chapter discusses theoretical approaches that are important when analyzing gender roles and gender stereotypes in advertising.

2.3. Visual analysis of gender roles in advertising

For the analysis of gender representations in advertising, Erving Goffman's work *Gender Advertisements* (1979) has often been used as a foundational work. However, since the research of this thesis focuses on an analysis of contemporary advertising, a more recent article that offers a revisited theory of Goffman's work by Bell and Milic (2002), in which the authors used Goffman's theory to analyze 827 magazine advertisements, was studied in addition in order to gain insight into the process of analyzing gender representations in advertising. Firstly, Bell and Milic (2002) present a list of six different findings that resulted from Goffman's research (1979), which were that the gender roles of men and women could be portrayed in advertising in the following ways: (1) women adopt a pose that physically presents them in a lower position than men in the picture and women seem to need protection from men by physically holding onto them; (2) men are framed as larger in the image compared to women, through which they appeared to have a higher social status; (3) women seemed to gently touch things for ornamental purposes, which Goffman refers to as 'caressing', compared to men who seem to grasp things with a clear purpose; (4) with regard to family positions there was often a division between a father-son relationship, which was often more spatially and emotionally distant from the viewer, and a mother-daughter relationship; (5) men were more often the active 'executor' of tasks, except for a task that is traditionally seen as 'feminine' such as cleaning or cooking; (6) women seem to have a less direct gaze towards, for example, the viewer or other people in the picture; rather they seem to look away or stare into the 'distance'.

In order to understand these findings, it is important to discuss literature by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) about the visual analysis of images. Namely, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) note the importance of the 'gaze', by stating that participants within the picture who directly gaze at the viewer 'demand' something from the viewer. This could mean for example that the participant asks for a social affinity with them or to take a certain action, which creates engagement between the participant and the viewer. Therefore, this communicative aspect is likely to reveal the target audience of the image as the demanding model often addresses the people who should be affected by the advertisement (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). In contrast, when the participant in the picture does not look at the viewer, the image is 'offering' something, meaning that the viewer is invited to solely look at the models as items of information (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

Also, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) argue that the size of frame of the models in the picture determines the relationship between the models and the viewer. This goes back to Edward Hall's theory (1966) which explains that social relationships play a role in the distance that people keep from each other. Based on this theory, different types of social distance are distinguished by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006). Firstly, the 'intimate' distance only shows the face or the head of the model; this frame is unlikely to appear in fashion adverts as the body is not visible (for an example, see Image 2.1). Secondly, the 'close personal' distance includes the head as well as the shoulders of the model in the picture (for an example, see Image 2.2), the 'far personal' distance shows the model from the waist up in the picture (for an example, see Image 2.3), in the 'close social' distance the entire body of the model is visible and there is not much space around it (for an example, see Image 2.4), and the 'far social' distance in which the full body of the model is shown with more space or context around it (for an example, see Image 2.5).

Image 2.1: Campaign picture by 4711
with 'intimate distance'
In Glamour June 2015, p. 129

Image 2.2: Campaign picture by Tommy
Hilfiger with 'close personal distance'
In Glamour January/February 2017, p. 23

Image 2.3: Campaign picture by McGregor
with 'far personal distance'
In LINDA. September 2017, p. 6

Image 2.4: Campaign picture by Woolrich with 'close social distance' In LINDA. September 2016, p. 6

Image 2.5: Campaign picture by Calvin Klein with 'far social distance' In Vogue March 2017, p. 22, 23

In addition to social distance, Kress and Van Leeuwen's theory (2006) highlights that the camera angle of the picture also plays an important role in portraying power relationships. When a model is seen from a low angle, he or she seems to have power over the other represented models or the viewer. When a model is depicted from a high angle, the represented model is seen from the point of view of a person that has more power than him or her. When the picture is taken at eye level, the image does not include a power difference in this way (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). In addition, a frontal angle suggests involvement and action to the viewer, whereas an oblique angle, in which the viewer looks at the represented figures from the side, causes the viewer to look at the figures in a detached way (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). These theories were used in order to analyze the gender power relationships that were depicted in the research sample of this thesis.

In addition to these theories by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), Bell and Milic (2002) looked at the 'narrative presentation' by focusing on to what extent the models are involved in an action with or without a purpose when they analyzed advertisements in their empirical research (Bell & Milic, 2002). In the end, the results of Bell and Milic's study (2002) indicated that for the majority of the adverts the male and female models were framed in the same way and had a similar gaze. Thus, these findings were not in line with Goffman's research that was conducted more than twenty years before (1979). However, the authors also argue that their research falls short on one important aspect, which is that the visual semiotic approach did not

take the stereotypical looks of the models themselves into account. Thus, they state that the notion of these specific expressive features should be added to the analysis (Bell & Milic, 2002). Therefore, the research of this thesis does not solely include the variables for visual analysis as provided by Kress and van Leeuwen's theory (2006), but it also takes a closer look at the visual representation of gender stereotypes with regard to the models themselves and the narrative presentation.

2.4. How the feminist movement changed gender representations in advertising

According to Schroeder and Zwick (2004), advertising does not only reflect social and cultural norms, it also changes and creates social and cultural norms. Thus, advertising can both be affected by social developments concerning gender roles in society as well as have an influence on gender roles in society (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). This sub-chapter dives into this interplay of advertising and society in the past decades with regard to gender roles.

Since the 1970s, feminist activism has critiqued gender representations in advertising. According to Gill (2007), the first studies on this topic from the 1970s and 1980s clearly showed a pattern: women were portrayed in advertising as 'mothers', 'housewives', 'sexual objects' and they were situated in a domestic environment or in dependent roles. In contrast, men were portrayed as 'autonomous' and 'independent' and they had a range of different occupational roles. In addition, women did not seem to provide an argument about the promoted product, whereas men seemed to have a more informative role towards the consumer with regard to this aspect (ibid.). In the 1990s, the representation of women in advertising shifted towards a new ideal of the female identity: women were supposed to be 'intelligent', 'effortlessly beautiful', 'professionally accomplished' as well as a 'perfect mother' (ibid.). As a result, feminist activism blamed advertisers for producing these denigrating, sexist and idealized representations of women throughout several decades.

At the end of the 1980s, more women got employed and became financially independent. Therefore, women themselves became an increasingly interesting group for advertisers to sell products to and advertisers started to respond to the beforementioned feminist critiques with 'commodity feminism' (Gill, 2007). The purpose of this new strategy was to use the cultural power of feminist activism. More specifically, this concept is likely to show a variety of the following themes with regard to gender role portrayals in advertising: (1) the incorporation of messages that express feminist anger, (2) the use of models that show the opposite of the female beauty ideal, which are models that look more authentic and edgy, (3) showing

women that are in charge of their own sexual desires instead of women as passive sexual objects, (4) the image of women that want to please themselves instead of women who are focused on pleasing men, (5) adverts include the 'new woman', which is a woman who seems to manifest a visual mix of feminist features – for example in the form of a successful businesswoman - and traditional femininity, by including a model that also has visual traits that are regarded as stereotypically feminine, (6) more sexual images of the male body, (7) the representation of gay men and women in a sexualized way, (8) a scene that represents a reversal of traditional gender roles, (9) a scene that represents a battle between men and women, (10) an advert that embraces the differences between men and women as a positive thing, meaning that men and women complement each other (ibid.). These themes of commodity feminism by Gill (2007) are used to extract the meaning of the contemporary adverts that are included in this research.

It is important to note that – as a reaction to the changing social norms for both men and women at the end of the 20th century – not only the role of women in advertising was criticized, but also a discussion around the concept of 'masculinity' and stereotypical male portrayals in advertising emerged (Gentry & Harrison, 2010; Gill, 2003; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). According to Gentry and Harrison (2010), the main reason why this discussion emerged is that there was not only confusion among male consumers about the meaning of masculinity, but also about the role of men in society as a whole. The historical cause for this confusion started in the 1980s, when many middle-class women started to get employed and the division of housework become more equally divided. This led to the notion of the 'new father' who was more emotionally involved with his children than the traditional father role that belonged to the traditional gender role of men, which implied that they are solely supposed to be a financial provider and protector of their family - as presented in most advertising (Gentry & Harrison, 2010). In addition, Schroeder and Zwick (2004) describe the increasing 'feminization' of masculinity, which creates an expanded meaning of masculinities next to stereotypical masculinity, by pointing out that nowadays men are also more encouraged to be concerned about their looks, embrace their emotions and show off their body.

In this thesis, the previously discussed literature on the developments of gender roles in advertising throughout history helps to understand whether the gender roles that are depicted in the adverts conform with traditional gender roles or more contemporary gender roles.

2.5. 'Gender-specific' marketing and 'gender-neutral' marketing

The previous sub-chapter already introduced that consumers' attitudes towards advertising are likely to influence the content of advertising. As also introduced in Chapter 1 of this thesis, the variety of gender identities and attitudes towards the representation of gender in society nowadays pose challenges to the expression of gender in advertising (Canadean, 2015a). Therefore, it is interesting to discover how advertisers respond to these different consumer attitudes towards gender representations in advertising and a clear way to do this, is to look into recent marketing reports that discuss marketing trends with regard to gender.

According to Canadean (2015c), not all consumers identify themselves with traditional gender roles and stereotypes nowadays; especially younger groups of consumers find gender equality increasingly important. Therefore, 'gender blurring', which is characterized by the rejection of traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes, forms a new trend within the market for fast-moving consumer goods (Canadean, 2015c; Kasriel-Alexander, 2016; Simões, 2016). This trend reflects the cultural and social changes in people's perception of male and female gender roles (Simões, 2016), which was touched upon in the previous chapter. According to Simões (2016), due to these social and cultural changes, consumers are getting more comfortable with using products that are conventionally used by the opposite gender. Therefore, brands are now making products appealing to the other gender through advertising that targets this new audience. An example is the whiskey market; according to Canadean (2015c) and Simões (2016), whiskey is an alcoholic drink that was traditionally perceived as a masculine drink. Nowadays, however, whiskey brands are promoting whiskey to women by using female models in advertising (Canadean, 2015c; Simões, 2016). As a result, whiskey brands aim to show that whiskey should not only be associated with masculinity, but also with femininity. Likewise, the same authors argue that household care products were originally targeted towards women, which is based on the traditional gender role of women as housekeepers. However, due to the fact that household activities are increasingly carried out by men as well, there now is advertising from brands of household care products which is especially targeted towards men (Canadean, 2015c; Simões, 2016).

In addition, according to a marketing report by Simões (2016) on blurring gender boundaries within the market of fast-moving consumer goods, the trend of gender blurring can be implemented in marketing strategies in multiple ways, by giving three other examples: (1) The advertising does not include traditional gender roles like women in the kitchen or women as sexual objects; (2) the brand avoids colors, shapes and other statements that are associated with one gender – which are related to gender stereotypes - in order to have a more

gender-neutral packaging. An example of this is that toy brands avoid the targeting of girls with pink toys or the targeting of boys with camouflage printed toys; and (3) the store segments are changed from a separate men's and women's section to one unified collection (Simões, 2016).

As a result, the new approach of gender blurring in marketing encourages the creation of product marketing with a more gender-neutral concept, which means that the product is not related to a specific gender (Simões, 2016). Several terms can be used to address the type of products that are the opposite of 'gender-specific' products, including 'unisex' and 'gender-neutral'. According to Simões (2016), unisex products are products that meet the common needs of both genders, as opposed to gender-specific products. According to literature about unisex fashion products in specific, 'unisex' fashion "is about taking men's shapes and adapting them for womenswear, and vice-versa" (Walker, 2015, p.1). These types of products were already recognized in fashion the 1960's (Simões, 2016). Alternatively, the newer concept of 'gender-neutrality', as already introduced in Chapter 1 of this thesis, does not solely present products as suitable for males and females, but also for people who do not identify with these binary gender identities (Simões, 2016). Hence, within this thesis, the term 'gender-neutral' is used to discuss advertising that promotes products which are not exclusively targeted towards people of a particular gender.

According to various sources, promoting gender-neutral products seems to be a more effective marketing strategy than promoting clearly gendered products. Namely, multiple authors of marketing reports from 2015 and 2016 state that an increasing number of women perceive gendered products and advertising as 'stereotypical' and 'outdated', and thereby reject 'gender-specific' marketing (Canadean, 2015a; Parker, 2016). Also, from a commercial point of view, a marketing report by Canadean (2015c) on blurring gender boundaries in the market for fast-moving consumer goods states that there actually is a small amount of fast-moving consumer goods that can solely be used by one particular gender. Therefore, the target audience is limited when products are exclusively targeted towards either males or females, since a larger target audience could be reached by removing those product boundaries (Canadean, 2015c). Likewise, Kasriel-Alexander (2013, p.1) argues that "to exploit a wider customer base, inclusive gender-neutral marketing, rather than crude gender stereotyping, appears to be the way forward for many products and services traditionally regarded as 'male' or 'female'". Thus, these marketing reports suggest that brands that sell specific types of fast-moving consumer goods, including fashion products, should focus on promoting gender-neutral products instead of gender-specific products.

As opposed to the marketing trends of gender-blurring and gender-neutral products, another marketing report by Canadean (2016) puts forward that gender-specific products also still form a trend for specific categories of fast-moving consumer goods including personal care products, food and drinks. For these type of products, marketing strategies focus on offering products that reflect both the physiological differences between the genders, such as body hair growth, as well as cultural differences, such as social roles. Thus, Canadean (2016, p.9) goes against the gender-neutrality trend by stating that consumers increasingly seek fast-moving consumer goods "that are specifically designed for their gender". The report further suggests that this type of marketing works especially effective for consumers who identify themselves as either 'female' or 'male' and want to meet the biological needs of their gender, like the recommended daily allowances. Likewise, another marketing report by Parker (2016) on developments in consumer attitudes and behavior shaped by socio-demographic changes, states that even though the boundaries between gender roles are increasingly blurring in society, gender-specific products continue to be popular among consumers worldwide because of the overall personalization trend in marketing. This personalization trend implies that consumers expect products to be tailored to their identity and needs (Parker, 2016). Results of empirical research on the popularity of gender-specific products can be seen in Image 2.6, which shows that the majority of consumers worldwide completely agree or somewhat agree with the statement that they are more likely to buy products that are specifically designed for their gender.
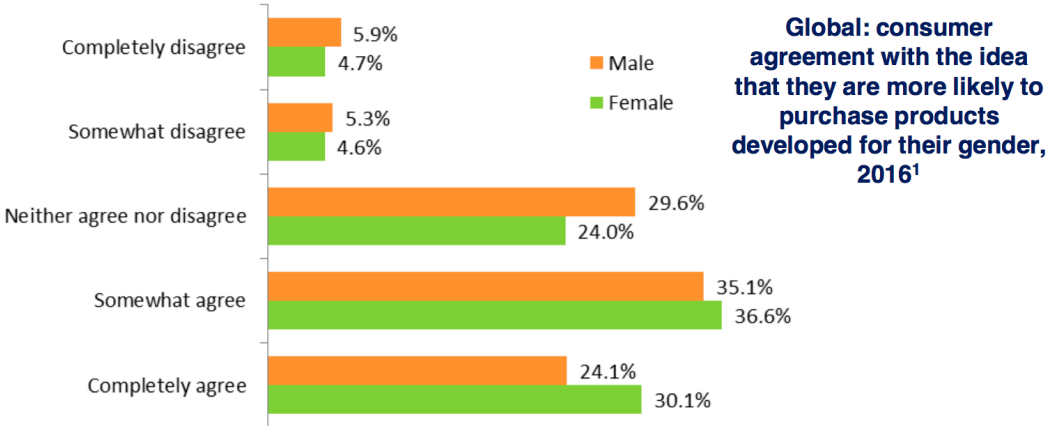

Image 2.6: Results of GlobalData's Q3 Global survey on consumer likeliness to buy gender-specific products[3]

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[3] *Source:* Parker, R. (2016) *TrendSights Analysis: Socio-Demographic Change Consumerism shaped by Evolving Societal Landscapes.* Retrieved from:

In addition to these statements in marketing reports, multiple academic articles highlight the possible positive sides of advertising that includes gender-specific products for men and women and clearly defined gender identities. Firstly, according to Grohmann (2009), commercial brands try to communicate 'masculinity' and 'femininity' so that their consumers can identify themselves with a brand. In fact, research by Fugate and Phillips (2010) and Morrison and Shaffer (2003) has indicated that consumers often look for 'gender congruence' in advertising, which is based on the idea that people want to use products that reflect their own gender identity or image (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). More specifically, gender plays a dominant role in one's identity and as a result, multiple authors argue that consumers purchase products that match with their own gender identity in order to maintain this identity (Fugate & Phillips, 2010; Morrison & Shaffer, 2003). It is important to note, however, that gender congruence between consumers and gender representations in advertising does not mean that advertisers have to stick to traditional gender roles or gender stereotypes. As discussed earlier in this chapter, there is also a group of consumers who do not identify with these gender identities. Therefore, Morrison and Shaffer (2003) compared the reception of adverts that displayed traditional gender roles with the reception of advertising displaying non-traditional gender roles. The research indicated that both types of advertising were effective, but for different groups of consumers. Namely, the authors state that the people who have a gender identity that conforms with stereotypical gender roles, which the authors refer to as 'feminine women' and 'masculine men', had a more positive response to gender-stereotyped advertising. In contrast, the people who did not conform with these stereotypical gender roles, which were referred to as 'masculine women', 'feminine men' and 'androgynous individuals' responded more favorably to the adverts that were not gender-stereotyped (Morrison & Shaffer, 2003). The scope of the above mentioned theory, however, was to analyze the reception of gender representations in adverts, whereas the aim of this thesis is to carry out an analysis of gender representations within fashion advertising itself as a media product.

For fashion products in specific, one could argue that consumers want clothes that are adjusted to the female body shape or male body shape. However, as the beforementioned marketing reports do not discuss the fashion industry as an important market for gender-specific

https://consumer-globaldata-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/Analysis/details/trendsights- analysis-socio-demographic-change

products, it is interesting to discover whether fashion brands are currently promoting gender-specific products or gender-neutral products through the research of this thesis.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that the trend of gender-neutral products is more likely to be popular in Western countries (Simões, 2016). Image 1.2, which was shown in Chapter 1, shows that only in Western countries – meaning France, the Netherlands, Sweden, Spain and Denmark – the majority of consumers do not agree or are indifferent with the statement that they are more likely to buy products that are specifically developed for their gender. In contrast, the figure shows that in non-western countries such as India, the majority of the consumers agree with the statement that they are more likely to buy products that are specifically developed for their gender. This suggests that there are cross-cultural differences with regard to the success of gender-related marketing strategies.

In conclusion, as multiple marketing reports seem to emphasize the importance of gender-specific marketing as well as gender-neutral marketing, the aim of this thesis is to analyze how both types of advertising strategies are currently implemented by fashion brands. The next sub-chapter explains exactly why the fashion industry forms an interesting focus in this thesis.

2.6. Gender in fashion

In order to be able to contextualize the topic of gender within the fashion industry in specific, Vänskä's book *A Cultural History of Dress and Fashion in the Modern Age* (2016) was used, which highlights different gender-related developments in the Western fashion industry throughout history. According to Vänskä (2016), until the 1920's, most women in Western societies traditionally wore skirts or dresses whereas men wore trousers. During the 1920's, fashion designer Coco Chanel was the first to introduce trousers for middle class and upper-class women, breaking with the stereotypical feminine look (ibid.).

Additionally, Chanel created the first designs that rejected the stereotypically feminine hour-glass silhouette by introducing jackets that had a looser cut. Hence, according to Vänskä's theory (2016), the first developments of gender blurring in women's wear took place during this decade. The author further highlights that the first developments of gender blurring in men's fashion started during the second wave of feminism in the 1960's when a significant amount of men rejected the somber designs of traditional menswear and embraced designs that had more feminine features. As a result, the androgynous look became more popular among men and women (ibid.). Androgyny can be defined as a mixture of features that are regarded as stereotypically masculine as well as stereotypically feminine (Johansson, 2017).

Thereby, androgyny represents a blurred gender identity and, as Johansson (2017, p. 1) states: "the androgynous fashion and body ideal appears to strive after an equal ideal between men and women". This androgynous look was originally manifested by glam-rockers such as David Bowie (Vänskä, 2016), which can be seen in Image 2.7.

Image 2.7: David Bowie (left) wearing an androgynous outfit with colorful printed suit, large earrings, make-up and heeled shoes during an interview in 1973[4]

Even though the previously mentioned definition of androgyny emphasizes equality between men and women, Johansson (2017) argues that one characteristic of the androgynous body makes it problematic to represent men and women as equal. Namely, the androgynous body does not include female curves. Thereby, androgyny is limited to a masculine body type without curves in order to appear as 'neutral' (Johansson, 2017). However, it is important to note that the concept of androgyny is significantly different from 'gender-neutrality'. Namely, whereas unisex or gender-neutral fashion aims to minimize any signs of stereotypical gender-related characteristics, androgynous fashion does include visual gender-related features by showing a mix between male and female traits (Johansson, 2017). According to Tormakhova (2019), androgyny can be recognized in fashion photographs in the following way: the blending of masculine and feminine characteristics which can be seen in the model's hairstyle, clothing, posture, expression, active or passive behavior and other physical characteristics that are presented. Therefore, the research of this thesis takes these aspects into account when determining whether a model seems to have an androgynous gender identity.

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[4] *Source*: David Bowie (n.d.), Retrieved from*: https://www.davidbowie.com/vision*

2.7. Gender representations in fashion advertising

According to Durante, Griskevicius, Hill, Perilloux and Li (2011), women spend a larger part of their income on fashion products compared to men. The authors argue that one of the reasons for this difference in fashion consumption behavior is that women are more likely to try to use fashion products in order to enhance their self-esteem (Durante et al., 2011). More specifically, fashion belongs to the largest group of appearance-enhancing products, which is a product category that also includes products such as hair products and makeup. Naturally, these type of products are supposed to enhance one's physical appearance (Durante et al., 2011). Moreover, according to Crane (2012), people can communicate their personal identity - including for example their gender, religion or occupation - by wearing certain fashion items (Crane, 2012). As mentioned before, gender is an important aspect of one's identity, which can determine one's consumption behavior (Fugate & Phillips, 2010; Morrison & Shaffer, 2003). Therefore, it is interesting for the research of this thesis to study how fashion brands try to attach a certain gender role or gender identity to the fashion products that are shown in their adverts.

Unisex fashion products were already present in the 1960's when models of both genders walked a Paris runway dressed in unisex collections (Simões, 2016). As Simões (2016, p. 29) states, "blurring genders is a more recent trend that has achieved maturity in only one sector: fashion. All other sectors are currently innovating around this trend, trying to find the right ingredients". An example of such a marketing 'ingredient' that Simões identifies which has been used for several decades in the fashion industry is the use of male as well as female models who have an androgynous look that wear the same clothes on the runway.

Even though 'gender-neutral' products seem to have been promoted in the fashion industry for quite a while, the concept of gender-neutral apparel, however, is still developing within the fashion industry. Gender-neutral products used to be limited to high-end fashion brands, but nowadays mainstream clothing stores such as &Other Stories and Zara have launched gender-neutral campaigns (Kissane, 2016). According to Walker (2015), a big part of gender-neutral fashion marketing is formed by the desegregation of men's wear and women's wear, resulting in one retail environment for all people instead of a separate men's department and women's department. Walker (2015), however, criticized how the department store Selfridges merged men's wear and women's wear in its stores for six weeks, as a part of their "Agender" campaign. In this case, gender-neutral marketing did not seem to be a genuine initiative to increase gender-equality, but it rather seemed to be a PR stunt in order to increase sales (Walker, 2015). Kissane (2016) also criticizes the promotion of gender-neutral

fashion by arguing that for years women have been able to find baggy 'boyfriend jeans' and other oversized garments in the women's collection and men can find skintight jeans in the men's collection. Therefore, she argues that consumers are already used to gender blurring in fashion and the attempt from Zara for a small gender-neutral collection that includes items like a plain grey sweatshirt and a classic pair of jeans, solely comes down to the removal of the gender label. A point of critique on this statement by Kissane (2016), however, is that the blending of stereotypically masculine product characteristics in women's collections and vice versa, is not the same as one gender-neutral collection that is targeted at people with every gender identity.

In short, some authors argue that gender-neutral marketing does not necessarily have to be as successful in the fashion industry like the marketing reports that were discussed in Chapter 2.3. predicted. Therefore, it is interesting to find out how fashion brands currently advertise gender-specific products and gender-neutral products through this research. As a result, these insights may be helpful to determine future gender-related marketing strategies.

2.8. An overview of previous research on the topic of gender representations in advertising

In order to be able to perform well-informed research on gender roles in (fashion) advertising, this section discusses previous academic research that is related to the topic of this thesis.

With regard to gender roles in advertising, several previous studies from the late 20th century and early 21st century (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Ferguson, Kreshel & Tinkham, 1990; Milner & Higgs, 2004) showed the prevalence of traditional gender roles in advertising, which were defined at the beginning of this chapter. An example is research by Lindner (2004) on the gender representations of women in adverts that were published between 1955 and 2002 in *Time* magazine and *Vogue* magazine, which indicated that 78% of the research sample included stereotypical gender portrayals of women. More specifically, *Vogue* was more likely to include stereotypical portrayals of women compared to *Times*, which mostly meant that women were portrayed in advertising as sexual objects by showing them in revealing clothing, which created the message that women were of low social power. Considering that *Vogue* magazine is a women's magazine whereas *Times* magazine is not, these are striking results as the adverts that were included in this research were published during the same period as feminist movements in society.

When it comes to more recent research, a meta-analysis by Grau and Zotos (2016) of academic articles on gender stereotypes in advertising that were published in marketing communications journals since 2010, also shows that multiple articles indicate that gender stereotyping still exists in advertising around the world. It is important to note, however, that these results of past research also depend on the scopes of the research, which can be limited. Namely, Gentry and Harrison (2010) state that many studies on gender portrayals in advertising focus on the prevalence of female stereotypes. The reason for this scope is that the stereotypical portrayal of women was often seen as more problematic, as the feminist perspective used to be focused on gaining equality for women (Gentry & Harrison, 2010). Their own research states that in television commercials from 2007 and 2008, women were portrayed less in stereotypical gender roles than men. Therefore, the authors argue that a more gender-neutral representation of men in advertising may be a key step to facilitate a shift in gender roles that is needed to achieve the manifestation of more egalitarian gender roles (Gentry & Harrison, 2010).

In contrast to the previously mentioned studies, a meta-analysis of 76 articles on gender-related advertising research in print media, television and other types of media from 1970 up to 2002 by Wolin (2003), shows that there has been a decrease in the portrayal of stereotypical gender roles in advertising. Similarly, an example of recent research by Timke and O'Barr (2017), which was also discussed in the introduction chapter of this thesis, showed that, even though the communication of traditional gender roles and stereotypes was still prevalent in advertising in 2016, more recent adverts had moved towards less traditional gender roles and stereotypes compared to advertising from 2006. Examples of the results that the researchers found is that since 2006, more and more advertising includes examples of a 'metrosexual' man. This concept represents a man who is more concerned with his looks - in terms of for example hairstyle, grooming and outfits – compared to the stereotypical 'macho' role of men. These characteristics are stereotypically regarded as feminine, which is why the metrosexual man represents a 'blurred' gender identity (Timke & O'Barr, 2017).

Kuipers, van der Laan and Arfini (2017) offer an example of recent research that focuses on gender roles within the fashion advertising in specific. These researchers conducted a comparative content analysis of gender representations in Italian and Dutch fashion magazines that were published between 1982 and 2011. The sample included one magazine title per country that had a mainstream audience - the Dutch *Libelle* and the Italian *Anna* -, two commercial magazine titles for both countries that are internationally franchised – *Cosmopolitan* and *Men's Health* – and three internationally franchised high-end fashion magazines -

Vogue, *Elle* and *Uomo Vogue*. On the one hand, the research indicated that women were more likely to be sexually objectified than men. On the other hand, the research also indicated that pictures which showed women in a passive or subordinate position were rare (Kuipers et al., 2017). Hence, this research shows that stereotypical gender roles were prevalent, but there has been a shift away from stereotypical gender roles, too. In addition, the authors found that Dutch fashion magazines were less likely to show prominent differences between men and women. Namely, Kuipers et al. (2017) argue that the male models in Dutch fashion magazines are increasingly represented with characteristics that used to belong to female stereotypical gender representations. This, however, was rarely seen the other way around. Kuipers et al. (2017) also took the concept of 'intersectionality' into account during their analysis. This is a term that is used to analyze multiple factors that represent social divisions within society (Collins & Bilge, 2016). For example, the term intersectionality involves the factors of gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity, race, religion and ability. These type of concepts divide people into different categories, which can influence social inequality between people. Thus, intersectionality is concerned with the representation of such factors within the topic of social inequality (Collins & Bilge, 2016). Some aspects of Kuipers et al.'s research (2017) were used for the research of this thesis, such as the notion of intersectionality during the analysis of gender representations in fashion magazines, the importance of national differences in gender representations and the inclusion of a similar division of different magazines for the composition of the research sample.

In short, several articles on previous recent research on gender role portrayals on the one hand confirm the prevalence of stereotypical gender roles in the majority of advertising, whereas on the other hand multiple articles also show that a shift has taken place towards the representation of less stereotypical gender roles. Therefore, the research of this thesis can add to the existing literature by providing new insights into the current manifestations of gender roles in advertising.

2.9. Chapter conclusion

The concepts and empirical studies that were discussed in this chapter do not only help to detect gender stereotypes in the adverts that are included in the research sample of this thesis, but also to make a distinction between traditional gender roles and non-traditional gender roles for men as well as women. In addition, the theoretical guidelines given by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) and Bell and Milic (2002) about the framing and positioning of the models help to interpret the visual representations of meanings that are communicated by

fashion brands in the adverts. Furthermore, this chapter has provided insight into the trend of gender blurring in the fashion industry and how this can be recognized in for example models with androgynous features or metrosexual features. In addition, the various previous studies on gender representations in adverts help to identify traditional gender roles in adverts, such as the portrayal of women as sexual objects, as well as contemporary themes, such as commodity feminism. In the end, the results of this thesis can be compared to the previous studies on the prevalence of gender stereotypes and the representation of gender roles in (fashion) advertising.

3. Method

3.1. Introduction

To gain insight into adverts that promote gender-specific or gender-neutral fashion products with regard to the portrayal of gender roles, adverts from Dutch women's lifestyle magazines were analyzed. Within this process, the research of thesis comprised a qualitative research method (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). More specifically, the reason why a qualitative method offered a suitable research design for this project is that the main focus of qualitative research is to understand the social world through a constructionist point of view, which implies that meanings are an outcome of interactions between people (Bryman, 2012). This constructionist perspective fits the purpose of the thesis, as the research helps to create an understanding of how gender roles are socially constructed in a broader social context and the goal is to specifically understand how fashion brands portray these gender roles in their magazine

adverts. In short, as the objective of this research is to analyze how certain meanings around the concept of 'gender' are constructed through advertising, the research design of this thesis is qualitative in nature (Boeije, 2010).

This chapter explains which qualitative methodological approach was used within this research project and why this method offered a suitable way to answer the central research question. More specifically, the first section of this chapter provides a detailed description of how the data for this research was retrieved by explaining the data gathering and sampling procedure, as well as the final data set that was used for this research project. Subsequently, this chapter explains the exact steps of the semiotic analysis of 'multimodal documents' that was carried out to analyze the data. Lastly, the chapter discusses the coding practices that were used to structure and compare the results of the analyses in such a way that it enabled the formulation of an answer to the research question of this thesis.

3.2. Description of the sample and data collection

3.2.1. Lifestyle magazines

Magazines offer valuable ways for advertisers to target specific audiences, as magazines do not only have a clearly defined audience when it comes to the socio-demographic characteristics of the readers, but the magazine's content also belongs to a specific topic or genre which represents the interests of the readers (Chandra & Kaiser, 2010). Also, considering that this research only focuses on the advertising content within the magazines and the fact that campaigns are often published across different media, magazines show a clear reflection of the advertising content of that time. Moreover, printed magazines offer a pragmatic way to collect the data, as it is easy to access a big collection of magazines at the National Library in the Hague and thereby collect advertisements that are all published in a similar format. This means that they are all printed still images of 1 or 2 pages, which makes the data more comparable. For these reasons, printed magazines were chosen as the medium to collect data for the research of this thesis.

In terms of data collection, printed magazines in general would be too broad to focus on as the research of this thesis has a clear focus on fashion advertising in specific. As lifestyle magazines are most likely to include advertising for fashion products, this genre of magazines was suitable to collect the data for this research. Furthermore, the Netherlands offers an interesting focus for the topic of this research, which was explained in Chapter 1. Thus, the research specifically includes data from Dutch women's lifestyle magazines. On top of this, all magazine titles explicitly had to cover the topic of fashion within its content.

When deciding which magazines to include in the research, it was decided to include magazines with different target audiences. This does not only make the data more representative for fashion adverts in general, but it also creates insight into possible differences between the adverts that are targeted to, for example, millennials compared to adverts that are targeted towards 'older' women. Therefore, before the data was collected, the media kits for advertisers of different Dutch women's lifestyle magazines were studied to gain an insight into the different target audiences of the magazines. As a result, four magazine titles were chosen that complement each other in terms of the demographics and social-economic characteristics of the target audiences. Thus, based on the media kits for advertisers, the following four magazine titles were included in the research:

1. Vogue

This magazine title was chosen for this thesis because of its focus on fashion. According to Hearst Netherlands, *Vogue* is "the queen of fashion magazines" (Hearst Netherlands, n.d., para. 1). In addition, Hearst's media kit of the Dutch edition of *Vogue* magazine states that the magazine's content can be described as 'high quality', 'high fashion', 'good interviews', 'inspiring women' and 'beautiful places'. More specifically, the magazine covers the following interests; beauty, fashion, accessories, healthy lifestyle, travelling, literature and art (Hearst Netherlands, 2018a). According to Hearst Netherlands (n.d.), the Dutch *Vogue*-readers are 'worldly wise', 'fashion-lovers', 'have a high interest in culture, art, books, films and music' and 'cover all ages'. However, according to the media kit for advertisers, the average age of the readers is 27 years old and 70% of the readers are millennials. In addition, this document states that 80% of its readership consists of females, of which 85% lives in larger cities in the Netherlands. Furthermore, the magazine is aimed at people from the highest classification of the Dutch Social Economic Index, meaning that the readers consist of people with a high level of income and education (Hearst Netherlands, 2018a). Thus, the magazine's focus on (luxury) fashion and its target audience of people with a higher income constitute the reason why this magazine in specific is included in the research.

2. LINDA.

LINDA. is a magazine by a Dutch TV presenter called Linda de Mol. The magazine includes columns, 'controversial' stories, interviews and fashion and beauty news. The media kit of *LINDA.* (2019) claims that the magazine has the highest paid circulation in the Netherlands compared to other printed Dutch women's lifestyle magazines. Therefore, this magazine

is an important title to include in this research. In addition, there are other traits that distinguish *LINDA.*'s target audience from the readers of the other magazines that are included in this project, which are the social-economic demographics. Namely, the media kit points out that the majority of readers consists of middle-aged women between 35 and 64 years old, including many women with children, and the magazine covers different social classes. Furthermore, it is striking that this was the only magazine that showed its reach of men in the media kit, as the readers consist of 889.000 women and 320.000 men (Linda Nieuws, 2019). These numbers, however, do not provide insight into whether these male readers are the partners of the female readers who buy the magazine. In this case, it is questionable whether this number of male readers are as interested in *LINDA.* magazine's content as the women who buy it.

3. Cosmopolitan

According to the Dutch media kit for advertisers of *Cosmopolitan*, the magazine is the 'biggest' international lifestyle magazine for young women (Hearst Netherlands, 2018b). The mission of the magazine is to "help young women become the happiest version of themselves" by offering lifestyle, beauty, fashion, talent, love, 'psyche' and interview content (Hearst Netherlands, 2018b, p. 10). The Dutch audience of *Cosmopolitan* consists of millennials that were born after 1980 and Generation Z that consists of people that were born after 2000. In addition, the *Cosmopolitan* reader has a keen interest in fashion and beauty and, according to the magazine's media kit (2018b), the Cosmopolitan reader spends more money on average on fashion and beauty products than the people around her. The focus on young commercially oriented readers makes the audience of this magazine an interesting target group to include in the research of this thesis (Hearst Netherlands, 2018b).

4. Glamour

The research of this thesis includes another Dutch women's lifestyle magazine that mainly targets younger women, which is *Glamour* magazine. Most of the magazine's content covers fashion and beauty, which makes *Glamour* an important title to include in this research (Hearst Netherlands, 2019). More specifically, on the topic of fashion, the magazine's content includes a range from high street fashion to high end fashion. Moreover, according to the magazine's media kit, *Glamour*'s target audience consists of women between 18 and 35 years old that are either studying or starting a job (Hearst Netherlands, 2019). Furthermore, the magazine's media kit states that the readers want to both be authentic and fit in at the same time and they like to spend money on experiences and themselves (Hearst Netherlands, 2019).

3.2.2. Data collection and sampling procedure

As various foundational academic articles on the visual analysis of adverts have indicated that advertising in which both men and women are shown can communicate certain power relationships (Bell & Milic, 2002; Goffman, 1979; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), the data of this thesis solely includes advertising that features at least one male and one female model. However, some brands have a separate advert for males and females that clearly belong to the same campaign, which means they were still included for the purposes of this thesis. For example, the campaign pictures by Artipoppe – in Images 3.1 and 3.2 – were published in *Vogue* November 2015 and *Vogue* December 2015. Considering that these adverts both have the same layout with the white frame, the black and white picture and the same type of product, these pictures clearly belong to the same campaign.

Image 3.1: Campaign picture by Artipoppe in Vogue November 2015, p. 48.
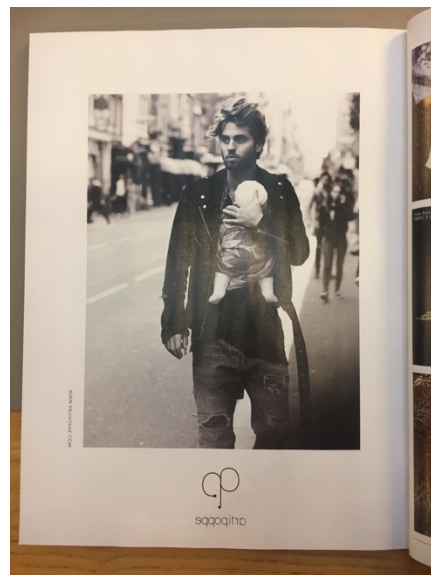
Image 3.2: Campaign picture by Artipoppe in Vogue December 2015, p. 45

For these advertising campaigns that consist of separate images for men and women, the criterion for inclusion was that the individual adverts were published in proximity, mean-

ing that they were published in the same magazine title in the same year and that the two advertisements were clearly related to each other by showing an item from the same segment of fashion products – meaning that they belong to one of the categories that are explained later on in this chapter - and from the same brand.

In addition, as mentioned before, the aim of this thesis is to gain insight into how contemporary gender-related marketing trends such as 'gender-specificity' and 'gender blurring' have been incorporated in recent advertising. Therefore, another selection criterion for the data of this research was that the advertisement had to promote either 'gender-specific' fashion products, which were separate – different - fashion products for men and women, or 'gender-neutral' fashion products, which means that the same fashion product was presented as suitable for men as well as women. Thus, the advertising campaigns that were included in this research had to promote fashion products for men as well as women, but these products could be 'gender-specific' or 'gender-neutral', according to the theoretical framework of this thesis. Thus, the unit of analysis for the research of this thesis comprises advertising for 'gender-specific' and 'gender-neutral' products from fashion brands, containing both male and female models, which were printed in *Vogue*, *Linda.*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour* between 2015 and 2018.

After determining the different magazines and setting the selection criteria for the fashion adverts, most of the magazines that were used for the data collection for this research were retrieved from the National Library in The Hague, where all magazines that are included in the collection of the library could be requested. Since a pilot study of two magazine titles indicated that the library in The Hague did not include every issue from every year for *Vogue* and *LINDA.* magazine, a large part of those magazines was also collected through 'Marktplaats', which is a Dutch trading website for second-hand products, in order to have access to a more complete sample of magazines. As the magazines from *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan* have a similar target group and the available issues per year that were available for these two magazines at the library complemented each other, it was decided that this collection of magazines was sufficient to include in this research. In short, as the data sample was based on accessibility, a purposive convenience sample was established (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016). A complete overview of which magazine issues were available for the research and where they were retrieved can be found in Table 3.1 in Appendix A.

In order to collect advertisements from the magazines that conform with the previously mentioned selection criteria for the advertisements, purposive sampling was used to gather the advertisements that are included in this research (Bryman, 2012). During the data

retrieval, pictures were taken from the advertisements in order to analyze them afterwards. Since this thesis has a narrow scope by only focusing on fashion advertising that includes a male as well as a female model and the research employs a qualitative method, a total number of research units of 100 advertisements divided across the four magazines was collected by the author of this thesis, which is in line with the ESHCC's *Methodological Guidelines Thesis Research* (Janssen & Verboord, 2018-2019). A complete description of the sample is included in Table 3.2 (Appendix B).

Before each semiotic analysis, a description of where the advertisement came from was written down (i.e. magazine title, issue, and page number) as well as a description of the fashion brand that is included in the advertisement, which consists of several aspects. Firstly, this brand description includes the brand name and the product segment that is shown in the advertisement. The latter is based on a recent report *The State of Fashion 2019* by Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Company (2019), which includes the following product categories for the fashion industry: apparel; sportswear; footwear; jewelry and watches; handbags and luggage; and other accessories. Subsequently, the country in which the brand is based was retrieved from the brand's website in order to be able to compare the portrayal of gender roles by fashion brands from different countries. As can be seen in the beforementioned Images 1.1 and 1.2, there are still differences between countries when it comes to gender-related issues. Therefore, it is important to take into account that for example a campaign picture from a Dutch fashion brand may lead to different results than one from an Italian brand.

Lastly, two different sources were combined to determine the price category of the brand. The first source was an academic article by Iannone, Ingenito, Martino, Miranda, Pepe and Riemma (2013), which includes a price range according to customer's attitudes for fashion products; products from 0 to 50 Euros are considered 'Cheap', products from 51 to 100 Euros are 'Intermediate' and products of 100 Euros and up are considered 'Expensive'. In addition, a blog post by Segura (2019) on a website called 'The Fashion Retailer' used *'The Fashion Pyramid',* which can be seen in Image 3.3. This figure devides the names of fashion brands into different price categories called: 'Mass-Market', 'Premium', 'Accessible Luxury', 'Aspirational' and 'Supreme'.

Image 3.3: The Fashion Pyramid[5]

As a result, a new guideline was created to define the price categories of the brands, in which the brand names are divided into wider categories, which makes them easier to assign. Also, the prices that can be used as an indicator of the categories overlap a little to make sure that all types of fashion products can be found in the right price catergory. For example, a premium t-shirt may be 50 euro's whereas a premium bag could be 250 euro's. As a result, the following three categories were used within this research project: Mass Market, which were 'cheap', products from 0 to 100 Euros; Premium, which were 'intermediate' products from 50 to 300 Euros and High end, which were 'expensive' products from 300 euros and up.

It is important to note that this is not a perfectly precise guideline, but as it is only used to give an indication of the price segment of the brands, it was considered to be suitable for the purpose of the research. An overview of how many adverts of the sample belonged to which price category, fashion product category and brand nationality can be seen in Appendix C.

3.3. Data analysis

3.3.1. Introduction: The analysis of adverts as multimodal documents

According to Bateman (2008), past studies on communicative documents traditionally focused solely on written text. Nowadays, however, when one thinks of communication, the

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[5] *Source: Segura (2019, March 11). Retrieved from The Fashion Retailer:*
https://fashionretail.blog/2019/03/11/the-fashion-pyramid-of-brands/

online world of social media and television comes to mind, which includes images in addition to the written texts. Thus, communicative documents do not solely rely on written text to communicate certain meanings, but instead they also include a combination of visual aspects. Bateman (2008, p. 1) explains that these communicative documents include different "modes of information presentation". Examples of such a communication mode can be language in the form of speech, text or visual images. Therefore, when a document includes a combination of different modes, the author refers to these type of documents as 'multimodal documents'. According to Torresi (2008, p. 66), "the two main modes of communication in print ads are the verbal and the visual, articulated in complex interactions". Hence, considering that adverts include some linguistic elements as well as visual aspects to communicate a certain message, the magazine adverts that are included in this research are regarded as multimodal documents.

According to Bateman (2008), the complexity of the mechanisms that build the meanings of multimodal documents demand an analysis that is different from text analysis alone, as multimodal documents can also include visual aspects and a different layout. There is a wide range of academic literature that focuses on the ways in which multimodal documents can be analyzed. In this case, the research method of this thesis employs Rose's (2007)

version of a semiotic[6] analysis.

In addition, as a semiotic analysis alone may not offer enough insights into the visual communication of the adverts, elements from Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) and Bell and

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[6] According to Daylight (2012), semiotics as well as semiology focuses on the interpretation or decoding of signs in order to understand its meaning. However, the difference between the two methods is that semiology, which is based on works from Ferdinand de Saussure and Roland Barthes, solely focuses on the notion of the 'signifier' and the 'signified', whereas semiotics, which originates from Charles Alexander Pierce, goes beyond that by also including the interpretive function of the sign or 'representation'. In other words, Pierce is concerned with how an object, such as smoke, can lead to an idea, which is fire (Daylight, 2012). Thus, as this thesis also investigates how certain objects or characteristics of people in campaign pictures can lead to the idea of a certain gender role, the full research method of this thesis comprises the method of 'semiotics', even though the method was based on work by authors like Rose (2007), which focus on semiology.

Milic's (2002) theories that are suitable for multimodal meaning-making, which were discussed in Chapter 2, were used as well in order to understand how different modes of information, including text and visual aspects, carry out a message for the adverts that are included in this research (Bateman, 2008).

3.3.2. Semiotics

In order to explain why semiotics offers a suitable methodology for the research design of this thesis, it is important to first look at Barthes' foundational work *The Rhetoric of the Image* (1977). In this essay, which was first published in 1964, Barthes explains how images, advertisements in particular, gain their meaning. The author explains that images provide different 'signs' that can be analyzed on multiple levels in order to 'read' the image and understand its message (Barthes, 1977). This 'study of signs' that the previously mentioned theory by Barthes touches upon is known as 'semiology'. This methodological approach is explained by Rose (2007, p.79):

> The sign is a unit of meaning, and semiologists argue that anything that has meaning – an advert, a painting, a conversation, a poem – can be understood in terms of its signs and the work they do. Signs make meaning in complex ways, and much of the technical vocabulary of semiology describes the precise ways in which signs make sense.

For this project, the study of signs that originates from semiology was used in order to reveal how the magazine adverts gain a certain meaning with regard to gender roles. Thus, within this research, every visual aspect or piece of text within an advert that contributes to the meaning that the advert conveys is regarded as a sign and thereby included in the semiotic analysis.

More specifically, semiotics mostly focuses on how a combination of signs can construct a certain message, which is the goal of the analysis (Sebeok, 2001). As a result, the analysis enables an understanding of how these different signs construct the meaning of the advert. Within this study of signs, the sign is constructed by two parts that play an important role in semiotics, which are the 'signifier' and the 'signified'. Firstly, the 'signifier' is something visible like letters or objects (Sebeok, 2001). Secondly, the 'signified' is the concept, image or meaning that is related to the signifier by for example the surroundings of the sign or the way in which the sign itself is represented in the image (Sebeok, 2001). With regard to this research, the theory of semiotics helps to detect for example which visible traits or positions of the models are related to a certain gender role. For adverts in specific, Rose (2007,

p.80) also argues that the beforementioned structure of signs can play a crucial role in the way in which advertising works; "the photographs of many adverts depend on signs of humans which symbolize particular qualities to their audience. These qualities – these signifieds – are shifted in the ad from the human signifiers and onto the product the ad is trying to sell". Thus, the semiotic analysis helps to find out how beauty and fashion brands create meanings for gender-specific products and gender-neutral products through magazine advertising. Furthermore, according to Rose (2007), semiotics offers an approach that can detect certain ideologies or social power relationships that are communicated in advertising. Hence, a semiotic analysis can provide insight into the ideological social differences or similarities that are constructed in an image with regard to the concept of 'gender' (Rose, 2007). In this way, the semiotic analysis enables the formulation of an answer to the research question.

3.3.3. Semiotic analysis

For this thesis, the method of data analysis is based on Rose's theory on semiotic analysis (2007), which draws upon Judith Williamson's *Decoding Advertisements* (1978). According to Rose, semiotics "offers a very full box of analytical tools for taking an image apart and tracing how it works in relation to broader systems of meaning" (2007, p. 74). Before explaining the exact process of the semiotic analysis that is used in this thesis, it is important to note that Rose (2007) discusses that there are multiple ways to carry out this type of analysis. Namely, a semiotic analysis can be guided by various concepts that help to find the different layers of meaning that are included in an image, but the exact theoretical concepts that guide a semiotic analysis can vary. Therefore, it can be complicated to define a clear method to apply this type of analysis (Rose, 2007). In the next paragraphs, the exact concepts that were used for the semiotic analysis of this thesis will be explained, as well as how they were used and combined within the analysis.

Based on Rose's discussion of concepts for semiotic analysis (2007), a schematic model was created (Appendix D) which was used to carry out a systematic semiotic analysis for each advertisement by using the following concepts; denotations, connotations, syntagmatic factors, paradigmatic factors and the myth. More specifically, by analyzing these dimensions of signs, this table was used as a means to gain an overview of the different aspects of the data. As a result, the use of this table enabled an understanding of how gender roles are manifested by fashion brands in advertising for gender-neutral and gender-specific products.

At the beginning of all semiotic analyses, the advertisements were carefully studied.

Subsequently, the signs which are included in the adverts that are relevant to provide an answer to the research question were analyzed on different levels. Thus, all signs including people, surroundings and products that play a role in the construction of gender roles were included in the analysis. Firstly, when signs communicate at the 'denotive' level, they only gain their meaning from the object or text that is explicitly shown in the picture (Rose, 2007). Thus, when describing denotations, the researcher describes what he or she sees; the objects, people or texts that are shown in the image. However, as most visible objects or people are likely to carry a certain meaning with them, signs rarely are solely denotive. Therefore, Rose (2007) explains that signs can also work on the connotive level when certain ideas, cultural values or other higher-level meanings are created by the way in which certain objects or texts are represented in the image. Hence, when describing the connotations, the researcher describes the higher-level meanings that are related to certain objects or texts. In addition, the analysis takes into account that signs can communicate their meaning on the syntagmatic level when they extract their meaning from the other signs that are situated around them and signs that work at the paradigmatic level gain their meaning from a specific contrast that is created by explicitly excluding other signs from the picture (ibid.). For an example of a sign with a paradigmatic meaning, in Image 3.4 there is an older woman on the right of the picture. Considering that she is in between models that look a lot younger than her, the brand might want to make a statement by including her in the front instead of a younger model.

Image 3.4: Campaign picture by Philipp Plein in Vogue December 2018, p. 10, 11.

It is important to take into account, however, that these different dimensions of signs generally also work simultaneously. For example, a sign can carry a syntagmatic meaning and

a paradigmatic meaning at the same time. Moreover, the variables of visual analysis from Bell and Milic's study (2002) and the theory from Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), which were discussed in Chapter 2.3., were used as well to decode the meanings of the signs that are involved in the semiotic analysis.

The last step in the semiotic analysis consisted of defining the 'myth' that is communicated in the picture in order to promote the products. Rose (2007) discusses this theory of the myth, which builds upon the concepts of the signifier and the signified, by arguing that signs can work at two different levels. When a sign carries its meaning at the first level, it only refers to the signifier or the 'form' of the sign, which is also referred to as the denotive level of signs in the analysis. However, when signs carry their meaning on the second level, which most signs do, denotive signs gain a 'higher' meaning – or have a signified attached to them. Hence, he argues that these signs work at the mythological level of meaning, which he also refers to as 'signification'. Thus, this 'myth' represents a conclusion of the central message, or sometimes even a form of social ideology, that the advertisement conveys on the second level of signs (ibid.). For example, an image that includes a woman with children in a kitchen could convey the social ideology that women (are supposed to) take care of the household. In addition, Rose (2007, p.97) argues that "the interpretation of mythologies requires a broad understanding of a culture's dynamics". Therefore, it is important to build on the knowledge from the theoretical framework of this thesis when defining this myth. As a result, the formulation of this myth helps to find an answer to the central research question.

3.3.4. Processing the results

After the semiotic analysis, a procedure had to be developed that would help to extract the central answer to the research question from the 100 separate semiotic analyses of this research. Even though the research does not include a qualitative content analysis, this procedure consisted of several coding practices in addition to the semiotic analyses, which helped to compare the results from the semiotic analyses in order to structure the results and find similarities, differences, exceptional cases and repetition within the results (Bryman, 2012).

Firstly, it was important to read through all the results of the semiotic analyses and start with 'open coding', which can be explained as identifying categories within the data (Blair, 2015). Secondly, 'axial coding' and 'selective coding' had to be carried out. Axial coding addresses 'sub-categories' to the main categories that resulted from the open coding, which provides a more precise explanation of the results. Subsequently, the process of 'selec-

tive coding' is concerned with connecting these previously defined categories to central concepts (Blair, 2015). Hence, these coding practices helped to compare the adverts for gender-specific products to the adverts for gender-neutral products and link the results of the analysis to the relevant concepts from the literature discussed in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

As a result, four categorizing tables were developed (Appendix E) that define the different ways in which gender roles were represented, according to the academic theory that was discussed in Chapter 1 and 2, in relation to four different topics: (1) the product type that was promoted in the advert; (2) the framing and positioning of the models; (3) the visual characteristics of the models themselves; and (4) the representation of activity. The following section explains how the adverts were coded and categorized through these categorizing tables.

1.   Product type

Firstly, in order to be able to answer the research question of this thesis, it is vital to provide an overview of which adverts were coded as promoting gender-specific or gender-neutral products. Therefore, the adverts were divided into the following categories: 'gender-specific', 'gender-neutral', 'both' and 'not clear'. Table 3.7 in Appendix E explains which adverts were assigned to which category and why, according to the literature of the theoretical framework.

2.   Framing and Positioning of the models

According to Goffman (1979), Bell and Milic (2002) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the framing and positioning of the models can represent certain power relationships between men and women. Table 3.8 shows how the framing of the models was coded and Table 3.9 in Appendix E shows how the positioning of the models was coded, both according to the literature.

3.   Appearance of the models

The results of the semiotic analysis showed that the visual characteristics of the models carry a certain meaning with them. More specifically, the physical appearance of the models played a role in the construction of different gender representations, such as gender stereotypes, that were presented in the picture. Therefore, the adverts were categorized into 3 subcategories, which are shown in Table 3.10 in Appendix E.

4.   Representation of activity with regard to gender roles

The last topic concerns only a part of the sample, as it specifically focuses on adverts which represent a scene in which an activity is happening. For this research, this entails the following: (1) The advert included models with a dynamic (non-static) pose. In other words, the models were in a position which represented a movement, such as walking or dancing; (2) the models were actively involved with an attribute that was a non-fashion item or accessory, such as a car or a photo camera; (3) there was a text in the advert which described an activity that the advert represented.

This leaves a sample of 48 adverts within this theme. Table 3.11 in Appendix E shows how these adverts were categorized.

For reporting the results, it was important to take into account that the semiotic analysis as a whole takes many signs into account when determining the central meanings that are conveyed in the advert. Therefore, the beforementioned tables were solely used as a means to be able to categorize the data and draw conclusions about differences and similarities between the data. In addition, as the theories from for example Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) are quite black and white about the meaning of positioning and framing of the models, the results chapter discusses the adverts that form an exception to the literature that was used in the categorizing tables.

3.4. Subjectivity and reliability of the research

Semiotic analyses may be deemed subjective as they include the researcher's own explanations of the signs that are included in the adverts. Therefore, the research method was carried out systematically on the basis of a table that provided a thorough analysis of the signs that are included in the picture, as well as a detailed explanation of the meaning that is attached to them. Furthermore, in order to increase the validity of the research, the interpretation and categorization of the results was related to academic literature, as explained in the previous section. Moreover, 30% [n=30] of the initial results of the semiotic analysis were checked by the thesis supervisor as well, which improves the intersubjectivity of the research as not only the perspective of the researcher was taken into account with regard to the interpretation of the results (Gillespie & Cornish, 2010).

However, even if the researcher's interpretation is included in the results, this does not necessarily have to form a problem of reliability with a semiotic research method. Namely, semiotic ideology is based on the capacity of humans to interpret the meaning of signs (Keane, 2018). Hence, Keane (2018) argues that the reflexivity of the researcher is necessary

in order to extract the meanings of people, objects, smells and other signs that appear in daily life. Therefore, human meaning-making and interpretation is a significant part of the research as it comes naturally with the analysis of signs.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the main themes and sub-themes that resulted from the analysis as discussed in Chapter 3 by providing percentages and examples that are representative for these themes. In addition, these results are discussed in relation to the literature from Chapters 1 and 2 in order to be able to form a theoretically supported answer to the research question of this thesis. The next sub-chapter (4.2.) presents the type of products that were promoted in the adverts in order to give an indication of how many adverts seemed to implement the trend of gender-specific marketing or gender-neutral marketing. The following sub-chapter (4.3.) discusses the main themes that were found with regard to the representation of gender power relationships, including 'equal power relationships', 'female/male dominance' and 'ambiguous gender power relationships'. Subsequently, the next sub-chapter (4.4.) describes the representation of gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles by discussing themes such as 'gender stereotyping in the appearance of the models' and 'non-traditional gender roles in 'activities''. Lastly, this chapter points out differences between the adverts that promote gender-specific fashion products and adverts that promote gender-neutral fashion products with regard to the previously mentioned themes, as well as a discussion on intersectionality.

4.2. The representation of different product types with regard to gender

4.2.1. Introduction

The semiotic analyses indicated that 85% [n=85] of the adverts included gender-specific products; 5% [n=5] of the adverts included gender-neutral products; 3% [n=3] of the adverts included both types of products; and 7% [n=7] of the adverts were not clear enough in order to draw conclusions about the product category and the target audience with regard to gender (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Number of adverts per product category

Category	Number of adverts
Gender-specific products	85
Gender-neutral products	5
Both types of products	3
Type of product is not clear	7

4.2.2. The underrepresentation of adverts with gender-neutral products

An important conclusion that one can draw from the beforementioned results is that it is striking that a mere 8% [n=8] of the sample clearly included at least one gender-neutral product. Hence, this result indicates that the trend of gender-neutral marketing, which was introduced in the first two chapters of this thesis (cf. Canadean, 2015c; Kasriel-Alexander, 2016; Parker, 2016; Simões, 2016), may not be as prevalent as the marketing reports had predicted. In fact, the vast majority of the sample, 85% [n=85] includes gender-specific products. These results are in line with the marketing reports by Canadean (2016) and Parker (2016), which state that gender-specificity is an ongoing trend in marketing for specific types of fast-moving consumer goods.

Image 4.1 shows an advert by Woolrich, which is an example of an advert that included gender-specific products. In this advert, the models are wearing coats that seem to be

made from the same material, but they have a different color. Also, the woman's coat is adjusted to her female body type as it is tightly fitted around her waist and she has an extra fur rim at the hood. In contrast, the man's jacket has a more simple and straight cut. Hence, as the advert promotes separate products for men and women, the advert was counted as gender-specific, according to the definition of gender-specific products by Canadean (2016).

Image 4.1: Campaign picture by Woolrich in Linda. September 2016, p. 6

In contrast, Image 4.2 shows an advert by G-Star, which is an example of advertising that promotes 'gender-neutral' products. As per the definition for this thesis, the advert includes gender-neutral products as the models are wearing the same – or at least very similar – trousers, which means that the product is presented as being suitable for men as well as women, regardless of their gender. This is in line with Simões' (2016) definition of gender-neutral products.

Image 4.2: Campaign picture by G-Star in Vogue March 2017, p. 267

From the 5 adverts that solely seemed to promote gender-neutral products, 80% were produced by Dutch brands that belonged to the Premium price category [n=4]. This is especially striking considering that brands from other countries, such as Italian brands and brands from the United States, constituted a larger part of the sample (see Table 3.5 in Appendix C), but did not include advertising that promoted gender-neutral fashion products. This suggests that Dutch brands from the Premium price category were relatively more likely to produce adverts with a gender-neutral concept than brands from other countries and price categories. One could argue that this is related to the relatively high score of the Netherlands in the Gender Equality Index and the majority of Dutch consumers who disagree or are indifferent with the statement that they are more likely to buy products that are specifically designed for their gender (see Image 1.1. and 1.2. in Chapter 1). However, these results cannot be entirely validated as the gender-neutral ads constitute a small part of the sample, which is 5% [n=5].

In addition, the research indicated that some adverts included gender-specific as well as gender-neutral products. The advert for Louis Vuitton in Image 4.3 is an example of an advert that includes both types of products. In this magazine advert, the women on the right page are wearing the same sneakers as the man on the left page, which suggests that this is a gender-neutral product. Also, the man's outfit is very similar to the women's outfits, but there are differences between the man and women as the shorts have a different cut and the jackets have a different print. Thus, it seems like whereas the shoes are gender-neutral products, the clothes are gender-specific products. As a result, the advert was marked as including both types of products.

Image 4.3: Campaign picture by Louis Vuitton in Vogue April 2018, p. 6, 7

From the total of 8 adverts that promoted at least one gender-neutral fashion product, 50% of the adverts [n=4] included a gender-neutral product that belonged to the category of 'other accessories', 37,5% [n=3] of the gender-neutral products belonged to the category of 'footwear' and 12,5% [n=1] of the gender-neutral products belonged to the category of 'apparel'. This suggests that most fashion brands choose to present accessories and footwear as gender-neutral fashion products to consumers. A possible reason behind this choice is that these types of products could be relatively easier to present as a 'gender-neutral' fit, compared to for example apparel, which is often adjusted to the female body shape or the male body shape.

4.2.3. Ambiguity with regard to the product segment

An aspect that was found in 7 adverts, which is 7% of the research sample, that made it unclear whether the promoted fashion products were gender-specific or gender-neutral, was that the advert did not visibly include the whole model. This made it difficult to see whether the product was aimed at men or women. An example is Image 4.4, in which only the lower legs of the model who is wearing the heels are visible. Therefore, it is not clear whether the shoes belong to a women's collection, men's collection or gender-neutral collection.

Image 4.4: Campaign picture by Philipp Plein in Vogue April 2016, p. 14, 15

This haziness about the type of products that are being promoted in the advert with regard to gender could either be regarded as a point of critique or as a clever marketing strategy. Namely, on the one hand, a point of critique is that the brands which created these adverts do not seem to make the product segment of the promoted products clear enough with regard to

gender. This is contrary to Barthes' theory, which states that "the signifieds of the advertising message are formed *a priori* by certain attributes of the product and these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible" (1977, p. 33). In contrast to this statement, these brands do not seem to choose a clear signifier to communicate the signified, which is the gender identity that is attached to the products. Therefore, in order to have a signifier that clearly communicates the signified with regard to this aspect, brands could fully show the models that are included in the advert in order to communicate whether the products are suitable for men, women or both. As a result, consumers may be more likely to be able to identify with the gender identity of the models and have gender congruence with the product that is shown in the advert (Fugate & Phillips, 2010; Morrison & Shaffer, 2003). On the other hand, not clearly showing the models could also be a clever marketing strategy. Namely, maybe the brands chose not to be clear about these matters in order for consumers to assign a certain gender to the models themselves, as also explained by Timke and O'Barr (2017). In this way, brands could target as many consumers as possible, including people who identify themselves as males, females as well as people who do not identify with binary gender identities. In this case, being unclear about the gender identity of the models in the advert could be an effective strategy from a commercial point of view and a suitable strategy to promote fashion products in a gender-neutral way.

4.3. Representations of power relationships

4.3.1. Introduction

This subchapter discusses, on the basis of percentages and examples, the different themes that were found in the portrayal of power relationships between the models that were shown in the advert, specifically with regard to the framing and positioning of the models. Firstly, this chapter explains that a relatively large part of the adverts that were included in the research sample seemed to portray an 'equal' power relationship between the genders. Secondly, this sub-chapter discusses the presence of female dominance as opposed to male dominance in the adverts. Lastly, this sub-chapter explains how ambiguity was a common theme in the process of analyzing gender power relationships in fashion advertising.

It is important to note that when discussing the meaning of the positioning and framing of the models, Kress and van Leeuwen's theory (2006) about the meaning of framing and positioning in visual material is quite black and white, as the authors themselves also point out (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Hence, during the analysis it was found that other factors in the image can play a more significant role in the portrayal of gender roles than solely the

positioning and framing of the models. Therefore, the final sub-chapters also provide more insights related to for example the appearance of the models and the activity that is included in the picture in order to obtain a more complete understanding of the gender role portrayals that were found in the data. Before diving into these other aspects, this sub-chapter includes a critical discussion of the gender power relationships in relation to Kress and van Leeuwen's theory (2006).

4.3.2. 'Equal' power relationships

Firstly, 74% [n=74] of the adverts seemed to portray equal power relationships with regard to the framing of the models and 26% [n=26] of the adverts framed men and women in a different way, which can communicate unequal power relationships (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

The framed distance between the models and the viewer could differ between the male and female models, as can be seen in the advert by Gucci in Image 4.5. In this image, the man is viewed from the intimate distance whereas the woman is viewed from the social distance. Following Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), this suggests that the man has a closer social relationship with the viewer than the woman.

Image 4.5: Campaign picture by Gucci in Vogue April 2016, p. 9

Another difference in the framing of the models was detected in the camera angle that was used in the picture. An example can be seen in the advert by Philipp Plein in Image 4.6, in which the viewer looks down on the man, whereas the viewer looks up to the woman. This

suggests that the woman has a more powerful position to the viewer than the man (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Also, a factor that plays a major role in the portrayal of gender roles in this image is the fact that the man is lying down and the woman is standing on top of him. This is an aspect (positioning) that will be discussed later on in this sub-chapter.

Image 4.6: Campaign picture by Philipp Plein in Vogue March 2017, p. 16, 17

Overall, the vast majority of the sample (74% [n=74]) seemed to present equal power relationships between men and women with regard to the framing of the models. This is in line with Bell and Milic's research (2002) which indicated that the majority of their sample of magazine adverts included equal framing between men and women. An example of an advert that includes equal framing between men and women can be seen in Image 4.7, in which all men and women are viewed from the same distance and from the same angle.

Image 4.7: Campaign picture by Diesel in Vogue September 2016, p. 36, 37

In contrast with the previous statements about the framing of the models, the results on gender power relationships with regard to the positioning of the models do not indicate that the majority of the adverts present men and women in an equal way. Namely, 43% [n=43] of the total sample presented men and women in a position that suggests an equal power relationship. In addition, 20% [n=20] of the adverts showed the man in a dominant position in relation to the woman, whereas the woman was positioned as more dominant in 26% [n=26] of the adverts. Lastly, 11% [n=11] of the research sample included a picture in which a mix of different power relationships between men and women is shown with regard to the positioning of the models.

For the adverts in which the position of the models present an equal power relationship between men and women, the results indicate the following: in most cases, this means that the men and women are positioned next to each other, as can also be seen in the beforementioned Image 4.7. In this image, all models are standing up and most of the models are facing the viewer, which suggests that they are equal to the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Also, there were a few cases in which the male and the female model were shown in separate adverts, but, even then, the models were positioned in a similar way, as can be seen in Image 4.8 and Image 4.9.

In short, these results on the framing and positioning of the models results suggest that a large part of the adverts which were included in this research represent non-traditional gender roles by showing men and women as equal (Hamburger et al., 1996).

4.3.3. Female/male dominance

As already mentioned in the previous section, 20% [n=20] of the adverts showed the man in a dominant position in relation to the woman, whereas the woman was positioned as more dominant in 26% [n=26] of the adverts. Image 4.10 shows an advert in which the man has a dominant position. Namely, in this image the man looks straight at the viewer, whereas the woman stares into the distance. This suggests that the man demands attention from the viewer whereas the woman offers the viewer to look at her, as explained by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). Also, the man is standing whereas the woman is sitting, which literally places the man above the woman (Goffman, 1979). Moreover, the man has his hand on the woman's shoulder, which suggests that he may be in charge of her. Thus, in multiple ways this advert seems to portray stereotypical gender roles (Goffman, 1979). In this research, however, only 20% [n=20] of the adverts included gender role portrayals that present men as the dominant gender.

Image 4.10: Campaign picture by Bear Design in Linda. December 2016, p. 146

A larger portion of the sample, 26% [n=26], presents the woman as a more dominant figure than the man. Image 4.11 shows an advert that belongs to this category. Namely, in Image 4.11, the woman is sitting on top of the man and looks straight at the viewer, which portrays that she has a more dominant role than the man who is placed beneath her and stares into

the distance (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Hence, this image seems to represent that the woman is in charge of her own sexual desires, instead of presenting the woman as a sexual object. Thus, this advert seems to represent the contemporary theme of commodity feminism (Gill, 2007). In addition, the man's bare upper body makes him more likely to be presented as a sexual object, which is another theme that Gill (2007) highlights with regard to the portrayal of gender roles in contemporary advertising that represents commodity feminism.

Image 4.11: Campaign picture by Calvin Klein in Vogue March 2015, p. 36, 37

In short, the adverts in which the women have a more dominant position than the man represent non-traditional gender roles (Goffman, 1979). Moreover, by showing for example a reversal of traditional gender roles, the adverts seem to include themes that represent commodity feminism (Gill, 2007). It is important to take into account, however, that the main target audience of all four magazines that were included in the sample of this research is women, which could explain why women have a more dominant role than men in a substantial part of the sample.

4.3.4. Mix of traditional and non-traditional power relationships

As stated before, 11% of the sample [n=11] seemed to present a mix of traditional as well as non-traditional power relationships between men and women when it comes to the positioning of the models. In these cases, the scene that was depicted in the advert was often quite complicated and ambiguous in the sense that it was not clear which gender roles or gender identities were portrayed. For example, in Image 4.12, the left side of the advert includes a woman and a man. The man is standing closely behind the woman and they hold each other. The woman on the left page is standing in front of the man and holding his upper leg in such a

way that it seems as if she is in control of him. However, the man is looking at a gun, which he is pointing towards another woman. This shows a social relationship in which the man on the left page is violent towards the woman on the right page; this violent behavior of men is in line with stereotypical masculinity (Gentry and Harrison, 2010). It is not clear, though, what the relationship is between the women and the man. At the bottom of the right page, this woman is situated on a triangle shaped block. She is in a crawling position, which suggests that she has a subordinate position, as also explained in literature by Bell and Milic (2002). However, she looks directly at the viewer, as if she is coming towards you. According to Kress and van Leeuwen's literature (2006), this suggests that she has a more demanding role in the picture, which could be the reason why she is also prominently holding a clutch towards the viewer, in order to promote the fashion item and encourage the viewer to buy it. However, it is questionable whether for example the direction of the woman's look determines the meaning or gender roles of the models in the picture as Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue. Namely, the fact that the man is pointing a gun towards this woman and that she is crawling on the floor seems more likely to emphasize the woman's subordinate role in this picture. In conclusion, the advert seems to portray different power relationships between the men and women.

Image 4.12: Campaign picture by Philipp Plein in Vogue October 2016, p. 14, 15

Next to these complicated power relationships, the advert in Image 4.12 also includes a blonde woman at the top of the right page who is hanging upside down and seems to look like a doll. In combination with the clothes that the models are wearing, which seem to be made of latex or patent leather, it seems like the advert portrays a theme that is related to SM.

However, the scene that is depicted in the advert can be interpreted in many different ways, which is a complication that was encountered in various fashion adverts that were included in the sample. Phillips and McQuarrie (2010) explain this theme of ambiguity that is prevalent in contemporary fashion advertising, by defining this phenomenon as the 'grotesque' in fashion advertising. The authors explain that this term represents the 'surreal', 'absurd', 'bizarre', 'deviant', 'odd' and 'peculiar' scenes that are included in visual representations such as fashion advertising. The opposite of the 'grotesque' in fashion advertising is the 'copy theory' in which the advert communicates as clearly as possible about the qualities of the product that is shown in the advert. According to the authors, the copy theory can be practically carried out in fashion advertising by showing clothes on models that are regarded as 'pretty' and placing them in a 'lovely' setting. In contrast, adverts that convey the 'grotesque' often include elements that are regarded as negative, such as the gun violence that is included in Image 4.12. The authors argue that advertisers use this strategy in order for the viewers to have an 'experience' while looking at the advert instead of giving the consumer the idea that he or she is 'persuaded' to buy the product. When looking at the brand itself that produced the advert in Image 4.12, Philipp Plein (n.d), states about the philosophy of its brand that the collections are 'provocative' and 'fun'. These concepts seem to reflect the 'grotesque' nature of the advert as they emphasize the experience of the products.

In short, the analysis made clear that some fashion brands use 'grotesque' scenes in advertising, which makes it difficult to interpret the gender power relationships that are portrayed in the image. Therefore, the next section specifically discusses the overarching theme of ambiguous representations that was found in the data with regard to the representation of gender power relationships.

4.3.5. Ambiguous representations of power relationships

An example of an advert that includes an ambiguous representation of gender power relationships can be found in Image 4.13, which is an advert by Fossil that promotes a men's watch and a women's watch. In this image, the woman is holding her finger in front of the man's mouth. This suggests that the woman has a dominant character compared to the man as she is trying to stop him from talking (Goffman, 1979). However, the overall scene in which the models are dressed up with reindeer antlers also represents a humorous atmosphere. Therefore, it is not sure whether the power relationship that is depicted between the woman and the man according to Kress and van Leeuwen's theory (2006) should be taken as a means to determine the central meaning of the advert.

Image 4.13: Campaign picture by Fossil in Vogue January/February 2016, p. 19.

Another example of an advert in which the communicated meanings of the advert exceed the positioning theories by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) is Image 4.14, which seems to promote gender-specific clothing as the man is wearing different fashion products than the women. As the woman on the left is the only model that faces the viewer in a frontal position, one could argue that she is the 'strongest' character in the advert as she is the only model who demands attention from the viewer by looking directly at the viewer, according to Kress and van Leeuwen's theory (2006). However, the man seems to be waving a pink garment like a bullfighter. Thus, considering that the man can be seen as a matador, the golden head piece that the woman on the left is wearing looks like a bull's horns. This means that she appears to be 'tamed' by the man, who is the matador, which represents stereotypical gender roles (Gentry and Harrison, 2010). In addition, considering that the scene seems to portray bullfighting, the woman sitting in the back could be a spectator, which is a passive position compared to the man.

Image 4.14: Campaign picture by Dolce & Gabbana in Vogue March 2015, p. 9

In conclusion, this research indicates that the existing frameworks by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), Goffman (1979) and Bell and Milic (2002) on the meaning of positioning and framing of the models with regard to gender roles are too simplistic on their own to analyze the portrayals of gender roles in fashion advertising for gender-specific and gender-neutral products, as the images of the adverts are often too ambiguous to neatly fit in the particular categories that were defined by these authors. However, the results of this research on the representation of power relationships with regard to the framing and positioning of the models do provide an indication of the representation of gender power relationships in the sample.

4.4. Representations of gender stereotypes and gender roles

4.4.1. Introduction

This sub-chapter explains to what extent the fashion adverts that were included in the research sample of this thesis portrayed stereotypical gender roles, according to the literature that was discussed in Chapter 1 and 2.

Two factors played a determining role in the representations of gender stereotypes; the visual characteristics of the models and the representation of gender roles in adverts that included activities. Therefore, these factors will be discussed within the following themes that were found in the results: 'traditional and non-traditional gender roles in 'activities'' and 'gender stereotyping in appearance'.

4.4.2. Gender stereotyping in appearance

The vast majority of the adverts, namely 61% [n=61] of the total sample, solely included models with 'stereotypical' looks when it comes to their gender (see Table 4.6). Thus, this means that the vast majority of all adverts which promote fashion products for men and women that were published in the Dutch *Vogue, Linda., Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan* between 2015 and 2018 seem to promote their products by showing male models that are stereotypically masculine as well as female models that are stereotypically feminine.

Table 4.6: The number of adverts that included models with stereotypically gendered looks, non-stereotypically gendered looks or both

Category	Number of adverts
Adverts solely including models with a 'stereotypically gendered' look	61
Adverts solely including models with a 'non-stereotypically gendered' look	6
Adverts that include models with 'stereotypically gendered' looks as well as 'non-stereotypically gendered' looks	33

Examples of adverts that include stereotypical representations of men and women can be seen in Images 4.15 and 4.16, which are both campaign pictures by Guess. In Image 4.15 the models have a look that conforms with stereotypical gender representations: the man has a beard, short hair and is wearing a suit; the woman is wearing a dress, she has long hair, long eyelashes and slightly pursed lips. In addition, with regard to her position, the woman has her eyes closed and her hand is 'caressing' her hair. Her head is lifted up, which brings more attention to her chest. Therefore, the woman seems to have no clear goal, but she solely seems to have a decorative role. Moreover, the man's body is fully covered, whereas the woman's outfit reveals a large part of her chest, which means that a lot of attention is drawn to her breasts. Thus, this suggests that only the woman is presented as a sexual object, which represents gender stereotyping (Gill, 2007). Another advert in which the woman is presented as a sexual object can be seen in Image 4.16. In this image, the woman is wearing an outfit that puts a lot of attention on her breasts, compared to the man whose body is completely covered. Thus, the woman is more likely seen as a sexual object.

Image 4.15: Campaign picture by Marciano Guess in Vogue March 2017, p. 18, 19

Image 4.16: Campaign picture by Guess in Vogue September 2015, p. 18, 19

A possible reason why most fashion brands chose to include models with stereotypically gendered looks is that fashion brands aim to include clear representations of masculinity and femininity, in order to create gender congruence for consumers who identify with these gender identities (Fugate & Phillips, 2010; Morrison & Shaffer, 2003). However, these results also indicate that the majority of fashion adverts does not take the audience into account that may not identify with these binary gender identities.

In contrast, 6% [n=6] out of all the adverts that were included in the sample seemed to solely include models with a non-stereotypically gendered look. Interestingly, 5 of these adverts belonged to the group of adverts that seemed to promote gender-specific products. This is a striking result as according to the marketing report by Canadean (2016), gender-specific products are supposed to communicate traits that are specifically regarded as masculine or feminine. An example of an advert that only includes models with a non-stereotypically gendered look can be seen in Image 4.17, in which the girl on the left side of the picture has short hair and no other features that are stereotypically feminine. Also, it is striking that the boy has longer hair than the girl instead of the other way around, which suggests that the advert includes more androgynous models (Johansson, 2017). Thus, this advert seems to represent the concept of 'gender blurring' by not including gender stereotypes and showing models that have traits which are stereotypical for the opposite gender (Simões, 2016). In addition, the advert seems to represent commodity feminism by including a female model that has an 'edgy' non-stereotypical look (Gill, 2007). Also, the models are wearing relatively similar clothes, which are both furry winter coats from the same types of material and similar colors. This

means that the products could be gender-neutral, but this is not entirely clear as the coats do have differences. Therefore, as the models are not wearing the exact same clothes, the advert was coded as including gender-specific products.

Image 4.17: Campaign picture by Diesel in Vogue October 2016, p. 18, 19

Another example of an advert that solely includes models with a non-stereotypically gendered look can be seen in Image 4.18, in which the only female model who is fully visible has short hair whereas the man in the back has longer hair. Thus, this advert also seems to communicate the concept of gender blurring (Simões, 2016). Furthermore, the women are wearing a suit, which is a product type that is traditionally worn by men (Vänskä, 2016). However, as the suits have a tight fit and the women are wearing a top that shows their belly, it seems like their outfit is especially targeted towards women. As a result, one could argue that this advert promotes commodity feminism by including women that have visual features which are regarded as stereotypically feminine, including scarce clothing, as well as non- ste- reotypically feminine features, which can be seen in the woman's short hair and their suits (Gill, 2007). The man's appearance is not visible enough to find results about this matter.

Image 4.18: Campaign picture by Zalando in Vogue March 2017, p. 33, 32

Lastly, there was a significant amount of adverts, 33% [n=33] of the whole research sample, that consisted of adverts which included models with a non-stereotypically gendered look as well as models with appearances that conform with stereotypical gender representations. An example of an advert in which both categories are included can be seen in Image 4.19, in which the two women that are wearing a hat have stereotypical feminine features, since they have long hair, they wear high heels and they wear make-up (Gill, 2007). The boy on the far right has bleached hair and pouted lips, which suggests that he is a male figure that is concerned with his physical looks. Thus, this seems to be a representation of a metrosexual man (Timke & O'Barr, 2017). In contrast, the other two men have stereotypically manly features, like short hair and a beard.

A possible reason why the brands that produced these 33 adverts include models with stereotypically gendered looks as well as models with appearances that do not conform with stereotypical gender representations, is that they want to reach consumers who identify with stereotypical masculinity and femininity as well as consumers who have a gender identity that does not conform with gender stereotypes through the same advert. In this case, these fashion brands seem to combine the two marketing strategies of gender blurring (Canadean, 2015c; Kasriel-Alexander, 2016; Simões, 2016) and gender-specificity (Canadean, 2016; Parker, 2016) in order to reach a variety of audiences through the same campaign.

Image 4.19: Campaign picture by Zalando in Vogue October 2015, p. 24, 25

4.4.3. Traditional and non-traditional gender roles in 'activities'

The whole sample of 100 adverts included 48 adverts which portrayed an activity. Within this sample of 48 adverts, in total, 38% [n=18] of the adverts included an activity that represented traditional gender role portrayals. In contrast, 62% [n=30] of the sample did not

include traditional gender roles in activities. Thus, for this part of the research, the results seem to be in line with previous research that has indicated a decrease in gender stereotyping in adverts (Kuipers et al., 2017; Timke & O'Barr, 2017; Wolin, 2003), in contrast to the previous section on gender stereotypes in the appearance of the models.

Examples of adverts that include an activity which represents stereotypical gender role portrayals can be seen in Images 4.20, 4.21 and 4.22. In Image 4.20, a man and a woman seem to be on a speedboat. As the man is behind a window and he is holding onto something behind the window, he seems to be steering the boat. In contrast, the woman is solely standing on the boat and holding a handbag. This suggests that only the man is the executor of the task in the advert and he is in charge of the activity (Goffman, 1979). Another example of an advert that represents stereotypical gender roles in an activity can be seen in Image 4.21, in which a man and a woman seem to be walking on a sidewalk. The woman has her hands in her pocket, which is a passive position. In contrast, the man is carrying three paper bags full of groceries behind her. This suggests that the man is performing the action and the woman is not participating. Likewise, Image 4.22 shows two men in an active position as they are jumping in the air, whereas the woman is standing still as she is softly 'grabbing' her hair Goffman, 1979).

Image 4.20: Campaign picture by Michael Kors in Glamour July 2015, p. 5, 6

Image 4.21: Campaign picture of S. Oliver in Linda. May 2016, p. 138

Image 4.22: Campaign picture by Hogan in Glamour April 2015, p. 4, 5

Likewise, Image 4.23 includes a textual description of an activity that represents the stereotypical role of women: at the top right of the advertisement there is a long text that says "will you know that as perfect as this ring is, it won't be truly beautiful until it's sparkling on your hand as you sip your tea and hug our kids and open the door to a world that gets more incredible all the time, just because you're in it? WILL YOU?". Underneath the text there are two silver rings, one with many diamonds and one without diamonds. When connecting those to the question "Will you?" and the couple on the left of the picture, these signs communicate the activity of a proposal. The man describes that the woman 'hugs the kids'. This is regarded as traditionally feminine as they emphasize the delicate and caring side of women (Kite et al., 2008) and it emphasizes that women take care of the children (Eagly & Wood, 2016).

Image 4.23: Campaign picture by Tiffany & Co. in Vogue May 2015, p. 15

Despite the fact that these traditional gender roles and gender stereotypes were visible in a significant amount of adverts, the vast majority of the adverts, 62% [N=48], did not include representations of traditional gender roles with regard to the activity that was included in the advert. For example, Image 4.24 seems to show how three women are putting up a large billboard along a highway on a ladder. In this scene, the man is standing beside the road, but he does not clearly seem to be involved in the activity. This goes against the traditional passive gender role of women as presented by Goffman's theory (1979).

Another example of an advert that includes non-stereotypical gender roles with regard to the activity that is shown in the advert can be seen in Image 4.25. On the left page of the advertisement there is a man, dressed in dark clothing, running away from the viewer. His face, however, is looking back towards the viewer. This could represent that the man is scared of something that is behind him. On the right page, a woman that is fully dressed in white holds a large bird of prey in one hand. It seems as if the woman controls the birds and she is sending the birds towards the man to scare him. This means that the advert does not only represent non-traditional gender role by putting the woman in charge of the activity, but it also seems to express feminist anger as a part of commodity feminism (Gill, 2007).

In short, as the majority of the adverts in which an activity is shown does not include stereotypical gender roles, it seems like gender stereotyping with regard to this aspect in not likely to be shown in in recent fashion advertising that was published in Dutch women's lifestyle magazines between 2015 and 2018.

Image 4.24: Campaign picture by Calvin Klein in Vogue September 2017, p. 21

Image 4.25: Campaign picture by Moncler in Vogue September 2015, p. 14, 15

4.5. Comparison between adverts that promote gender-specific and gender-neutral products

4.5.1. Introduction

As the research of this thesis includes a comparative study between adverts that promote gender-specific fashion products and adverts that promote gender-neutral fashion products, the next section includes a comparison between these two advertising categories with regard to the positioning, framing, visual characteristics of the models and the representations of activity, as discussed in the previous sub-chapters. It is important to note, however, that the sample of adverts that include gender-neutral products is relatively small in this research: 5% [n=5], compared to the portion of gender-specific products 85% [n=85]. Therefore, the next sections of results can merely provide an indication of differences between adverts that promote gender-specific and gender-neutral fashion products with regard to the beforementioned themes.

4.5.2. Representations of power relationships

When looking specifically at the adverts which were coded as promoting gender-specific products [n=85], 19% [n=16] included a positioning of the models which suggested that the man has a dominant position, 25% [n=21] included a positioning of the models which suggested that the women have a more dominant position compared to the men, 9% [n=8] included a mix of gender power relationships with regard to the positioning of the models, and 47% [n=40] seemed to include equal gender power relationships with regard to the positioning of the models.

These results suggest that with regard to the positioning of the models, almost half of the adverts that promote gender-specific fashion products included non-traditional power relationships that regard men and women as equal (Hamburger et al., 1996), which may represent an egalitarian ideology. Also, from these adverts that promote gender-specific products, more adverts were likely to present women in a more dominant position than the men. This means that also for the advertising of gender-specific products, most products are marketed without the representation of traditional gender roles. A possible reason why the adverts within the sample of this thesis are not likely to portray traditional gender roles is that 3 out of 4 magazines, which are *Vogue*, *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour*, that were used to retrieve the data for this research, have a target audience that consists of women who are younger than 35 years old. This can be related to the marketing report by Canadean (2015c), which states that mostly younger consumers reject traditional gender roles and support gender equality. Hence, it

seems like the fashion brands that decided to publish their advertising for gender-specific products in these magazines also took these personal values of their target audience into account. For the 21 adverts that were published in *LINDA.* magazine, 6 adverts included traditional power relationships by showing the man as more dominant than the woman. Thus, these results do not suggest that this magazine which is aimed at a relatively older female target audience includes more traditional gender roles than the other magazines.

For the 5 adverts that were coded as promoting gender-neutral products, 80% [n=4] presented the woman in a more dominant position towards the viewer compared to the man with regard to the positioning of the models. This is a remarkable result, as one would perhaps expect that advertising for gender-neutral products is more likely to show an equal power relationship between the genders with regard to the positioning of the models, because the trend of gender blurring rejects traditional gender roles in society (Canadean, 2015c; Kasriel-Alexander, 2016; Simões, 2016). However, as previously mentioned, these results can be related to the fact that the sample consists of adverts from women's lifestyle magazines.

Similarly to the previous section, 60% [n=3] of the adverts that promoted gender-neutral products included unequal framing between men and women, as can be seen in the adverts by Artipoppe in Image 3.1 and Image 3.2 in Chapter 3. These images included a larger social distance of the male model from the viewer compared to the female model, which could be an expression of the stereotypical belief that men are less emotionally involved (Gentry and Harrison, 2010). In contrast, from the 85 adverts that promoted gender-specific fashion products, 21% [n=18] included unequal framing between the male and female models. These are striking results, as they show that ads including gender-specific fashion products are more likely to show an equal power relationship than an unequal power relationship. Namely, as gender-specific advertising promotes separate products for men and women (Canadean, 2015b; Canadean, 2016), a difference in framing between men and women could be done to emphasize the difference between the two genders.

4.5.3. Gender stereotyping in the visual appearance of the models

As stated before, the majority of the adverts includes models with a physical look that conforms with gender stereotypes. It is especially interesting to note that 80% [n=4] of the adverts that promote gender-neutral products include stereotypical gender representations with regard to the visual appearance of the models and 20% [n=1] of the adverts that promote gender-neutral products include models with 'stereotypically gendered looks' as well as 'non-

stereotypically gendered' looks. Examples of gender-neutral adverts that solely include models with a 'stereotypically gendered' look can be seen in Image 3.1 and Image 3.2 which are included in Chapter 3, in which the woman has long hair and make-up on whereas the man has a stubble beard and short hair. On the one hand, the brands may have chosen to show stereotypical masculine men and feminine women to clearly show that the products are suitable for men as well as women. On the other hand, this strategy seems to neglect the trend of gender blurring that is related to gender-neutral marketing, which implies that not every person can identify with these binary gender identities (Canadean, 2015c; Kasriel-Alexander, 2016; Simões, 2016).

4.5.4. Gender roles in 'activities'

There was a significant difference between adverts that promote gender-specific products and adverts that promote gender-neutral products with regard to the portrayal of gender stereotypes in activities. For the 18 adverts that included stereotypical gender roles with regard to the activity that was performed in the advert, 94% of the adverts were assigned to the category of promoting gender-specific products [n=17]. For the other 6% of the adverts, it was not entirely clear whether the products were gender-specific or gender-neutral [n=1]. From the 30 adverts that seemed to show non-stereotypical gender roles in an activity, 87% [n=26] promoted gender-specific products, 10% [n=3] promoted gender-neutral products and 3% [n=1] of the adverts did not have a clear product category with regard to gender.

These results suggest that adverts which promote gender-specific fashion products are likely to portray stereotypical gender roles in an activity as well as non-stereotypical gender roles. In the case of adverts that promote gender-neutral products, the adverts are likely to include non-stereotypical gender roles in a scene that includes an activity. The latter result represents the rejection of traditional gender roles that is related to the trend of gender blurring in advertising for gender-neutral products (Canadean, 2015c; Kasriel-Alexander, 2016; Simões, 2016).

4.6. Intersectionality: a possible theme in advertising for gender-neutral fashion products

Another theme that was found during the comparison between adverts that promote gender-neutral products and adverts that promote gender-specific products is 'intersectionality'. Even though it falls outside the scope of this thesis to fully engage with intersectionality, the analysis indicated that this might be a common theme within adverts for gender-neutral

products. From the entire sample of 100 adverts, 29% [n=29] of the adverts represented intersectionality on multiple levels by including people of different ages, ethnicities and clothing from different price ranges, which are themes that represent different social categories (Collins & Bilge, 2016). More specifically, from the total of 8 adverts that at least included one gender-neutral product, 37,5% [n=3] represented the concept of intersectionality. For these cases, these adverts included models with different skin tones which suggests that the advert includes people with different ethnicities. These results suggest that advertising with a gender-neutral concept is relatively more likely to include intersectionality compared to advertising that promotes gender-specific products. The research sample of this thesis, however, did not include enough cases of gender-neutral advertising in order to draw conclusions on how intersectionality in specific can play a role in marketing strategies with a gender-neutral concept.

5. Conclusion

5.1. The answer to the research question

By carrying out a semiotic analysis of 100 adverts that were produced by various fashion brands, the aim of this thesis was to fill a specific gap in academic research on gender role portrayals in (fashion) advertising. Namely, after providing a theoretical discussion of the two recent and highly contrasting marketing trends of 'gender-neutral products' and 'gender-specific products' as well as existing academic research on gender representations in advertising, this project provides empirical results on how – and to what extent - these trends are currently manifested in fashion advertising. This chapter provides the conclusion that can be drawn from the results and theoretical discussions that were provided in the previous chapter, which answers the central research question *'How did fashion brands portray gender roles in advertisements for 'gender-neutral' and 'gender-specific' products in Dutch women's lifestyle magazines between 2015 and 2018?'.*

The first conclusion that one can draw from the results of this research does not specifically focus on gender role portrayals, but on another result that came up during the analysis of the research sample. Namely, there was a striking difference in the proportions of gender-specific products and gender-neutral products in fashion adverts, which may not represent what various marketing reports have predicted. Namely, adverts that promoted gender-specific fashion products covered 85% of the whole research sample, whereas only 5% of the research sample consisted of adverts that solely included gender-neutral products. Hence, it seems like the majority of fashion brands continue to promote gender-specific products, despite the growing trend of gender-blurring. This goes against the marketing reports by Canadean (2015c), Kasriel-Alexander (2016), Parker (2016) and Simões (2016).

Subsequently, the conclusion on the portrayal of gender roles in the sample can be divided into two parts: firstly, the gender power relationships between male and female models within the adverts were investigated. This led to the insight that most adverts included an equal power relationship between male and female models. For the rest of the research sample that included unequal power relationships between men and women, the adverts were more likely to present women in a dominant position compared to the men. These results were evident for the adverts that promote gender-specific products as well as the adverts that promoted gender-neutral products. This leads to the conclusion that the majority of the advertisements

for 'gender-neutral' and 'gender-specific' fashion products included non-traditional gender roles with regard to the representation of power relationships. A possible reason why most fashion brands that produced these adverts either show an equal power relationships between men and women or portray women as more dominant, is that the majority of the magazines in which the adverts were published – at least within the sample of this research - have a target audience that consist of women that are younger than 35 years old. As Canadean (2015c) discusses, this younger target audience may be more likely to reject traditional gender roles and thereby could respond more positively to non-traditional gender representations. In addition, a female audience may be more likely to support advertising that represents the concept of 'commodity feminism', which is a concept that is discussed in Gill's literature (2007), by portraying women as more dominant than men because this may be a good response to the feminist critiques on gender representations in advertising that has developed during the past decades.

In addition, the representation of gender stereotypes constituted a significant part of the analysis of gender role portrayals. When it comes to the appearance of the models, stereotypical gender representations were more frequently used than non-stereotypical gender representations. This was not only the case for adverts including gender-specific products, but also for adverts that promoted gender-neutral products. However, the 48 adverts that included an activity show different results; the activities that are presented in these adverts are non-stereotypical in most cases. Thus, the results about the use of gender stereotypes are contradictory: whereas visual appearances of the models are in mostly stereotypical, the activities in which the models are involved are not. A possible motive that could explain this combination of stereotypical and non-stereotypical representations in adverts is that the fashion brands may try to increase the possibility that consumers are able to identify with the gender representations that the models convey in the image. For example, fashion brands may try to incorporate the marketing trend of gender-specificity by communicating that their products are suitable for people who identify with a visual look that conforms with stereotypical masculinity or femininity as well as the marketing trend of gender blurring by including models with non-stereotypically gendered looks such as metrosexual masculinity or an androgynous look. In this way, fashion brands may increase the possible commercial success of their campaigns by meeting the needs of multiple audiences.

In short, this thesis presents three conclusions concerning the portrayal of gender roles in advertisements for 'gender-neutral' and 'gender-specific' fashion products in Dutch

women's lifestyle magazines between 2015 and 2018. First of all, a small amount of advertisements within the sample of this research promotes gender-neutral products compared to gender-specific products. Secondly, most adverts including gender-neutral as well as gender-specific products choose to portray their models with an equal gender power relationship or with women in a dominant position over men. This means that non-traditional gender role portrayals are most frequently used. This non-traditional way of portraying gender is also evident in the adverts that included activities, as most of these activities were labeled as non-stereotypical. These results are in line with previous research by Kuipers et al. (2017), Timke & O'Barr (2017) and Wolin (2003) which state that gender stereotyping in advertising has decreased over the years. In contrast, gender stereotypes were most often recognized in the appearances of the models within the research of this thesis. Thus, the research showed that even though a large part of the sample included non-traditional gender roles, traditional gender roles and stereotypical gender representations were also still present in fashion advertising for gender-specific products as well as gender-neutral products. Especially for the adverts that promote gender-neutral products, these findings are not in line with the marketing reports by Canadean (2015c), Kasriel-Alexander (2016), Parker (2016) and Simões (2016) on gender-neutral marketing.

5.2. Theoretical implications for gender role studies of (fashion) advertising

In addition to the previous sub-chapter, the research of this thesis also provides insights on the theoretical implications that play a role in gender role studies of contemporary (fashion) advertising, which constitutes an important part of the conclusion that one can draw from the research project of this thesis.

Firstly, the semiotic analysis indicated that the fashion adverts that were included in the research sample often included ambiguous scenes, for example by showing a theme that represents the 'grotesque'. This aspect made it difficult to extract the meanings of the gender power relationships that were represented in the adverts according to the theoretical approaches by Goffman (1979), Bell and Milic (2002) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) that were used within the semiotic analysis. Also, some adverts only showed body parts from the models, which may indicate that the products are presented as 'gender-neutral', but there is no academic literature yet which states that 'cropping' is a common strategy used in visual fashion advertising to promote products in a gender-neutral way. Thus, the academic theories that were used as a framework for the visual analysis of advertising in this research did not prove to be completely suitable for contemporary fashion adverts that promote gender-specific

and/or gender-neutral products. This suggests that an analysis of contemporary advertising for these categories of fast-moving consumer goods asks for a new theoretical approach that takes this phenomenon into account. Hence, in addition to the previously mentioned answer to the research question, this thesis showed that the existing literature on the analysis of gender representations and power relationships in multimodal documents needs to be revised, as it is not as clear-cut as some of the previous research sketches it out to be.

Secondly, as already stated in the introduction and theoretical framework of this thesis, the concept of 'gender' itself is a complicated matter as the definition of this concept differs cross-culturally, between different groups of people and at different periods of time. In addition, nowadays, not everybody identifies as either a 'male' or 'female', which further extends the definition of gender beyond the gender binary and thereby poses challenges to the visual representations of 'gender' in advertising. Therefore, the ambiguity around the concept of 'gender' itself formed a theoretical complication within the research of this thesis. Therefore, this research project shows that it is vital to provide more academic research that addresses how this variety of gender identities and the concept of 'gender-neutrality' nowadays is reflected in visual documents such as advertising.

5.3. Limitations of the research and suggestions for future research

The scope of this thesis solely took the Western definition of 'gender roles' and 'gender stereotypes' into account, which means that the results of this research cannot be generalized on a global scale. Moreover, the results of this research may not be found as valid for all fashion advertising, as it only includes adverts from women's magazines. This may have an impact on the gender representations of women in the adverts, as women form the main target audience of the adverts that were included in the research project. For example, in this research, more women were found to have a dominant position in the adverts compared to men, but this may be reversed in advertising that is published in men's magazines. Therefore, future research should include adverts from men's magazines as well to retrieve data for the research sample.

Furthermore, one may question why printed lifestyle magazines are chosen as a focus for this research, as circulation figures are declining within the market of printed media due to the development of online media channels (Stam & Scott, 2014). Even though the medium of printed lifestyle magazines formed a suitable data source for the research of this thesis, future research could focus on digital advertising channels to retrieve data from media that may have a larger audience, such as Instagram accounts from fashion brands. In this way, the results

may be more likely to give an indication of fashion advertising that more people are exposed to than printed magazine advertising.

Lastly, the research of this thesis indicated that 'intersectionality' is a possible common theme within adverts that promote gender-neutral products. Therefore, future research that includes a larger sample of adverts including gender-neutral products or solely focuses on gender-neutral marketing could focus on the implementation of intersectionality in gender-neutral advertising.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Table 3.1: Overview of which magazines were available and if so, where they were retrieved

Magazine title	Year	Issue	Retrieved from
Vogue	2015	Januari	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2015	Februari	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2015	Maart	Own collection
Vogue	2015	April	Own collection
Vogue	2015	Mei	Own collection
Vogue	2015	Juni	Own collection
Vogue	2015	Juli / Augustus	Marktplaats
Vogue	2015	September	Marktplaats
Vogue	2015	Oktober	Marktplaats
Vogue	2015	November	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2015	December	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2016	Januari	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2016	Februari	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2016	Maart	Own collection
Vogue	2016	April	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2016	Mei	Own collection
Vogue	2016	Juni	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2016	Juli / augustus	Own collection
Vogue	2016	September	Own collection
Vogue	2016	Oktober	Own collection
Vogue	2016	November	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2016	December	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2017	Januari	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2017	Februari	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2017	Maart	National Library in The Hague
Vogue	2017	April	Not available
Vogue	2017	Mei	Not available
Vogue	2017	Juni	Marktplaats
Vogue	2017	Juli / augustus	Not available
Vogue	2017	September	Own collection
Vogue	2017	Oktober	Marktplaats
Vogue	2017	November	Not available
Vogue	2017	December	Marktplaats
Vogue	2018	Januari	Marktplaats
Vogue	2018	Februari	Marktplaats
Vogue	2018	Maart	Marktplaats

Vogue	2018	April	Marktplaats
Vogue	2018	Mei	Own collection
Vogue	2018	Juni	Marktplaats
Vogue	2018	Juli / Augustus	Marktplaats
Vogue	2018	September	Marktplaats
Vogue	2018	Oktober	Marktplaats
Vogue	2018	November	Marktplaats
Vogue	2018	December	Marktplaats
Linda.	2015	Januari	Not available
Linda.	2015	Februari	Not available
Linda.	2015	Maart	Not available
Linda.	2015	April	Not available
Linda.	2015	Mei	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2015	Juni	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2015	Juli	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2015	Augustus	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2015	September	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2015	Oktober	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2015	November	Marktplaats
Linda.	2015	December	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2016	Januari	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2016	Februari	Marktplaats
Linda.	2016	Maart	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2016	April	National Library in The Hague
Linda.	2016	Mei	Marktplaats
Linda.	2016	Juni	Marktplaats
Linda.	2016	Juli	Marktplaats
Linda.	2016	Augustus	Marktplaats
Linda.	2016	September	Marktplaats
Linda.	2016	Oktober	Marktplaats
Linda.	2016	November	Marktplaats
Linda.	2016	December	Marktplaats
Linda.	2017	Januari	Marktplaats
Linda.	2017	Februari	Not available
Linda.	2017	Maart	Marktplaats
Linda.	2017	April	Marktplaats
Linda.	2017	Mei	Marktplaats
Linda.	2017	Juni	Marktplaats
Linda.	2017	Juli	Marktplaats
Linda.	2017	Augustus	Marktplaats
Linda.	2017	September	Marktplaats
Linda.	2017	Oktober	Marktplaats

Linda.	2017	November	Not available
Linda.	2017	December	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	Januari	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	Februari	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	Maart	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	April	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	Mei	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	Juni	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	Juli	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	Augustus	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	September	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	Oktober	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	November	Marktplaats
Linda.	2018	December	Marktplaats
Glamour	2015	Januari	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	Februari	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	Maart	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	April	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	Mei	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	Juni	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	Juli	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	Augustus	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	September	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	Oktober	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	November	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2015	December	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	Januari / februari	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	Februari	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	Maart	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	April	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	Mei	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	Juni	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	Juli	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	Augustus	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	September	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	Oktober	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	November	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2016	December	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2017	Januari	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2017	Februari	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2017	Maart	National Library in The Hague
Glamour	2017	April	National Library in The Hague

Glamour	2017	Mei	Not available
Glamour	2017	Juni	Not available
Glamour	2017	Juli	Not available
Glamour	2017	Augustus	Not available
Glamour	2017	September	Not available
Glamour	2017	Oktober	Not available
Glamour	2017	November	Not available
Glamour	2017	December	Not available
Glamour	2018	Januari	Not available
Glamour	2018	Februari	Not available
Glamour	2018	Maart	Not available
Glamour	2018	April	Not available
Glamour	2018	Mei	Not available
Glamour	2018	Juni	Not available
Glamour	2018	Juli	Not available
Glamour	2018	Augustus	Not available
Glamour	2018	September	Not available
Glamour	2018	Oktober	Not available
Glamour	2018	November	Not available
Glamour	2018	December	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	Januari	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	Februari	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	Maart	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	April	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	Mei	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	Juni	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	Juli	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	Augustus	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	September	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	Oktober	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	November	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2015	December	Not available
Cosmopolitan	2016	Januari	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	Februari	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	Maart	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	April	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	Mei	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	Juni	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	Juli	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	Augustus	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	September	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	Oktober	National Library in The Hague

Cosmopolitan	2016	November	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2016	December	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	Januari	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	Februari	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	Maart	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	April	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	Mei	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	Juni	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	Juli	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	Augustus	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	September	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	Oktober	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	November	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2017	December	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	Januari	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	Februari	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	Maart	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	April	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	Mei	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	Juni	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	Juli	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	Augustus	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	September	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	Oktober	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	November	National Library in The Hague
Cosmopolitan	2018	December	National Library in The Hague

Appendix B

Table 3.2 includes the name of the brand, in which magazine issue and on which page the adverts were published. The overview also includes duplicates of adverts that were published in multiple magazines.

Table 3.2: Overview of all adverts that were included in the research per magazine title

Brand name	Vogue	Linda.	Glamour	Cosmopolitan
Artipoppe	November 2015 p. 48			
Artipoppe	December 2015 p. 45			
Artipoppe	June 2016 p. 53			
Bear Design		December 2016 p. 146		
Blue Ridge			April 2016 in attached booklet	
Breitling		December 2018 p. 42, 43		
Calvin Klein	March 2015 p. 36, 37		March 2015 p. 9, 10	
Calvin Klein	September 2017 p. 21			
Calvin Klein	March 2017 p. 22, 23			
Calvin Klein			April 2016 p. 2, 3	
Calvin Klein		May 2017 p. 10		
Camel Active		May 2017 p. 18		
Camel Active		October 2015 p. 52		
Camel Active		April 2016 p. 70		
Church's	April 2018 p. 35			
De Bijenkorf	October 2017 p. 18, 19			
De Bijenkorf		December 2018 p. 20		
De Bijenkorf		April 2018 p. 76, 77		
Diesel	September 2015 p. 38, 39			
Diesel	October 2015 p. 22, 23			
Diesel	December 2015 p. 43			
Diesel	March 2016 p. 24, 25			

Brand				
Diesel	September 2016 p. 36, 37			
Diesel	October 2016 p. 18, 19			
Dolce & Gabanna	March 2015 p. 9			
Dsquared	October 2017 p. 16, 17			
Esprit				May 2018 p. 9
Fossil	January / February 2016 p. 19			
Golden Goose	April 2018 p. 39			
Golden Goose	March 2018 p. 20			
Golden Goose	October 2016 p. 43			
Gucci	October 2018 p. 6, 7			
Gucci	April 2016 p. 9			
Guess	September 2015 p. 18, 19			
Guess	July / August 2016 p. 21			
Guess	September 2017 p. 17			
G-Star	October 2017 p. 139			
G-Star	March 2017 p. 267			
H&M		December 2016 p. 156, 157		
H&M		December 2017 p. 12, 13		
Hema		December 2015 p. 148		
Hogan			April 2015 p. 4, 5	
Hogan			March 2015 p. 2, 3	
Hogan	March 2015 p. 12, 13			
Hogan	September 2015 p. 10, 11		September 2015 p. 3, 4	
IKKS			April 2017 p. 13	
Levi's			October 2016 p. 7,8	
Louis Vuitton	October 2017 p. 4, 5			
Louis Vuitton	April 2018 p. 6,7			
Marc o polo		March 2016 p. 164		

Marciano Guess	March 2017 p. 18, 19			
Mc Gregor		April 2017 p. 16		
Mc Gregor		September 2017 p. 6		
Michael Kors			July 2015 p. 5, 6	
Michael Kors			September 2015 p. 8	
Michael Kors			September 2016 p. 9	
Michael Kors			November 2015 p. 12	
Moncler	September 2015 p. 14, 15			
Moncler	October 2016 p. 9, 10			
Pauw	March 2015 p. 81			
Pepe jeans			April 2015 p. 23	
Pepe jeans			July 2016 p. 12	
Philipp Plein	September 2015 p. 20, 21			
Philipp Plein	October 2015 p. 12, 13			
Philipp Plein	April 2016 p. 14, 15			
Philipp Plein	October 2016 p. 14, 15			
Philipp Plein	November 2016 p. 10, 11			
Philipp Plein	April 2018 p. 12, 13			
Philipp Plein	March 2017 p. 16, 17			
Philipp Plein	September 2017 p. 15, 16			
Philipp Plein	December 2018 p. 10, 11			
Philipp Plein	September 2018 p. 16, 17			
Philipp Plein	October 2017 p. 14, 15			
Prada	June 2015 p. 6, 7			
Ray ban			December 2016 p. 171	
Scotch & Soda		October 2016 p. 139		
Scotch & Soda	October 2016 p. 35			

Scotch & Soda	December 2016 p. 20, 21		December 2016 p. 9, 10	
Scotch & Soda	March 2017 p. 34, 35		April 2017 p. 3, 4	
S Oliver		May 2016 p. 138		
Skagen	December 2015 p. 65			
Skagen	December 2016 p. 41			
Tiffany & Co	May 2015 p. 15			
Tommy Hilfiger	March 2015 p. 38, 39		March 2015 p. 7, 8	
Tommy Hilfiger	March 2016 p. 38, 39			
Tommy Hilfiger			December 2016 p. 35	
Tommy Hilfiger			January/February 2017 p. 23	
Tommy Hilfiger			April 2016 p. 4, 5	
Tommy Hilfiger			February 2015 p, 7,8	
Versace jeans				October 2018 p. 148
Woolrich		September 2016 p. 6		
Woolrich			March 2015 p. 21	
Zalando	October 2015 p. 24, 25		October 2015 p. 5, 6	
Zalando	November 2015 p. 10, 11			
Zalando	March 2017 p. 33, 32			
Zalando		July 2015 p. 8		
Zalando		December 2018 p. 4, 5		
Zalando			April 2017 p. 6, 7	
Zalando				March 2017 p. 4, 5
Zalando			June 2016 p. 3, 4	June 2018 p. 3, 4

Appendix C

Overview of the research sample with regard to the product/brand categories

Table 3.3: Overview of the research sample with regard to the product categories

Product category	Number of adverts
Apparel	87
Sportswear	2
Footwear	43
Jewelry and watches	28
Handbags and luggage	29
Other accessories	38

Table 3.4: Overview of the research sample with regard to the price categories

Price category	Number of adverts
Mass Market	16
Premium	69
High End	39

Table 3.5: Overview of the research sample with regard to the brand nationalities

Brand nationality	Number of adverts
Netherlands	18
Italy	22
United Kingdom	3
United States	29
Switzerland	11
Germany	12
France	3
Sweden	2

Appendix D

Table 3.6: Schematic model of the semiotic analysis

Specifications of the data:

Analysis nr:	
Magazine title, issue (year / month), page number:	

Background information of the brand:

Brand name:	
Product category:	
Brand price category:	
Brand nationality / country of origin:	
Gender-specific / gender-neutral products:	

Semiotic analysis:

Denotations	Connotations
Syntagmatic factors	Paradigmatic factors
Myth	

Appendix E

Categorizing Tables

Table 3.7: Categorizing table of the product types

Gender-specific	The advert seems to promote separate products for men and women, meaning that the products that the men are wearing in the advert are different from the products that the women are wearing. This is in line with a gender-specific marketing strategy (Canadean, 2015b; Canadean, 2016).
Gender-neutral	The male as well as female models wear the exact same fashion items, which suggests that these products are suitable for everybody, regardless of their gender. This represents the concept of gender-neutral marketing (Simões, 2016).
Both	The models in the picture are wearing products that are the exact same for men and women as well as products that are different between the men and women.
Not clear	It is not clear whether the advert promotes gender-specific products or gender-neutral products.

Table 3.8: Categorizing table for the framing of the models

Framing is different between men and women	- When the male models have a different framed distance from the viewer than the female models, this suggests that the social relationship which the models have with the viewer is not equal for both genders (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Hence, the advert was coded as including unequal gender roles with regard to this aspect. - The viewer's perspective on the models is different for men compared to women: The camera angle that is used in the advert can reflect power relationships, according to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). This means that when men were viewed from a different standpoint than women, these adverts were coded as presenting an unequal power relationship between the genders with regard to this aspect.
Framing is the same between men and women	- When the male models have the same framed distance from the viewer as the female models, this suggests that the social relationship which the models have with the viewer is equal for both genders (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Hence, the advert was coded as including equal gender roles with regard to this aspect. - The viewer's perspective on the models is the same for men and women: When men were viewed from the same standpoint as women, these adverts were coded as presenting an equal power relationship between the genders with regard to this aspect (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Table 3.9: Categorizing table for the positioning of the models

The man has a dominant position compared to the woman	- Men are framed as larger in the picture compared to the women (Goffman, 1979). - Women have a pose that physically and thereby literally places them below men in the composition of the advert (Goffman, 1979). - Women hold on to the man which suggests that they are dependent on the man or that they need his protection (Goffman, 1979). - Men have a gaze with a direct purpose, towards for example a person, an attribute or the viewer, whereas women stare into the distance (Goffman, 1979). This means that men are more likely to demand attention from the viewer and women are more likely to 'offer' something to the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).
The woman has a dominant position compared to the man	- Women are framed as larger in the picture compared to the men (Goffman, 1979). - Men have a pose that physically and thereby literally places them below women in the composition of the advert (Goffman, 1979). - The man holds on to the woman which suggests that the man is dependent on the woman or that he needs her protection (Goffman, 1979). - Women have a gaze with a direct purpose, towards for example a person, an attribute or the viewer, whereas men stare into the distance (Goffman, 1979). This means that women are more likely to demand attention from the viewer and men are more likely to 'offer' something to the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).
The men and the women have an equal position	- The models of one gender are not framed as larger or smaller than the models of the other gender. - The models are positioned at an equal height in the composition of the picture.

	- The model of one gender is not holding on to the model of the other gender
The men as well as the women are shown in a dominant position	The advert includes a mix of power relationships between men and women with regard to the positioning of the models.

Table 3.10: Categorizing table of the physical characteristics of the models

Including models with a 'stereotypically gendered' look	- Women have long hair and wear make-up (Gill, 2007). - Women have an emphasis on physical beauty (Kite et al., 2008). - Women are emotional (Kite et al., 2008). - Women wear scarce clothing, are sexual objects (Gill, 2007). - Men wear trousers and women wear skirts (Vänskä, 2016). - Men have aversion with feminine characteristics, which means that they represent the opposite (Gentry & Harrison, 2010). - Men are presented as human beings without emotions (Gentry & Harrison, 2010). - Men are presented as broad-shouldered, athletic and physically strong (Kite et al., 2008). - Men are presented as 'tough' (Gentry & Harrison, 2010). - Men and women are heterosexual (Gentry & Harrison, 2010).
Including models with a 'non-stereotypically gendered' look	- The advert includes a man that seems to be concerned about his looks, which represents metrosexual masculinity (Timke & O'Barr, 2017). - The advert includes a male or female model who has a mix of characteristics that are stereotypically regarded as feminine as well as characteristics that are stereotypically regarded as masculine, which represents an androgynous gender identity. This often includes a body type without female curves (Johansson, 2017). - The advert includes cross-dressing, which implies that the models of one gender wear clothes that are stereotypical for the other gender (Johansson, 2017).

	- The models have other visual characteristics that are the opposite of stereotypical gender representations, as explained above.
Adverts that include models with both types of looks	The advert includes a mix of models that have a look that conforms with a stereotypical gendered look as well as models that have a non-stereotypical look when it comes to their gender.

Table 3.11: Categorizing table for gender representations in adverts that include an activity

Representation of activity: stereotypical	- Women take care of the housekeeping activities and children (Eagly & Wood, 2016). - Men are financial providers (Eagly & Wood, 2016; Kite et al., 2008). - Women are 'caring' and 'gentle' (Kite et al., 2008). - Men are represented with violent behavior (Gentry and Harrison, 2010). - Men are independent and competitive (Gentry and Harrison, 2010; Kite et al., 2008). - Men touch things with a clear purpose, whereas women seem to be 'caressing', which is more likely to solely have an ornamental purpose (Goffman, 1979). - Men are the executor of the task and women are passive, except for housecare activities (Goffman, 1979).
Representation of activity: non-stereotypical	The advert shows the opposite of the above-mentioned stereotypical gender representations of activity.