Skincare for real men

A qualitative study of masculinity construction in Grooming advertising

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Abstract

The growing participation of men in the cosmetic and beauty industry in the past years has led to new questioning over masculinities in current times. Grooming brands target men with advertising that reflects a commercialized and accepted form of masculinity; consequently, these portrayals shape and reinforce gender stereotypes in society. Due to the relevance of the subject, this paper's aim is twofold, to analyze the depiction and construction of masculinity in grooming brands advertising on Instagram and to interview adult men on their perception and experiences of masculinity depictions in advertising. To answer the main research question: "How is masculinity constructed and negotiated in the male grooming industry?' this study analyzes 90 Instagram posts from brands Nivea, Dove, and L'Oréal through a thematic analysis of visual and textual data. And to answer the sub-question 'How do gay and heterosexual men perceive the construction of masculinities in advertising by Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal?' five interviews were performed with men aged 28-45 years old, from Spain, Brazil, Italy, U.S., and The Netherlands. The results showed that men are depicted as sensitive and fashionable persons. However, these representations entailed hidden hegemonic masculinity traits that reinforce traditional beliefs on the male gender. Moreover, the brands communicated their messages in an engaging and relatable manner, which made participants identify themselves with the image's circumstances and some of the messages they shared. The interviews showed how male participants supported advertising that displayed progressive and modern beliefs and considered the traditional portrayals of masculinity antiquated. Moreover, participants claimed masculinity is shifting in current society, and this is reflected in advertising. Furthermore, it was discovered that some taboos and conventional ideas over masculinity remain present in today's society.

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1. Introduction

> *" So now it's normal to buy a cream online and I even tell my roommate "Which aftershave do you use? because my skin is really irritated" things like that. So before maybe I did not speak about this. And the important thing is that now we (men), are starting to share also this."* – Pedro, age 30

Over the past 30 years, fashion and beauty were predominantly associated with women (McNeill & Douglas, 2011; Sturrock & Pioch, 1998). Nowadays, the retail industry has evolved into a more inclusive place for men due to the increment of consumerism in society (Connell, 2005; Grau & Zotos, 2016; McNeill & Douglas, 2011). In the year 2015, the European toiletries market was valued at 5,963.5 million euros. In the following years, this amount continually grew to $6,142.1 million in 2016, then $6,316.7 million in 2017, and 6,445.4 million in 2018. In 2019, the male toiletries market value increased by 3%, reaching a value of $6,641.8 million in Europe (Marketline, 2021); moreover, the male grooming industry is expected to increase its value by 2024 due to the demand for products from male consumers (Maarek, 2021). The popularity of grooming products is associated with an increase in men's concerns over appearance and well-being (Del Saz-Rubio, 2018); this phenomenon has impacted the grooming products demand. In response, grooming brands started targeting men, motivating them to consume products through advertising (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). Researchers found that advertising reflects societal values and sets societal expectations of how men should behave and look (Connell, 2005; Grau & Zotos, 2016; McNeill & Douglas, 2011). For instance, grooming advertising frequently portrays men's bodies as white, heterosexual and muscular which sets the expectation that men should look like this; moreover, these depictions exclude men with other physical characteristics (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Waling et al., 2018). This situation gathered academics' attention, who started researching the misleading representation of men, and the increasing body dissatisfaction caused by beauty standards or ideals portrayed in advertising (Neill & Douglas, 2011).

Several reasons explain why it is relevant to understand how advertising constructs masculinities. First, advertising has a significant role in normalizing and shaping people's

identities (Bridges & Pascoe 2014). Moreover, advertising reproduces and sets gender roles or stereotypes impacting people's behavior and the understanding of gender. Secondly, the reproduction of gender stereotypes in advertising can normalize and reproduce inequalities among individuals (Grau & Zotos, 2016), which have positioned women and minorities at a disadvantage. Thirdly, researchers claimed new masculinity types are composed of newer characteristics that obscure how gender inequalities reproduce in today's life (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Demetriou, 2011). Thus, a clearer understanding of how advertising shapes masculinity can provide insights into how gender roles are set and reproduce the patriarchal systems. Although there is a vast body of literature on gender, specifically focused on studying how women are depicted in advertising, there are few studies that have focused on how men are portrayed in advertising. Thus, it is relevant to study how advertising represents men's masculinity and what strategies grooming brands use to target men.

Due to previously discussed reasons, scholars began to draw attention to the representation of diverse types of masculinities in advertising content (Alexander, 2003; Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Sturrock & Pioch, 1998; Vokey et al., 2013; Waling et al., 2018). Moreover, grooming advertising has become an interesting subject to research as it explains how masculinities intertwine with the consumption of grooming products. Several studies on men's representation have studied the constructions of masculinities in grooming advertising commercials and magazines (Barber & Bridges, 2017; Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019;). Other studies focused on analyzing men's grooming products purchase intention to understand men's grooming interests (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; McNeill & Douglas, 2011). However, no studies have researched grooming brands' posts on social media, which is currently used to share advertising content (Huey & Yazdanifard, 2014). Similarly, there are no studies on how men perceive the new discourses on grooming advertising, which might deliver a broader perspective on their understandings of men's representation in advertising.

Moreover, this study fulfills the literature gap on masculinity construction in social media advertising by answering the following overarching research question *'How is masculinity constructed and negotiated in the context of the male grooming industry?'* Firstly, this thesis will provide insights into how the grooming industry constructs masculinities and how grooming brands use particular marketing strategies to target men. To understand how global grooming companies target men, the sub-question *'How do Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal construct masculinity in their advertising for male grooming brands on social media?'* will be answered through a thematic analysis of the three leading grooming brands *Dove*, *Nivea*,

and *L'Oréal* social media in the year of 2020 (Ridder, 2020b). This sub-question will provide new insights into the representation of masculinities and the main themes used in grooming advertising.

A second aspect to include as part of the wider research question is men's opinion on masculinity in grooming ads. It is valuable to gather insightful information from male consumers and their perceptions of grooming advertising to have a greater understanding of male experiences and perceptions of masculinities constructed in the media. Moreover, a conversation about men's engagement with retail beauty products is key to obtain a broader perspective of masculinity construction in today's society (McNeill & Douglas, 2011).The following sub-question was formulated to address this issue *'How do gay and heterosexual men perceive the construction of masculinities in advertising by Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal?'* The second sub-question aim to understand through five in-depth interviews how heterosexual and gay[1] men from different nationalities perceive masculinity constructions by male grooming brands. Past research has indicated that gay men have a greater interest in their self-appearance, and therefore, a higher consumption of beauty products and clothing than heterosexual men (Dodd et al., 2005). Thus, it is relevant to understand their views on advertising and identify important differences between participants' opinions. The interviews will be analyzed through a thematic analysis, which will be further discussed in the methodology section of this paper.

This research paper has the following structure. First, this paper presents the theoretical framework that discusses the main theories related to masculinities, which constituted a main element for the data analysis. Besides this, the framework discusses in a detailed manner how the grooming industry has developed till current times, then, past research findings on grooming advertising are reviewed. This chapter is followed by the methodology section, which explains and justifies the research design. Moreover, in this section lies a detailed description of how data was analyzed and operationalized through a thematic analysis. Additionally, in this section, the validity and reliability of this study are discussed. These are followed by a reflection on the researcher's role in this study. Then, the results chapter presents all of the findings from both Instagram posts and Interviews. Moreover, the final themes are discussed and linked to past research on masculinities and

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[1] It is relevant to specify that the terms used in this research are "gay" and "heterosexual." According to Committee on Lesbian and Gay Concerns (1991), the term "gay" is preferable over "homosexual," a term used in the past to offend gay people. In comparison, "heterosexual" is a term that merely describes identity and behavior.

advertising. Furthermore, the results are exemplified with both visuals and extracts from the interview transcripts. Finally, the conclusion summarizes and discusses the main findings concisely. Additionally, this section presents the limitations of the research and recommendations for future research on masculinities.

2. Theoretical framework

This study aims to understand how masculinities are constructed in advertising. To accomplish this intention, it is necessary to look into the diverse masculinities in sociological research, such as hegemonic masculinity, hypermasculinity, metrosexual masculinity and laddism, which will be further explained. Previous research has demonstrated how masculinities are not static (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). Masculinities are continuously changing dependent on men's beliefs, practices, attitudes, portrayals, and identities (Howson & Hearn, 2020). Therefore, it is impossible to define masculinities as a static concept. However, several masculinity concepts and terminologies have been introduced in the academic world in the past 30 years (Connell, 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Gill, 2003; Risman, 2018).

To comprehend what masculinities encompass, it is key first to understand the differences between sex and gender. Sex is defined as the biological state of the organism that categorizes humans into male or female (Risman, 2018), while gender is commonly performed throughout the social interactions of day-to-day life (Connell, 2005). It can be stated that gender is commonly associated with actions and choices (Connell, 2005). Gender is the expression of socially constructed masculine and feminine behavior (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Generally, masculinities are associated with men and femininities with women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, masculinities and femininities are independent of a person's sex. Men or women can have both 'masculine' and 'feminine' traits and behaviors (Risman, 2018). Scholars defined masculinities not as male sex or a natural state but as a social construction composed of "masculine" behavior and personality traits (Connell, 2005; Risman, 2018). The nature of masculinities implies that there is not only one reality or definition, but masculinities are dependent on the societal context (Anderson & Magrath, 2010). Therefore, the construction of masculinities is dependent on the society, culture, and time in history.

2.1 Hegemonic masculinity

There are two terms that researchers considered key when researching men and masculinities, *hegemony* and *hegemonic masculinity* (Connell, 2005; Howson & Hearn, 2020). These two terms are social constructions used in research to get a notion over the stratification of men in society (Anderson & Magrath, 2019). "Hegemony" outlines the dominance of a group of power within a social structure and the acceptance of this subordination by the ruled groups (Howson & Hearn, 2020). Moreover, a particularity of the concept is the consensus and complicity of the disadvantaged groups, which is achieved through culture, persuasion, and leadership of the dominant classes (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hearn, 2004). In the gender system, power structures have generally placed men with a specific masculinity type as the dominant group in overall institutions (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005); this phenomenon has been normalized and accepted by most societies (Howson & Hearn, 2020).

Connell (1995) first described hegemonic masculinity as the "configuration of gender practice" that reproduces men's power in society and the subordination of women and other men. Hegemonic masculinity has been recognized in academic research as a dominant masculinity type over other masculinities, as not all masculinities have access to male privileges (Hearn, 2004). Authors outlined that heterosexual and white men are well-positioned in society compared to "marginalized" masculinities, men from other ethnicities, sexual orientations, and classes (Connell, 2005; Hearn, 2004). Still, it is hard to define a static or fixed definition for hegemonic masculinity as it is dependent on the context and place in time. Moreover, it is a term that has continuously changed throughout the years in the academic field, where each researcher has given a particular meaning to this concept. Demetriou (2001) described hegemonic masculinity as "essentially white, western, rational, calculative, individualist, violent, and heterosexual" (p.327). Similarly, other authors associated hegemonic masculinity with physical toughness, unemotionality, and independence (Chu et al., 2005; Donaldson, 1993; Eisen & Yamashita, 2019). Furthermore, hegemonic practices are claimed to reinforce traditional gender stereotypes that traditionally label men as the "breadwinner" and women as nurturers (Farahani & Thapar-Björkert, 2019). The behavior and personality traits from men holding this masculinity type are accepted in some cultures without any judgment as they fulfill the masculine ideal for some individuals (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Donaldson (1993) claimed that hegemonic masculinity is the "culturally idealized form of masculine character," meaning that it may not be the most common masculinity type among men but the most celebrated and accepted one.

Thus, there are several subjects and characteristics to consider when researching hegemonic masculinity and how individuals' masculinities are formed. In this research paper, hegemonic masculinity will be understood as the traditional "manly" behavior which is stereotypically associated with men. Similarly, some manifestations of dominance and power will be associated with hegemonic masculinity.

2.1.1 "Hegemonic masculinity" Redefined

Due to the years of criticism and societal changes, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) re-formulated the concept with a particular focus in four main areas: *the nature of gender hierarchy, the geography of masculine configurations, the process of social embodiment, and the dynamics of masculinities*.

Regarding *gender hierarchy*, Demetriou (2001) emphasized how diverse masculinities influence each other, meaning that hegemonic masculinity can adopt characteristics from other masculinities. Similarly, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) claim that women play a relevant role in shaping masculinities because of their historical and traditional roles as mothers and romantic partners. Moreover, the authors acknowledge that it's a mistake to focus on the generalized idea of "men power over women and other men" as social relationships do not imply domination over others (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus, the authors recognized the agency of other groups and the relevance of social dynamics on hegemonic masculinity.

Secondly, the authors referred to the *geography of masculinities* where they recognized hegemonic masculinity exists at a local, regional and global level. Local is the models of hegemony found at a closer instance, such as family interactions and communities. Regional level refers to masculinity at a national level which is located at the nation-state. Finally, global refers to the masculinities constructed globally and through transnational companies the media. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argued that global institutions influence regional and local levels in establishing gender order, while regional levels filter and adapt these models and influence local levels.Although regional models do not represent men's actual lives at a local level, these represent aspirational ideals or desires for some (Donaldson, 1993). Politicians, sports celebrities, and national celebrities are examples of regional levels of masculinity; these are role models that may influence (not totally) how social dynamics are constructed in local communities. Moreover, the authors emphasized that regional levels are underrated in academic research, as regional models appeared to have a

stronger influence on local levels due to their closer interaction (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, global models are expected to become more relevant in the future as migration, economic changes, and future development can have an impact on local masculinities and gender politics (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus, it is relevant to consider the global, regional, and local levels of hegemonic masculinity when researching grooming products advertising and its overall power on gender norms.

Thirdly, the *process of social embodiment* discusses how hegemonic masculinity is linked with specific forms in which the male body is represented (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Masculine embodiment is a relevant element in determining the male identity and behavior. Moreover, this merges from diverse situations, such as how a skilled body embodies masculinity for adolescents who practice sports. Other body practices, like eating meat and dangerous driving, are not merely gendered; however, these have become related to masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Thus, bodies are both objects and agents in social practice because they model and shape social conduct.

Finally, the *dynamics of masculinities* explain how masculinities have been constructed and changed over time. It is acknowledged by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) that men can reject gender binary constructions and be critical of hegemonic masculinity. This means men have the autonomy to build newer and better gender relations around them and thus, change how masculinities are constructed. However, this does not mean that change and modernization of masculinities may solve gender inequalities. Moreover, the authors argued that a pattern found in new masculinities is reconstructing patriarchal power in new forms (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Ideally, masculinities should be conceptualized and shaped in a form that democratizes gender relations and abolishes inequalities (Demetriou, 2001).

2.2 Hypermasculinity

While hegemonic masculinity refers to the traditional manly attitudes and behavior that constitute the male stereotype, *hypermasculinity* is the exaggerated 'masculine' behavior (Mosher & Tomkins, 1988). Thereby, hypermasculinity entails traditional manly attitudes taken to the extreme. Mosher and Sirkin (1984) claim hypermasculinity frames specific characteristics and beliefs such as the *perception of violence as manly*, *danger as exciting*, *calloused sex attitudes towards women*, and *toughness*. Considering Mosher and Sirkin's (1984) framework, these characteristics will be contemplated during the analysis process of this research and associated with hypermasculine behavior. A hypermasculine man

embraces *toughness,* and anger is the only acceptable emotion. Moreover, hypermasculine ideals prohibit the expression of feelings traditionally linked to femininity (e.g., sensitiveness, emotionality) as it represents weakness. In this case, manliness is obtained through self-control and the inhibition of feelings such as fear, distress, and shame (Vokey et al., 2013). Thereby, these ideologies limit how men express their feelings and emotions, which may impact their mental health (Boland, 2017). Furthermore, hypermasculinity is characterized by physical aggressiveness and violence. From a conventional perspective, violent behavior is a way of gathering control over situations that "hazard" manhood (Bosson et al., 2009). For instance, hypermasculine men express power and control over others when they get involved in physical fights or express verbal aggression. Similarly, confronting risky situations is another way to express manliness and virility (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984). In the media, these ideals are represented in "action" scenes where the main actor controls dangerous threats.

Academic studies on advertising and television have identified hypermasculinity in the media (Scharrer, 2001; Vokey et al., 2013). Vokey et al.'s (2013) analysis on 527 magazine advertisements found that 56% of these contained worded items and images that expressed extreme masculine behavior, toughness as emotional self-control, and danger as exciting, violence as manly and calloused attitudes toward women and sex. Moreover, Katz (1995) explained how men's muscularity in sports magazines displayed strength, power, and violence. Men with muscles represented physical toughness, as it was considered a sign of power against physical threats. At that time, the image of highly muscular bodies settled an ideal body type for boys and men, who were persuaded to achieve the perfect 'masculine' body (Smolak & Stein, 2006). In television programs, Scharrer (2001) found how crime television program's characters showed hypermasculinity. The "good guys" showed toughness and control over their emotions, viewed violence, and aggression as exciting. Moreover, the "good guys" normalized violence when it is used with good intentions (e.g., to protect others) or defeat the "bad guys." Similarly, the "bad guys" showed calloused attitudes, viewed violence and aggression as exciting, and had control over their emotions. Thus, the overall construction of masculinity from both "good" and "bad" guys in this television program displayed hypermasculine attitudes. The media plays an important role in the normalization of violence, and thereby, new regulations and protocols regulate gender stereotypes and violence showed in the media (Knoll et al., 2011). In today's media, some of these portrayals of masculinity have decreased due to societal changes that provided new images of men in the media, where masculinity tends to be more sensible and adopts a "softer" image (Demetriou 2001).

Moreover, at current times people catalogs men that practice hypermasculine ideologies are as "machos," a term derived from the Spanish word "machismo" described by Mosher and Tomkins (1988) as "a system of ideas forming a world view that chauvinistically exalts male dominance by assuming masculinity, virility, and physicality to be the ideal essence of real men" (p. 64). In some cultures, minorities such as Black and Latino men are commonly judged and classified as *macho* due to their traditional cultural background and social stigmas (Saez et al., 2009). According to Spencer et al.'s (2004), hypermasculine behavior comes from particular contexts and situations, social inequalities, and the normalization of hypermasculine values. Therefore, the set of specific factors can possibly yield hypermasculine behavior. However, ethnicity does not influence how male identity is formed. Furthermore, it is relevant to mention that this research study rejects any stereotyping or inclination towards any specific ethnicity, as hypermasculinity does not necessarily emerge from any ethnic group. Moreover, recent studies have demonstrated that these stigmas are "outdated" as more men from diverse backgrounds seem to adopt a more respectful and contemporary vision of gender ideologies (Walters & Valenzuela, 2020).

2.3 Metro-sexuality and laddism

As mentioned before, masculinity is not stable; its composition and gender practice are continually redefined by social trends and new gender ideologies (Shugart, 2008). Moreover, this flexibility has permitted the emergence of various subtypes in which masculinity is formed over time. One of the most known ones is the "metrosexual," which is originated in the early 1980s and revolutionized how male identities were known at that time; this construction adopted behavior and interests that were traditionally associated with "femininity," such as fashion and grooming (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2013). To an extent, this subtype helped to blurry the traditional signifiers of masculinity and femininity, which enabled men to express themselves uniquely. The metrosexual is described as "sensitive, emotionally aware, respectful of women, and egalitarian in outlook" (Gill, 2003, p. 37), which means that this man is connected with his emotions, and at the same time, invests in his appearance. Authors have argued that this masculinity arises from the gay liberation movement, economic and societal factors (Gill, 2003; Shugart, 2008). At that time, this masculinity subtype challenged traditional gender roles, and as a consequence, the conventional family structure changed as it got normalized to be single. As a result, single adult men had a disposable income to consume products (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2013).

Furthermore, it became normalized that men invested their money in beauty treatments and fashion products (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2013).

Later, in the 1990s, a new masculinity subtype emerged called "laddism." In a similar manner to metrosexual men, consumerist formed one of its principles. However, this masculinity type has stereotypical masculine interests "such as sports, cars and videogames" (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2013, p.65). Moreover, it is characterized by hedonistic, sexist, and misogynist conduct (Gill, 2003; Ricciardelli & Clow, 2013). Additionally, laddism rejects the traditional family structure and adult responsibilities and encourages sexual promiscuity and the irresponsible consumption of alcohol and drugs (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2013). Researchers argued laddism appeared to respond to feminism and the gay movement as it aims to maintain male supremacy and heteronormativity in society (Gill, 2003; Ricciardelli & Clow, 2013). These hegemonic characteristics made researchers question the adaptability and influence of hegemonic masculinity on new masculine models (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2013).

As a response to these "consumerist" subtypes, magazines and fashion brands saw men as a profitable consumer target. Furthermore, advertising began to encourage the consumption of products through self-improvement discourses which displayed an idealized image of men only attainable through the modification of the body (Ricciardelli & Clow, 2013). To explain this in further detail, the following subsections **2.4 Male grooming and beauty** and **2.5 Grooming advertising,** will discuss the grooming industry and advertising.

2.4 Male grooming and beauty

Grooming products in the past were mainly focused on female consumers as their primary market (Sturrock & Pioch, 1998). According to Sturrock and Pioch (1998), this situation changed due to post-modern consumption characterized by the individual use and consumption of products, as families were not the main goods' consumers anymore. Moreover, products became objects of "identity" for people; products were used as an instrument to achieve the desired self-image (Firat et al., 1995). This means people were not mainly judged on their occupations as they used to in the industrial revolution; they were judge on their material beings (Firat et al., 1995). Moreover, postmodernity is characterized by involving both men and women in product consumption. As in the past, women were stereotypically classified as "consumers," and men were seen as the goods "producers" (Bocock & Bocock, 2008; Kacen, 2000). Furthermore, marketing efforts were not exclusively

directed to "housewives" as advertising targeted a broader and more diversified consumer number (Featherstone, 1982).

From the '50s to the '80s, male bodies started appearing in magazines that promoted products such as clothes, hair products, body lotions and presented images of the male body in an appealing manner (Bocock & Bocock, 2008). At the time, men accepted the purchasing of toiletries to a limited extent and merely for hygienic reasons (Sturrock & Pioch, 1998). Besides, most cosmetics and fashion advertising were mainly, traditionally, directed to women. Men were slowly adopting the consumption of cosmetics and fashion as these were still a taboo among them (Featherstone, 1982). Furthermore, the health movement brought out consciousness on the importance of healthy eating and exercising, which incited individuals to take "responsibility for their bodies. This trend normalized slimness during the 20th century as it started to be related to good health, and overweight was associated with health risks (Featherstone, 1982). However, these discourses normalized the conventional association of slimness to health. Featherstone (1982) claims that the dieting purposes of women back then were mostly for maintaining a good appearance, and it was not until the half of the 20th century that slimness was similarly socially imposed on men (Featherstone, 1982). Consumer culture and advertising encouraged individuals to achieve the ideals of health, good sexual life, beauty, youthfulness, and fitness through body care (Featherstone, 1991). From that ideology, the body is not a biological entity, but it became a construct that must be worked out to benefit from it. Thus, body care became an instrument for achieving the desired and idealized body. New societal values like the importance of an appealing appearance influenced the higher purchasing of men's grooming products (Harrison, 2008). Moreover, advertising discourses on the body pressured men to be concerned over their appearance (Kacen, 2000). Thus, new beauty régimes were accepted among men, such as dressing fashionable, having a healthy lifestyle, beauty treatments, and more (Kacen, 2000).

Nowadays, there is a wide range of products for men's self-care routines, such as face scrubs, hair serums, face wash, and deodorants (Harrison, 2008). The cosmetic market has changed, and men are the primary consumers of their own "gendered" grooming products (Souiden & Diagne, 2009). According to previous research, the main motivations for grooming are men's interest in healthcare, societal pressure, and maintenance of a fitness body (McNeill & Douglas, 2011; Souiden & Diagne, 2009). Still, other factors may influence the purchase of grooming products, such as the consumer's lifestyle, personal preferences, and economic state. In Neill and Douglas's (2011) interviews on men's grooming products, selection showed that men justified their grooming. Participants claimed they groomed only

for hygienic and health reasons rather than vanity. In other studies, men preferred grooming products that displayed masculine traits because the act of "grooming" is deemed feminine (Barber & Bridges, 2017). Additionally, men purchased only "manly" branded products, rejecting any feminine characteristic attached to the product marketing or packaging due to the fear of becoming "unmanly" (Neill & Douglas, 2011). Thus, in those cases, social norms shaped and influenced men's motivations to consume grooming products.

2.5 Grooming advertising

Advertising mirrors societal ideologies through images and messages (Souiden & Diagne, 2009). From a different perspective, advertising is a "mold" as it has the power to set and reinforce societal values and constructions (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Souiden & Diagne, 2009). In gender studies, advertising has been fundamental to identify the cultural and societal beliefs on masculinity (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). Therefore, scholars have drawn their attention to how men are represented in advertising, tv commercials, and magazines from grooming products advertising (Barber & Bridges, 2017; Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Feasey, 2009; Frank, 2014; Patterson & Elliot, 2002; Scheibling & Lafrance 2019). Advertising's nature is based on social knowledge and cultural factors that express gender ideologies (Kervin, 1990). These are represented through the depiction of visuals, words, symbols with an implicit or explicit meaning. Thus, it is relevant to study advertising to understand how gender ideologies and masculinities are negotiated and imposed by the media.

In the 1930s, advertising highlighted "work" as a relevant characteristic of masculinity in those times (Kervin, 1990). Moreover, to be a "hard worker" was a valuable quality admired by women as this characteristic was associated with success. Later in the '80s, advertising directed to men was associated with leisure activities and sports (e.g., golf). These depictions displayed men at a high status which expressed glamour and prestige (Kervin, 1990). Furthermore, advertising in those years showed how employment provided benefits through the idealization of consumerism. In the 80's the beginning of the erotization of the male body started, as men began to appear in advertising with less clothing and sexual positions. For instance, Calvin Klein's brand displayed men with seductive faces, muscular bodies, and wearing underwear (Kervin, 1990).

In the 2000s, Richardelli and Clown's (2010) research on lifestyle magazines showed that health magazines associated masculinity with extreme physical muscularity. While in fashion magazines, men displayed laddism, vanity and were less likely to be muscular. Scholars highlighted the objectification and sexualization of the male body in magazines

advertising (Richardelli & Clown, 2010). This was displayed through the fragmentation of the human body (Sender, 1999), body nudity exposure (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019), and body improvement discourses associated with health and fitness (Richardelli & Clown, 2010; Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Scheibling & Lafrance 2019). Later in the mid-2000s, Lynx commercials generally portrayed men as masculine, mostly as "white, lightly muscled and heterosexual" (Feasey, 2009, p.367). The actors in those commercials were illustrated in two manners: a strong, confident man or an insecure nerd (Albrighton, 2016); moreover, both were illustrated as seeking sexual intercourse with women. Advertising denoted 'men sexual power' as commercials illustrated them gaining female attention due to deodorant consumption. In these commercials, women were objectified and used as the reward men obtained from grooming (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Feasey, 2009; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). Moreover, humor served as an instrument to conceal the sexism and misogyny in the advertising.

Likewise, satire and humor were used in grooming advertising to mock over the feminine side of grooming (Barber & Bridges, 2017). Additionally, these jokes mocked men and women's body insecurities in a cruel manner (Barber & Bridges, 2017; Richardelli & Clown, 2010). To some extent, satiric advertising broke the traditional depiction of men on advertising by illustrating them performing traditional "feminine activities" (e.g., grooming, bathing) in a humorous and exaggerated manner. Moreover, masculinity in this type of advertising showed a mix of hypermasculine behavior and femininity (Barber & Bridges, 2017). This means the ads displayed extreme male representations mixed with "traditional" feminine activities and softness, but always in a mocking manner.

Posterior to satire advertising, research on advertising commercials from the years 2010 to 2019 showed that grooming brands depicted men on advertising in a "hybrid" or "flexible" manner (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). This means men in ads showed stereotypical masculine behavior like risk-taking attitudes, toughness, and body strength. However, at the same time integrated characteristics from other masculinities and traditional "feminine" behavior. Thus, hybridity is a mix of hegemonic masculinity and characteristics from other men groups and women. Del Saz-Rubio (2019) argues that grooming commercials illustrated men in 'masculine activities' such as driving or playing sports to eliminate feminine associations towards grooming. Moreover, football celebrities endorsed the advertising in repetitive times, reinforcing the belief that 'real men can groom,' as they are perceived, for some, as highly masculine figures (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019). Furthermore, advertising discourses emphasized the aim of becoming manlier, as they presented slogans and phrases like "Be the better man" or "The man who gives a damn" phrases that constantly associated

grooming with masculinity (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019, p.230). Body maintenance and personal care discourses invited men to take responsibility for their bodies and care about their appearance on any social occasion (Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019).

In contrast to past research, there was a new emphasis on how grooming can positively impact men's relationships, families, and work. Grooming advertising projected ideals of work and family, namely having a high-ranked job and a caring family. These two were illustrated as complementary to each other, showing how work must balance personal life (Scheibling & Lafrance 2019). Fatherhood became a popular subject among grooming ads; moreover, new western advertising portrayed a new masculine ideal, sensitive and caring men towards his partner and children (Leader, 2019; Walker & Gangadharbatla, 2019). Still, those depictions embedded traditional associations to masculinity as they depicted men as the family's main protector, which remains stereotypical.

To conclude, society has evolved through the years, and it is reflected in current advertising. Masculinities have been shaped and reconstruct in a more humanized manner, and this influenced advertising. Still, traditional hegemonic constructs remain as an indispensable feature of masculinities depiction.

3. Methodology

As mentioned in the introduction of this research paper, the main research question is, *'How is masculinity constructed and negotiated in the male grooming industry?'*, followed by the two sub-questions: *'How do Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal construct masculinity in their advertising for male grooming brands on social media?'* and *'How do gay and heterosexual men perceive the construction of masculinities in advertising by Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal?'*,

This section will provide a detailed description of the research design of this study which will answer the before-mentioned questions. The design will describe the research method, the method used for the collection of the data, an explanation of the data analysis. Moreover, all of the choices made throughout the research design will be explained in a detailed manner. Finally, at the end of this section, the validity and reliability of this research will be discussed. Moreover, the chapter ends with a final reflection on the researcher's role in this study.

3.1 Research design

A qualitative approach was chosen for this research, and three arguments justify this decision. First, qualitative research aims to understand the social world from a constructionist perspective, meaning that social reality is shaped through people's interactions and communication (Flick, 2007). Moreover, qualitative researchers aim to understand the meaning behind the people's interpretations of the world by studying materials as interviews, advertising, and more (Flick, 2007; Merriam & Grenier, 2019), which directly relates to the aim of this research, studying how masculinity is constructed on social media advertising. Furthermore, scholars have used qualitative methods to research masculinity, gender, and the body in advertising (Del-saz Rubio, 2018; Scheibling and Lafrance, 2019). Secondly, qualitative flexibility allows the analysis of visual, verbal, and textual data (Elo & Kyng, 2008). This flexibility provided this research the possibility to analyze both social media posts and interview transcripts. Thirdly, qualitative research captures subjectivity; its analysis goes beyond explicit meaning and identifies hidden interpretations within a text. In this case, subjectivity is within the interviewee's responses and grooming advertising.

For data collection, a content analysis of Instagram posts and interviews was selected. The content analysis develops from the analysis of visual and textual data to the coding and interpretation of the material (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). As mentioned in the introduction of this paper, this research aims to identify the most relevant elements used when constructing

masculinity in advertising, specifically when representing men. Thus, it was relevant to select a method of analysis that could identify the most important advertising features. Additionally, this research aimed to examine the perception of men on the depiction of masculinity in advertising to understand their interpretations on grooming brands' marketing. Moreover, it was relevant to choose a flexible method that enabled the examination of patterns among the participants' opinions and perceptions (Evans, 2018). Thus, to identify the most relevant patterns of data within social media posts and the participant's perception, thematic analysis was selected.

Thematic analysis is "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2007, p.79). The systematic procedure of this method enhances the organization of great amounts of data in a minimalistic but detailed manner (Braun & Clarke, 2007; Guest et al., 2012). Moreover, the whole procedure requires a high immersion and reflection from the researcher throughout all of the steps. Another characteristic of this method is its flexibility, as the analysis can be inductive or deductive. Deductive means that themes are guided by a theoretical framework provided by previous research (Braun & Clarke, 2007). Inductive means that the themes merely come from the data itself, and the data does not necessarily have to fit existent theories or frameworks (Braun & Clarke, 2007). A mixed procedure composed of inductive and deductive means that the coding is both data and theoretically driven (Braun and Clarke, 2007; Guest et al., 2012).[2] A mix of deductive and inductive was used for both Instagram posts and interviews in terms of this research. This selection allows the researcher to refer to past theories during the theme interpretation and provides flexibility for new interpretations. In this research, the interpretations were guided to some degree by theory but not to a limiting extent. In the next section, detailed information about the methodological decisions is discussed, such as the sampling and procedure and operationalization of social media posts and interview transcripts.

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[2] Braun and Clarke (2012) argued that it is impossible to have a purely inductive or deductive approach as the coding and interpretation processes require both approaches.

3.2 Social media posts

To answer the main research question: *'How is masculinity constructed and negotiated in the male grooming industry?'* and sub-question, a thematic analysis on grooming advertising was performed. In this section, the researcher's choices for the methodological process, including sampling, data collection, and procedure, will be explained and justified.

Due to the relevance of grooming in today's men's lifestyles, this research focused on grooming brands directed at men (Ridder, 2020a). Thereby, purposive sampling was used to select the sub-brands *Dove men*, *Nivea men,* and *L'Oréal men* for this research. *Dove*, *Nivea,* and *L'Oréal* are considered three significant brands in the men's beauty market globally (MarketLine, 2021). *L'Oréal* has a market value of 29.47 million dollars, *Nivea* of 6.67 million dollars, and *Dove* 6.35 million dollars (Ridder, 2020b). Compared to other brands with a lower value in the market, like *Shiseido* with 6.21 million dollars and *Olay* 3.84 million dollars (Ridder, 2020b).

Additionally, these brands are similar to each other in terms of channel distribution, price, and product ranges (MarketLine, 2021). Moreover, these international brands sell their products in more than 150 countries with a wide range of cosmetic and skincare products. Another similarity is that these three brands own a sub-brand that focuses on men's self-care products (*Dove men*, *Nivea men,* and *L'Oréal men)*. Therefore, their similar characteristics and status in the cosmetics industry made them relevant for researching their advertising.

Sampling

Instagram is considered one of the most popular social media platforms globally, which reached one billion users by the year 2018 (Tankovska, 2021b) and generated 6.84 billion dollars in revenue by the year 2019 (Ridder, 2020a). Moreover, there are about 25 million business accounts on Instagram (Tankovska, 2021a). This makes Instagram not only an image-sharing platform but a marketing platform. Besides, Instagram offers various utilities that allow businesses to directly interact with their main consumers through text, images, videos, and more (Huey & Yazdanifard, 2014). As a result, Instagram has become an essential platform for large, medium, and small businesses. These facts have made Instagram an interesting platform to research on.

Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal advertise their products through several media outlets; however, social media platforms are their main communication outlet (Soedarsono et al., 2020). Therefore, the Instagram posts collection for this research was through the official international Instagram accounts from *Dove men* found on Instagram as

@dovemencare, *L'Oréal men* as @lorealmen, and *Nivea men* as @niveamen. International accounts were selected because of their higher number of posts and followers compared to local accounts from particular countries. The international accounts @Dovemencare have 44.7k followers, @Niveamen 41.4k followers, and @L'Orealmen 73.6k followers. Therefore, the accounts reach a great amount of Instagram users all over the world. Moreover, these accounts are active on social media as the accounts make daily posts and stories.

A corpus of 90 Instagram posts in total was utilized in this study. This amount was divided between the three grooming brands and delivered an equal amount of 30 posts per brand. The selection of these posts was through purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a method where the most relevant data is chosen to provide significant insights that answer the research question (Emmel, 2013). Thus, all of the images that included a man as a model were selected to understand how masculinity was constructed. Moreover, the majority of the posts on the brand's Instagram contained an image of a man in their pictures, as men are the brands' main target group. Additionally, academics that researched on the same matter followed the same selection and focused on advertising that illustrated male characters (Del-saz Rubio, 2018; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019). Thus, this choice allows a better comparison with previous research. Moreover, all posts that focused on other elements like products or phrases were left out. The Instagram components analyzed in these posts were the image, caption, and hashtags (see *Figure 1.* **Nivea men**). These are the main components that constitute an Instagram post. Moreover, the image, captions, hashtags are commonly used strategically to build a message that reaches a specific target (Soedarsono et al., 2020). Thus, these elements were chosen based on their relevance in the platform and how communication is constructed inside Instagram.
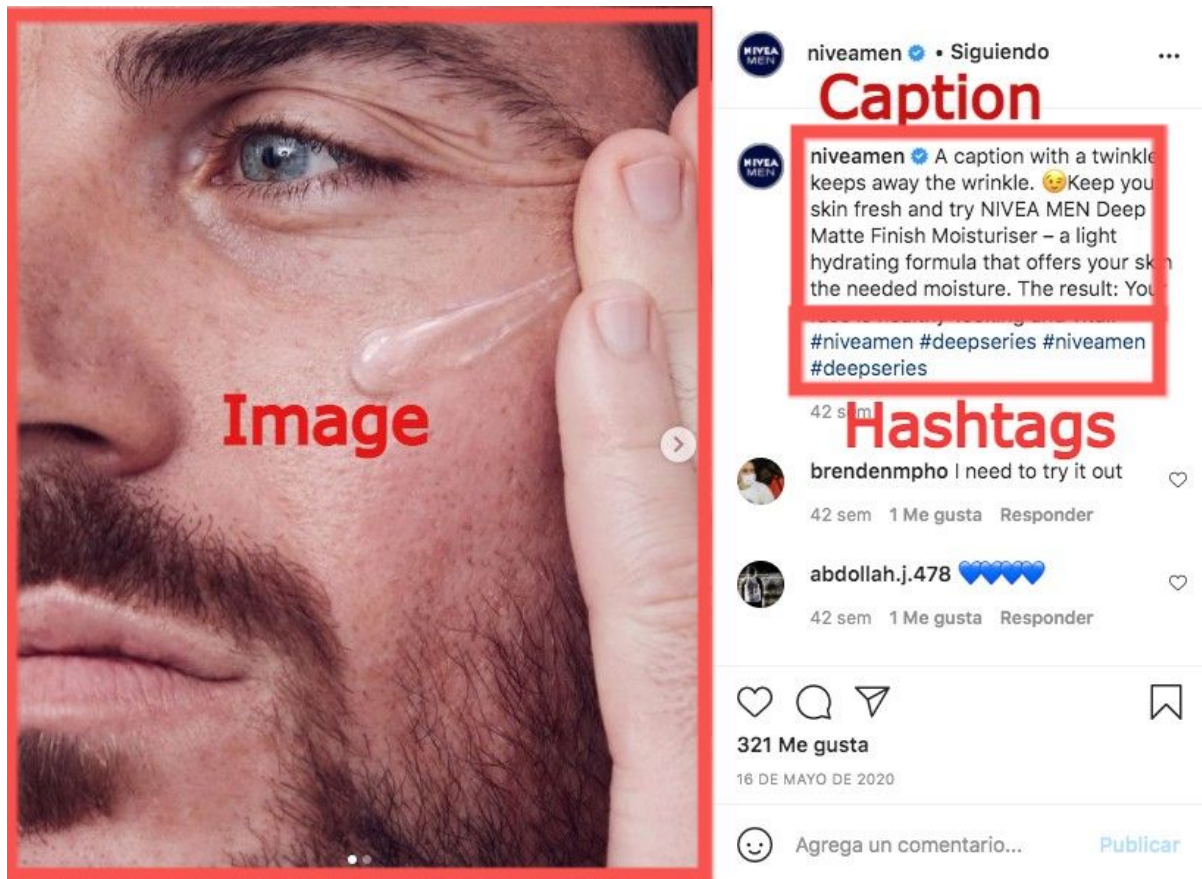
Figure 1. Nivea men, May 16th, 2020

This study analyzed the most recent posts from the brands' Instagram. This means that the data corpus is composed of the posts starting in the year 2021 till the beginning of 2020. Moreover, to identify how *Dove men*, *Nivea men,* and *L'Oréal men* construct masculinity, several elements captured by previous researchers that defined hegemony, hypermasculinity, metrosexual were analyzed. This includes specific characteristics found on the male body, poses, communication style, narratives, and more. These particular elements will be further explained in the next section and are visually illustrated in ***Table 1. operationalization.***

Operationalization

The elements considered from theory to operationalized masculinities were the following ones. To identify hegemonic masculinity, all images, characteristics, or behavior of a personality associated with "traditional" masculine behavior were coded (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). All of the symbols and beliefs that denoted violence, calloused attitudes towards women, risk-taking attitudes, and toughness were taken as part of hypermasculinity (Zaitchik & Mosher, 1993). If the post shared a "progressive discourse" that showed men having feelings towards social causes, it was linked to metrosexuality. The features that illustrated men as nurturing, expressing emotions, being fashionable, practicing self-care were associated with metrosexual masculinity. However, it was noticeable that some images denoted the "objectification of the body," which was the men's body fragmentation (Sender, 1999). Similarly, the sexualization of men was noticed when men appeared with little clothes, open mouths, squinting eyes, subtle smiles, or any sexual reference associated with the male's body (Hatton & Trautner, 2011).

Concept	Theoretical background	Documentation
Metrosexuality	Ricciardelli and Clow (2013), Gill (2003)	Marginalized masculinities. Diversity. 'feminine' traits. Sensitivity. Softness. Disclosure of feelings.
Hegemonic masculinity	Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), Chu et al. (2005), Eisen and Yamashita, (2019)	Sports, strength, confidence. Discipline. Toughness, unemotionality, and independence. Traditional masculine behavior. Heterosexuality.
Hypermasculinity	Zaitchik and Mosher (1993)	Physical aggressiveness. Highly muscular bodies. Violence as manly, danger as exciting, calloused sexuality towards women and toughness.

Table 1. Operationalization.

Data analysis

This paper followed Braun and Clarke's six-step procedure to perform thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2007). The first step followed in the data analysis was getting familiar with the data. All Instagram posts were collected through screenshots and saved in a specific folder per brand *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal*. The posts' collection process and going through them several times provided the researcher an initial knowledge about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2007), which supported the first identification of potential themes. The second step was the creation of the initial codes. These initial codes were focused on visual and textual information (images, emojis, hashtags, and captions). In this step, the researcher started coding the data set by selecting specific data characteristics in a semantic (explicit) or an interpretative (latent) manner (Braun &Clarke, 2007). At this point, a semantic approach was chosen for the coding, a literal description of the image, direct quoting of the caption, and hashtags. To not miss any information from the posts, most of the elements within it were coded (image content, caption, and hashtags). After all relevant elements were coded per brand, the next step was to create a coding table per brand. These tables contained categories, for instance, "men's bodies," "fatherhood portrayal," "grooming discourse," "lifestyle," and more. These first themes had categories that were formulated by the grouping of categories. The fourth step was grouping all brands categories in one table, and then, formulating main themes for all of the brands *Dove, L'Oréal, and Nivea*. At this step, the researcher had to reflect on the relationship between categories, sub-categories and themes (Braun &Clarke, 2007). The themes, categories and subcategories were placed and organized in a thematic table. The fifth step was re-evaluating the individual codes and the data set as a whole. At this step, the researcher reflected on the theoretical framework and the new theories emerging from the information. The researcher defined and named the main themes by allocating them a name that expressed the central "core" within each theme. At this stage, the themes were redefined according to the theory and some others to the researcher's criteria. The final step was reporting the results, which entailed discussing and incorporating the insights coherently. This step will be presented in the "*Results and discussion* " section of this study. Moreover, the thematic map is found in the "*Appendix*" section of this paper (see ***Appendix A***)

3.3 Interviews

To answer the sub-question *'How do gay and heterosexual men perceive the construction of masculinities in advertising by Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal?',* interviews were

executed. Interviews are a one-on-one conversation between an interviewer and an interviewee, where the interviewer seeks information (Gubrium & Holstein, 2021; Johnson, 2001). Interviews are used to research on people's "lived experiences, values and decisions, occupational ideology, cultural knowledge or perspective" (Johnson, 2001, p.3). As the research question aims to understand men's opinions about advertising and general experiences with grooming, interviews were selected. Other data collection methods, such as focus groups, were not chosen due to possible judgment between participants when sharing their opinions in an active conversation (Seal et al., 1998). Besides this, one-on-one interviews provide insightful data when researching perceptions of beauty, a sensitive subject to some individuals (Schouten, 1991). In this section, all of the decisions and procedures made to accomplish the question's answer will be acknowledged, including sampling decisions, data collection, and operationalization.

Sampling

The sampling criteria for the interviews were the following. First, the participants were required to be Internationals living in the Netherlands for a period no longer than ten years. It was preferred to have a sample composed of people from diverse backgrounds because the diversity of the opinions provide diversified insights into the subject (Johnson, 2001; McNeill & Douglas, 2011), which enriched the results. Moreover, it was relevant that the internationals had familiarity with *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal,* to understand the brands' background. Concerning age, the sample required men, adults, and professionals with ages ranging from 25 to 45. These demographics were chosen as past reports on men grooming consumption showed how men of those ages are considered the main grooming products consumers (Marketline, 2018). Men around those ages are cataloged as millennials; moreover, they are described as consumers with economic stability and are likely to invest in their appearance (DeAcetis, 2020).

Once the criteria were defined, the researcher found the participants that fulfilled the sampling criteria through friends of friend's connections. The final sample consisted of Brazilian, Dutch, Spanish, American, and Italian interviewees (see ***Table 2. Participant demographics***). This international perspective delivered insights into global understandings of masculinity. The participants' age range was between 28 to 45 professionals. Moreover, the sample consisted of three heterosexual men and two gay men. All of them consume products for their personal care. In past research, it was found that there are differences within male consumption when men are heterosexual men and gay men (Dodd et al., 2005;

Reilly & Rudd, 2007). Therefore, the participants' perceptions and opinions about grooming products might differ; thus, it is relevant to stress their sexual preferences.

Participant (Pseudonyms)	Nationality	Sexual orientation	Age	Occupation	Country of residence
Paulo	Brazilian	Gay	45	Make-up artist	The Netherlands
Derk	Dutch	Gay	28	Student	The Netherlands
Pedro	Spanish	Straight	30	Engineer	The Netherlands
John	American	Straight	29	Developer marketeer	The Netherlands
Gianni	Italian	Straight	28	Engineer	The Netherlands

Table 2. Participant demographics

Data collection

A topic list was made before performing the interviews. A topic list helps to structure the conversation with participants during the interview (see ***Appendix C***). This topic list was a script that included open questions and potential follow-up questions for the interviews. During the interviews, stimulus materials were shown to the participants; these were pre-selected posts from the brands *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal which* were selected based on a quick analysis of the Instagram posts. The repeated appearance of the subjects, fatherhood, grooming, sports, social activism, influenced on the selection of posts illustrating these. Additionally, the selection was supported by past literature where the themes referred to the some of these subjects (e.g. fatherhood, sports) (Del-saz Rubio, 2018; Scheibling and Lafrance, 2019). In the end, the stimulus covered five subjects "*Fatherhood*," "*Feelings*," "*Sports*," "*Feminism*," and "*Appearance*." These were considered relevant subjects and recurrent in the advertising, and therefore, it was applicable for this research validity that interviewees reacted on them.

The interviews would have been ideally executed face-to-face to facilitate rapport and build trust with the interviewee (Johnson, 2001). However, the interviews were conducted

online and recorded using Zoom's online platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic. [3] To overcome this obstacle, the researcher looked for building trust with the participants with time ahead. The communication with the participant started online, with a brief introduction of the researcher's profile, an explanation of the study, and scheduling a potential date for the interviews. Once the date was confirmed, a consent form was sent to the interviewee by e-mail.

The interview process was the following. The interview started with questions to establish rapport, then, consent was asked and recorded. After that, the researcher explained the instructions and verified if everything was clear. The interview was structured around diverse subjects; "experience with grooming", "experience with grooming brands", "stimulus", "men and society", and a final closing procedure. The first section, "experience with grooming," started with questions about the interviewee's personal experience with grooming. Then, the section "experience with grooming brands" aimed to gather information about their experiences with grooming brands and their advertising. At the "stimulus" section the interviewer explained that images from *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal* Instagram accounts were about to be shown. At this part of the research, the researcher displayed a PowerPoint presentation with the posts and asked male participants questions about their advertising perceptions. After that, the interviewer asked some general questions about the participant's final thoughts on the advertising. The following section was "men and society," where questions about men, society, and beauty standards were asked. Finally, to close the interview, the researcher asked the interviewees to add any final comment, afterward, the interviewer ended the interview. At this point, the participants were thanked by the researcher. On average, the interview duration was 60 minutes. This amount of time enabled the building of trust during the interview, discussing all of the subjects, and observing the interviewee's attitude at the time of the interview.

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[3] Zoom is a video chat platform that enables communication through video and audio with others.

Data processing and software

The analysis process followed Braun and Clarke's (2012) procedure to find patterns within the text through the coding process. The thematic analysis was conducted for the data processing since its methodological steps helped identify the interviews' thematic (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The procedure was the following. First, the data were transcribed into text with the help of the *AmberScript* software. The use of the software facilitated the transcription time and coding of the data. Still, the researcher revised and ensured the accuracy of the scripts. Once transcriptions were refined and adjusted, the archives were uploaded to the *Atlas.ti* cloud. *Atlas.ti* facilitates the analysis process and enhances the organization and data visualization (Friese, 2012). Moreover, software technologies have enhanced the possibility to structure, retrieve and visualize tasks during the analysis process (Smit, 2002). Once the interviews were coded (open coding) on *Atlas.ti,* the data was exported from excel, revised, and coded again. This time, the codes were more specific and explicit towards the quoting. The quotes were divided into parts to acknowledge every piece of information that referred to a different topic. Every fragment encapsulated bits and pieces of information that may have been relevant for the final codification. Then, the axial coding started with the first grouping of the information. All of the information about other subjects not related to the advertising was filtered and taken out of the categories' selection. Only codes that were related to the sub-question were taken into consideration. At this point, the first categories were made based on the similarities found within the data. The researcher, at this point, tried to avoid focusing on the subjects used as stimulus but in the mere content of data. Finally, after reflecting and revising the categorizations, the main themes arose from the grouping.

3.4 Validity and reliability

Qualitative researchers get immersed in the research procedures as they act as a tool for interpretation (Golafshani, 2003). [4]The immersion and manipulation of researchers can have some implications for the study results as subjectivity is acknowledged as part of qualitative interpretations. To ensure this issue does not affect this paper's quality, validity and reliability were core components of this paper.

Validity means the extent to which methodological decisions genuinely measure the concept of study (Babbie, 2014). In this research, validity was ensured by diverse means.

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[4] Immersion refers to the personal involvement researchers have during the research process.

Throughout the entire research process, the mental state of the researcher aimed to be "critical" to avoid any preconceptions on the final results of this research. This action signifies having clear objectives of how to approach the research process to obtain the right results. At the Instagram posts analysis and interpretation, specifically during the *open coding* process, the researcher tried to be critical towards data and provide a literal description of the core information. Then at the following coding processes, *axial coding* and *main themes* formation the researcher tried to organize and construct them in the most objective manner. In the end, the codes were designated and some discarded based on their relevance to answering the research question. Moreover, to ensure the final themes transparency, a definition of each category within the thematic map was written (see ***Appendix A***). Moreover, these descriptions explain the data characteristics in which the themes were based on.

In the interviews, the reality is mutually constructed between subjects and researchers; researchers should ideally remain neutral and respect other's perspectives (Maxwell, 1992). To achieve this, the interviewees' answers were respected, the researcher intended not to intervene on the interviewee's point of view and argumentation. Furthermore, specifically at interviews, the topic list was revised several times. All of the questions were focused and directed to answer the research question. Similar to the Instagram posts, when results were logical, and the interpreted data was sufficient to answer the research question, the researcher decided to conclude the analysis.

On the other hand, reliability means the degree to which replication of a procedure leads to the same result (Kirk & Miller, 1986). For reliability, both analyses, Instagram posts, and Interviews were revised several times. Moreover, the grouping of codes was modified and renamed until the main themes were conformed of codes that had no "overlap." To do this, the researcher revised the group codes within the themes. The confirmation of this study results was through critical revisions of the results from the researcher and outsiders. Besides, the steps described in the methodology section are detailed and transparent, as it details methods, interpretative positions, and research choices in an open manner (Moravcsik, 2019); thus, this study replication may lead to reliable results. Still, researchers' intents of replication possibly lead to other results as their perceptions may differ from this study researcher.

3.5 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is "the process of critical self-reflection about oneself as a researcher (own biases, preferences, pre-conceptions)" (Korstjens & Moser, 2018, p. 121). As a Mexican, privileged woman living in The Netherlands, I was aware of how my background and interests may influence the research. Moreover, the research process required certain "immersion" and a subjective interpretation of the results. Therefore, although the researcher had a critical approach to her work, the researcher's background in this research may influence this paper.

To acknowledge my position in this research and contribute to the transparency of this paper, I aim to explain my interest in this subject. As a beauty professional (make-up artist), the cosmetics and beauty industry are of personal interest. Moreover, as a master's student, my knowledge of academic research on the subject drove my interest in continuing academic literature in this specific subject. Furthermore, my feminist position and interest in learning about masculinity construction in today's advertising motivated me to focus on this particular topic. Perhaps reflect on your position as a young woman interviewing men on a 'feminine' issue.

To conclude, these personal factors provided an advantage as a researcher; they permitted me to research and had a multidimensional view as a student, beauty industry worker, and woman. Thus, the awareness of these factors allowed a more critical view of my pre-understandings and how

4. Results and Discussion

The thematic analysis of Instagram posts (N=90) and interviews (N=5) has provided diverse results that complement the existing literature in the academic field. This section aims to present the results for both Instagram and Interview results. These results are divided into two sections, **4.1 Instagram posts: *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal*,** and **4.2 interviews**. In the first section, the main four themes, "*New masculinity forms*," "*Empathic discourse*," "*Objectification of the body*," and "*Hypermasculinity*," are discussed and accompanied with images. In the second section, the six themes "*Advertising mirroring today's society*," "*Nurturing fatherhood*," "*Expressing sensitivity*," "*Against traditional values in advertising*," "*Political messages as impactful but limited*," and "*The male body appearance*" are discussed and exemplified with quotes.

Masculinities are constantly changing into new and, sometimes, contradicting forms (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Moreover, advertising has the tendency to capture these changes. In general, this paper found that grooming advertising is taking over subjects like social issues and social campaigns, which is distinctive from most studies on masculinities (Richardelli & Clown, 2010; Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Scheibling & Lafrance 2019). It is noticeable how brands tried to deliver a more "progressive" message in their advertising as they encourage these ideas in their captions and images. In this research, men were depicted as caring, fashionable, and sensible, which are characteristics of metrosexual masculinity. Despite these characteristics, some other features found in advertising represented traditional beliefs and stereotypes associated with men (e.g., men as heroic, leader, strong). Moreover, aligned to past research, themes like the objectification of male bodies and hypermasculinity remain present in advertising (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Scheibling & Lafrance, 2019).

It is relevant to specify that a peculiarity of the post's images is that the majority are shot "at home" due to the current Covid-19 pandemic, where most daily life activities are home-based. Jiménez-Sánchez et al. (2021) claimed advertising has a temporary nature, which means that advertising adapts depending on the context in society. Thus, advertising adapted to the current circumstances since the COVID-19 pandemic, where most people were advised to stay home. This strategy is used to persuade and empathize with consumers (Romanova, 2019). In the specific case of COVID-19, brands took over the hashtag #StayHome and promoted health measures against the spread of the virus. Therefore, men have been portrayed performing activities at home, and some captions make references to

"social isolation." Moreover, this has shaped new constructs of real life, which is reflected in grooming advertising since society is experiencing new ways of living.

In the second part of this chapter, the interview results will be presented. The results discuss men's perceptions of advertising for men's grooming products. This study showed men were positive about the images and characters as they were relatable to them. Moreover, progressive discourses were viewed positively, while traditional denotations were perceived in a negative light. Furthermore, this section will use some interviewee's quotations to exemplify the findings.

At the end of this chapter, the researcher will provide a small discussion on the posts' construction of masculinity and men's perception of these. Afterwards, the *conclusion* section will mention the most relevant findings from the study.

4.1 Instagram posts: Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal

4.1.1 New masculinity forms

Men were depicted in a soft, fashionable, in most of the cases. As previously mentioned, Messner (1993) called these masculinities "softer and more sensitive styles of masculinity" (p.725). However, the progress in men's behavior, and hence, reflection in advertising, does not entirely diminish the patriarchal system coexisting in society. Moreover, this study showed that grooming advertising has a 'mixture' of traditional masculine values and new modern masculinities that display progressive ways of thinking. Thus, this result shows limited progress in men's depiction in advertising where new forms of masculinity are constructed but hold traditional "masculine" associations.

'Diversity'

On the progressive edge, grooming advertising illustrated more inclusion of men with diverse skin. Still, white models appear (N= 45/90), men with dark(er) skin (N= 36/90), others without a clear skin color distinction (N= 8/90), which is an unequal amount in favor of white males. This supports past research where men's representation was mainly white and heterosexual (Connell, 1995). However, this gap is relatively small in this database, which surprisingly expresses a higher inclusion of men with a dark(er) skin complexion in grooming advertising. As seen in *Figure 1*, men with darker skin types appear as main characters in grooming brand's advertising. Moreover, children of these men are generally depicted with a similar appearance, which displays "homogeneity" within families to make them look closer

and united. At first glance, the viewer can identify the familiarity that family members have with each other.

Concerning sexual preferences, men have been mainly illustrated alone without a partner or in heterosexual relationships, only in two posts openly mentioned homosexuality. Thus, the representation of homosexuality in grooming advertising is unseen in its majority. As Sender (1999) explained in their research, presenting an isolated man without a partner companionship gives space for interpretations on their identity. As the model's sexual preferences cannot be distinguished, the viewer will interpret the sexual preferences of the character as they prefer to. Therefore, these strategies engage more general audiences composed of gay men, heterosexual men, and more.

Figure 1. Dove Men Care, 20th April 2020

'Progressive values'

Advertising portrayed men raising their voices against social issues and supporting social movements. For instance, LGBTQ community support, feminism, the fight against racism, men's mental health, and more. Figure *2* Nivea advertising promoting the feminism movement shows two young adolescents, one with cross-arms showing off confidence and the other hugging him in a caring manner. The relationship between the young boys is no clear, as they could be brothers, boyfriends, or friends. The image displays two boys that look "normal" and supports feminism which conveys the message that supporting feminism is common among young boys. Although the image relatively shows a progressive message that invites men to become feminists and become part of the movement. The phrase "make mum proud" implies that men have to please their mothers and make them feel proud, and therefore, women (mothers), in this case, are used as an incentive for men to join the feminist movement. Moreover, the caption of this post says, "let's listen to what the young generations have to say," completely disconnecting the feminist movement from older men as they are labeled, in this case, as having different ideas from younger generations. Thus, although grooming depicts men as 'progressively' pro-social movements and progressive discourses, these illustrations include beliefs of adult men's rejection or detachment from feminism. Moreover, "making mama proud" utilizes women and justifies adult men's support towards the movement; this phrase seems like a "valid" reason for men to support feminism rather than other motives such as supporting equal rights and opportunities.

Figure 2. Nivea Men, 28th August 2020

Adopting progressive political subjects in advertising is considered a trend that attracts consumers (Leader, 2019) and connects positively with consumers' emotions (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Moreover, no past studies have emphasized this particular characteristic in grooming product advertising. This type of advertising shows how corporations have an identity branded in neoliberal times (Marshall, 2016). Marshall (2016) argues that companies shift their brand identities to build a more solid brand image and attract consumers who share the same ethics. This happens because consumer culture offers individuals to shape their identities through consumption, and thus, people consume products aligned with their ideals and beliefs. As a result, advertising discourses are formed by corporate social responsibility and commodity activism (Leader, 2019), a strategy focused on depicting an "ethically" correct lifestyle rather than promoting a product. Although the usage of social movements in advertising can, to some extent, affect their real purposes and misinform people, this strategy is now constantly used by some corporations with the aim of branding and consumer engagement.

In this research, grooming brands adopted political subjects as part of the brand's identity. This shows how men are now displayed through images show men caring and supporting social causes. Moreover, it is paradoxical how grooming brands illustrate progressiveness while advertising still entails and refers to traditional beliefs on men. Therefore, it is questionable how political subjects have been approached in advertising from this research paper.

'Modern fatherhood'

The advertising portrayed fathers as young men who were likely to have young children or babies. These fathers are represented to have nurturing, caring, and loving attitudes towards their families. New fatherhood constructions set a new ideal for men, who are shown as affectionate fathers and partners. In the grooming advertising, fatherhood was illustrated only positively. The "downfalls" that fatherhood involves remained excluded in advertising which exclusively illustrates a romantic vision of fatherhood. This means men are shown smiling and enjoying the time they spend with their families in all pictures. Although this advertising does not illustrate the traditional idea of men as the "breadwinner" in a family structure, the advertising depicts certain ideologies linked to hegemonic masculinity, such as un-involvement with household work. Men in grooming advertising were not displayed performing any household work as they were mainly depicted as caring or playful with their children. Moreover, the tasks men performed in advertising mainly were holding their child and playing as their main father's activities. In line with Leader (2019), the main labor men performed in the ads is to be an involved parent who only "fulfills emotional unpaid labor" (p.85). Therefore, the domestic duties were not a subject man executed in the advertising, which rests credibility on the brand's message supporting equal parenthood. Thus, the fatherhood advertising from this research depicts an unrealistic vision of *gender equity*. It is reasonable to mention that women did not appear performing domestic labor, as it traditionally used to in advertising (Spiegel, 2019). Still, when men are only presented as "playful" fathers, advertising still conveys the vision (in a concealed manner) that household work is women's job. Moreover, women were underrepresented in fatherhood advertising, women rarely appeared (N= 2/90), and when it occurred, it was only as a couple of a man. The fact that men appeared in most images alone with children portrays fathers as the leader or heads of families. In *Figure 3*, the dad appears walking along with his four children, the father as the only adult taking care of them is depicted as the family's main protector. Moreover, this representation contributes to the traditional idea that catalogs fathers as "heroes" to their children (Leader, 2019)

Regarding gender representation, men were portrayed with male children in most of the cases. Young boys appeared 19 times and girls 12 times in the advertising, implying a preference towards the male gender in advertising. Thus, this means certain men's domination in the advertising. Another traditional representation was that teaching sport (baseball, taekwondo) was an activity that fathers taught only to male children. Scholars have critically researched sports in different aspects, ideologies, participation levels, and administration (Matthews & Channon, 2019; Swain, 2006). Moreover, research studies have shown how sports have been preponderantly dominated by heterosexual men (Swain, 2006) and how this symbolically "empowers" men in a group. Furthermore, masculine archetypes in sports are constructed as strong, competitive, skilled, and aggressive in some cases (Matthews & Channon, 2019). Moreover, baseball and taekwondo are sports that men mostly practice. Thus, these depictions show how older generations teach younger generations to be a "man," a conception that, in this case, apparently includes practicing sports.

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Figure 3. Dove Men Care, 4th September 2020

Another feature found is the constant reference to a "new father" archetype on the Instagram captions. As advertising suggests, new fathers are changing the script of fatherhood as they carry progressive values; the captions showed quotes from dad influencers

like *"I am proud to be part of a new era that reflects the dads of today*." Moreover, these captions blame the media for only illustrating fathers in a bad way *"media likes to portray dads as being bad at the role of child-rearing."* However, the brand's "aim" of redefining fatherhood among the masses is questionable, as their images still reproduce stereotypes and traditional notions of masculinity. Still, new fatherhood representations, to some extent, normalize or spread a positive image about men's involvement with nurturing. Moreover, these representations express certain progressiveness towards gender equality in today's media.

4.1.2. Objectification of the body

The objectification of the body in advertising is commonly studied and identified in advertising that illustrates the female body (Del-Saz Rubio, 2008; Zotos & Tsichla, 2014). Similarly, men's bodies are now cropped, dismembered, and sexualized in an objectifying manner. In line with Del- Saz Rubio (2019), this research found that advertising cropped male bodies and using the body (arms, back, face) when promoting some of the brand's products (deodorants, shower gels, facial products). Moreover, brands have illustrated the male body as decorative as the images displayed nude muscular bodies in an aesthetic manner (Morrison et al., 2003). The Instagram images showed a level of intimacy in some cases as the body parts were entirely naked and close-up. Regarding the image composition, the light and focus of cameras were explicitly on the part of the male body to get the viewer's gaze to focus on specific parts body.

Figure 4 shows a muscly and naked back; the man's face is not visible but looks down to the side, appearing a bit passive towards the viewer (Goffman, 1979; Hatton & Trautner, 2011). Moreover, the image focus remains entirely on the back of his body. It is noticeable how the skin on his back looks smooth and clean except for his scar. This representation has several meanings. First, male body parts appeared objectified and displaying the ideal muscular back. Then, the skin's smoothness makes his body look clean, which is commonly shown due to grooming. The image appears to be intimate. It could be stated that he is depicted in a sensible or even in a vulnerable manner. However, the scar shows that the model remains masculine. Weitz (2011) found that men considered scars as "battle wounds" resulting from taking risks and confronting dangerous situations. Moreover, some men proudly show off scars as a demonstration of "determination, athletic skills, and strength" (Weitz, 2011, p. 204). Thus, when men's bodies are depicted in grooming advertising from

Dove men, Nivea men, and *L'Oréal* men in an objectifying manner that makes them vulnerable, objectification comes together with traditional masculine symbols case, scars and muscles "restore" their masculinity. Furthermore, in the ads from this research, men have a different and perhaps even a "better" objectification than females, as women objectification in advertising objectifies and sexualizes them in a way that only disempowers them (Zotos & Tsichla, 2014).
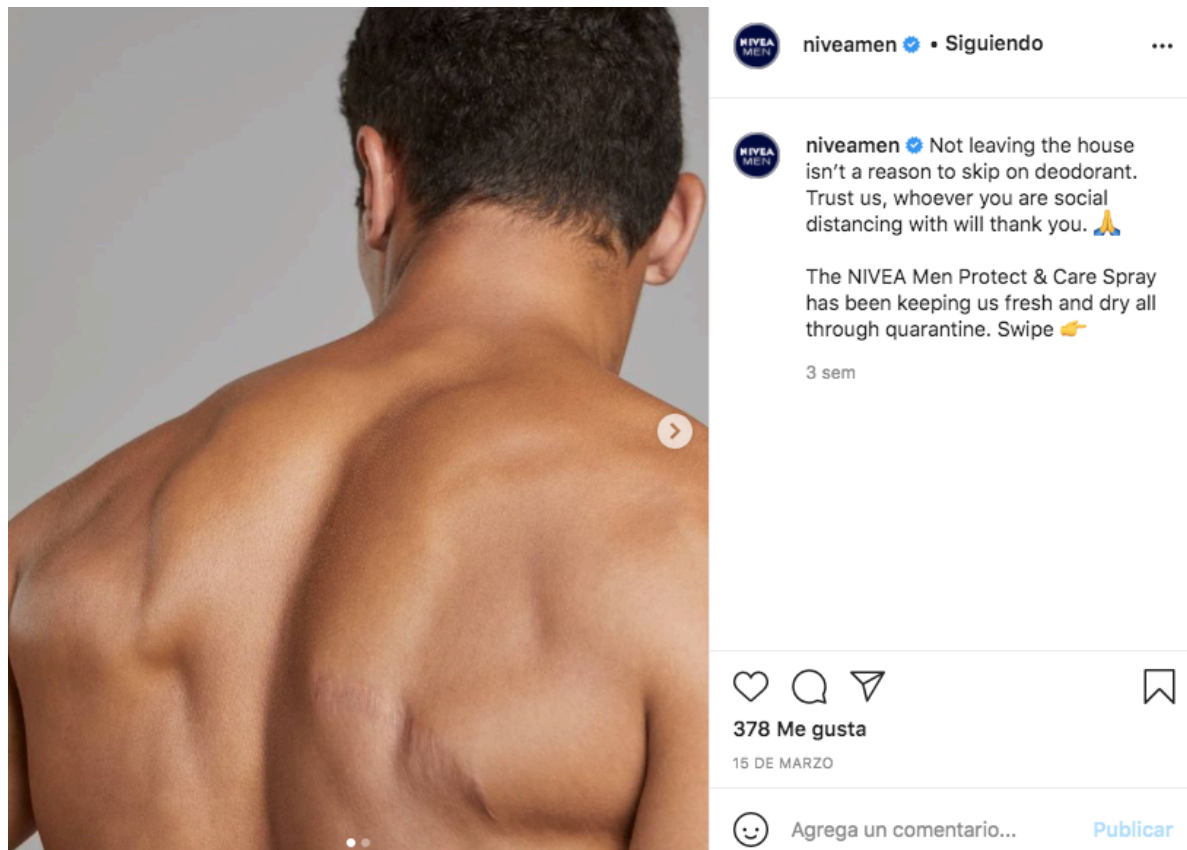
Figure 4. Nivea Men, 16th March 2021

Figure 5 shows a model with squinty eyes, an open mouth, and a subtle smile, which delivers a message of flirtation towards the viewer. Although, men were mainly looking straight to the camera, which implied power and confidence in the overall pictures (Goffman, 1979; Hatton & Trautner, 2011). In some close-up images, the men head is canting to the side, which displayed passiveness towards the viewer (Goffman, 1979). Unlike Lynx ads which displayed sexual power over women (Feasey, 2009)**,** the results of this research showed no direct relationship between the product and sexual attraction towards women as it used to be in past research (Del Saz-Rubio, 2019; Feasey, 2009; Scheibling & Lafrance 2019). It can be stated that sexual power over women is a thematic that has disappeared in

grooming advertising from *Dove men*, *Nivea men,* and *L'Oréal*. Thus, the aesthetic illustration of male attractiveness is the main form of expressing coquetry (Bell & Milic, 2002). Additionally, the images illustrated men with an ideal smooth and perfect skin on face and body. Moreover, photoshop was used on male models to diminish skin pores. In most images, the men's faces and bodies looked smooth in an unnatural manner which sets unattainable aspirational ideals for men.
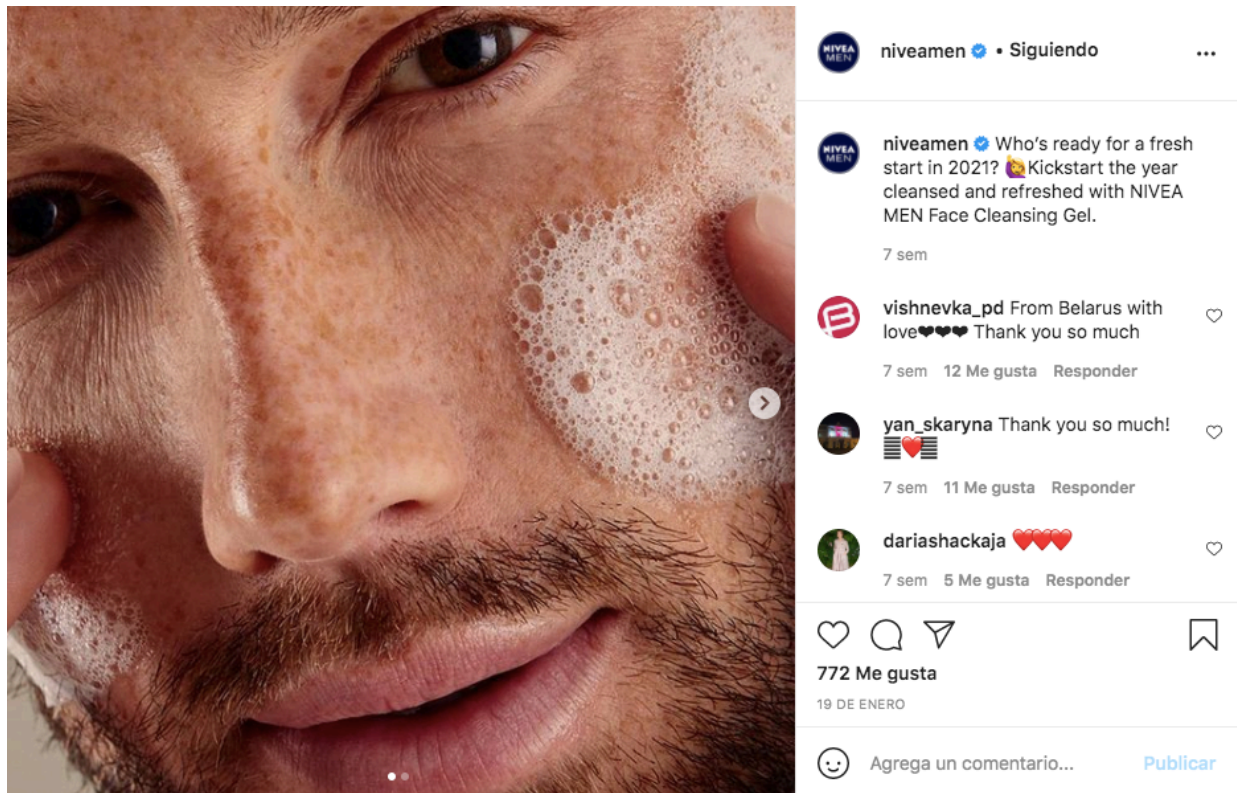

Figure 5. Nivea men, 19th January 2020

Another finding is the strategic placement of "body hair" in advertising. Body parts like arms or shoulders had no hair in the images, while facial hair was constantly illustrated. The results display male bodies as a mix of masculine facial hair and hairless bodies, which is considered part of femininity. Facial hair traditionally represents "masculinity, virility and attractiveness" (Boroughs et al., 2005, p.637), and it's a characteristic perceived by most people as natural or usual on men's bodies (Frank, 2014). Concerning facial hair, the image of a 'younger man' is illustrated with no facial hair. In contrast, 'older men' or adults, in general, have facial hair in most of the images. Thus, older men are considered more masculine than younger men due to their higher facial hair (hair on head, beard, and mustache).

On the other hand, a hairless body has been historically related to women since body depilation has been imposed (Toerien & Wilkinson, 2003). As Frank (2014) argues, this has changed with time because men's new body ideal is a hairless body, reducing or removing hair starting from underneath their necks (torso, chests leg, etc.). This phenomenon has normalized body depilation practices such as shaving with razors, wax, laser among men (Frank, 2014). Furthermore, Boroughs et al. (2005) found that male reasons behind body depilation were cleanliness, looking attractive, and making their bodies appear more muscular. Thus, advertising in this research reproduces the belief of "shaved bodies as appealing."

'Body improvement'

As expected, the improvement of the body is a subject advised to men in several of the Instagram posts. Advertising discourses refer to the body in an under-construction process rather than a fixed entity. Therefore, individuals are persuaded to make bodywork efforts to achieve their ideal body (Featherstone, 1982). A situation that, to an extent, breaks the traditional concept of masculinity. Still, at the same time, this discourse promotes gaining control over one's body through bodywork and consumption. As a result, this is a contradictory message of empowerment and self-care mixed up with physical self-improvement. Similarly to Scheibling and Lafrance (2019), the imperative discourses found in advertising "*Start fighting skin irritation*," "*Join the perfect skin crew*," "*Get ready for the new you*" are used to persuade the viewers to fix their bodies as a social norm imposed on them. The Instagram captions highlighted the importance of an appealing appearance and products to prevent or eliminate any imperfection through a grooming routine. Therefore, the brand's ideologies support this continuous body improvement where men have to perform daily work to achieve a better image. Additionally to this discourse, men were depicted in advertising grooming themselves. These depictions suggest the achievement of confidence as a reward from grooming founded in the models' serious faces.

As Featherstone (1982) claimed, "day to day awareness of the current state of one's appearance is sharpened by comparison, with one's own past photographic images as well as with the idealized images of the human body which proliferate in advertising and the visual media." (p.22). Thus, the images and discourses used in the grooming advertising influence awareness over one-self body, particularly rejection of the body imperfections. For instance, *Figure 6* shows "*Face masks giving you spots?* 😬*… the Pure Carbon Wash will*

deeply exfoliate your skin, purify and tighten your pores. Goodbye imperfections".
Furthermore, it was found that the advertising captions suggest taking care of "body imperfections," which are cataloged in the advertising as spots, wrinkles, dry skin, irritation, and redness. Moreover, men are advised to practice skincare to prevent or reduce wrinkles, as they are considered a "threat" to their appearance that has to be prevented. Thus, the persuasive discourse from grooming brands presents body imperfections as a "problem" that has to be "solve" by the viewer through consumption.

Furthermore, the discourse established by advertising suggests that men should be responsible for maintaining a positive body appearance (Featherstone, 1991). This discourse especially emphasizes the importance of taking care of their faces as it is considered the main symbol of each person's identity. Additionally, most products from *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal* are face products, which logically influences the decision to focus on the male "face" than on the rest of the male body.

Figure 6. L'Oréal, 28th February 202

4.1.3. Empathic discourse

'Informal discourse'

Grooming advertising contained messages that aimed to connect with male viewers emotionally. First, there were some "informal" or "casual" discourses. These included specific language used by men in their daily conversations (e.g., "bro," "crew," and emojis), which makes the message easier to follow as the reader does not need any expertise to understand their messages. In *figure 7*, the caption shows how texts are written colloquially and with a conversational tone "*Join the hair crew, wanna know the trick?"*. This strategy creates a greater connection with male consumers since they feel familiar with the brand (Romanova, 2019). This familiarity can make the viewer have a greater affinity towards the brand, as viewers can perceive these discourses as coming from a friend. Similar to Del-Saz Rubio's (2019) findings showed that advertising used a particular "language" to engage with male consumers. Moreover, in her research, masculine symbols (e.g., football) were used to explain grooming routines to men. Similarly, captions in advertising from this paper explain routines with analogies (e.g., comparing grooming to "x").

lorealmen ✅ Join the good hair crew 😎
Wanna know the trick? You can easily
achieve a 'fresh out of the barber shop'
look at home with the #BarberClub
hairstyling products. Join the club!

Figure 7. L'Oréal Men*, 24*th *January 2020*

'Personal experiences'

Romanova (2019) found that advertising emotionally connects with viewers when there is a shared "common ground" in terms of goals, values, and ideals. In the same way, it was found that the narratives used in grooming advertising involve personal life subjects which can evoke emotions in the viewer. Influencers shared their personal experiences with the brand's community about their family life, grooming experiences, etc. In *figure 8*, the influencer @theshowcase, with 82.1k followers, shared his thoughts on what he admired the most from his father. Moreover, he shares a very personal message about how his father was caring and present in his life. The message's authenticity can connect emotionally with men who can possibly identify with the intimate stories (Romanova, 2019). Moreover, these messages can deliver men a feeling of a safe "space" where they can discuss personal

experiences and thoughts with each other. This action normalizes men's communication over personal subjects, rejecting the stereotype of men's unrevealing feelings. Still, it is not clear if grooming brands aim to normalize these conversations or if the conversation is actively taking place among the users.
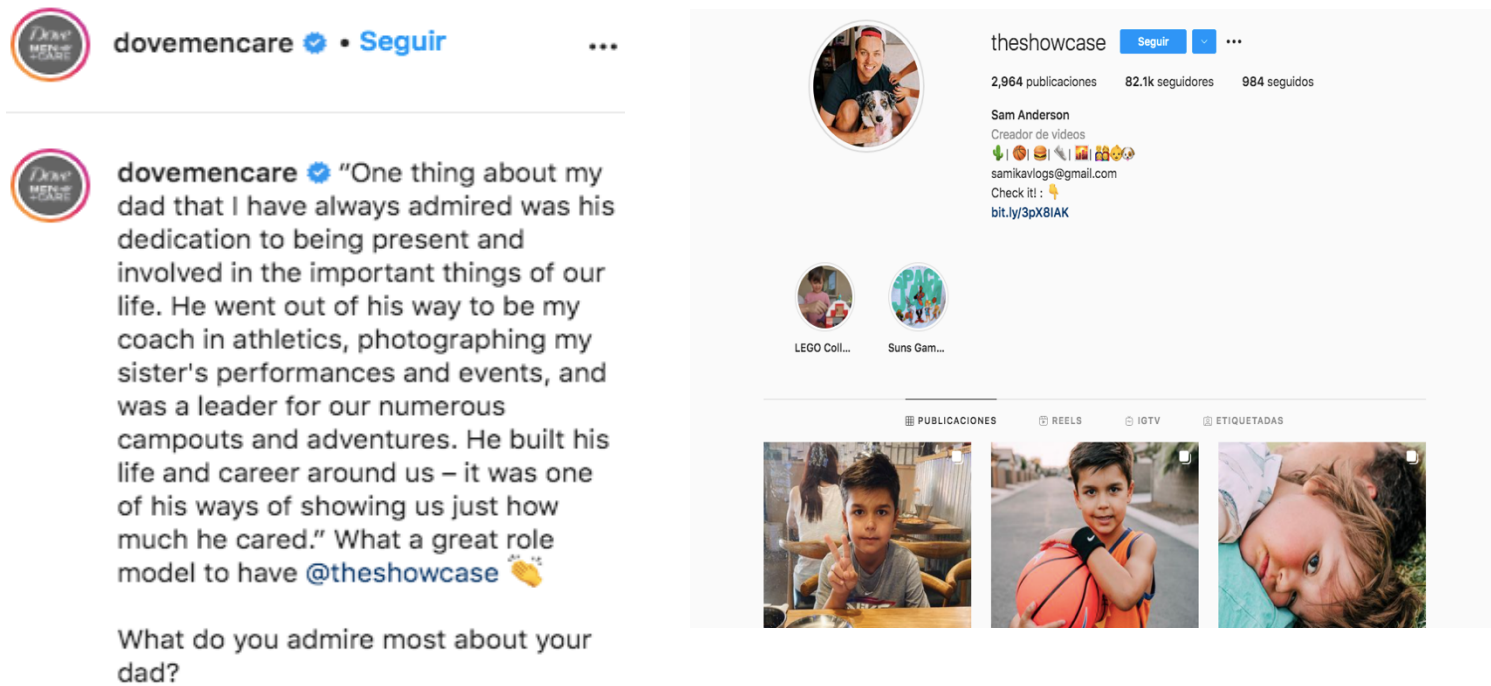

Figure 8. Dove Men Care, 10th July 2020

Historical nostalgia is a common strategy in men's grooming advertising where advertising romanticizes the past to produce empathy on the audience (Stern, 1992). This strategy uses stories about past consumption or personal stories to evoke feelings that persuade consumers to engage with consumption. In this case, this strategy is used particularly when representing fatherhood as it usually refers to childhood stories. However, in the analysis was found that the brands not only refer to past stories, but they mostly share personal day-to-day experiences of influencers as brands want men to feel identified with "present" stories, which may be more significant to their consumers. These research findings showed that present stories are relevant for men's self-identification and that the crisis on masculinity is not a matter of concern for men. For instance, *figure 9* shows a caption of the man expressing his opinion *"I am proud to be a part of a new era that reflects the dads of today,"* a phrase that emphasizes how he is proud of today's fatherhood, *"We are Dad 2.0."*

which is a phrase that distances "newer" fatherhood versions from old ones. Then the caption states "*we see fatherhood as a verb. We change diapers, we embrace grass stains and rug burns, and, by golly, we finger paint*" a description of apparently "newer" ways of father's behavior which remains very limited.

Figure 9. Dove Men Care, 31st July 2020

'Real life images'

 Instagram posts from *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal* are of a mix of traditional produced images and images that display daily life activities. The images from day-to-day life are more simplistic than conventional advertising. Some of the images are reposted from personal influencers and celebrity accounts. Thus, images appear as somebody's photo, which displays intimacy to the viewer. In *figure 10*, a young father is shown brushing her daughters' teeth; the image, in general, does not appear to have "high" production. Moreover, it shows an intimate family moment that seems to be spontaneously photographed by someone at the scene. Similar to the quoting of personal experiences, images can generate a connection towards the viewer, especially if they reflect real-life situations that can connect with male consumers. Moreover, when the viewer identifies himself with the main character in advertising, they feel represented by the image (Stern, 1992). Besides, it is claimed that grooming brands create storylines and characters that feel closer to their main audience to generate positive responses from them. In this case, brands want to express their values and engage social media users through influencers. However, the interpretation of images will rely on the viewer's perception as there is no direct approach to advertising the product (Crook, 2004). At the end of the captions, the brand asks for opinions or men's participation

in the comment section, inviting men to interact with the brand and other users. Thus, men can also express their perspective or interpretation of the brand's message, strengthening the interaction between the social media user and the brand (Nisar & Whitehead, 2016).

Figure 10. Dove Men Care*, 10th July 2020*

Masculine figures'

Like any other toiletries advertising, grooming advertising tends to use celebrities to promote their products. In the specific case of *Dove, Nivea,* and *L'Oréal*, these use images of male Hollywood celebrities, fashion models, sports celebrities, and influencers. For example, football teams and sports celebrities are commonly depicted in grooming advertising, "Real Madrid players are employed to reify the belief that real men can groom while still embracing the essence of what it takes to be a man" (Del-Saz Rubio, 2019, p.214). Besides, it was found that endorsed images from these role models illustrate success and status; as the images only

show the wins or achievements of these. Thus, these partnerships might enhance the brand image, attract new people to their accounts and thereby, generate more sales (Belch and Belch, 2013).

Figure 11. L'Oréal, 25 February 2020

Masculine figures set an aspirational model for men. Wohlford et al. (2004) mention that men tend to select same-sex role models. Wohkford (2004) claims that men tend to follow role models distant from their surroundings (Wohlford et al., 2004). Thus, men follow figures, not necessarily personal models but aspirational ones. This ideal is not an achievable image for average men in society, as average men might not have the same life and opportunities as celebrities. The men featuring grooming advertising are successful individuals that are recognized by society. Some of them have different professional careers. This phenomenon can cause body dissatisfaction and low self-esteem to men that compare their lives with those of these individuals (Hobza et al., 2007). Similarly, grooming brands select celebrities and influencers with a certain status to represent the brand and create a level of attraction towards their products. An active endorsement is when the celebrity openly speaks about the product and shares a personal experience to generate trust and credibility

(Belch & Belch, 2013). Another benefit is the follower's communities from these celebrities, who can empathize with the brands. Moreover, this justifies the selection of celebrities and influencers on Instagram posts.

For example, *figure 11* shows the Hollywood actor, producer, and screenwriter Nikolaj Coster-Waldau, who appeared in the famous series Game of Thrones. He appears posing with the product, frowning and subtly smiling towards the camera while holding the product closer to his person as if it was one of his main accessories. Having celebrities and influencers featuring the Instagram pages of *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal* displays aspirational ideas of success and status as these are recognizable figures in society.

4.1.4 Hypermasculinity

Following Mosher & Sirkin, (1984) framework *violence* was acknowledged in the Instagram posts. Moreover, an unexpected discovery is how aggression is used in the advertising captions as grooming brands use violent wording like *'fighting' 'counterattack' 'secret weapon'* and more. This type of speech normalizes the traditional belief of men being aggressive (Hermans, 2021). For instance, figure *12* shows how the word "*secret weapon*" is used as a reference to beard oil and then uses the word "*fighting*" for mental health.

Besides language, emojis in social media play an important role as they are graphic symbols that express sentiments and thereby complement a message (Kralj, 2015). Furthermore, the fists emojis were widely used in the posts; a fist symbolizes punching. Additionally, the pose of "strength" with the arm was used as an emoji several times. Strength, in general, was a subject connotated several times, mainly when captions spoke about progressive subjects as a symbol of empowerment and physical strength. The mix of aggressive wording and emojis confirm theories about using "masculine" symbols to dissociate men from feminine practices (Del- Saz Rubio, 2019; Messner, 1992).

loralmen ✅ Discover our Movember limited edition beard oil, @nikolajwilliamcw's secret weapon for having a smooth beard and fighting for men's health. 💪

Figure 12. L'Oréal, 26th November 2020

4.2 Interviews

The general perception about the brands' advertising is that the images are eye-catching, and their messages are perceived as attractive, particularly when the message is progressive. Moreover, when the person in the image was performing an activity (e.g., fatherhood, sports) which the interviewee could not identify himself with, the interest in the advertising was reduced. Furthermore, confirming past claiming's on Instagram posts, the emotional connection towards the ad was reduced when the viewer felt unidentified with the matter (Romanova, 2019). Another relevant finding was the greater criticism of the posts from participants when they perceived hegemonic discourses, which was shown in their responses.

Concerning the sexual preference of participants, there was a higher knowledge about grooming products from gay participants as past studies had suggested differences among gay and heterosexual men consumption of beauty and fashion (Dodd et al., 2005; Reilly & Rudd, 2007). Moreover, overall interviewee's responses had similarities indicating relevant patterns within the data corpus, which will be further explained below.

4.2.1 Advertising mirror today's society

Just as the mold and the mirror theory explain how advertising reflects reality and at the same type it shapes our surroundings (Souiden & Diagne, 2009), it was found that the interviewees perceived the images as real-life reflections of life situations. Paulo (age 45, Brazilian) claimed, "*I think this picture is really reflecting a lot of what's happening already right now*" when he saw fatherhood illustrated by the brands, he suggested that men are now different from the past, and this is what the ad reflected. Thus, men distance themselves from the traditional ways of masculinity. As mentioned in the past section, real-life images and progressive discourses made the interviewees identify themselves with the images (Romanova, 2019). Notably, men identified themselves with the images that illustrated a "normal" way of living (e.g., home activities). Thus, the participants felt more identified when a real-life scenario was illustrated rather than directly portraying a product as traditional advertisement does.

Furthermore, participants claimed that this new type of advertising results from new generations and cultural changes. Moreover, with their comments, they stated how younger generations had popularized social movements like feminism, *"if you want to be a brand that supports a movement like the feminist movement, then it's also important to look at the younger generations"* (Derk, age 28), and how brands have to listen to new generations and

adapt to recent social changes. In the same manner, when the subjects referred to other progressive. This emphasized how the male participants felt outsiders from this "mindset" as they grew up with more traditional values and social constructions. Still, they have accepted that the current social changes are positive and progressive for today's society.

4.2.2 'Nurturing Fatherhood'

Like Zawisza et al. (2016), nurturing father's portrayals led to positive responses by the viewer. Still, it is relevant to mention that this result is influenced by positive beliefs towards equal gender roles and context. Additionally, these men's participation in this research required interest in examining masculinities, which somehow limits the results. Moreover, none of the participants were fathers. Thus, when expressing their opinion, participants stressed how the advertising was targeting "fathers and families," excluding themselves from the target. Moreover, men admitted that they could not identify themselves with the advertising as they have no children. Thus, it is relevant for marketers to picture a closer representation of their consumers as the more empathy consumers feel towards the ad provides a more favorable response. Additionally, men claimed they noticed how advertising has changed from only portraying sports to illustrating families. Pedro (age 30, Spanish) mentioned, "*They clearly want to switch to a new. A new a new target in terms in terms of people"* emphasizing that brands are trying to reach new consumers. Then, he mentioned how in the past he saw subjects related to sports and now see more family activities on grooming advertising *"probably they've in the past was mainly, I don't know, related to sports or activities of this kind. Well, now they say that 2.0 is more of a family activity".* The construction of "Fatherhood" in the advertising was considered attractive since it confronted the traditional stereotype that illustrates women as the nurturer and men as the breadwinner; as stated by Paulo (age 45, Brazilian), "*We have to break down the stereotypes of the woman, has to be the one that has to take care of the children."*. Moreover, participants agreed on the importance of expressing these values within society because spreading this message can positively impact gender equality.

Interviewees were conscious of the impact of Covid-19 and how it also has shaped advertising. This affects social interactions because parents spending more time at home and organizing time for "family activities" are more common than before. Therefore, men accept there has been a cultural change influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, which has made them get closer to their loved ones. Moreover, the grooming brand's approach of illustrating fatherhood as an involved man towards their family is not a fact far from reality. Derk

commented, *"Um, probably it's also somehow related to Covid-19 working from home, being closer with the family".* Still, he ended his comment stating that the brand took advantage of the social circumstances to create content "they want to take advantage of this fact," which depicts distrust in the grooming brands' intentions.

4.2.3 Expressing sensitivity

The controversial caption *"strong men choose sensitive"* gathered interviewees' attention, and they felt encouraged to comment on this sentence. Moreover, it was not surprising that the interviewees picked up this concept as they were very engaged with progressive messages during the interview. Thus, the participants were interested in discussing the subject of feelings and their connection to men. Most of the participants judged what word "strong" implicated; they believed any type of men could be sensible, not only "strong men". Moreover, they saw in a negative way the traditional association of "strength" to "men" as they considered men do not necessarily have to be strong. Furthermore, Derk commented, *"So, they're trying to show men that it's OK to have like an emotional side, it's OK to show vulnerability, it's OK to be on the non-typical masculine men.".* He emphasized that the brand teaches "traditional" men to have an emotional side, vulnerability and not following the traditional forms of masculinity. Participants highlighted how this advertising aimed to "teach" heterosexual men to show feelings. This demonstrates that emotions are still not normalized among men, as some participants considered this a "taboo." Moreover, Paulo (age 45, Brazilian) said not blaming the brands for reproducing these messages due to the traditional background society comes from *"we are still coming from a very conservative mindset of how to be a man*." Moreover, the participant emphasized how brands try to reach large audiences of men when using "traditional" associations to masculinity, who uphold these "traditional" mindsets "and *"I think they are trying to speak to a very large audience here when they go with those words. "* In a positive light, the participants supported the initiative of the brands for promoting the expression of sensitiveness and feelings among men, a characteristic commonly associated with femininity (Connell, 1995). Moreover, interviewees believed this is only the beginning of the change of how masculinities are traditionally depicted in the media.

4.2.4 Against traditional values in advertising

Men in this study identified traditional symbols or words related to masculinity and reacted negatively towards them because they felt these were stereotypical and old-fashioned.

Another characteristic the participants judged was when a model appears to be "fake" and classified as stereotypical. This happened specifically when men were depicted with a strong and muscly bodies. Thus, for them, an extremely muscly body is not the standard in comparison to skinnier bodies. Another characteristic interviewee considered was using football to promote the brand's products. Moreover, male participants perceived football as an element of traditional masculinity. Besides, people that followed football content were classified as "machos" in a generalized manner. Although sports celebrities are idols and role models for many men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), males did not consider them idols or role models in this specific research. Moreover, this characteristic depends on each person's preferences and judgments. The participants saw football players as icons for "macho" men, although this does not apply to all cases. Interviewees argued sports players have the authority to influence men worldwide, as they accepted these "macho" men are a majority in society. Derk, for example, argued, *"for me, the stereotype of masculinity is also soccer,"* which means he believed soccer is a traditional sport. Correspondingly, Paulo commented, "*the soccer players… they are they are always on the top of the food chain when it comes to predators"* He explains how soccer players have a high status among other men types, particularly among football supporters who are cataloged as "traditional." Interestingly, he compares" traditional" men to predators (hunters or devourers) of other men. Thus, men with traditional ideas are seen by the interviewees as violent and aggressive, which is not always the case.

Finally, all men claimed that overall advertising illustrated diverse forms of masculinities viewed as positive. Thus, grooming brands' strategy of presenting more masculinity types and different scenarios has been a good approach to reaching their market. However, based on the stimulus, participants believed the representation was limited. Paulo mentioned, *"I think it was quite diverse. Well. To some extent, it was diverse,"* emphasizing that the ads showed "some" diversity but in a limited manner. Moreover, participants stressed how this representation was limited by highlighting how women and the LGBTQ community were mostly excluded from the advertising. However, it is important to stress that the number of stimuli used during the interviews was limited (N=5), and the selection criteria included the representation of men. Thus, this influenced the participants' perception and judgment of the ad's representation of diversity. Still, they had pointed out the need for diversity, which already tells this is a feature they think is important.

4.2.5 Political messages as impactful but limited

The participants were critical of the brands' support of social causes. Moreover, they were skeptical over the brands' genuine interest in solving social issues and supporting social movements. Derk commented, "*Because if they are going to post this, but then the next day they're going to post something about another problem in society… that starts to become a bit too much.*" For him, an over-shared and support of social issues on social media can become overwhelming. Moreover, there's a certain level of skepticism over the brands' intentions when publishing about political and social causes (Arli et al., 2019). Interviewees questioned the right of the brands to speak about these subjects and the purposes behind this type of advertising, which could be marketing aligned. Another critique is the lack of consistency within the posts that speak about social movements; thus, their messages were seemed limited or neutral. Moreover, participants felt there was no clear message or focus within the Instagram posts message and image. This is probably because not all men accept progressive and feminism in today's society, and grooming brands attempt to introduce this little by little. However, this factor made the participants perceived that the advertising messages had a "neutral" approach.

Moreover, interviewees described progressive subjects as "modern" or the "new cool." Brands that share their political values are perceived positively because of their capability to influence society. Derk argued, "*I am very positive about these kinds of messages… I identify more with the brand. If they say something that I also think,*" which means that the participant considered it relevant to follow brands who share the same values. In line with Romanova's (2019) research on persuasive advertising, participants shared the same values as the brands identified with the advertising. Moreover, participants considered corporations were significant entities that can re-shape the narrative of what is considered masculine and what is not. Furthermore, the interviewees believed that spreading progressive messages on masculinities in the media could impact the male masculinity constructions. Therefore, as stated before, brands have a big responsibility when communicating political opinions in their messages because they can reach the big masses and support the normalization of better masculinity styles.

4.2.6 The male body appearance

In McNeill and Firman's (2014) interviews on grooming consumption, men's aspirational image was a "normal," healthy person. This research showed similar results. Gianni commented, "*They are just normal people in their everyday life. And I feel … that it*

could be me". This means participants positively saw the illustrations of men that had a similar appearance to them. Although it is hard to specify the "normal" appearance, men referred to this normal image when models wore simple clothing, had skinny bodies, and were illustrated in real-life scenarios. There were some contradictions in this subject as models with facial attractiveness (which was not classified as normal) were accepted and even aspirational for the participants. Moreover, the participants claimed that the visual representation of facial attractiveness is relevant for them in grooming advertising. This because, for the interviewees, the models' faces represented the benefits obtained from grooming. This is a finding that indicates that no matter if grooming brands do not directly refer to the product benefits, if the model carries an attractive face, the viewer will interpret this as the outcome of using the product. Furthermore, this explains how *Dove, Nivea,* and *L'Oréal* most of the time missed mentioning the product ingredients in their captions, but they illustrated pore-less men with attractive faces in their advertising.

Regarding the body, the participants reacted to the "male body" in images in diverse manners. Participants perceived that body-cropped photos of the body have sexual connotations. Thus, the participants were aware of the objectification of the body, but to some extent, this was normalized in this research. Although the participants' opinions on the male body were generally positive, gay and heterosexual participants expressed their views differently. Derk (gay) claimed*, "it's a piece of a man's body... it feels quite intimate. I actually really like this one"* The participant openly admitted that he liked the image, and it was cataloged as *intimate*. On the other side, Pedro (heterosexual) mentioned, "*I mean, photographically, I do like it a lot. It can be even, even sensual for somebody, like somebody can find this attractive"* this participant mentioned that the image might appear attractive or sensual for someone but not for him. Thus, he distanced himself from liking a man's body. Besides this comment, John (heterosexual) found no interest in the image. He claimed*, "This is a dude's neck (in a derogatory manner). Like I said, the main commercial I remember from my childhood was a woman putting lotion on her legs"* this participant not only rejected the idea of liking another man's body, but he emphasized how ads that illustrate women (in a suggestive manner) are the ones he preferred. Moreover, it seems like a taboo for heterosexual men to "like" another man's body, which would be an interesting subject to research in the future. Furthermore, it is not clear if these participants felt afraid to be judged by the interviewer, afraid to appear less manly if they stated "liking" or "appreciating" the body of another man, or if it's just a matter of taste. However, it is clear that they still carry

some conventional ideologies over men's masculinity. Furthermore, this finding cannot be generalized to all heterosexual men as this research sample remains small.

5. Conclusion

This research explored how the brands *Dove, Nivea,* and *L'Oréal* constructed masculinities in their Instagram posts. The following section will answer the main research question and sub questions by a discussion of the findings.

Masculinities in grooming advertising are constructed in a hedonistic, fashionable, and sensible manner. Moreover, the man depicted in images is a man that takes care of his appearance, shows his emotions, and cares about others. In current times, *Dove, Nivea,* and *L'Oréal* try to deliver a "progressive" vision of masculinity where political subjects are discussed and illustrated through their posts. These results showed that current masculinity constructions slightly progressed. Still, this phenomenon could possibly be part of their new branding to gain people's interests and deliver a positive brand image (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). Moreover, these outcomes were accompanied by conventional masculine constructs. In line with Del Saz-Rubio (2019) and Scheibling and Lafrance (2019), men's portrayal conveys traditional masculine symbols and beliefs (e.g., fatherhood as heroic, men uninvolvement with household work, muscular bodies, physical strength, heterosexuality). Moreover, the message the brands send invites men to be "manly" in overall situations. It is noticeable how traditional visions on men masculinity are still being reproduced by advertising. Furthermore, the usage of progressive subjects sometimes conceals these conventional messages which sadly gives the illusion of a full advancement in masculinity depiction, when it is not the case.

Regarding the depiction of the body, similar to past research, men's bodies were shown in advertising like objects (Hatton & Trautner, 2011). Moreover, male body parts such as arms, back, face were cropped and illustrated as decorative objects in the images (Zotos & Tsichla, 2014). The body parts showed were naked and muscular, which depicted certain level of intimacy and attractiveness. Furthermore, the trend of hairless bodies (Frank, 2014) was shown in advertising as male bodies were illustrated with no hair which displayed cleanliness. Another finding was the smoothness on men faces which had no pores or facial imperfections and male bodies were only skinny or muscular. Thus, not all men fulfill the body image that *Dove, Nivea,* and *L'Oréal* displays in their advertising which is very limited and sometimes unrealistic.

To communicate their messages, *Dove, Nivea,* and *L'Oréal* used several strategies to engage the viewer. In particular, the brands used casual language and had a conversational tone; thus, their messages were clear to read as they avoided any technicism. Similarly, to

generate closeness, the brands used high-produced images and images with a lower quality which appeared more personal. These images showed activities men performed daily (e.g., spending time with family) to make them identify with the pictures (Stern, 1992). A new finding was the usage of quotes, from Dad influencers who shared personal experiences that show their feelings and emotions. Thus, the brand's platforms serve, to some extent, to break men's "taboo" of showing off feelings. Moreover, when interviewees identified themselves with three particular aspects, they delivered a more positive response towards the advertising. These aspects where the following ones, the situations or circumstances showed in advertising, the "model" that appeared in the images, and with the messages shared by the brand. Thus, brands have to consider these aspects when communicating their messages in social media. Moreover, this confirms Romanova's (2019) claims on persuasive advertising. The researcher claims that if there is a 'common ground' (e.g. values, principles, ideas) shared between brands and consumers; then the brands advertising becomes more persuasive, which in this case was accurate.

The interviews showed some trends among the participants' opinions and perceptions over the grooming advertising. First, the participants had a great interest in political subjects. Moreover, as expected, the participants were strongly against the "traditional" or "stereotypical" depictions of men. On the contrary, advertising that supported social causes or shared progressive messages was supported. Then, interviewees claimed that the images were real-life reflections of what's happening today. Thus, they alleged that newer male versions are different from past ones classified as "traditional." Moreover, the participants claimed that these new advertising styles arose from recent social changes and thoughts from younger generations.

Regarding the appearance of the models, the participants found it relevant that models appear with some facial attractiveness in the grooming products advertising. It was found that they perceived this as the benefit they can obtain from grooming. Moreover, when bodies were cropped, this was found attractive and intimate, which means the objectification of bodies is normalize to some extent. Furthermore, it was showed how some men still carry some conventional ideas. It seems people are experiencing a complex situation as some traditional ideas and roles are kept in today's society. Some others are thrown away as a participant mentioned: *"it's kind of difficult because you're trying to figure out which one of these traditional roles is OK for me to follow, and which ones I am supposed to throw away."* Moreover, current conversations over feminism and social issues have made us more critical of our society's ideas, which already display some advancement in our society.

Although new values in society are embraced, we should remember how patriarchy remains present (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). In line with Duncanson (2015), it is expected that the integration of new values and new sexual preferences in our society diminishes the patriarchal system's reproduction. Still, in this research, interviewees highlighted how society still expects men to fulfill certain roles. Moreover, cultural norms are reproduced in some societies that take over men's behavior, such as not crying, earning a higher salary than women, affronting risky situations, and more. Thus, these societal expectations still reproduce gender inequalities among individuals. As a final comment, I invite the reader to reflect on the roles we hold and expect others to fulfill as we are all main actors in reproducing the patriarchal system (Demetriou, 2001).

Limitations and future research

This research had several implications and limitations that the research might acknowledge as future research might use these. First, the research has some sampling implications as the study limits itself to three brands in specific (*Dove, Nivea,* and *L'Oréal*). Moreover, a greater sample or analysis of other grooming brands with other identities might lead to different results. Besides this, the number of posts is a limitation as 90 posts in total were analyzed, which is a limited amount as other studies with a higher data compilation might draw different results. Additionally, there some sampling implications as the images chosen for the study only illustrated men, meaning that any other post without a man on its image was excluded from the research. Although this selection was strategically performed, other images might provide other social constructions on masculinities. Moreover, a broader corpus of Instagram posts might show broader knowledge regarding gender relationships, as in this sample, women and relationships visualization were limited subjects.

Secondly, this study's interviews were performed in not the most ideal conditions via the online platform Zoom, which may have some implications on the participants' responses and communication. Moreover, the participants are privileged men living in Western Europe which might influence their perspectives on gender and masculinities. Moreover, the number of participants was five, which is very limited. Thus, their opinions cannot be generalized to the whole male population. Another implication is the researcher's position in this study when performing interviews with the participants. Since being a woman might have an influence on the male respondents' argumentations as they took more care of how they expressed themselves. As found in previous research by Catania et al. (1996), men tend to be influenced in their wording when the interviewer's gender is female. Moreover, the researcher

recommends matching the same-gender interviewer and interviewee for greater disclosure and answer quality.

Thirdly, another limitation derives from the societal context in which this research was executed. As Instagram posts are specifically from the time were Covid-19 spread in the world. However, this might change in the near future when the virus is eradicated. Thus, this might affect the reproduction of these results as Instagram posts analyzed in this research entailed a "new normality."

Future research should focus on how masculinity is constructed within a specific grooming brand. Moreover, it might be interesting to understand how gender neutrality has been built in grooming products from brands that are not gender directed (e.g., lush, the ordinary) as these brands are gaining relevance in the grooming market and popularity among consumers. Regarding interviews, this research was focused on an international sample that is based in The Netherlands. It is suggested that future studies analyze men's perceptions on grooming advertising from a specific country. Furthermore, as this research focused on men living in western society, an interesting approach would be to research the men's perceptions on grooming advertising from a non-Western culture. Additionally, it is suggested that future research should study men's motives for the consumption of grooming products to understand which are their main drives for grooming at current times.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Instagram posts

Themes	Categories	Sub-category	Definition
1.New masculinity forms	'Modern' fatherhood	Young father with young children and babies	The advertising portrays a youthful fatherhood. Men are wearing modern clothes, caps, shirts and jeans.
		Dad's expressing happiness at their children	Dad are presented in a positive attitude when they are with their families
		Involved with nurturing	Men as nurturing, caring and sensible towards their family. They are portrayed playing sports, finger paint, high-five with children, holding children, teaching.
		Caring	Dad appears holding children. Captions refer to dads approaching their family responsibilities.
		Changing "fatherhood" discourse	New fathers are portrayed as changing fatherhood stereotypes. Captions refer to fatherhood evolution.
	Diversity	White men	The images portray white men 13 times in Nivea advertising, 13 times in Dove advertising and 19 times *L'Oréal*. In total 45 times.
		Dark skin complexion	Darker skin men appear 8 times in Nivea, 12 times *L'Oréal*, 16 times in Dove advertising. In total 36 times.
	Progressive values	Political movements	Captions and images that refer to social activism involving several subjects: LGBTQ support, feminism, racism, mental health.
		Movember movement	Brands refer to social movement that supports causes like male depression, mental health.
		Stay at home	Brands refer to stay at home

		movement	movement. A movement that supports self-quarantine due to COVID-19 pandemic.
		Feminism support	References to feminism.
2. Hypermasculine behavior	Violence	Aggressive wording	The wording of the captions suggest aggression, uses words as 'fighting' 'against' 'counterattack' 'secret weapon', 'kick off'.
		Fist and explosion emojis	The images refer to expressions of violence.
	Strength	Strength references captions	References to physical "strength "in captions.
		Strength poses	Emojis with strong arm pose. Men showing off their arms.
		Muscular bodies	Fit and muscular bodies
	Confidence	Confident poses	Power position poses (open legs), cross arms.
		Strong eye-looks	Gaze direct to viewer, frowning
3.The objectification of the male body	Sexiness	Squinty eyes	Male characters have squinty eyes or, frowning.
		Subtle smiles Or open mouth	Male models appear to subtly smile or pose with an open mouth.
	Body	No body hair	The models body, has no body hair since its more 'appealing' and express 'cleanliness'.
		Masculine aging	Older and adult men tend to portray more facial hair to look more 'masculine', younger male models have no facial hair.
		Emphasis on the body	Darkness on the background of images and light directly emphasizing the male body.
	Body improvement	Imperative discourses	Invite to take action against body imperfections (e.g. "Start fighting skin

			irritation!")
		Negative towards body imperfection	Consumption products as a solution to imperfections, black spot's, wrinkles, skin irritation, body odors. Negative connotation of wrinkles and black spots.
	Appearance as valuable	Men grooming	Men are portrayed grooming, using skincare, washing their faces, shaving and more.
		Vanity	Men appear to look into their reflection when grooming.
		Men smiling while grooming	Men are portrayed as joyful when they groom. As if this was a particular part of the routine they enjoyed.
		Appearance as a valuable factor	Captions emphasize the importance of a good appearance under any circumstances. Models appear with a smooth skin and groomed hair.
4.Empathic discourse	Self-reflection images	Day-to-day activities	Images display common life situations. Images have a phone camera quality. Besides they look causally taken.
		Models normal appearance	Models portray a 'normal' lifestyle, wearing casual clothes. The images display first the models and then products in a second image. All of these strategies provoke empathy
	Personal experiences	Quoting	The captions share other men personal experiences with grooming, fatherhood.
	Masculine models	Actor, productor	Hollywood celebrity featuring the advertising. Illustrate the idea of 'success' and an 'appealing appearance'.
		Dad influencers	Dad's or men influencer collaborating with grooming brands featuring the advertising. They reflect the image of the 'ideal father'.

		Models	Illustrate the idea of 'success' and an 'appealing appearance'.
		Football and basketball celebrities	Sport celebrities featuring advertising. They illustrate the idea of 'success'.
	Engaging discourses	Neurolinguistic	Most of the captions are written with a 'casual' vocabulary. Using colloquial words (E.g. 'bro'). Analogies comparing grooming to manly activities.

Appendix B. Interviews

Main themes	Categories	Subcategories
<u>**1. Advertising mirroring today's society**</u>	Advertising mirroring today's life	Advertising displaying images of every day's life
		Advertising not focus on brand but displaying images of today's life
		Advertising portraying 'normal people' in their daily life's: more identification with brands
	New generations have a "new mindset": reflected in advertising	Ad feminism: addressing young people in a progressive manner
		Ad feminism: listen to younger generations because they are the future
<u>**2. Expressing emotionality and sensitiveness**</u>	Advertising showing men they can be sensible (stimulus 2): Men support towards message	Strong men can change into sensitive: "I like the idea behind it"
		Acceptable to have sensible skin and still be a man: feeling aligned with the message
		Does not mean that if you are strong you cannot be sensitive: message nice and appealing
	Advertising breaking the "feelings" taboo	Sensitivity is still a taboo within men's world has to be break down
		Advertising: trying to show men it's OK to have an emotional side and sensitive
		Social media: advertising supporting expressing feelings to men is 'huge'

	"Feelings" a trend (stimulus 2)	Societal values reflect on advertising: feelings
		Talking about feelings is a new kind of communication
		Advertising about feelings: trend
3. "Nurturing Fatherhood"	"Fatherhood" as a positive message (stimulus 1)	Advertising fatherhood: a positive image to portray
		Advertising fatherhood: interesting approach
		Important to break down stereotypes about women involved in nurturing
	Evolution within actual paternity (stimulus 1)	Advertising reflecting 'new lifestyle' closeness to family
		Advertising reflecting actual fatherhood
		Reflecting today's tasks divisions at a household
		Role of men changing in society: more involvement in nurturing
4. Against traditional values in advertising	Football as subject that resonates with traditional masculinity (stimulus 3)	Football ads: perceived as stereotypical masculinity, obvious choice
		Football fan based associated with macho personality and homophobia
		Football catalogue as 'traditional'

		Soccer players as influencers for macho men
		Ad sponsored (status), soccer as a masculine sport
	Brands are still transmitting traditional values in Advertising	Advertising assuming all men have a macho masculinity and it's not true
		Advertising implying all men have to be 'strong'
		Nivea conservative values on advertising
		Brand is conservative: huge "Adam's apple" image represents masculinity
		Strong men' phrasing catches attention but supports the male stereotype
	Criticism over brand's "attractive" models	Skepticism over ad: model actor look-alike
		Ad feminism: skepticism over models in image supporting feminism
		Attractive men on advertising: basic
	Limited diversity	Diverse of male representation but limited: need more inclusion in advertising

		Models in advertising only male: need of women inclusion in advertising
5. Political message as impactful but limited	Advertising re-writing masculinity (stimulus 4)	Advertising with political view: importance on redefining masculinity
		Brand trying to rewrite narrative about what is masculine
		Advertising opinion: empowering men
	Political subjects perceived as impactful to society (stimulus 4)	Advertising with political view: grab attention with images to get people interested
		Nivea messages are impactful to society
		Message of unity and awareness: positive
		More identification with brand when they share positive messages
	Loss of credibility due to over support of social causes (stimulus 4)	Advertising: should be focus on a social cause they can support and stick to it
		Advertising: should not over support causes and be careful about what their messages
		Advertising: should not over support causes and made an opposite effect
	Neutral approach from brands (stimulus 1)	Advertising about fatherhood: neutral other ads portray this better

		Advertising: playing safe 'surfing the wave'
		Advertising: beginning to change
		Grooming advertising: baby steps in comparison to male make-up advertising
		Fatherhood advertising: considered neutral
	Skepticism over brand's political position	Marketing strategy to use inclusion and diversity on ads
		Skepticism brands sharing political views, no correlation between image and product
		Skepticism over ad: fake the ideal of selling a miraculous product that will enhance appearance
		Support over brand's speaking about political subjects but skepticism
		Brands have a huge platform but skepticism if they speak about diverse political subjects
		Questionable brand's right to speak about a political subject
6. The male body appearance	"Attractive" models	Advertising displaying cool "fit" guys: no advertisement with ugly people
		Advertising moisturizer: "I wanna look like this when I am tired"
		Not judgement over male models: "hot kind of people"

	"Normal" people as worth ideal	Models represent a worth ideal: they could be anyone
		Opinion on ads: represent a "men" ideal kind of worth and normal
	Male body fragmentation as attractive (stimulus 2)	Neck of men advertising: attractive and intimate
		Men's neck advertising: considered attractive or sensual
	Visual representation of benefits: positive	Neck of men advertising: good representation of sensitivity
		Image illustrates grooming: smooth faces
		Image of an attractive men as the benefit of grooming: positive

Appendix C: Topic list interviews

Rapport questions:

- How was your day? What did you do today/what are your other plans for today?

Introduction to the interview:

- Thank you so much for being here, as I mentioned before, this interview is going to be recorded with your permission and the information you share with me will remain private, right? Okay...

- **Instructions -** I will ask you some questions about some topics related to men's grooming and advertising, then, I will show you some images that I collected from the social media accounts *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal* on Instagram… I will finally ask some final questions and close the interview… Do you have any questions?

1) **Experience with grooming**

o   What do you do in terms of grooming?

o   What do you think about the practice of personal grooming?

o   Which type of products you buy for your personal grooming and why?

    o   Potential follow-up question:

        o   Do you use these products daily? How?

o   How do you take care of yourself in the daily basis?

2) **Experience with grooming brands**

o   In general, which grooming brands do you know?

    o   Potential follow-up question:

    o   What do you think about these brands?

o   Do you remember any advertisement from these brands or any grooming brand?

o   What is your experience with the brands *Dove, Nivea, and L'Oréal?*

3) **Stimulus**

Now I will show you some images I collected from grooming brand's' Instagram and then I will make a few questions about these posts… I will give you a few seconds to look at the image and read the caption...

Stimulus 1 – Fatherhood

dovemencare ✓ • Seguir

dovemencare ✓ "For decades fathers have been portrayed in media as uninvolved, and uninterested in parenting. I am proud to be a part of a new era that reflects the dads of today. We are Dad 2.0. We see fatherhood as a verb. We change diapers, we embrace grass stains and rug burns and, by golly, we finger paint."

Keep smashing those stereotypes @dudedad and @dad2summit 👊Are YOU part of Dad 2.0? 🧑

#DoveMenCare #DadsCare #DadLife #Fatherhood #ModernFatherhood #Family #FamilyFirst #Parenting #BreakingStereotypes

31 sem

177 Me gusta
31 DE JULIO DE 2020

Agrega un comentario...   Publicar

- o   What do you see in the image?
- o   What are your thoughts about the message *Dove* is sending?
- o   How is masculinity illustrated in this image?
- o   Have you seen any other advertising or brand approaching the subject (fatherhood and equal paternity)? If yes, which one?

Stimulus 2 – Feelings

- o   What do you see in the image?
- o   What do you think about the caption?
- o   What is the message
- o   What do you think about the phrase "Strong men choose sensitive"?
- o   What do you think about brands that speak about this subject?

Stimulus 3 – Sports

niveamen ✓ • Siguiendo   ...

niveamen ✓ Grooming is like scoring in a team: First, you need a shower gel, then a lotion, a shaving gel, an after shave balm and finally a deodorant. Well, a long and tricky combination for your tiki-taka grooming at home. But fans will love it. Won't they? #niveamen #realmadrid

42 sem

maja.menstuff Thats not really menstuff

42 sem   Responder

vu.yy 😍

42 sem   1 Me gusta   Responder

694 Me gusta

17 DE MAYO DE 2020

Agrega un comentario...   Publicar

- o   What do you see in the image?
- o   What do you think the image represents?
- o   What do you think about the caption?
- o   What is the message?
- o   What do you think of sports and football teams in the grooming brands posts?
- o   Why do you think brands post about football?

Stimulus 4 - Women empowerment and feminism
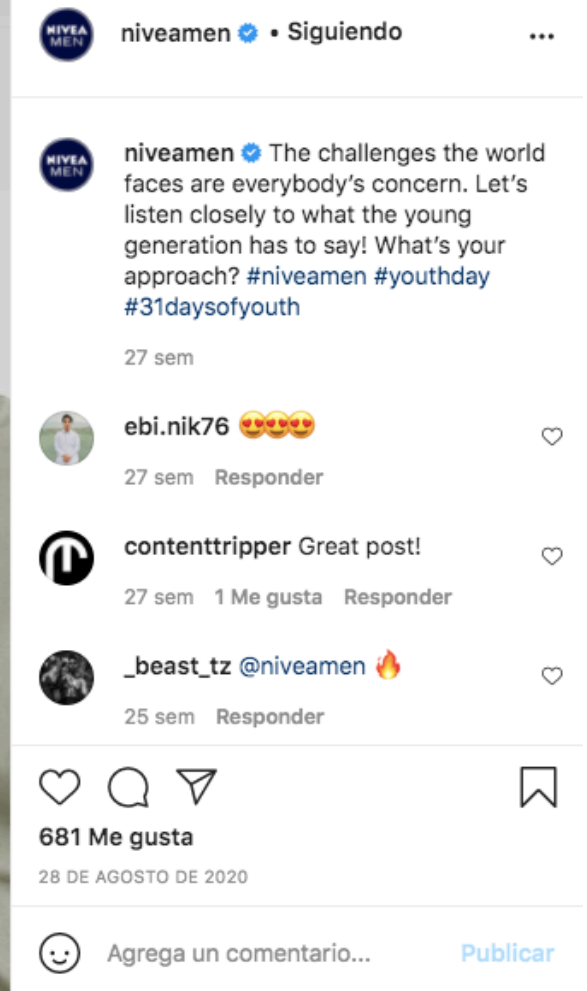
- o What do you see in the image?
- o What do you think about the caption?
- o What is the message?
- o Do you think is important to spread this message?
- o What do you think of brands that share this message?

Stimulus 5 – Appearance

- o What do you see in the image?
- o What do you think about the caption?
- o What is the message?
- o Why do you think brands share this message?

4) **Final thoughts about Instagram posts**
- o What are your overall thoughts about the posts you just have seen?
- o What do you think about how these brands illustrate masculinity?

5) **Men and society**
- o Tell me, for you what it is to be "man" in today's society?
- o In your opinion, what does society expect from men?
- o What are your thoughts about men and beauty standards?

- o This is the end of the interview, is there anything else you would like to add about masculinity and grooming that we haven't discussed?

Closing of the interview

These were all of the questions, thank you so much for your participation in my research, I hope you had a good time and I will share the results with you once my thesis is finished! I will stop recording now…Have a nice day!