

## **The power of religious diversity in advertising**

Exploring consumers' responses toward depicting religious minorities in advertising

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# THE POWER OF RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN ADVERTISING

## Abstract and keywords

The advertising industry has faced some changes throughout the last decades with society's strong call for diversity. The effect of depicting religious minorities, however, is still an ongoing debate, with once-leading brands receiving backlash and facing accusations of cultural appropriation. Some scholars state that including religious minorities can be beneficial to target specific consumer groups or promote niche products. Others argue that depicting religion can backfire and lead to lower consumer responses. A large body of research has focused on Christianity in advertising, while Islamic signs in Western European are understudied.

To address this gap in literature, this thesis addresses the following research question: *'What is the effect of including religious minority endorsers in advertising on consumers' responses in Europe?'* The hypotheses posed in the theoretical framework were tested using an experimental survey design with three treatment groups. All participants were randomly assigned to one condition using the randomization from the program Qualtrics.

It was found that participants belonging to a religious minority had a more favorable attitude toward the ad compared to participants belonging to a majority group. Additionally, participants who identify as atheists tend to have a lower attitude toward the brand than religious participants. No other effects between endorsers' religion on the defined consumers' responses showed significance.

The study concluded that depicting religion and especially a minority endorser does not influence consumers' ad and brand evaluation. Thus, marketers nowadays do not risk a negative backlash or lower consumer attitude toward the ad or brand anymore when depicting a religious minority in Europe. This research contributed to the existing literature on religious minorities in advertising and its effect on consumers' responses. Lastly, some suggestions for future research are provided. These recommendations comprise looking into various religious signs and focusing on other religious groups. Further research will provide a deeper understanding of the impact of depicting religious minorities in advertising on consumers' responses.

**KEYWORDS:** Advertising, religious minorities, religious diversity, Endorsement, Islamic advertising

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## 1. Introduction

In 2018, Katjes, a German candy company, released an advertising campaign featuring women wearing hijabs (Leretz, 2018). Some applauded the company for promoting inclusivity and representation in advertising (Harper, 2018). The campaign featured a diverse group of women, including those with hijabs, to showcase the company's commitment to diversity. This move was seen as a positive step towards a more excellent representation of Muslim women in the media. However, the campaign was also met with backlash from some who felt that the company was trying to profit from cultural appropriation (Rößner et al., 2021). Critics argued that the company was using the hijab as a marketing gimmick rather than honestly promoting diversity and inclusivity (Harper, 2018). The campaign highlighted the ongoing issues of religious depiction in advertising and the importance of diversity and inclusion in all aspects of society. It sparked conversations about the effectiveness of a diverse portrayal of religions and their effect on consumers.

However, conversations and awareness about diversity did not occur recently. The 1960s can be claimed as the starting point for diversity discussions through investigations of gender diversity. During that time, scholars' interest in diversity advertising started questioning the traditional depiction of men and women (e.g., Mann & Huffman, 2005). Along with the second wave of feminism and its aim for equal rights and self-determination, the media portrayal of women was beginning to change (Mann & Huffman, 2005). According to the most recent research on the influence of advertising, gender depictions in ads should correspond with consumers' established social and mental frameworks, as well as their thoughts and beliefs around gender role. (Eisend et al., 2022; Rubie-Davies et al., 2013; Grau & Zotos, 2016). A less traditional portrayal of gender roles or, in general, a more diverse portrayal leads to a positive brand attitude (Middleton & Turnbull, 2021).

A large body of research focused on specific diversity attributes like sexual preferences or gender (e.g., Eisend, 2009; Sierra et al., 2012; Grau & Zotos, 2016). Some research resulted in the notion that a diverse presentation of different ethnicities enhances the advertisement effectiveness or is even more effective if minority groups are displayed (Bragg et al., 2019; Appiah, 2007). The results, though, are inconsistent. Other academic studies have shown that people are more tolerant of in-group members than others (Aaker et al., 2000). Customers, therefore, favor commercials with representatives from their own ethnic group (Aaker et al., 2000). Advertisers face the dilemma of including minority members to contribute to a more diverse society while at the same time might receive negative consumer responses toward the ads.

So far, little attention has been given to other characteristics like disabilities (e.g., Haller & Ralph, 2001) or religion (Rößner et al., 2021). Especially religious diversity is widely understudied as it is often measured together with ethnic identity. Religious diversity refers to various religious beliefs and practices within a given society or community. Religious diversity in advertising relates to the inclusion of people from different religious backgrounds and the representation of different religions in ad campaigns (Rößner et al., 2021). Especially, Islam and its role in Western advertising was greatly overlooked in academic research. Thus, according to Lumpkins (2010), in addition to Christianity, other religions should be researched in relation to diversity advertising. Subsequently, Naseri & Tamam (2012) recommend focusing on Islamic religious symbols in advertising for further research.

Only a few attempts have been made to investigate religious minorities and their consumers' responses. For example, Rößner et al. (2021) found that an endorser's affiliation with a religious minority has a negative influence on consumers' attitudes and behaviors. El Hazzouri et al. (2017) highlight the fact that it was not examined thoroughly in literature how members of a religious minority or majority groups react once they are exposed to an ad including a religious minority member. They further suggest testing the impact of religion on consumer behavior. The lack of a thorough examination of how individuals from religious minorities or majority groups react to advertisements depicting members of religious minorities highlights the need for additional research focused on looking at how religion affects consumer behavior.

Aiming at generating academic knowledge, this study will investigate the effect of including religious minority endorsers in advertising on consumers' responses, such as their attitudes and trust.

Therefore, the following research question is introduced: *What is the effect of including religious minority endorsers in advertising on consumers' responses in Europe?* Furthermore, moderation effects of religious affiliation, ethnic identity, and gender will be tested to further explore the relationship between religious minority endorsement and consumers' responses. Ethnic identity and gender are often used in diversity research as moderators to get a better understanding of consumers' behavior, as these factors strongly shape an individual's values, beliefs, and behaviors (e.g., El Hazzouri et al., 2017).

Companies are presently under enhanced social pressure to participate in Corporate Social Responsibility, with inclusivity and diversity being regarded as crucial components (Sánchez-Torné et al., 2020). For a positive social reputation, it might be vital to portray

minority groups in an authentic and sincere manner. Especially due to globalization, internationalization and migration, and travel nowadays, it is crucial to examine this issue in research since consumers' perceptions of diversity in advertising may be influenced by it. This study will help to gain insights for advertisers about consumers' responses to the portrayal of religion and will assist in balancing the dilemma of depicting majority and minority members. The results can guide marketers in their decisions to gain more diversity in advertising and toward more positive attitudes towards the ad/brand to increase the overall brand reputation.

The remaining part of the thesis four chapters. The following chapter will describe the theoretical framework. It entails presenting prior research on the topics, making connections to the diversity context, and formulating hypotheses. A conceptual model that represents the introduced assumptions is presented at the end of Chapter 2. The study's research design, methods, and sampling decisions are all described in detail in Chapter 3. The literature-based measurements that were selected to be part of the survey will also be discussed and justified. The results are reported in Chapter 4. By using MANOVA and moderation studies, the hypotheses are tested. Furthermore, some additional analyses will be presented to test further relationships in the data. The results are finally discussed, and a conclusion is drawn in Chapter 5. The research limitations are addressed, the results are reported, and recommendations for further study are drawn from an analysis of the theoretical implications. In the end, the findings are converted into practical implications that provide recommendations for managerial implementations.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This thesis aims to explore the effects of including a religious minority endorser in advertising on consumers' responses. This chapter provides an overview of the existing literature related to the study's topic. Firstly, research about diversity in advertising and social identity theory will be introduced. This section will introduce the topic of diversity in advertising, before the main body focuses on religion and advertising and the different consumer responses. Thirdly, this thesis examines possible moderation effects of religious affiliation, ethnicity, and gender. As a result, the final section of this chapter will explore these variables. Based on theory and the results of previously conducted research, hypotheses are developed and formulated. Lastly, to illustrate the hypotheses, a conceptual model will be presented.

### 2.1 Diversity Advertising and the Social Identity Theory

Advertising can be seen as the promotional element of marketing. It is used to 1) inform, 2) raise awareness, and 3) promote a product, brand, or service (Richards & Curran, 2002). Therefore, advertising uses a variety of cultural cues, such as culturally related personalities, shared cultural symbols, and favored language, to convey the desired meaning in the hopes that the viewer would be able to decode its message (Veloutsou & Ahmed, 2005).

Diversity in advertising focuses on depicting individuals with a variety of attributes while yet pursuing the same objectives of promotion (Richards & Curran, 2002). Nevertheless, Appiah and Saewitz (2016) argue diversity in advertising and in the media landscape, in general, plays a crucial role, as these institutions should ideally reflect the composition of society as a whole. Shankar (2015) claims that diversity in advertising involves thoughtfully aligning marketing initiatives with customers that would otherwise be neglected due to their low numbers (e.g., minorities), poor income, or lack of a strong public voice. Previously, such marginalized groups were identified by their race or ethnicity. Nowadays, scholars like Shankar (2015) highlight the lack of public display of the LGBTQ+ community or different religious affiliations. Advertisers promote diversity for a variety of reasons, including management demand, unique selling propositions, or personal beliefs toward a more diverse media representation (Gopaldas, 2013).

*Social Identity Theory* (SIT) is often employed in the context of diversity research. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that individuals define themselves in terms of group affiliation, a significant source of pride and self-esteem. Individuals obtain their identity from

social groups, which are formed based on shared traits like race, ethnicity, nationality, or gender (Turner et al., 1979). Based on theories, social classification enhances a differentiation between in-group and out-group members that might result in discriminatory behaviors. Additionally, the conflict is reinforced by the assumption that members of one group are superior to others outside of that group (Turner et al., 1979). The Social Identity Theory demonstrates the influence of social groups on an individual's behavior and self-image and tries to find explanations how discrimination and bias occur (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Once individuals have found their group, their self-image changes positively as they have found their peers (Sierra et al., 2012).

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), the process of joining a social group is mainly influenced by beliefs, a similar set of values, ethnicity, or religion. Therefore, it can be assumed that within a group, the members will react similarly to certain stimuli, such as in advertising, and will share a similar opinion (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As a result, the SIT paradigm is often employed for studying advertising effectiveness. Thus, this theory will be used to explain the effects of religion in advertising and consumer responses.

### **2.1.1 Religion and Advertising**

An individual's affiliation with a particular religion significantly impacts their values and general conduct (Lim & Putnam, 2010). For daily existence, religion establishes norms and rules. These can include guidelines for what to wear or eat, but they can also refer to particular morals and ways of life. Additionally, religion significantly influences consumer behavior, such as choosing leisure activities (Stodolska & Livengood, 2006) or shopping habits (Essoo & Dibb, 2004).

According to Hirschman (1940), there are notable disparities in consumer behavior between people of different religious affiliations in terms of novelty seeking, information seeking, and innovativeness. For instance, she concluded that Jewish consumers value attributes related to a variety of goods and services more highly than Catholic or Protestant consumers and that they are less brand- and store-loyal. Interestingly, research has shown that the religious influence of Islamic and Christian beliefs on social life and consumer behavior is greater than for other religions (Ustaahmetoğlu, 2020). Thus, it has been demonstrated that religion may significantly impact a person's life. Therefore, if religious affiliation is an integral part of life and determines daily life through values and behavioral principles, it can be assumed that religion also serves an essential role in consumption behavior.



Overall, the literature primarily focused on specific products or specific target groups in the context of religion in advertising. Prior research has shown that including religion in advertising efficiently targets a religious target audience (Zehra & Minton, 2020).

Consequently, a common marketing strategy is using religious cues during holidays like Christmas, Ramadan, or Rosh Hashana to attract specific customers (Zehra & Minton, 2020).

Furthermore, religious symbols are often utilized to promote niche products. One of the most prominent examples would be the green food certificate "halal," which highlights the food ingredients' compliance with the Islamic diet (El-Gohary, 2016). In addition to niche products, religious symbols are employed by companies to attract consumers' attention. Since consumers who identify with a product are more likely to evaluate that product positively, prior research has shown that the employment of religious symbols in product advertising often results in higher product and brand evaluations (Zehra & Minton, 2020). Research on the use of religious symbols in marketing is few, and the majority of the studies that are accessible concentrate on Christian symbolism in advertising. For example, Henley et al. (2009) indicate that while an irrelevant Christian symbol product linkage (the word "Christian" in a beer ad) significantly lowers ad evaluative efficacy, like attitude toward the ad, a relevant Christian symbol product linkage (using a cross symbol on an ad for counseling services) confirms the fundamental assumptions of a positive evaluation.

However, contrary findings were reported by other studies (e.g., Alhouti et al., 2015). It was found that displaying religion can backfire and result in lower attitudes toward the ad (Alhouti et al., 2015). A recent example, which was described previously, was the Candy Ad from the German company Katjes, with a Model wearing a Hijab.

Until this day, little research attention was given to Islamic cues in advertising. In a study by Nickerson et al. (2022) concerning religious affiliation and consumer behavior in Dubai, it was discovered that incorporating Islamic symbols in the advertisement of a culturally free product (phone advertisement) harms the consumer's perception of the advertisement. This effect was discovered for Muslim consumers, but even more convincing evidence was discovered for Christian or non-religious consumers (Nickerson et al., 2022).

Returning briefly to the main idea of SIT, Christian respondents could not identify with a Muslim advertisement because it does not correspond to their social category. However, the theory is contradicted by the fact that the results for Muslim respondents were also negative. For this reason, Nickerson et al. (2022) recommend that marketers be cautious when using Islamic symbols in advertising. On the other hand, despite this recent finding, other studies show that Muslim consumers especially react positively to Islamic signs in an

advertisement and derive a more positive brand attitude from it (see Butt et al., 2018; Nickerson & Nandialath, 2019). Similarly, these authors base their results on Social Identity Theory, which contends that social categorization affects ad evaluation significantly. However, it has to be stated that these studies focused on products specifically targeted at an Islamic target group. As was mentioned in a previous paragraph, including religion can effectively target specific consumers.

Other studies on religion and advertising have concentrated on the influence of religion on consumers' attitudes toward controversial advertising. For example, Fam et al. (2004) studied the attitudes of religious believers of four religious' groups (Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Atheist) toward four different types of controversial products) in order to determine whether religion and the intensity of religious belief affect the attitudes toward the ad. Alcohol, cigarettes, underwear, or political advertising are examples of controversial products in their study. Their research showed that religiosity significantly impacts views about products (Fam et al., 2004). In comparison to the other three religions, Muslims regarded the promotion of gender/sex-related products, social/political groupings, and health and care products to be the most offensive. Additionally, religiously devoted responders were more likely than less devoted followers to regard advertisements for products with sex or gender-related content, health and beauty products, and addictive substances as unpleasant (Fam et al., 2004).

Moreover, a study by Siala (2013) showed that religion impacts brand loyalty and influences the purchase intention for high-involvement purchases. It is obvious that marketers must use extreme caution when employing religious symbols in ads (Zehra & Minton, 2020). As a result, Fam et al. (2004) suggested that marketers reconsider using Islamic themes to advertise a product. Including religion in advertising works well when targeting specific groups or promoting certain products. Hence, ambivalent academic results prove that religious symbols can unite target groups and repel others.

On a final note, it can be said that the literature primarily focused on specific products or specific targets group in the context of religion in advertising. To find out how consumers respond to the portrayal of religion in advertising, with the endorser's religion being of secondary importance, this thesis chose to concentrate on low-involvement products.

*Table 2.1 Overview of important topics about religion and advertising*

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Summary</b>	<b>Source</b>
Impact of religion on values	Belonging to a religious group presents norms and rules for the daily life. Therefore, one's religious affiliation strongly influences their values and behavior	Stodolska & Livengood (2006), Essoo & Dibb (2004), Lim & Putnam (2010)
Consumer behavior based on religious affiliation	The consumer behavior differs from each religious group.	Hirschmann (1940)
Targeting groups based on their religious affiliation	Depicting religion in advertising is a useful approach to target specific religious groups.	Zehra & Minton (2020)
Use of religious symbols in advertising	Including religious symbols and cues can lead to more favorable ad and brand evaluations, however its effectiveness is controversial.	Zehra & Minton (2020), Henley et al. (2009), Alhouti et al. (2015)
Religion's impact on consumers responses	Religion can have a positive impact on consumers responses and brand loyalty.	Siala (2013)
Employing religion in advertising	Marketers should be cautious when depicting religious symbols or religious endorsers in advertising as there is the risk for potential backlashes or the risk to repel target groups.	Zehra & Minton (2020), Fam et al. (2004)

## **2.2 Consumers' Responses to minority group endorsers**

This research follows the definition of a minority group by Wirth (1945). He refers to it as any group of individuals who are regarded differently from others in society due to physical or cultural characteristics. The phrase describes the group that is less powerful than the dominant power. It is not always the case that being a member of a minority group equates

to being a numerical minority; instead, this is tied to who has a worse socioeconomically and politically and who occupies a less prominent social position.

Concerning religious groups in European nations, Christianity continues to remain the most common religion today. Mainly due to the historical aspect that Christianity, and especially the church, served as an important institution in the last centuries in Europe. It is most visible in European cities, where churches and cathedrals still characterize the cityscapes. Furthermore, throughout Europe, there are still common Christian holidays prescribed by law, such as Christmas, Easter, or Pentecost (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen, 2010).

Nevertheless, academics say Christianity will decline in Europe by 2050 and be replaced by a rise in atheism (Pew Research Center, 2022). According to the report, an increased number of Muslims is also anticipated, which will be brought on by immigration, refugee flows, and a rise in religious conversions. Nevertheless, the Islam remains a minority group in today's society (Pace, 2021). Islam was therefore picked to act as the substitute minority group in this research. Due to the Muslim consumer market's rapid expansion in terms of size and purchasing power, it is also intriguing for marketers to see how customers respond to Islamic endorsers (Khan et al., 2017).

This study investigates a possible correlation between religious minority endorsement and consumers' responses. Consumers response to a brand's advertising can often be explained by theoretical, advertising frameworks like, for example, AIDA (awareness, interest, desire, and action (Fortenberry & McGoldrick, 2019)). Even though framework types can differ, the fundamental theory proposes that behavioral results are ultimately the result of an initial cognitive or awareness stage, followed by an emotive response or responses. Given this, advertising researchers frequently look at consumers' attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, brand trust and their intention to buy (Sierra et al., 2012). Spears & Singh (2004) claim that attitudes predict consumer behavior.

Research about diversity advertising has focused on similar attitudinal behaviors. The following part will discuss the concepts including results of different diversity traits, along with the posed hypotheses for this study.

### **2.2.1 Attitude toward the Ad**

According to MacKenzie et al. (1986), attitude toward the advertisement is the predisposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a specific advertising stimulus during a specific exposure condition. It includes the emotional reaction to the ad and its credibility and

effectiveness (MacKenzie et al., 1986). MacKenzie et al. (1986) discovered two distinct ways that attitude toward the ad can forecast brand attitude. First, by the direct influence that an advertisement's likeability can transfer to the brand's likeability, and second, through the more subtle influence that an advertisement's credibility can have on favorable attitudes toward a particular brand. Attitude toward the ad is frequently used a mediator of attitude towards the brand and is one of the important dependent variables in advertising studies that measures ad reaction. It has also been recognized as a crucial element in determining brand preference among low-involved people who hardly comprehend the information contained in advertising (Lumpkins, 2010).

### **2.2.2 Attitude toward a Brand**

The term is defined by Mitchell and Olson (1981) as “individual’s internal evaluation of the brand” (p. 318). With regard to this notion, it is possible to assess a brand either positively or negatively.

A theoretical framework known as the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) describes the psychological procedures involved in persuasion and explains how attitude toward a brand can be shaped (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Individuals can either process information centrally or peripherally, in accordance with the ELM. According to Petty and Cacioppo (1986), the primary path entails a thorough, deliberate analysis of the data, during which individuals assess the claims and slogans displays in the message. The superficial processing of information that occurs along the peripheral pathway is impacted by external factors such as the message's origin, emotional appeal, and visual appeal (MacKenzie & Spreng, 1992). Particularly in the context of advertising, the ELM has significant implications. Commercial communications that aim to convince people to alter their opinions about a product might have to pass via a central processing channel where people assess the arguments and supporting data (Srivastava & Saini, 2022). This necessitates careful thought about the message's content and delivery, as well as an awareness of the motivations of and capacities of the target audience for central processing. On the other hand, peripheral cues like the diversity of the endorser in the advertisement or the emotional appeal of the message may also be successful in encouraging attitude (Srivastava & Saini, 2022).

### **2.2.3 Brand Trust**

By definition, brand trust refers to the fact that customers have confidence in the ability or quality of a brand and are convinced that it delivers what it promises. If a brand consistently fulfills the expectations it has raised in the minds of customers, brand trust grows

(Qualtrics, 2022). Rempel et al. (1985) contend that trust development results from earlier interactions and experiences, whereas Ravald and Grönroos (1996) believe that trust arises from experience and grows through time. Relationships with the brand, whether they be interpersonal or personal, are distinguished from transactions by a number of criteria, one of which is trust.

Promoting a diverse portrayal of religion might assist companies to increase trust and credibility. By showing that they are respectful and sensitive to the religious beliefs of their customers, companies can build stronger and long-lasting relationships with their audience and create a higher brand trust (Khamis et al., 2021). Table 2.2 gives an overview of the measured consumer responses.

*Table 2.2 Definition of the measured consumer responses*

<b>Subsection</b>	<b>Concept</b>	<b>Definition</b>
2.2.1	Attitude toward the Ad	Attitude toward the ad is the predisposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a specific advertising stimulus during a specific exposure condition. It includes the emotional reaction to the ad and its credibility and effectiveness (MacKenzie et al., 1986).
2.2.2	Attitude toward the Brand	Attitude toward the Brand is the “individual’s internal evaluation of the brand” (Mitchell & Olson, 1981, p. 318). It is possible to assess a brand either positively or negatively.
2.2.3	Brand Trust	Brand trust refers to the fact that customers have confidence in the ability or quality of a brand and are convinced that it delivers what it promises (Qualtrics, 2022).

### **2.3 Hypotheses**

To properly give an overview of all relevant concepts that will be used in this study, the term *endorsement* must be defined. The term refers to the use of a celebrity, expert, or other influential figure to support or promote a product or a brand. This is performed by, e.g., appearances in advertisements (Muda et al., 2014).

Since this study refers to European Countries, it must be emphasized that Christianity is the majority religion in Europe. Most European countries have been influenced by Christianity over the last centuries (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen, 2010). Therefore, most likely, inhabitants of these countries know the rituals of Christianity, even if they do not belong to this religion (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen, 2010). It may even be that consumers no longer notice when Christianity is depicted in some way because they are used to it. It may be different if an endorser from a minority religion is depicted. In-group favoritism states that individuals' attitudes toward members within a group tend to be more favorable than those outside of it (Fu et al., 2012). Based on this theory, it is assumed that consumers (disregarding their religion in the first step) will have a low attitude towards advertisements with endorsers from a minority religion. To examine if an adverse effect occurs when displaying religious minorities in advertising, the following hypothesis will be tested:

**H1:** Depicting a religious minority endorser in advertisements leads to lower levels of (a) ad attitude, (b) brand attitude and (c) brand trust compared to depicting a religious majority endorser.

Besides the social identity theory, the concept of self-referencing can assist in explaining these effects. Self-referencing theory can be applied in a minority group setting to comprehend how group members view themselves and their position in society (Lee et al., 2002). For instance, members of a marginalized group might create a group self-referential narrative that details their common encounters with prejudice and exclusion. Their identity and sense of inclusion within the group may be shaped by this narrative. According to Lee et al. (2002), self-referencing remarks can also be used by members of the minority group to establish their unique identities and challenge prevailing cultural standards.

It is critical to further investigate the in-group favoritism, so whether the consumers' religious membership affects the relationship between religious endorsers and attitude toward the ad. An individual's behavior is based on their attitudes and values, which their religious affiliation can directly influence. Additionally, this may influence how consumers receive and translate advertising (Sandıkcı, 2011). However, research does not agree on a positive or a negative effect on consumers' behavior. As previously stated, some studies have shown that advertising with religious clues leads to negative attitudes (e.g., Taylor et al., 2010). Thus, once the consumer can identify themselves with the ad, the attitude toward the brand will be more positive. One explanation for this can be that religious affiliation is a part of one's

identity. To gain more academical insights about the moderating effect of consumer's religious affiliation on the relationship between attitude toward an ad and religious endorsement, the hypothesis is worded as:

**H2:** The negative effect of religious minority endorsement on attitude toward the ad will be stronger for consumers of a religious majority than for consumers of a religious minority.

A strong sense of belonging to a social group, including self-identification, is known as ethnic identity (Tajfel, 1978; Phinney, 1990). It is influenced by cultural interactions and contributes significantly to one's sense of self (Tajfel, 1978). Identity thus has a significant impact on how consumers perceive and react to advertising (Sierra et al., 2012). Numerous studies on ethnicity's impact on advertising were conducted (Appiah & Liu, 2009; Yin et al., 2019). They concluded that a member of an ethnic minority group is more likely to react positively when other minority groups are displayed in advertising. This can be explained by the fact that marginalized groups frequently have more favorable opinions toward other minorities (e.g., Bragg et al., 2019).

This notion was again found in ethnic diversity research. For example, Whittler and DiMeo (1991), reported that Whites are less receptive to brand's advertisements featuring Black endorsers. It clearly shows a positive correlation between attitude toward the ad and for example viewers' ethnic identification with an advertisement. According to the literature, people who identify with a particular ethnic group are more likely to respond positively to advertisements that feature people from that group. A study by Forehand et al. (2002) resulted in the notion that Asians reacted more favorable toward advertisements, depicting Asian endorsers than Caucasians who saw the same Asian endorsers. Other studies (e.g., Whittler, 1989; Deshpande et al., 1986) focused on different ethnic groups like Blacks or Hispanics, providing similar results. In addition to favoring advertisements with endorsers of the same race as the viewer, Appiah (2001) observed another intriguing outcome. According to his research, minorities (Blacks, Hispanics, and Asians) are more likely to respond favorably to a black endorsement than a white one (Appiah, 2001). Surprisingly, his study indicates that white teenagers found black character commercials with varied degrees of black cultural cues equally enticing as comparable white character advertisements, notwithstanding their ethnic identification (Appiah, 2001). These findings suggest that people are more likely to view a brand favorably when it uses endorsers within the same in-group member as the viewer.



Similar to the insights about attitude toward the ad, conclusions can equally be drawn about attitude toward the brand.

In this study, it was chosen to examine whether the presence of a member of a religious minority would affect brand attitudes differently for ethnic minority and majority members. To see if similar results to other diversity studies, the following hypothesis is introduced:

**H3:** The negative effect of religious minority endorsement on brand attitude will be stronger for consumers of an ethnic majority group than for consumers of an ethnic minority group.

Eisend et al., (2014) critically assessed consumer perception towards advertising and their study resulted in the notion that women process information differently than men. Diverse information led to more positive female responses than men that favored non-diverse gender portrayal (Eisend et al., 2014). Women can be seen as marginalized group and therefore tend to have a more positive opinion toward other minorities (Bragg et al., 2019). Rudwin and Goodwin (2004) note that women can be more sensitive toward the struggles of others, resulting in more understanding and acceptance of problems of other groups with people from different backgrounds. Furthermore, Kochan et al. (2003) claim that females are more often exposed to diversity in the workplace, which could also be an indicator for a more positive attitude. Lastly, when referring to social norms and traditional gender expectations, women are often seen as more caring and nurturing compared to men, which would make women more empathic to others (Livingston et al., 2012).

Based on that premise and to find out if these results are also shown with depicting a religious minority member, the hypothesis is posed:

**H4:** The negative effect of religious minority endorsement on a) attitude toward the ad, b) attitude toward the brand and c) brand trust will be stronger for male consumers than for female consumers.

The hypotheses presented in the earlier section are compiled in the conceptual model that follows, which also serves to illustrate the anticipated relationships. The model consists of two sections. The first component denotes the anticipated relationship between the advertisement and consumers' responses and stands for H1a, b, and c. The second component

refers to potential moderator effects of religious affiliation and ethnic identity gender on consumers' responses, namely attitude toward the ad and toward the brand (H2, H3). Lastly, the lower part of the model represents the effect of gender on attitude toward the ad, toward the brand and brand trust (H4a, b, and c).

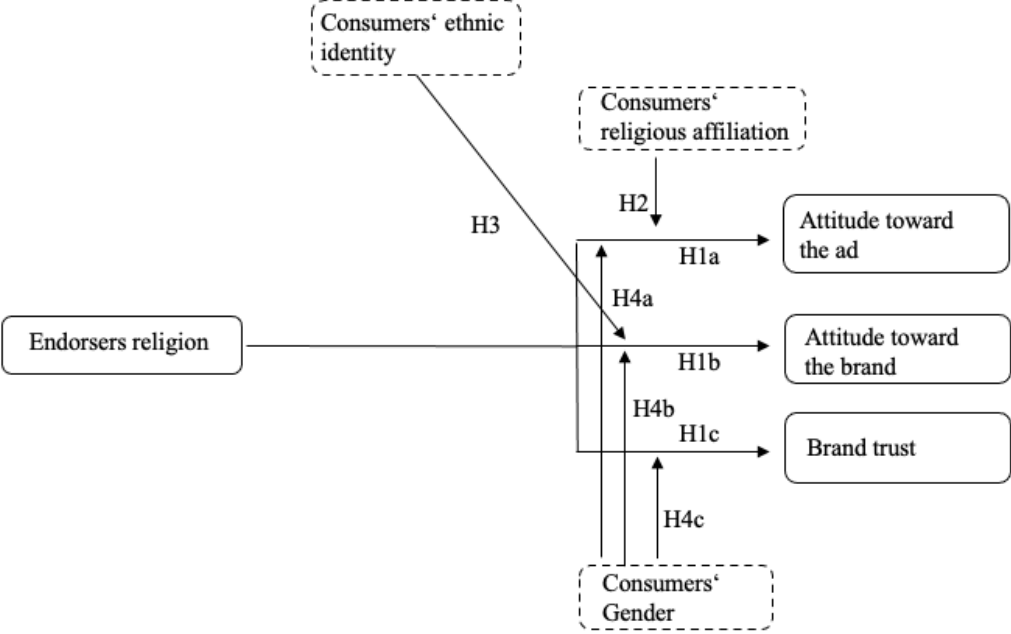


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Model

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter will cover the methodology of this thesis. The methodological decisions taken for this study are covered subsequently. First, the introduced and supported experimental survey research design will be presented. Second, the methods of the study will be explained in depth, including information on sampling, data collection, assimilation, and processing. Prior to the presentation of the appropriate descriptive statistics in the next chapter, the measures selected to quantify the used concepts are also introduced.

To answer the posed research question, it was decided to choose a quantitative research approach. Holton & Burnett (2005) argue that this is a suitable approach for analyzing the influence of an independent variable on a dependent variable. Furthermore, the posed hypotheses include potential moderation effects. To find out their effects, a quantitative approach must be utilized. Neuman and Robson (2014) state that quantitative research strives for investigating effects and relationships between independent and dependent variables. Surveys are a quantitative research method aiming for quantifiable results (Bowling & Ebrahim, 2005). According to Bowling and Ebrahim (2005), surveys gather standardized quantitative data. They are suitable for investigating people's attitudes by measuring them by the concepts of interests. An experiment within a survey design will answer the proposed research question. A between subject design will be utilized. Each condition is tested on a distinct person, limiting each participant's user interface exposure to only one condition (Charness et al., 2012). With this decision, the answer will be less biased, and the ordering effects will be decreased (Charness et al., 2012).

In recent years, research has emphasized the survey method as a suitable way of measuring consumers' responses (Forehand et al., 2002; Appiah, 2001; Cowart & Wagner, 2021; Khamis et al., 2021).

#### **3.1 Participants**

The study's population of interest consisted of individuals of all genders and ages. All religious affiliations and atheists will be included in the sample. The sample focused on Europe due to the researcher's accessibility.

For this research, it was decided to focus on convenience sampling for this research. Convenience sample is characterized by the selection of participants based on their availability to participate in a study (Sarstedt et al., 2017). Additionally, the researcher initiated a snowball sampling to increase the number of participants. The participants, who

already filled out the survey, were asked to refer additional participants (Handcock & Gile, 2011).

### 3.2 Materials

Three advertisements for a fictional brand “Reliefex” were designed by the researcher for the experiment. The appearance of the endorser was modified using Adobe Photoshop and the ad was designed using the graphic design platform Canva. The researcher utilized the same female endorser in all three scenarios to eliminate appearance-related confounding effects, and visual cues will be used to modify religion. As this study focused on religion only and aimed for a clear differentiation between ethnicity and religion, the presented woman in the ads, is white. It must be stated that in this study, the endorser is not famous or known to decrease potential participants' bias for their answers. The picture of the woman was purchased on Shutterstock, a platform to buy royalty free images.

By showing the endorser with a cross necklace or a hijab, the endorser's religion will be manipulated. The first ad showed a white woman without any religious cues (Figure 3.1.) This ad was used as the control group. The second ad included the same female endorser with a cross-chain, symbolizing her identification as a Christian (majority group) and can be seen in Figure 3. 2.. The third ad displayed the same woman wearing a hijab, symbolizing her belonging to a minority group (as shown in Figure 3.3.). The religious cue is the only stimulus that changes between the ad. The ad slogan, the woman, and the overall design stay the same. Only the background color was slightly adjusted to match the woman's background.

It was decided for an ad for painkillers, as it target the whole population and no specific gender is targeted more. Additionally, it was decided to use the hijab as a symbol for a minority group as it can be seen as the most obvious Islamic cue to show religious commitment (Naseri & Tamam, 2012). Hassan and Harun (2016) argue that style and colors of a hijab can be a sign of a certain cultural group or region. To avoid categorization to a specific ethnical group, a simple, black hijab was chosen. Lastly, participants were randomly assigned to one of the treatments while answering the survey.



Figure 3.1 Ad\_Neutral

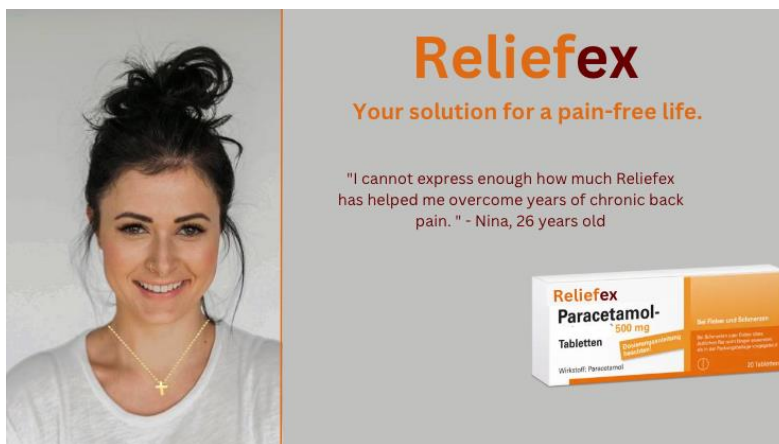


Figure 3.2 Ad\_Majority



Figure 3.3 Ad\_Minority

To guarantee high reliability and validity, a pilot test was carried out before the questionnaire was publicly online. The efficacy of the manipulation check was the main focus of the pilot test. It specifically tested participants' ability to correctly identify the religious affiliation of the endorsement that was displayed. The survey was also thoroughly tested to find any ambiguities or errors that would have made it difficult for participants to understand.

A sample of five people, aged between 18 and 26, from the selected population was chosen in order to perform the pilot test.

Participants received clear instructions prior to taking part in the pilot test. They were prompted to think on the survey's length, the questions' clarity, their understanding of the general goal of the research, and the guarantee of data privacy. In addition, participants were especially instructed to look for any disparities in how women were portrayed in the advertising materials. The goal was to get in-depth feedback on all of the questionnaire's components.

Analyzing the pilot test results revealed that the respondents had sufficient understanding of the topic, and the questions given were simple and easy to understand. Regarding the formulation or comprehension of the questions, no mistakes or concerns were found. However, one important conclusion from the pilot test was that the participants did not understand the first criteria to differentiate between the majority and neutral ads. The majority religion's symbol, a cross necklace, was found too small for participants to clearly identify.

To solve this issue, the cross necklace required to be made more visible so that participants could easily recognize it as a sign of the dominant faith. As a result, the cross-necklace's size was increased, making it more apparent and unmistakable. This change was necessary to guarantee that participants understood the manipulation check and that the survey remained legitimate.

The questionnaire was thoroughly tested and refined once the necessary adjustments were implemented based on the pilot test findings. With the changes in place, the questionnaire distribution process began, allowing a larger range of participants to share crucial thoughts and contribute to the study findings.

### **3.3 Design**

This study's independent variable focused on the religion of the endorsers, who were divided into three separate categories: neutral, majority, and minority endorsers. This variable was chosen to investigate its influence on participant responds. The questionnaire primarily investigated the following main dependent variables to determine the impact of the independent variable: attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand, and brand trust.

Pre-existing scales carefully generated from relevant academic literature in the subject were used to measure these components. These measures have received widespread acceptance and validation, proving their dependability and validity in capturing participants' views and perceptions. In addition to the main variables interest, the questionnaire asked

about a number of demographic parameters. These additional demographic characteristics were examined to identify potential confounding factors or subgroup differences that might influence participants' responses. The study sought to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the sample and to analyze potential correlations between these factors and the dependent variables by collecting data on participant demographic characteristics such as age, gender, education level, and cultural background.

Wells (1964) proposed a scale to measure *attitude toward the ad* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .68$ ). This five-item scale was used in this study. The items include, for example, "This ad is very appealing to me" or "This ad makes me feel good." The participants have chosen from a seven-Likert scale how much they agree or disagree (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

The scale from Spears & Singh (2004) was utilized to measure *attitude toward the brand* (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ). It consists of four items, measuring positive or negative reactions. The items include bad/good, appealing/unappealing, unpleasant/pleasant, and unfavorable/favorable. In a matrix table, the respondents were asked to choose the option they feel the strongest about.

*Brand Trust* was measured by a seven-items scale by Delgado-Ballester (2004) (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .90$ ). The items include, for example, "(X brand name) would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns." and "(X brand name) guarantees satisfaction. ". Participants could evaluate how strongly they agree or disagree with the statements on a seven-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 7=strongly agree).

Lastly, the participants were asked about their demographics such as age, gender, country of birth, country of residence, religion affiliation, education, birth country of the father and birth country of the mother. Participants were asked to specify their age in years, with larger values indicating older ages, in order to determine age. To measure religion affiliation, participants were asked to state if they belong to a religious minority, majority or atheist. After the Pre-test, the question about religious affiliation was changed from "Do you feel you belong to a religious minority or majority group?" to "To which religious group do you belong" with the options: a) minority group, b) majority group or c) atheist. The decision was made to ensure more clarity among the answer options.

Using an open field for the countries of birth, residency and both parents was requested. This data could be used to identify participants' ethnic minority or majority status as well as any potential multicultural upbringing. The questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

### **3.4 Procedure**

The questionnaire was distributed with an anonymous link, accessible from electronic devices like phones or laptops. The researcher distributed the study in her own social media channels like Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. Additionally, the survey was distributed to several advertising agencies. Some are agency that the researcher has worked before or are agencies that she has a good connection to and will ask them to share the survey among their employees. Lastly, participants who already filled in the survey, were asked to further distribute the survey on social media.

Subjects were directed to the survey's introductory page by clicking on the link, where they were thanked for their participation and given a general overview of the study as well as an estimate of the participation duration of 5 minutes. The total questionnaire included 28 questions.

A thorough explanation of informed consent, participant anonymity, and voluntariness was also provided. After confirming that they were freely participating in the survey and had read and understood the information, respondents were forwarded to start the questionnaire.

Firstly, the participants were then presented the ad that was randomly assigned to them. After viewing the ad, participants were asked to confirm that they looked at the ad carefully. The following screens contained questions about the attitude toward the ad, toward the brand and brand trust. To check if the experiment has worked, the respondents were asked to which group the shown endorser in the ad would belong. They could decide between a) majority, b) minority c) neutral.

Lastly, the respondents were asked about their demographics. A final screen thanked respondents once more for participating in the survey and provided them with the researcher's contact information in case they had any follow-up questions. Reminders were sent out in the second and third week of the data collection period.

Qualtrics was the chosen tool to create the survey and collect the data. The data collection period lasted four weeks (26.03.-12.04.2023). The previously posed hypotheses were tested with MANOVA to find significant relationships. The analyses were conducted using the 27.0.0.0 version of IBM SPSS Statistics. Furthermore, moderation analyses were run to explain the influence of different moderators on the outcome variables and religious endorser. The results will be presented in the next chapter.



## **4. Results**

This chapter starts off with the descriptive statistics that will give insights into the study's sample. Afterwards, the posed hypotheses will be tested using MANOVA and moderation analyses. Additionally, further analyses were conducted and will be presented lastly.

### **4.1 Sample description**

In the following, the process of data cleaning will be explained as well as the presentation of the final sample.

#### **4.1.1 Data cleaning**

At the end of the data collection, a total of 236 participants were reached. Before running the analyses, the data was cleaned. This includes checking for wrong answers, unusual answer patterns, deleting outliers and the right answer for the manipulation check (IBM, 2017). Due to disagreement with the terms and conditions, one respondent was sent to the survey's end. A total 23 participants (9.7%) had to be deleted as the manipulation check did not work. Respondents were asked which of the three advertisements they had seen before providing their demographic data. They failed the manipulation check if the provided response did not match the shown stimulus. Therefore, their answers were removed from the data set and not used in the analyses. The other participants (N=29) were deleted due to missing information, meaning that they did not complete the questionnaire. Lastly, 32 participants had to be deleted as unusual answer patterns were detected. An unusual answering pattern was defined as a behavior in which the same value, e.g., 4, was consistently selected. Or the items that were formulated negatively received the same score as positively formulated ones. One person stated that they indicated their gender as "Prefer not to say". This participant was included for reliability testing but excluded for further analyses. Finally, 150 participants were included in further analysis.

#### **4.1.2 Sample description**

After data cleaning, a total of 150 respondents participated in the survey. The distribution per treatment group can be seen in Table 4.1. 44 of the participants were assigned to the endorser without any religious signs, 54 were assigned to the ad with the majority endorser and 52 of the participants saw the ad with the minority endorser. The final sample consisted of more females (60.7%) than men (39.3%). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to

86, with the sample's average age being 30.15 (SD = 11.47). Out of the participants that have completed the demographic part of the questionnaire, most have achieved a bachelor' degree (40%), followed by a graduate or professional degree (34.7%), a high school degree (8.0%), some college but no degree (7.3%), associates or technical degree (4.0%) and some high school or less (3.3%). 47.3% (N=71) of the sample belong to the religious majority, while 12.7% of the participants (N=19) stated their belonging to a minority group. The remaining 40.0% (N=60) identity themselves as atheists. A total of 28 different countries were indicated as a country of birth, with the majority of participants born in Germany (44.7%), followed by the Netherlands (20.0%) and Italy (4%). Furthermore, respondents resided in 12 countries, with the Netherlands being the most common (46.7%). 40.7% of respondents currently live in Germany, followed by Spain (3.3%). An overview of the descriptive statistics can be found in the appendix.

*Table 4.1 Distribution per treatment group (N=150)*

Treatment group	Frequency	Percent
Endorsers religion neutral	44	29.3
Endorsers religion majority	54	36.0
Endorsers religion minority	52	34.7

#### **4.2 Psychometric properties of the multi-item measures**

Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was performed to assess dimensionality and underlying structure of the items. The scales were purified with an eigenvalue of 1.0 and factor loadings of 0.40 as cut-off points. The Cronbach's alpha values for each multi-item measure meet or exceed the 0.70 threshold. For the attitude toward the ad scale, the initial analysis suggested that five items should be retained. However, closer inspection of the factor loadings revealed that two items "I would probably skip this ad if I saw it again on Social Media." and "This ad has little interest for me." due to the factor loading threshold. These items were dropped from the analysis. All other items loaded above the .40 threshold, resulting in a final set of 3 items for attitude toward the ad. All factor loadings of the remaining items, and the Cronbach's alpha for all scales can be found in the appendix.

#### **4.3 Descriptive Statistics**

To gain insights into how the variable are correlated to each other, a correlation matrix was created (see Table 4.3). Attitude toward the ad is positively correlated with endorser minority ( $r=.17$   $p<.001$ ). Therefore, it can be assumed that the participants who saw the ad with the minority endorser tend to have a more favorable attitude toward the ad. Attitude toward the ad is negatively correlated with endorser majority ( $r=-.180$ ,  $p <.001$ ). It suggests that participants who saw the advertising with the majority endorser tend to have a less favorable reaction towards the ad.

Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics and correlations ( $n = 150$ )

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	Mean	SD
1. Endorser minority	-													.35	.48
2. Endorser majority	-.55**	-												.36	.48
3. Endorser neutral	-.47**	-.48**	-											.29	.46
4. Attitude toward the Ad	.17*	-.18**	.01	-										4.11	1.12
5. Attitude toward the Brand	.08	-.08	-.01	.69**	-									4.28	1.16
6. Brand Trust	.15	-.08	-.07	.48**	.58**	-								4.22	.99
7. Ethnic Identity (0=minority, 1=majority)	.08	-.04	-.04	-.24	.02	-.02	-							.62	.48
8. Gender (1=male, 2=female)	.01	.01	-.02	.08	.15	-.02	-.07	-						1.61	.49
9. religious affiliation minority	.02	.01	-.02	.12	.11	.01	-.03	-.10	-					.13	.34
10. Religious affiliation majority	.12	-.07	-.05	.08	.13	.09	-.08	.11	-.36**	-				.47	.51
11. Religious affiliation atheist	-.14	.07	.07	-.15	.01	-.09	.11	-.04	-.31**	-.77**	-			.40	.49
12. Age	-.11	.08	.03	.08	.04	-.06	.21**	.03	-.09	.07	-.01	-		30.15	11.47

\*\*\* $p \leq .01$ , \*\* $p \leq .05$ , \* $p \leq .10$  (2-tailed).

#### 4.4 Main effects

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) was conducted to examine the effects of the independent variable (endorsers religion) on the dependent variables: Attitude toward the ad, attitude toward the brand and brand trust. The results showed that the independent variable does not significantly influence the attitude toward the ad, ( $F(2,146) = 2.38$ ,  $p = .097$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .04$ ). Moreover, Endorsers religion did not significantly influence attitude toward the brand,  $F(2, 146) = .19$ ,  $p = .824$  partial  $\eta^2 = 0.1$  and brand trust,  $F(2, 146) = 1.05$ ,  $p = .352$ , partial  $\eta^2 = 0.23$ . Therefore, hypothesis 1 was not supported (see Table 4.4)

and was therefore rejected. The expected main effect of endorsers' religion on a) attitude toward the ad, b) attitude toward the brand and c) brand trust did not emerge.

To test hypotheses 2, 3 and 4, moderation analyses were conducted. In total, 3 analyses models were run (see Table 4.4) for each of the dependent variables. To test hypothesis 3, endorsers religion as the independent variable, religion affiliation of the participant as the moderator variable, and attitude toward the ad as the dependent variable were included. To test hypothesis 4, endorsers' religion as the independent variable, ethnic identity as the moderator variable, and attitude toward the brand as dependent variable were utilized. Additionally, another moderation analysis further explored whether the gender of the participants also influenced their a) attitude toward the ad, b) attitude toward the brand and c) brand trust, while endorsers' religion was the independent variable.

The results (see Table 4.4) revealed a statistically not significant interaction between endorsers religion and religious affiliation on attitude towards the ad,  $F(2,108) = .045$ ,  $p = .639$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .09$ . These findings suggest that the participant's religious affiliation may not result in a different attitude toward the ad when exposed to the ad depicting religious endorsers. Additionally, no significant effect was found between endorsers' religion and ethnic identity on attitude towards the brand,  $F(1,108) = .58$ ,  $p = .447$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$  (see Table 4.4).

These results imply that the ethnic identity of the participants may not have an impact in their attitude toward the brand when exposed to the ad depicting religious endorsers, indicating that there is no difference in attitude between participants from ethnic majority and minority. Thus, H3 was not accepted.

Lastly, the moderation effect of gender was not statistically significant, on attitude toward the ad,  $F(1,108) = .10$ ,  $p = .752$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .05$ , on attitude toward the brand,  $F(1,108) = 1.86$ ,  $p = .175$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .02$  and on brand trust,  $F(1,108) = .23$ ,  $p = .636$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Suggesting that the consumers' responses do not differ between male and female participants. Thus, H4a), b) and c) were rejected.

Table 4.3 Results of the MANOVA (N=150)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Observed Power
Endorsers Religion	Attitude toward the Ad	5.77	2	2.88	2.38	.097	.472
	Attitude toward the Brand	.508	2	.25	.19	.824	.079
	Brand Trust	2.18	2	1.09	1.05	.352	.230
Religious Affiliation	Attitude toward the Ad	1.09	2	.55	.45	.639	.122
	Attitude toward the Brand	5.28	2	2.64	2.01	.139	.407
	Brand Trust	1.67	2	.844	.82	.444	.187
Ethnic Identity	Attitude toward the Ad	.00	1	.000	.00	.989	.050
	Attitude toward the Brand	.76	1	.76	.58	.447	.118
	Brand Trust	.01	1	.01	.014	.905	.052
Gender	Attitude toward the Ad	.121	1	.12	.10	.752	.061
	Attitude toward the Brand	2.45	1	2.45	1.86	.175	.273
	Brand Trust	.23	1	.23	.23	.636	.076
Endorsers Religion x Religious Affiliation	Attitude toward the Ad	7.06	4	1.76	1.45	.221	.439
	Attitude toward the Brand	.64	4	.16	.12	.974	.074
	Brand Trust	1.59	4	.39	.38	.819	.136
Endorser Religion x Ethnic Identity	Attitude toward the Ad	.123	2	.06	.51	.950	.057
	Attitude toward the Brand	1.55	2	.77	.59	.555	.146
	Brand Trust	.42	2	.21	.20	.815	.081

*Table 4.3 Results of the MANOVA (N=150) (continued)*

Endorsers Religion x Gender	Attitude toward the Ad	3.81	2	1.91	1.57	.212	.327
	Attitude toward the Brand	.66	2	.33	.25	.777	.089
	Brand Trust	1.18	2	.59	.57	.564	.143
Error	Attitude toward the Ad	130.93	108	1.21			
	Attitude toward the Brand	141.89	108	1.31			
	Brand Trust	111.48	108	1.03			
Total	Attitude toward the Ad	2716.22	150				
	Attitude toward the Brand	2950.56	150				
	Brand Trust	2822.75	150				

The absence of the main effects and moderation effects resulted in the rejection of the posed hypotheses. Table 4.5 provides an overview of the formulated hypotheses.

*Table 4.4 Overview of Hypotheses*

Hypotheses	accepted	rejected
H1a: Depicting a religious minority in advertisements leads to lower levels compared to depicting a religious majority endorser.		x
H1b: Depicting a religious minority in advertisements leads to lower levels of brand attitude compared to depicting a religious majority endorser.		x
H1c: Depicting a religious minority in advertisements leads to lower levels of brand trust compared to depicting a religious majority endorser.		x
H2: The negative effect of religious minority endorsement on attitude toward the ad will be stronger for consumers of a religious majority than for consumers of a religious minority.		x
H3: The negative effect of religious minority endorsement on brand attitude will be stronger for consumers of an ethnic majority group than for consumers of an ethnic minority group.		x

Table 4.4 Overview of Hypotheses (continued)

H4a: The negative effect of religious minority endorsement on attitude toward the ad will be stronger for male consumers than for female consumers.	x
H4b: The negative effect of religious minority endorsement on attitude toward the brand will be stronger for male consumers than for female consumers.	x
H4c: The negative effect of religious minority endorsement on brand trust will be stronger for male consumers than for female consumers.	x

#### 4.5 Additional Results

A Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) with only the main effect of endorsers religion on attitude toward the ad, toward the brand and brand trust was conducted to further investigate on the positive correlation between endorsers religion and attitude towards the ad that was shown before. The results showed that the independent variable significantly influenced the attitude toward the ad  $F(2, 146) = 3.08, p = .049, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .040$  (Table 4.5). Contrary to the assumptions of H1, participants who saw the minority ad significantly have a higher attitude toward the ad ( $M = 4.3, SD = 1.2$ ) than participants who saw the majority ad ( $M = 3.8, SD = 1.1$ ), see Table 4.5. Nevertheless, Endorsers religion did not significantly influence attitude toward the brand,  $F(2, 146) = .67, p = .510, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.09$  and brand trust  $F(2, 146) = 1.76, p = .176, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.23$ .

Table 4.5 Results of MANOVA (N=150)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	partial $\eta^2$	p
Endorsers Religion	Attitude toward the Ad	7.52	2	3.76	3.08	.040	.049
	Attitude toward the Brand	1.83	2	.92	.67	.009	.510
	Brand Trust	3.42	2	1.76	1.76	.023	.176

Additionally, it was decided to run a simple General Linear Model with the main effects of endorsers religion, religious affiliation, ethnic identity, and gender on the dependent

variables. As seen in the previous analysis, including interaction effects resulted in not significant results. Therefore, the moderating effects were dropped. Subsequently, the observed power of the test increased (see table 4.6). Specifically, for attitude toward the brand, a significant effect was found for religious affiliation,  $F(2,143) = 3.43, p = .035$ . Looking at the pairwise comparisons, atheist's brand attitude ( $M = 3.94, SD = .15$ ) is significantly lower than participants who belong to a religious minority ( $M = 4.62, SD = .26$ ),  $p = .027$  and participants belonging to a majority religion ( $M = 4.37, SD = .14$ ),  $p = .038$ . Meaning that atheists tend to have a lower attitude toward the brand compared to religious participants.

Table 4.6 Results General Linear Model (N=150)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Observed Power
Endorsers Religion	Attitude toward the Ad	6.62	2	3.31	2.73	.069	.532
	Attitude toward the Brand	.96	2	.48	.37	.691	.109
	Brand Trust	3.02	2	1.51	1.52	.223	.319
Religious Affiliation	Attitude toward the Ad	4.03	2	2.01	1.66	.194	.345
	Attitude toward the Brand	8.90	2	4.45	3.43	.035	.636
	Brand Trust	.77	2	.38	.39	.678	.112
Ethnic Identity	Attitude toward the Ad	.05	1	.05	.05	.835	.055
	Attitude toward the Brand	.46	1	.46	.44	.551	.091
	Brand Trust	.14	1	.14	.14	.707	.066
Gender	Attitude toward the Ad	1.30	1	1.3	1.07	.302	.177
	Attitude toward the Brand	4.39	1	4.39	3.38	.068	.448
	Brand Trust	.13	1	.13	.13	.715	.065



*Table 4.6 Results General Linear Model (N=150) (continued)*

Error	Attitude toward the Ad	173.56	143	1.21
	Attitude toward the Brand	185.56	143	1.29
	Brand Trust	142.16	143	.994
Total	Attitude toward the Ad	2716.22	150	
	Attitude toward the Brand	2950.56	150	
	Brand Trust	2822.75	150	

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## **5. Discussion and Conclusion**

This chapter will present a summary of the findings, discuss them, and answer the posed research question. Theoretical implications will be discussed, providing a deeper understanding of how this research contributes to the academic knowledge and existing theories on religion in advertising. Furthermore, limitations and recommendations for future research will be highlighted, and practical implications for Marketers will be given.

This study aimed to assess the effect of religion in advertising, in particular when a religious minority is depicted, on consumers' responses. An experimental survey was conducted to investigate the effect of a majority versus minority endorser on attitude toward the ad, brand attitude, and brand trust.

Based on the literature and academic findings, it was expected to find a negative effect of depicting a religious minority endorser in advertising on consumers' responses.

Contradictory to the expected results, the study found no significant relationship between the endorser's religion and consumers' responses. Neither had the religion of the endorser have a significant impact on the attitude toward the ad and the brand nor on brand trust. Additionally, consumers' religious affiliation, ethnic identity, and gender did not appear to have moderating effects on the relationship between the endorser's religion and consumers' responses. However, a slightly positive effect of endorsers' religion on attitude toward the ad was found. Participants who saw the minority ad tended to have a slightly more positive ad attitude compared to the ones who saw the majority ad. Additionally, it was seen that participants who identified as Atheists had a lower attitude toward the brand compared to participants who belonged to a religious minority or majority group.

### **5.1 Theoretical implications**

This study provides several contributions to theory. The current study attempted to assess the unique impacts of minority endorsers in advertising in Europe. The results suggest that religious minority endorsers generate similar consumer responses to advertising compared to religious majorities. In other words, endorser religion did not affect how consumers evaluated the advertisement.

However, the use of religious symbols led to ambiguity amongst scholars. On the one hand, some research, e.g., Zehra and Minton (2020) or Henley et al. (2009) resulted in positive consumer responses in which the viewer could identify themselves with the depicted religion or the display of religious symbols increased their identification with the brand or the product. Thus, their attitude and trust toward the brand were strengthened. On the other hand,

negative consumer responses have also been observed, e.g., by Alhouti et al. (2015) or by the recent ad campaign by Katjes in 2018. Some consumers had the feeling that the company was trying to profit from cultural appropriation (Rößner et al., 2021). Moreover, Nickerson et al. (2022) found that incorporating Islamic cues can have a negative effect on consumers' attitudes toward the ad. Ryan (2011), assumed that the hijab is often seen as a political symbol in Europe. Based on this, he argued why consumers' attitude was more negative towards the endorser from the minority religion compared to the one from the majority religion. Unexpectedly, this effect did not occur in this study. However, by measuring the attitude of non-Muslim participants toward ads with Islamic cues, this study contributed to the academic knowledge of religion and advertising and followed the call of Naseri and Taman (2012) for more research in this field.

One possible explanation for the absence of significance could be attributed to the participant's demographics, which predominantly consisted of young individuals with a high level of education. Additionally, the majority of respondents live in Western European countries like Germany and the Netherlands. Within the perspective of this specific generation and culture, diversity has been a prominently discussed topic across various fields, such as in the workplace, education, or the media landscape (Hofhuis et al., 2015). It can be assumed that consumers nowadays are used to a diverse representation in the media, and therefore, ads with different religious endorsers no longer evaluated differently.

Furthermore, the literature consistently highlighted that the younger generation exhibits a more favorable attitude toward diversity than older generations (Sawyer et al., 2005). Moreover, studies have demonstrated that individuals who obtain a higher education (bachelor's degree or higher) tend to hold more positive views regarding diversity and even appreciate efforts made by the advertising industry to address this issue (Mulder & Krahn, 2008). Since this sample consisted of relatively young participants with high education, it can be explained why participants who got presented with the minority ad had a more favorable opinion about the ad than the ones who saw the other advertisements.

Unexpectedly, consumers' religious affiliation did not show any significant moderating effect. This result highlights that no matter which religious group the consumer belongs to or which group they might not belong to, it did not affect their ad evaluation. It was expected that members of a religious minority would have a more favorable attitude toward the ad depicting the minority endorser compared to members of the majority group. One possible explanation could be that minority groups in Europe are accustomed to Christianity and its symbols in advertising. Christian symbols are no longer explicitly

perceived as such in an advertisement and thus have no influence on consumers' attitudes (Kalyvas & Van Kersbergen, 2010). Therefore, the religion of the shown endorsers did not have an impact on the consumers' response.

Furthermore, it was found that participants who identify as atheists tend to have a lower attitude toward the brand than religious participants. To discuss this finding, the in-group-favoritism can be employed again. Based on the in-group-favoritism, individuals within one group tend to have a more favorable attitude than those outside of it (Fu et al., 2012). A possible explanation of atheists' lower attitude toward the brand could be that atheists could not identify with the religious endorsers in the shown ads and react less favorably than members of a religious group. Participants who belong to a religious group identified more with the minority or majority endorser. It can be assumed that they classified themselves within one group based on similar traits or beliefs. One can assume that a belief and the associated way of life connects individuals, although they might not belong to the same religious group.

## **5.2 Practical Implications**

The results of this study could imply that there is no longer the risk that featuring religious minorities in advertising may alienate the majority of customers, even with different gender or ethnic identities. A more accurate portrayal of society in advertising can aid in lowering prejudice and fostering a more diverse advertising landscape. Thus, marketers do not have to face the dilemma in the decision-making to include religious minorities or not. The findings of this study suggest that include minorities in advertisements might even be beneficial. A favorable attitude about advertisements results from the inclusion of endorsers who are members of a religious minority.

However, it is essential to reevaluate in which region or country the ad is displayed. The majority of respondents in this study came from Western Europe, from countries like Germany or the Netherlands, where there is no strong religious identity. A St. Mary's University report on religion resulted in the notion that in 12 of the 20 European countries studied, more than 50 percent of 16-29 years olds do not identify with any religious affiliation (Bullivant, 2018). This percentage includes non-denominational as well as individuals who officially belong to a religion but do not practice or identify with it. In Germany, 45 percent of the respondents stated that they do not belong to any religion, whereas in the Netherlands, the percentage was even higher (72%) (Bullivant, 2018).

The results could have differed in countries which stronger religious identities, e.g., Turkey. Therefore, marketers only from these regions should follow these implications. Especially when promoting a low-involvement product like in this study, painkillers, depicting a religious endorser, does not have an influence on how consumers evaluate the advertisement or the brand.

Additionally, depicting predominantly a religious minority like an Islamic endorser does not seem to have an effect on consumers in Europe. Not even one's own religious affiliation matters. It was found that if the consumer feels they belong to a minority religion, advertising with another minority is not perceived more positively than advertising with an endorser of the majority religion. Religion was also found not to be a factor for members of the majority religion in Europe in their evaluation of an advertisement. Even if the question is whether the consumer's gender is essential for defining the target group when religion is to be shown in advertising, it can be stated for the advertising industry that no attention needs to be paid to this either.

Contradictory to Henley et al. (2009) suggestion for advertisers to carefully consider if religion in terms of endorsers or symbols should be employed for advertising purposes, this research concludes that depicting religion might not always be a risk for potential backlashes. Given the fact that even the ad with the neutral endorser (without any religious signs) scored the same results, it can be suggested that practitioners can depict religion in advertising, no matter which religious group it is. Only when targeting a group of Atheists only, should practitioners be careful to depict any religious sign, as it can harm the attitude toward the brand.

### **5.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

Some limitations related to this research have to be acknowledged. Regarding the research methodology, a three-treatment group study was carried out. The survey design ensured that many respondents could participate in little time. However, the researcher needed more control over how thoroughly or how long each respondent observed the advertisement. Therefore, a total amount of 23 participants had to be deleted due to the failed manipulation check. Most did not pass the check when exposed to the ad with the endorser without any religious sign. The difference between the ad with the majority endorser and the ad without religious signs (neutral) must be more obvious so that all respondents can clearly assign the religion. It may be because most participants lived in a country where Christianity is the majority religion. Thus, participants unconsciously assumed that the neutral endorser was

Christian as many participants selected that the endorser belonged to the majority religion even though there was no sign of religion in the ad. When replicating the study, the researcher must ensure the difference between the ads is clear.

Moreover, it has to be acknowledged that participants might have interpreted the endorser's religion in addition to their ethnic background, which was not supposed to be measured in this study. The aim was to focus on religion; however, it was shown in previous research that these concepts are often intertwined with each other (Rößner et al., 2021). According to Verkuyten and Yildiz (2007), religious groups are often associated with certain nationalities, such as in Europe, Muslims with Turks.

Even though the ethnicity was stable throughout all shown ads, the hijab is often associated with not only Islam but additionally with an ethnic background (Karaman & Christian, 2020). Karaman and Christian (2020) argue in their study about female Muslim students in the United States that the visible religious sign of the hijab goes beyond religious and may result in racist thoughts about the ethnical background and cultural differences.

An additional aspect that should be paid attention to is the demographic composition of the sample. Conducting a similar experiment on respondents from different geographical regions or focusing on a specific religious group might yield varying outcomes. For instance, the samples mainly consisted of individuals from Western Europe. However, it would be beneficial to gather more participants (increasing the sample size) from other regions like the South-Europe or Eastern European Countries. The findings of this study may have significant implications, mainly because the majority of participants reside in regions where Christianity is the prevailing religion. The researcher assumed that Christianity is the most common religion in Europe, which may differ in several Eastern European nations such as Balkan countries like Albania, where Islam is more prevalent. The study's results cannot be extended to countries with various religious or cultural origins, and its generalizability is thus restricted to regions where Christianity is the predominant faith.

Finally, the study recommends the following subjects for future research. Firstly, future research should conduct similar research in specific European countries rather than focusing on Europe overall. Europe consists of many different countries with their own cultures, customs, and lifestyles. It is a diverse continent, and therefore, it is difficult to relate a study result to the whole of Europe. It would be interesting to find out what the results would be in a specific country to gain a more specific knowledge rather than a general results for overall Europe. It can be assumed that the results in, e.g., Germany as a Christian country

will be different than in, e.g., Greece as an Orthodox country. Subsequently, it is interesting to compare the results with each other in order to examine the different ad evaluations.

Secondly, instead of choosing Islam as the presentation of the minority religion, another religion and its signs should be depicted. It could, for example, be some Buddhist religious symbol presented in the ad. The chances are lower that European consumers will recognize to which religion these symbols belong. It would be beneficial to study if their attitude is lower as they cannot identify themselves with it. Another possibility would be to use less stigmatized, like in this study, the hijab or well-known Islamic symbols like the Moon and the star. The hijab is often seen as a stigmatized religious symbol in Western Europe, and it can be easily categorized to one religion, Islam. Less-stigmatized signs should be tested to see if the results hold true or if consumers react less favorably to a religious sign they do not know or cannot clearly categorize. Results from this research may be compared to determine which religions and religious symbols can influence advertising.

Furthermore, the intensity of the participant's religious affiliation could be an interesting moderation effect to examine. In this research, it was shown that atheists had a lower attitude toward the brand. However, it was not asked how religious the participants were that state belonging to a religious group. Studies have revealed that customers tend to gravitate toward religious advertising the more religious they are (Nickerson et al., 2022). On the other hand, it may be predicted that this will have a less favorable impact on ad evaluation if a customer has no connection to religion at all and even disputes the notion of religion.

Thirdly, focusing on one specific religion and examining how these groups perceive the shown ads could offer valuable insights for advertisers. A large body of literature focused on Christianity in advertising (e.g., Henley et al., 2009), and an increasing number of scholars are focused on Islamic signs in the media. However, more research has yet to be conducted about other religious groups like Buddhists in Europe. Studying this group and seeing if the results remain the same would be beneficial to find out if the results hold true for less-stigmatized religious groups in Europe.

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## Appendix A: Descriptive Statistics Sample

Table A1 Descriptive Statistics Sample (N=150)

Characteristics	Value	Frequency in sample	Percentage of sample
<b>Gender</b>			
Male		59	39.3%
Female		91	60.7%
<b>Education</b>			
Some high school or less		5	3.3%
High school diploma or GED		12	8.0%
Some college, but no degree		11	7.3%
Associates or technical degree		6	4.0%
Bachelor's degree		60	40.0%
Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.)		52	34.7%
Prefer not to say		3	2.0%
<b>Religious affiliation</b>			
Minority Group		19	12.7%
Majority Group		71	47.3%
Atheist		60	40.0%
<b>Country of birth</b>			
Germany		67	44.7%
the Netherlands		30	20.0%
Italy		6	4.0%

Table A1 Descriptive Statistics Sample (N=150) (continued)

Other	47	31.3%	
Country of residence			
the Netherlands	70	46.7%	
Germany	61	40.7%	
Spain	5	3.3%	
Other	14	9.3%	
Nationality Father			
Germany	63	42.0%	
the Netherlands	25	16.7%	
Belgium	6	4.0%	
Other	56	37.3%	
Nationality Mother			
Germany	62	41.3%	
the Netherlands	26	17.3%	
Belgium	5	3.3%	
Other	56	38.1%	
Ethnic Identity			
Majority	93	62.0%	
Minority	57	38.0%	
	<b>Range</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
Age in years	18 - 86	30.15	11.47

## Appendix B: Measures, factor loadings, and Cronbach's alphas

*Table B1 Measures, factor loadings, and Cronbach's alphas*

Construct	Items	Factor Loadings
Attitude toward the Ad	( $\alpha = .68$ ) (1=strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree)	
	1. This ad is very appealing to me.	0.86
	2. I dislike the ad. (R)	0.79
	3. I would probably skip this ad if I saw it on social media. (R)*	0.54
	4. This ad makes me feel good.	0.81
	5. This ad has little interest for me. (R)*	0.59
Attitude toward the Brand	( $\alpha = .91$ )	
	1. bad/good	0.79
	2. appealing/unappealing	0.78
	3. unpleasant/pleasant	0.85
	4. unfavorable/favorable	0.82
Brand Trust	( $\alpha = .90$ ) (1=strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree)	
	1. Reliefex is a brand that meets your expectations.	0.73 0.84
	2. I feel confidence in the brand Reliefex.	0.77
	3. The brand Reliefex guarantees satisfaction.	0.84
	4. The brand Reliefex would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns.	0.83
	5. I could rely on the brand Reliefex to solve my problem.	0.79 0.73
	6. The brand Reliefex would make any effort to satisfy me.	
7. The brand Reliefex would compensate me in some way for a problem with the medication.		

\* Items were dropped, factor loadings > 0.70

## Appendix C: Survey

# Master Thesis

---

### Start of Block: Welcome

#### Intro

Dear participant,

I am a master student at the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, and I am conducting research on the topic of religious diversity in advertising.

Please keep in mind that there are no wrong or right answers in this questionnaire, and I am interested in your personal opinion and experience.

Filling out the questionnaire will take approximately 5 minutes of your time and I appreciate your participation in our research.

To help protect your confidentiality and anonymity, the survey does not ask for information that will personally identify you. The results of this research will be used for scholarly purposes only and will not be furthered to any third party.

If you now decide not to participate in this research, this will not affect you. If you decide to cease your cooperation while filling in the questionnaire, this will in no way affect you either. You can cease your cooperation without giving reasons.

If you have questions about this research, you can contact the responsible researcher, email: 607046cr@student.eur.nl.

Thank you for participating!

---

#### Consent

If you understand the information above and freely consent to participate in this study, click on the "I agree" button below to start the questionnaire.

I agree (1)

I do not agree (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If If you understand the information above and freely consent to participate in this study, click on... = I do not agree*

### End of Block: Welcome

---

Start of Block: Stimuli 1

Stimuli\_1\_no sign

In the photo you can see an advertisement for painkiller medication.

Please look carefully at the ad and answer the questions asked about it.



---

Q36 Please confirm that you saw the ad.

- Yes (1)
- No (4)

---

Page Break

End of Block: Stimuli 1

---

Start of Block: Stimuli\_2

Stimuli\_2\_majority

In the photo you can see an advertisement for painkiller medication.

Please look carefully at the ad and answer the questions asked about it.



**Reliefex**  
Your solution for a pain-free life.

"I cannot express enough how much Reliefex has helped me overcome years of chronic back pain." - Nina, 26 years old

**Reliefex**  
Paracetamol-  
500 mg  
Tabletten  
Wirkstoff: Paracetamol  
20 Tabletten

---

Q37 Please confirm that you saw the ad.

- Yes (1)
- No (4)
- 

Page Break

---

End of Block: Stimuli\_2

---

Start of Block: Stimuli\_3

Stimuli\_3\_minority

In the photo you can see an advertisement for painkiller medication.

Please look carefully at the ad and answer the questions asked about it.



---

Q38 Please confirm that you saw the ad.

- Yes (1)
- No (4)
- 

Page Break

---



Start of Block: Attitude toward the ad

Q15 How much do the following statements apply to you?

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
This ad is very appealing to me. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I dislike this ad. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would probably skip this ad if I saw it again on Social Media. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad makes me feel good. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This ad has little interest for me. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q16 Please describe your overall feeling about the brand described in the ad that you just saw.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Unappealing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Appealing
Bad	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Good
Unpleasant	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Pleasant
Unfavorable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Favorable

---

Page Break

---

## Brand Trust

For each of the statements below choose the response that best expresses how you feel about the statement.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
Reliefex is a brand that meets my expectations. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel confidence in the brand Reliefex. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand Reliefex guarantees satisfaction. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand Reliefex would be honest and sincere in addressing my concerns. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I could rely on the brand Reliefex to solve my problem. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand Reliefex would make any effort to satisfy me. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The brand Reliefex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

would  
compensate  
me in some  
way for a  
problem  
with the  
medication.  
(7)

End of Block: Attitude toward the brand

---

Start of Block: Manipulation check

Q35 Please think back about the ad that was shown before.

Which religious group does the endorser in the ad belong to?

Minorities groups in Europe are for example: Muslims, Jews, Buddhists or Orthodox

Majority groups in Europe are: Christians

Neutral: Atheists

This is just your personal opinion and there are no right or wrong answers.

- minority (1)
- majority (2)
- neutral (3)

End of Block: Manipulation check

---

Start of Block: Gender

Q21 How do you describe yourself?

- Male (1)
  - Female (2)
  - Non-binary / third gender (3)
  - Prefer to self-describe (4)
- 

- Prefer not to say (5)

End of Block: Gender

---

Start of Block: Religious affiliation

Q32 To which religious group do you belong?

- minority group (1)
- majority group (2)
- atheist (3)

End of Block: Religious affiliation

---

Start of Block: Country of birth

Q21 In which country were you born?

If you do not know or not prefer to say, write 'I do not know' in the field

---

End of Block: Country of birth

---

Start of Block: Country of Residence

Q16 In which country do you currently live?

If you do not know or not prefer to say, write 'I do not know' in the field

---

End of Block: Country of Residence

---

Start of Block: Birth country\_father

Q21 In which country was your father born?

If you do not know or not prefer to say, write 'I do not know' in the field

---

End of Block: Birth country\_father

---

Start of Block: Birth country\_mother

Q21 In which country was your mother born?

If you do not know or not prefer to say, write 'I do not know' in the field

---

End of Block: Birth country\_mother

---

Start of Block: Age

Q23 How old are you? Please describe in numbers, e.g. 26

---

End of Block: Age

---

Start of Block: Block 8

Education What is the highest level of education you have completed?

- Some high school or less (1)
- High school diploma or GED (2)
- Some college, but no degree (3)
- Associates or technical degree (4)
- Bachelor's degree (5)
- Graduate or professional degree (MA, MS, MBA, PhD, JD, MD, DDS etc.) (6)
- Prefer not to say (7)