Polarisation in Advertising: How Ethnic Diversity Influences Purchase Intentions Across Political Spectrums

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Executive Summary:

The recent controversies surrounding 'woke' advertising, show that the issue of diversity in advertising has become increasingly polarised. This thesis aims to quantify the effect of diversity in advertisements. It also investigates the effect of political ideology on this relationship.

The central research question of this thesis is: "How does the presence of ethnic diversity in advertisements affect the likelihood of Dutch consumers to purchase a product, and to what extent does political orientation play a role in this?"

First, the literature review shows that diversity in advertisements is on the rise. And it is often praised for its positive effects on brand perception and loyalty, although the influence on purchase intention is less clear. The literature also suggests that some people can react very negatively to diverse advertisements and may even choose to boycott the associated brands. This negative response is most often observed among conservatives.

The research method involved an online experiment where respondents were randomly exposed to one of two versions of the same advertisement. One version featured a diverse model, while the other featured a non-diverse model. Purchase intention was measured both before and after exposure, and respondents' political orientation was also collected.

The results showed no statistically significant effect of ethnic diversity in advertisements on consumers' purchase intentions. It also showed no statistical difference between the responses from the conservatives and the liberals.

The conclusions of this study suggest that ethnic diversity in advertisements is not a determinant of purchase intention. Political orientation was also found to have no significant influence. However, these results may not be entirely reliable, as they contradict the findings of Vonk (2017) that states that the initial impression of a person plays a crucial role in consumer decision-making. It is possible that the survey respondents did not state what they really thought.

Future research could explore how using video advertisements influences the results. And if the budget allows for it, use paid Facebook advertisements.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Recent Events

Amidst the ongoing criticism of the invisibility and stereotyping of minorities in advertising, alongside the recent controversies surrounding 'woke' advertising, the issue of diversity in advertising has become increasingly polarised. In 2023 Bud Light, owned by Anheuser-Busch (AB), showed this increased polarisation. The marketing partnership with transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney led to a significant backlash. Bud Light's sales were about 28% lower than during the same period in prior years (Liaukonyte et al., 2024).

1.2: The Topic of this Thesis

This leads to the question of how diversity in advertisements affects purchases. In this thesis, the term 'diversity' is defined as the fair and proportional portrayal of all people and their attributes in a particular promotional setting or medium (Eisend, 2022). An advertisement is labelled 'diverse' when it portrays people from minority groups.

Over the last two decades, there has been a rise in the prevalence of diverse advertisements (Eisend et al., 2022). This includes the increased portrayal of religious minorities (Rößner et al., 2017), racial and linguistic diversity (Ahn et al., 2017a), and gender diversity (Kroeper et al., 2022). Furthermore, recent industry surveys suggest that most consumers appreciate diversity in advertising, but that some people are willing to boycott a brand they deemed 'woke' (Statista, 2022). 'Woke' carries a negative connotation for these individuals. The original definition of 'woke' was to be aware of social injustice. However, it is now commonly used to describe individuals and companies perceived as exploiting the diversity and inclusion movement for personal or corporate gain. Although the research shows that diversity in advertisements is important to many consumers, it also shows that some consumers might respond negatively to this diversity, as the Bud Light example illustrates. This study examines the impact of diversity in online advertising on individuals' purchase intentions.

Furthermore, the effect of the political orientation (liberal or conservative) of these individuals on this relationship is examined. This information could be valuable for businesses; if conservative individuals are less receptive to diversity in advertising, marketers might consider geopolitical segmentation to guide their marketing and media strategies. Election data could be used to gain insights into the political ideologies prevalent in different locations.

Most previous research has focused on advertising in traditional media. Studies have only recently begun to examine diversity in online media. For instance, Feng et al. (2019) have explored how consumers react to various advertising campaigns. More research is needed, especially given that both positive and negative reactions can quickly spread through comments and sharing of advertising content on online and social media platforms. Therefore, this thesis focuses on online advertisements.

1.3: A Brief Discussion of the Literature

Due to the increase in diverse and inclusive advertisements (Eisend et al., 2022), numerous papers have been published on this subject. The literature primarily focuses on how diverse advertisements affect consumer well-being. For example, Henderson and Rank-Christman (2016) underscore the adverse effects of a lack of diversity, emphasising its potential to reinforce bias and marginalisation against minority groups. Despite the growing recognition of inclusive advertising and its implications for consumer well-being, empirical evidence regarding its impact on purchase intention—an essential objective of digital advertising—remains limited (Zhang et al., 2023). Qayyum et al. (2023) partially address this issue. They examined the impact of Instagram-based inclusive advertising, featuring an endorser with a disability, on consumer well-being and purchase intention. They found that inclusive advertising on Instagram enhances both the hedonic and eudaimonic well-being of individuals. Hedonic well-being focuses on pleasure, enjoyment, and the avoidance of pain, while eudaimonic well-being centres on living a life of purpose, meaning, and self-realisation. Only hedonic well-being predicted purchase intention. By combining the relationship between diversity in advertisements and individual well-being, as studied in

previous research, with Qayyum et al.'s (2023) findings on the connection between well-being and purchase intentions, the literature suggests a positive relationship between diversity in advertisements and individuals' purchase intentions.

1.4: Why Are Advertisements Not Always Diverse?

Although the literature is mostly positive about the effects of diversity in advertisements, some brands do not incorporate it into their advertising. According to Rodríguez-Vilá (2024), brands often target a 'general market' by linking their products to cultural ideals of beauty, success, and other attributes. This strategy, known as the 'exclusivity paradigm,' can be effective because it targets a large audience. However, the study also indicates that the exclusivity paradigm comes with significant drawbacks. It excludes customers who do not see their identities represented in the products. Additionally, when many brands adopt similar standards, it leads to the marginalisation of some groups. This not only limits market growth but also negatively impacts the emotional well-being of underrepresented communities (Rodríguez-Vilá, 2024).

Another reason companies might avoid diversity is the potential backlash from consumers, particularly conservatives. Although the reaction to ethnic diversity based on political ideology has not yet been studied, Northey et al. (2021) conducted a study examining reactions to homosexual imagery. They found that conservatives are more likely to experience feelings of disgust towards ads featuring homosexual imagery. This led conservatives to view the brand or product as less appealing. The recent boycotts of Target and Bud Light also show that some consumers do not appreciate LGBTQ+ promotion. The majority of those who criticised these brands for being 'woke' were conservatives.

1.5: The Research Question

Qayyum et al. (2023) provide some insights into the relationship between diversity in advertisements and purchase intention. However, further research into this relationship would be valuable. Additionally, the influence of political orientation on this relationship has not been extensively studied. Recently, diverse advertising has come under criticism, with examples of 'woke' campaigns, such as those by Bud Light, facing backlash. This creates challenges for companies in making marketing decisions. Should they embrace the growing trend of diversity in advertising campaigns, or should they avoid it to steer clear of 'woke' critique? The answer to this question may vary for each company. Companies should consider their customer base and cater to their preferences. For instance, a transgender campaign for Bud Light was evidently a misstep. However, for brands with an inclusive image, this approach might have been appropriate. But what causes some individuals to react positively to diversity in advertising while others react negatively? Political orientation, specifically the divide between conservatives and liberals, might play a role. Wetts and Willer (2022) demonstrate that conservative Americans are more likely to oppose 'woke culture.' Therefore, this thesis aims to answer the question: How does the presence of ethnic diversity in advertisements affect the likelihood of Dutch conservatives versus liberals to purchase a product?

1.6: The Methodology

To research the relationship between diversity in advertisements and purchase intention, an online experiment was conducted. The experiment used a between-subjects design and featured three pairs of advertisements. Each pair consisted of a diverse advertisement (displaying actors from minority groups) and a non-diverse advertisement (not displaying individuals from minority groups). The two advertisements in each pair were as similar as possible, differing only in the actors, with all or most other elements kept constant. The advertisements in each pair both promoted the same product, from the same company, with identical copy (text on the advertisement).

First, respondents' purchase intentions were measured before viewing one of the advertisements, using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = extremely unlikely, 5 = extremely likely) and the question: "How likely are you to buy the product from the advertisement?" Respondents then viewed one of the advertisements from each pair randomly. After viewing the advertisement, respondents' purchase intentions were measured again. Additionally, the political orientation of the respondents was assessed using a 2-item scale (liberal or conservative). Control variables such as age, ethnicity, and gender were also collected. An online survey was administered to a hundred Dutch citizens to gather the data. Following data collection, t-tests and ANOVAs were conducted to examine the relationships between ethnic diversity in the advertisement and the purchase intention of the advertised product, as well as the moderating effect of political orientation.

1.7: Predictions

It is difficult to predict the outcomes of this thesis. Other studies on diversity in advertisements have focused more on individual and societal well-being than on purchase intentions. Qayyum et al. (2023) researched this relationship, but their experiment had a within-subject design. The problem with this design is that it communicates to the subjects that it is studying the effect of diversity (in their case, a disabled person) in advertising. This might push subjects to respond in what they perceive to be a socially acceptable way and therefore influence the results.

Research from Brodzik et al. (2021) and Rodríguez-Vilá (2024) indicates that younger people and those from minority backgrounds often consider diversity and inclusion when choosing brands. However, in the general population, diversity and inclusion are among the least important factors influencing a purchase decision. Moreover, the results from studies about diversity could be influenced by social desirability bias. Hence, it is hypothesised that no significant effect will be found between diversity in advertisements and purchase intention. Furthermore, the moderator 'political orientation' is expected to influence this relationship. Conservatives are anticipated to prefer non-diverse advertisements, while liberals are expected to have no preference..

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1: Introduction

AdLock notes that during the 1970s, the average American encountered between 500 and 1,600 advertisements each day. By 2020, this figure had surged to an estimated 6,000 to 10,000 ads per day (Serezchenko, 2024). Given this substantial exposure to advertisements, businesses have a significant influence on consumers. Consequently, consumers now expect brands to adhere to high ethical standards, including the incorporation of diversity into their advertisements.

On the one hand, people are becoming more conscious of diversity in advertising, but on the other hand, advancements in technologies could lead to less diverse advertisements. With the advent of technologies like deepfakes and generative AI, advertisers can now modify features such as a model's age, gender, and race with ease. Moreover, these advancements allow for precision in audience targeting, presenting tailored ads that best fit the individual. This creates the risk of fostering a "diversity echo chamber" (Campbell et al., 2023).

Diversity in advertising is a subject that has been extensively studied. Before examining the research, the term "diversity" is defined once more. In this thesis, "diversity" is defined as the fair and proportional portrayal of diverse groups in a particular promotional setting or medium (Eisend, 2022). Diversity refers to the basic human right of not being disadvantaged, but being recognized, understood, and appreciated based on any diversity attribute. These attributes can range from ethnicity to age, to disabilities, and gender. This thesis focuses on the diversity of a surface-level trait, namely ethnicity. Surface-level characteristics are easily observable (e.g., age, ethnicity, gender), while deep-level characteristics are less so (e.g., religious beliefs, neurodiversity, health status, intersectionality) (Khan and Kalra, 2021).

2.2: Has Advertising Become More Diverse?

Advertising has generally become more diverse over the last two decades (Eisend et al., 2022). The big companies, in particular, have been paying more attention to diversity.

According to Penn State University, Fortune 500 companies and other organisations have been increasing their marketing efforts around diversity since the 1980s (Wong, 2023).

Although it is clear that diversity in advertising worldwide has significantly improved over the past few decades, some recent reports suggest that advertisements have become less representative lately (Council, 2023). Following the murder of George Floyd in 2020, diversity became a much-debated topic. After the resulting "Black Lives Matter" protests, many brands and marketers made bold commitments to diversity, but most of these brands did not live up to their promises (Notte, 2023).

Since the murder of George Floyd, advertising firms and marketing departments at consumer-products companies have made progress in pushing for executive representation. However, the diversity in advertising itself hasn't improved since then (Council, 2023). A study by McLaughlin et al. (2022) on diversity in U.S. advertising highlights this issue. While non-Hispanic white people comprise 59% of the U.S. population, they accounted for 72.5% of those who appeared in TV and digital video ads in 2022, according to a study by Extreme Reach, a global marketing logistics company. This marks an increase in the portrayal of white actors from 65.6% in 2021. At the same time, 60% of consumers from diverse communities said they felt "invisible or underrepresented" in advertisements, up from 58% in 2021.

Next, the diversity in advertising in the Netherlands is closely examined. Boon and Schroeder (2022) have studied this subject rigorously. They conclude that Dutch advertisements have become more diverse relative to the findings in their 2020 study. However, they also conclude that in some aspects of diversity, such as age and disabilities, the population is still not fairly represented. Moreover, people who are part of minority groups (e.g., people with a non-Dutch ethnicity) are often represented in a stereotypical way or have a less prominent role in the advertisement. Although there are still improvements that can be made, Dutch advertisements are already relatively diverse. For example, the Dutch population consists of 25% people with a non-Dutch ethnicity, and 50% of Dutch advertisements include at least one of these individuals.

After examining the diversity in Dutch advertisements, can we conclude there is enough diversity? Claiming definitively whether there is sufficient or insufficient diversity is very

difficult. Enough diversity would suggest that a society is fairly represented. But what exactly does it mean to "represent society"? For instance, which society are we referring to? Is it a country, the entire world, or should ads be tailored to reflect the distinct societies of each city they appear in? Additionally, what happens if a product's current user base is largely homogeneous? Campbell et al. acknowledge that there is no perfect way to make these comparisons (Campbell et al., 2023).

2.3: Do People React Positively to Diversity in Advertisements?

In advertising, it's not about what the advertisers want; it's about what the consumers want. Research shows that many consumers desire more diversity in marketing (Brodzik et al., 2021). However, not all demographics pay the same attention to diversity in advertisements. In a survey by Brodzik et al. (2021) of 11,500 global consumers, it was found that those aged 18 to 25 paid more attention to inclusive advertising. Additionally, in the U.S., non-white respondents (identifying as Asian or Pacific Islander, Black or African American, Hispanic American, Native American or Alaska Native, or multiracial) were up to two-and-a-half times more likely to notice a brand emphasising diversity during their purchasing decisions.

It is evident that younger generations are more attentive to and supportive of diversity in advertising. However, Brodzik et al. (2021) also show that even 70% of Baby Boomers believe companies should incorporate inclusive marketing at least some of the time.

So, people say they want more diversity in advertisements, but how do they actually react to it? Evans et al. (n.d.) conclude that the general British population reacts more positively to diverse advertisements. The study used a metric called the "star rating," which is based on how positively viewers respond to the advertisement. They found that diverse advertisements had a higher star rating on average, meaning that the British population reacted more positively to diverse advertisements.

Although people can appreciate diversity in advertisements, this does not mean that advertisements will be better received if companies simply add as much diversity as possible. The actors in the advertisement should be congruent with the brand, the product,

and the message, as the effects of portrayals in advertising are more positive when they are consistent with these elements (De Meulenaer et al., 2017). Further supporting this claim, Eisend (2009) shows that higher degrees of perceived stereotyping are actually more positively received by consumers. This is particularly evident in the portrayal of male roles and, to a slightly lesser degree, in the depiction of female roles. Congruity theory provides an explanation for this phenomenon. Congruity theory proposes that people value information or depictions that are congruent with their existing social and cognitive schemata (Ko et al., 2015). To conclude, in general, people appreciate diversity in marketing when it is done in a congruent manner. For example, evidence suggests that an advertisement for a Barbie doll featuring only boys would be less effective.

2.4: Pushback Against Diversity in Advertising

While many studies emphasise a growing demand for diversity among certain consumers, this enthusiasm is not shared by all. This discrepancy poses challenges for brands, some of which have faced criticism. The complex nature of diversity in advertising is evident. Although the literature largely highlights the advantages of diversity, there has been notable consumer pushback against brands featuring diverse models in their advertisements. This tension calls into question the objectivity of our current understanding of the effects of diverse representation in advertising (Campbell et al., 2023).

The reasons behind the pushback against diversity in advertising can be explored. The primary concern among critics is authenticity. Many consumers today expect brands to take a stand on sociopolitical issues. However, merely taking a stand is not enough for certain consumers. Vredenburg et al. (2020) state that consumers also demand authenticity. Authentic brand activism occurs when brands align their activist messages with their core values, goals, and corporate culture. However, when brands' activist messages are disconnected from their true values, goals, and corporate culture, it results in inauthentic brand activism, known as "woke-washing." This term describes companies that seek to benefit from activist messaging without genuinely caring about the issues, such as the discrimination of minority groups. As a result, even if consumers support the diversity

movement, they often criticise brands when they perceive the message to be inauthentic (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Another argument against diversity in advertising is the criticism of "political correctness." This perspective suggests that companies lack genuine conviction and are merely conforming to politically correct norms rather than being true advocates for diversity. Critics argue that these companies are more concerned with appeasing societal expectations and avoiding controversy than with creating true inclusion. This viewpoint holds that businesses are acting as mere puppets of a politically correct agenda, prioritising image over real change, and failing to demonstrate true commitment to diversity and equality.

When consumers perceive a company as "woke," it can lead to significant backlash, including boycotts. According to Northey et al. (2021), 26% of U.S. adults are willing to boycott a brand they consider "woke." Recent examples highlight the challenges brands face when engaging in diversity efforts, as not all consumers value diverse representation equally. For instance, Anheuser-Busch faced substantial fallout after partnering with transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney to promote Bud Light. This collaboration, launched in April 2023, sparked outrage among conservative groups, resulting in calls for a boycott. Consequently, Anheuser-Busch lost $6 billion in market capitalization within a week (Hammer, 2023), and Bud Light's sales dropped by about 28% compared to the previous year (Liaukonyte, 2024). Similarly, other brands like Disney, Target, and the National Hockey League have experienced repercussions from their diversity initiatives. These incidents underscore the risks companies face when addressing controversial social issues, leading many marketing departments to tread more cautiously to avoid financial and reputational damage.

The two arguments for the pushback against diversity in advertising discussed are those that opponents of diversity use to justify their actions or attitudes. There could be a deeper psychological explanation as well. Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979), suggests that individuals derive a part of their self-image from their membership in social groups. First, people categorise themselves into social groups based on attributes like race, religion, and gender. Once they categorise themselves into these social groups, they often adopt the group identity and internalise the group's norms, values, and behaviours, and often attach emotional significance to this group membership, which

influences their self-esteem. After identifying with a group, individuals compare their group to others. This comparison is often biassed in favour of their own group, leading to in-group favouritism. SIT posits that individuals naturally view their in-group positively and out-groups neutrally or negatively to enhance their self-image. This prejudiced view of out-groups can cause discrimination. Perhaps some people do not like seeing diverse advertisements because the people in these advertisements might not be part of their in-group. This theory may also explain why individuals from minority groups respond more positively to diverse advertising.

To conclude, some people have negative reactions to diversity in advertising because they do not believe the companies to be authentic, or they accuse companies of being puppets of a politically correct agenda. Another reason for this might be a deeper psychological explanation given by Social Identity Theory. However, studies show that, in general, diversity in advertisements is appreciated. Unfortunately, there is no data on the reaction of Dutch citizens to diversity in advertisements.

2.5: The Relationship Between Diversity in Advertising and the Purchase Intention

Diverse and inclusive advertising has been shown to positively influence brand perception among certain demographic segments (Eisend et al., 2022). Specifically, minority groups and younger individuals exhibit greater sensitivity to diversity in advertising, with their purchase decisions being notably influenced by perceptions of brand inclusion. For instance, in the sportswear market, the purchase intent of Black customers increased from 17% to 40% as perceptions of brand inclusion improved. Similarly, perceived inclusion also influenced the purchase decisions of 87% of nonbinary consumers, 61% of Black and plus-size consumers, 63% of Gen Z consumers, and 38% of white consumers (Rodríguez-Vilá, 2024).

Additionally, a survey of 11,500 global consumers found that young individuals (18-25 years old) were particularly attentive to inclusive advertising when making purchasing decisions (Brodzik et al., 2021). This indicates that younger people and those from minority backgrounds often consider diversity and inclusion when making brand choices.

The research suggests a positive relationship between diversity in advertising and brand perception, as well as reported purchase intent. However, this relationship appears to be stronger within certain demographic segments.

But what does the research suggest about the broader population? Qayyum et al. (2023) investigated the impact of inclusive advertising on Instagram, featuring an endorser with a disability, on consumer well-being and purchase intention. Their findings demonstrated that inclusive advertising enhances both hedonic and eudaimonic well-being, with hedonic well-being specifically predicting purchase intention. Moreover, if two brands offered identical products, one in three consumers (34%) would consider each brand's commitment to diversity and inclusion when making purchase decisions (Top Design Firms, 2020).

It seems that diversity in advertisements positively affects individuals' purchase intentions for at least a portion of the population. However, another study reported that diverse marketing is one of the least important factors in swaying customers' purchasing decisions (Briggs, 2024). This highlights the necessity, as emphasised by Overgoor et al. (2023), of understanding the complexities of demonstrating a commitment to diversity and meeting consumer expectations.

Another caveat to the research suggesting a positive relationship between diversity in advertisements and purchase intent or brand perception is that respondents' stated intentions (potentially influenced by social desirability bias) may not align with their actual behaviours in real-world scenarios.

In conclusion, the research on the effect of diversity in advertising on individuals' purchase intentions is inconclusive. But what about the research done on Dutch citizens? InBoon and Schroeder (2022) found that simply including ethnic diversity in advertisements targeted at Dutch audiences does not necessarily boost sales. Instead, they emphasise the significance of portraying actors in ads as positive role models. While this can involve individuals from non-Dutch ethnic backgrounds, their research suggests that diversity for the sake of diversity, without meaningful portrayal, may not contribute positively to sales outcomes. This leads to the first hypothesis.

H1: Featuring a person from an ethnic minority group in a Meta advertisement does not significantly influence purchase intentions among Dutch citizens.

2.6: The Impact of Political Ideology on Reactions to Diversity in Advertising

Political ideology significantly influences various psychological aspects. Farmer et al. (2020) demonstrate that consumers' personalities, thoughts, motivations, and behaviours differ fundamentally based on their preferred political party. This aligns with a study by Jung et al. (2017), which found that political ideology plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' attitudes, opinions, and behaviours.

So, what are some of the key psychological differences between conservatives and liberals? Research conducted by Shavitt (2017) highlights distinct characteristics between these groups. Liberals are often characterised by a desire for equality and tend to be more tolerant of uncertainty and more open to new experiences than conservatives. On the other hand, conservatives are typically characterised by a desire to uphold traditional institutions and hierarchies and tend to score higher in traits such as conscientiousness, orderliness, and rigidity. Shavitt (2017) concludes that these ideological patterns are evident in reactions to products and advertising campaigns that confirm stereotypes or support the status quo. This suggests that liberals may be more supportive of diversity in advertising.

Although the reaction to ethnic diversity based on political ideology has not been extensively studied, there is relevant research on related themes. For instance, a study by Northey et al. (2021) examined reactions to homosexual imagery in advertising and found that conservatives are more likely to experience a feeling of disgust toward advertisements featuring such imagery. This led conservatives to view the brand or product as less appealing. This reaction can be explained by the earlier-discussed Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979). SIT posits that individuals naturally view their in-group positively and out-groups neutrally or negatively to enhance their self-image, potentially leading to discrimination. Some individuals may dislike seeing diverse

advertisements because the people in these advertisements might not belong to their in-group.

Recent boycotts of brands like Target and Bud Light illustrate that some individuals, particularly conservatives, do not appreciate the promotion of LGBTQ+ themes. The majority of those who criticised these brands for being 'woke' were conservatives. For example, following Bud Light's collaboration with transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney, the brand received significant backlash on social media from prominent conservatives, leading to a boycott. The decline in sales was more pronounced in predominantly Republican counties, where sales decreased by 32%, compared to a 22% decline in predominantly Democratic counties (Liaukonyte, 2024).

Target is another company that has faced criticism over its LGBTQ+ Pride product line. In response to backlash from right-wing conservatives, the retailer removed certain products, which then sparked further outrage among LGBTQ+ supporters who felt that Target had capitulated to right-wing pressure (Murray, 2023).

It is evident that, particularly in the U.S., some conservatives have a negative association with diversity, especially in the context of LGBTQ+ promotion. However, there have been no studies that examine whether this relationship is also prominent among Dutch citizens. This leads to the second and third hypotheses:

H2: The purchase intentions of Dutch individuals with conservative political views are significantly decreased by the presence of ethnic diversity in advertisements.

H3: The purchase intentions of Dutch individuals with liberal political views are not significantly influenced by the presence of ethnic diversity in advertisements.

2.7: Other Factors That Might Influence Consumers' Purchase Intention

This study focuses on the impact of diversity on consumers' purchase intentions. However, it is very difficult to isolate this relationship completely. While it is possible to control for variables such as product, price, and advertising text, it is nearly impossible to control for

factors related to the model. In an ideal experimental setting, one would use the exact same model with two different ethnicities, but this is not feasible. Several other factors could explain why consumers might prefer one actor over another, besides ethnicity. These include the model's attractiveness, the emotions displayed by the model, whether the model makes eye contact, and the perceived trustworthiness of the model. These factors are explored in more detail here.

One of the most apparent attributes of a model that could impact purchase intention is their attractiveness. Caballero and Solomon (1984) found that a model's attractiveness significantly influences consumer purchase behaviour. However, they caution that this does not imply that the more attractive the model, the better the results. There is an optimal level of attractiveness for each advertisement, moderated by the sex of the buyer and the type of product.

Another factor that might play a role in the effectiveness of an advertisement is the direction of the model's gaze. Whether the model looks directly into the camera, making eye contact with the consumer, or whether their gaze is averted, can influence consumer reactions. To and Patrick (2021) conclude that both approaches have their uses: an averted gaze is beneficial for advertisements highlighting the hedonic nature of the product, while direct eye contact is beneficial for advertisements that aim to emphasise the expertise of the spokesperson.

Another factor that might impact the effectiveness of a particular model in an advertisement is the emotions displayed by the model. Otamendi and Martín (2020) suggest that a model's facial expression can evoke strong emotions in the consumer, which in turn impacts the consumer's liking and engagement with the advertisement.

2.8: The Conceptual Model

The conceptual model, as illustrated in Figure 1, represents the relationships between the key variables discussed in this study. The arrows indicate a one-way effect between the connected variables, grounded in the literature reviewed. The primary focus of this thesis is

to investigate the impact of the independent variable, 'diversity in advertisements,' on the dependent variable, 'purchase intention.'

While the direct effect of diversity in advertisements on purchase intention has not been extensively studied, and the relationship remains uncertain, several studies hint at its existence, particularly within specific demographics. For instance, Eisend et al. (2022) suggest that diversity in advertising can influence purchase intention among certain demographic groups. Additionally, broader studies often examine this relationship through the lens of a mediator variable. For example, Qayyum et al. (2023) propose that diversity in advertisements impacts purchase intention, with hedonic well-being serving as the mediator.
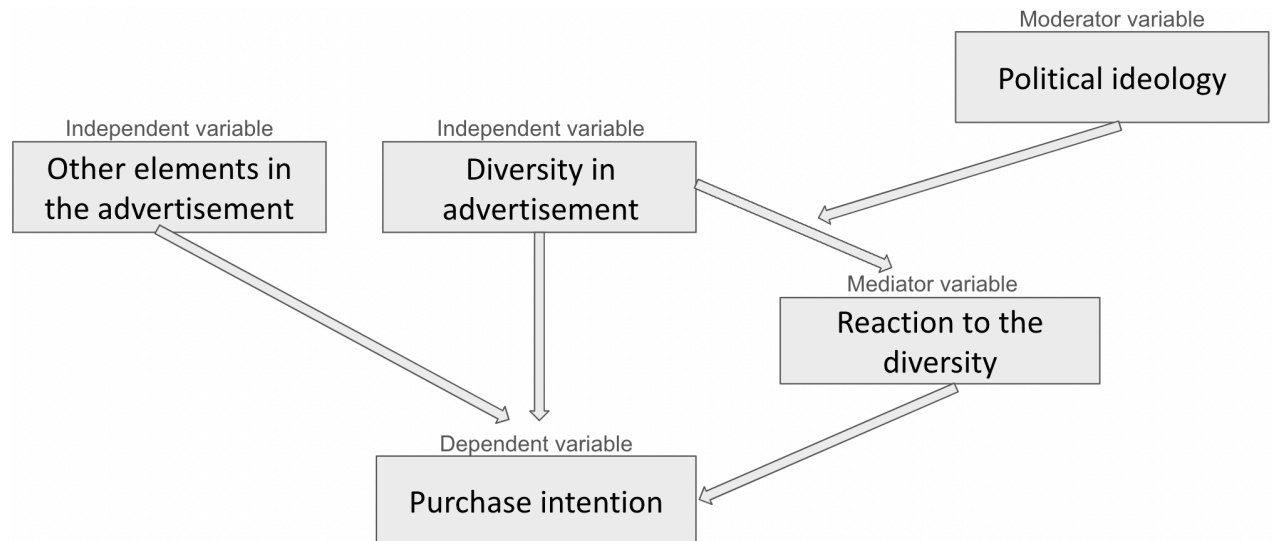
The literature generally indicates that people express a desire for more diversity in advertisements. For some, the presence of diversity may trigger a positive reaction, which could, in turn, enhance purchase intention. This is why 'reaction to diversity' has been included as a mediator variable in the conceptual model. For instance, Evans et al. (n.d.) found that people generally responded more favourably to diverse advertisements, which could positively influence short-term sales.

However, not everyone reacts positively to diversity in advertisements. Northey et al. (2021) report that 26% of U.S. adults are willing to boycott a brand they perceive as 'woke.' In recent examples, boycotts against such brands were predominantly driven by conservative consumers. Moreover, Northey et al. (2021) discovered that conservatives are more likely to experience disgust towards advertisements featuring homosexual imagery, leading to a decrease in the brand's appeal. Therefore, 'political ideology' has been incorporated as a moderator variable for the reaction to diversity in advertisements.

Finally, it is important to note that, in addition to diversity, many other elements in an advertisement can influence purchase intention. While the experimental setup of this thesis controls for many of these factors, certain variables—such as the attractiveness of the model and the emotions displayed by the model—could still affect the results. These factors are also considered within the conceptual model.

Figure 1

Conceptual model of variables

Moderator variable

Political ideology

Independent variable

Other elements in the advertisement

Independent variable

Diversity in advertisement

Mediator variable

Reaction to the diversity

Dependent variable

Purchase intention

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1: Qualitative Versus Quantitative

Qualitative and quantitative research represent two fundamental methodologies in gathering and analysing data. Understanding the differences between these approaches is crucial for selecting the appropriate method for a research question.

Qualitative research is centred on exploring ideas and understanding experiences. It focuses on the "why" and "how" rather than on numerical data. This approach collects data through various means, such as interviews, focus groups, and observations. In interviews, researchers engage in one-on-one conversations to gather personal thoughts and stories. Focus groups involve discussing a topic with a small group to obtain diverse perspectives. Observational methods allow researchers to watch how people behave in real-life situations. Another frequently used method is content analysis, where researchers examine texts, videos, or social media content to identify themes and patterns. The primary advantage of qualitative research is its ability to provide a comprehensive view of a topic. Participants have the opportunity to elaborate on their responses and introduce new points that researchers might not have anticipated.

Quantitative research, in contrast, is focused on numbers and statistics. Common methods include surveys and experiments. Surveys utilise questionnaires to collect data from a large number of participants, typically asking closed-ended questions. Experiments are controlled tests designed to observe how changes in one variable affect another while controlling for other factors. The data collected through these methods are analysed statistically. Quantitative research is particularly useful for making comparisons between groups and studying the effects of specific variables. One significant advantage of this approach is that it produces quantifiable results that can be easily measured and compared.

In summary, qualitative research delves into ideas and experiences in depth, using methods like interviews and observations to gather non-numerical data. Quantitative research, on the other hand, measures and quantifies issues, using surveys and experiments to collect numerical data that can be statistically analysed. Both approaches are valuable and are often used together to provide a comprehensive understanding of a research question.

3.2: The Case for a Quantitative Approach

For this thesis, a quantitative research method was selected. The relationship between diversity and advertising is deeply psychological, and the inclusion of political orientation adds further complexity. While qualitative research could have provided valuable insights into the underlying reasons behind these relationships, a quantitative approach was ultimately chosen.

The first reason for choosing a quantitative approach is its ability to produce quantifiable results, which can be more easily applied to marketing strategies. Although this does not necessarily mean that quantitative results are more valuable, they tend to be more straightforward to implement in practical scenarios.

Secondly, a quantitative study allows for a larger sample size. Conducting and analysing in-depth interviews with a hundred participants would be extremely challenging. In contrast, an online experiment can easily achieve a hundred responses, making the results more generalizable. This is particularly beneficial for marketers aiming to target a broad audience.

Lastly, a quantitative approach helps to reduce researcher bias. In this thesis, the absence of an experienced interviewer might have increased the likelihood of bias in a qualitative study. Additionally, given the sensitivity of the topic of diversity, there is a risk of participants providing socially desirable or politically correct responses. Interpreting qualitative data with complete objectivity is difficult. On the other hand, quantitative methods rely on numbers and statistics, which are inherently more objective. This objectivity can help ensure that the results are more reliable and less influenced by the researcher's personal perspectives.

3.3: The Different Quantitative Methods

In quantitative research, several methods are commonly used to collect data, each with its own strengths and weaknesses.

Surveys are one of the most frequently employed methods. They involve standardised questions that respondents answer via a questionnaire. Surveys are particularly popular in

quantitative studies due to their cost-effectiveness and the relative ease with which data can be gathered from a large group of respondents. This method allows researchers to collect data quickly and efficiently, making it ideal for studies that require responses from a broad audience.

Experiments are another key method in quantitative research. In an experiment, the researcher manipulates one or more independent variables while controlling other variables to observe their effect on a dependent variable. Because all variables are controlled in an experiment, the results are highly reliable for establishing cause-and-effect relationships. However, experiments also have some downsides. They are often more complex and time-consuming to set up than surveys. Additionally, the artificial settings of an experiment may not accurately reflect real-world conditions, which can influence participant behaviour and limit the generalizability of the findings.

A third method is secondary data analysis, which involves analysing data from previous studies. This approach can be both cost-effective and time-efficient, as it utilises existing data rather than requiring the collection of new data. However, a potential limitation is that the available data may not address the specific nuances of the research question at hand, which could limit the study's relevance to the current research objectives.

3.4: This Thesis' Approach

For this thesis, a combination of the first two methods discussed—surveys and experiments—was used. An online experiment was conducted using a survey to answer the research question. This approach effectively combines the advantages of both methods, making it relatively simple to gather data from many respondents in a cost-effective and time-efficient manner, while also allowing for the exploration of potential cause-and-effect relationships.

The survey begins with a few demographic-related questions to gather background information on the respondents. Following this, the experiment component examines the effect of ethnic diversity on purchase intention. Respondents are first asked about their

purchase intention for a specific product using a 5-point Likert scale. They are then randomly shown one of two advertisements for the product. The two advertisements are nearly identical, with the only difference being the model featured: one features a White/Caucasian person, while the other features a non-Western person. After viewing the advertisement, respondents are again asked to state their purchase intention on a 5-point Likert scale. This procedure is repeated for three different products, which helps to minimise the influence of other factors, such as the attractiveness of the model in the advertisement, thereby increasing the reliability of the results.

3.5: Pilot Experiment

To determine the effectiveness and comprehensibility of the online experiment, a small pilot experiment was conducted. A group of 5 individuals filled in the initial survey, with the researcher present. The respondent gave feedback along the way and told the researcher about their train of thought. This process resulted in a few minor changes in the wording of questions, but also in one major change, namely the addition of the pre-test into the online experiment. It became evident from the pilot experiment that the liking of the product itself was the most important factor in the decision process, overshadowing other factors.

3.6: The Research Sample

To gather the data the circle of the researcher was used. This explains the overrepresentation of males and younger people in the research sample. Firstly, of the 78 valid responses, 48 respondents were male, and only 30 respondents were female, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics on gender of sample demographics

Gender	Frequency
Male	48
Female	30
Total	78

Furthermore, Table 2 shows that the research sample is highly overrepresented by people ranging from 18 to 30 years old, because most of the acquaintances of the researcher are around this age. To put the skewness of age into perspective, 40 respondents fall in the category of 18 to 30 years old and only one respondent is above 70 years old. The total frequency in Table 2 is lower than the amount of respondents (81). Some people were either not comfortable stating their age, or entered an invalid number.

Table 2

Descriptive statistics on age of sample demographics

Age	Frequency
18-30	40
31-43	12
44-56	10
57-69	6
70+	1
Total	69

The last control variable that was gathered in the survey was the ethnicity of the respondents. There were three options; Dutch, Non-Dutch or Mixed. The survey was conducted among Dutch citizens, so it was expected that the majority of respondents would have a Dutch ethnicity. There were 52 respondents with a Dutch ethnicity, 11 with a Non-Dutch ethnicity and 15 with a Mixed ethnicity.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics on ethnicity of sample demographics

Ethnicity	Frequency
Dutch	52
Non-Dutch	11
Mixed	15
Total	78

3.7: Data Collection

The survey was distributed through online channels, including Instagram, WhatsApp, and email. Family members and friends of the researcher were asked to complete the survey and assist in further distribution. This approach facilitated a larger and more diverse sample of respondents. Participants completed the survey on their phones or laptops without supervision, and the survey was conducted anonymously. These conditions aimed to ensure that respondents felt comfortable providing honest opinions. Data collection occurred from July 10th to July 22nd. The raw survey data can be found in Appendix B.

3.8: Data Analysis Method

Each advertisement pair was analysed separately. Each pair included a non-diverse variant, referred to as variant A, and a diverse variant, referred to as variant B. Approximately half of the respondents were shown variant A, while the other half were shown variant B. For each respondent, the difference between their post-advertisement purchase intention rating and their pretest purchase intention rating was calculated:

For participants who viewed variant A:

ΔA = Pretest rating $-$ Post-advertisement A rating

For participants who viewed variant B:

ΔB = Pretest rating $-$ Post-advertisement B rating

The analysis focused on whether ΔA and ΔB significantly differed. These two samples contained approximately forty respondents per group. To determine if the means of these groups significantly differed, a two-sample t-test was conducted using SPSS. However, the first step involved ensuring that ΔA and ΔB were normally distributed and that their variances were reasonably homogeneous.

The two-sample t-test was conducted with the following hypotheses:

- H0: There is no difference in the mean change in purchase intention between advertisement A and advertisement B.
- H1: There is a difference in the mean change in purchase intention between advertisement A and advertisement B.

To examine the effect of political ideology (conservative or liberal) on the relationship between purchase intention and diversity in the advertisement, a two-way ANOVA was conducted. The dependent variable was the difference between the purchase intention before and after viewing the advertisement. The two independent variables were political ideology and the advertisement variant shown in the survey.

3.9: Bias in the Study

A quantitative approach was chosen to minimise researcher bias. The use of an online experiment provided ample time to carefully consider the phrasing of questions, which were designed to be as neutral and non-judgmental as possible. Additionally, the random assignment of respondents to one of the two advertisement variations reduced potential selection bias, ensuring that any differences in responses could be attributed to the advertisements rather than pre-existing differences among participants. Furthermore, respondents were informed that the study concerned the effectiveness of online advertisements, without specific mention of the focus on diversity. This approach ensured

that the researcher did not influence participants toward a particular perspective and allowed them to respond without concerns about providing socially desirable answers.

Chapter 4: Research Outcome

4.1: The Role of Diversity on Purchase Intention in Advertisement Pair One

In this study, three different advertisement pairs are analysed separately to ensure the most reliable results. These pairs are detailed in Appendix A.

Initially, the group statistics for advertisement pair one (Table 4) are reviewed. Thirty-four respondents indicated their purchase intention after viewing advertisement A, and thirty-four respondents indicated their purchase intention after viewing advertisement B. All respondents first reported their purchase intention for the specific product in a pretest, prior to viewing any advertisement. Following the pretest, respondents viewed either advertisement A or B and subsequently reported their purchase intention for the product again. The difference in purchase intention before and after viewing the advertisement is assessed using a two-sample t-test. Purchase intentions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

In the t-test this difference is formulated as:

'Diff_pre1_5' = 'purchase intention pretest 1' - 'purchase intention advertisement 1'

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of advertisement pair one

	Advertising variant	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Diff_pre1_5	advertisement a	34	.9706	1.44569	.24793
	advertisement b	34	.7941	1.34343	.23040

The mean value of 'Diff_pre1_5' is 0.97 for advertisement A, indicating a decrease in purchase intention by 0.97 after viewing this advertisement (the non-diverse variant). For advertisement B, the mean value of 'Diff_pre1_5' is 0.79, reflecting a decrease in purchase intention by 0.79 after viewing this advertisement (the diverse variant).

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is employed to assess the equality of variances. The significance value of 0.966 is substantially higher than 0.05, suggesting that the null

hypothesis of equal variances is not rejected. Therefore, equal variances are assumed for the t-test.

Using a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the two-sided p-value of 0.604 exceeds 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean change in purchase intention between advertisement A and advertisement B. These results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

Independent samples test results advertisement pair one

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p			Lower	Upper
Diff_pre1_5	Equal variances assumed	.002	.966	.521	66	.302	.604	.17647	.33846	−.49928	.85222
	Equal variances not assumed			.521	65.648	.302	.604	.17647	.33846	−.49935	.85229

4.2: The Role of Diversity on Purchase Intention in Advertisement Pair Two

First, the group statistics will be examined (see Table 6). Thirty-two respondents reported their purchase intention after viewing advertisement A, while twenty-nine respondents reported their purchase intention after viewing advertisement B. All respondents initially reported their purchase intention for the product in a pretest, prior to viewing any advertisement. Following the pretest, each respondent viewed either advertisement A or B and subsequently reported their purchase intention for the product again. The difference in purchase intention before and after viewing the advertisement will be analysed using a two-sample t-test. Purchase intentions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

In the t-test this difference is formulated as:

'Diff_pre2_6' = 'purchase intention pretest 2' - 'purchase intention advertisement 2'

Table 6

Descriptive statistics of advertisement pair two

	Advertising variant	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Diff_pre2_6	advertisement a	32	−.1562	1.16700	.20630
	advertisement b	29	.4483	1.59432	.29606

The mean value of 'Diff_pre2_6' is -0.16 for advertisement A, indicating an increase in purchase intention by 0.16 after viewing this advertisement (the non-diverse variant). For advertisement B, the mean value of 'Diff_pre2_6' is 0.45, reflecting a decrease in purchase intention by 0.45 after viewing this advertisement (the diverse variant).

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is used to assess variance equality. The significance value of 0.072 is greater than 0.05, suggesting that the null hypothesis of equal variances is not rejected. Therefore, equal variances are assumed for the t-test.

Using a significance level of α = 0.05, the two-sided p-value of 0.094 exceeds 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean change in purchase intention between advertisement A and advertisement B. These results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Independent samples test results advertisement pair two

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
						Significance		Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One–Sided p	Two–Sided p			Lower	Upper
Diff_pre2_6	Equal variances assumed	3.355	.072	−1.701	59	.047	.094	−.60453	.35543	−1.31574	.10669
	Equal variances not assumed			−1.675	50.944	.050	.100	−.60453	.36085	−1.32897	.11992

4.3: The Role of Diversity on Purchase Intention in Advertisement Pair Three

First, the group statistics will be examined (see Table 8). Twenty-five respondents reported their purchase intention after viewing advertisement A, and twenty-five respondents reported their purchase intention after viewing advertisement B. All respondents initially reported their purchase intention for the product in a pretest, prior to viewing any advertisement. After the pretest, each respondent viewed either advertisement A or B and subsequently reported their purchase intention for the product again. The difference in purchase intention before and after viewing the advertisement will be analysed using a two-sample t-test. Purchase intentions were measured on a 5-point Likert scale.

In the t-test this difference is formulated as:

'Diff_pre3_7' = 'purchase intention pretest 3' - 'purchase intention advertisement 3'

Table 8

Descriptive statistics of advertisement pair three

	advertisement variant	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Diff_pre3_7	advertisement a	25	-.0400	.93452	.18690
	advertisement b	25	-.0800	1.03763	.20753

The mean value of 'Diff_pre3_7' is -0.04 for advertisement A, indicating an increase in purchase intention by 0.04 after viewing this advertisement (the non-diverse variant). For advertisement B, the mean value of 'Diff_pre3_7' is -0.08, reflecting an increase in purchase intention by 0.08 after viewing this advertisement (the diverse variant).

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances is used to assess whether the variances are equal. The significance value of 0.072 is greater than 0.05, suggesting that the null hypothesis of equal variances is not rejected. Therefore, equal variances are assumed for the t-test.

With a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, the two-sided p-value of 0.89 exceeds 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis is not rejected. This suggests that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean change in purchase intention between advertisement A and advertisement B. These results are presented in Table 9.

Table 9

Independent samples test results advertisement pair three

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
							Significance		Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	One-Sided p	Two-Sided p	Difference	Difference	Lower	Upper
Diff_pre3_7	Equal variances assumed	.444	.508	.143	48	.443	.887	.04000	.27928	-.52154	.60154
	Equal variances not assumed			.143	47.484	.443	.887	.04000	.27928	-.52170	.60170

4.4: The Effect of Political Ideology

To investigate whether political ideology affects the relationship between diversity in advertisements and purchase intention, an analysis was conducted that considers both the advertisement variation (diverse vs. non-diverse) and political ideology (liberal, conservative, neutral). A two-way ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) is used to examine the interaction between these two factors.

4.5: The Effect of Political Orientation in Advertisement Pair One

To assess whether political ideology influences the change in purchase intention after viewing diverse versus non-diverse ads, an ANOVA was performed using the variable 'Diff_pre1_5'. This variable represents the difference in purchase intention between the pretest measurement and the measurement after viewing the first advertisement, which is either non-diverse (variant A) or diverse (variant B). A positive value for 'Diff_pre1_5' indicates a decrease in purchase intention after viewing the ad compared to the pretest, while a negative value indicates an increase in purchase intention. These differences are based on a 5-point Likert scale.

Descriptive statistics in Table 10 show that the ten conservative respondents who viewed ad A (the non-diverse variant) reported a mean decrease in purchase intention of 1.70. In contrast, the fourteen liberal respondents reported a mean decrease of 0.71.

Table 10

Descriptive statistics of advertisement pair one including political ideology

Advertising variant		Mean	Deviation	N
advertisement a	Conservatief	1.7000	1.15950	10
	Liberaal	.7143	1.68379	14
	Ik weet het niet / Geen voorkeur	.6667	1.22474	9
	Total	1.0000	1.45774	33
advertisement b	Conservatief	1.0000	1.00000	11
	Liberaal	.6923	1.43670	13
	Ik weet het niet / Geen voorkeur	.6667	1.36626	6
	Total	.8000	1.24291	30
Total	Conservatief	1.3333	1.11056	21
	Liberaal	.7037	1.53960	27
	Ik weet het niet / Geen voorkeur	.6667	1.23443	15
	Total	.9048	1.35259	63

For those who viewed ad B (the diverse variant), the eleven conservatives reported a mean decrease in purchase intention of 1.00, while the thirteen liberals reported a mean decrease of 0.69. Respondents with no political preference exhibited a mean decrease of 0.67, regardless of the advertisement variant.

Levene's test was performed to assess the homogeneity of variances for 'Diff_pre1_5' across the different political groups (conservative, liberal, and no preference). The results show that the p-values for Levene's test are greater than 0.05, indicating no significant differences in variances between the groups. Thus, the assumption of variance homogeneity for the ANOVA was satisfied.

An ANOVA was conducted to examine whether there is an interaction effect between respondents' political ideology and the type of advertisement (non-diverse vs. diverse) on the change in purchase intention. The results, presented in Table 11, reveal no significant main effect for ad type (Group_1): $F(1, 57) = 0.46$, $p = 0.50$, or for political ideology (Q8): $F(2, 57) = 1.64$, $p = 0.20$. The interaction between political ideology and advertisement variant is also non-significant: $F(2, 57) = 0.44$, $p = 0.64$. These findings indicate that political ideology does not have a significant effect on the change in purchase intention after viewing diverse versus non-diverse ads.

Table 11

Results of ANOVA for advertisement pair one

Dependent Variable: Diff_pre1_5

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	8.369[a]	5	1.674	.908	.482	.074
Intercept	47.959	1	47.959	26.020	<.001	.313
Group_1	.845	1	.845	.458	.501	.008
Q8	6.061	2	3.030	1.644	.202	.055
Group_1 * Q8	1.636	2	.818	.444	.644	.015
Error	105.060	57	1.843			
Total	165.000	63				
Corrected Total	113.429	62				

Based on the analyses, it can be concluded that, within this sample, respondents' political ideology does not significantly affect the change in purchase intention after viewing a diverse or non-diverse advertisement. Both conservative and liberal respondents show similar patterns in the decrease of purchase intention, irrespective of the ad's diversity.

4.6: The Effect of Political Orientation in Advertisement Pair Two

To investigate whether political ideology affects the change in purchase intention after viewing diverse versus non-diverse ads, an analysis of variance was conducted using the variable 'Diff_pre2_6'. This variable represents the difference in purchase intention between the second pretest measurement and the measurement after viewing the second advertisement, which is either non-diverse (variant A) or diverse (variant B). A positive value for 'Diff_pre2_6' indicates an increase in purchase intention after viewing the ad compared to the pretest, while a negative value indicates a decrease. These differences are based on a 5-point Likert scale.

Descriptive statistics in Table 12 show that the fourteen conservative respondents who viewed ad A (the non-diverse variant) reported a mean increase in purchase intention of 0.43. In contrast, the eight liberal respondents reported a mean decrease of 0.25.

Table 12

Descriptive statistics of advertisement pair two including political ideology

Advertising variant		Mean	Deviation	N
advertisement a	Conservatief	−.4286	.75593	14
	Liberaal	.2500	1.83225	8
	Ik weet het niet / Geen voorkeur	−.1111	1.05409	9
	Total	−.1613	1.18594	31
advertisement b	Conservatief	1.1111	1.96497	9
	Liberaal	.0769	1.25576	13
	Ik weet het niet / Geen voorkeur	.2857	1.60357	7
	Total	.4483	1.59432	29
Total	Conservatief	.1739	1.52709	23
	Liberaal	.1429	1.45896	21
	Ik weet het niet / Geen voorkeur	.0625	1.28938	16
	Total	.1333	1.41980	60

For those who viewed ad B (the diverse variant), the nine conservative respondents reported a mean decrease in purchase intention of 1.11, while the thirteen liberal respondents reported a mean increase of 0.077. Respondents with no political preference showed a mean increase of 0.11 for advertisement A and a mean decrease of 0.29 for advertisement B.

Levene's test was conducted to assess whether the variances of 'Diff_pre2_6' are homogeneous across the different groups (conservative, liberal, and no preference). The results show that the p-values from Levene's test are greater than 0.05, indicating no significant differences in variances between the groups. Thus, the assumption of variance homogeneity for the ANOVA was satisfied.

An ANOVA was performed to determine whether there is an interaction effect between respondents' political ideology and the type of advertisement (non-diverse vs. diverse) on the change in purchase intention. The results in Table 13 reveal no significant main effect for ad type (Group 2): $F(1, 54) = 2.50$, $p = 0.12$, or for political ideology (Q8): $F(2, 54) = 0.17$, $p = 0.85$. The interaction between political ideology and advertisement variant is also non-significant: $F(2, 54) = 2.04$, $p = 0.14$. These findings suggest that political ideology does

not significantly affect the change in purchase intention after viewing diverse versus non-diverse ads.

Table 13

Results of ANOVA for advertisement pair two

Dependent Variable: Diff_pre2_6

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	13.875[a]	5	2.775	1.426	.230	.117
Intercept	2.196	1	2.196	1.129	.293	.020
Group_2	4.871	1	4.871	2.504	.119	.044
Q8	.658	2	.329	.169	.845	.006
Group_2 * Q8	7.941	2	3.970	2.041	.140	.070
Error	105.058	54	1.946			
Total	120.000	60				
Corrected Total	118.933	59				

Based on the above analyses, it can be concluded that, within this sample, respondents' political ideology does not significantly affect the change in purchase intention after viewing a diverse or non-diverse advertisement. Both conservative and liberal respondents exhibit similar patterns in the change in purchase intention, regardless of the ad's diversity.

4.7: The Effect of Political Orientation in Advertisement Pair Three

To examine whether political ideology affects the change in purchase intention after viewing diverse versus non-diverse ads, an analysis of variance was conducted using the variable 'Diff_pre3_7'. This variable represents the difference in purchase intention between the second pretest measurement and the measurement after viewing the third advertisement, which is either non-diverse (variant A) or diverse (variant B). A positive value for 'Diff_pre3_7' indicates a decrease in purchase intention after viewing the ad compared to the pretest, while a negative value indicates an increase. These differences are based on a 5-point Likert scale.

Descriptive statistics in Table 14 show that the nine conservative respondents who viewed ad A (the non-diverse variant) reported a mean increase in purchase intention of 0.44. In contrast, the ten liberal respondents reported a mean increase of 0.10.

Table 14

Descriptive statistics of advertisement pair three including political ideology

advertisement variant		Mean	Deviation	N
advertisement a	Conservatief	−.4444	.52705	9
	Liberaal	−.1000	.87560	10
	Ik weet het niet / Geen voorkeur	.6667	1.21106	6
	Total	−.0400	.93452	25
advertisement b	Conservatief	−.2500	1.38873	8
	Liberaal	.0000	.70711	9
	Ik weet het niet / Geen voorkeur	.0000	1.06904	8
	Total	−.0800	1.03763	25
Total	Conservatief	−.3529	.99632	17
	Liberaal	−.0526	.77986	19
	Ik weet het niet / Geen voorkeur	.2857	1.13873	14
	Total	−.0600	.97750	50

For those who viewed ad B (the diverse variant), the eight conservative respondents reported a mean increase in purchase intention of 0.25, while the nine liberal respondents reported no change in their mean purchase intention. Respondents with no political preference showed a mean decrease of 0.67 for advertisement A and no change in their mean purchase intention for advertisement B.

Levene's test was conducted to assess whether the variances of 'Diff_pre3_7' are homogeneous across the different groups (conservative, liberal, and no preference). The results show that the p-values from Levene's test are greater than 0.05, indicating no significant differences in variances between the groups. Thus, the assumption of variance homogeneity for the ANOVA was satisfied.

An ANOVA was performed to determine whether there is an interaction effect between respondents' political ideology and the type of advertisement (non-diverse vs. diverse) on the change in purchase intention. The results in Table 15 reveal no significant main effect for ad type (Group 3): $F(1, 44) = 0.20$, $p = 0.66$, or for political ideology (Q8): $F(2, 44) = 1.84$, $p = 0.17$. The interaction between political ideology and advertisement variant is also non-significant: $F(2, 44) = 0.87$, $p = 0.43$. These findings indicate that political ideology does

not have a significant effect on the change in purchase intention after viewing diverse versus non-diverse ads.

Table 15

Results of ANOVA for advertisement pair three

Dependent Variable: Diff_pre3_7

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	4.864[a]	5	.973	1.020	.417	.104
Intercept	.022	1	.022	.023	.880	.001
Group_3	.188	1	.188	.197	.660	.004
Q8	3.511	2	1.755	1.841	.171	.077
Group_3 * Q8	1.653	2	.826	.867	.427	.038
Error	41.956	44	.954			
Total	47.000	50				
Corrected Total	46.820	49				

Based on the above analyses, it can be concluded that, within this sample, the respondent's political ideology does not significantly affect the change in purchase intention after seeing a diverse or non-diverse ad. Both conservative and liberal respondents show similar patterns in decrease in purchase intention regardless of the diversity of the ad.

Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1: Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings from both the literature review and the survey, comparing them to identify areas of agreement and divergence. This comparison leads to an answer to the central research question: "How does the presence of ethnic diversity in advertisements affect the likelihood of Dutch conservatives versus liberals to purchase a product?" Finally, this chapter evaluates whether the hypotheses formulated in Chapter 2 should be accepted or rejected.

5.2: Key Findings From the Literature

The literature review in this study explored the impact of diversity in advertisements on purchase intention. Several studies, including Brodzik et al. (2021), indicate that diversity in marketing campaigns can elicit positive consumer reactions, particularly among demographic groups that identify with the diversity portrayed. However, these positive effects are not universally observed. Consumer reactions can be negative, with conservative consumers more likely to respond unfavourably to "woke" marketing campaigns perceived as overly progressive or ideological, as exemplified by Bud Light's collaboration with a transgender influencer (Liaukonyte, 2024).

Furthermore, the literature suggests that demographic factors such as age, gender, and ethnicity can influence perceptions of diversity in advertisements. Younger consumers and minority groups tend to be more attuned to representation in advertisements and generally respond more positively to diversity (Brodzik et al., 2021). Conversely, a lack of authenticity in the portrayal of diversity may lead to negative reactions (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

5.3: Findings From This Thesis

The empirical research conducted in this thesis examined the change in purchase intention after exposure to diverse versus non-diverse advertisements, as well as the influence of respondents' political orientation. The main findings are as follows:

No Significant Difference in Purchase Intention: The results indicated no significant difference in the change in purchase intention between diverse and non-diverse advertisements. This suggests that, within the sample studied, diversity in advertisements does not directly influence purchase intention.

Limited Influence of Political Orientation: Although the literature suggested that political orientation might be a factor, the data revealed no significant interaction between political orientation and the type of advertisement (diverse or non-diverse) on purchase intention. Both liberal and conservative respondents exhibited similar response patterns to the advertisements.

5.4: Comparison of Findings

Both the existing literature and this thesis indicate that diversity in advertisements does not consistently lead to an increase in purchase intention. The effects of diversity are complex, influenced by factors such as the perceived authenticity of the advertisement and specific demographic characteristics. Notably, the role of political ideology differs somewhat from expectations. While the literature suggests that conservative consumers may react negatively to 'woke' marketing, this reaction was not observed in the present research. This discrepancy may be attributed to the fact that the examples labelled as 'woke' by conservative consumers in the literature predominantly involve LGBTQ content. It is possible that conservative consumers are less inclined to categorise ethnic diversity as 'woke'.

5.5: Answer to the Central Research Question

The findings of this thesis suggest that diversity in online advertisements does not have a significant effect on consumers' purchase intentions, irrespective of their political ideology (conservative or liberal). These results indicate that political orientation, within the context of this study, may not influence the purchase intention of diverse advertisements. However, it is important to recognize the inherent complexity of diversity and the multitude of factors that shape consumer behaviour. Therefore, providing a definitive answer remains challenging. Future research, utilising larger sample sizes and varied methodological approaches, may be necessary to confirm and expand upon these findings.

5.6: Acceptance or Rejection of the Hypotheses

The study's findings lead to the following conclusions regarding the hypotheses:

- Acceptance of H1: The hypothesis that 'featuring a person from a minority group in a Meta advertisement does not significantly influence purchase intentions among Dutch citizens' (H1) is accepted, as no significant difference was observed.
- Rejection of H2: The hypothesis that 'the purchase intentions of Dutch individuals with conservative political views are significantly decreased by the presence of ethnic diversity in advertisements' (H2) is rejected. The study found no significant interaction between political orientation and advertisement type on purchase intention.
- Acceptance of H3: The hypothesis that 'the purchase intentions of Dutch individuals with liberal political views are not significantly influenced by the presence of ethnic diversity in advertisements' (H3) is accepted. The study found no significant interaction between political orientation and advertisement type on purchase intention.

These results suggest that, at least in this context, diversity in advertisements may have a less direct impact on consumer behaviour than often assumed. This provides valuable

insights for marketers and advertisers, who may need to focus more on other factors that influence purchase intentions.

5.7: Recommendations For Advertising Professionals

Based on the outcomes of this study and the prior research examined in the literature review, the following recommendations are made for online advertisers and marketing agencies regarding the use of diversity in online ads:

1. Avoid 'fake' diversity:

   Diversity should not be used merely to meet inclusivity goals. Both this study and others suggest that simply adding diversity to advertisements does not increase purchase intentions or sales. De Meulenaer et al. (2017) conclude that actors in advertisements should align with the brand, the product, and the message, as portrayals in advertising are more effective when consistent with these elements. Therefore, select models who are congruent with the advertisement's context and product, regardless of their ethnicity. When models fit the advertisement's story and message, diversity is integrated authentically, ensuring that the brand's inclusiveness appears natural and genuine. Focusing solely on diversity without considering the model's relevance to the product can result in a lack of authenticity, potentially leading to negative reactions (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

2. Be cautious with "woke" marketing:

   While embracing diversity in marketing is increasingly common, the literature highlights the potential risk of negative reactions. Northey et al. (2021) report that 26% of U.S. adults are willing to boycott a brand they perceive as 'woke.' Advertisers should carefully assess the extent to which they wish to engage in "woke" marketing campaigns. It is crucial to balance promoting inclusive values with avoiding potential controversies that could damage the brand's image. Even when diversity is genuine, it may still attract criticism if the advertisements conflict with the norms and values of certain (conservative) consumers. Therefore, understanding the target audience is essential.

5.8 Recommendations For Future Research

Although this research was conducted as rigorously as possible, there are limitations. Based on the findings and limitations of this study, the following recommendations are made for future research:

1. Increase the sample size:

   One of the main limitations of this study was the relatively small sample size. While none of the findings were statistically significant, several p-values approached significance at a 0.1 level. A larger sample size could yield more significant results. Future researchers are encouraged to use a larger sample size to draw more robust conclusions about the impact of diversity in advertisements on different consumer groups.

2. Examine the impact of video advertisements:

   This study exclusively used images to measure the impact of diversity. While images provide valuable insights, they lack the dynamic elements present in video ads, such as character behaviour, interactions, and roles. Videos also allow for a better assessment of the authenticity of diversity, which can be crucial in shaping consumer reactions. Future research could focus on the use of video ads to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how diversity is perceived and its effect on purchase intention.

3. Consider other variables:

   In addition to political orientation and demographic factors such as age and ethnicity, other variables may influence the relationship between diversity in advertisements and purchase intention. Future research could explore factors such as personality traits and the level of commitment to social justice issues. This could help identify specific consumer groups that are more sensitive to diversity in advertisements.

4. Utilise real data with Meta Ads:

   To enhance the reliability of the results, future researchers could run actual advertisements on Meta Ads, utilising the platform's A/B split testing functions. This approach would provide insights into consumers' true purchase intentions, as self-reported purchase intentions may not accurately reflect real-world behaviour and may be influenced by social desirability bias.

5. Explore Cultural and Geographical Differences:

   Finally, future research could benefit from comparing the effects of diversity in advertisements across different cultural and geographical contexts. Perceptions of diversity can vary significantly between countries and cultures, meaning that findings from one context may not be generalizable to others. A cross-cultural study could provide valuable insights into how diversity in advertisements is perceived globally and inform international marketing strategies.

5.9: Discussion on the Potential Limitations of the Study

While this study has provided valuable insights into the influence of diversity in online advertisements on purchase intention, several limitations complicate the interpretation of the results. These limitations should be considered when evaluating the findings and planning future research.

1. Challenges of studying diversity in isolation:

   One of the challenges of this study was attempting to examine diversity in isolation while holding all other variables constant (ceteris paribus). Although efforts were made to vary the models in the advertisements solely by ethnicity, it is practically impossible to control for all other influencing factors fully. Variables such as attractiveness, the emotions expressed by the models, their body language, and their gaze direction can all affect the perception of the advertisement. These factors may introduce biases into the results, making it difficult to isolate the impact of diversity. Consequently, the findings should be interpreted with caution, as unforeseen factors may have influenced the results.

2. Limitation of purchase intention as an approximation for actual purchases:

   Another important limitation of this study is the use of purchase intention as a proxy for actual purchasing behaviour. While purchase intention is commonly used in marketing research as an indicator of consumer behaviour, it does not always reliably predict actual purchases. Consumers often do not know how they will respond to an

advertisement in a real-world setting. Therefore, results related to purchase intention should be interpreted with caution, as they may not directly translate to actual purchasing behaviour.

3. Sample bias and generalizability:

   A further limitation of the study relates to the composition of the sample. Although efforts were made to obtain a representative sample of the population, certain demographic groups were overrepresented. For instance, the sample included a disproportionately large number of young people and men. This may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could benefit from using a larger and more diverse sample to draw more generalizable conclusions.

4. Limitations of the methodology:

   The methodology employed in this study, which combined a survey with an online experiment, has its own limitations. Surveys may be prone to socially desirable responses, capturing what respondents believe to be more acceptable or favourable answers rather than their true opinions. This discrepancy between actual behaviour and socially desirable behaviour can lead to biassed results, where the data collected may not accurately reflect real-world attitudes or behaviours, potentially compromising the validity of the study's findings.

Additionally, while the experimental aspect of the study is valuable for establishing causal relationships, it can also create artificial scenarios that are not fully representative of real-world conditions. This limitation should be considered when interpreting the results and their applicability to broader contexts.

5.10: Reflection

The importance of planning:

I knew planning would be crucial for this project, but I was reminded again just how essential it truly is. During periods when I worked without a plan, I noticed more

procrastination and increased stress. I also learned that planning in too much detail can be counterproductive. Life can be unpredictable, so it's important to remain flexible.

Researching:

While searching for my subject and conducting research for my literature review, I read dozens of scientific papers. Over time, I became better at extracting the most important information and understanding the content. This is a valuable skill that will be essential for the remainder of my academic life and beyond.

Working with SPSS:

To be honest, I had barely used SPSS before. In group projects, I would always avoid that part, and I didn't even have the software installed on my laptop before this thesis. However, I was now forced to figure it out on my own. After a lot of trial and error (and YouTube tutorials), I finally got the hang of it. While I am still not an expert, I am glad to have gained an understanding of the basics.

The difficulty of scientific studies:

I honestly never expected scientific research to be this challenging. Before writing this thesis, I naively thought research involved simply designing an experiment, finding respondents, and publishing the results. Obviously, as I now know, there is much more to it: the literature review, quantitative analysis, finding respondents, preventing biases, and more. Experiencing this difficult process firsthand has given me a newfound appreciation for researchers.

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Appendix A: The Advertisements Used in the Experiment

Advertisement Pair One:

Advertisement A:

Advertisement B:

Advertisement Pair Two:

Advertisement A:

Advertisement B:

Advertisement pair three:

Advertisement A:

Advertisement B:

Appendix B: raw data from survey

In the Google Spreadsheet file below, all the raw data from the online experiment is recorded. This is better understandable than pasting all the data into this thesis document.

⊞ **Thesis experiment diversity - Raw data**

Appendix C: Glossary

Diversity = The fair and proportional portrayal of all people and their attributes in a particular promotional setting or medium

A diverse advertisement = An advertisement that portrays people from minority groups.

Conservatism = Conservatism is a political ideology that emphasises preserving traditional institutions, values, and practices.

Liberalism = Liberalism is a political ideology that emphasises individual freedoms, equality, and social progress.

Woke = The original definition of 'woke' was to be aware of social injustice. However, now it's commonly used for people and companies who exploit the diversity and inclusion movement for their own gain.