



The impact of gendered product marketing on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z – A case study of Gillette.

By

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DECLARATION

I, Emma Jayne Criticos, hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BCom Honours in Strategic Brand Management degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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ABSTRACT

This small-scale, qualitative research study investigated the impact gendered product marketing has on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z, a generational cohort whose power and clout over brands is consistently increasing. The research is specifically focused on Gillette (a subsidiary of the house of brands, Procter & Gamble) and its two sub-brands, Gillette (for men) and Gillette Venus (for women).

Gendered product marketing has been used by many brands and marketers as a strategic choice in order to differentiate and appeal directly to a specific consumer. Due to an ever-changing social climate, members of the Generation Z cohort are starting to venture away from brands embracing stereotypical gendered product marketing. They are supporting brands that address social issues, confront gender stereotypes and resonate with their Generation Z values. Gillette is perceived as embracing gendered product marketing and needs to reconsider their strategies, including their brand identities and architecture, in order to maintain their current target audience whilst attracting the consumers of Generation Z, whose purchasing power is consistently increasing.

The study utilised online questionnaires, focus groups and a semi-structured interview in order to gain an in-depth and holistic understanding of the gendered product marketing present within Gillette sub-brands and products, as well as the perceptions Generation Z consumers have towards gender-neutral products. The data gathered allowed for meaningful findings and recommendations to be identified, both of which can be utilised by Gillette, in their attempt to strategize and solidify their position in the mind of the Generation Z consumer.

Overall, it was found that the Generation Z consumer is conscious of gendered product marketing within Gillette's products and sub-brands and would be more inclined to purchase gender-neutral products as opposed to gendered products (if the choice was offered by Gillette), as inclusivity and equality is of utter importance to this cohort. These findings can serve as a guide for Gillette and other brands wanting to alter their strategies in order to attract Generation Z consumers through incorporating gender-neutral product marketing.

Keywords: *Generation Z, Unconscious gender bias, gender-neutral, gendered products, brand equity, customer purchasing decisions.*

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CHAPTER 1 – Introduction & Overview

1.1. Introduction and Contextualisation

As a generation grounded by their desire to make a change and challenge social norms, Generation Z expect this from the brands and organisations they support (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Powers, 2019). With brands still dependent on out-dated marketing communications to influence and implement gender stereotypes and constructs within society, they run the risk of alienating Generation Z consumers, which will ultimately lead to the brand's demise (Ellis, 2018; Powers, 2019). Such alienation stems from Generation Z gravitating towards brands challenging gender norms and embracing gender-neutrality within their product marketing (Carefoot, 2020).

The Gillette brand, is the case study of this research in terms of gendered product marketing. Gillette is a brand that has been seen as “progressive” for challenging gender stereotypes (Hassan, 2019). However, Gillette still, to a certain extent “gender” their products through their brand portfolio structure and choices in visual representations (Kingston, 2019).

Thus, Gillette's gendered product marketing and the impact such gendered product marketing has on Generation Z purchasing decisions is analysed. This study therefore argues whether Generation Z consumers are influenced by gendered product marketing and whether a brand such as Gillette could benefit from gender-neutral product marketing.

1.2. Rationale and Relevance

Ellis (2018) explains how marketers and brands still produce work shaped by personal biases without consciously realising it. Although brands believe they are challenging out-dated stereotypes, consumers think otherwise (Powers, 2019; Warc, 2019).

Generation Z consumers gravitate towards brands reflecting gender diversity; forming a gap in the market for new brands to capitalise on (Carefoot, 2020). Gillette need to adapt to the changing consumer in order to stay relevant.

Marketers need to identify to what extent this shift towards gender-neutral and “genderless” product marketing will influence Gillette’s long-term profitability and brand image, whilst providing guidance to brands in relation to Generation Z’s focus on gender-neutrality (Powers, 2019; Carefoot, 2020). It will also prompt brands to address their unconscious gender biases prior to forming marketing strategies.

1.3. Problem Statement

Generation Z consumers are increasingly supporting gender-neutral brands and products; prompting brands to confront gender constructs and biases within their product marketing (Powers, 2019). Generation Z individuals form part of a cohort that value self-expression, individualism, ethics and the deconstruction of labels, all of which they long to see within the brands they support (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

Thus, their focus is not only on the product or service being offered, but on the brand’s ability to deliver what they have promised (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Although Gillette has attempted to challenge gender stereotyping (Uta, 2019), their product marketing, still embodies elements of gender bias (Ellis, 2018). This being said, Gillette need to assess whether their current gendered product marketing strategy, will sustain the brand’s long-term relevance amongst Generation Z.

1.4. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact unconscious gender biases have on Generation Z consumer purchasing decisions, whilst assessing the effectiveness of adopting gender-neutral product marketing in-store.

In order to understand what drives the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers when purchasing personal care products, Procter & Gamble's (P&G) Gillette brand and sub-brands will be used as a case study. Data collected will provide P&G and other organisations, with insights to improve their marketing strategies towards Generation Z.

1.5. Research questions

1.5.1. Primary Question

Are members of Generation Z gravitating towards personal care products that embrace gender neutrality and fluidity?

1.5.2. Secondary Questions

1. Are Generation Z consumers buying personal care products based on the gender assigned to the product?
2. How has Gillette imposed unconscious gender bias within their product marketing and organisational structure?
3. How are brand's sales impacted by their perceived gender neutrality?

1.6. Research Objectives (RO)

RO1: To evaluate the impact gendered product advertising has towards Generation Z consumers' personal care product purchasing decisions.

RO2: To establish whether Gillette has imposed unconscious gender biases through their in-store product marketing.

RO3: To identify whether Gillette's brand impact and popularity amongst Generation Z will increase, should they implement gender neutral product marketing within South Africa.

CHAPTER 2 – Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Generation Z consumers, as a result of technological and social progressions, have a plethora of information about brands at their fingertips, something of which can result in negative or positive outcomes (Parry, 2020). They are no longer solely price focussed, but are fixated on the brand's benefits to them and its social responsibility and awareness (Parry, 2020). Unlike previous generations, the Generation Z cohort prioritise self-expression, whilst challenging labels and constructs within society and brands (Francis & Hoeffel, 2018).

Generation Z consumers gravitate towards brands and products exuding gender-neutrality, pressurising brands to reassess the gender-neutrality of their current product marketing strategies (Francis & Hoeffel, 2018; Powers, 2019). Although many brands believe they are successfully challenging out-dated stereotypes within their product marketing, Generation Z consumers are sceptical and think otherwise (Warc, 2019; Powers, 2019).

Gillette has, in the past attempted to challenge gender stereotypes and constructs formed within society (Hassan, 2019). However, it can be said that their product marketing and categorisation thereof, are still succumbing to such gender biases (Ellis, 2018).

In order to explore the research topic, a literature review will be conducted in which specific theories and branding models will be scrutinized in relation to the research objectives. In conjunction with the deciphered literature and theories, conceptual frameworks will also be outlined.

2.2. Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical foundation outlines the various theories to be unpacked throughout the research. Keller's Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model and the Generational Cohort Theory are integral elements of this research when assessing the relevance of the research problem in relation to the three research objectives:

RO1 aims to evaluate the impact of gendered product advertising on Generation Z consumers' personal care product purchasing decisions. This involves the use of the Generational Cohort Theory in order to review Generation Z Cohort and the various factors that drive their purchasing decisions.

RO2 is focussed on establishing the current impact Gillette has on Generation Z consumers and whether or not Gillette evidently impose unconscious gender biases through their in-store product marketing. This will require a review of Gillette in relation to Keller's CBBE Model: evaluating the relationship between the consumer and Gillette, and whether Gillette has established a strong brand equity within the minds of the Generation Z customer whose expectations constantly fluctuate.

RO3 reviews the potential changes Gillette may encounter as a result of altering their brand identity and shifting their brand image within the gender realm and in the mind of Generation Z consumer; all of which can affect the overall brand equity of Gillette. Both Keller's CBBE Model and the Generational Cohort Theory, will aid in determining the efficacy of Gillette imposing such a shift.

2.2.1. Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model

According to Keller (2001), a brand's strength is heavily determined by the organisation's brand equity; with brand equity being the value of a brand based on consumer perceptions and interactions with the brand (Keller, 2001; Nguyen, 2019). The true strength of a brand is ultimately determined by the customer's experiences and associations customers have with the brand; all of which should be specifically orchestrated by the brand (Keller, 2001).

Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model provides organisations with the ability to unearth what their brand equity is, and how it can be built in order to develop strong brands (Keller, 2001).

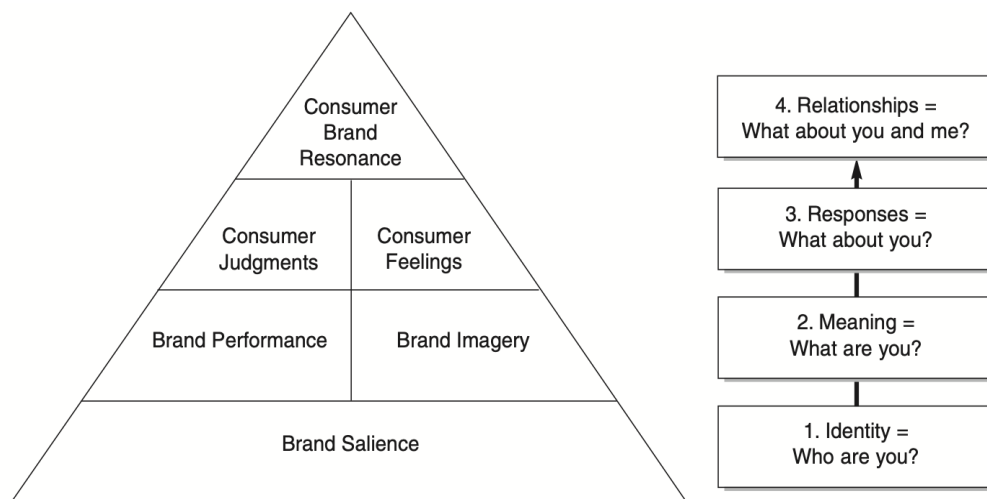


Figure 2.1: Customer-Based Brand Equity Pyramid
(Keller, 2001)

This model consists of six “brand-building blocks” within the four-levelled model (Keller, 2001). With a focus on gaining knowledge about the brand in order to create meaningful brand-customer relationships and loyalty, Keller's model will prove beneficial in analysing the consumer's relationship and potential relationships and perceptions of Gillette (Keller, 2001).

Organisations first need to outline what their brand identity is – who the brand is and how it wants to be perceived by customers (Keller, 2001). In order to form a successful brand identity, brand salience needs to be formed, relating to the customer's awareness and associations with the brand, specifically that of Gillette (Keller, 2001).

Secondly, it is imperative for the brand's meaning to be established through two categories: brand performance and brand imagery (Keller, 2001). Brand performance contributes to the creation of brand meaning from a more functional perspective, one that meets and potentially exceeds the consumer's expectations of the offering (Keller, 2001). Such functional aspects include the reliability, design and price of the product (Bhasin, 2019), all of which need to be considered when analysing Gillette's marketing and physical personal care products.

The brand imagery however, focusses on the deeper emotional benefits the brand aims to exploit, with specific focus on how the brand meets the customer's social and psychological needs (Keller, 2001). An organisation's brand imagery therefore refers to the way in which the customer views the brand as opposed to how the brand views itself (Keller, 2001; Bhasin, 2019).

Generation Z have information at their fingertips and their expectations are becoming increasingly higher (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). It is therefore imperative that organisations such as Gillette expose their customers to relevant yet meaningful brand imagery, focussed on attending to their social and psychological needs of self-expression, individualism and deconstruction of labels (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

The third level of the model is that of brand responses, which ultimately refers to the way in which customers respond to the brand as a whole and its marketing efforts (Keller, 2001). In order to decipher how the customer responds to the brand, one needs to understand their thoughts and feelings towards the brand; otherwise known as brand judgements and brand feelings (Keller, 2001; Bhasin, 2019). These have the ability to influence the customer behaviours towards the brand, such as purchasing decisions and potential for long-term loyalty (Keller, 2001; Bhasin, 2019); all of which are focussed on throughout this research study – examining the effect gendered product marketing has on Generation Z purchasing decisions.

Brand judgements are linked to the customer's perceptions developed towards the brand as a result of the brand imagery and performance outlined in the previous tier (Keller, 2001). Judgements can be formed based on customer opinions of the brand's quality, credibility, superiority and consideration (Keller, 2001). Brand feelings also

build upon the previous tier, focussing on the emotional responses the brand elicits from the customer (Keller, 2001).

Brand relationships are formed as a result of the varying tiers below it (Bhasin, 2019). It is the bond that the customer has built with the brand (Keller, 2001). Through brand resonance, one can identify the nature of the bond and the synchronicity between the customer and brand (Keller, 2001). Brand resonance will ultimately determine the level of loyalty as held by the consumer through their attachment and engagement with the brand; all of which translate into the behaviour and purchasing decisions of the customer (Keller, 2001).

Overall, Keller's CBBE Model will allow for Gillette's current brand equity and position in the mind of the customer to be outlined, as well as the potential or expected brand equity Gillette may derive from Generation Z customers, should they embrace gender neutrality within their product marketing and product groupings thereof.

2.2.2. Generational Cohort Theory

Those who fall within a specific generation, are typically characterised by their age and age group in which they are born (Chen, 2010). It can be said that those within such “generations” or age groups can be aligned with specific characteristics of that time period; characteristics that differentiate one age group from another (Chen, 2010). When identifying sub-groups within society, one can adopt the term “cohort” to classify social groupings who share commonalities and have encountered a shared experience in the same time period as one another (Padayachee, 2018). These experiences ultimately influence the cohort’s, values, beliefs, perceptions and buying behaviours (Chen, 2010; Padayachee, 2018).

The Generational Cohort Theory combines “generation” and “cohort” aspects in order to assess a population based on their age and their experiences (Chen, 2010). Thus, Generational Cohort Theory stems from the assertion that individuals within the same age group, will encounter and embody similar experiences and characteristics (Chen, 2010; Padayachee, 2018). There are multiple Generational Cohorts, some of which include: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y (Millennials) and Generation Z (Francis & Hoefel, 2018, Padayachee, 2018).

This theory will provide an understanding into Generation Z’s traits and how these may influence their purchasing decisions and behaviours of gendered products. Generation Z needs to be defined and identified in order to improve the focus of this research and allow for relevant segmentation of research participants. It is essential that there is a sufficient background and analysis of the Generation Z cohort’s values, beliefs, attitudes, experiences, cultures and opinions towards gender-neutrality, as these will ultimately affect their perceptions of brands and their purchasing decisions.

With this being said, brands have the ability to impose their own values and attitudes onto society through their marketing, all of which need to align with the target customer’s values and attitudes (Chen, 2010). A solid understanding of the customer based on their Generational Cohort can potentially provide an organisation with a competitive advantage as consumers are increasingly opting for brands that reflect and align with their values and attitudes (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

2.3. Literature in Relation to Research Objectives

In order to ensure that the literature discussed is relevant to this research, the research problem and theories, the literature will be discussed in relation to the three research objectives.

2.4. RO1 – To evaluate the impact gendered product advertising has towards Generation Z consumers' personal care product purchasing decisions.

2.4.1. Gendered Product Marketing

Although gender definitions are changing within marketing, gender stereotypes are still prevalent (Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014; Ratten, 2017). Gender stereotypes can influence, strengthen and change socially constructed values and expectations (Kyonghee, Lee & Kim, 2016). Such strengthening of gender stereotyping often results in negative consequences for those who are placed within the said stereotype (Eisend *et al.*, 2014).

However, within advertising, there are various non-stereotypical gender role representations visible (Kyonghee *et al.*, 2016). As mentioned above, society is changing, and the manner in which brands communicate with consumers, also need to see a change (Kyonghee *et al.*, 2016).

Often referred to as a “cross-gender phenomenon”, brands are beginning to reverse and shift typical gender roles and stereotypes within society (Kyonghee *et al.*, 2016). Although gender stereotyping advertisements have the potential to make waves within society (Eisend *et al.*, 2014); producing non-stereotypical advertisements and offerings has the potential to yield differing responses from the consumer, depending on the way in which it is communicated to them (Kyonghee *et al.*, 2016).

Gender cues play a pivotal part in shaping the consumers' perception of a brand and its products thereof (Sandhu, 2018). According to Sandhu (2018), gender cues can impact on how the consumer perceives the “gender identity” of the product being advertised; with men and women having differing perceptions based on the gender identity of both the brand and product being assessed.

Brands commonly make use of stereotyping and the process of assigning genders as a means through which they can communicate their product to its target market (Kyonghee *et al.*, 2016). Sandhu (2018) uncovers that brands believe that assigning gender identities to products, makes their products more appealing and attractive to the consumer. Gendered products target specific genders, taking on either stereotypical masculine or feminine identities (Sandhu, 2018). Ultimately, gendering of products is a strategic choice, used to differentiate brands and products from one another (Alreck, 1994).

Thus, one can evidently see that marketers target consumers of particular genders with stereotypical and implicit gender traits; all of which are cemented through unconscious bias (Kyonghee *et al.*, 2016). However, Sandhu (2018) explains that there have been attempts by marketers to restrict and neutralize the gendering within product marketing however, some consumers have resisted such a change.

2.4.2. Generation Z

Generation Z as defined by Swanson and Davis (2020), are individuals born between 1996 and 2010. Francis and Hoefel (2018) classify Generation Z as individuals born between 1995 and 2010, however, Padayachee (2018) states that Generation Z are those born after 1991. Within a South African context, Generation Z is often referred to as the “Born-Free Generation” as they were born after South Africa became a democracy (Padayachee, 2018). Although there are varying yet slight discrepancies throughout the literature, the Generation Z cohort age range of Swanson and Davis (2020) is adopted throughout this research in order to ensure consistency.

Generation Z is increasingly growing in power with high expectations from the brands with which they interact (Priporas, Stylos & Fotiadis, 2017; Powers, 2019; Swanson & Davis, 2020). This is particularly due to the nature of Generation Z being born into a largely digitised world - they have become accustomed to using technology (Padayachee, 2018; Swanson & Davis, 2020).

Generation Z’s behaviour is grounded on their desire to express individuality, with many individuals focussing on being an “identity nomad”, fostering their identity over

time (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Generation Z are human rights and diversity orientated (Swanson & Davis, 2020). They are specifically engaged in the equality of genders and sexualities (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Thus, making gender neutrality and genderless brands more attractive to Generation Zers (Francis & Hoefel, 2018); elements of which brands need to consider in order to maintain relevance amongst Generation Z.

2.4.3. Buying Behaviour and Purchasing Decisions

Ratten (2017) expresses that gender has evolved. Global marketers therefore face the task of confronting gender biases as a means of creating a gender inclusive society (Ratten, 2017). Although the advertising and marketing industry is typically dominated by males, there has been a shift in how brands market their products (Ratten, 2017). The purchasing power of females has increased as a result of the changing role of women within society (Kyonghee *et al.*, 2016). Brands are therefore, having to alter their marketing communication to appeal to such changes (Ratten, 2017).

Although Generation Z are known for their digital stance (Priporas *et al.*, 2017), it has however been noted that Generation Z consumers still value in-store shopping experiences as opposed to solely relying on online (Swanson & Davis, 2020). Therefore, the relevance and role, in-store and point-of-purchase displays still hold amongst Generation Z, is important to consider throughout the research process. This research focusses on the in-store gendered product marketing of Gillette.

Gender is often leveraged within product marketing, something of which has often been beneficial to organisations (Alreck, 1994; Sandhu, 2018). However, there is a change occurring within society whereby consumers, specifically those of Generation Z, are gravitating towards brands that are challenging societal norms and rejecting the gendering and inequalities present within their communities (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Generation Z consumers have a large amount of clout over brands, making it essential for organisations to not only adapt to external environmental changes, but also address the constantly changing needs and expectations of the Generation Z consumer. Thus, gendered product marketing, to a certain extent, is a driving force influencing Generation Z consumers' purchasing decisions.

2.5. RO2 – To establish whether Gillette has imposed unconscious gender biases through their in-store product marketing.

2.5.1. Unconscious gender bias & Gender Perspectives

Throughout this research, stereotyping and unconscious bias is analysed in relation to the brand Gillette. The varying constructs present within Gillette's gendered product marketing is therefore at the forefront of this research. However, in order to analyse Gillette's gendered product marketing, one requires a holistic understanding of unconscious bias and gender stereotyping.

Eisend et al. (2014) express that stereotyping as well as gender roles and portrayals, can be either helpful or detrimental in advertising as a result of varying factors. The effectiveness of such gendered portrayals is often dependent on the content of the stereotype being portrayed (Zawisza, Luyt, Zawadzka & Buczny, 2018). However, it is important to note that gender stereotyping occurs from both a male and female perspective (Eisend *et al.*, 2014).

People's attitudes towards marketing that challenge gender stereotypes is said to be dependent on the mindset, norms and demographics of a country or area within which an advertisement is aired (Ratten, 2017). Thus, it can be said that gender perspectives and representations often differ depending on global trends, differing tastes and preferences of global geographic locations (Ratten, 2017). Consumers, their perceptions and unconscious biases therefore, stem from opinions and societal norms that respondents uphold within aspects of their life, such as their community, culture and location (Zawisza *et al.*, 2018).

It is therefore imperative that brands consider the context of their marketing and products prior to introducing them into a market. This is due to the possibility of consumers from that country, region or religion not resonating with the brand, its proposed positioning and its offering, therefore causing a disconnect between the consumer and the brand, which will ultimately affect the brand's consumer relationships and weaken the brand equity.

2.6. RO3 – To identify whether Gillette’s brand impact and popularity amongst Generation Z will increase, should they implement gender neutral product marketing within South Africa.

2.6.1. Gender Neutrality and Brand Equity

A strong brand equity results in customer satisfaction, brand bargaining power over the consumer and ultimately brand loyalty (Lieven, Grohmann, Herrmann, Landwehr & van Tilburg, 2014). Lieven et al. (2014) explores the notion that a brand’s gender (level of femininity and masculinity) when aligned with the said sex of the customer, will positively affect the customer’s response and brand equity.

Alternatively, Sultana and Shahriar (2017), have found that “gender blurring” is an increasingly popular trend amongst customers. This has raised questions as to whether or not “traditional marketing” of gendered brands, is sustainable going forward (Sultana & Shahriar, 2017). Consumers are moving towards gender neutrality and the deconstruction of gender ideals, something of which is a growing focus of modern marketers in their attempt to remain relevant in times of growing uncertainty and change (Sultana & Shahriar, 2017; Powers, 2019). However, the extent to which gender neutrality affects brands and brand equity, has not yet been fully explored and is therefore a window of opportunity for this research to contribute.

2.6.2. Gender-neutral Product Marketing

It has been said that those who have been most resistant to gender-neutral products, are the male gender (Sandhu, 2018). This is particularly due to the issues they associate with becoming gender-neutral, such as their “masculine” and patriarchal products becoming combined with those of women who consume more feminine products as prescribed by society (Zawisza *et al.*, 2018).

However, newer generations of consumers are opting for more gender-neutral products and marketing communication (Powers, 2019). Newer generations are adopting fluid gender identities and are therefore gravitating towards brands and products that are adopting gender fluidity (Sandhu, 2018); all of which need to be consistently considered by the brand and the marketer thereof (Kyonghee *et al.*, 2016).

It can therefore be said that gender neutrality can positively influence an organisation's brand equity (Sultana & Shahriar, 2017; Powers, 2019), however, the gendering of products still holds an element of relevance as there is still a correlation between the said sex of the consumer and their responsiveness to a brand (Lieven *et al.*, 2014).

Thus, in order for Gillette to successfully increase their popularity amongst Generation Z consumers if introducing gender-neutral product marketing; they not only need to identify the long-term effects such a change would have on the brand, but also how the organisation will communicate gender neutral products to the consumer in order to resonate with and maintain Generation Z consumers.

2.7. Conceptualisation of Key Terms

2.7.1. Generation Z

Also expressed as “Gen Z”, it refers to the generation of people born between the years 1996 and 2010 (Swanson & Davis, 2020). It is an integral aspect of this study as the research is focussed around the Generation Z cohort and the way in which gendered product marketing influences their purchasing decisions and behaviours.

2.7.2. Unconscious Gender Bias

Unconscious gender bias refers to judgements made towards others based off pre-existing and socially constructed gender prejudices (Storey, 2017). It differs depending on factors such as: background, cultural and religious beliefs as well as personal experiences (International Labour Organisation, 2017; Storey, 2017).

This concept delves into the way in which marketers may position their brands as a result of personal unconscious gender biases and how customers’ purchasing decisions can be influenced by their existing biases. By understanding such gender biases, it can assist in gaining a deeper understanding into addressing the research problem: the effect gendered product marketing has on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z.

2.7.3. Gender-Neutral

Gender-neutral defines something that does not refer to a particular gender, but rather relates to and is intended for all genders (Benson & Ries, 2020; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021). There are various instances in which gender-neutrality is adopted, some of which include language, pronouns and consumer goods. It is however cautioned that one does not mistake gender-neutrality for gender blindness whereby specific genders are disregarded or ignored (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2021).

As this research is focussed on identifying the effect gendered product marketing has on consumers, it is therefore essential to decipher whether adopting a gender-neutral product marketing strategy towards Generation Z will strengthen Gillette’s brand equity.

2.7.4. Gendered Products

The concept of gendered products has arisen from prescribing a “masculine” or “feminine” image and identity to the product and is used when marketing every-day goods to appeal to the stereotypical “man” or “woman” (Alreck, 1994).

Gendered products and the marketing thereof are therefore central to this study as there is a need to identify whether or not the inclusion of such masculine and feminine stereotypical characteristics can sustain brands in the long-term, specifically with the increasing power of the consumer, of the Generation Z cohort.

2.7.5. Brand Equity

According to Nguyen (2019), brand equity is the value of a brand based on consumer perceptions and interactions with the brand. As expressed previously, brand equity can play a large role in determining an organisation’s long-term success (Keller, 2001; Nguyen, 2019).

Brand equity is therefore pertinent to this study as both the existing brand equity of Gillette and potential brand equity of Gillette (should they adopt a gender-neutral product marketing approach) are assessed in order to fully understand the effect of gendered product marketing on Gillette customer purchasing decisions.

2.7.6. Customer Purchasing Decisions

The purchasing decision of a customer refers to the brand offering choices made, based on their interactions and encounters with the brand (Stankevich, 2017). The purchasing decisions of Generation Z customers are closely considered throughout the study as the decisions and purchases made by customers, can result in higher brand equity and increased market share.

2.8. Conclusion

Brands have a multitude of considerations to take note of in order to meet the varying gender needs and wants of a changing society (Ratten, 2017). Both consumers and marketers are influenced by their environment and social setting, paving the way to their awareness and potential implementation of unconscious biases (Eisend *et al.*, 2014; Ratten, 2017; Zawisza *et al.*, 2018).

However, such an approach is not sustainable, as Generation Z customers are becoming more critical of brands whilst supporting those which embody similar values and attitudes to them, specifically in terms of self-expression, equality, gender blurring and diversity (Sandhu, 2018; Powers, 2019; Swanson & Davis, 2020).

Generation Z consumers have an increased amount of power over brands, therefore making it essential for brands to not merely meet their needs, but rather exceed their expectations of the offering and the brand itself (Sultana & Shariar, 2017). Through adopting such a diverse approach, organisations have the potential to grasp a competitive advantage over others through solidifying a meaningful customer relationship and stronger brand equity (Sultana & Shahriar, 2017).

The effect gender-neutrality has on brand equity is often contested, therefore offering a gap in the literature through which this study could aim to fulfil, through primary research (Lieven *et al.*, 2014; Sultana & Shahriar, 2017; Powers, 2019).

CHAPTER 3 – Research Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research paradigm aligning to this study and how the primary research was conducted and collected through the use of population segmentation, sampling, data collection methods and the data analysis methods employed.

The analysis and application of each section ensures a well-rounded and in-depth understanding of the research conducted, as well as the way in which the research occurred. Small samples were used for this qualitative study, resulting in the data not being extremely generalisable to the greater population.

3.2. Research Paradigm

Interpretivism presents a differing viewpoint, one that is focussed on exploring and defining meaningful social interactions and occurrences (Intgrty, 2016). Interpretivists adopt a human centric approach by acknowledging that human experiences differ to that of an object; they are shaped by their environment and the changes that occur thereof (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014).

This research study adopts Interpretivism which is grounded upon the need to understand social occurrences as it requires an in-depth, meaningful and empathetic understanding of the impact gendered product marketing has on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

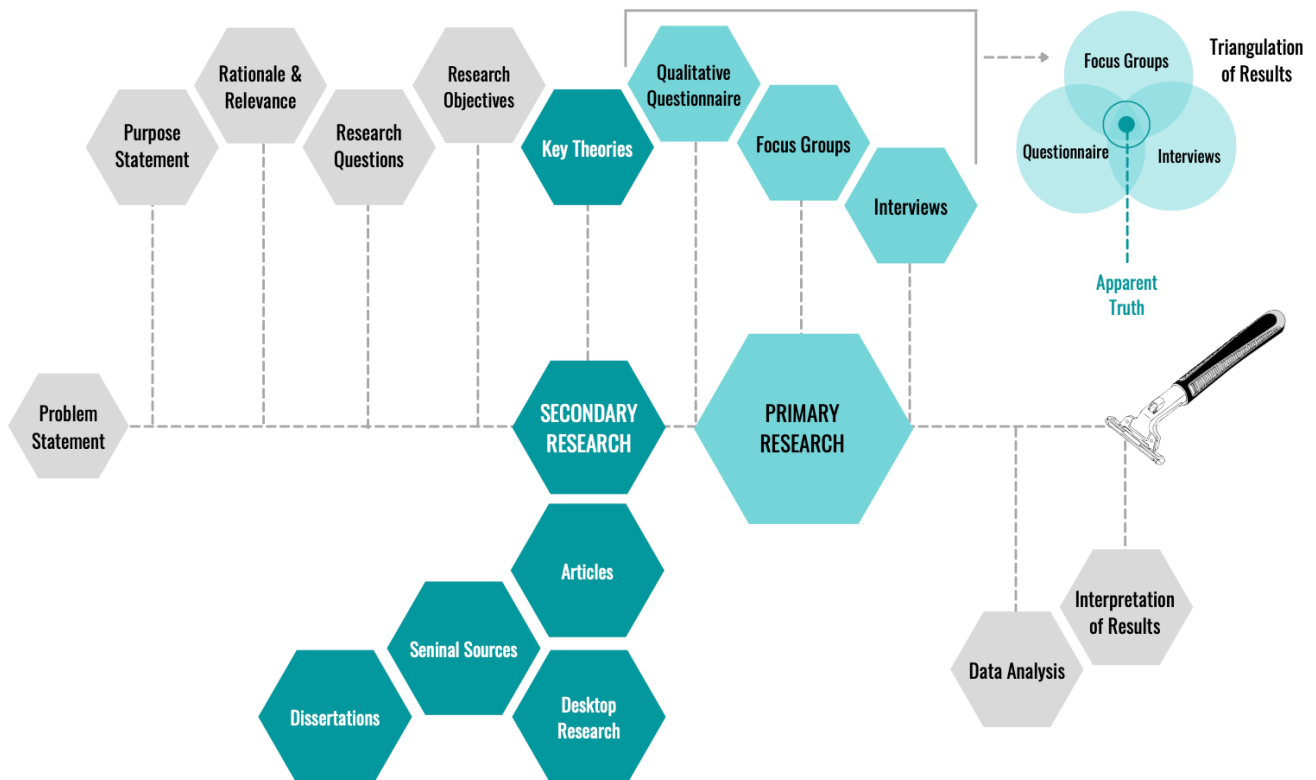
Interpretivism lends itself to the use of qualitative research, something of which was of importance throughout this research study (Intgrty, 2016). Interpretivists focus on viewing the world through the eyes of the humans they are researching, an element enriched by the in-depth and open-endedness of qualitative research (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology positions were considered. However, an Interpretivist ontological position is focussed on as this study interrogates the nature

of reality in order to gain insight into human truths and perceptions relating to Generation Z purchasing decisions (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

This research focuses Generation Z consumer perceptions, gendered product marketing and Gillette; all of which can be made sense of through Interpretivist research, allowing a multi-faceted yet human-centric perspective into such phenomena (Intgrty, 2016).

In order to ensure coherence throughout the research process, various sequential steps needed to be considered and observed. Thus, a research process diagram as visible in Figure 3.1, outlined the stages of the research process that were assessed and implemented in order to obtain well-informed and structured findings throughout the research process.



Source: Developed for Research

3.4. Research Design

As the research paradigm is that of Interpretivism and the study focusses on Generation Z consumer perceptions and behaviours; a qualitative approach was adopted. Qualitative research focusses on understanding the subjective experiences and meanings derived from the occurrence of a specific phenomenon (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

It differs from quantitative research as the goal is not to identify numerical results to generalise, but rather to obtain an in-depth understanding into various human truths, something of which cannot be generalised to the broader population (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). Thus, qualitative research was suitable for this research as it was focussed around gaining deeper insights surrounding gendered product marketing (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

Exploratory research was used to gather insights surrounding an occurrence within society (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). The occurrence within society that is being examined and explored throughout this research is the impact of gendered product marketing on consumer purchasing decisions, as well as consumers' perceptions of Gillette.

3.5. Population

3.5.1. Population Parameters

Generation Z consumers are focussing on brands that are making meaningful contributions to society and challenging stereotypical marketing by brands (Powers, 2019; Carefoot, 2020). Additionally, the purchasing power of members of the Generation Z cohort and their ability to influence their household spending and choices, are increasing, making it evidently more important for organisations to meet their expectations (Coray, 2019). Thus, Generation Z consumers in South Africa were the primary focus of this research and formed the population from which the research was conducted.

In order to further streamline the Generation Z cohort in South Africa as a whole, the nature, size and unique characteristics of the population were identified:

Nature of the population

Consumers who purchase personal care products (shaving).

Size of the population

Generation Z consumers, using Gillette personal care products within the Durban metropolitan area.

Unique characteristics of the population

Generation Z consumers (men and women) who use personal care products from Gillette and Venus brands. The Generation Z consumers aged 18-26, were also those who have currently, or previously, purchased their personal care products in-store (Swanson & Davis, 2020). The Generation Z age group was slightly shortened as those younger than 18 who fall within the Generation Z cohort, are regarded as minors and were excluded to adhere to the ethical guidelines provided by Vega School as a member of the Independent Institute of Education (Swanson & Davis, 2020).

3.6. Sampling

3.6.1. Sampling Method

Non-probability convenience sampling

Non-probability convenience sampling was used. The population was segmented through a non-random selection process and participants were selected by their compatibility with the population characteristics and their accessibility to the researcher at the time of the research (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014; Gaille, 2020). Convenience sampling offered multiple benefits to the researcher, through a low-cost, time-saving and swift collection of data (Gaille, 2020).

Questionnaire and focus group participants (who fell within the population parameters) were selected based on their availability and whether they were willing and able to participate in the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The availability of participants was particularly influenced by the state of the Covid-19 pandemic as the process of identifying participants who were willing to partake amidst a global pandemic was challenging. Due to Covid-19, virtual contact was proposed as opposed to face-to-face contact.

Utilising individuals within close proximity of the research and those who were known to the researcher, assisted in effectively conducting this research. Sufficient insights relating to the impact of gendered product marketing on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z with specific focus on Gillette were obtained.

3.6.2. Sample Size

The qualitative questionnaire consisted of 31 respondents (both women and men) whom aligned with the outlined population parameters, thus allowing for diversification of respondent's answers and an in-depth understanding of the respondents, whilst ensuring that the research was realistic, attainable and that a saturation point could be reached (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014; Sekaran, 2013). Sekaran (2013) states that a sample smaller than 30 respondents can result in a lack of diversification in findings and less reliable research. Whilst Maree (2016) acknowledges sample sizes as low as 15 respondents which allow for rich data to be collected whilst not preventing data saturation, are also deemed acceptable. Thus, the acquired sample size of 31

participants, provided a reliable source of information and findings for this research study.

Three focus groups were conducted, the focus group samples were established through non-probability convenience sampling:

- **Group 1:** Women of Generation Z aged 18 to 26.
- **Group 2:** Men of Generation Z aged 18 to 26.
- **Group 3:** Combination of Men and Women of Generation Z aged 18 to 26.

A maximum of 5-6 respondents participated in order to allow for discussion and multiple perspectives to be voiced during the focus groups. These discussions provided valuable insights as to how each gender responded to the same set of questions and whether an environment consisting of a mix of genders, similar to that experienced when physically in a store, altered participant responses. It was imperative to understand the perspectives and opinions of men and women towards Gillette and Gillette's gendered product marketing. This was specifically important as Gillette is currently marketing products to men through Gillette and women through Gillette Venus.

An interview was also conducted with a South African brand expert in order to gain an understanding of gendered product marketing from the perspective of a seasoned individual within the marketing industry and how gendered product marketing has and could continue to influence the way brands strategize.

3.6.3. Unit of Analysis

This study focussed on analysing the true effect gendered product marketing has on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers within Durban, including their perceptions of Gillette. Generation Z consumers are supporting brands tackling stereotypes, thus, Gillette needs to understand Generation Z consumer purchasing decisions and the effect of gendered product marketing, in order to appeal to and maintain their relationships with members of Generation Z.

3.7. Qualitative Data-Collection Method

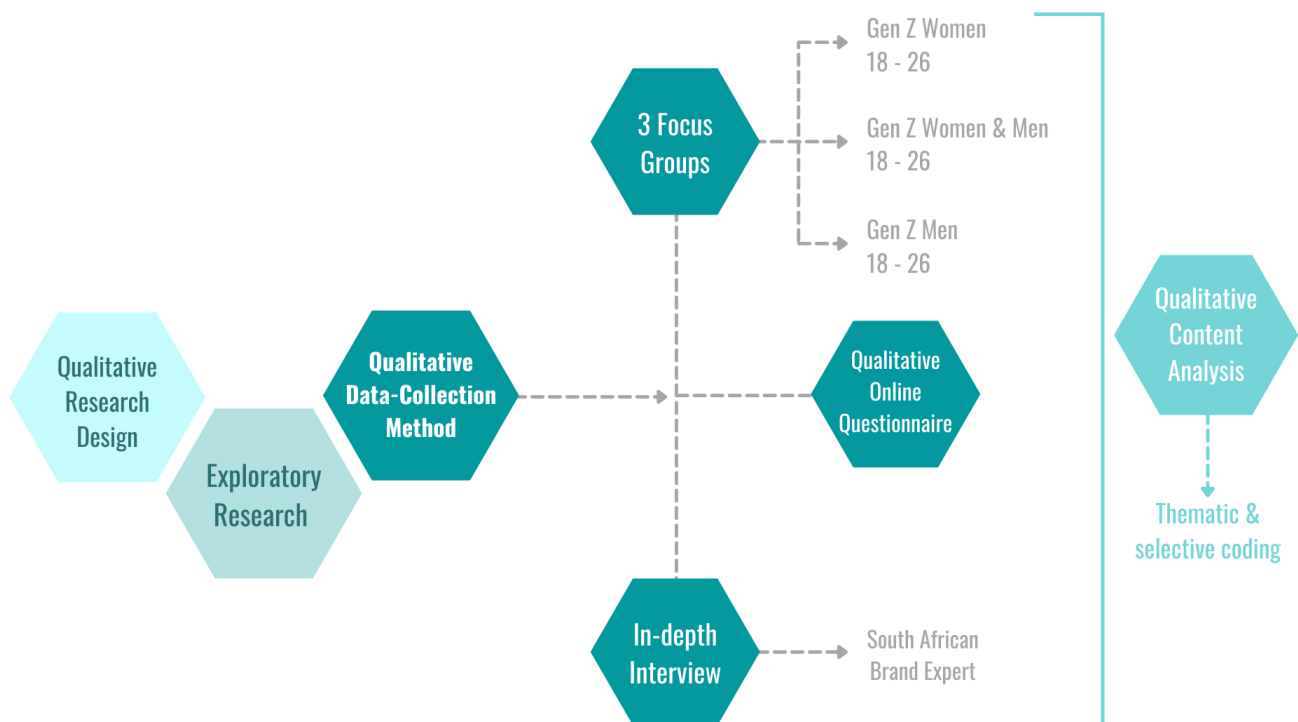


Figure 3.2: Data Collection Methods

Source: Developed for Research

As evident in Figure 3.2, three qualitative data-collection methods were utilised: qualitative online questionnaire, three focus groups and an in-depth interview. These three methods exposed the researcher to a plethora of findings around the same phenomenon, therefore allowing for a comprehensive understanding of the research - the impact gendered product marketing has on Generation Z consumer purchasing decisions. Each data collection method was tested prior to being employed to the targeted research participants.

3.7.1. Qualitative Online Questionnaire

The researcher assessed the sample through a series of pre-established open-ended questions, allowing respondents to relay their viewpoint (Sekaran, 2013; Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014; Maree, 2019); in order to understand the impact gendered product marketing has on Generation Z's purchases and perceptions of Gillette. There were also closed-ended questions (such as multiple-choice and matrix questions) incorporated into the questionnaire in order to allow for some degree of control over

the responses obtained (Sekaran, 2013; Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014) (see Appendix 5 for questionnaire).

Questionnaires were distributed online and respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire using Google Forms, allowing for the efficient collation of data and ease of distribution to the participants. Specific age groups were stated at the start of the questionnaire, ensuring that only those within the specified age group, who met the population parameters (over the age of 18 for ethical purposes), were participating (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

3.7.2. Focus Groups

Small groups of selected participants interacted within three facilitated online focus group environments (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). This allowed the researcher facilitating the discussion to observe participant's verbal cues and attitudes to questions (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

Table 3.1: Focus Group Distribution

Source: Developed for Research

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Women of Generation Z aged 18 to 26.	Men of Generation Z aged 18 to 26.	Men and women of Generation Z, aged 18 to 26.

Focus groups were conducted using online Zoom calls in order to adhere to Covid-19 protocols and ensure the safety of both the respondents and the researcher. The Zoom platform enabled sharing of the researcher's questions in order for the respondents to visually see what was being asked, whilst also allowing for the recording of the focus groups. The respondents consisted of individuals fitting into the parameters of this research; those that were accessible to the researcher and those who were willing and able to participate.

Gillette's current products within their portfolio were shown in order to gain an understanding as to the consumers' current perception of Gillette's gendered product offering. A visual representation of a gender-neutral product, specifically a razor, was

also shown in order to decipher what Generation Z consumers are looking for when purchasing gender-neutral personal care products. Various other questions that were asked are outlined in Appendix 6.

Audio and visual evidence and consent from focus group participants was obtained. Audio recordings allowed the researcher to transcribe the detailed responses provided by respondents after the focus group, therefore enabling the researcher to still be fully engaged and capable of facilitating the focus groups effectively. Participants completed an audio and visual consent form in addition to the consent form, prior to participation (see Appendix 3 and 4).

3.7.3. In-depth Interview

The initial research proposal was to engage with a P&G representative in order to provide reasoning and insights as to the various choices made by Gillette. Despite multiple attempts by the researcher, P&G were unable to participate and comment due to the context of this study.

Thus, the researcher engaged with a brand expert in order to gain a neutral perspective from an individual familiar with the brand and marketing industry, gendered product marketing and the shifting Generation Z consumer expectations thereof.

3.8. Application of Qualitative Data-Collection Methods

As a result of the pandemic, all correspondence with participants occurred via online communication platforms in order to limit contact and exposure to the virus whilst still ensuring sufficient information is obtained.

3.8.1. Qualitative Online Questionnaire

The questionnaire was made using the Google Forms, allowing ease of distribution and a convenient experience for the respondent, whilst adhering to Covid protocols. 16 questions were developed whereby respondents were exposed to open-ended questions as well as closed-ended multiple choice and matrix questions in order to refine certain responses.

Prior to the respondent answering the questionnaire, an introduction to the research title, the purpose of the research and the various ethical considerations such as consent and anonymity were outlined. By submitting the completed questionnaire, the respondents were therefore consenting to their information being used, anonymously within this research study (see Appendix 5).

Furthermore, the structure of the questionnaire was ordered in a way that ensured all questionnaire respondents were within the population parameters (specifically in terms of the Generation Z age group 18-26, a cohort central to this research).

The researcher identified 31 respondents by contacting them via WhatsApp messenger. The researcher asked them if they would like to participate in the research study and the link to the Google Form questionnaire was then sent through to the respondent upon agreement to complete it or consider completing it. The questionnaire required the respondent to complete all questions in order to successfully submit the questionnaire, therefore avoiding the possibility of respondents avoiding or leaving out a question either on purpose or by mistake.

3.8.2. Focus groups

Participants for the three focus groups were chosen based on the researcher's accessibility to them and whether or not their characteristics corresponded with the parameters outlined for the sample population.

As three different focus groups were conducted with six members in each group, the researcher found it imperative to find a time that suited all members of each of the three focus groups. In so doing, it ensured that the participants' time was respected and that they would be able to give sufficient and unrushed responses. This played a pivotal role in the success of the focus group in obtaining information relating to the research questions and objectives.

All participants received an email contextualising what the focus group entailed, how to log into the Zoom call and a consent form in order to participate in the focus group. The three focus groups were each conducted on separate days, all within the space of a week. The first focus group conducted was the men only focus group with six members, the second focus group conducted was the women focus group and the last focus group was that of mixed genders with both men and women.

A visual presentation was compiled in order to engage with the online participants and allow them to give valid responses to questions containing visual cues to assist responses. Such visual cues were used to understand which Gillette brand and product, Gillette for men or Gillette Venus, the participants were drawn to, as well as their perspective of a gender-neutral razor when shown a visual of a razor and its product marketing that is not gender-specific.

At the beginning of each focus group, the respondents were given an explanation as to what the research topic was about, the various consent that would be required of them for participating and the rules and guidelines of the focus group (See Appendix 4 for the focus group guide and outline). Within the introduction, the researcher requested permission to record the online focus group in order to ensure that the researcher would be able to utilise it when transcribing the focus group.

The researcher then facilitated the focus groups and found that there were valuable perspectives voiced by the participants, with many commonalities being found between the secondary research and the focus group responses, all of which related back to Generation Z consumers' perceptions of Gillette and the impact gendered product marketing has on their purchasing decisions.

Although data collection of the focus groups was successful, various hurdles surfaced as a result of the online focus groups, specifically: respondents not wanting to show their faces and turn their camera on (therefore making it imperative for the researcher to listen to their verbal cues as opposed to physical cues) and participants encountering connectivity issues (leading to participants leaving unexpectedly).

3.8.3. In-depth interviews

A brand expert and lecturer from Vega School Durban was consulted for an in-depth interview. Interviewing a brand expert allowed for information from an individual well-versed in the marketing industry to be obtained and for meaningful responses to be gathered, all of which speaking to the research problem at hand: the impact of gendered product marketing on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers.

3.9. Data Analysis Methods

Qualitative Thematic Content Analysis

A qualitative thematic content analysis identifies and explores of themes and patterns present within the data collected (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The thematic content analysis for this research used selective coding, allowing for the identification of specific patterns to categorise and compare (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). This method forms meaningful patterns relating to Generation Z consumers' perceptions of Gillette and their purchasing decisions as a result of gendered product marketing (Bengtsson, 2016).

Selective coding involved fracturing of data; categorising data received from questionnaires, focus groups and interviews, into relevant groupings (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). All of which can assist this research in achieving its goal to contribute to the body of knowledge within the branding field whilst challenging social injustices such as stereotyping (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

Braun and Clarke (2006) state that a thematic content analysis will occur through six-phases:

- 1. Familiarising yourself with the data:**

Researcher will familiarise themselves with the data through transcribing the data and taking notes to begin engaging with and dissecting the data gathered.

- 2. Generating initial codes:**

Specific features of the data are coded. These codes are then used in order to inform further stages of analysis.

- 3. Searching for themes:**

The codes are used to generate themes with information gathered from the data collected in relation to each theme. A set of candidate themes is derived.

- 4. Reviewing themes:**

The themes are then tested and checked against the data and codes collected, in order to ensure consistency in addressing the research questions. The themes are then refined, separated, combined or discarded.

- 5. Defining and Naming Themes**

Themes are further defined and refined with clear names for the themes identified. Each of the themes outlined will be divided into suitable themes

specifically relating to the effect of gendered product marketing on Generation Z purchasing decisions and Generation Z consumers' perceptions of Gillette. These themes should aid in telling the overall story of the research.

6. Write-Up

A report consisting of the findings, methods and interpretations, as well as the themes identified within the data will be compiled in order to explain the process and conclusions clearly.

3.10. Application of Data Analysis Methods

Due to the research being of a qualitative nature, a large amount of data was gathered. It was therefore imperative that the data collected was organised and the crux of the responses maintained. The researcher took a systemic approach to a thematic content analysis to yield a structured, focussed and in-depth analysis of the data collected from the qualitative questionnaire, focus group and interview. In order to sufficiently analyse the data, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phases of a thematic content analysis will be followed.

To further familiarise themselves with the data, the researcher transcribed the focus groups, word for word (at the discretion of the researcher so as not to include unnecessary information) with the inclusion of any verbal cues that may have been evident. This allowed for the researcher to fully engage with the data collected.

The researcher read through the transcripts and listened to the recordings multiple times in order to ensure all elements were accounted for in the transcripts. Whilst transcribing or reading through the transcribed data and re-listening to the recording, the researcher began to identify various elements relating to the research problem and questions.

Furthermore, the Google Form used for the questionnaires compiled the data into a list of responses for the open-ended questions and various graphical representations for the closed-ended questions (multiple choice and matrix). This assisted in outlining the information obtained as answers were automatically transcribed, making the researcher's process of familiarising themselves with the data more efficient whilst also saving time. The researcher took the grouped information per question and formulated a Word document, allowing the researcher to further breakdown the research.

The researcher then began generating initial codes through analysing and dissecting the transcripts in order to identify certain features and elements that correlate with the research questions of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2006). As the transcripts were written out on a Word document, the researcher was able to highlight and group the various

codes identified to inform further analysis of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The codes consisted of words and phrases used by participants.

Such codes aided in searching and generating initial themes relating to the effect gendered product marketing has on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers as well as the common perceptions expressed relating to Gillette and the concept of gendered product marketing. These themes were reviewed, tested, refined and checked against the data and codes in order to ensure that they coincided with the research study and the answering of the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Final themes were defined with clear names in order to ensure that they contributed to the overall research. Each theme was formed in order to specifically relate to one another as well as the effect of gendered product marketing on Generation Z purchasing decisions and Generation Z consumers' perceptions of Gillette.

3.11. Validity, Reliability & Trustworthiness

The validity, reliability and trustworthiness of the research needs to be explored in order for it to be trusted by others (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007; Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Validity and reliability will be used to assess the quantitative research and trustworthiness for qualitative research, thus, trustworthiness will be focussed on for this research (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014; Maree, 2019).

3.11.1. Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness determines the reliability and validity of the qualitative research and is assessed based on: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

Credibility assesses how accurately the researcher interprets and collects data from participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). In order to ensure credibility during this research, time will be spent with the focus group participants in order to obtain a thorough yet clear understanding of the participants (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014).

Transferability refers to “the ability of the findings to be applied to a similar situation”, deriving similar results (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014: 258). This research study, although focussed on Gillette and Gillette Venus brands, can be applied to other consumer brands and similar situations whereby gender stereotypes and unconscious gender biases are involved.

The quality of integration of the data collection methods, data analysis and findings are reflected through dependability (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Throughout this research, each decision has been informed by another; ensuring a golden thread across data collection methods, data analysis and the overall findings.

Confirmability examines the cohesion between the data and findings thereof (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The research process has been fully outlined for this study. It consists of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, with the findings from both supporting one another.

3.12. Conclusion

After conducting the data collection and analysis, the researcher began connecting the primary research with secondary research done in the Literature Review. The researcher has aligned and linked the findings to the research problem, objectives and questions.

As a result of the triangulation of three different data collection methods (online questionnaire, focus groups and an interview) and a thematic content analysis, the study holds a plethora of valuable insights, findings and credibility. It can therefore be said that, through understanding the Generation Z consumer, brands such as Gillette will be able to make more calculated decisions as they move forward as a brand in the future and further try to ascertain the loyalty of Generation Z consumers; a cohort with an increasingly large amount of clout in the purchasing process.

CHAPTER 4 – Research Interpretation & Findings

4.1. Introduction

This chapter outlines the various findings and insights that were obtained as a result of the qualitative data collection methods employed. Three primary data collection methods were used in order to obtain information; all of which can be used to gain a deeper understanding around the impact of gendered product marketing on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z whilst specifically focussing on Gillette.

It must be noted that this is a qualitative study and the findings can therefore not be sufficiently generalised to the population at large (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). The data has been recorded and presented in tables and figures. In some instances, the data is represented in bar graphs and pie charts (both of which are typically used in quantitative research); solely for illustrative purposes and to aid in the analysis and synthesising of data.

4.2. Respondent Profiles

4.2.1. Questionnaire Respondents

Pie Chart outlining the age distribution of questionnaire participants

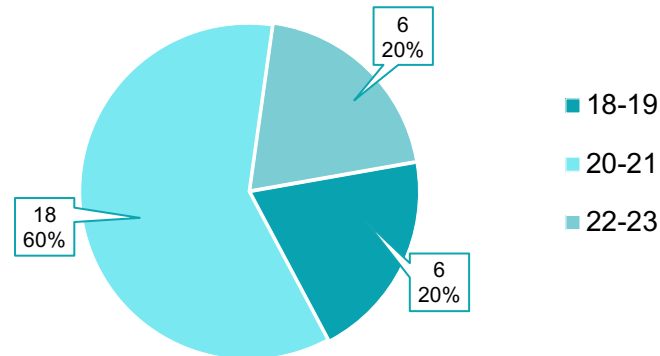


Figure 4.1: Questionnaire Respondents' Age Distribution

Source: Developed for Research

Overall, there was a sufficient distribution of ages amongst the questionnaire respondents. However, there were no respondents within the age group 24-26, therefore the age group has not been represented in the above figure. The majority of the respondents being within the 20-21 age group, due to the use of convenience sampling with the participants being selected based on their proximity and availability to the researcher.

Pie Chart outlining the genders of questionnaire participants

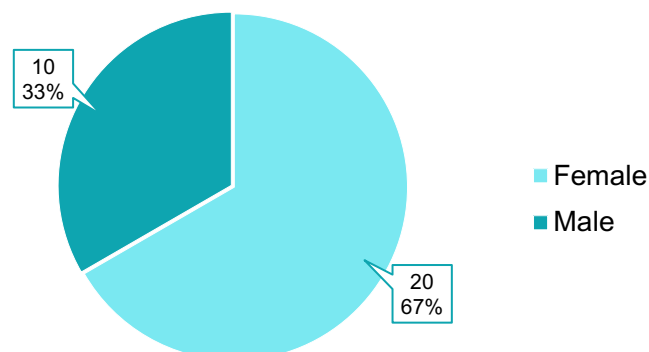


Figure 4.2: Questionnaire Respondents' Gender Classification

Source: Developed for Research

Based on the figure above, there were more participants who identified as female than male. As all participants stated their gender, it can be said that all participants were comfortable stating their gender when completing the questionnaire, however, participants were given an option to not disclose information regarding their gender.

4.2.2. Focus Group Respondents

Table 4.1: Profile of Respondents – Focus Group

Source: Developed for Research

Gender	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Women (aged 18 to 26)	6	-	2
Men (aged 18 to 26)	-	5	4

The focus group was aimed towards both men and women in order to provide multiple perspectives from both genders as both are perceived as buyers of the Gillette and Gillette Venus brands. Focus group 1 consisted solely of women and focus group 2 consisted solely of men. This was done in order to understand how each gender responds to and interprets their responses when surrounded by individuals from their gender cohort.

Alternatively, focus group 3 consisted of a combination of both men and women. This focus group allowed both genders to engage with one another in conversation and for participants of differing genders to gain an understanding of other gender's perspectives, not only towards Gillette, but towards gendered product marketing and gender-neutral product marketing as a whole.

4.2.3. Brand Expert

A brand expert, who has been in the industry for more than 10 years, was consulted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the marketing industry in relation to the research problem at hand: the impact of gendered product marketing on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers.

4.3. Presentation and Interpretation of Findings

The three research objectives and questions for this study will be central to this discussion. The questionnaire, focus groups and interview responses have been grouped and will be assessed based on their ability to address the specific objective. In order to assess and interpret the research findings, the responses have been presented in the form of tables and figures. The qualitative data has been analysed through the use of a thematic content analysis, allowing for common themes and codes to be ascertained and depicted visually.

4.4. RO1 – To evaluate the impact gendered product advertising has towards Generation Z consumers’ personal care product purchasing decisions.

In order to address this objective, various questions from the questionnaire, focus groups and interview were assessed in relation to themes centred around gendered product marketing, Generation Z, as well as buying behaviour and decisions.

4.5. Questionnaire Questions in relation to RO1

4.6. Questionnaire Question 3: What do you look for in the personal care brands you use?



Figure 4.3: Qualities of personal care brands - Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research

4.6.1. Interpretation of Findings

In order to gain an understanding of Generation Z consumers’ expectations of personal care brands when making their purchasing decisions, respondents were required to express what they gravitate towards when purchasing personal care brands. This is relevant to Gillette as the brand is categorised within the personal care and shaving category with their multiple brand offerings, and would therefore benefit from understanding what drives a consumer’s surface level purchasing decision.

The above Figure 4.3, is a word-cloud consisting of the common words utilised by the respondents. Respondents deemed the quality of a product to be one of the most

important factors influencing their purchasing decisions, followed by the product's price and performance.

Swanson and Davis (2020) have expressed that Generation Z consumers have extremely high expectations of brands and expect brands to align with their values whilst simultaneously showing social awareness. This being said, respondents also noted the importance of brand's aligning with their values, delivering on their promise and being socially aware through addressing social causes.

4.7. Questionnaire Question 9: Are you conscious of gendered products when making purchases?

Pie Chart outlining the extent to which respondents are conscious of gendered products when making purchases

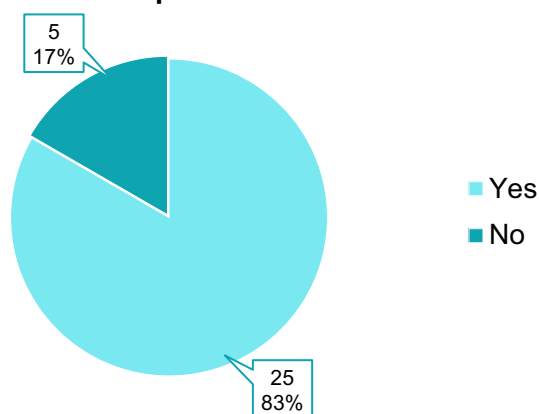


Figure 4.4: Gendered product awareness - Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research

4.7.1. Interpretation of Findings

This question assessed the extent to which the respondents, all of which form part of the Generation Z cohort, are conscious of gendered products when making their purchasing decisions. As can be seen in Figure 4.4, the majority of respondents stated that they are conscious of gendered products when making their purchasing decisions. Therefore, alluding to there being a profound awareness amongst the Generation Z respondents. Such an awareness aligns with the literature that Generation Z consumers are focussed on and are more aware of social constructs such as gender and gendered products (Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Powers, 2019).

4.8. Questionnaire Question 11: What prompts your purchasing decisions?

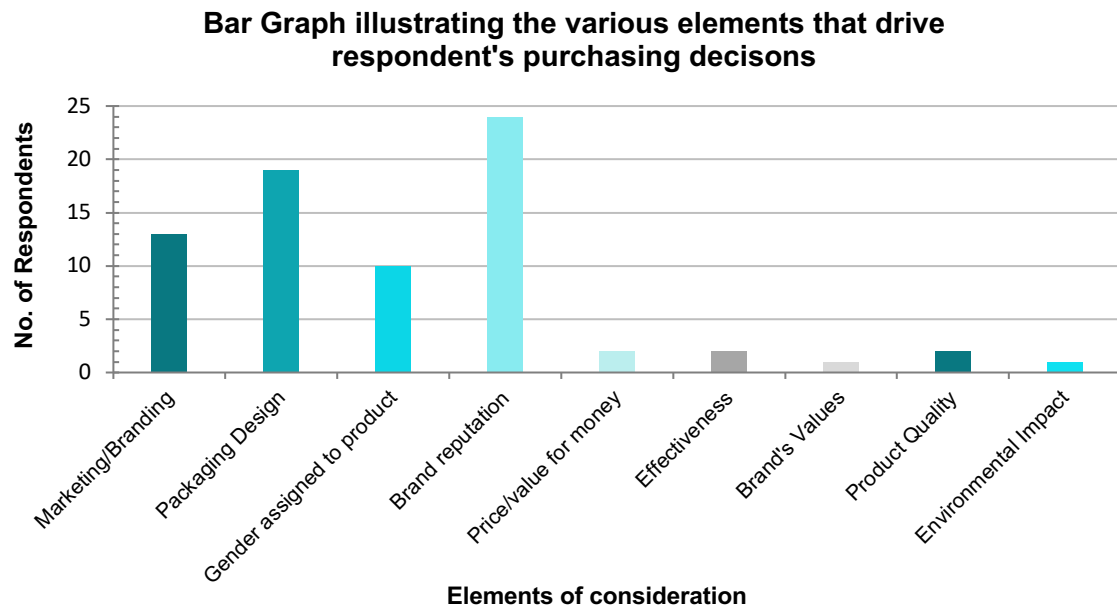


Figure 4.5: Generation Z Purchasing Decisions - Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research

4.8.1. Interpretation of Findings

The above question focusses on outlining the broad or general elements that drive Generation Z consumer decisions. Specific emphasis is placed on the choice of product based on the gender assigned to the product. Although the majority of the respondents stated, in the previous Question (Question 9), that they are conscious of gendered products, 10 of the respondents (as seen in Figure 4.5) still base their purchasing decisions on the gender assigned to the product. Thus, some respondents, although aware of gendered product marketing, are more attracted to brands who succumb to such gender stereotyping and categorisation within products.

Such findings, to a certain extent, vary from the literature which states that the Generation Z at large are focussing their energy on brands who are breaking down stereotypes (Francis & Hoefel, 2018). Such a variance, as explained by Sandhu (2018), is attributable to consumers resisting gendered product shifts (to more inclusive, gender-neutral alternatives) or do not see the need for change, even though they are exposed to and are aware of brands attempting to combat gendered product marketing.

4.9. Focus Group Questions in relation to RO1

4.10. Focus Group Question 3: Are you conscious of gendered products when making purchasing decisions? Please state yes or no and what else may influence your purchasing decisions.



Figure 4.6: Word-Clouds of each Focus Group

Source: Developed for Research

4.10.1. Interpretation of Findings

Of the 17 respondents involved in the three focus groups, all the respondents were conscious and aware of gendered products when making purchasing decisions. However, 15 of the respondents, although aware of gendered products and marketing thereof, did not find the gender of a product to be the sole variable involved in their purchasing decision.

The remaining two respondents who stated that they are aware of gendered products, identified as a man and a woman, with the woman stating that she “would go for products that are marketed towards females” and the man stating that “the whole masculine side does play a role”. Thus, these responses echo what was found in the questionnaire, whereby, it needs to be considered that, many Generation Z consumers, although aware of the gendering of products, are content with the current structure of products being categorised into either for “men” or “women” (Sandhu, 2018).

As seen in the above Figure 4.6, consumers are particularly drawn to the price, quality and functionality of a product, over and above the gender assigned to the product. It

has been said by some respondents, that they are focussed on a product's ability to perform and meet their needs, regardless of the gender of the product because "if the product works, it works". Many of the women participants stated that they have found women's razors to be more expensive and therefore, if the men's razors are of a better quality and cheaper, they would rather purchase a men's razor. This was specifically evident through one particular female respondent who stated very firmly that "women's products are more expensive, for no reason and it just doesn't make sense".

4.11. RO2 – To establish whether Gillette has imposed unconscious gender biases through their in-store product marketing.

The main themes focussed on within RO2 are that of unconscious gender bias and gender perspectives, both of which are assessed specifically in relation to Gillette.

4.12. Questionnaire Questions in relation to RO2

4.13. Questionnaire Question 5 & 6: Are you familiar with the brand Gillette? Are you aware of Gillette's connection with the women's personal care brand Venus, formally referred to as Gillette Venus?

Pie Chart outlining the how many respondents are aware of Gillette

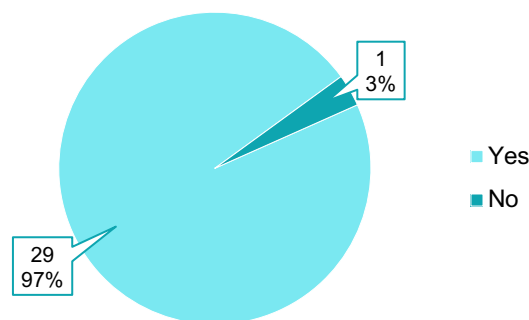


Figure 4.7: Gillette Brand Awareness - Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research

Pie Chart outlining respondents awareness of the Gillette and Gillette Venus connection

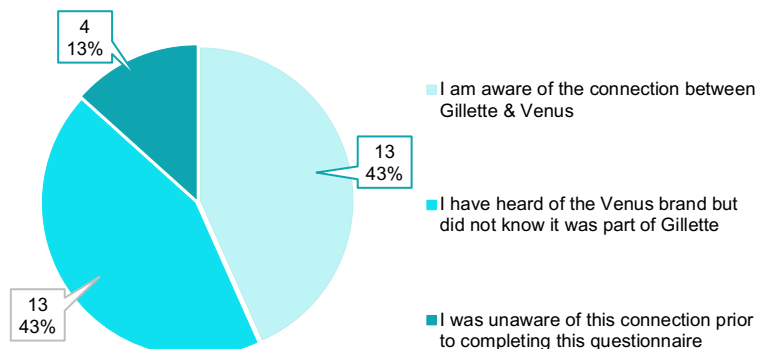


Figure 4.8: Gillette & Gillette Venus Connection - Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research

4.13.1. Interpretation of Findings

The previous Figures 4.7 and 4.8, both address the respondent's awareness of the Gillette and Gillette Venus brand, coupled with their knowledge of the connection between Gillette and, as many refer to it, "Venus" brands. 97% of the respondents were aware of the Gillette brand, however, there was an equal split of 13 respondents who were aware of the connection between Gillette and Venus, and 13 respondents who had heard of Venus but were unaware of its connection with Gillette.

4.14. Questionnaire Question 7: Have you noticed any major differences between Gillette's range for "men" and Gillette Venus's range (for women)? If yes, please elaborate.



Figure 4.9: Gillette & Gillette Venus connection - Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research

4.14.1. Interpretation of Findings

The above-mentioned question is contextualised and supported by Questions 5 and 6 which make the consumer aware of the connection in order to answer Question 7. The majority of respondents expressed the most obvious difference to be the colour of the products in the Gillette and Gillette Venus ranges. 13 of the respondents did not see the point in having such "old fashioned" segmentation of products by stereotypically assigning colours to genders. Such responses allude to the Gillette brand as a whole, still embodying gendered product marketing. These respondents also argued that such a disparity in the Gillette and Gillette Venus range is unnecessary as products in both ranges serve similar, if not the same functions to the user.

As mentioned in previous responses, respondents also expressed frustration as a result of the price differences between the two ranges, with men's razors being cheaper and the women's products being more expensive and less durable.

4.15. Questionnaire Question 8: Do you perceive Gillette to be a progressive brand, specifically in terms of combatting gender stereotyping?

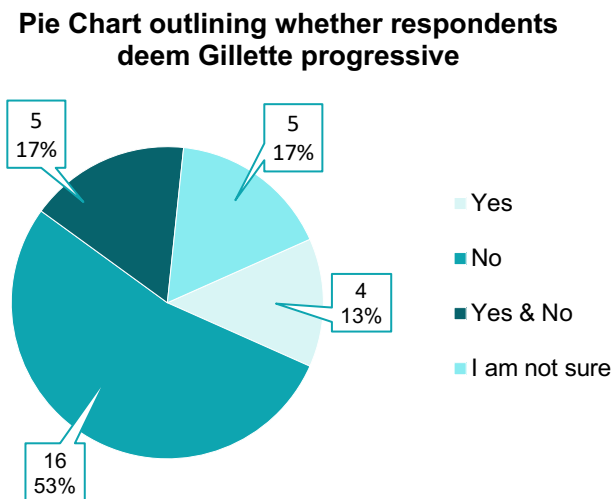


Figure 4.10: Gillette Progressiveness - Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research



Figure 4.11: Word-cloud Gillette Progressiveness - Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research

4.15.1. Interpretation of Findings

As seen in Figure 4.10, there were mixed feelings from respondents as to whether or not Gillette is progressive in combatting stereotyping. The majority of the respondents deemed Gillette to not be progressive due to their separate brand for men and women and the stereotypical use of colours and visuals in their marketing campaigns. Many

of those who said “yes” and everyone who said “yes and no” expressed that although Gillette has been progressive in terms of their campaigns touching on social issues such as toxic masculinity, the brand could still do more, specifically with their gendered products as this is seen as regressive by many. Thus, the Generation Z respondents are evolving and are, as explained in the literature, gravitating towards brands that allow individuality and diversity (Francis & Hoefel, 2018), all of which need to be considered by Gillette in order to remain relevant.

4.16. Focus Group Questions in relation to RO2

4.17. Focus Group Question 1 & 2:

Q1: Have you heard of the brand Gillette? Please specify how you have encountered it and if you have personally used it.

Every respondent was aware of the brand Gillette with many having encountered the brand at retail stores such as Pick n Pay, Woolworths and Checkers.

Q2: Are you aware of the Gillette's connection with the women's personal care brand Venus, formally referred to as Gillette Venus? Since learning of this connection, whether it be today or previously, has it changed your perception towards either brand?

Table 4.2: Gillette Brand Perception – Focus Group

Source: Developed for Research

Has Changed Brand Perception	Has Not Changed Brand Perception
"When I compare the prices that the men pay, the men's stuff isn't as expensive as the women's stuff."	"I didn't feel any different for the brand like it was just a logical step for me."
"Obviously, they are trying to be inclusive by offering a women's range but it does defeat the point when they make them more expensive and not as good of quality. It's just having a negative effect on what they are trying to do."	"I didn't realise it was a whole separate brand under the Gillette name."
"The things they add for women aren't functional, they are just like frivolous like make it pink and dainty and smell fruity but that's not what I need."	"They need to expand their market. That's a good way to expand their market."
"I always used to think that the women's razor is for women and women can't use the men's razors but ever since I've been learning about this, I understand that they do the same thing."	"At the end of the day, shaving cream is shaving cream."
"It's quite hectic to think that the female range is actually more expensive than the male range when it's exactly the same, if not more inferior designs."	"Doesn't make a difference to me whether they market it to guys or girls; whether it's the same product or a whole new product line."
"A bit disappointing that a brand would not keep it equal between both genders in terms of products."	"I just think it's cool that they are catering fully for that market."
"It's funny to see that they are catering towards women but they are somehow making it less efficient as though they are trying to say men need a more efficient shave."	"It just makes me more conscious now and aware of how masculine brands are now incorporating feminine products."
"I didn't really think it was important to do that separation."	

4.17.1. Interpretation of Findings

Of the three focus groups, the male focus group had 4 of 5 participants who were unaware of the Gillette Venus range prior to the focus group being conducted. However, all other members of the male, female and mixed focus group were aware of the connection. Based on some of the responses collated into Table 4.2 above, one can deduce that many of the respondents have found that their perception of Gillette and Gillette Venus have been shifted as a result of the brand separating genders into two gendered product categories, with women's products being less efficient and more expensive.

Some of the responses also draw upon a connection between the way in which people have been brought up and how they were led to believe specific gender perspectives as a result of unconscious biases and constructs imposed upon the youth (Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014; Ratten, 2017).

It was found that the majority of respondents who felt their perception had changed, were those who identified as women. Therefore, the brand separation is a more pertinent topic to women respondents as opposed to men who do not see the separation as a hinderance; rather an opportunity to broaden the brand's horizons.

4.18. Focus Group Question 4: Do you believe Gillette and Gillette Venus make use of gendered product marketing or do you see them as progressive in combatting stereotyping?



Figure 4.12: Gendered Product Marketing or progressive – Focus Group

Source: Developed for Research

4.18.1. Interpretation of Findings

Figure 4.12 above outlines the various positive and negative words expressed by the respondents. Some respondents felt as if Gillette, although attempting to be progressive through their previous toxic masculinity campaign, have contradicted themselves by having separate gendered product ranges. Such an occurrence has resulted in many respondents feeling that this is not enough, they are a backwards brand and that their current marketing choices are ineffective.

Respondents also expressed their concern regarding the manner in which the products are portrayed. Not only do they segment products through the use of stereotypical colours, but they also portray an unrealistic, fictional visual of what women and men should be, showing how the brand is succumbing to stereotyping and unconscious gender biases. Such areas of concern align with the literature which indicates that Generation Z consumers are more aware of brand stereotyping and are gravitating to brands which are challenging gender norms (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

4.19. Brand Expert Interview Questions in relation to RO2

4.20. Interview Question 6: Do you believe Gillette and its sub-brands like Gillette Venus, are trying to challenge gender biases and stereotypes? How do you believe they are or are not doing so?

The brand expert expressed that Gillette have in the past, attempted to challenge gender stereotypes through their toxic masculinity campaign, however, this resulted in a loss of sales as people did not perceive the campaign to be true to the Gillette identity. Gillette need to avoid jumping onto the bandwagon and instead invest in a long-term solution-driven approach that ensures the brand communicates a message of inclusivity or equality in cohesive yet gradual manner.

4.21. RO3 – To identify whether Gillette’s brand impact and popularity amongst Generation Z will increase, should they implement gender neutral product marketing within South Africa.

The main themes focussed on within RO3 are that of gender neutrality and its effects on brand equity and gender-neutral product marketing.

4.22. Questionnaire Questions in relation to RO3

4.23. Questionnaire Question 12: If given the option to choose between a gender neutral product and a product assigned to a specific gender, which would you choose and why?

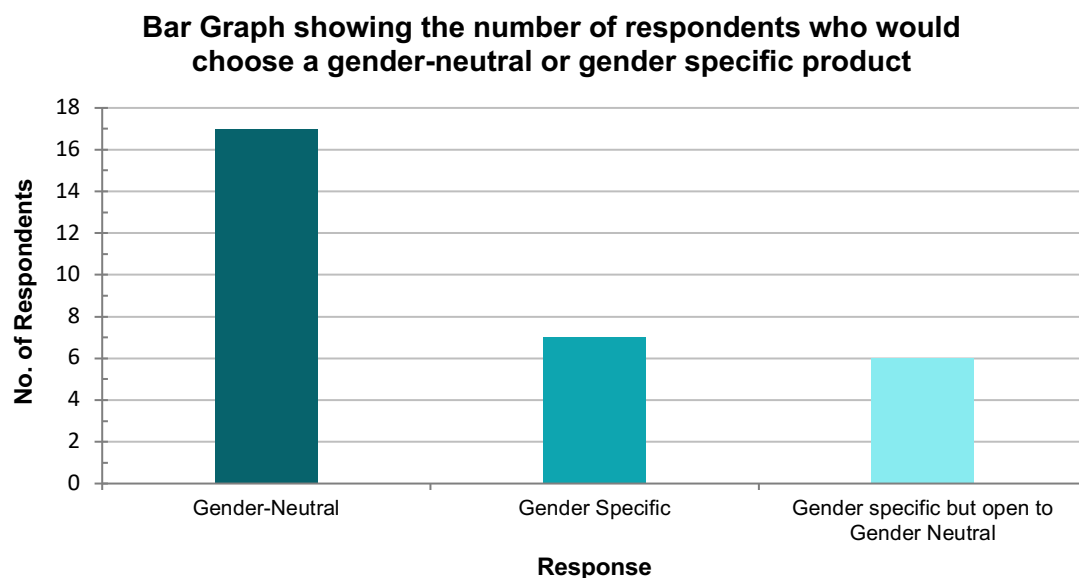


Figure 4.13: Gender Neutral vs Gender Specific – Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research



Figure 4.14: Word-Cloud Gender Neutral vs Gender Specific – Questionnaire

Source: Developed for Research

4.23.1. Interpretation of Findings

Figure 4.13 outlines how the majority of the Generation Z respondents would purchase a gender-neutral product as opposed to a gender-specific product. This, accompanied with the various negative connotations of gender-specific marketing, illustrate how consumers are straying away from the notion that they must use brands that segment the population based on out-dated stereotypes, specifically as gender becomes more fluid (Sultana & Shahriar, 2017; Powers, 2019).

For many respondents, gender-neutral offers a more inclusive outlook on gender, noting that everyone is different and there is no need to put people into “boxes”. It has been discussed in previous responses to RO1 and RO2 that there is an undeniable added cost attached to purchasing female personal care products, something of which many respondents hope to see abolished, should a gender-neutral product be introduced into the market. Alternatively, those who prefer gender specific products find comfort in the familiarity and desire for a product to meet their specific gender needs.

4.24. Focus Group Questions in relation to RO3

4.25. Focus Group Question 5: If given the option to choose between a gender neutral product and a product assigned to a specific gender, which would you choose and why?

Similarly, to question 12 in the questionnaire, many respondents were open to the idea of purchasing a gender-neutral product as opposed to gender specific. Some of the reasoning behind this is that it creates a broader, more inclusive environment and as long as the product is functional, respondents had no resistance to choose gender-neutral over gender assigned. However, it must be noted that the sensitivity to gendered products is product dependent for many respondents.

4.26. Focus Group Question 7: If Gillette were to produce a gender-neutral product, would you purchase it?

Table 4.3: Gender-neutral Product Offering – Focus Group

Source: Developed for Research

Reasons why respondents would purchase a gender-neutral product from Gillette	Gender-neutral products Expectations
"You hear a lot about people being discriminated against because of gender and not being able to be part of a specific gender or conform to gender norms."	"They are affordable or more or less the same price as an average razor."
"To hear that a brand would try and break those aspects of not conforming to the gender and having a genderless object by taking away those stereotypes which try to conform to what society deems as male or female, I would definitely back it."	"I would buy it if it did the right job and isn't overpriced."
"They are trying to broaden their audience because you have people who are non-binary so it might appeal to them and make them want to buy the brand."	"Good quality and meets all the needs I have."
"I think specifically in the social climate of this country, if they did it, it would stand out and I would take notice."	
"I think it's really cool and you wouldn't feel like you're missing out on anything because everyone is getting the same thing."	
"It has all of the things that I personally look for when buying razors so it just makes sense."	
"It is just one product and its ideal for everyone so therefore you'd think it is good quality and worth the price and feel like everyone is being treated equally."	
"It would definitely give me an extra reason when I'm in the shop to pick up one of their products instead of another brands. If I was walking down the aisle and I saw this marketing next to let's say Nivea, I would probably choose Gillette just because of the inclusivity of the brand and that the marketing is more familiar or have more in common with the ideals of the brand."	
"I think if corporations, like Gillette, went down this path, they would gain my support because they are now supporting a community and that could just be a friend of mine or something but it's still supporting a community."	

4.26.1. Interpretation of Findings

Although the literature expresses that males are generally more resistant to purchasing gender-neutral products (Sandhu, 2018), and while this may be true for some men within society, the respondents of the focus group all stated that they would purchase a gender-neutral product from Gillette, if Gillette were to introduce one.

As seen in Table 4.3, Generation Z respondents have positive views towards gender-neutral products and the adoption thereof. Respondent's abilities to resonate with a brand embracing gender-neutrality and breaking away from gender stereotypes, is something that can be leveraged to foster and maintain long-lasting and meaningful relationships with consumers. All of which will ultimately aid in achieving strong brand equity for the said brand. Thus, making gender-neutrality a valid consideration for brands such as Gillette.

4.27. Brand Expert Interview Questions in relation to RO3

4.28. Interview Question 3: What do you foresee as key characteristics younger generation consumers, such as Generation Z (aged 18-26) within South Africa, are looking for in the brands they support?



Figure 4.15: Generation Z Characteristics – Interview

Source: Developed for Research

4.28.1. Interpretation of Findings

The brand expert outlined that Generation Z consumers are extremely connected and informed, and as a result, have high expectations from the brands they support and interact with. This being said, he expressed the importance of brand's delivering on their promises and maintaining a connection with them because with this specific cohort "you only have one chance with them".

4.29. Findings in Context

Primary Research Question: Are members of Generation Z gravitating towards personal care products that embrace gender neutrality and fluidity?

Throughout this study, the research problem, primary research question and sub-questions have been considered through the use of research objectives. The above research question is the overarching focus of this study and underpins all the sub-questions and objectives addressed within the study.

Through the use of three data collection methods and literature, it allowed for there to be triangulation of results, all of which contribute to enhancing the credibility and validity of this qualitative study. Overall, it can be said that the primary research conducted aligns with and compliments the literature and theories from which the study was built.

One can deduce that, Generation Z consumers are aware of gendered product marketing, coupled with increasingly high expectations of brands within the personal care industry. Although many of the respondents are aware of gendered products, some of them are still drawn to products that have an assigned gender, therefore making gendered product marketing a large factor for consideration when making purchasing decisions. This indicates that the impact of gendered product marketing is still very prominent within society, despite a shift in the social climate (Sandhu, 2018; Francis & Hoefel, 2018; Powers, 2019).

It was also found that Generation Z consumers, are well-acquainted with the various social issues occurring within society, specifically that of gender inequality and a lack of understanding towards those within the LGBTQ+ community who may not fit within the socially constructed gender boxes of “men” and “women”. This being said, both the literature and primary findings align as Generation Z consumers are more willing to gravitate towards brands, and specifically personal care brands like Gillette, who embrace the changing social landscape and explore gender-neutrality and fluidity.

By embracing gender-neutrality, brands like Gillette will resonate with a larger audience which will form a strong brand equity which is key to organisational success (Sultana & Shahriar, 2017; Powers, 2019). However, as mentioned frequently throughout this research, such perspectives do not apply to every individual within Generation Z as some members of the cohort may still be inclined to purchase gender specific personal care products from Gillette.

4.30. Conclusion

Overall, it can be said that the primary research conducted has allowed for valuable findings and insights to be obtained. Such findings and insights addressed the research problem, research questions and objectives. Each of the three data collection methods, accompanied by the literature findings, can be utilised to inform and understand the shift in Generation Z consumer's purchasing decisions and their shift towards brands embracing neutrality and away from brands succumbing to gender stereotypes.

CHAPTER 5 – Conclusions & Recommendations

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides conclusions and recommendations for each of the three objectives outlined throughout this study. The key findings from the literature, presented in Chapter 2 and primary research, in Chapter 4, will be highlighted in relation to the research objective they address and will include conclusions and recommendations under each objective. Additionally, anticipated contribution, suggestions for further research, as well as ethical considerations and limitations will conclude this chapter.

5.2. RO1 – To evaluate the impact gendered product advertising has towards Generation Z consumers' personal care product purchasing decisions.

5.2.1. Findings from Literature

The literature examined the Generational Cohort theory and assessed its influence on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z consumers through the assertion that the individuals within this cohort not only encounter, but will also embody similar experiences and characteristics to one another (Chen, 2010; Padayachee, 2018).

Marketers leverage gender cues in order to shape how consumers perceive products based on the product's assigned "gender (masculine or feminine) identity" (Sandhu, 2018). Gendered product marketing is a strategic choice, one that differentiates and enhances the attractiveness of brands and products to the consumer (Alreck, 1994; Kyonghee *et al.*, 2016; Sandhu, 2018).

Generation Z expect brands to provide quality, align with their values and address social issues (Swanson & Davis, 2020). An increase in Generation Z consumer purchasing power is causing brands to reassess their marketing communications, rejecting gendered stereotyping in order to stay relevant amongst the Generation Z consumer (Francis & Hoefel, 2018).

5.2.2. Findings from Questionnaire

Questions 3, 9 and 11 within the online questionnaire addressed RO1. The responses supported the literature outlined in Chapter 2. Although respondents deemed quality, price and performance to be influential in their purchasing decisions, they also noted that they support brands which align with their values, deliver on their promises and are socially conscious. Although Generation Z respondents noted that they are conscious of gendered products, many, are still basing their purchasing decisions on the product's gender, whilst others steer away from gendered products, focusing on the functional benefits of the product.

5.2.3. Findings from Focus Group

Question 3 from all three focus groups aligned with RO1. These respondents, all of which form part of the Generation Z cohort, were all aware of the term gendered product marketing and the presence of gendered products when making purchasing decisions. However, the majority of respondents did not deem gender to be the sole variable in their purchasing decision.

5.2.4. Conclusion

Based on the information gathered in relation to RO1, it can be said that although Generation Z consumers are aware of gendered product marketing, it is not the sole contributing factor to their purchasing decision. Some Generation Z consumers purchase solely on the gender assigned to the product, whilst others are driven by the functional benefit of the product and the brand's emotional benefit to them (resonating with their values and supporting social issues) whilst ultimately embracing diversity and inclusivity.

5.2.5. Recommendations

It is evident that brands, like Gillette, need to adapt or die within the growing global and local marketplace. Consumers and their digital exposure are becoming increasingly aware of social concerns and hold a large amount of clout over which brands they support. Gillette and P&G, can no longer be complacent in their existing product marketing and need to consider furthering their research and development processes to account for the growing desire for social commentary and diversity, whilst still delivering on the brand's promise and functionality.

5.3. RO2 – To establish whether Gillette has imposed unconscious gender biases through their in-store product marketing.

5.3.1. Findings from Literature

In addition to the previous discussion of gendered marketing, the literature states, in relation to RO2 that unconscious gender biases are prevalent within marketing (Eisend *et al.*, 2014). The stereotyping in terms of gender roles and portrayals can either be beneficial or detrimental to an organisation, depending on the social climate, norms, mindsets and demographics in which a brand is communicating within (Zawisza *et al.*, 2018). This further amplifies the fine balancing act brands need to maintain when imposing gender biases (Zawisza *et al.*, 2018).

5.3.2. Findings from Questionnaire

Questions 5, 6, 7 and 8 all related to RO2 as they focussed on the Gillette brand itself and the unconscious gender biases and gender perspectives present within the personal care industry and Gillette as a brand. Many of the Generation Z respondents noted the differences between Gillette's various sub-brands (Gillette and Gillette Venus), including colour and price differences which were deemed pointless and an "old fashioned" version of segmenting products; specifically, when the differing ranges provide the same basic function (hair removal).

The overall consensus from these respondents was that Gillette, despite attempting to combat social issues in their Gillette for men brand, are still, to a certain extent embodying gender stereotyping and succumbing to the unconscious gender biases many are accustomed to due to social conditioning.

5.3.3. Findings from Focus Group

Focus group questions 1, 2 and 4 gave insight into the respondent's interactions with the Gillette brand and their perceptions thereof. Predominantly, respondents encountered Gillette through in-store product marketing in various retail stores.

Many of the Generation Z respondents voiced their concerns and perception shift towards the Gillette brand as a result of separating their brands into two gender specific product categories, with the products aimed towards women (Gillette Venus),

being more expensive and less efficient than the men's Gillette products. Similarly, to the responses obtained from the questionnaire, there has been a contradiction between Gillette's brands, predominantly as a result of their separate gendered product ranges.

However, respondents noted how their up-bringing and social environments led them to become accustomed to specific gender perspectives based on society's unconscious biases and constructs.

5.3.4. Findings from Brand Expert Interview

Interview question 6 in relation to RO2, provided a perspective towards the brand from someone who is not within the Generation Z cohort. The brand expert outlined Gillette's previous attempts at challenging gender stereotypes which did not succeed and therefore expressed the importance of investing in a long-term brand solution, one that avoids Gillette jumping onto the bandwagon without the brand's identity fully immersed in the social cause.

5.3.5. Conclusion

Although Gillette have made many strides within Gillette men, both Gillette and Gillette Venus are still lacking diversity and inclusivity. This has left many of the respondents feeling that the brand as a collective can do more, with some perceiving the brand as regressive as a result of their categorisation and segmentation of products based on colour and gender.

5.3.6. Recommendations

Based on what the respondents have mentioned, there is a disconnect between the various Gillette sub-brands and the overarching attempts of Gillette to become progressive within the changing social landscape. This being said, consumers have a multitude of brands to choose from within the personal care market, amplifying the importance for Gillette to solidify their positioning as a brand moving away from gender stereotyping through gendered product marketing.

Thus, it is recommended that Gillette re-assess their brand identity from the top down in order to ensure cohesion across Gillette's sub-brands. This would entail assessing

the brand's visual and verbal messaging in order to encapsulate a more inclusive and diverse perspective of the brand, one that will allow Gillette and its sub-brands to combat gender stereotyping in a more believable and heartfelt manner, whilst ultimately resonating with the Generation Z consumer. By positioning Gillette as a brand attempting to meaningfully combat gender stereotyping, Gillette will have the ability to differentiate themselves within a populated market.

5.4. RO3 – To identify whether Gillette’s brand impact and popularity amongst Generation Z will increase, should they implement gender neutral product marketing within South Africa.

5.4.1. Findings from Literature

The literature aligned with RO3 through examining the possible effects of gender neutrality on brand equity. Although this has not fully been explored within literature, there are many sources of literature that note the positive influence gender neutrality can have towards an organisation’s brand equity, specifically due to the shift in Generation Z consumer purchasing decisions (Sultana & Shahriar, 2017).

“Gender blurring” has become increasingly popular and has drawn further attention towards the importance of brands deconstructing gender ideals in order to maintain their social relevance (Sultana & Shahriar, 2017; Powers, 2019). Furthermore, it has been recognised that those most resistant to gender-neutral products have been those of the male gender due to the blurring of their prescribed “masculine” products with that of a more “feminine” nature (Zawisza *et al.*, 2018).

5.4.2. Findings from Questionnaire

Question 12 addressed RO3 by ascertaining where the Generation Z respondents stand in terms of their perceptions of gender-neutral products versus gendered products and their reasoning thereof. The majority of Generation Z respondents opted for the gender-neutral option, further solidifying the literature as Generation Z consumers are becoming more accustomed to inclusivity in the form of gender-neutral products.

5.4.3. Findings from Focus Group

In line with question 5, the questionnaire respondents expressed their support of gender-neutral product offerings, provided that there is no additional cost and the product functions effectively. However, the sensitivity to gendered products, for many products, is product dependent. These individuals further expressed the importance of gender-neutral product developments within a changing social climate whereby gender is becoming more fluid.

5.4.4. Findings from Brand Expert Interview

Due to technological advancements, Generation Z consumers are extremely connected with an abundance of information at their fingertips, resulting in this cohort having high expectations from the brands they support. Thus, brands need to deliver their promises in order to maintain a meaningful relationship with them.

5.4.5. Conclusion

From the research gathered, it can be said that although many of the Generation Z respondents are in support of gender-neutral marketing as opposed to gendered product marketing, there is still a need for brands to ensure functionality, quality and reasonable pricing of gender-neutral products within the market.

5.4.6. Recommendations

In order to account for the changing social landscape and to embrace inclusivity, Gillette need to consider a shift towards forming a gender-neutral product range. This gender-neutral product range can be in addition to their brand identity “gender revamp” as discussed previously. This gender-neutral product range could potentially override the existing Gillette sub-brands and provide only one range, merging the two into one cohesive gender-neutral brand. This range would cater for the Generation Z consumers’ desire for affordability, quality and functionality, all whilst providing gender-neutral products and marketing.

Not only will this bold move draw the attention of the consumer, but it will also allow many individuals within society to feel accounted for and heard. Therefore, increasing the Gillette customer base and popularity, improving their brand image and ultimately driving consumer purchasing decisions towards Gillette products.

5.5. Anticipated Contribution

This research study will contribute to an existing body of knowledge around consumer gendered product marketing, the impact of gendered product marketing on Generation Z consumers and their purchasing decisions, specifically within KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. There are currently minimal studies discussing the effect gendered and gender-neutral product marketing can have on both the consumer's purchasing decisions and the brand's overall equity and loyalty.

It will serve as a guide for Gillette and other brands. The research aims to provide a roadmap from which brands can alter their strategies to incorporate gender-neutral product marketing and communications towards Generation Z consumers. Overall, this study is anticipated to change brands' thought processes and force them to focus on the impact such changes occurring within society will have on their future.

5.6. Suggestions for Further Research

In order for a more accurate representation of the Generation Z consumer, a larger sample of the population needs to be implemented. This being said, this study has unearthed multiple elements to the gendered product marketing scenario, specifically with regards to the perceived price, function and quality gaps identified by the various female respondents in relation to the Gillette Venus products as opposed to that of the Gillette for men sub-brand.

The representation of models and individuals used to promote these products could also be used as within the research, many alluded to a stereotypical and unrealistic representation of the perfect "woman" or "man" shaving; completely misrepresenting many individuals within the population and not accounting for the people's unique and differing shaving experience. This, in addition to the various price and quality gaps, will provide further insight into the dynamics of gendered product marketing.

5.7. Ethical Considerations

Prior to the research being conducted, ethical clearance was obtained. Ethical guidelines were followed, as laid out in the IIE Postgraduate Handbook. All participants were over 18 years old (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014). Although Generation Z consists of individuals aged 12 to 26 years of age (born between 1995 and 2009) (Jordaan, 2019), only those who are aged 18 to 26 participated in this research study.

This being said, the following ethical considerations were carried out throughout the duration of the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers *et al.*, 2014):

Confidentiality of participants' identities was maintained with information obtained only to be used for the purpose of this research study. Formal consent was obtained from all respondents through the use of an explanatory consent form (Appendix 3).

Due to audio recordings and visual evidence being obtained during the focus groups to monitor and track each focus group, participants were asked to complete the consent form (Appendix 4). A set of focus group guidelines was established to ensure the researcher followed the correct protocols.

Participant's physical and psychological well-being was not be harmed (avoided uncomfortable or highly personal questions). Leading questions were also avoided and results were not distorted to achieve a desired outcome.

Credible sources were used to accurately inform statements. The research document will be stored in a password protected file to ensure the research as a whole and the respondents' identities remain safe.

5.8. Limitations

Limitations for this research study are any constraints that can affect the research process (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014). These limitations include: time, geographic access to information, shifts in conditions and Coronavirus restrictions.

There is limited time available in order to collect data, restricting the amount of data the researcher can collect and the amount of information that can be analysed prior to the completion of the study. If the researcher were to have more time to conduct this research, it would increase the reliability and validity of the research and the overall trustworthiness (Du Plooy-Cilliers et al., 2014).

The research study was conducted within the Durban area, excluding other areas in South Africa which, if included in the research, would have enhanced the reliability and validity of the research in the broader South African context.

Due to the uncertain nature of the Coronavirus pandemic, focus groups and interviews were conducted online to allow social distancing and limit the spread of the virus. There were multiple disadvantages to using online video platforms as people encountered technical issues and were reluctant to turn their cameras on. It hindered the effectiveness of observing the respondents' body language and made showing the proposed visuals challenging. Although such limitations occurred, the conclusions derived were still, to a certain extent both valid and reliable as a result of the data collected.

5.9. Concluding Remarks

This study was centred around the shifting social climate and its effects on Generation Z consumer purchasing decisions, specifically with regards to gendered product marketing and the brand Gillette. It focussed on understanding the reasoning behind Generation Z consumer purchasing decisions, their perspectives towards brands who are embracing gendered product marketing and the concept of gender-neutral product marketing.

The study adopted a qualitative approach, gaining qualitative data through an online questionnaire, three focus groups and an interview with a brand expert, all of which were analysed through the use of a thematic analysis. Literature and seminal sources were also consulted in order to ground the research and draw connections with the primary research conducted.

Overall, it can be seen that throughout the study, Generation Z consumers are more inclined to engage with brands who not only deliver on their promise, but show interest and invest in social issues (Powers, 2019). It was found that Generation Z respondents were aware of Gillette's implementation of gendered product marketing and believe that although they have attempted to tackle stereotyping in some aspects of their sub-brands and marketing, such product segmentation is more regressive than progressive and needs to be reconsidered by Gillette.

Gillette have the potential to improve their brand equity and embrace wider inclusivity through the implementation of gender-neutral products. However, this would only be made possible if the brand identity and architecture (including its visual and verbal messaging) were reassessed. The Gillette brand and P&G would therefore embrace more gender-neutral choices whilst authentically dissolving unnecessary stereotypes and segmentation present within Gillette products.

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APPENDIX 1: ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER



Date 4 July 2021

Student name: Emma Jayne Criticos

Student number: [REDACTED]

Campus: Durban

Re: Approval of RESE8419 Proposal and Ethics Clearance

HONOURS ETHICAL CLEARANCE LETTER

Your research proposal and the ethical implications of your proposed research topic were reviewed by your supervisor and the campus research panel, a subcommittee of The Independent Institute of Education's Research and Postgraduate Studies Committee.

Your research proposal posed no significant ethical concerns and your supporting documents and instruments are in order to proceed. We hereby provide you with permission to proceed with your research.

In the event of you deciding to change your research methodology in any way, kindly consult your supervisor to ensure all ethical considerations are adhered to and pose no risk to any participant or party involved. A revised ethical clearance letter will be issued.

We wish you all the best with your research!

GENERAL CONDITIONS TO BE FULFILLED IN RELATION TO RESEARCH

Permission is granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted.

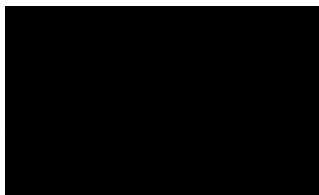
Please note: The panel has not considered the merits, accuracy or ethical soundness of the research. The only merits examined are the use of The IIE as a sample.

Permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. The researcher(s) will need to obtain informed consent in writing from all of the participants in his/ her sample if the study is not anonymous.
2. The researcher(s) may only use the data collected for research purposes and in no other way.

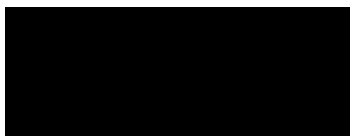
3. Photographs of human subjects may only be taken if relevant to the research, informed consent was obtained, and even with informed consent, the photographs may not be published on any online platforms.
4. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
5. No names or identifying information of participants may be used within the research and the research must be voluntary.
6. Please make it clear that the information will not be used punitively in any way and participants may in no way be counselled/advised based on this.

Supervisor name: **Cameron Belling**



Signature:

Campus Postgraduate Coordinator (CPC) name: **Carolanda du Toit**



Signature:

6 July 2021

APPENDIX 2: VEGA ETHICS CHECKLIST



Vega Ethics checklist: RESE8419/p/w

Student Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☒	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First name(s)	Emma Jayne											
Last name(s)	Criticos											
Title of study	The impact of gendered product marketing on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z – A case study of Gillette											
Qualification	BCom Honours in Strategic Brand Management											

Supervisor Details												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☐	Mr	☒	Mx	☐
First and last names	Cameron Belling											
Co-supervisor Details (if applicable)												
Title	Prof	☐	Dr	☐	Ms	☐	Mrs	☐	Mr	☐	Mx	☐
First and last names	Click or tap here to enter text.											

Explaining your research process						
Philosophical paradigm	Positivism	☐	Interpretivism	☒	Constructivism	☐
	Realism	☐	Objectivism	☐	Pragmatism	☐
	Functionalism	☐	Subjectivism	☐	Humanist	☐
	Other:					
Research design:	Interview	☒	Questionnaire (self administered)	☒	Focus group	☒
	Ethnography/ Observation	☐	Artefact analysis/website/ social media analysis	☐	Action Research	☐
	Case Study	☐	Design Research (Practice based)	☐		☐
	Other (if so, state)	☐	Click or tap here to enter text.			
Brief explanation of the population and number of participants/items	30 questionnaire respondents. 6-8 focus group members with 3 focus groups being conducted. 1 interview respondent, a representative of P&G.					
Target group sampling methods/artefact (No under 18's or vulnerable groups allowed)	Purposive	☐	Random	☐	Snowball	☐
	Convenient	☒	Stratified	☐	Census	...
	Explain selection process		Sample will be chosen from individuals who fit within the population parameters, are accessible to the researcher and are willing to participate.			

Ethics		
Documentation submitted with proposal	Gatekeeper's letter (institutional consent)	☐
	Completed Annexure E if you conduct research on IIE sites/students/staff	☐
	Instrument(s) (interview schedule or questionnaire)	☒
	Participant or respondent consent form	☒
	Audio-visual consent form (if applicable)	☒

Campus ethics committee recommendation	
Proposal has been reviewed by the supervisor and necessary ethics considerations have been included.	
☒	Accepted as is and provide letter
☒	Accepted with provisions: Nature of provision: e.g. Instrument is not sufficient / included and need to be signed off by the supervisor
☒	Major issues: Student should not continue with fieldwork. Actions to be taken: Click or tap here to enter text.
Supervisor signature	
	Click or tap to enter a date.
Co-supervisor/Campus ethics panel member signature	
	Click or tap to enter a date.

APPENDIX 3: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Explanatory information sheet and consent form for participants
To whom it may concern, My name is Emma Jayne Criticos and I am a student at Vega School. I am currently conducting research under the supervision of Cameron Belling about the impact gendered product marketing has on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z, with specific focus on Gillette. I hope that this research will enhance our understanding of gendered product marketing and the viability of gender-neutral marketing when communicating with Generation Z consumers. I would like to invite you to participate in my study. In order to explain to you what your participation in my study will involve, I have formulated questions that I will try to fully answer so that you can make an informed decision about whether or not to participate. If you have any additional questions that you feel are not addressed or explained in this information sheet, please do not hesitate to ask me for more information. Once you have read and understood all the information contained in this sheet and are willing to participate, please complete and sign the consent form below.
What will I be doing if I participate in your study?
I would like to invite you to participate in this research because you fit within my population parameters and characteristics. If you decide to participate in this research, I would like to ask you questions within an online focus group setting in order to gain your perspective around my research topic and the research problem at hand. You can decide whether or not to participate in this research. If you decide to participate, you can choose to withdraw at any time or to decide not to answer particular interview questions.
Are there any risks/ or discomforts involved in participating in this study?
Whether or not you decide to participate in this research, there will be no negative impact on you. There are no direct risks or benefits to you if you participate in this study. You might, however, indirectly find that it is helpful to talk about your understanding of gendered product marketing and its influence on consumer purchasing decisions and your personal purchasing decisions. If you find at any stage that you are not comfortable with the line of questioning, you may withdraw or refrain from participating.

Do I have to participate in the study?
• Your inclusion in this study is completely voluntary; • If you do not wish to participate in this study, you have every right not to do so; • Even if you agree to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without having to provide an explanation for your decision.
Will my identity be protected?
I promise to protect your identity. I will not use your name in any research summaries to come out of this research and I will also make sure that any other details are disguised so that nobody will be able to identify you. I would like to ask your permission to record the interviews, but only my supervisor, I and possibly a professional transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings. Nobody else, including anybody at Vega School, will have access to your interview information. I would like to use quotes when I discuss the findings of the research, but I will not use any recognisable information in these quotes that can be linked to you.
What will happen to the information that participants provide?
Once I have finished all interviews, I will write summaries to be included in my research report, which is a requirement to complete my BCom Honours in Strategic Brand Management. You may ask me to send you a summary of the research if you are interested in the final outcome of the study.
What happens if I have more questions about the study?
Please feel free to contact me or my supervisor should you have any questions or concerns about this research, or if there is anything you need to know before you decide whether or not to participate. You should not agree to participate unless you are completely comfortable with the procedures followed. My contact details are as follows: Emma Criticos ██████████ ████████████████████

The contact details of my supervisor are as follows:

Cameron Belling



Participant or respondent consent

I, _____, agree to participate in the research conducted by Emma Jayne Criticos about the impact gendered product marketing has on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z, with specific focus on Gillette.

This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that:

- I agree to be interviewed for this research.
- My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private.
- My participation in this research is voluntary and I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time. There will be no repercussions should I choose to withdraw from the research.
- I may choose not to answer any of the questions that are asked during the research interview.
- I may be quoted directly when the research is published, but my identity will be protected.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX 4: AUDIO RECORDING CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM FOR AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING

Consent form for participants	
I, _____, agree to allow Emma Jayne Criticos to audio record my interviews as part of the research about the impact gendered product marketing has on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z, with specific focus on Gillette. This research has been explained to me and I understand what participation in this research will involve. I understand that: • My confidentiality will be ensured. My name and personal details will be kept private; • The recordings will be stored in a password-protected file on the researcher's computer; and • Only the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and possibly a transcriber (who will sign a confidentiality agreement) will have access to these recordings.	
Signature	Date

APPENDIX 5: ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire is part of a University research study at Vega School Durban. It therefore has no association to any of the products or brands mentioned. The aim of this research is to gain an understanding the impact of gendered product marketing on purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers, with specific focus on Gillette. As a respondent, both you and your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Please ensure that your answers are honest and truthful. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may back out of this at any point. By completing this questionnaire, you are therefore giving formal consent for your responses to be used within the above-mentioned study. Thank you for taking the time to complete the following questionnaire.

1. What age group do you fall within?
 - ☐ 18-19
 - ☐ 20-21
 - ☐ 22-23
 - ☐ 24-26
2. What gender do you classify yourself as?
 - ☐ Woman
 - ☐ Man
 - ☐ Other
 - ☐ I would rather not disclose this information
3. Which personal care brands do you use?
4. What do you look for in the personal care brands you use?
5. Are you familiar with the brand Gillette?
 - ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No
6. Are you aware of Gillette's connection with the women's personal care brand Venus, formally referred to as Gillette Venus?
 - ☐ I am aware of the connection between Gillette and Venus
 - ☐ I have heard of the Venus brand but did not know it was part of Gillette
 - ☐ I was unaware of this connection prior to completing this questionnaire

7. Have you noticed any major differences between Gillette's range for "men" and Gillette Venus's range (for women)? If yes, please elaborate.
8. Do you perceive Gillette to be a progressive brand, specifically in terms of combatting gender stereotyping? Please elaborate.
9. Are you conscious of gendered products when making purchases?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

Gendered Product: when a "masculine" or "feminine" identity is assigned to products in order to market every-day goods to the stereotypical "man" or "woman".

10. After answering the above question, do you believe Gillette and Gillette Venus make use of gendered product marketing?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

11. What prompts your purchasing decisions? Please select the option/s that are most relevant.
- ☐ Product's marketing or branding
 - ☐ Packaging design
 - ☐ Gender assigned to the product
 - ☐ Brand reputation
 - ☐ Other _____

12. If given the option to choose between a gender-neutral product and a product assigned to a specific gender, which would you choose and why?

13. As a member of Gen Z (aged 18-26), do you feel that brands could do more in terms of being more gender neutral and fluid?
- ☐ Yes
 - ☐ No

14. Please explain your above answer.

15. How often you purchase products in-store?
- ☐ Once a week
 - ☐ Every day
 - ☐ Once a month
 - ☐ Other _____

16. If you could change anything to do with Gillette's current offering, what would it be? If your answer is not one of the below options, please specify what you would change.

- ☐ More inclusive of genders
- ☐ Become more gender-neutral
- ☐ More affordable prices of products
- ☐ I would not change anything
- ☐ Other _____

APPENDIX 6: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Have you heard of the brand Gillette? Please specify how you have encountered it and if you have personally used it.
2. Are you aware of the Gillette's connection with the women's personal care brand Venus, formally referred to as Gillette Venus? Since learning of this connection, whether it be today or previously, has it changed your perception towards either brand?
3. Are you conscious of gendered products when making purchasing decisions? Please state yes or no and what else may influence your purchasing decisions.

Gendered Product defined: when a “masculine” or “feminine” identity is assigned to products in order to market every-day goods to the stereotypical “man” or “woman”.

4. After encountering the definition of gendered products in the previous question, do you believe Gillette and Gillette Venus make use of gendered product marketing or do you see them as progressive in combatting stereotyping? Please elaborate and discuss.
5. If given the option to choose between a gender-neutral product and a product assigned to a specific gender, which would you choose and why?
6. Which of the following Gillette products would you purchase and why? (visually show the Gillette products from the Gillette and Gillette Venus ranges)
7. If Gillette were to produce a product like the ones picture below, that are gender neutral, would you purchase it? (show visual of “gender-neutral” product)

APPENDIX 7: FOCUS GROUP OUTLINE

Introduction:

Thank you for taking the time to join this online focus group this evening. I am Emma Criticos, an honours student at Vega Durban and I will be moderating and facilitating the discussion today.

Group Guidelines:

- I have provided a consent form to be signed by each member in order to indicate your agreement to participate.
- Please note that you may withdraw from this research at any time.
- Participants first names will only be required for this online focus group in order to ensure confidentiality between respondents.
- Due to time limitations and in order to be respectful of all respondents, the focus group will last no longer than 40 minutes. I will be asking you multiple questions surrounding the topic of gendered product marketing and its impact on Gen Z purchasing decisions, with specific focus on Gillette.

Ground Rules:

1. Please talk one at a time and raise your hand if you would like to add something.
2. Everyone needs to please participate in the discussion.
3. Feel free to respond directly to someone who has made a point and not always to the question at hand.
4. Please be honest in your responses, this is a safe space for you to express your opinions.
5. Please respect other participant's opinions, if you disagree with an opinion, please respond in a respectful and polite manner.

Confidentiality:

- The discussion will be record via zoom in order to ensure all comments and points are accounted for. As some may feel uncomfortable with showing their

faces via an online platform, you will not be required to have your video on if you do not feel comfortable doing so.

- First names will be used upon joining the session and no names will be assigned to comments when collating the final report.
- If you are not comfortable with this being recorded, please let me know.

APPENDIX 8: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following questions are part of a University research study at Vega School Durban. It therefore has no association to any of the products or brands mentioned. The aim of this research is to gain an understanding the impact of gendered product marketing on purchasing decisions of Gen Z consumers, with specific focus on Gillette.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. Your participation, as a brand expert will provide a unique perspective, as an individual familiar with the brand and marketing industry and the shifting consumer expectations thereof.

As a respondent, both you and your responses will remain anonymous and confidential. Please ensure that your answers are honest and truthful. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may back out of this at any point. By completing these questions, you are therefore giving formal consent for your responses to be used within the above-mentioned study.

1. How long have you been involved in brand and marketing?
2. Have you noticed any trends and shifts occurring within the industry? Please explain your perspective on such trends and shifts.
3. What do you foresee as key characteristics younger generation consumers, such as Generation Z (aged 18-26) within South Africa, are looking for in the brands they support?
4. Are you familiar with the brand Gillette and its sub-brand Gillette Venus? If yes, please explain how you perceive their current marketing strategy for both brands and if you deem such strategies successful.
5. Are you conscious of gendered products when making purchasing decisions?
Gendered Product: when a “masculine” or “feminine” identity is assigned to products in order to market every-day goods to the stereotypical “man” or “woman”.

6. Do you believe Gillette and its sub-brands like Gillette Venus, are trying to challenge gender biases and stereotypes? How do you believe they are or are not doing so?
7. Do you think the efforts made in the above question enough to sustain the Gillette brands amongst the youth of South Africa (specifically Gen Z consumers aged 18-26) in the long-term? Please explain.
8. How would you describe Gillette and/or Gillette Venus as a brand in your own words?
9. Have you encountered gender-neutral product marketing? What are your thoughts towards gender-neutral product marketing?
10. In your opinion, where do you think the Gillette and/or Gillette Venus brand should be in the next 5 years? Do you foresee any changes being made to the brand/s?

APPENDIX 9: FINAL RESEARCH SUMMARY DOCUMENT TABLE

Title: The impact of gendered product marketing on the purchasing decisions of Generation Z – A case study of Gillette.

Research Purpose / Objective	Primary Research Question	Research Rationale	Seminal Authors / Sources	Literature Review – Conceptual Framework	Paradigm	Approach	Data Collection Method(s)	Ethics	Key Findings	Recommendations
Investigate the impact unconscious gender biases have on Generation Z consumer purchasing decisions, whilst assessing the effectiveness of adopting gender-neutral product marketing.	Main Question: Are members of Generation Z gravitating towards personal care products that are embrace gender neutrality and fluidity? Secondary Questions Are Generation Z consumers buying personal care products based on the gender assigned to the product? How has Gillette imposed unconscious gender bias within their product marketing communications and organisational structure? How are brand's sales impacted by their perceived gender neutrality?	Gen Z are gravitating towards gender diverse brands as opposed to brands adopting out-dated gender biases (Carefoot, 2020). Brands such as Gillette need to adapt to the changing consumer in order to stay relevant. Guidance also needs to be provided in order for brands to see the benefit of gender-neutrality in product marketing strategies.	Keller, 2001. Chen, 2010. Padayachee, 2018.	Theme 1: Generation Z Theme 2: Buying Behaviour & purchasing decisions Theme 3: Unconscious gender bias & gender perspectives Theme 4: Customer-Based Brand Equity Theme 5: Gendered product marketing Theme 6: Gender Neutrality & Brand Equity	Interpretivism <i>Ontology, Epistemology and Axiology</i> were considered. However, ontology will be focussed on as study interrogates the nature of reality in order to gain insight into human truths and perceptions relating to Gen Z purchasing decisions, characteristics of the Ontological paradigm (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014).	Qualitative	Qualitative Online Questionnaire Focus Groups Interview with brand expert	- Formal consent obtained. Participants over 18 years old. - Participant's physical & psychological well-being was not harmed. - Maintained anonymity of participant's identities. - Information obtained only used for the purpose of this research study. - Results not distorted to achieve a desired outcome. - Credible sources used to accurately inform statements.	- Gendered product marketing is a strategic choice. - Gen Z consumers are aware of gendered product marketing - Gender is not the sole variable in purchasing decisions. - Despite attempting to combat social issues, Gillette are still embodying gender stereotyping. - Gen Z are becoming more accustomed to inclusivity in the form of gender-neutral products.	- Gillette and P&G, can no longer be complacent in their existing product marketing, they need to consider furthering their research and development processes to account for the growing desire for social commentary and diversity, whilst still delivering on the brand's promise and functionality. - Gillette need to re-assess their brand identity from the top down in order to ensure cohesion across Gillette's sub-brands. This would entail assessing the brand's visual and verbal messaging in order to encapsulate a more inclusive and diverse perspective of the brand.
						Population				
						Population Parameters Nature of the population: Consumers who purchase personal care products (shaving). Population Size: Generation Z consumers, using Gillette personal care products within the Durban metropolitan area. Unique Characteristics: Generation Z consumers (men and women) who use personal care products from Gillette and Venus brands.				
Research Problem	Research Objectives	Key Concepts	Key Theories	Theme 7: Gender-neutral product marketing		Sampling	Data Analysis Method(s)	Limitations	Key Contribution	
Gillette need to assess whether their current strategy to maintain gender-assigned product categories, will sustain the brand's long-term relevance amongst Gen Z.	To evaluate the impact gendered product advertising, has towards Generation Z consumers' personal care product purchasing decisions. To establish whether Gillette has imposed unconscious gender bias and stereotyping through their product marketing. Understand whether or not Gillette's following and sales could increase, should they implement gender neutral product marketing communications within South Africa.	1. Generation Z 2. Unconscious Gender Bias 3. Gender-Neutral 4. Gendered Products 5. Brand Equity 6. Customer Purchasing Decisions	Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity Model (Keller, 2001) Generational Cohort Theory (Padayachee, 2018)			Non-probability sampling Sampling Method: Convenience sampling. Sample Size: - 31 respondents for the qualitative questionnaire. - 3 focus groups of 5 to 6 people each. - 1 Brand Expert Unit of Analysis: Gen Z consumers.	Qualitative Thematic Content Analysis with selective coding.	- Limited time frame. - The research study is to be conducted within Durban due to accessibility, therefore excluding consumers from other provinces. - Gillette may alter their marketing communications during the study, this may hinder responses. - Shift in Covid-19 protocols. - Challenges of online focus groups & interviews.	It will serve as a guide for Gillette and other brands. The research aims to provide a roadmap from which brands can alter their strategies to incorporate gender-neutral marketing when communicating products to Gen Z consumers.	- Gillette need to consider a shift towards forming a gender-neutral product range, in addition to their brand identity "gender revamp". -