



The effect of brand function if an advertisement fails:

One minute and 49 seconds that cost \$8 billion

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<p>This research investigates the effect of brand functions as defined by Jean-Noël Kapferer on advertising, focusing on a poorly received advertising campaign. The material was sourced from YouTube for the advertisement: “The Best a Man Can Be” by Gillette. The negative reactions of the public regarding the campaign are explored through three different research questions by using content analysis as a research method. Comments are categorized by using Kapferer’s functions as an classification frame. The intention is to understand the relationship of Kapferer’s brand functions to consumers’ reactions in this particular case. The companies’ pursuit of commercial gain and at the same time the pursuit of authenticity and ethics is universal phenomenon and it extends beyond the business world. The study examines consumers' reactions to a particular type of advertisement, so the results say nothing about the general reactions of consumers. Given this limitation into account it can be said that this research brings new insights into how the consumer reacts to seemingly ill-fitting advertisement campaign. Through analyzing the comments, it can be observed that the brand functions, as stated by Jean-Noël Kapferer, seem to be working both for and against the companies ideals in equal measures. Furthermore, from this study it can also be ascertained that in addition to Kapferer’s eight brand functions there is also a political brand function as people seem to care about what political profile their consumption reflects. Social media in general has grown into a significant channel of influence and It is therefore important to continue to study its impact from the political point of view.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Expectations for the man and the role of the man have undergone a drastic change in recent decades. Simultaneously the role and influence of the consumer has become increasingly influential as the Internet enabling two-way communication. As well-being has increased, ethical values have been emphasized in terms of consumers behavior adding new kind of pressure on companies to respond to consumers changing behavior. All of these changes together resulted in a series of events in which Gillette's marketing, Gillette's brand and consumer power were re-evaluated based on a single advertisement.

The contradictory feedback received by the advertisement provides an opportunity to assess the consumer's expectations for a brand whilst, the risks of company's brand changes in a rapidly changing world. As consumers' media literacy improves, the messages created by marketing are quickly broken into pieces and their authenticity assessed. This contradiction: the pursuit of commercial gain and at the same time the pursuit of authenticity and ethics is universally interesting and important phenomena.

All of this, the consumer as an ethical and social person and the company as commercial, ethical and social factor, has been taken into consideration whilst researching the feedback Gillette's ad received on the YouTube's comment field. It is believed the consumers' reactions on YouTube's comment field brings generalizable information about consumer's thoughts, feelings and use of power against companies.

Gillette is more than a century old company which was merged to Procter & Gamble in 2005. P&G paid \$57 billion for Gillette. Due to product innovation and heavy investment in marketing, Gillette still occupies perhaps the most dominant position of global consumer goods brands. However, since 2010, Gillette's market share has dropped from 70% to 54% (Menke 2020 p.1)

In 1989 Gillette released an advertisement campaign “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be” which introduced Gillette’s consumers as real men who were athletes, astronauts, devoted family men and good fathers.

As we entered the 21st century, the attitudinal climate had changed. People had started talking about sexual harassment, the #MeToo -movement was born and the phrase “toxic masculinity” had been released. (Godwin, 2018)

The habits of shaving were changing too. Relaxed social norms gave men a permission to shave less often. Men’s market for shaving in the U.S. was shrinking. Gillette had lost the connection with the millennial generation, instead it was becoming a brand of the millennial’s dads. (Naidu & Sondarya, 2019)

Gillette had the need to get rid of the 1980s atmosphere and demonstrate going forward: do something to attract millennials. “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be” advertisement/short film, was released on YouTube January 14, 2019. The advertisement stands against bullying, sexual harassment and toxic masculinity.

Reactions to the campaign were mixed and strong but the haters seem to be noisiest. The #MeToo -ad and #BoycottGillette was born. In August 2019 Gillette had made an \$8 billion loss. Of course, there were many explanations to the loss but the contradictory advertising campaign was seen as one of the reasons. The CEO of P&G’s Global Grooming Business, Gary Coombe, when asked about this, said: “It was price worth paying” (Cage, 2019).

On the 20th of November “We believe: The Best Men Can Be” advertisement had got 822 thousand likes, 1.6 million dislikes, over 425 thousand comments, over 35 million views. Many of those who commented on the ad claimed Gillette has been deleting the dislikes. In January 2021 Gillette took off the comment option in YouTube’s comment field. The company had had enough of consumers thoughts, and then the consumers had been silenced. Luckily, some comments were captured before they disappeared from video.

In recent studies the majority of American consumers want companies to take public stands on social and political problems (Mull, 2019) but something obviously went wrong in “The Best Men Can Be” campaign. What happened in this interaction between Gillette and their audience will be highlighted in this study, and further analysis will be given whether there is something that can be learned about this.

1.1 Aim and rationale

Since in the western countries consumers' basic needs are mostly fulfilled, the moral values have become more relevant than before. In our materialistic society, people want to give meaning to their consumption. (Kapferer, 2012, p.8) Commercial life has also become a bigger part of the cultural landscape than it used to be before. People have their favorite ads and ad campaigns. For example, Coca-Cola’s traditional Christmas campaign is for many people an integral part of anticipation of Christmas.

Nowadays consumers don’t find it sufficient that the product or service is affordable, and it is of good quality. Instead, they expect more responsible behavior from the brands. Brands are telling a story about their customers and customers want to like their role in that story.

Since the customers are becoming more aware of their choices, companies have become more sensitive about their reputation, while they used to be sensitive about their image. Image making has lost its glamour and reputation sounds like having more depth than image. Building reputation is also one way to please stakeholders with moral issues having become an efficient way of earning a competitive edge.

Because humans are social animals, we judge ourselves on certain choices including those we make as consumers. This explains why a large part of our social identity is based on logos and brands. (Kapferer, 2016. p.33) Brand awareness is a collective phenomenon.

The present playground of advertising has also changed because of technical developments: the media has become two-sided. Giving public feedback is easy and quick and customers are eager to do that. Sometimes it seems that the discourse between advertise and customers is a more important factor than the actual advertisement itself.

Customers are expecting companies to have high moral standards and companies are eager to stand out as having higher moral standards than their rivals. Yet, social-responsibility marketing has its risks. Taking sides means that company alienates its tradition-minded, more conservative customers (Mull, 2019, p.1)

This phenomenon is worth studying because audiences' quick and effective feedback has many kinds of effects on advertising. On the one hand: customers' comments can be an important part of marketing strategy. In order to know what is happening on the comment field, the company should know their audience. On the other hand, the comment field is a direct way of learning from their audience.

In studying “The Best Men Can Be” campaign there can be found something new found about customer relationships, branding and social-responsibility marketing and this covered throughout this essay.

1.2 Structure of thesis

This study starts from introducing the research question and hypothesis. After that the background of Gillette's brand building and marketing will be explored. The methods used are described and the grounds for being chosen are explained. This section also explores the challenges of creating a categorizing system for the study.

After research methods there will come a literature review of related topics: the Gillette - brand itself, brand research in general, media and customer relationship. Once theoretical background has been reviewed the results of the study are analyzed and summarized.

Lastly there will be a conclusion from study results and evaluation of limitations of the study. Finally, there comes reflection on how research could be continued or expanded.

1.3 Research questions

The following questions will be addressed:

1. What are the most important of Kapferer's brand functions to consumers when they react to Gillette's ad?
2. Are some of the Kapferer's brand functions more active than others? In this context, activity means trying to influence or take contact with others, for example.
3. Are there any optional brand functions in addition to Kapferer's eight functions?

2 GILLETTES MARKETING AND BRAND BUILDING

Gillette was founded in 1901 by American businessman King Gillette and purchased to Procter & Gamble in 2005 for \$57 billion (Sorkin & Lohr, 2015). Product innovations and effective marketing has secured Gillette's position as a leading brand in the market for more than hundred years (Menke, 2020, p. 1).

2.1 The Campaign

Gillette has been dominating the razor industry as a leading brand and it has been known as a brand whose advertising has praised traditional masculinity. In 2019, Gillette moved its marketing in a direction the company believed spoke to younger men. Gillette released "The best a man can be" -ad on YouTube, in which the company took a stand against toxic masculinity.

After the ad was distributed, Gillette's sales fell \$8 billion and it has been claimed that the controversial ad was one of the causes for losses (Gage, 2019).

To resonate with modern consumer, it is not enough anymore to be a market leader, you also need to win the value competition. To meet this challenge, Gillette released "The Best a Man can be" video on YouTube which tried to redefine masculinity.

In “We believe: The Best Men Can be” campaign Gillette used their voice and market share to grab people’s attention and start a discussion about the phenomenon called ‘toxic masculinity’, an issue that targets their main customer base directly.

Customer feedback was strong and heated. The ad received some praise although the majority of the audience turned against it. The customers doubted Gillette’s motives, a discussion about toxic masculinity was seen as more hypocritical virtue-signaling than authentic and genuine concern for the situation (Topping et al. 2019).

2.2 A Change from Hero to Caregiver

One way of evaluating a brand reputation is to measuring consumers’ comments online to something that the brand has said or done. This means that the opinions impacting reputation can be measured. What cannot be measured in a scientific way is the direct correlation between investment in specific public relations activities and overall brand reputation (Washington & Steve, 2012, p. 16).

It is quite clear that there can be found inconsistencies between Gillette's past and present positioning. How can a brand that has spent the last decades supporting gender stereotypes now call themselves a supporter of a more progressive masculinity? As a result of this, Gillette’s authenticity and legitimacy can be fairly critiqued.

There are a few criteria which need to be established in order to create a successful campaign. First you need to choose a meaningful issue to address. Secondly you need to consider whether the brand is able to connect to the issue in a relevant and distinctive way. And finally, the campaign should focus on an issue that your brand can do something significant about, rather than just ‘raising awareness’. (Gogarty, 2019)



Figure 1 Gillette's challenge is to create marketing that appeals younger generations.

To find out how “The Best Men Can Be” campaign measures up against these three tests, a new campaign was tested alongside a 1980s classic ‘Best a man can get’ film. Then from an online panel of over 2.5 million, around 200 consumers reviewed the content and answered questions that scored the work on three key dimensions (ICE). (Gogarty, 2019)

Impact – the ability of the content to get and hold attention.

Character – what character impression does the content make? This is reported as one of 12 standard archetypes also with a clarity score.

Effectiveness – does it get people to do what you want them to do, i.e. buy, download or click through?

The character impression results show that the Gillette branding gives an impression of a character identity that seeks status and strength and has an ethos of accomplishment. These are characteristics associated with a **Hero, Persuader or Ruler**. (Gogarty, 2019)

The new ‘The Best Men Can Be’ video makes an impression of responsibility, respect, compassion and protection. These are characteristics associated with a **Caregiver or Mentor**.

These two-character impressions are worryingly out of sync.

The content is off-character and therefore off-brand, it builds no memory structure, and has a negative effect on purchase intent (Gogarty, 2019).

Brand images can be sticky and once consumers form strong brand associations; they are often difficult to change. Consumers may ignore or just have difficulties to remember the new positioning when strong, but different brand associations already exist in a memory (Keller, 1999) That seems to be a problem in The Best Men can be -campaign too.



Figure 2 Sports have long been an important part of Gillette brand.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

In this study both quantitative and qualitative methods have been used as analyzed the research material. The research material for the study are comments on YouTube's comment field which has been categorized and analyzed by using Kapferer's brand functions as classification frame.

3.1 The Best a Man can be - advertisement:



Figure 3 A scene from the "The Best a Man Can Be" -ad.

The advertisement starts with the scene where a man is watching himself from the mirror looking to shave soon. From the “radio” coming words: “bullying”, “me too -movement”. A flash from the old “The best A Man Can Get” -ad, running boys breaking the screen. In the next scene boys are watching tv-scenes where men are acting stereotypically masculine. In the next scene boys fighting, barbecuing father saying: “boys will be boys”. Sentence is repeated many times. After that there will come tv-news: woman speaking about sexual harassment. Men are watching news in movie theatre.

After this there will come scenes where men are harassing women. Another man comes, teaches the man who is misbehaving to act better (race issue, the savior is colored).

In the end there will come scenes where men are acting well: shaking their hands as a sign of reconciliation, the barbecuing man comes and separates the fighting boys from each other. In the end faces of boys’ flashes and a text appears: it’s only challenging ourselves to do more that we can get closer to our best> we are taking action at [www. thebestamancanbe.org](http://www.thebestamancanbe.org)

3.2 Content analysis

In this study (Internet based) content analysis as a research method. Content analysis has been used both as qualitative and quantitative method, in this study both qualitative and quantitative methods are used.

Mixed methods research has been broadly defined as referring to the combined use of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies within the same study to address a single research question. (Hewson 2007 p.1)

Qualitative research is based on idea that meaning is socially constructed by individuals interacting with their world (Merriam & Grenier, 2019, p. 4) In this study individuals are interacting with world through comments, texts. As a text in this study is considered a linear sequence of meaningful entities, organized hierarchically (Popescu at al. 2015, p.2)

The research material for this study was comments in “The Best a Man Can Be -ads comment field in Gillette’s channel on YouTube. The comments are analyzed as using Kapferer’s brand functions as a classification frame. Comments were collected in November-December 2020 so that the most recent comments were selected to the study.

In internet based research participant observation is possible in online communities such as Internet chat rooms, discussion boards and newsgroups (Hewson, 2007, p. 25) The observation can also be non-participant and that will be the case in this study because of two different reasons: 1) given the large number of comments, a few additional comments would hardly have been reflected in comments anyway 2) the possibility for the comments unexpectedly disappeared in January 2021. At the same time the previous comments disappeared from the comment field.

Content analysis involves quantitative measures of the frequency of appearance of particular elements in the text (see Hewson 2007 p .21) Content analysis aimed at quantification seeks to develop the clearest possible analytical rules to ensure the reliability of the classification. When content analysis is used as a qualitative method, we are more interested in the meaning of content. (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2014)

The research problem and the theoretical frame of reference form the starting point for the selection and definition of content categories. Quantitative content analysis can also be divided according to whether the content classification used in the analysis is biased. (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2014)

1. concepts or categories derived from theory
2. whether the classification framework arises purely from the data (data - based classification)
3. whether the classification framework of the material is formed and in the interaction of theory and material.

3.2 Data Collection and Classification

The data are analyzed by coding the data into categories of variables that are meaningful to the research problem, which are often created before the data analysis phase and are no longer changed during the analysis phase (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen).

In general, when applying qualitative content analysis, different processing steps can be distinguished in the processing of material (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2014).

1. Textualization of the material
2. Development of a classification system and preparation of a classification framework
3. Defining the analysis unit and dividing the data (segmentation)
4. Data coding and reporting

The selection and definition of content categories is the most important step in the content analysis and the classification framework is rarely generated in a straightforward manner. (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2014) It depends on the nature and starting point of the study whether pre-defined categories are relied upon, whether they are generated in the context of the analysis and what kind of statistical analysis is needed. (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2014)

An analysis unit refers to such parts of the content that are determined by the meaning content, such as words, thoughts, descriptions of functions. (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2014) In qualitative content analysis, it is also possible to change the analysis unit and different levels of analysis can be performed on the same data. For example, a more rough classification of the material can be made first based on e.g. event descriptions and then a more detailed analysis based on e.g. thoughts or ideas presented. (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen)

In this research, the classification unit is a comment, usually the comment is one sentence but it can be just one word. First the comments were classified based on the subject of a comment. In the next step the comments were classified based on Kapferer's eight brand

functions. So, classification framework was formed both based on data and based on Kapferer's brand function theory.

In the content analysis, the research material is organized in such a way that the conclusions drawn from it can be gradually separated from individual persons, events, statements and transferred to a more general conceptual and theoretical level. (Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, 2014)

In this research individual comments were transferred to a more conceptual and theoretical level by comparing and categorizing comments based on Kapferer's functions of a brand. According to Kapferer brand provides certain functions which justify its attractiveness and its monetary return (higher price) when they are valued by buyers. The brand functions are tools to create value in eyes of consumer. (Kapferer,2012, p.33)

Kapferer's functions of the brand for consumer:

Identification: to be clearly seen, to make sense of the offer

Practicality : Primarily a mechanical function to make sure that the brand is useable and recognized. Practicality concerns the essence of the brand and makes purchasing the product (especially rebuying) easier for the customer.

Guarantee: to make sure of finding same quality no matter where you buy product

Optimization: offering the best product against the lowest total cost of ownership

Badge/Characterization: confirmation of self image or image you present to others

Continuity: emotional satisfaction function created by brand intimacy over a long period of time due to loyalty

Hedonistic Excitement: pleasure created by brand attractiveness: brand's logo, communication

Ethical: emotional satisfaction function towards the brand responsibility related to its stakeholders and environment.

Because Kapferer's functions haven't been originally made to categorize consumer comments, I had to do some amount of applying to make them fit to categories. I applied the functions so that I took their central idea and transferred it to consumer world seen in comments. For example: identification function deals with the differentiation of the product. For this reason, the comments that deal with the product itself were classified in this category.

Kapferer's functions applied to classification of this study:

Identification: comments on actual product or product features

Practicality : comments on practical matters of subject, for example: money, profit

Guarantee: comments on quality of products

Optimization: comments on value and prize on products

Badge/characterization: comments on how you see yourself as consumer of Gillette's products

Continuity: comments on relating the continuity of the customer relationship

Hedonistic Excitement: comments relating on pleasure created by brand attractiveness: brand's logo, communication

Ethical: comments relating on ethical issues

3.3 Classification Chosen to the Research

In this research comments were classified in two different categories 1) Kapferer's brand functions 2) passivity and activity of comments. Classification based on Kapferer's functions was chosen because I wanted to know which of the functions seem to be most important based on comments in the comment field. Activity/passivity -categorizing was chosen because I wanted to explore if one can see differences in the motives of commenting in relation to the functions.

3.4 Internet-mediated research

The Internet is nowadays considered a valuable and important data-gathering tool which may facilitate and enhance research possibilities within the social and behavioral sciences.

(Hewson 2007 p.1)

The ready availability of the data in text-based data can serve to eliminate the need for transcribing and provide data which is already in a format which can be readily imported into data analysis. (Hewson 2007 p. 6)

One of the idiosyncratic features of the Internet is the way in which it can give rise to fairly high levels of interactivity while also maintaining relatively high degrees of anonymity, e.g., as in online text-based chat interactions where the conversants have no information about each other's physical characteristics. (see Hewson 2007 p.6)

A potential drawback in Internet-mediated research which is more relevant to qualitative approaches, such as observational studies of online conversational interactions, concerns the possible disadvantages which may emerge due to the idiosyncratic nature of the online communication medium. In particular, that online interactions typically embody a lack of extra-linguistic cues which are normally available in face-to-face settings, e.g. facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, and so on (Hewson 2007 p.12)

On the other hand, the existence of devices such as emoticons (e.g. smile: :-), acronyms (e.g. LOL: 'laughing out loud' and using capital letters to indicate shouting, for example, provides more scope for analysis of extra-linguistic features than may at first be obvious. (Hewson 2007 p.27)

Like observational techniques, qualitative document analysis engages with the data in a less structured way than in quantitative approaches. Emphasis is less categorization and more on

uncovering the richness of meanings and interpretations embedded within the text. (Hewson 2007 p.28)

There are authors who have objected to a mixed method approach on theoretical grounds, arguing that qualitative and quantitative research strategies are based on such fundamentally different ontological and epistemological claims that they cannot be coherently combined. Nevertheless, an increasing number of authors are advocating the approach, arguing that the traditional divide between qualitative and quantitative research strategies is not useful, since both have their own relative strengths and weaknesses. (Hewson 2007 p. 31)

Also, mixed methods strategies have been described as useful for approaching questions at different levels. For example, in some situations quantitative techniques may perhaps be more appropriate at one level of analysis, while qualitative techniques may be most suitable at another level. (Hewson, 2007 p. 32)

4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

It has been said that a product has become a brand when product's name becomes a purchase criterion. Legal definition for brand is: a sign or set of signs certifying the origin of a product or service and differentiating it from the competition. (Kapferer, J, 2022, p. 10)

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a name, term, symbol, and/or design that's intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of the competition. (Park, C. Whan 2016 p.5)

A brand is not a name. A brand is not a positioning statement. It is not a marketing message. It is a promise made by a company to its customers and supported by that company. (see Rowley 2004 p. 95)

Brands as intangible assets are one of the most valuable assets that companies have (Zehir et al, 2011 p.1). Brands are like tools working to make a contact between a company and a consumer.

4.1 Brand identity

Through brand communication a company informs the consumer of who it is, what it does and what it stands for. That could also be seen as company's identity.

As Aaker said "Brand identity similarly provides direction, purpose and meaning for the brand. It is central to a brand's strategic vision and a driver of one of the four principal dimensions of brand equity: associations which are the heart of and soul of the brand". (Aaker, 1995, p.123)

"Brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for and imply a promise to customers from the organization members. Brand identity should help establish a relationship

between the brand and the customer by generating a value proposition involving functional, emotional or self-expressive benefit.” (Aaker,1995 p. 124)

Brand identity is tangible and perceptible to the senses. Brand identity makes big ideas and meaning accessible. Brand identity unifies disparate elements into whole systems. (Wheeler, 2012, p. 4)

Balmer and Greyser divide the corporate brand identity into five different types; 1) the actual identity, how the organization sees themselves. How and what values are shared throughout the organization. 2) communicated identity, which is formed through the advertisements and press releases. 3) conceived identity where consumers are shaping their own perceptions of the brand through the company’s past, present and predicted future activities. All this forms the brand's reputation. 4) the ideal identity which is the best possible positioning in the markets at a given time 5) the desired identity which describes the vision the corporate leaders have for the organization (Balmer & Greyser, 2002, p. 4)

Corporate branding has been seen as a tool to meet the multiple challenges of the firm today: the need for increased differentiation in increasingly commoditized markets and the need to attract and retain highly qualified staff to sustain the value generating processes of the firm. (Jones, 2010, p. 44)

It has been argued that the corporate brand helps significantly the firm to break through the noise that characterizes the communication environment today. The corporate brand has also potential for greater strategic impact than product brands since it rests upon a deeper, more credible brand identity: the identity of the firm itself, e.g., Balmer & Greyser, 2002 (Jones, 2010. p. 44)

“The best a Man can be” campaign has problems especially in the 3rd type of brand identity: conceived identity. The company’s past and present activities seem to be out of sync with “The Best of Man can be ” campaign and that may have made the audience feel deceived and disrespected.

To capture the brand identity as a whole, there are four elements to be considered: brand as product, brand as an organization, brand as a person, and brand as a symbol. Brand identity is a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain. These associations represent what the brand stands for. (Aaker 1996 p. 123)

While brand image is usually passive and looks to the past, brand identity should be active and look to the future, reflecting associations that are aspired for the brand. While brand image tends to be tactical, brand identity should be strategic, reflecting a business strategy that will lead to sustainable advantage. (Aaker 1996 p. 126)

Lately, scholars have been increasingly interested in the narrative features of branding (e.g. Jensen, 1999). In the narrative perspective, brands are seen as stories about values. Brands are stories about the corporate self; they carry a message of the inner, core values of the organization or the product. (Salzer-Mörling et al. 2004 p. 227)

The consumers are conceptualized as an audience, communications are about making the message heard in media noise, and the brand is supposed to tell a story. This is to say that the brand theorists, although in different forms, see a sender, a message, and a receiver. (Salzer-Morling et al. 2004 p.228)

As Jensen (1999, p. 53) writes, stories are value statements, and the product is just an appendix to embody whatever story is being sold. (see Salzer-Mörling et al. 2004 p.229)

Brands do not carry any inherent meaning. Most of the time, brands pass by unnoticed or they just become icons void of meaning. For meanings to arise, if at all, interaction is needed. It is when consumers actively use brands that brands become more than markers of identification. (Salzer-Mörling et al. 2004 p.233)

Consumer often tend to choose and use a brand, which have a personality that they can identify with. This means the brand personality should agree on the consumer's own self-concept. According to Kevin Keller brand builder should be aware that the consumer might

choose a brand whose personality matches with the consumer's desired self-image rather than with their actual image. (see Helin, 2014, p. 21)

4.2 Brand positioning

Gillette's "The Best a Man can be" campaign can be seen as an attempt to reposition Gillette in razor markets. The challenge of repositioning is not only to be right in accessing the new trends but also to deliver with substance against it, even if it involves significant investment and a revision in the culture and people in the organization. It can be risky to make such a radical shift, particularly if the existing strategy is still profitable and the trend is uncertain. (Aaker 2013 p.8)

Examples of strong brand positioning:

- The brand is interesting/exciting. There is a reason to talk about the brand. (Examples: Disney, AXE, Avon Walk for Breast Cancer, Pixar, Red Bull, FedEx Cup.)
 - The brand is involving/engaging. People are engaged with the brand; it can be part of a valued activity or lifestyle. (Examples: LEGO, Disney, Starbucks, Google, Amazon.)
 - The brand is innovative/dynamic. It has been capable of creating "must-have" innovations that define new subcategories or has had a flow of incremental but visible innovations. (Examples: Apple, Virgin, Dove, GE, 3M.)
 - The brand is passionate/purpose-driven. It conveys a higher purpose that propels passion. (Examples: Whole Foods Market, Patagonia, MUJI, Method, Nike.)
- (Aaker 2013 p. 18)

One example of a company with a strong brand is Gillette's rival Dollar Shave club. The brand's name demonstrates one of the main aspects of Dollar Shave Club's value proposition: their low cost. Dollar Shave Club -brand has focused its positioning on affordability and convenience.

Gillette is more expensive than Dollar Shave Club and has quite a masculine tone to their branding. Gillette has a sleek look and features guys who look like actors and models. Dollar Shave Club is more casual than Gillette. Dollar Shave Club features average looking people who are more relatable to consumers. (Bartolacci, 2019)

When a brand, especially an established brand, lacks energy, it can move into the “graveyard.” A graveyard brand is one the customer has heard of and probably is familiar with, but it is not recalled easily and thus does not get into the consideration set. Being a graveyard brand is a substantial handicap, because it is hard to generate interest in a brand when the audience assumes that they already know enough about it and have little interest in learning more. Second, a loss of energy can lead to the brand’s being perceived as bland, tired, old-fashioned, and not up-to-date. It might have been an excellent choice for your father or grandfather or yourself in another time, but is no longer contemporary enough for you. It no longer fits your self-image or lifestyle; it has negative self-expressive and social benefits; it is so yesterday. It thus has lost relevance and is excluded from consideration. (Aaker 2018, p. 18)

Brodie et al. (2006) highlight the role of brands as facilitators of relationships and propose that brands are relational assets in a complex network of relationships. Thus, brands develop bonds with their customers that bring the brand seller and buyer together. (Lim, Ming, et al. 2015. p. 217)

- An involving promotion
- Repositioning
- Compelling advertising
- Supporting the higher-order purpose
- A viral video
- A “go-to “website
- An active sommunity

An emotional connection with customers and potential customers in general communicates much more about a brand than does a set of facts and logic and enhances the relationship as well. (Aaker 2013 p. 28)

Of course, building a strong brand is not enough yet. The next step is to maintain a relevance of a brand in a market. Aaker defines (Aaker, 2013, p.2) three main threats to relevance of a brand.

- **decline category or subcategory relevance:** In this case customers doesn't simply want to buy anymore what you are making. This has been in part Gillette's challenge as people's general need for shaving has diminished.
- **loss of energy relevance:** Lack of energy can create a perception that the brand is locked in the past and suitable only for older generation. Gillette has facing also this challenge as shaving in younger generations is not that important and of course also new brands have entered the market to challenge Gillette's position.
- **a reason not to buy:** A brand can have quality problems or be associated with a firm policy with is not acceptable. Gillette's controversial campaign raised these issues and laid the groundwork for this threat.

4.3 Media

The proliferation of brands has been made possible by the explosion of information and mass media. TV, Internet, films, magazines, etc. constitute the various media through which images are produced and reproduced. (Salzer-Mörling 2004 p.231)

It can thus be argued that the mediascape is a prerequisite for the emergence of a branded world, or what we would like to refer to as a "brandscape". That is, a landscape where the production and consumption of commercial icons take place. (Salzer-Mörling 2004 p. 231)

Given these societal changes, it is not surprising that marketers have stepped forward with products designed to meet the increasing demand for social interaction. In particular, Internet services have become a primary new venue for social connections with innovations such as blogs, listservs, dating sites, networked multiplayer video games, and social networking sites. (Wood et al. 2009. p. 43)

Tajfel has defined social identity as that part of an individual 's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership (see Islam, 2014, p.1)

Ellemers et al. suggest that one's social identity has three components:

1. a cognitive component (a cognitive awareness of one's membership in a social group: self categorization)
2. an evaluative component (a positive or negative value connotation attached to this group membership: group self-esteem)
3. emotional component (a sense of emotional involvement with the group: affective commitment) (p. 372).

(see Lim, Ming, et al. Brand, 2015. p.127)

4.4 Customer relationship

The learning relationship works like this: If you're my customer and I get you to talk to me, and I remember what you tell me, then I get smarter about you. I know something about you my competitors don't know. (Peppers et al. 2016 p.1)

Technological advancements have enabled firms to manage customer relationships more efficiently and to create better customer experience, but technology has also empowered customers to inform themselves and one another and to demand much more from the companies they do business with. (Peppers et al.2016 p.3)

For many years, companies depended on gaining the competitive advantage from the best brands. Brands have been untouchable, immutable, and inflexible parts of the twentieth-century mass-marketing era. But in the interactive era of the twenty-first century, companies are instead strategizing how to gain sustainable competitive advantage from "brands" that

create the best customer experience, based on the information they gather about customers. (Peppers et al. 2016 p. 5)

The two-way brand, or branded relationship, transforms itself based on the ongoing dialogue between the company and the customer. The branded relationship is “aware” of the customer and constantly changes to suit the needs of that particular individual. (Peppers et al. 2016 p.5)

The company learns more about its own strengths and weaknesses from each interaction and from the customer’s feedback, and is therefore able to market, communicate, and handle some aspects of its own tactics or strategy more efficiently. (Peppers et al. 2016 p. 24)

First, a relationship implies mutuality. In order for any “state of affairs” to be considered a relationship, both parties have to participate in and be aware of the existence of the relationship. This means that relationships must inherently be tw-way in nature. (Peppers et al. 2016 p. 46)

In attempting to build genuine customer relationships, companies must, therefore, set out to reduce negative emotions and strengthen positive ones. It is useful, in this regard, to think about a hierarchy of emotions, ranging from relatively weak emotions to particularly strong ones. On the negative side, some fairly mild emotions are merely irritants. For example, a customer may experience confusion, annoyance, or frustration in dealing with a certain business. These feelings may not lead the customer to decide never to deal with the company again, but, if left unaddressed, may lead to a situation where the customer simply walks away, or at least “tweets” negatively. If a company continues to frustrate, disappoint, let down, or ignore its customers, ultimately more strongly felt negative emotions such as anger, hatred, and disgust will emerge. (Peppers et al. 2016 p.57)

When there’s a connection between customers and a brand, customers think about themselves in terms of the brand. For example, many customers who use a Mac consider themselves to be “Mac people.” (Park, C. Whan et al. 2016 p.39)

5 RESULTS

In this research, the classification unit is a comment, usually the comment is one sentence but it can be just one word.

At first comments were classified based on the subject of a comment. The majority of comments, 73%, were somehow related commenting the ad, the company or business. Smaller amount, 23%, of comments were related to the topic of masculinity/femininity. Only 4% of comments were positive. Only comments related to the ad, the company or business were used in this study as it was felt that the masculinity/femininity -topic was completely independent discussion.

In the next step comments were classified based on Kapferer's eight brand functions. So, classification framework was formed both based on data and based on Kapferer's brand function theory.

Because Kapferer's functions weren't been originally made to categorize consumer comments the functions needed some adapting to fit to the categories.

One problem when classifying information is deciding which information belongs to which category. In this research comments were classified in two independent ways: 1) based on Kapferer's functions 2) based on comments activity or passivity.

There were many comments that did not belong purely to any category or had elements from more than one category. These comments were categorized into several categories because forcing a comment into one category would, in my view, have distorted the result more than dividing the comment into more categories.

Classification examples based on Kapferer's functions:

practicality:

- “Hey Gillette, I’m just here to remind you that I’m never buying your products again!” (active, talking to Gillette)
- “They are never going to recover financially from this situation” (passive, statement)

ethical:

- “What about the unpaid child slaves producing gillete products?” (active, question)
- “Moral lessons by a company who uses child labour” (passive, statement)

Badge: (all active)

- “Hey Gillette, I’m just here to remind you that I’m never buying your products again!” (active, talking to Gillette)
- “1 year on, still haven't bought a Gillette product.” (active, boycott)

Continuity: (all active)

- “I Swear When I Teach My Son To Shave It Will Not Be With This Brand.” (active, extended boycott)
- “Hey Gillette, I’m just here to remind you that I’m never buying your products again!” (active, boycott)

Hedonistic excitement:

- “At this point every gilette failure gives me immense pleasure” (passive, statement)
- “EIGHT BILLION DOLLAR LOSS FOR GILLETTE's MAN HATING MISANDRY AD... priceless!!” (passive, statement)

Examples of comments classified into several categories:

- “Gillette. You just lost 8 Billion Dollars due to these toxic masculinity messages you spread. No other reason. Loss of loyal customers is no joke.” (**ethical**: toxic masculinity, **practicality**: loss of money and customers, **active**: talking to Gillette)
- “Gillette we will never forget your betrayal.” (ethical: betrayal, continuity: a reference to the future, active, talking to Gillette)

An example of a comment difficult to classify:

- “I’m proud of deciding not to buy Gillette ever again. Advertisements should influence how we spend money, and this one certainly did!” (**practicality**: how to spend money, **badge**: being proud of his/hers acts, **ethical**: decision of not to buy based on ethical reasons?)

Classification examples based on activity/passivity -aspect:

Passive comments:

- “a company is a company, I guess. Just a machine that does anything to gain profit.” (statement)
- “All this ad did was make me aware of the child labour scandal” (thought)
- “8 Billion dollar write down. Most expensive commercial in history.” (statement)
- “I read that sales in India have tanked horribly as well.” (giving information)

Active comments:

- “Why would you allow a company who only thinks you are a predatorial bully to overcharge you for their razors?” (question)
- “REMEMBER Gillette is still adding fake likes and removal of dislikes” (talking to other commentators)
- “Proctor and Gillette merged in 2005. Avoid purchasing products from them.” (advice or prompt, boycott)

- “you are in for a fight if you are going to delete my comments, Gillette. I don't have work today” (acting towards Gillette)

5.1 Quantitative results

The research material for this study was randomly selected comments published on YouTube’s Gillette’s channel, “The Best a Man can be” -ad’s comment field. The total number of comments was 134. Some of those comments were eliminated from study because they were commenting only the masculinity/femininity -side of an advertisement. So, in actual study was used 103 comments as a source.

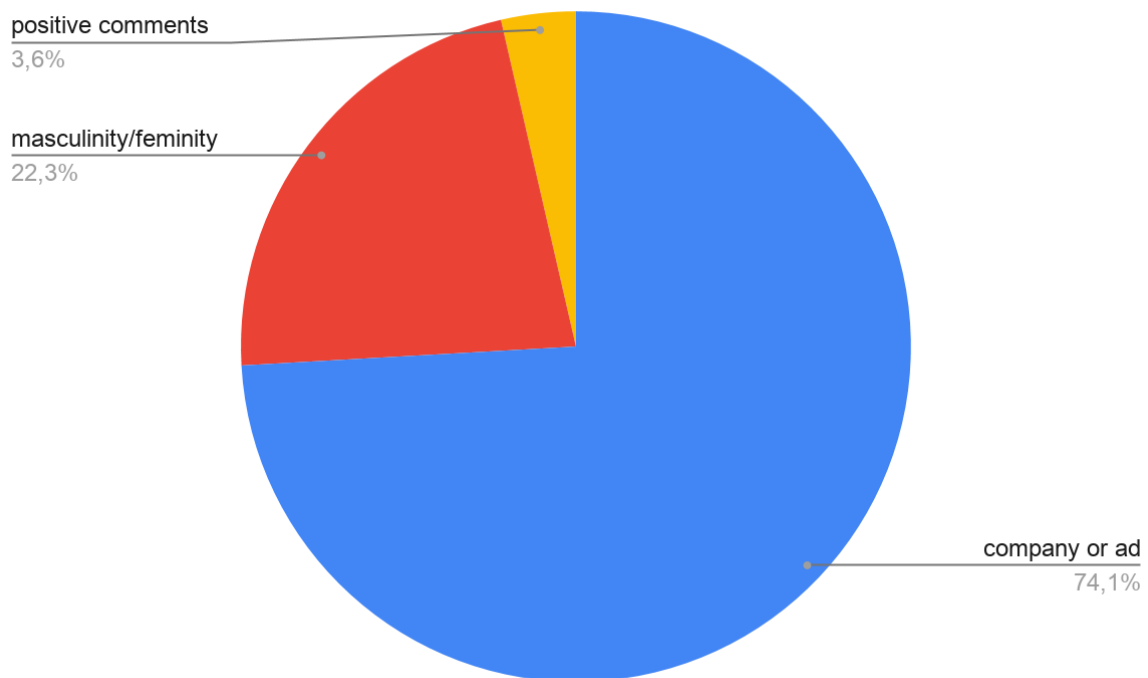


Figure 4: The topics of all comments broken down into company or gender related and positive comments

In quantitative analysis I wanted to get information about how the commentators had been reacting to the ad. The ad took a stand on ethical issues and it is to be expected that the comments will be specific to ethics and not, for example, to the practical features of Gillette, such as price.

Comments were categorized based on Kapferer's functions. The number of comments classified as an ethical function (comments on company's values, disapproval of the ad's message, comment's that referref company's ethics in other situations) is the largest. So, based on results, commenters respond as expected.

On the other hand, practicality function is the second largest category in number. Comments that dealt with e.g. corporate itself, economical losses, buying products, missing dislikes, were categorized in this category.

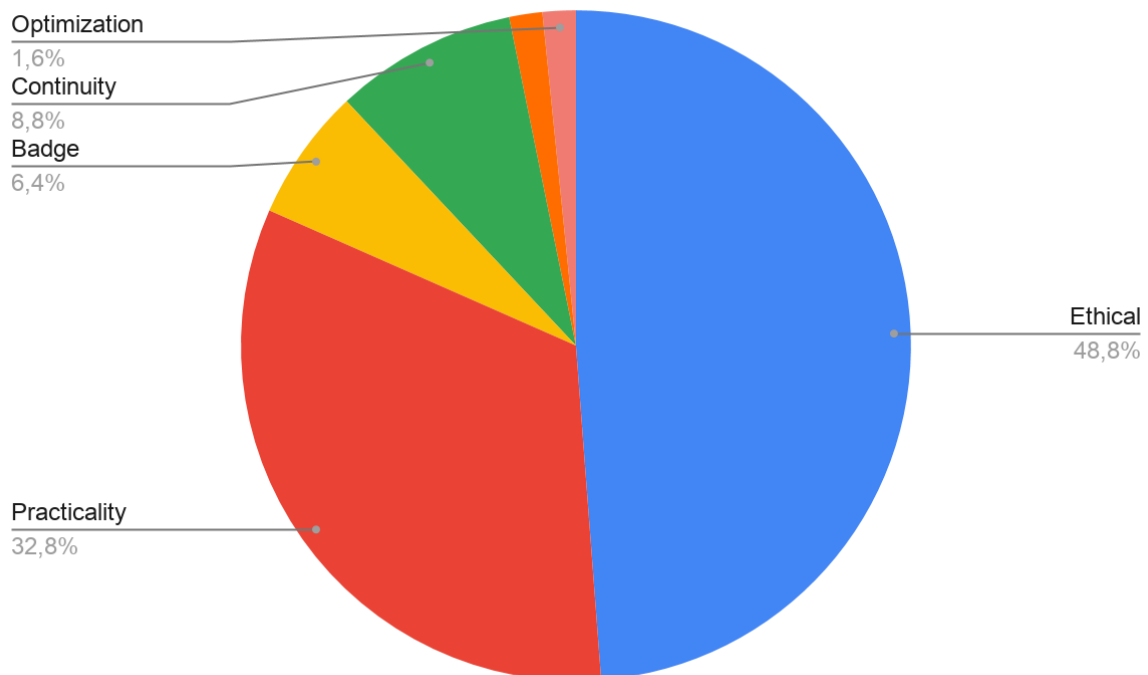


Figure 5: Comments that take a stand on a company or ad broken down on Kapferer's functions

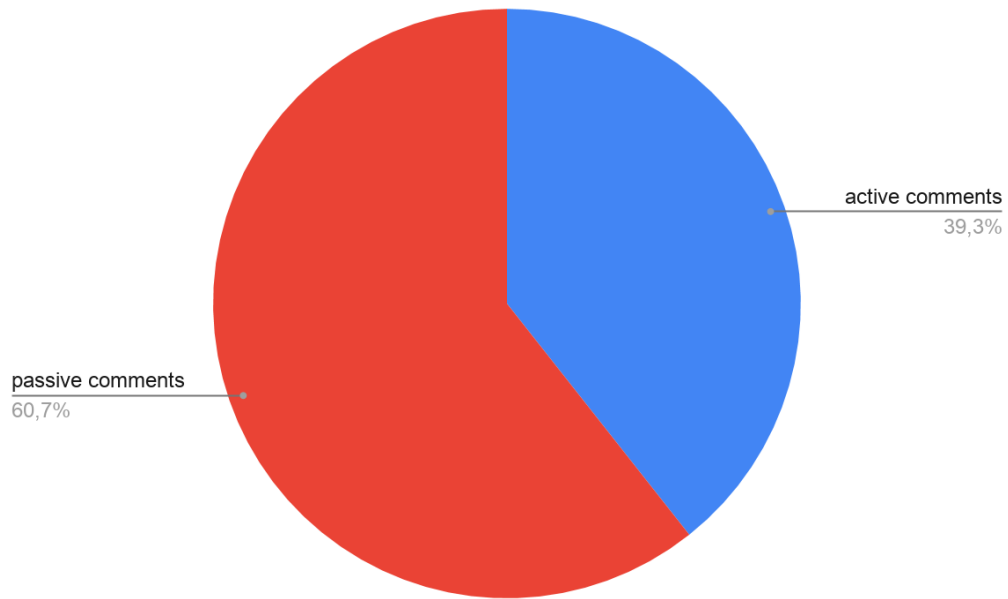


Figure 6: The ratio of active to passive comments on comments classified as ethical

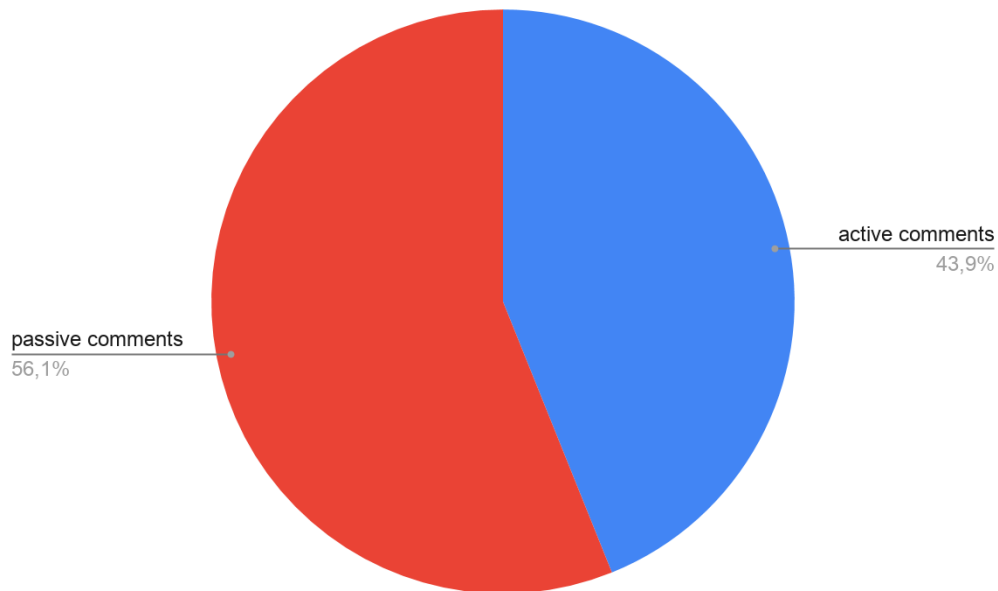


Figure 7: The ratio of active comments on comments classified as practical.

Ethical -categorized comments were slightly more passive than practicality -categorized but the difference is so small that it cannot be said to be relevant to the study.

In badge and continuity sectors comments are 100% active. On the other hand hedonistic excitement comments are 100% passive. In all these sectors the number of comments was so small that it's difficult to draw specific conclusions from them.

Generally it seems relevant that comments on ethics sector are clearly more passive than in badge and continuity -sector. Ethics per se can be passive reflection while badge and continuity require some kind of activity to materialize.

5.2 Qualitative results

In this research answers were sought for three different questions:

1. What are the most important of Kapferer's brand functions to consumers when they react to Gillette's ad?
2. Are some of the Kapferer's brand functions more active than others? In this context, activity means trying to influence or take contact with others, for example.
3. Are there any optional brand functions in addition to Kapferer's eight functions?

Qualitative results show that in this case, the ethical function is clearly most important to customers. Another important function according to this study is practicality, but continuity and badge were also important functions.

When communicating towards the audience/customers is successful brand functions are supporting and strengthening the brand. Brand functions don't lose their meaning when communicating towards an audience being lost, they just start working in the opposite direction – they start acting against the brand.

In this research there are good examples of how brand functions act against the brand.

1. Gillette tried to use ethical -function on brands behalf by taking a position on toxic masculinity. Negative function: the audience/customers did not believe in the sincerity of the company but raised the company's previous problems on ethical issues: e.g. child labour, rain forests.

“From A company that use child workers and take more money for women products XD”

2. Gillette didn't try to use practicality function in their ad but irritated audience/customers started to find also practical reasons why not to buy brands products.
"Hey Gillette, when Men start going back to work they will realize how much TIME they saved at home by not shaving with Gillette products."
3. Gillette tried to use badge function by positioning a more ethical brand than its rivals. Because of lack of trust this function started to act against the brand: the audience/customers were earning their badge by boycotting the brand and encouraging others to do the same.
"it's been a year since this came out and I quit Gillette products, still going strong. Hang in there everyone who's boycotted Gillette!"
4. Gillette tried to strengthen continuity function by trying to please younger customers with the ad but the result might be the opposite.
"I Swear When I Teach My Son To Shave It Will Not Be With This Brand."

It seems Kapferer's brand functions are covering quite well activities and communication between the brand and consumer. Somewhat surprisingly, in many comments, the ad was also seen to take a political stand. One reason for this may be that at the time of commenting, the U.S. presidential election was approaching. Another reason could be that people have become more educated to notice political references and connections even in contexts that do not directly talk about politics.

The number of political comments was so significant in this material that I think there could be a reason to discuss whether a political function should be added to the brand functions. In this study the political comments are categorized under ethical -function but if there would have been political -function the results looked like this:

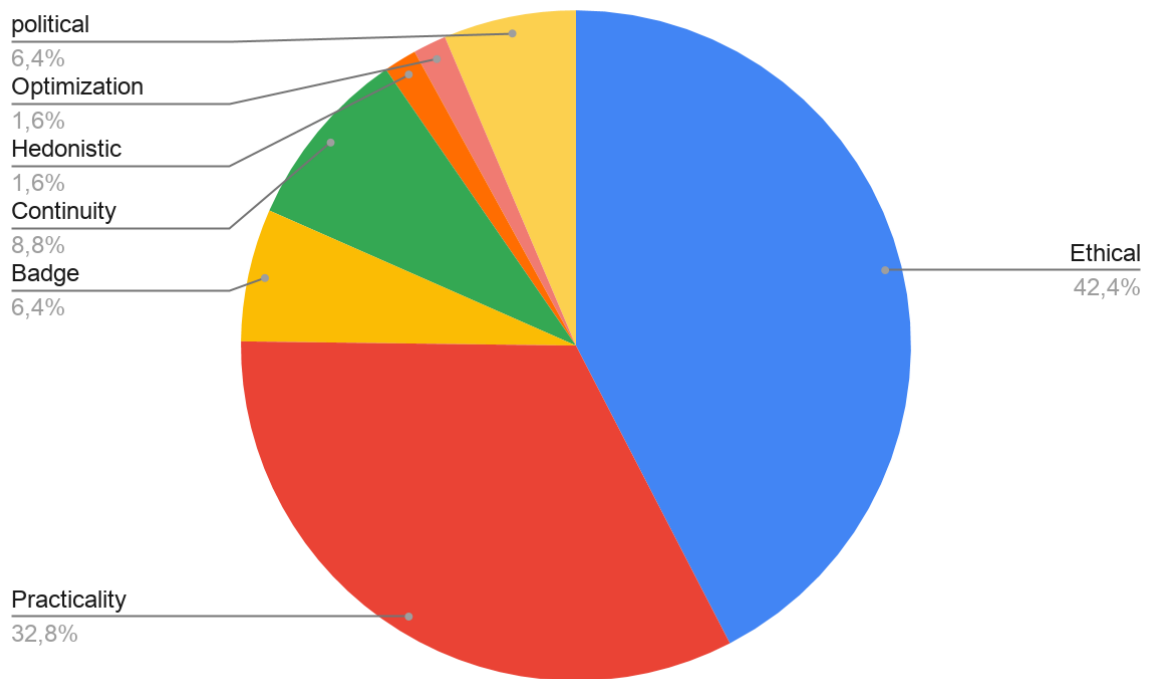


Figure 8: "Political" - function added to Kapferer's functions

Examples of political comments:

- "Gillette's hypocrisy is matched only by that of Joe Biden's or Amber Heard's"
- "SleepyJoeBidan shaves with Gillette. The kids love it."
- "Gillette, as useless and crooked as Adam Schiff."

6 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

As a conclusion: how did the audience/customers react to “The Best a Man Can be” - campaign and what was found by analyzing comments about the advertisement?

The ad was intended to spark a debate about toxic masculinity. It did that, the audience was discussing the topic but the ad also raised discussion about Gillette’s motives releasing the ad and more broadly: discussion about Gillette’s ethics in general. There were many, who agreed with the ad’s message but didn’t like the way the message was told and more importantly – by who the message was told. As a result of that Gillette got lots of publicity, mostly negative. In the comment field there were messages reminding of Procter&Gamble’s ethically problematic past: alleged child labor, use of palm oil, destroying rain forest, corruption. At the same time Gillette reported \$8 billion loss and “The Best a Man can be” - campaign was seen as one of the reasons for losses.

On the other hand Gillette has had also successful campaign based on ethics. Gillette’s Trans Man -ad was posted on Gillette’s Facebook page and it has received thousands of comments praising the company for the ad. This shows that customers can also accept ethical advertising from a company with an ethically problematic past. The tone just has to be right. (Young, 2019)

The analysis of the comments showed that advertising based on ethics evokes an evaluation of the ethical function in consumers. The analysis also showed that brand functions are working against the brand as easily as they are working for the brand. Brand advocates easily turn to boycotters if they feel offended. Both the brand advocates and the boycotters will receive their badges, badges are just coming from different directions.

Somewhat surprising phenomenon was that commenting was partly political. This may be because the topic of the ad was seen partly political. It is also possible that the forthcoming presidential election was the reason for the politicization of discussion. It is also possible that politically active people are even more specific about what kind of companies they will be connected to as consumers. The people who are confident enough to comment on a YouTube

video's comment field may also correlate with people with strong and vocal political opinions.

When the campaign began to arouse criticism, Gillette said they were glad they had sparked a debate of a subject. After a critical discussion in the comment field had continued for more than a year Gillette took off a comment option related to "The Best a Man can be" ad in Gillette's channel. There is a clear contradiction here with Gillette's statements about their satisfaction as to be a conversationalist. Earlier the commentators on YouTube's comment field had accused Gillette of deleting negative comments and dislikes. All this could be interpreted as that Gillette no longer wants to discuss the matter with their audience/customers. If this is the case, the decision feels strange. Once the conversation had been sparked, Gillette at least would have had a chance to learn something from their audience/clients. Closing the conversation seems pointless and as a dismissive end to this campaign.

6.1 Discussion

This study examined consumers' reactions to a particular type of advertisement, so the results say nothing about the general reactions of consumers. It would therefore be interesting to extend the study to include, for example, practicality based -advertising and to see how consumer's commentary differs from the comments on Gillette's advertising. Another interesting comparison could be Gillette's "Trans Man" -ad, which succeeded where "The Best a Man can be" -ad failed.

Although the ad was not political, some of the comments were politically charged. It is not possible for me to know what nationality political commentators represent. Because the political comments talked about politics in the United States, it is likely that the political commentators come from the United States.

Despite the limitations of the study it could be said this study showed that in addition to Kapferer's eight brand functions there is also a political brand function. People seem to want

to be profiled politically also as consumers. This phenomenon is probably more pronounced in a country where the political divide is clearer than in Finland. The timing of the commenting is also relevant: commentators were clearly reacting to the upcoming presidential election in the United States.

One interesting topic for further research would be to find out how the forthcoming political (e.g. presidential) elections appear on Internet discussion forums in general. Based on this research, it could be argued that there is lot of political power struggle in comments that have no visible political significance. If this assumption is true, this phenomenon may have far-reaching for social influence.

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Figures:

Figure1: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/best-marketing-gillette-can-get-lambert-fcim-chartered-marketer/> [Accessed 14.5.2021]

Figure 2: <https://www.whizsky.com/2015/03/gillette-social-media-strategy-review/> [Accessed 14.5.2021]

Figure 3: <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/pissing-off-piers-morgan-valid-marketing-strategy-gillette/1522940> [Accessed 14.5.2021]

