

**▲ Hochschule Harz**

Bachelor Thesis

# **Gender Marketing in the Automotive Industry**

**Differences in the Design of  
gender-specific Communication using the  
Example of Volkswagen AG**

made at the  
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## **List of Abbreviations**

LGBT..... Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

PoS ..... Point of Sale

USA..... United States of America

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction to the Topic and Justification of the Choice of Topic

Gender roles of women and men have undergone a serious transformation in recent years. This has been triggered by social changes within the population. Accordingly, women are more multi-faceted and multi-optional in terms of who they want to be. The already established roles of housewife and mother have not been exchanged but expanded to include the position of a career woman.<sup>1</sup> In the past, women's lives were often limited to household chores and raising children. Today, women are not only better educated, but they are also increasingly employed. The greater earning power and the associated increase in disposable income have ensured that the female target group has become much more important for companies in recent years.<sup>2</sup> Their increased presence in what used to be typical "men's markets" has also raised the importance of women in the automotive industry.<sup>3</sup>

Just like women, men are also undergoing a period of transition regarding traditional gender roles. Even though many of them still measure themselves by their professional success, status, and high income, career no longer takes up the center of life for all men. They also like to take on household tasks, grow in their role as fathers and integrate areas such as fitness, health care, and cosmetics into their everyday lives. These "new" women and men are more likely to be found in the younger generation.<sup>4</sup>

Companies perceive these changes and adapt their marketing strategies concerning the needs of women and men.<sup>5</sup> The gender marketing approach is therefore being used increasingly in the marketing activities of companies. The

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Canzler, Julia: Gender Marketing – Die Geschlechterrollen heute und daraus resultierende Ansätze für das Marketing, Erfurt, 2009, p.7.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Halfmann, Marion: Zielgruppe Frau – Marketing wird weiblich, Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler: 2014, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Baig, Ulrike: Gender Marketing. Handlungsempfehlungen für ein erfolgreiches geschlechtsspezifisches Marketing, Hamburg: Diploma Verlag, 2015, p. 7-8.

implementation considers the biological as well as social gender differences and thereby tries to meet the customers' requirements on products and processes in the best way possible. Based on these characteristics, a product-specific orientation towards "masculine" and "feminine" gender attributes takes place.<sup>6</sup> This adaptation affects not only the product or service itself but also the way it is marketed.

Marketing accompanies us from birth and therefore influences the way people identify with certain role models in the long term. Despite the changes in society, gender roles in advertising have not become more gender-neutral. While women are shown in less stereotypical, traditional roles, the portrayals of men still reflect a very traditional male perspective.<sup>7</sup> The traditional gender roles that are still presented in advertising are crucial for the maintenance and reproduction of inequalities between the genders.<sup>8</sup>

This raises the question of whether it is still necessary at all to advertise the same products differently in an age of equal rights for women and men. Because even though this social change has taken place, it is particularly important today to point out current problems regarding the reinforcement and spread of gender stereotypes.

## **1.2 Research Question and Guiding Questions**

Given the preceding starting point, this bachelor thesis will address the following primary research question:

*“Are traditional gender differences reflected in the product design preferences and car purchasing behavior of women and men aged 16 to 69 in Germany?”*

Derived from this, the following subordinate guiding questions are:

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Jaffé, Diana/Saskia Riedel: Werbung für Adam und Eva. Zielgruppengerechte Ansprache durch Gender Marketing Communication, Weinheim: WILEY-YCH Verlag, 2011, p. 26.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Bettany, Shona/Susan Dobscha/Lisa O'Malley/Andrea Prothero: Moving beyond binary opposition: Exploring the tapestry of gender in consumer research and marketing: Marketing theory articles, 2010, p. 16.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Bettany/Dobscha/O'Malley/Prothero, 2010, p. 5-6.

- What gender-specific design and feature preferences do women and men place on a product?
- What gender-specific demands do women and men place on the distribution of a product?
- What communication messages are perceived by women and men?
- What is the willingness to pay prices among men and women?

### **1.3 Structure and Objectives of the Thesis**

To answer the previously mentioned research and guiding questions, this bachelor thesis is divided into three fundamental parts. At the beginning of this paper, basic terms related to gender marketing are defined, distinguished from each other and historically characterized. Based on this, gender differences from biological, cultural, and social backgrounds are analyzed. While the biological level deals with the brain, the five senses, and the hormones of men and women, the cultural and social aspects deal with backgrounds such as the education of children or the influence of social instances. In addition, the purchase decision process is examined in detail and evaluated for differences between men and women. This is followed by an examination of the four P's of the marketing mix – product, promotion, price, and place – to determine gender differences.

Subsequently, gender marketing in the automotive industry will be discussed in the second part, using Volkswagen AG as an example. The remaining empirical part of this bachelor thesis deals with the description and analysis of the survey. The study is intended to draw a conclusion as to what extent traditional gender differences are still influencing children as well as adults and whether their attitudes should be adapted to gender-differentiated product perceptions or whether gender marketing steers past the needs of women and men and therefore tends to revive embedded stereotypes.

## 2 Marketing and Gender

The assumption that consumer behavior and product demands differ between women and men is used as the basis for the application of gender-specific marketing. Therefore, it is essential to question by what means these gender differences emerge and how they affect the consumption of customers.

### 2.1 Delimitation and Definition

Two expressions in Anglo-American terms define the affiliation of a person to either men or women. These are "sex" and "gender". The introduction of the term "gender" by the feminist philosopher Anne Oakley in 1972 pursues a different meaning and intends to act as a distinction between the two concepts.<sup>9</sup>

Modern gender research nowadays distinguishes between "sex" as the biological and "gender" as the social entity.<sup>10</sup> "Sex" refers to all anatomical, genetic, and hormonal differences, while "gender" highlights cultural and social imprints.<sup>11</sup> Whereas biological sex is fixed from the moment of pregnancy, social gender is formed based on repeated behavior and could be altered over time.<sup>12</sup>

Gender marketing is an interdisciplinary approach that relates gender differences not only to biology but also to cultural and social influences. It attempts to break down traditional gender roles and to use the resulting opportunities for the development, production, and sale of gender-sensitive products and services.<sup>13</sup> A distinction is made between three variants of gender marketing:

- marketing exclusively for women,
- marketing exclusively for men,
- and marketing for women and men.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. Bettany/Dobscha/O'Malley/Prothero, 2010, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Bode, Matthias/Ursula Hansen: Das Geschlecht der Marketingwissenschaft. Wie „männlich“ ist sie und wie „weiblich“ sollte sie sein?, Wiesbaden: Gabler Fachverlag, 2005, p. 51.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 71.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, Eva: Gender Marketing. Impulse für Marktforschung, Produkte, Werbung und Personalentwicklung, Landsberg am Lech: mi-Fachverlag, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 26.

All three variants are aimed at heterosexual women and men. The differences in homosexual customers in terms of needs, desires, and consumer behavior are covered by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender (LGBT) marketing.<sup>15</sup>

Gender marketing observes markets from the female and male consumer perspectives.<sup>16</sup> This distinguishes it from other concepts, which usually operate from the company's point of view.<sup>17</sup> As a result, it is oriented toward the two largest target groups, women and men.<sup>18</sup> The approach enables company adaptation regarding gender-specific wishes, expectations, and needs.<sup>19</sup> Optimal adaptation to the respective customer group can lead to increased purchase volume and brand loyalty, and at the same time support the economic business objectives pursued by gender marketing.<sup>20</sup> According to Stark and Kuhn, the holistic concept can lead to a win-win situation if applied correctly.<sup>21</sup>

The approach of gender marketing should be distinguished from diversity management because both methods classify the gender aspect differently. This means that in addition to aspects such as origin, age, religion, and sexual orientation, gender is only one of the countless differentiating factors. According to this approach, all factors are interrelated. In contrast, gender marketing refers to gender as a fundamental differentiating factor. So, while diversity management tries to include all groups of people, the application of gender marketing can lead to the exclusion of one gender because the marketing focus is placed on the opposite gender.<sup>22</sup> Whereas in diversity management the differentiating characteristics are given equal weight, in gender marketing they are subordinated to the aspect of gender.<sup>23</sup> This can be seen in Figure 1.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 28.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Jaffé, Diana: Der Kunde ist weiblich. Was Frauen wünschen und wie sie bekommen, was sie wollen, Berlin: Ullstein Buchverlage, 2005, p. 17.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 20.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 32.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2006, p. 40.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Stark, Susanne/Johanna Kuhn: Gendermarketing – Rollenbilder in der TV-Werbung für Kinder, Bochum: Duisburg-Essen Publications, 2015, p. 31.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 33.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Jaffé, Diana: Geschlecht ist kein Werturteil, sondern ein Wirtschaftsfaktor, München: Europe-Fachpresse-Verlag, 2006, p. 42-43.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 31.

## 2.2 History and Background of Gender Marketing

Gender marketing is a relatively new concept that evolved in the United States of America (USA) in the early 1990s.<sup>24</sup> The approach was developed with the intent to be able to respond more sensitively to customer wishes.<sup>25</sup> For this purpose, the “Association for Consumer Research” organizes conferences where they study the market behavior of women and men.<sup>26</sup> Until today, nine conferences have been held consecutively, with the first one taking place in 1991. The publications of these conference papers in the USA as well as Europe resulted in a change in the fields of marketing and consumer research.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, only a few people in Germany dealt with the business aspects of gender research, which is why gender-specific marketing is only a few years old in this country.<sup>28</sup>

The predominantly male workforce in the field of market research led to the fact that marketing was often taught based on male ways of thinking and behaving.<sup>29</sup> The values, perceptions, and desires projected onto consumers as well as the lack of knowledge about female customers resulted in unused brand potential. In this context, gender was seen as a fundamental characteristic of buying behavior due to the expression of different needs, life phases, cultural backgrounds as well as sexual orientations. The shift to gender marketing consequently brought new responsibilities, as the differentiated view should help to better reach target groups as well as increase their purchase intentions.<sup>30</sup> By doing so, the concept picks up on the natural abilities of men and women and focuses on their needs.<sup>31</sup>

The starting point for the development of gender marketing was the assumption that the purchasing behavior and product wishes of women were not taken

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Bettany/Dobscha/O'Malley/Prothero, 2010, p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2006, p. 42.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jaffé, Diana: Was Frauen und Männer kaufen. Erfolgreiche Gender-Marketingkonzepte von Top-Unternehmen, Freiburg: Haufe Gruppe, 2014, p. 7.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 60-61.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 25.

into account enough or not at all.<sup>32</sup> Up to this point, women were considered the unknown entity for companies and were seen as the more demanding and complicated gender.<sup>33</sup> These perceptions stemmed from a time when men had the right to decide over women. Also, society's rules of conduct ensured the manifestation of masculinity and femininity in relation to consumption.<sup>34</sup> In reality, women make an increased number of purchasing decisions themselves and exert a significant influence on the purchases of men.<sup>35</sup> Changes in society as well as the emancipation movement of women caused major shifts regarding the understanding of role models in companies.<sup>36</sup>

### **2.3 Gender Differences as a Foundation for Gender Marketing**

Since gender marketing is based on the distinctions between men and women, most of the literature addresses gender differences as well as their origins. Therefore, this chapter explains the differentiating characteristics described by the representatives of the gender marketing approach.

According to Jaffé, gender differences find their origins in the past. During the Stone Age, the roles of women and men were precisely defined. While men were considered the nourishers and protectors of the family, women were assigned tasks such as child raising, food preparation, and general housework.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, evolution provided for the adaptation of the physiological abilities of men and women to fulfill the tasks of role allocation and to ensure survival. The brain adapted to the way of life and hence aligned with gender roles.<sup>38</sup>

We now know that inherited gender differences are not the only causes of gender disparities prevalent nowadays.<sup>39</sup> In addition to biology, culture, socialization, and individual experiences all contribute to the differentiation between

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 13.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Jaffé, Diana: Gender Marketing 2016: im Dschungel der Geschlechter, Wiesbaden: Spielbein Publishers, 2016, p. 80.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 20-22.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Bode/Hansen, 2005, p. 41.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Knörzer, Carina/Carsten Rennhak: Gender Marketing. Reutlinger Diskussionsbeiträge zu Marketing & Management, Reutlingen: Hochschule Reutlingen, 2010, p. 2.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 108.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 109.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Bettany/Dobscha/O'Malley/Prothero, 2010, p. 7.

femininity and masculinity.<sup>40</sup> An interdependence of these factors supports the emergence of "typical male" and "typical female" behavior patterns.<sup>41</sup>

### **2.3.1 Biological-genetic Differences**

Several representatives refer to biology as evidence of gender differences. That is because genes and hormones are the first factors on which our attitude is built, while the environment and interactions contribute to the rest of the development.<sup>42</sup> Thereby, researchers refer to collected aspects such as imprints before our birth up to the physical changes of our current stage of life.<sup>43</sup>

#### **2.3.1.1 The female and male Brain**

Brain research is of particular relevance for gender marketing. This research found an enormous number of structural, genetic, hormonal, and functional differences in the brains of men and women.<sup>44</sup> The differences filtered out are important for the development of products, communication with consumers, and design of operations. The only commonality found throughout the research was the distribution of tasks between the cerebral hemispheres of women and men. While the left half is responsible for logic, rationality, and language, the right half is involved in processing emotions and developing creativity.<sup>45</sup>

Up to the eighth week of pregnancy, the brain of every embryo looks female based on natural conditions. Only the supply of testosterone makes it male.<sup>46</sup> After complete development, the male brain exceeds the female brain in volume by about ten percent. This difference in size does not affect the average intellectual performance of women and men. While men have more fluid and white substances, called nerve fibers, in the brain, the proportion of gray brain mass in women exceeds that of men.<sup>47</sup> Because this gray brain material is

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Stark/Kuhn, 2015, p. 32.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Kasten, Harmut: Weiblich – männlich. Geschlechterrollen durchschauen, München: Ernst Reinhardt Verlag, 2004, p. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Brizendine, Louann: Das weibliche Gehirn. Warum Frauen anders sind als Männer, Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2007, p. 55.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 53.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. Brizendine, 2007, p. 16.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 114-115.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Brizendine, 2007, p. 34-35.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 27-28.

responsible for rapid signal processing as well as computing power, women's brains work more efficiently, according to Jaffé. In addition, she points out that the nerve fiber cord that connects both sides of the brain is thicker in female brains than in male brains. Because of this, a woman's brain has a greater number of neural connections that allow her to use both sides of the brain simultaneously. In contrast, men can only use one hemisphere of the brain alternately, preferably the left.<sup>48</sup>

According to Jaffé, these differences form the basis for different thought patterns between the sexes. While men take on the role of specialists, women are seen as generalists. While female brains are able to coordinate different activities at the same time due to parallel use, men try to work through specific tasks one after the other. This process is also based on the fact that the male brain is segmented into individual areas, leading to the so-called "stereotyped thinking" because the information is assigned to one area and stored there. The indicated controlled approach allows men to allocate problems to fixed points in time and to complete them sorted in sequence. Because women receive a constant stream of information, their brains process problems differently. These are only discarded when there is complete satisfaction. These differences affect the brain activity of women and men at rest. While men's brain activity drops to 70 percent, women's stagnates at 90 percent.<sup>49</sup>

Another concise differentiating feature between the two genders is the spatial imagination and processing ability, as this is one of the most developed brain areas in males. While this ability centers in the right hemisphere of the male brain, women do not have such a center. For women, this ability is distributed in both hemispheres of the brain. These differences are also noticeable in everyday situations. Therefore, men have an easier time recognizing maps of parking garages or converting verbal directions graphically in their minds.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 115-116.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 116-117.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 118-120.

Another point of differentiation is the area of communication. While communication serves men to convey facts and relevant information, women build up emotions using language. Since men do not have a separate speech center, they use their entire left-brain hemisphere during this process. This does not allow them to perform complex activities on the side. In contrast, women have two speech centers, one of which is somewhat larger in the left hemisphere and a smaller one in the right hemisphere.<sup>51</sup> This division leads to the fact that women are considered more linguistically talented because they often use both brain hemispheres in tasks that require language skills.<sup>52</sup> Jaffé also sees the hormone estrogen as responsible for the strengthening of the nerve vein cells and therefore the more developed speech ability of women.<sup>53</sup> All these explanations sound reasonable since women talk about three times as much as men. While men use about 2,000 to 4,000 words a day, women use on average 8,000 to 15,000 words. The relationship between a woman and her counterpart can be defined as good as long as the woman talks. If it comes to silence, there is a subliminal problem. Women also apply this tactic to companies where they are dissatisfied with the product or service. They decide not to file a complaint but simply to withdraw their trust in the organization silently.<sup>54</sup>

### ***2.3.1.2 Gender specific Perception of the Five Senses***

In addition to language, other parts of holistic communication are also addressed as differentiators by Jaffé. The way we smell, taste, feel, hear, and see also shapes our understanding of the world. In a nutshell, it can be said that all the senses are more concisely defined in women than in men.<sup>55</sup>

Women are designed to match visual signals such as facial expressions, gestures, and body language with verbal messages.<sup>56</sup> While only ten percent of the information is absorbed through words, women take in 70 to 80 percent

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 138-139.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 23.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 147.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 139-140.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 271-272.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 124.

from the body language and facial expressions of people and advertising figures.<sup>57</sup> Men, on the other hand, are unable to access information provided parallel to the factual level.<sup>58</sup> In addition to these visual aspects, women also have a larger field of vision than men. This asset was already used by women in prehistoric times for the early detection of danger.<sup>59</sup>

These approaching threats were more likely to be determined by males through their spatial sense of hearing. The sense of hearing in women is rather designed for high-pitched sounds. This condition helps them to detect the slightest changes in someone's vocal range.<sup>60</sup>

Looking more closely at the sense of taste and smell, it can be observed that this development occurred to detect spoiled food. Changes in the sense of smell emerge with age, pregnancy, and during the menstrual cycle.<sup>61</sup> The emotional state of men and women can be influenced by the help of fragrances. While pleasant scents have a positive effect on a person's mood, unpleasant ones lead to a worse one. Likewise, the effects on the perception of pain can be observed in women. While positive scents decrease pain perception, negative scents increase it.<sup>62</sup>

Men's skin is ten times thicker than women's and therefore less sensitive to injury. The fact that female skin is more sensitive to touch and pressure is because it is oriented to the need of physical intimacy of children. This difference implies that the sense of touch is essential for women while shopping. Products are exposed to material and design testing because touch conveys information that cannot be perceived by any other means.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 124.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 287.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 124-126.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 127.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 128-130.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 278.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 134-136.

### **2.3.1.3 Hormones**

Hormones also contribute to gender differences in behavior. The main culprit is the hormone androgen.<sup>64</sup> While male and female behavior is largely driven by testosterone and estrogen, insulin, thyroid hormones, and adrenaline also influence behavior. However, these are driven more by other facts such as stress and diet than by gender itself.<sup>65</sup>

The genetic sex is determined the moment a sperm and egg combine.<sup>66</sup> In male embryos, the testicles begin to develop from the seventh week of pregnancy. These produce the male sex hormones, the so-called androgens. The most important hormone for men among them is testosterone. In the female embryo, the ovaries develop from the eighth week of pregnancy. The female hormones estrogen and progesterone are produced in these. From this moment on, sex differentiation takes place only through the different concentration of androgens. Castration of the male embryo at this time would mean that it would continue to develop as a female embryo. Conversely, exposing a female embryo to androgens would lead to masculinization. Between the twelfth and sixteenth week, the external sexual characteristics will also develop based on the androgen concentration.<sup>67</sup> Hormones are also responsible for the gender-specific formation of brain structures because they influence the growth rate of the individual cerebral hemispheres and therefore the abilities that the person later possesses. Between the sixteenth and eighteenth week of pregnancy, the areas react to the release of androgens. If an increased concentration occurs, male brain structures develop, whereas low concentrations establish a female brain structure.<sup>68</sup>

Hormonal differences also affect gender-specific purchasing behavior. Women go through hormonal fluctuations depending on their age and the phase of their

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. Baig, 2015, p. 28.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 52.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 15.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Bischof-Köhler, Doris: Von Natur aus anders. Die Psychologie der Geschlechtsunterschiede, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer: 2022, p. 228-230.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 21.

monthly cycle. Around their ovulation, women act and think significantly differently, making it difficult for marketers to develop campaigns that cannot be misunderstood. The release of the hormone progesterone also affects women. This hormone is released at the sight of a baby to trigger feelings of motherhood and to perform the role of mother in the best possible way. Chapter 3 of this bachelor thesis will discuss in more detail how this circumstance is used by the automotive industry.<sup>69</sup>

### **2.3.2 Cultural and social Differences**

While representatives of gender marketing use biological gender differences to legitimize the concept, consumer behavior can also be attributed to underlying motives that stem from social trends.<sup>70</sup> This approach is based on the theory that the gender conventions negotiated by the population, through the way they interact with each other, make their contribution to a feminine and masculine construct.<sup>71</sup> Accordingly, gendered behavior would not be inborn but socially learned and culturally influenced.

Parents are usually guided by stereotypes even before their child is born. In their subconscious, boys are associated with the attributes big, strong, and active while girls are viewed as small, fragile, and pretty.<sup>72</sup> After birth, the biological basis provides for the development of individual and social gender through alignments of learning and educational processes.<sup>73</sup>

Children are usually raised in a gender-specific way from an early age. Typically, this process begins with the choice of color for clothes for example, pink for girls and blue for boys. A person's gender identity begins to develop within the first two to three years of life. Only then do children begin to orient themselves to predetermined gender roles.<sup>74</sup> Social interactions from the second year of life that are appropriate to the child's assigned gender create a sense

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 148-150.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2006, p.43.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Bode/Hansen, 2005, p. 52

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 56.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 35.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Stark/Kuhn, 2015, p. 32.

of belonging. This gender affiliation goes through a series of stages and reaches its completion at elementary school age.<sup>75</sup>

Interactions with the family prepare the child for social systems. As a result, the patterns of action learned continue to be applied in adult life. In addition to interactions with other children and adults, other instances contribute to this gender role socialization. While the differences in parenting are still minimal in early childhood, the gender-specific influence becomes clearer from kindergarten onwards at the latest. If children exhibit gender-specific behavior, they usually receive approval.<sup>76</sup> Boys are expected to behave in a much more appropriate, gender-specific manner than girls.<sup>77</sup> If a boy likes to play with a doll, he is usually eyed more suspiciously than seen in the role of a caring father.<sup>78</sup> Also, if boys show their emotions or cry, this is seen as rather atypical behavior. However, if there is a deviation of gender-specific behavior in girls, they experience more understanding.<sup>79</sup> Research shows that toy preferences occur at an age when children are not yet aware of their gender. Preferences for materials and shapes are therefore genetically anchored.<sup>80</sup>

Alongside the experiences that a child gains with other people and institutions, the media must be considered as a shaping factor too. Advertising as well as product design have an influence on the development of gender roles. Stereotypical role models are still featured in two-thirds of all television commercials. 62.5 percent of girls' commercials and 65 percent of boys' commercials are characterized by them.<sup>81</sup> Gender classification also occurs in books. While boys are portrayed as adventurous heroes, girls experience not only significant underrepresentation, but also associated characteristics such as weak, needy, and fearful.<sup>82</sup> Thereby, both children and adults are shaped by the gender roles

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 58-59.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Halfmann, 2014, p. 23.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 70-72.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. Stark/Kuhn, 2015, p. 34.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 70-71.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 63.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Stark/Kuhn, 2015, p. 32-34.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Kasten, 2003, p. 77.

portrayed in the media. These gender differences subsequently also influence the purchasing behavior of men and women.

## 2.4 Gender differences in Purchasing Behavior

The complex decision-making and information process leading to consumption, as well as consumption itself, are essential for company survival. Market research, therefore, attempts to analyze which actions ultimately lead to the completion of a purchase.<sup>83</sup> Research results show that gender-specific differences between women and men also have an impact on purchasing behavior. The buying process takes on different meanings for them.<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, women distinguish between "Purchasing" and "Shopping," and men between "Necessity purchasing" and "Luxury purchasing".<sup>85</sup> For many women, shopping represents their favorite leisure activity, during which they enter stores even without any specific purchase intentions. The focus of female customers is not on simple consumption but on the shopping experience and the fun associated with it. Men, however, enter stores with a specific intention to buy. After acquiring the product, the purchase is done.<sup>86</sup> When it comes to men's luxury purchases, similarities can be drawn with women's shopping, as they then also begin to invest more time.<sup>87</sup> Barletta sums up the gender differences in buying behavior with her words *"Men are buyers, Women shoppers."*<sup>88</sup>

According to Barletta, the purchase decision takes place within five phases. Figure 2 shows the different buying behavior of women and men.

- **Activation:** Identification of the customer's needs takes place, whereupon the market for the desired product or service is considered for the first time.

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<sup>83</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 98.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Halfmann, 2014, p. 19.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2016, p. 76.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 120.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 40.

<sup>88</sup> Barletta, Marti. Marketing to women. How to increase your share of the world's largest market, Chicago: Dearborn Trade Publishing, 2006, p. 118.

- **Nomination:** The customer is in the process of brainstorming which brands might be considered in their search.
- **Investigation and Decision:** Alternative products of all brands are compared with each other via a wide variety of channels. This phase ends with the purchase of a product.
- **Retention:** Based on a positive experience, customer loyalty is created and the customer comes back for subsequent purchases.
- **Recommendation:** Recommendation of the product or service occurs.<sup>89</sup>

A male purchase decision process is linear, with the customer going through the process step by step, experiencing each phase only once. Women, meanwhile, move through the process in a spiral. This difference is due to the desired quality of the outcome. As so-called maximizers, women seek the perfect solution and therefore often fall back into previous phases by gaining new insights. This principle contrasts with the male process principle, in which they, as so-called satisficers, cease their efforts the moment their demands are met. The list of criteria to be met is often shorter for men than for women, which is why they generally approach the situation more openly. Women find it more difficult to define their goals in terms of product features and therefore tend to focus more on the final benefit.<sup>90</sup> They take long-term considerations into account, whereas for men, the satisfaction of needs must take place immediately or in the near future. After completing a purchase, women are the more loyal gender, but also the one that returns half of the purchased goods.<sup>91</sup> Women tend to complain more than men and have a stronger tendency to use negative word of mouth if the process does not produce the desired outcome.<sup>92</sup>

The purchasing behavior of women and men can also be differentiated in terms of their need for communication. During the decision-making process, women

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<sup>89</sup> Cf. Barletta, 2006. p. 115-116.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Barletta, 2006, p. 116-119.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Bakshi, Swarna: Impact of gender on consumer purchase behaviour, Noida: Amity University, 2012, p. 6.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Halfmann, 2014, p. 20.

ask not only the sales staff but also their friends and relatives for their experiences and advice. In this way, they try to get an overview of a wide variety of alternatives. While women prefer to obtain their information from people, men tend to orient themselves to impersonal sources. They have already acquired a lot of background knowledge at the beginning of the process based on research in reference books or internet forums. They see the expert talk with the sales staff as a competition and therefore do not want to show any weakness.<sup>93</sup>

These differences are evident in the communication patterns of women and men with sales personnel. Table 1 shows that gender-typical behavior plays a role in the entire decision-making and information process. While men base their decisions on technology benefits and detailed knowledge, women place greater emphasis on relationship level and personal appreciation.<sup>94</sup>

## **2.5 Gender-specific Aspects in the Marketing Mix**

The impact of gender on consumer preferences and purchase decisions is related to the product, the distribution channel as well as the communication with the company.<sup>95</sup> To address women and men in an optimal way, the company's marketing strategies should be adapted to gender differences. Each of the four marketing instruments, product policy, communication policy, price policy, and distribution policy can be examined and changed for such.<sup>96</sup> The concept expands the classic marketing mix and affects the areas of market research, service, relationship management, and corporate social responsibility.<sup>97</sup>

### **2.5.1 Product Policy**

Decisions regarding product policy influence other marketing instruments. The success or failure of a product is already decided at the start of development. For this very reason, the manufacturer must be clear in advance about which

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. Barletta, 2006, p. 117-118.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 102.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2014, p. 24.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. An der Heiden, Iris/Maria Wersig: Preisdifferenzierung nach Geschlecht in Deutschland, Berlin: MLK Druck, 2017, p. 32.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 29.

target group they want to address with this product and what the consumers' requirements are. To take gender-specific characteristics into account, the following questions must be answered beforehand:

- Which features are important for women and men about this product?
- What gender-specific expectations do women and men have of this product?
- Do women and men demonstrate similar requirements for this product or do their desires differ greatly?

The answers to these questions can vary from product to product, which is why companies need to analyze the aspects individually.<sup>98</sup> When products are manufactured according to gender-specific aspects, particular reference is made to the appearance as well as the characteristics of the product.<sup>99</sup> This enables the company to adapt products to the needs of either gender. However, this also confronts developers with some risks. If the product is perceived as too gender-stereotypical by women or men, it will be rejected.<sup>100</sup> Women tend to focus on the external criteria of a product, such as its aesthetics, while for men the performance features are of primary importance.<sup>101</sup>

Table 2 illustrates how similar and yet gender-specific different products can be designed. The following two subchapters on product design and product features pick up on these differences and explain them in more detail.

### **2.5.1.1 Product Design**

The external product and packaging design exerts a significant influence on the customers' perception as well as on their purchase decision. Features such as material, shape, color, and font can play a role in the process.<sup>102</sup> The

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. Knörzer/Rennhak, 2010, p. 11.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 10.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 152-153.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Halfmann, 2014, p. 19.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Zellerhoff, Claudia: Geschlechtsbezogene Produktpositionierung, Berlin: TU Berlin. 2001, p. 81.

combination and weighting of key design dimensions ultimately determines whether the consumer perceives the product as feminine or masculine.<sup>103</sup>

Solid metals, heavy plastics, dark marble, dark precious woods such as mahogany, and coarse leather types are perceived as masculine, while golden and silver metals, alloys of bronze or brass, light plastics, crystal, light marble, porcelain, and light precious woods are defined as more appealing to women. To appear attractive to a man, the surface of the product and packaging should be plain, matte, or satin. Women, for their part, prefer effective surfaces that are either semi-gloss or high gloss. Clear, round, light, and curved shapes are considered popular among women. In contrast, men favor robust, bulky, and heavy shapes that have angular contours.<sup>104</sup> As described in chapter 2.3.1.3, experts in the area of gender marketing also hold the theory that hormonal differences have an impact on the popularity of various forms. Shapes that correspond to the child schema and trigger motherly feelings are thus preferred by women.<sup>105</sup>

Colors are a simple design tool to make products interesting for a certain gender. If it is available in earthy colors like brown or in bold colors, men will tend towards it. Black and gray are also very appealing to them. Women, however, prefer light colors like white and light gray, fresh colors, or pastel colors. As for the font, men tend to favor abstract, symmetrical, or geometric fonts, and women cursive or small fonts.<sup>106</sup>

### **2.5.1.2 Product Features**

Regardless of whether a product or service is bought and used by women, men, or both sexes, a gender-specific image is generated. This classification occurs based on emotional attitudes, knowledge, and conscious and unconscious experiences. The simultaneous combination of all these characteristics

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<sup>103</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2014, p. 82.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Zellerhoff, 2001, p. 82-90.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Halfmann, 2014, p. 19.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Zellerhoff, 2001, p. 82-90.

ensures that customers have a comprehensible product in front of their eyes and no longer think about the product type in general. Tools such as drills, power saws, and lawnmowers are accordingly considered more masculine, whereas fashion such as jewelry tends to be assigned to the female product world.<sup>107</sup> Further examples can be found in Table 4.

The development of product features is based on the different needs of women and men. While male customers demand facts and comprehensible information, women look for ease of use and usefulness.<sup>108</sup> Marketers take advantage of these interests and fall back on traditional task distributions of gender roles to sell their products in the best way possible.<sup>109</sup> As a result, women show an affinity for products from female product worlds and vice versa. Consumer behavior can be influenced by the product group to such an extent that products assigned to the opposite sex often have no relevance.<sup>110</sup> With increasing changes in values within society, the clarity of classification becomes blurred. This leads to some men consuming female products and women consuming male products.<sup>111</sup> Likewise, there are relatively new products that meet the requirements of both genders and are therefore assigned neither to the male nor the female product world. Digital cameras, laptops, and wheeled suitcases are part of this androgynous product group. Their popularity is the result of the mass establishment of young buyers who, due to their age, are not fixated on gender stereotypes but have grown up with all kinds of role models.<sup>112</sup>

### **2.5.2 Communication Policy**

The communication policy of a company includes all activities with consumers. The marketing strategy aims to increase the awareness of the product and the brand, spread product characteristics, create a product image, and initiate

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<sup>107</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2014, p. 69-73.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 12.

<sup>109</sup> Cf. Bakshi, 2012, p. 5.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2014, p. 77.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 57.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 59.

subsequent actions. Gender-specific perception makes it necessary to adapt the means of communication to suit the target group.<sup>113</sup>

Communication messages that highlight the practical utility of a product are particularly well received by the female target group because their perception enables them to integrate the object of purchase well into their own life situation. In addition, women like to be portrayed in advertising in social relationships, whether as best friends, as mothers, or within the family.<sup>114</sup> The use of storytelling can convey additional communication messages that women perceive as positive, such as authenticity and personal identification with the story presented. By recognizing themselves in the person portrayed, women find the product more believable and realistic.<sup>115</sup> A balanced presentation of rational and emotional meaning content as well as humor is positively recognized by the female audience.<sup>116</sup> Men, by contrast, can be convinced rationally and tend to judge ideal images positively. The male population orients itself to images and fades out detailed information in communication messages. For them, the focus is on fundamental aspects of the product and performance features.<sup>117</sup>

Through advertising, companies can show that they understand and respect the problems of certain life situations of women and men without falling back on gender roles. To the extent that women value respect and authenticity in advertising, men expect everyday intimacy, the celebration of masculine space, and the representation of father-son relationships.<sup>118</sup> Additionally, illustrations such as team spirit and friendship, as well as competition and rivalry should be included.<sup>119</sup>

But it is not only through advertising that consumers can be addressed in a gender-specific way. Different forms of communication can also be used at the

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. Knörzer/Rennhak, 2010, p. 25.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. Stark, Susanne/Sabrina Krause: Alte Klischees oder neue Vielfalt? Geschlechterbilder in der Werbung, Bochum: Hochschule Bochum, 2013, p. 22.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 291.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Halfmann, 2014, p.21.

<sup>117</sup> Cf. Barletta, 2006, p. 216.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 16.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Jaffé & Riedel, 2011, p. 266.

Point of Sale (PoS) to meet the needs of both groups. Women are looking for experiences, variety, and advice. These can be provided through events, promotions, or direct marketing such as samples or giveaways. Large displays are often set up to stimulate men to purchase.<sup>120</sup> As can be seen in Table 4, gender-specific characteristics also establish themselves at the PoS.

Sponsoring represents another part of communication policy. Companies can use this initiative to present their social commitment as well as to pursue corporate economic goals. Although women are increasingly becoming more interested in sports, the sponsorship of many male sports such as soccer, handball, golf, and Formula 1 reinforces a persistently male image. Due to the mass and media dependency, one, unfortunately, searches in vain for the support of a women's variant.<sup>121</sup>

### **2.5.3 Pricing Policy**

Representatives of gender marketing agree that the pricing policy plays a subordinate role in this approach.<sup>122</sup> This is because, in research, gender is only considered as an orientation and is primarily regarded as a weak factor for differentiating between consumers' willingness to spend money.

Nevertheless, gender differences are noticed in pricing policies. Women's willingness to pay prices is fundamentally lower than that of men. They are willing to spend a lot of money on luxury goods in the areas of clothing, perfume, and watches, while men tend to invest in sports and hobby articles as status symbols.<sup>123</sup> Their tendency to pay higher prices stems from the search for quality and reliability.<sup>124</sup> If a man's desired brand meets all his requirements, he is even willing to pay above-average prices.<sup>125</sup> In principle, women spend more money on the consumption of products and services than men, which is partly explained by the more activated buying stimulus in the case of special

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 13.

<sup>121</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p.135-136.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Knörzer/Rennhak, 2010, p. 3-4.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. An der Heiden/Wersig, 2017, p. 21.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 250-251.

<sup>125</sup> Cf. Halfmann, 2014, p. 20.

promotions and discounts.<sup>126</sup> This tendency is enhanced by female companionship in the buying process.<sup>127</sup>

The willingness to pay, of both men and women, can be increased if the combination of service, quality, and emotional experience makes the product seem valuable. Accordingly, not only the price but also soft factors such as the purchase and reclaim process influence the value of the product and therefore the purchase decision. As a result, dissatisfaction can lead to neither the product nor the retailer being recommended to others, even if the price may be low.<sup>128</sup>

However, differences between the genders can be observed not only in their willingness to buy regarding the price of goods but also in terms of pricing policy. "Gender pricing" leads to women and men being charged different prices for the same service. A common example of this is a visit to the hairdresser. Not only services but also products are affected by this phenomenon. On average, a comparable male product is often offered at a lower price than the female version. Shower gels and shampoos serve as good examples.<sup>129</sup>

#### **2.5.4 Distribution Policy**

The distribution policy is strongly based on the different purchasing behavior of women and men. Retail and e-commerce are not only the most relevant sales channels for a company, but they are also the most significant in gender marketing.<sup>130</sup> Gender differences impact the design of the PoS.

Women and men have different demands on the appearance of a store. While women can already draw conclusions about the interior of a building from the sight of its exterior due to their distinct perception, men are more robustly inclined and want to achieve their purchase.<sup>131</sup> For women, the atmosphere is just as important as the cleanliness and aesthetic presentation of the store.

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 250-251.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 287.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 66.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Baig, 2015, p. 54.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 17.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Jaffé, Diana: Die Kundin – das unbekannte Wesen, München: Springer Automotive Media, 2010, p. 129.

Even small things like the wrong furnishings or clutter can lead women to subliminally decide never to enter the store again. The structure is important because consumers like to get an overall impression. However, this is only possible if the shelf heights and arrangement of the aisles are right.<sup>132</sup> The layout of the store should ensure enough space in the aisles and in-between spaces for women to retreat and reflect on their product choices.<sup>133</sup> Products for men should be placed in the walking zone to attract their interest.<sup>134</sup> If this is not possible, displays, labels, or special placements should be used to help them find the product they are looking for faster.<sup>135</sup> The presentation of products should offer a technically oriented appearance for men and a minimum of technical details for women. Since women are addressed through all senses, the smells within the store are also of high importance.<sup>136</sup>

Since the retail sector continues to be dominated by women, the remaining ambiance plays a rather subordinate role for men. For male customers, the professional and concrete knowledge of the employees is of greater relevance.<sup>137</sup> While women place a stronger focus on personal interaction with sales staff, men pay attention to utilitarian aspects such as the availability of parking spaces and the desired item, as well as queues at the checkout.<sup>138</sup>

In addition to retail, the internet is also an important sales channel for companies. The gender-specific differences relate to product orientation, payment methods, and website perception. While men use the internet primarily to inform themselves about vehicles, computer hardware and software, and consumer electronics, women tend to look for books, fashion, shoes, and cosmetics.<sup>139</sup> Women's behavior when buying online reflects their general behavior. If they had a good experience with the company, they remain loyal customers

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<sup>132</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2014, p. 129-130.

<sup>133</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 287-288.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2014, p. 130-131.

<sup>135</sup> Cf. Jaffé/Riedel, 2011, p. 49.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 18.

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 119-120.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Bakshi, 2012, p. 6.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 18.

and recommend the store to others if satisfied. Female customers attach importance to the ease of redeeming vouchers and the payment methods of installment and purchase on account. Men, by contrast, prefer to use credit cards.<sup>140</sup> Design elements play a subordinate role for men in this context. For them, the good recognizability of links and clickable elements is more relevant.<sup>141</sup> The entire shopping process for women is characterized by a fast order sequence, a wide range of products, well-known brands, and a risk-free return policy. As can already be seen in the payment behavior, men are more willing to try things out at this point.<sup>142</sup>

If women are not offered security and provision of information by the provider, they switch to another website and make the purchase there.<sup>143</sup>

As described in the entire chapter 2.5, gender marketing adapts the four areas of the marketing mix - product, price, promotion, and place - to the "different" needs of women and men. The assumption that the buying behavior of the genders differs greatly from each other results in certain characteristics and preferences that are attributed to men and women and to which the marketing mix can be adapted. The recurring use of gender stereotypes, regardless of whether they are the result of biological, social, or cultural factors, leads to the reproduction of gender roles.

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2014, p. 174.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 14.

<sup>142</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 18.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, 123.

### 3 Gender Marketing in the Automotive Industry

Cars are products that are bought and used by women and men. Although one could therefore assume that the basis is the same, the automotive industry uses gender differences to adapt its products. In doing so, the products are adjusted to the corresponding gender in terms of their handling and size.<sup>144</sup>

A study on the preference for certain vehicle types depending on gender and household net income revealed that the same income group exhibits strong equality regarding their vehicle preference.<sup>145</sup> Figure 3 shows the percentage distribution of men and women in the respective income class. Nevertheless, small cars continue to be designed primarily for female buyers. To design them as appealing as possible for women, they usually follow the child scheme. Big eyes and a curved radiator grille are intended to give the appearance of a smiling face. Meanwhile, sports cars and limousines are designed for men. The projected face is intended to convey a dangerous image. Figure 4 illustrates the difference using a VW Beetle and a VW Scirocco. Often, cars for men appear even wider and deeper due to post-processing in advertising.<sup>146</sup>

Furthermore, the different emotional distances of the genders influence their ideas regarding their dream cars. For women, the car is a means to an end, but its abandonment is unthinkable. The benefit of the personal freedom they derive from it is far too high. Despite their increased earnings, sports cars and limousines remain more attractive to men than to women. Female customers prefer vans or station wagons, depending on their family situation. This also shows that the automotive industry is using the mobility behavior of traditional role distribution. According to this, women need more storage space to run errands for the children and the household. Men, however, drive alone more often than women and primarily to the workplace. Since the representation of

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. Knörzer/Rennhak, 2010, p. 13.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Halfmann, 2014, p. 23-24.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 150-151.

income and status is desired here, limousines and coupes are preferred by males.<sup>147</sup>

These gender stereotypes are also evident in automobile advertising. While men are displayed behind the wheel of large or expensive sports and luxury cars, women are often shown in the passenger seat.<sup>148</sup> In addition to this role division, advertisements focus on things that men value. These include performance features and driving experiences, technical equipment in the interior, sporty transmissions, as well as the engine sound and the social image that the buyer experiences through ownership of the car.<sup>149</sup> Relationships and everyday situations that form an important basis for decision-making for women are hardly presented.<sup>150</sup> Companies would find it much easier to attract women as customers through their marketing communications if they included features such as safety systems or low fuel consumption.<sup>151</sup> Further decision criteria that influence the car purchase of men and women can be seen in Table 5. Nevertheless, care must be taken not to promote vehicles as “Cars for women”, as any clichés that are picked up on are more likely to lead to rejected rather than attracted behavior.<sup>152</sup>

Male and female environments present strong contrasts in the presence of automotive information media. While companies claim to appeal to both genders, a closer look often reveals that their standards are outdated. This is reflected in advertising in magazines, broadcast times of commercials on television, and offers from insurance companies. In addition, the information materials use different communication styles. While mid-range and upwardly focused vehicles use a masculine communication style, small cars use a pseudo-feminine style by referring to emotions of the individual experiences.<sup>153</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Cf. Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 155.

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 21-22.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2005, p. 217.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2014, p. 122.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. Canzler, 2009, p. 19.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2010, p. 128.

<sup>153</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2010, p. 130-131.

Through the application of gender marketing, it can be determined that the entire automotive industry, car manufacturers, and individual brands are male dominated. This also affects sales, thus ensuring male sales styles, salesrooms, and salespeople. However, the industry's clientele is mixed.<sup>154</sup> This market situation is illustrated in Figure 5. Women are increasingly less respected and face fraud attempts such as the sale of unneeded repairs.<sup>155</sup> They are often ignored by consultants, even though women make, help determine or influence their own vehicle purchasing decisions 80 percent of the time.<sup>156</sup>

### **3.1 Application Example: Volkswagen AG**

The automotive industry is an economic sector that consists of many suppliers, international manufacturers, and distributors. Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the gender marketing approach is applied equally in all companies. One of the world's leading car manufacturers and the largest car producer in Europe is Volkswagen AG. The group owns ten brands spread across five European nations. These include Volkswagen, Volkswagen Commercial Vehicles, ŠKODA, SEAT, CUPRA, Audi, Lamborghini, Bentley, Porsche, and Ducati.<sup>157</sup> The following chapter will focus on the extent to which Volkswagen AG implements the gender marketing concept. Since the company currently offers 17 models as passenger vehicles and countless other commercial vehicles, the application refers to the company's best-known model, the Golf. The model is currently available in eleven variations, which is why the focus here is once again narrowed down and the basic Golf Life variant is considered.<sup>158</sup>

For the exterior design of the vehicle, the customer can choose from a light-to-dark color palette as well as striking colors such as Kings Red Metallic or Lime Yellow Metallic. Depending on the exterior paint selected, the surface of the

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<sup>154</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2014, p. 51.

<sup>155</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2010, p. 129.

<sup>156</sup> Cf. Jaffé, 2010, p. 124.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Volkswagen AG 2023: Portrait & Standorte des Volkswagen Konzerns, n.d., <https://www.volkswagenag.com/de/group/portrait-and-production-plants.html> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Volkswagen 2023: Konfigurator, n.d., <https://www.volkswagen.de/de/konfigurator.html> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

vehicle will appear glossy, matte, or feature a metallic effect. In the interior, the customer can choose between a light and a dark design. The chosen variant affects the seats, the instrument panel, the carpet, and the headliner.<sup>159</sup> The processed materials are always the same in the standard equipment of the Golf Life. This includes chrome trims on the exterior, cloth sports seats, a leather steering wheel as well as a leather shift knob, and pedals in an aluminum finish.<sup>160</sup> When modifying the vehicle with elements of optional equipment it is possible to influence the fabric of the seats, door, and side panels. The lettering of the model variant on the tailgate is small, symmetrical, and rounded. The Golf features a contoured down swept hood. Narrow headlights and radiator grille complete the front view of the vehicle.<sup>161</sup>

The brand campaign around the Golf advertises with the slogan "Here plays life". The TV commercial takes up a wide variety of relationships and life situations of men and women and shows that the Golf is the perfect partner in all of them. According to the former Chief Marketing Officer, Jochen Sengpiehl, the campaign is intended to reflect the most important principle of the Volkswagen brand, namely, to put people first.<sup>162</sup> The presentation of various technical details such as the mobile key, streaming and internet functions, the Head-Up display or the ambient lighting should not only be shown in the campaign but also represent how they make people's lives better.<sup>163</sup> Looking at other commercials that showcase the Golf, it is clear that Volkswagen's strategy is to show the usefulness of its product and its performance features in small clips of everyday life. In doing so, the most diverse relationship structures and situations are taken up and an attempt is made to convey them

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<sup>159</sup> Cf. Volkswagen 2023: Konfigurator, n.d.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Volkswagen 2023: Die neuen Ausstattungslinien | Volkswagen Newsroom, 2019, <https://www.volkswagen-newsroom.com/de/der-neue-golf-internationale-fahrvorstellung-5609/die-neuen-ausstattungslinien-5619> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Huber, Andreas/Jan Horn/ Jan Götz: VW Golf 8 (2022): Alles was zum Kompaktmodell wichtig ist – AUTO BILD, 2022, <https://www.autobild.de/artikel/vw-golf-8-2019-test-variant-preis-cockpit-abmessungen-automatik-interieur-kofferraum-aenderungen-5266049.html#-2117523673> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

<sup>162</sup> Cf. Laures, Kamila Joanna/ Christoph Oemisch: "Life happens with a Golf": Volkswagen startet am 6. Dezember neue Marketingkampagne | Volkswagen Newsroom, 2019, <https://www.volkswagen-newsroom.com/de/pressemitteilungen/life-happens-with-a-golf-volkswagen-startet-am-6-dezember-neue-marketingkampagne-5640> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Volkswagen: Der neue Golf 8: Wo das Leben spielt | Volkswagen – YouTube, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vfP5nNFRVs&list=PL51A8CB545870C539&index=9> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

authentically. Furthermore, they demonstrate their social commitment by sponsoring numerous women's and men's soccer clubs throughout Germany, as well as through partnerships with the DFB, the DFB Cup, and the UEFA.<sup>164</sup> The Golf Life can be purchased from a starting price of around 31,000€. Depending on the customer's wishes, equipment elements can be added, or higher-quality model variants can be purchased, starting with a higher base price. When buying a car, men and women are charged the same price.<sup>165</sup>

Volkswagen is represented with the Golf as well as the rest of its vehicles both in retail and online. In 2021, the company decided to invest in the expansion of digital and stationary retail. The expansion included the modernization of car dealerships and showrooms, product and service training for dealers, and training on e-mobility along with a digitalization push.<sup>166</sup> The new brand design includes floor-to-ceiling windows that provide light-flooded sales areas, putting the focus not only on the vehicles but also on the users. The open transition from the presentation stage to the consultation area allows customers to get an overview as soon as they enter the store. The Configuration Lounges feature ceiling-high separations to the right and left to ensure customer privacy. Additional seating is provided in corporate colors throughout the building.<sup>167</sup> The Volkswagen website offers many features such as the visualizer, car configurator, or simulators for electromobility, to help customers familiarize themselves with the products. Interested parties can compare models and consider how they would configure their cars. Clickable elements can be used to request offers, arrange test drives or search for similar new and used cars that have already been produced.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> Cf. Volkswagen 2023: we drive football – Sponsorships, n.d., <https://www.volkswagen.de/de/marke-und-erlebnis/wedrivefootball/sponsorship.html> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Volkswagen 2023: Konfigurator, n.d.

<sup>166</sup> Cf. Roggenbuck, Jörn/Christoph Ludewig: Volkswagen startet Vertriebsoffensive im deutschen Markt | Volkswagen Newsroom, 2021, <https://www.volkswagen-newsroom.com/de/pressemitteilungen/volkswagen-startet-vertriebs-offensive-im-deutschen-markt-7169> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

<sup>167</sup> Cf. Bäuchle, Christoph: Erster VW-Showroom im neuen Design eröffnet | Automobilwoche, 2020, <https://www.automobilwoche.de/nachrichten/erster-vw-showroom-im-neuen-design-eroffnet> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

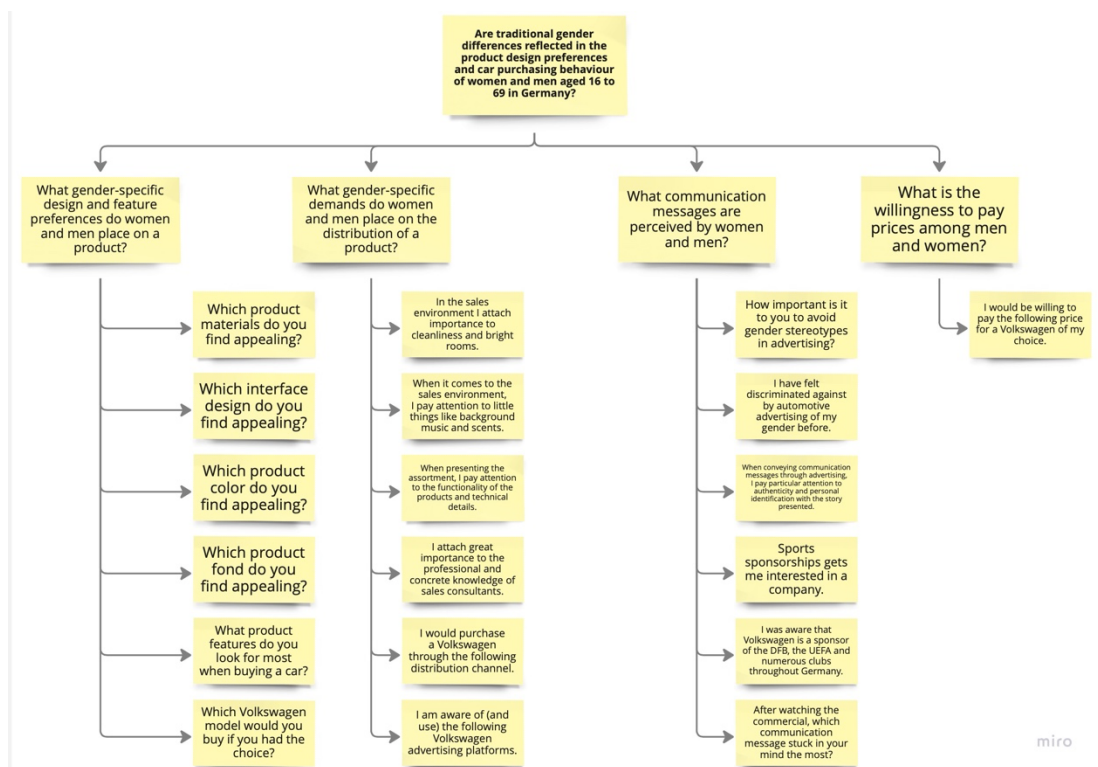
<sup>168</sup> Cf. Volkswagen 2023: Startseite | Volkswagen Deutschland, n.d., <https://www.volkswagen.de/de.html> (Retrieved on 25.03.2023).

# 4 Empirical Study

## 4.1 Research Approach

To answer the research question of this bachelor thesis, a quantitative survey was conducted on the topic of "Gender Marketing in the Automotive Industry". This method was chosen because it was possible to determine the preferences of both genders and different age groups using a wide range of multiple-choice and scaled questions. In addition to conducting the survey, selected literature was consulted to incorporate existing research. It is therefore a deductive approach, in which the present work combines the elements of field research with those of literature work. The questions for the survey were developed based on the insights obtained from the previous research and the guiding questions. In this process, Figure 6 was created to ensure that all guiding questions could be answered.

Figure 6: Assigned survey questions



Source: Own illustration

## **4.2 Questionnaire Design**

The questions were then divided into six categories; personal information, gender marketing as well as the components of the marketing mix namely product, place, price, and promotion.

Overall, the survey consisted of 34 closed questions that can be broken down into more specific question types. Three of the total 34 questions were dichotomous questions. This means that respondents could only choose between "yes" and "no" as an answer option. This type of question was used to clearly distinguish between the experiences and opinions of the participants. In addition, the survey consisted of 15 Likert scales where respondents' attitudes could be measured and examined based on their answers. Participants had to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with specific statements. Moreover, the survey included 15 single and multiple-choice questions. A single question was presented as a matrix question to obtain different answers related to the same variable.<sup>169</sup> Due to the nature and number of questions, participants did not have to spend much time completing the survey. Since short completion times and ease of response increase the likelihood of full participation, these facts were mentioned on the first page of the survey. The survey was designed in the color gray in order not to appear more pleasing to either gender.

## **4.3 Data Collection and the Sample**

To find suitable participants for this research purpose, a target group was defined based on specific characteristics. The focus group is men and women between the ages of 16 and 69 who currently live in Germany. Other countries were not included because cultural and social differences, such as parenting styles, might influence participants' attitudes toward their preferences. This age radius is preferred since especially people of that age pay attention to automobile advertising and the presence of individual companies. People who

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<sup>169</sup> Cf. Porst, Rolf: Fragebogen. Ein Arbeitsbuch, Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, 2014, p. 53-55.

have not yet reached the age of 18 are too young in Germany to drive a car independently. However, they could also show an interest in vehicles, to find out about possible models that they would purchase when they reach the age of majority. Therefore, only people who were at least 16 years old were allowed to participate in the survey. The upper limit of 69 was drawn because retirees are less likely to drive and think about purchasing a motor vehicle. Another reason for excluding older people from the survey is their affinity with the internet, as the conducted survey was to be answered exclusively online. The target group includes both younger people living in Germany, as they represent long-term customers for companies, and older people, as they make up the majority of the German population and have greater financial resources to purchase a vehicle.<sup>170</sup> Apart from that, no further limitations were made.

In the first step, a pretest was conducted to test the comprehensibility and clarity of the survey by allowing three test persons to answer the questions. In order to prevent the replies from showing up in the survey results, this was done on printed paper. Based on the feedback, the questions were adjusted.

The survey was conducted via the website “Survio”. After the questions had been reworked, the access link was distributed to test persons throughout Germany via a wide variety of channels on February 15, 2023. The link was shared via social media channels such as Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp, as well as sent to colleagues directly via email. Participants were given two weeks to complete the survey at a time convenient to them without my presence. They were able to answer the questions on either a computer or a mobile device of their choice. The aim behind this method was to collect more responses and therefore reach a better validity of the research since respondents are more likely to participate if there are lower barriers of entry. A week after the survey was published, a reminder was shared on the previously

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<sup>170</sup> Cf. Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis) | 2023: Mitten im demografischen Wandel – Statistisches Bundesamt, n.d., <https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Querschnitt/Demografischer-Wandel/demografie-mitten-im-wandel.html> (Retrieved on 05.04.2023).

mentioned social channels. At the end of the 14-day period, the collected responses were downloaded on the evening of March 1, 2023.

#### **4.4 Measurements and Data Analysis Methods**

For the data analysis, the entire data set was first divided into individual sheets in Excel, as it was important to be able to view the responses of men and women separately. Afterward, a separate sheet was set up for each of the individual guiding questions to collect and calculate the associated results of the survey in it. Below the questions from the survey, tables were created to record the information collected. With the help of the frequency distribution, the results were counted, and absolute frequencies were determined. Subsequently, these absolute frequencies were converted into relative frequencies. These results were converted to graphs for visual representation.

For the presentation and analysis of the survey results, certain responses were assigned to numbers. For the Likert scales, numbers between -2 and +2 were assigned to the range of response options. The answers with the lowest agreement, importance, or knowledge were assigned the number -2, while answers with the highest agreement, importance, or knowledge were assigned the number 2.

To determine which statistical tests could be performed on the collected data, the characteristics were examined. A distinction was drawn between qualitative, comparative, and quantitative characteristics. For qualitative characteristics, the mode as well as the Herfindahl index was calculated. The mode indicates which response option can be observed most frequently compared to others. With the help of the Herfindahl index, one can see whether the answers of the participants are strongly scattered or concentrated on one answer option. For comparative as well as quantitative characteristics, the arithmetic mean, and the median could also be calculated. The arithmetic mean indicates the rectified average of all observations, while the median defines the smallest characteristic value perceived by at least 50 percent of the observations.

## 5 Analysis of the Results

Due to the distribution of the access link via social media, it is impossible to determine how many people became aware of the survey. Out of 210 visitors, a total of 146 women and men took part in the quantitative online survey and answered questions about their product and purchasing process preferences in the automotive industry. The completion rate was therefore 69.5 percent.

As can be seen in Table 6, of all participants, 75.34 percent were women and 24.66 percent were men. Both genders had the highest participation rate in the age range of 21-29 years. 73 women accounted for 50 percent of the participants while 14 men accounted for 9.59 percent.

**Table 6: Distribution of female, male, and diverse participants**

Gender/Age in years	16-18	18-20	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	Total
Female	4 (2.74%)	11 (7.53%)	73 (50%)	8 (5.48%)	5 (3.42%)	6 (4.11%)	3 (2.05%)	110 (75.34%)
Male	1 (0.68%)	5 (3.42%)	14 (9.59%)	7 (4.79%)	2 (1.37%)	4 (2.74%)	3 (2.05%)	36 (24.66%)
Diverse	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	5 (3.42%)	16 (10.96%)	87 (59.59%)	15 (10.27%)	7 (4.79%)	10 (6.85%)	6 (4.11%)	146 (100%)

Source: Survey results

Referring to Figure 6, six questions from the survey are relevant to answer the first guiding question, *"What gender-specific design and feature preferences do women and men place on a product?"*. Starting with the first relevant question, *"Which product materials do you find appealing?"* the most common answer given by women and men differed. 59 out of 110 women found light plastics such as glass, porcelain, or crystals appealing, whereas 21 out of 36 men voted for mahogany and heavy plastics such as leather, metals, and wood. Furthermore, while 52.77 percent of men favored dark marble, product

materials classified as “feminine”, such as gold with 8.33 percent, bronze with 11.11 percent, and light plastics with 19.44 percent, received fewer votes. Women, however, found both dark marble pleasing according to 50 percent of all statements as well as heavy plastics with 48.18 percent. The distribution can be seen in Figure 7. Women, therefore, show greater enthusiasm for product materials considered “masculine” than men for “feminine” materials.

As with the very first question, the mode differed for women and men for the second question, *“Which interface design do you find appealing?”*. While semi-gloss was chosen by 61 women, the matte surface design was the most popular among 19 men. Conversely, a similar number of men found semi-gloss appealing and women found matte surfaces pleasing. High gloss was found less desirable by both men, with only 22.22 percent, and women, with 31.81 percent. The responses of both genders are shown in Figure 8. Gender-specific preferences, therefore, seem to blur concerning surface design.

The third question, *“Which product color do you find appealing?”* was most frequently answered by both men and women with the answer “Black.” 66.36 percent of women and 66.66 percent of men voted for this product color. As described in Zellerhoff’s theory, the results of the survey indicate that women have a higher affinity for “feminine” colors than men. Accordingly, 51.81 percent of women voted for white, 39.09 percent for light colors, and 41.81 percent for pastel colors. These colors performed less well among men. Besides black, 46.36 percent of men considered dark gray to be aesthetically pleasing. Figure 9 presents the results of the survey question.

The fourth question was *“Which product font do you find appealing?”*. The most common answer given by 61 women and 17 men was identical to “symmetrical font”. The “small font” followed in second place for both genders and the “large font” was in third place. Less than a quarter of men and women voted for “abstract font” or “cursive font.” The results disprove the theory and indicate that

women also like "masculine" fonts and men "feminine" fonts. The distribution of the answers can be seen in Figure 10.

*"What product features do you look for most when buying a car?"* was the fifth question of this section. Participants could submit up to three response options at this point, with the overall distribution shown in Figure 11. The mode for women was "Comfort & Utility" with 61 responses. This was followed by "Consumption" with 53 responses and "Safety" in third place with 45 responses. The most frequently selected response from men was "Engine Power" with 19 votes. "Consumption" followed in second place with 15 votes and "Transmission" in third place with 13 votes. It is worth highlighting that none of the men selected "Child-friendliness" and only four of them selected "Trunk volume". The results thereby reflect the same characteristics that are assigned to women as well as to men in Jaffé's theory of gender marketing in the automotive industry.

*"Which Volkswagen model would you buy if you had the choice?"* was the last information participants had to provide to answer the first guiding question. Contrary to theory, the results in Figure 12 show that women chose the "SUV" with 30 percent of their entries. 38 percent of men chose the "Mid-size" model as their mode. While also 30 percent of the men chose the "SUV", none of them chose the "Small car". Only 23 percent of women were convinced by this category. Accordingly, women also show a great interest in vehicles presented in a "masculine" way, whereas men are not interested in small "feminine" cars.

Responses from four different Likert scales as well as two multiple-choice questions were included to answer the second guiding question, *"What gender-specific demands do women and men place on the distribution of a product?"*. Participants were asked to give their opinion on the statement *"In the sales environment I attach importance to cleanliness and bright rooms."* The same mode and median could be determined for men and women, namely "Agree". The arithmetic mean of 1.02 for women and 0.61 for men, however,

shows that women attach more importance to cleanliness and brightness. The higher Herfindahl index of 0.42 for women compared to 0.27 for men indicates a smaller dispersion of the data. In other words, the results of the survey, shown in Figure 13, are consistent with the theory.

Answers to the second statement "*When it comes to the sales environment, I pay attention to little things like background music and scents.*" revealed very similar results for men and women. Through 37.27 percent of all women and 27.77 percent of all men, the mode occurred on the answer "Disagree". The median could be determined as "Neither agree nor disagree" for both genders. The central value of -0.2 for women and -0.25 for men indicated a similar representation. As described in the theory, the importance of smells for women is not reflected in the results of the survey. The distribution of all answers can be seen in Figure 14.

The visual representation of the answers of the third Likert scale for the expression "*When presenting the assortment, I pay attention to the functionality of the products and technical details.*" can be found in Figure 15. With 73 responses from women and 16 responses from men, the mode and median were "Agree." In contrast to the previous finding, this time the arithmetic mean of the men was higher, with a value of 1.22, compared to that of the women, with a value of 0.90. Nevertheless, the data of women with a Herfindahl index of 0.48 were less scattered than those of men with 0.38. The results of the question reinforce Canzler's theory.

For the last Likert scale on this guiding question, women and men had to state their opinion on the expression "*I attach great importance to the professional and concrete knowledge of sales consultants.*" 63 women and 15 men voted "Fully Agree," thereby determining the mode of this question. The median for women could also be calculated for the answer "Fully Agree" while for men it was "Agree". This trend is also reflected in the arithmetic mean, which was 1.45 for women and 0.91 for men. Although it was explained in theory that the

technical knowledge of sales consultants is especially important to men, the results of the survey reflect a role reversal. Figure 16 shows the distribution of responses.

In addition to general opinions about the sales environment, participants were asked to answer two multiple-choice questions specific to Volkswagen. In the first statement, *"I would purchase a Volkswagen through the following distribution channels."* three answer options were given, which received the same ranking by both genders. 70 percent of women and 58.33 percent of men were most likely to use a company-owned Volkswagen dealer. The multi-brand car showroom came in second with 60 percent of women and 52.77 percent of men. The online configurator received the least number of votes, with around one-third of the answers. Accordingly, as can be seen in Figure 17, 31.81 percent of women and 38.88 percent of men would use it. Building on the theory, this shows that in addition to women, men also prefer to buy their cars in stores rather than online. For the last statement *"I am aware of (and use) the following Volkswagen advertising platforms."*, the participants were offered nine different answer options. The mode for women formed on the answer "Video commercials" with 82 responses, while for men it centered on "The Autostadt in Wolfsburg" with 26 responses. The company recorded the least awareness with its Tik Tok channel, which was known by just 9.09 percent of women and 8.33 percent of men. Figure 18 illustrates the distribution.

To answer the third guiding question, *"What communication messages are perceived by women and men?"*, responses from six queries were included. In the first question, *"How important is it to you to avoid gender stereotypes in advertising?"* participants had to indicate how they felt towards this scenario on a scale from "Very unimportant" to "Very important". The results are shown in Figure 19. With 34 responses, the mode for women was "Important," while for men it ranked "Very unimportant," with 13 responses. These responses are also reflected in the median of the two genders, which is "Important" for women and "Neither unimportant nor important" for men. The arithmetic mean for

women is 0.37 and for men -0.41. All these statistical values show that women are more interested in not encountering stereotypical gender roles in advertisements than men.

These indications are reflected in the second sub-question, in which women and men were asked to answer the following statement "*I have felt discriminated against by automotive advertising of my gender before.*". While the mode, as well as the median for women and men, lie at the answer "Do not agree at all", the arithmetic mean of men with a value of -1.66 shows a stronger expression regarding this direction than that of women with a score of -1.02. This means that, on average, women feel more discriminated against by automotive advertising than men. These results reinforce the theory and suggest that the use of stereotypical characteristics in automobile advertising is more strongly rejected by women. Figure 20 shows the distribution of responses.

Subsequently, participants had to indicate how they agreed with the following testimony using a Likert scale: "*When conveying communication messages through advertising, I pay particular attention to authenticity and personal identification with the story presented.*". As can be seen in Figure 21, the most common response among women was "Agree" at 48.18 percent, while for men it was "Disagree" at 44.44 percent. The median of both genders was found to be in the same answer as previously described. The average answer for women was 0.36 while for men it was -0.30. Thus, the participants' responses reflect Jaffé's theory behind gender differences.

Although the theory suggests that the sponsorship of sports creates a mainly male image, the results of the fourth statement "*Sports sponsorships gets me interested in a company.*" show different results. The mode was "Do not agree at all" for 12 men and "Disagree" for 35 women. The median of men and women was "Disagree" and the arithmetic mean of -0.69 for women and -0.52 for men also indicates little enthusiasm for this type of communication policy. However, with a Herfindahl index of 0.25 for women and 0.23 for men, the

answers to this statement are very scattered. The other values can be found in Figure 22. Thereupon, participants were asked to give their opinion on the statement *"I was aware that Volkswagen is a sponsor of the DFB, the UEFA, and numerous clubs throughout Germany."* 54.54 percent of all women and 69.44 percent of all men answered "Yes" to this question, defining the mode. Only a few women (11.81 percent) and men (5.55 percent) selected "I am not sure", as can be seen in Figure 23. A Herfindahl index of 0.54 for men compared to an index of 0.42 for women shows that they answered more concisely.

Based on a golf commercial, participants were asked to indicate *"After watching the commercial, which communication message stuck in your mind the most?"*. The most frequently given answer was "Humor" for women with 53 votes and men with 22 votes. In addition to this, 32 women recalled social relations and 48 recalled the practical utility of the vehicle. Only twelve of them remembered no communication message at all. 15 men also recognized the practical utility of the vehicle. Only two felt that the commercial was authentic and only five saw social relations in it. Other absolute frequencies can be taken from Figure 24. These results show that the focus of the genders is mixed and that men pay attention to "female" communication messages such as humor and women to "male" communication messages such as utility.

As described previously, pricing policy plays a subordinate role in the gender marketing approach, so only one question was asked to answer the guiding question *"What is the willingness to pay prices among men and women?"*. As can be seen in Figure 25, participants had to state their opinion on the statement *"I would be willing to pay the following price for a Volkswagen of my choice."*. The results confirm the theory by reflecting a lower willingness to pay prices among women. The mode with 38 answers for them is "10,000-19,999€" while for men it is "20,000-29,999€" with nine answers. Also, the arithmetic mean of men with a value of 1.69 compared to women with 0.37 shows that they are willing to spend more money on a car.

## **6 Discussion, Limitations, and Future Research**

To identify whether traditional gender differences are still present in the product design preferences and car purchasing behavior of women and men aged 19 to 69 in Germany, a quantitative study was conducted. In the following, conclusions are derived from the obtained results, and the guiding, as well as research questions, are answered.

Considering the results of the first guiding question, it can be said that women and men have mainly different preferences for the appearance and features of products. While women find both "feminine" and "masculine" attributed materials and colors appealing, men underline the presented image of the theory. This shift also seems to be making itself evident in terms of car purchases. Here, women pay attention not only to aspects attributed as "feminine" but also to engine power and acceleration or comfort and utility. Although some of them would still prefer a small car, just as many women vote for the purchase of an SUV. All these points reflect the evolution of the female role from housewives and mothers to career women. The resulting increase in their income raises their interest and opportunities within the automotive industry. Male changes are not yet meaningfully reflected in the results found.

The results of the second guiding question convey an almost opposite picture of the preferences of women and men determined in theoretical terms. The evaluation shows that women attach importance not only to the sales environment but also to the technical data of the products and the professional knowledge of sales consultants. This shows that women are no longer mere companions to male buyers when buying a car but are just as interested in the products they want to purchase. For men, on the other hand, the presentation of the salesroom also seems to play a role. In addition to the women, they also indicated that they prefer to purchase a vehicle in a showroom rather than on the internet.

The results of the third guiding question indicate that women and men perceive and attach importance differently to certain areas of corporate communications. Women's stronger rejection of gender stereotypes shows how important it is to them not to be reflected in traditional roles. This attitude can be explained by the example of the automotive industry, where women face discrimination more often than men. In this sector, they are often still reduced to traditional stereotypes of housewives or mothers. The theory from the representatives of gender marketing is also underlined when men and women observe commercials. Women pay more attention to the presented authenticity and personal identification with the story than men. This was also determined based on the Volkswagen commercial examined. Women and men remembered both "feminine" and "masculine" characteristics after seeing the clip. The company is therefore trying to make a masculine product world interesting for women through the way it is marketed. The impact of sports sponsorships associated as "male" can be classified as low for both genders. Although many male and female participants were aware that Volkswagen is a sponsor of many events, both genders indicated that this does not increase their interest in the company.

Regarding the last guiding question, it can be summarized that women show a lower willingness to pay prices when buying a car than men. From this, it can be concluded that men still associate their car as a status symbol and women see it more as a means to an end. This could also be the reason why a lot of women still select small cars, as these are usually cheaper. It must be noted that the results obtained refer to a male-product world and this may have influenced the price willingness of the individual genders. In addition, the participants of the survey are mostly people between 21 and 29 years old, which may also have an impact on the available capital.

The overarching research question can be answered in the affirmative based on the results of the guiding questions. Traditional gender differences are reflected in the purchasing behavior of women and men. Not all theoretical

aspects could be confirmed with the help of the survey, however, the majority of the results overlap with the collected information presented in the theory part of this bachelor thesis. Women are fundamentally more open and interested in "male" aspects than men are in "female" aspects. As a result, the automotive industry, which is a well-known male market, is increasingly being taken up by women.

Readers of this bachelor thesis should note that the research has also encountered limitations. Limitations arose in the evaluation of the survey regarding various characteristic points of the individual participants. Firstly, the survey did not generate enough participants to be perceived as a representative image of the German population. In particular, the minority of older population groups between the ages of 40 and 69 could lead to distortions in the results. In addition, the preferences of people under 16 and over 69 were not included, which may also have led to a variation in the results. The comparison of research conducted in the past with the results of the present survey must also be viewed critically since neither the sample nor the method of determining the results is the same.

These limitations point to recommendations for future research. Studies could therefore focus more on individual age groups' different preferences and determine whether these are age-related or intergenerational changes. At the same time, an attempt could be made to ask people from different cultural and social backgrounds about their preferences and compare them with those of German residents. Furthermore, the present work does not include the aspect of educational level or income class. Future research could start from this point and establish a link between gender, the previously mentioned characteristics, and gender-specific preferences.

## 7 Conclusion

Corporate marketing activities play a large part in the perpetuation of traditional gender roles. These stereotypes are reflected in the gender-specific adaptation of product, communication, pricing as well as distribution policy. The assumptions of companies are based on the biological as well as cultural and social differences between women and men and become visible through the application of the gender marketing approach. The characteristics developed and presented are intended to reflect "typical female" and "typical male" buying behavior thereby encouraging customers to make purchases.

The results of the survey show that gender differences between men and women still exist. These relate mainly to the design and feature preferences for products as well as the willingness to pay prices. In other areas, such as distribution or even communication policy, women and men show similar tendencies. This can be attributed, among other things, to the change in values within society. As a result, women have more rights of self-determination as well as capital at their disposal to take an interest in products from "men's markets" such as the automotive industry.

Moreover, the analysis of the results showed that especially women avoid stereotyped advertising. Companies that have recognized the purchasing power of women should therefore avoid using marketing activities that only reflect women in the role of housewives or mothers. This actively demonstrates that although women and men prefer different colors, shapes, functions, and prices, the same products should not necessarily have to be marketed differently.

Overall, it was possible to answer the main research question of this thesis with the results of the empirical study. To sum up, everything that has been stated so far, gender differences are reflected in the product design preferences and car purchasing behavior of women and men aged 16 to 69 in Germany.

# Appendix

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## Tables

**Table 1: Differences in communication patterns**

Important for men	Important for women
Main features of the product	Complete information
Bare Bones: only the product framework	Explanatory text
Informational interviews	Harmony conversations
Highlight one's own social status	Creating interpersonal connections
Explain competition and rank	Create affection and connection
Be better	Be equal
"Putting down" as a game and a sign of respect and affection	"Upgrading" the counterpart
Facts and features of the product	Connect personal wishes with the product

Source: Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 101.

**Table 2: Criteria of equivalent gender product variants**

Female connotated by	Male connotated by
<b>Product name</b> (e.g. "Princess star magic")	<b>Product name</b> (e.g. „Captain Sharky“)
<b>Labeling for women</b> (e.g. Ladies T-shirt „for women“, „for girls only“)	<b>Labeling for men</b> (e.g. men's t-shirt „for men“, „for boys only“)
<b>Product description</b> (e.g. „specially developed for the demands of female skin“; „beguilingly feminine fragrance“)	<b>Product description</b> (e.g. „specially developed for the demands of male skin“; „irresistible masculine fragrance“)
<b>Color of the product and packaging (pink, purple, gold, glitter)</b>	<b>Color of the product and packaging (blue, light blue; dark blue/black/grey for care products)</b>
<b>Attributes, photos, patterns, or applications on the product</b> (e.g. Minnie Mouse; photos of women or girls; motifs of princesses or roses)	<b>Attributes, photos, patterns, or applications on the product</b> (e.g. Disney Cars; photos of men or boys; motifs such as soccer balls or cars)

Source: An der Heiden & Wersig, 2017, p. 16.

**Table 3: Female and male product worlds**

Female product worlds	Male product worlds
Prosecco, tea, low-calorie drinks	Beer, high percentage alcohol, drinks
Small cars	Big cars, lots of horsepower
Cosmetics & hair care	Men's fragrance & aftershave
Fashion & accessories	Suit & tie
Furnishing, living, decorating	Real Estate
Health and wellness	Cigars

Source: Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 58.

**Table 4: Gender-specific behavior at the point of sale**

Values for men	Values for women
Objectivity, clarity	Friendliness of the staff
Technical competence	Competent staff
Separation of factual and relationship level	Emotional components
Talk shop	Relationship levels with the staff
Purchasing power	Bright, tidy atmosphere

Source: Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 64.

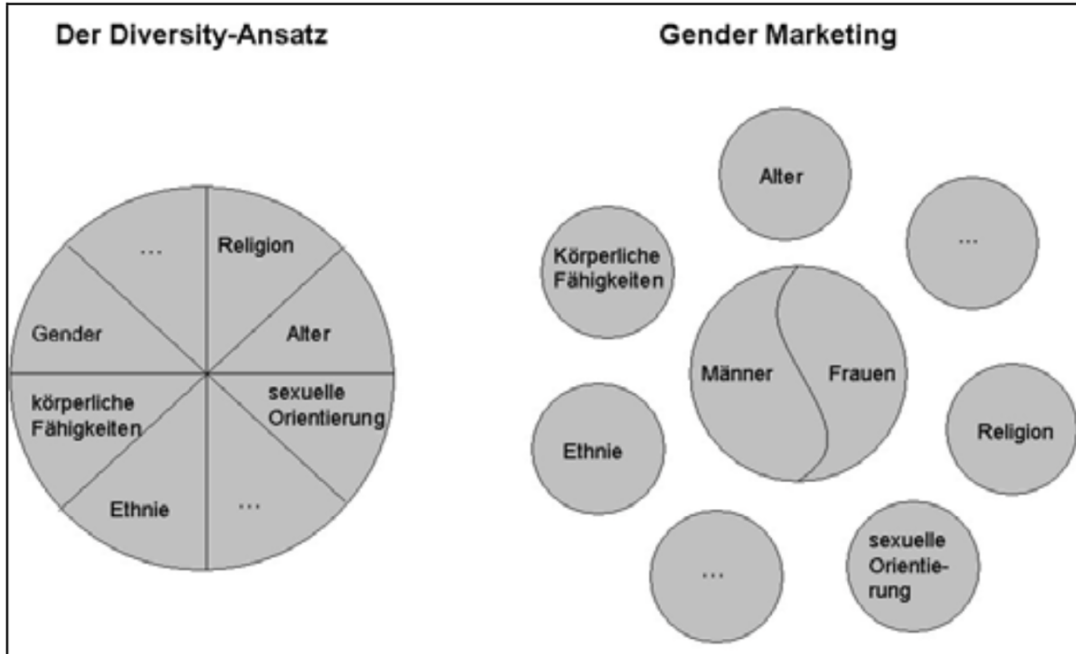
**Table 5: Decision criteria for car purchase**

	Women	Men
Favorable consumption	95%	90%
Air conditioning	67%	74%
Low loading edge on the trunk	59%	39%
Interior storage space	58%	45%
Arrangement system trunk and storage	50%	39%

Source: Kreienkamp, 2007, p. 156.

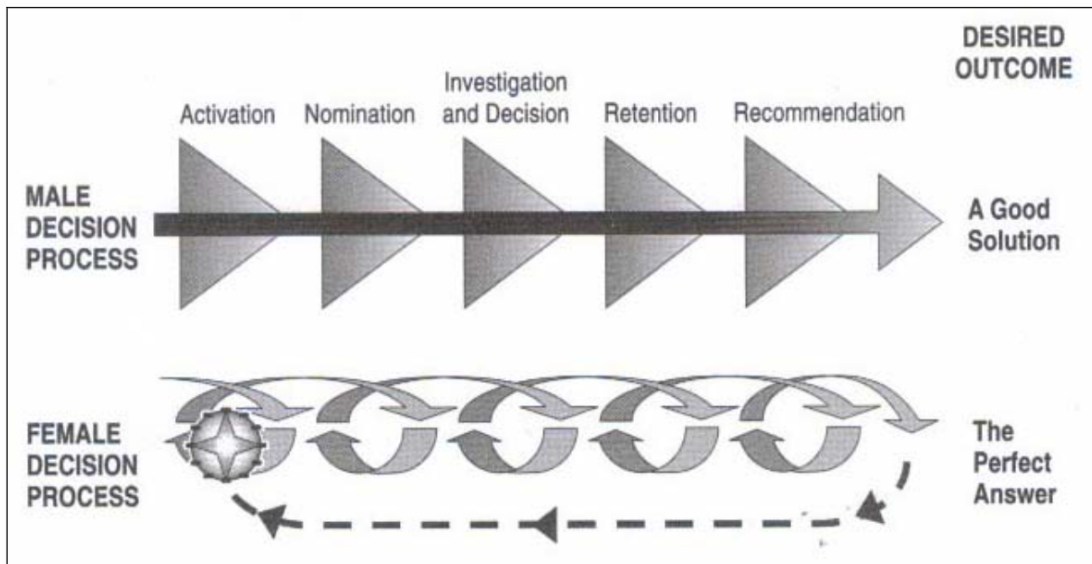
# Figures

**Figure 1: Diversity approach and gender marketing**



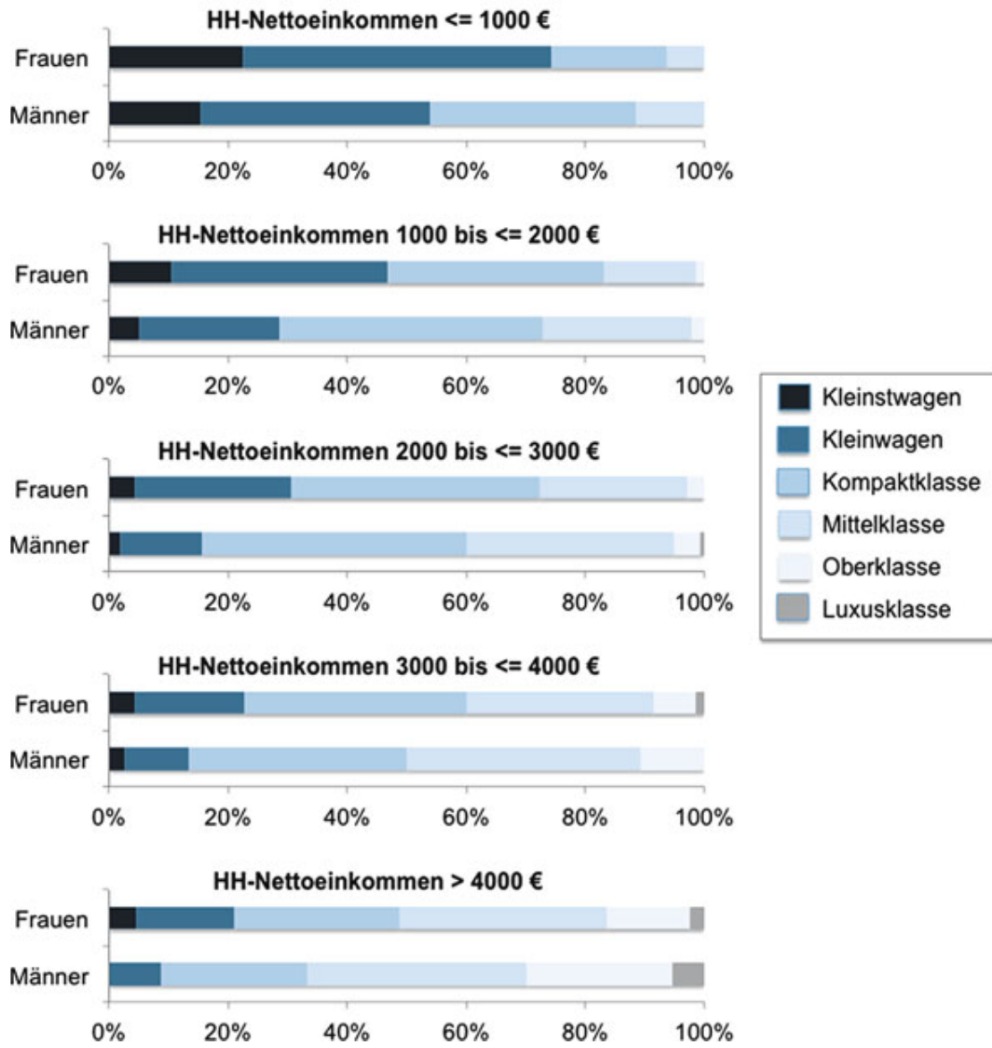
Source: Jaffé, 2006, S. 42.

**Figure 2: The Spiral Path**



Source: Barletta, 2006, p. 117.

**Figure 3: Proportion of women / men in an income class who are considering buying a new car in a certain class – in % of the responses**



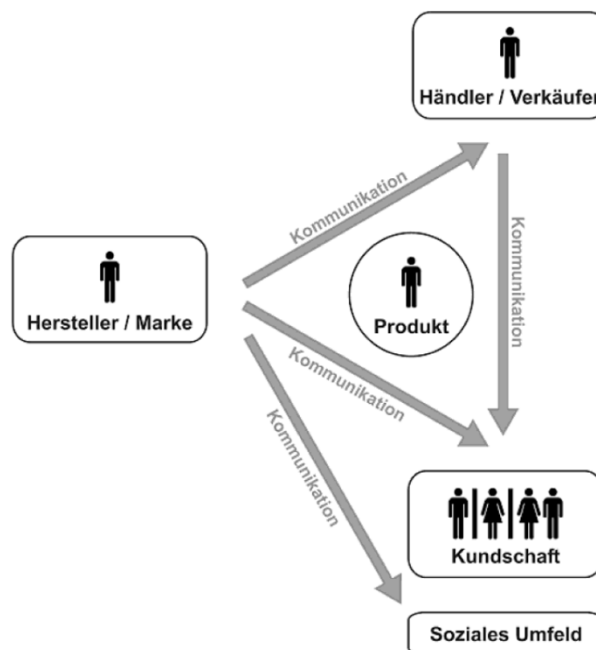
Source: Halfmann, 2014, p. 24.

**Figure 4: Comparison of the front view of VW Beetle and VW Scirocco**



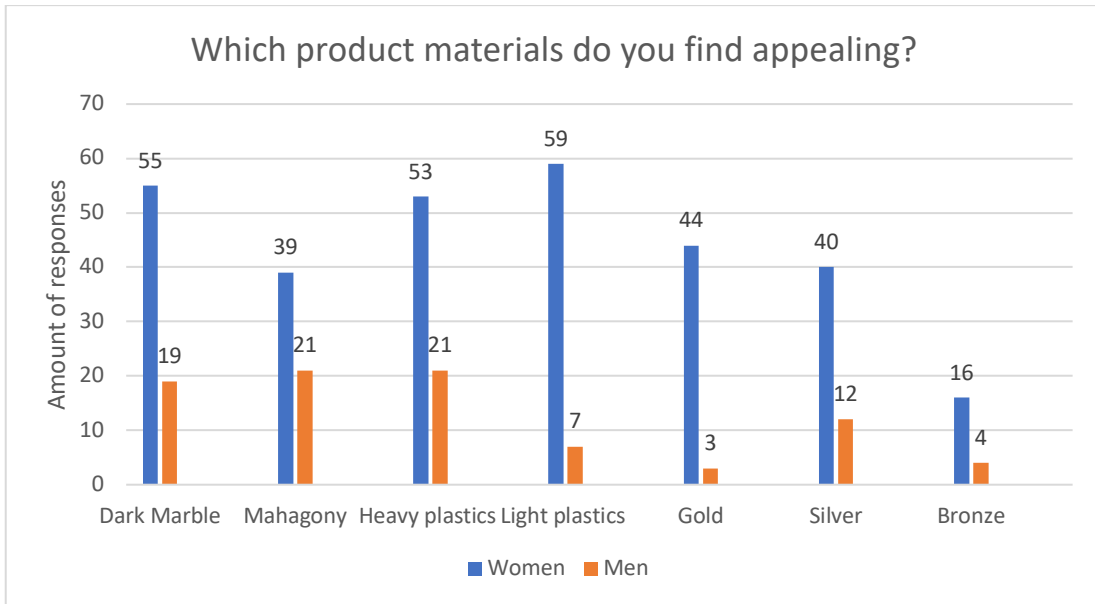
Source: Knörzer & Rennhak, 2010, p. 10.

**Figure 5: Scheme manufacturer-sales-customer in the automotive industry**



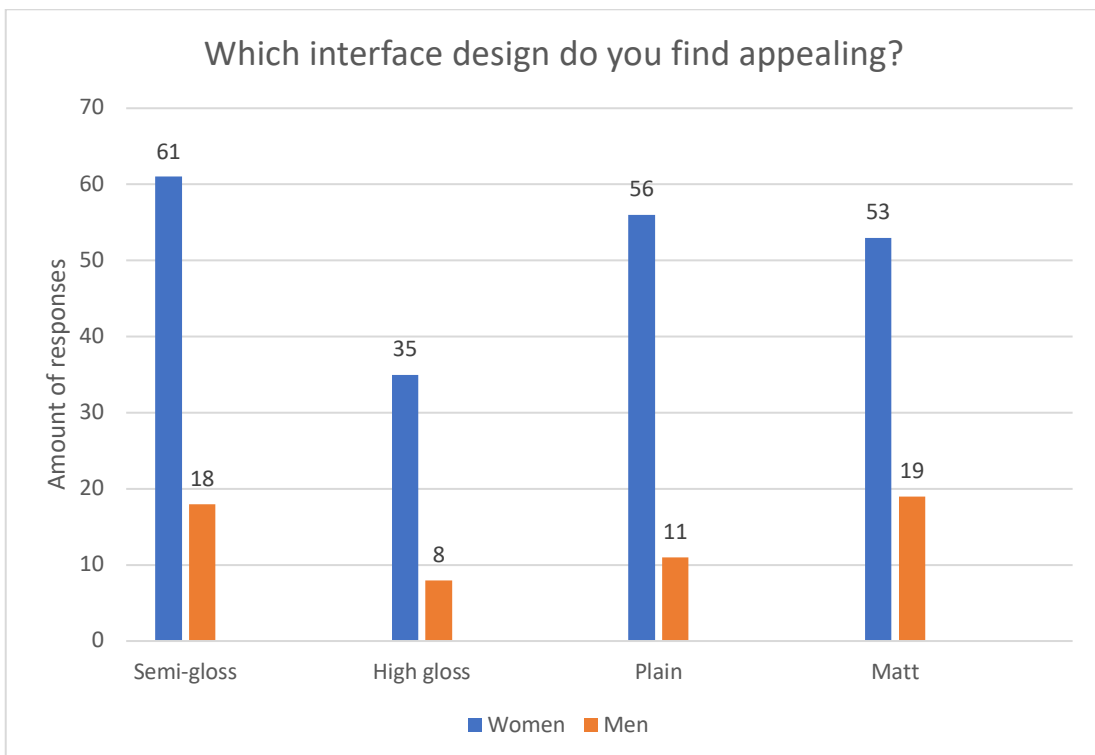
Source: Jaffé, 2014, p. 51.

**Figure 7: Which product materials do you find appealing?**



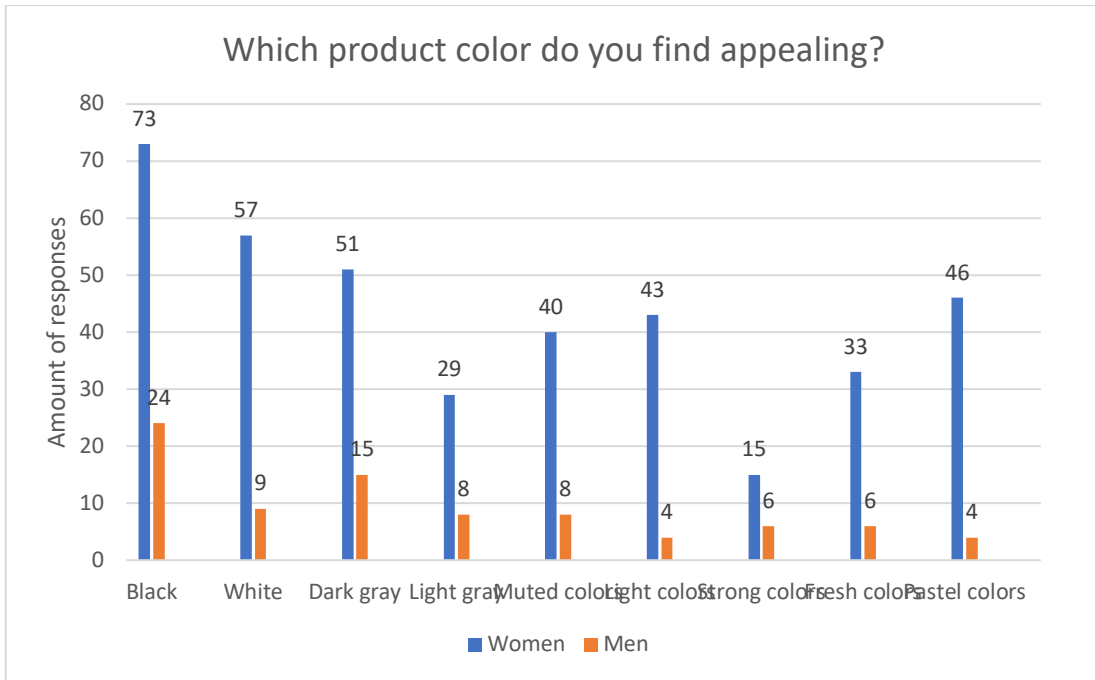
Source: Survey results

**Figure 8: Which interface design do you find appealing?**



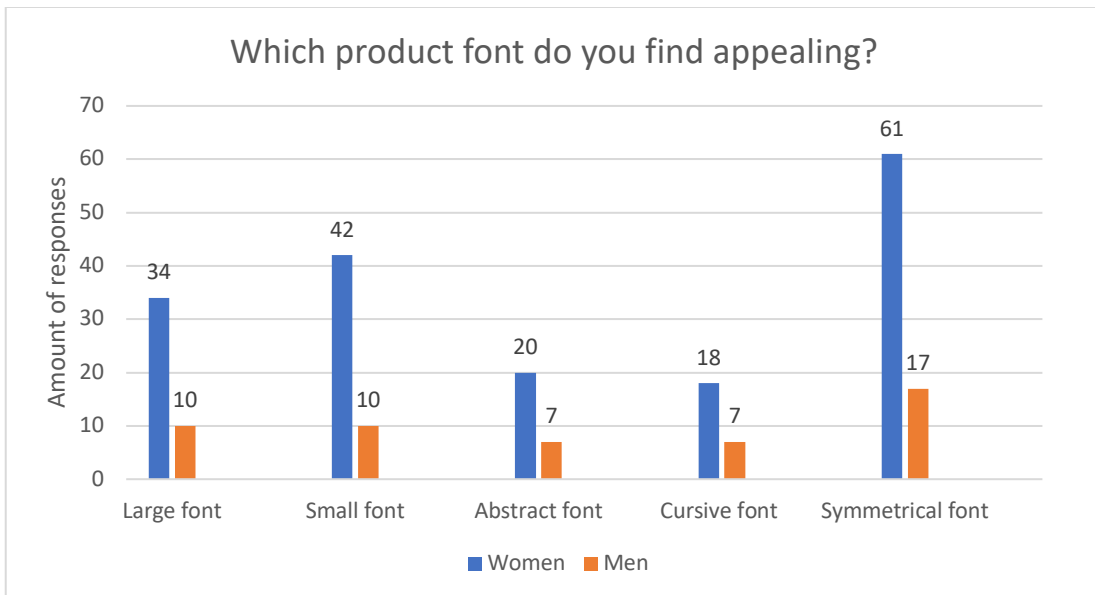
Source: Survey results

**Figure 9: Which product color do you find appealing?**



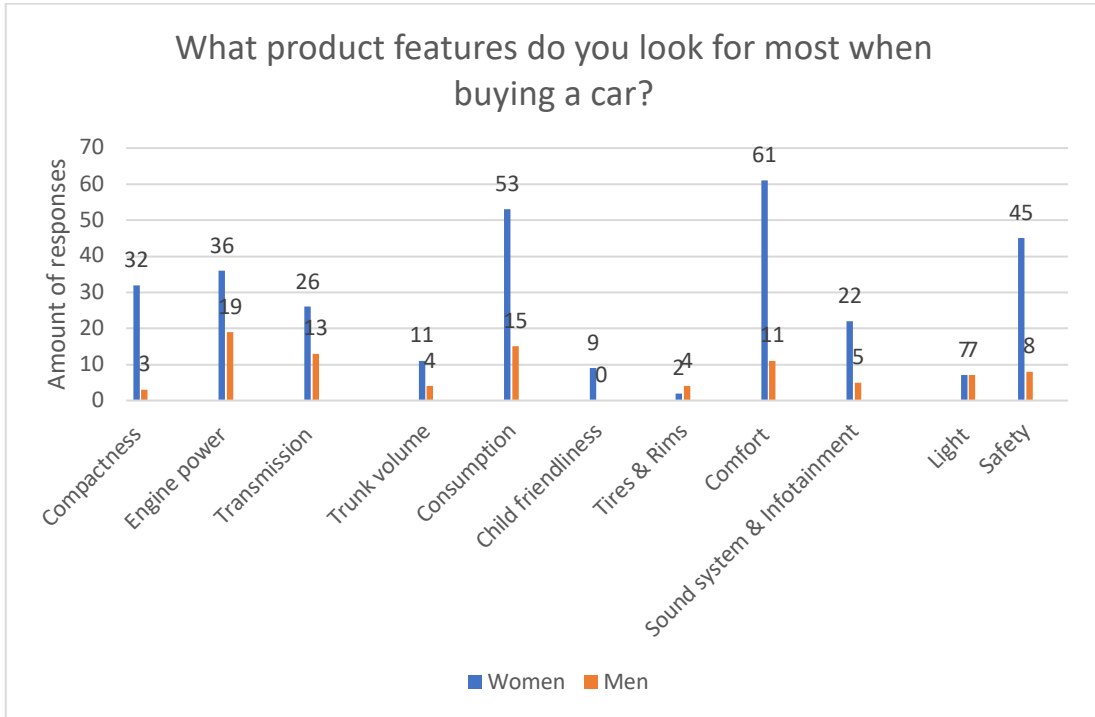
Source: Survey results

**Figure 10: Which product font do you find appealing?**



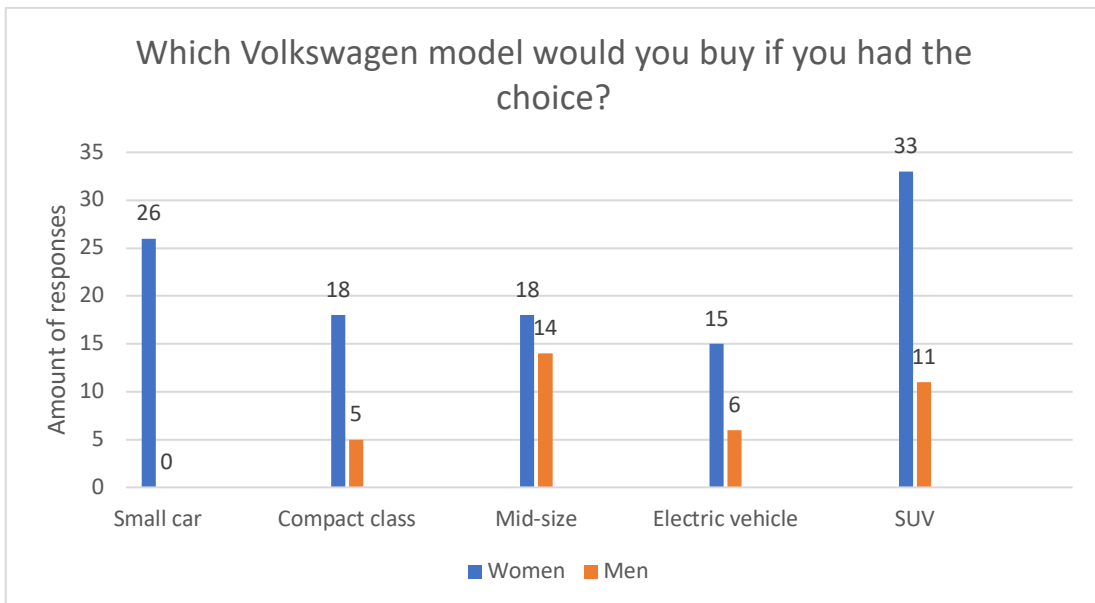
Source: Survey results

**Figure 11: What product features do you look for the most when buying a car?**



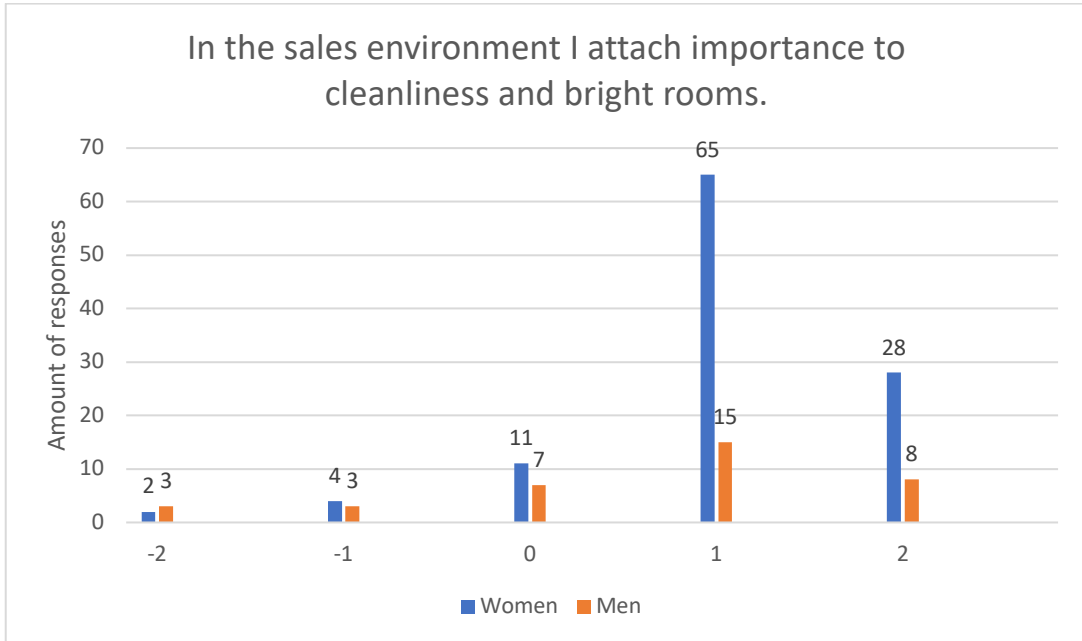
Source: Survey results

**Figure 12: Which Volkswagen model would you buy if you had the choice?**



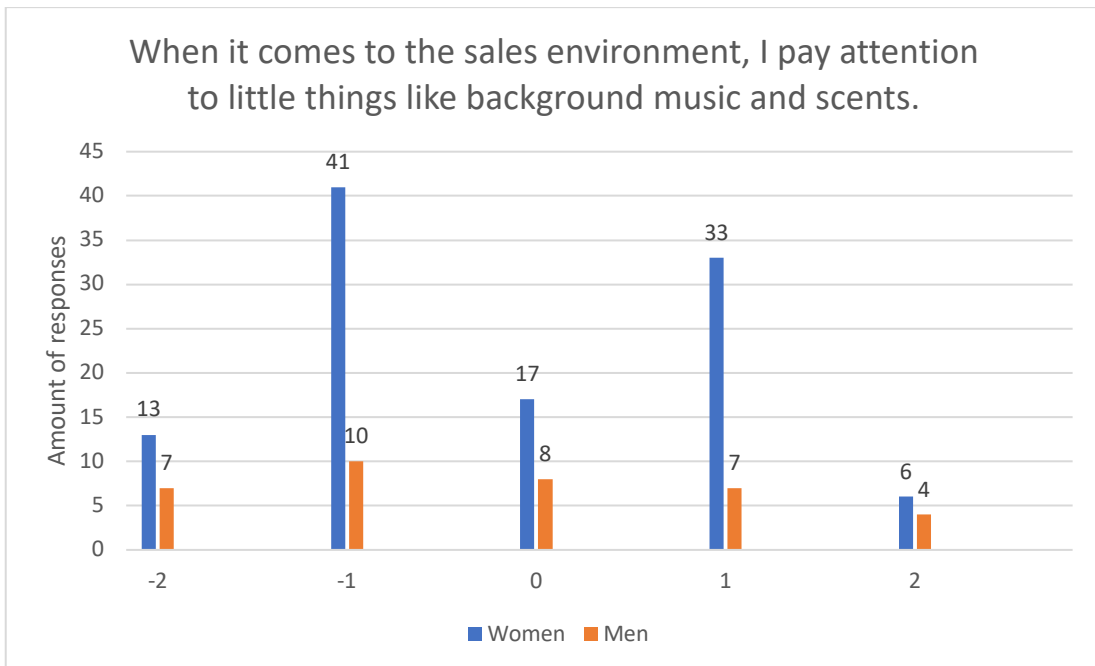
Source: Survey results

**Figure 13: In the sales environment I attach importance to cleanliness and bright rooms.**



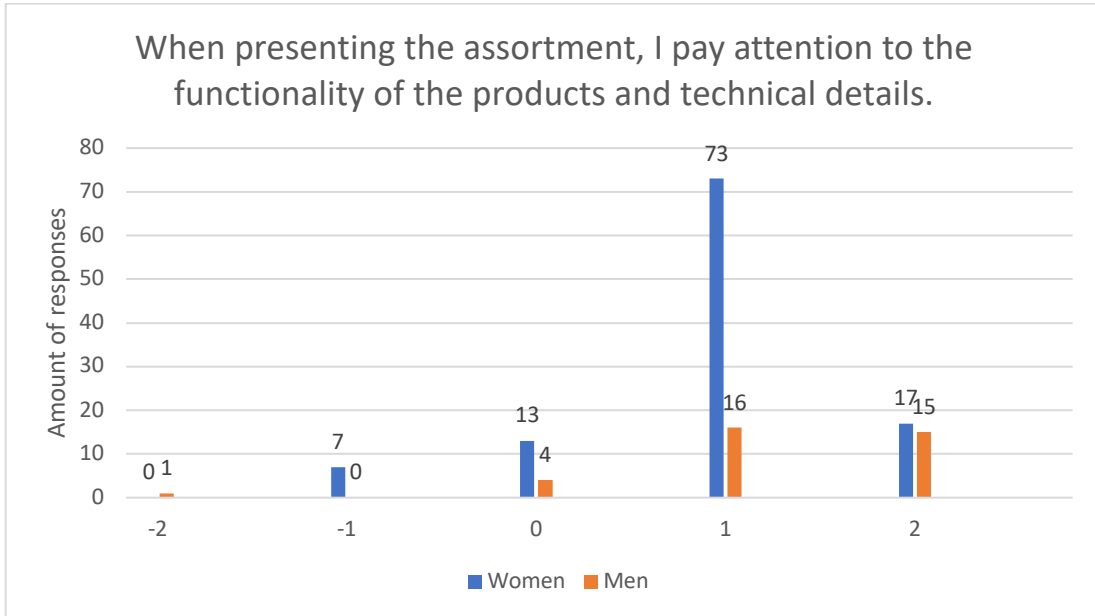
Source: Survey results

**Figure 14: When it comes to the sales environment, I pay attention to little things like background music and scents.**



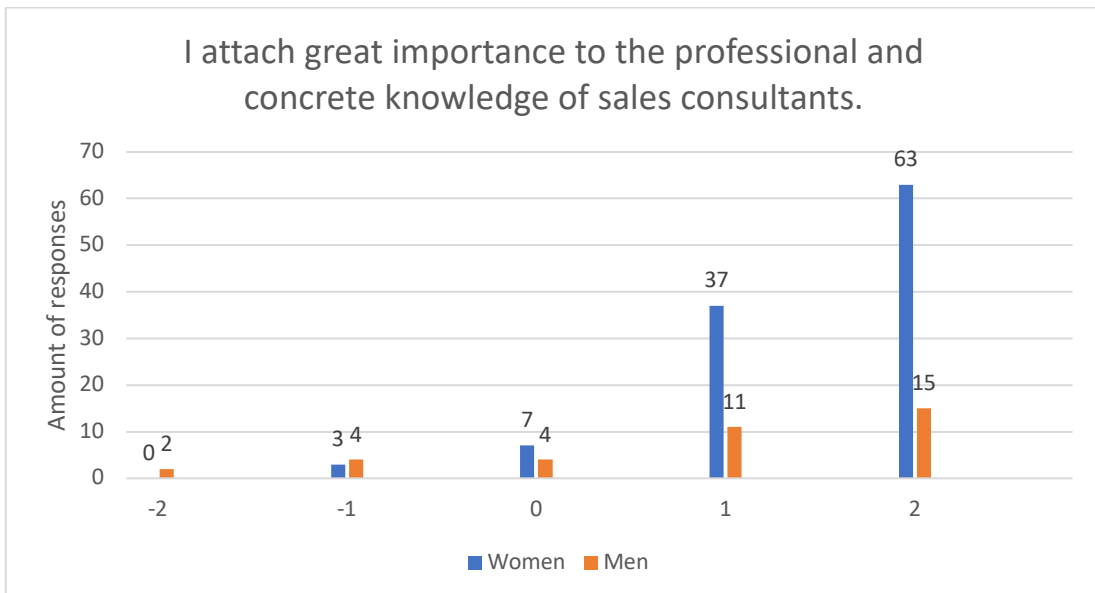
Source: Survey results

**Figure 15: When presenting the assortment, I pay attention to the functionality of the products and technical details.**



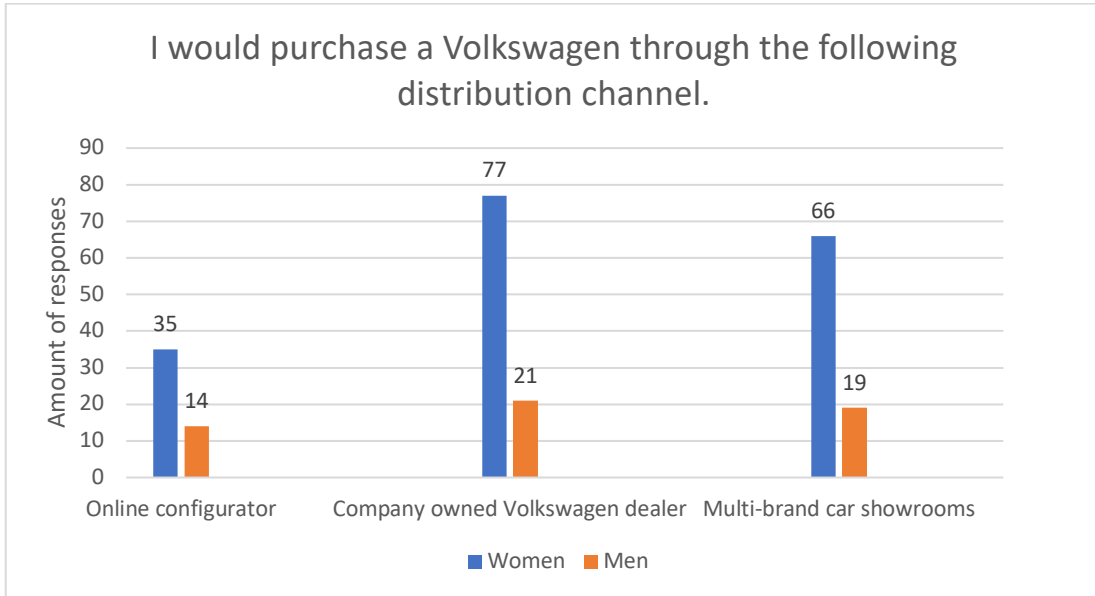
Source: Survey results

**Figure 16: I attach great importance to the professional and concrete knowledge of sales consultants.**



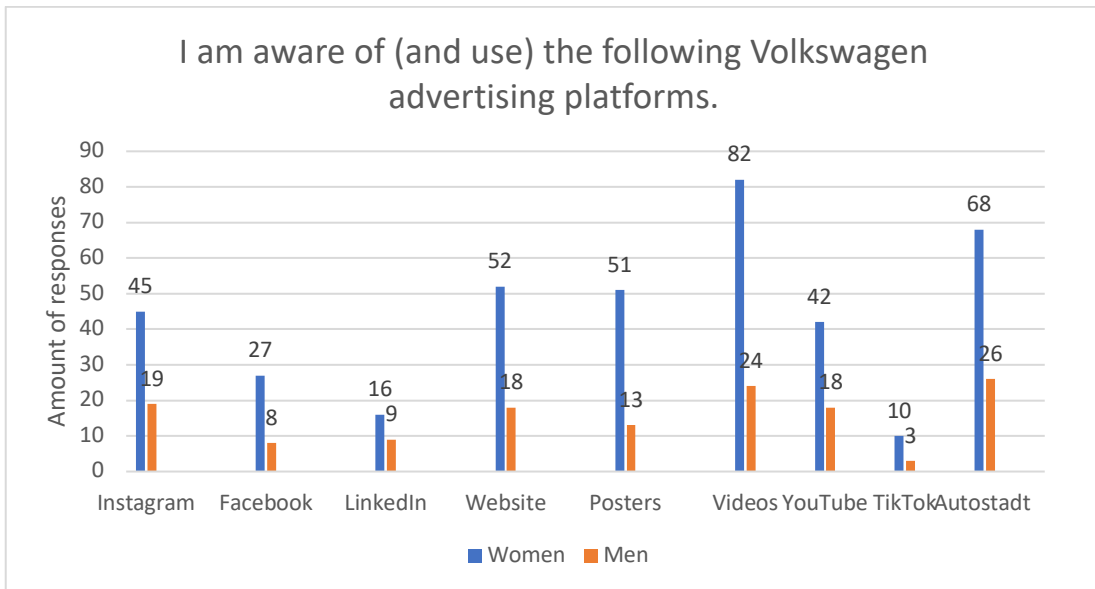
Source: Survey results

**Figure 17: I would purchase a Volkswagen through the following distribution channel.**



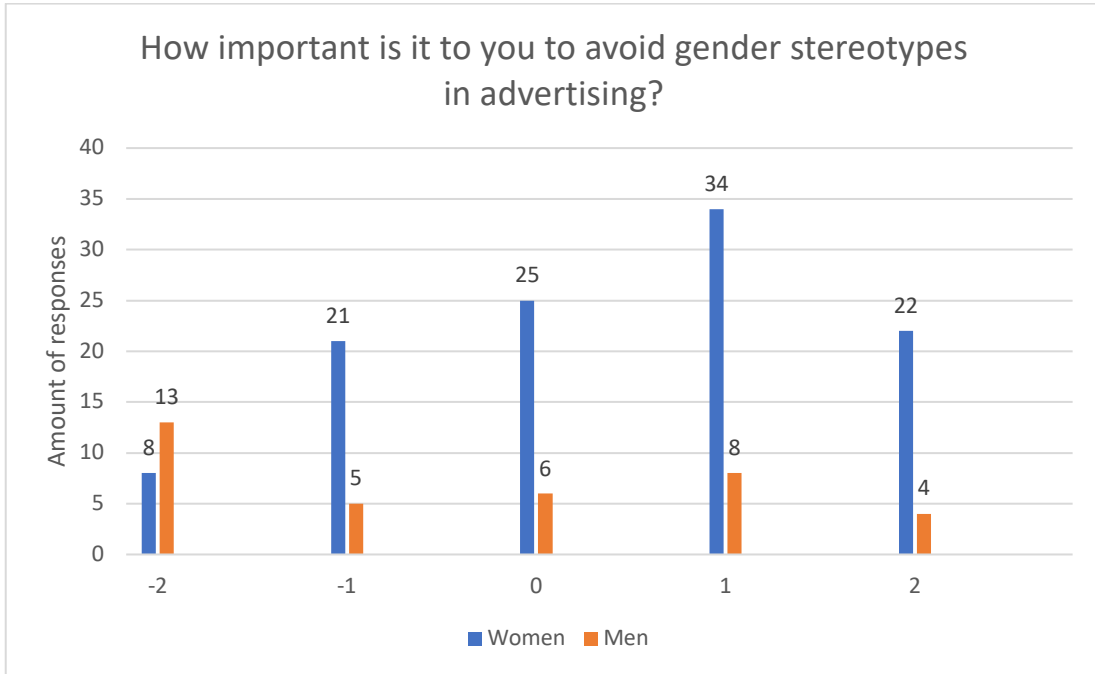
Source: Survey results

**Figure 18: I am aware of (and use) the following Volkswagen advertising platforms.**



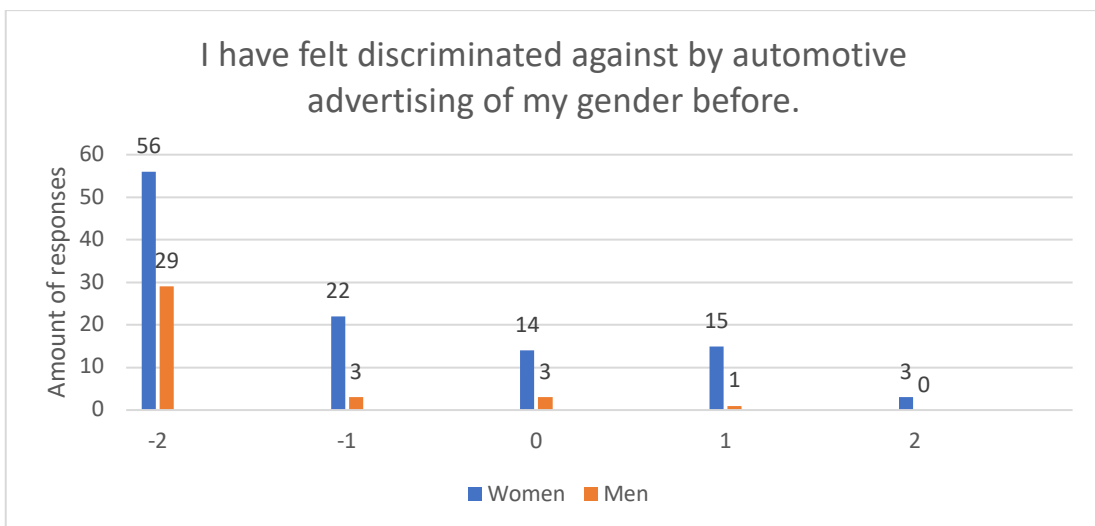
Source: Survey results

**Figure 19: How important is it to you to avoid gender stereotypes in advertising?**



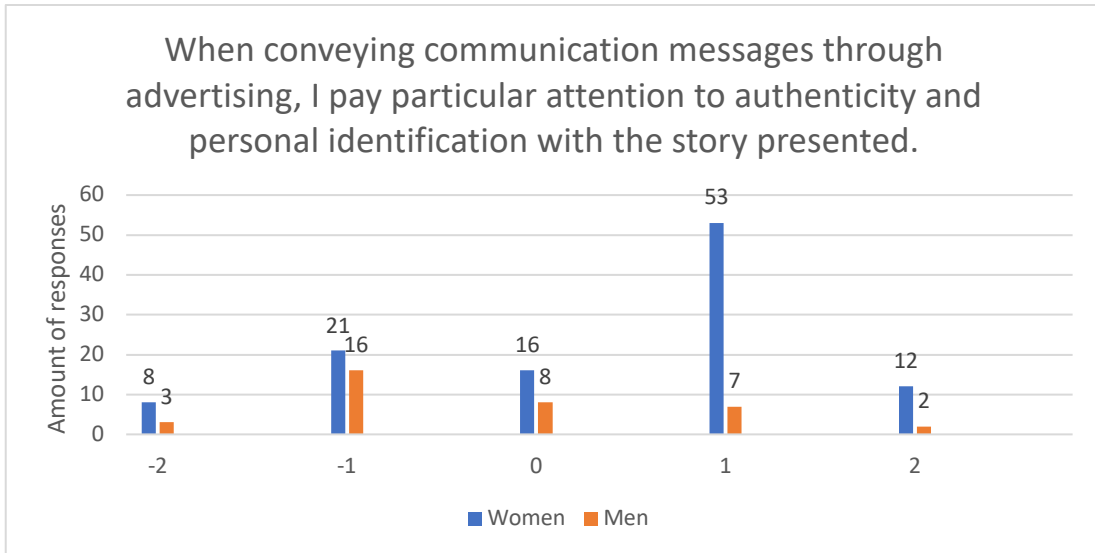
Source: Survey results

**Figure 20: I have felt discriminated against by automotive advertising before.**



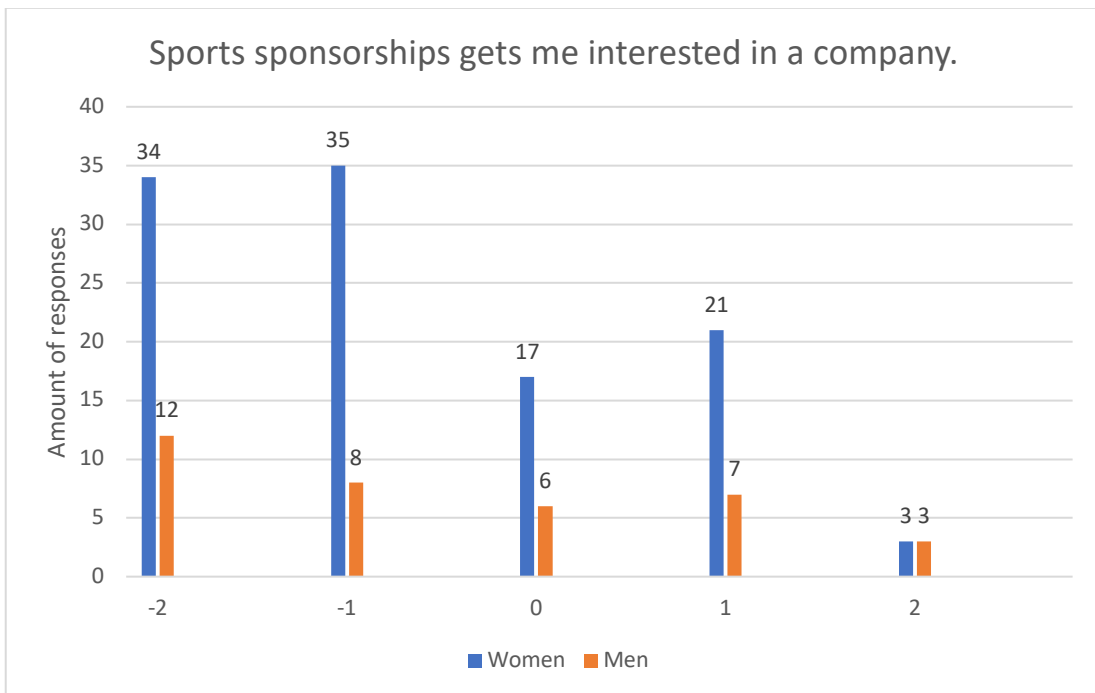
Source: Survey results

**Figure 21: When conveying communication messages through advertising, I pay particular attention to authenticity and personal identification with the story presented.**



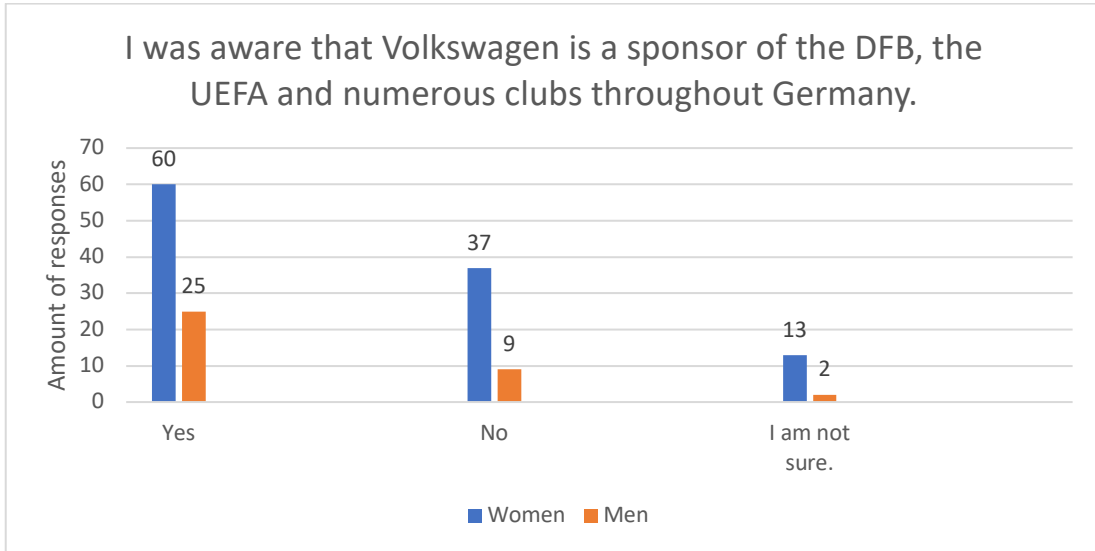
Source: Survey results

**Figure 22: Sports sponsorships gets me interested in a company.**



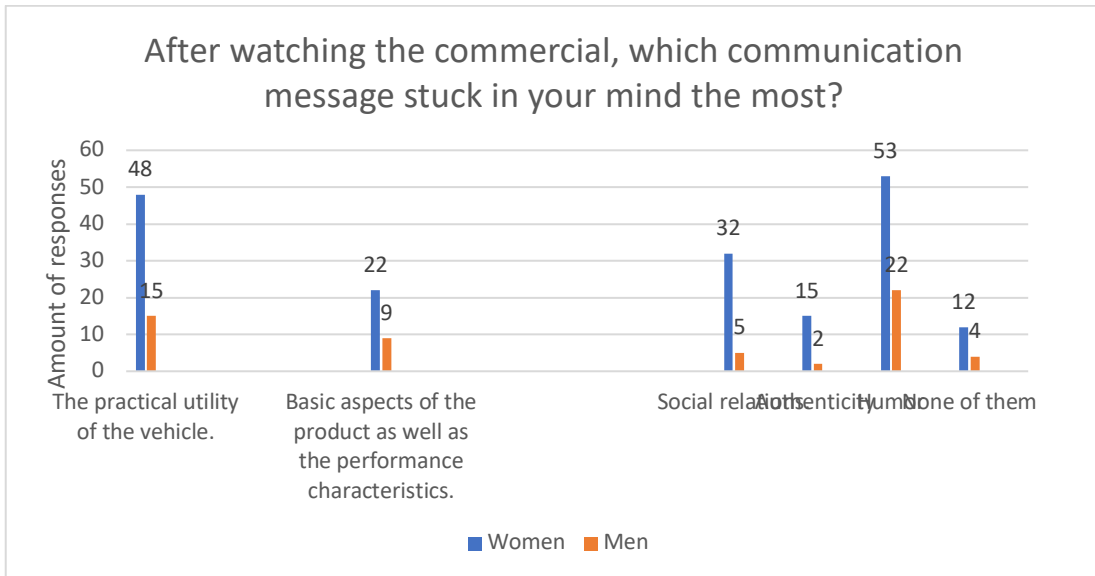
Source: Survey results

**Figure 23: I was aware that Volkswagen is a sponsor of the DFB, the UEFA, and numerous clubs throughout Germany.**



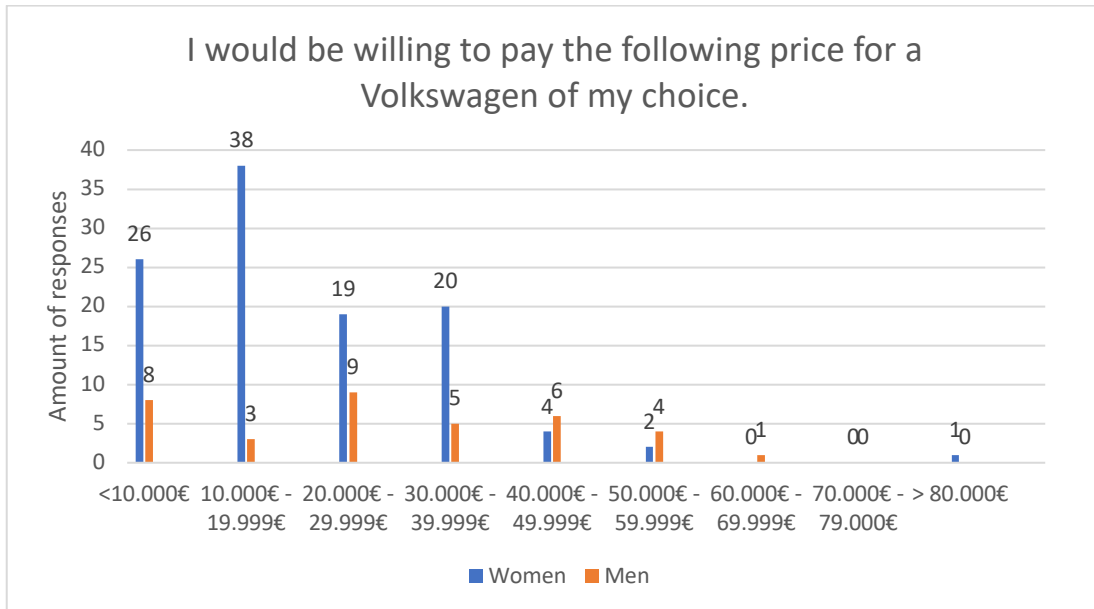
Source: Survey results

**Figure 24: After watching the commercial, which communication message stuck in your mind the most?**



Source: Survey results

**Figure 25: I would be willing to pay the following price for a Volkswagen of my choice.**



Source: Survey results

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## Declaration of Independence

I hereby certify that I have not previously submitted this thesis to any other examination authority, that I have written it independently, and that I have not used any sources or aids other than those indicated, and that I have clearly indicated any citations.

Braunschweig, 22<sup>nd</sup> of April 2023



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Place, Date

Handwritten signature

Number of characters (without blanks): 78,089

Number of words: 14,363

## Eidesstaatliche Erklärung

Hiermit versichere ich, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit bisher bei keiner anderen Prüfungsbehörde eingereicht, sie selbstständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen und Hilfsmittel benutzt sowie Zitate kenntlich gemacht habe.

Braunschweig, 22.04.2023



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Ort, Datum

Eigenhändige Unterschrift

Anzahl der Zeichen (ohne Leerzeichen): 78.089

Anzahl der Wörter: 14.363