Challenging Universality:

Gender Portrayals in Television Commercials in South Africa and Germany

Johanna Maria Hoess

HSSJOH004

A dissertation presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in the Centre for Film and Media Studies

University of Cape Town

February 2024

Supervisor:

Dr Ronald Irwin

University of Cape Town

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

University of Cape Town

ABSTRACT

This study explored gender portrayals in television commercials in South Africa and Germany. Quantitative content analysis is commonly used in cross-cultural advertising research, often relying on codebooks developed in one cultural context and applied universally. Guided by a decolonial perspective, this research aimed to challenge these “methodological universalisms” (Mohanty, 2003) by developing and validating a culturally relevant quantitative instrument. Moreover, this study was the first to compare gender portrayals in television advertising between South Africa and Germany. Adopting a social constructionist viewpoint on gender, the analysis employed Ashmore's (1990) gender domains to examine gender constructions as dynamic and multifaceted phenomena.

The research utilised a mixed-methods design, beginning with a qualitative phase followed by a quantitative phase. In the qualitative research phase, a small subsample of 30 South African and 30 German television commercials was analysed using thematic analysis. The qualitative results informed the development of the quantitative codebook during the interim phase of instrument development. This new codebook was then applied to a sample of 459 television commercials in the subsequent research phase, the quantitative content analysis. Key gender-related themes from the thematic analysis included demographic characteristics, contexts, roles and activities, advertising-specific aspects, nonverbal expressions, and physical attributes. The final codebook consisted of 15 relevant variables to examine gender constructions in South African and German television commercials. By categorising variables according to Ashmore's (1990) framework within the codebook, the study aimed to capture all relevant aspects of gender as communicated in advertising.

As suggested by the results, this context-specific quantitative instrument revealed different outcomes compared to previous research, with German commercials exhibiting more systematically gendered portrayals than South African advertisements. In Germany, nine of the fifteen variables, including *product type*, *setting*, *age*, *body type*, *attire*, *passive vs. active behaviour*, *symbolic behaviour*, *interest*, and *company*, were significant, indicating a focus on

specific gender-related expectations, especially for female characters. In South Africa, four variables—*product type*, *age*, *body type*, and *relationships status*—were significant. The comparative analysis revealed that male characters in German ads tended to be more objectified, while female characters conformed to narrower and more conventional expectations compared to their South African counterparts.

Subsequently, findings for select variables (*gender*, *age*, *relationship status*, and *race*) were contextualised with census statistics, which indicated a notable overrepresentation of young characters in German commercials compared to the population. These findings suggest the need to re-evaluate conventional quantitative codebooks, emphasising the importance of updating measurement tools and critically reviewing their relevance to the specific contexts under analysis.

Keywords:

media and identity, gender representations, cross-cultural advertising research, mixed methods design

DECLARATION

I, Johanna Maria Hoess, hereby declare that the work on which this thesis is based is my original work (except where acknowledgements indicate otherwise) and that neither the whole work nor any part of it has been, is being, or is to be submitted for another degree in this or any other university. I authorise the University to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents in any manner whatsoever.

Signed by candidate

Signature:..... Date: 9 February 2024

DEDICATION

Für Oma.

*****

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people for their contributions to this dissertation:

Dr N. Zungu, for her mentorship and unwavering support throughout this journey. Your encouragement and dedication to engaging with my ideas have been invaluable in bringing this dissertation to fruition.

T. J. Ntuli, for the endless words of encouragement, home-cooked meals, campus pick-ups, and for being a sounding board for my ideas. This work would have not been possible without you.

My supervisor, Dr R. Irwin, for his scholarly guidance and supervision throughout the research process.

My mom, for believing in me and always knowing when I needed a call.

My dad, for supporting my academic career and teaching me that hard work pays off.

The National Research Foundation and UCT Funding Office, for their financial support which made this research possible.

The Centre for Film and Media Studies, for providing opportunities and enabling me to present my work at various conferences.

The Doctoral Degrees Board, for their confidence in my work and for granting the upgrade from Master's to PhD research.

And my editor, V. Bruce, for working alongside me during those late-night editing sessions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT i

DECLARATION iii

DEDICATION iv

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS v

TABLE OF CONTENTS vi

LIST OF TABLES xii

LIST OF FIGURES xiv

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 Motivation for the Study 7

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study 8

1.3 Study Contribution 10

1.4 Thesis Outline 11

1.4.1 Chapter 1 12

1.4.2 Chapters 2 to 6 12

1.4.3 Chapter 7 14

1.4.4 Chapter 8 14

1.4.5 Chapters 9 and 10 15

1.4.6 Chapter 11 15

CHAPTER 2: ADVERTISING PERSPECTIVES AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES 16

2.1 Defining Advertising 16

2.2 Coding Schemes from Key Studies 20

2.2.1 McArthur and Resko (1975) 21

2.2.2 Gilly (1988) 23
2.2.3 Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002) 28
2.3 Conclusion 31

CHAPTER 3: PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON GENDER PORTRAYALS IN TELEVISION ADVERTISING 34
3.1 Global Trends 34
3.2 Insights from South Africa 40
3.2.1 Current Trends 41
3.2.2 Race as Mediating Factor 44
3.2.3 Cross-cultural Studies 50
3.2.4 Conclusion 53
3.3 Insights from Germany 57
3.3.1 Current Trends 57
3.3.2 Cross-cultural and Austrian studies 63
3.3.3 Conclusion 69
3.4 Research Gaps 73
3.4.1 Impact of Country Context 74
3.4.2 Outdated Coding Schemes 76

CHAPTER 4: GENDER IN SOUTH AFRICA AND GERMANY 79
4.1 A Look into the Past 81
4.1.1 A Gendered Perspective on National Socialism 83
4.1.2 A Gendered Perspective on Apartheid 87
4.1.3 Similarities in the Gendered Discourses of National Socialism and Apartheid 92
4.2 A Glimpse of the Present 94
4.2.1 Gender Equality in South Africa and Germany 95
4.2.2 Gender Dynamics and Contradictions 104
4.3 Conclusion 106

CHAPTER 5: GENDER, ADVERTISING, AND SOCIETY 109
5.1 Finding Meaning: Decoding Advertisements 110
5.2 Advertising and Identity 114
5.3 Advertising and Gender Stereotypes 117
5.4 Conclusion 122

CHAPTER 6: THEORISING GENDER 126
6.1 Exploring Gender Concepts 127
6.2 Contemporary Masculinities 132
6.3 Contemporary Femininities 139
6.4 Gender Beyond the Binary 147
6.5 Conclusion 149

CHAPTER 7: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, RESEARCH DESIGN, STUDY METHODS AND PROCEDURES 152
7.1 Theoretical Orientation 152
7.1.1 Social Constructionist Perspective on Gender 153
7.1.2 Decolonial Approach 156
7.1.3 Synthesis of Perspectives 160
7.2 Research Design 161
7.2.1 Mixed Methods 161
7.2.2 Procedures 164
7.2.2.1 Qualitative Thematic Analysis 166
7.2.2.2 Quantitative Content Analysis 167
7.2.3 Channel Selection 170
7.3 Phase One: Qualitative Thematic Analysis 173
7.3.1 Sampling 173
7.3.2 Data Collection 175
7.3.3 Transcription 176
7.3.4 Data Analysis 178

7.4 Interim Phase: Instrument Development 180
7.5 Phase Two: Quantitative Content Analysis....181
7.5.1 Sampling 182
7.5.2 Data Collection and Filtering 183
7.5.3 Unitising 185
7.5.4 Data Analysis 186
7.6 Conclusion 188

CHAPTER 8: UNCOVERING GENDER CONSTRUCTIONS: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND RESULTS 190
8.1 Thematic Analysis: Stages of Data Coding 190
8.2 Instrument Development: The New Codebook 195
8.3 Data Validation....196
8.4 Definition, Operationalisation, and Importance of Variables 197
RQ0: Advertising Attributes 199
RQ1: Roles, Activities, and Settings 201
RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes 206
RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours 209
RQ4: Interests 211
RQ5: Social Relationships....213
RQ6: Mediating Identity Categories 215
8.5 Conclusion 216

CHAPTER 9: GENDER PORTRAYALS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND GERMANY: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS 218
9.1 Content Analysis: Statistical Assumptions and Evaluation....218
9.1.1 Quantitative Coding....219
9.1.2 Data Transformations and Statistical Tests 220
9.1.3 Reliability and Validity 223
9.2 Results: Gender Portrayals in South African and German Television Commercials 227

9.2.1 Male Portrayals 228
9.2.1.1 Practical Providers 228
9.2.1.2 Embracing the Average 231
9.2.1.3 Expressive and Approachable 233
9.2.1.4 Free from Responsibilities 235
9.2.2 Female Portrayals 237
9.2.2.1 The Mental Load 237
9.2.2.2 Looks, Looks, Looks 239
9.2.2.3 Sensual Objects 243
9.2.2.4 Juggling Expectations 245
9.2.3 What We Don't See 247
9.3 Conclusion 248

CHAPTER 10: REALITY CHECK: RECONTEXTUALISING SELECT QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS WITH CENSUS DATA 251
10.1 Gender Distribution and Age 251
10.2 Marital Status Revisited 253
10.3 Unpacking Gender and Race 255
10.4 Conclusion 256

CHAPTER 11: DISCUSSION 258
11.1 Key Findings 259
11.2 Limitations of the Study 263
11.3 Future Research 265

REFERENCES 268

APPENDICES 293
A Qualitative Sample 293
B Transcripts of Selected Advertisements 295
C Quantitative Sample 300

D Codebook 302
E Coding Form 310
F Quantitative Findings Overview 311
G Quantitative Findings Chi-Square Tables 316

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: McArthur & Resko's (1975) Coding Categories....21
Table 2: Gilly's (1988) Coding Categories: Variables for Each Commercial....25
Table 3: Gilly's (1988) Coding Categories: Variables for Each Character....25
Table 4: Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's (2002) Coding Categories....28
Table 5: Labour Equity in South Africa and Germany....96
Table 6: Governance in South Africa and Germany....98
Table 7: Perceptions of Gender Roles in South Africa and Germany....100
Table 8: Attitudes Toward Women's Leadership in South Africa and Germany....102
Table 9: Categories After Data Transformations....221
Table 10: Measure of Inter-coder Agreement (Cohen's Kappa)....225
Table 11: Gender x Product Type....229
Table 12: Gender x Setting....230
Table 13: Gender x Interests....231
Table 14: Gender x Physical and Material Attributes....232
Table 15: Gender x Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours....234
Table 16: Gender x Social Relationships....235
Table 17: Gender x Product Type....238
Table 18: Gender x Setting....239
Table 19: Gender x Physical and Material Attributes....240
Table 20: Gender x Interests....242
Table 21: Gender x Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours....244
Table 22: Gender x Social Relationships....246
Table 23: Gender: Census x Advertising....252
Table 24: Age: Census x Advertising....253
Table 25: Marital Status: Census x Advertising....254
Table 26: Race: Census x Advertising....255

Table 27: Qualitative Sample South Africa (N=30).....293
Table 28: Qualitative Sample Germany (N=30) 294
Table 29: Quantitative Sample 300
Table 30: Gender x Country 316
Table 31: Gender x Product Type.....316
Table 32: Gender x Roles, Activities, Settings 317
Table 33: Gender x Physical and Material Attributes 318
Table 34: Gender x Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours.....318
Table 35: Gender x Interests 319
Table 36: Gender x Social Relationships.....320
Table 37: Gender x Race 320

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Phases and Procedures of the Exploratory Sequential Design. 163

Figure 2: Procedures of the Exploratory Sequential Study with Instrument Development. ..165

Figure 3: Stages Undertaken to Code the Data. 191

Figure 4: Overview of Variables.....198

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> *The history of media representations is not a progression from stereotypes to truth but a struggle to constantly articulate the meanings of people's identities and the ways they can live those cultural categories* (Grossberg et al., 2006, p. 248).

Possibly one of the most researched areas across all forms of mass media is that of the portrayals of men and women. Studies typically compare the representation of men and women and their behaviours in magazines, television, film, radio, news, books, video games, comics, advertising of all types, and even postage stamps (Neuendorf, 2017). In its early stages, this field of research was anchored in the inequalities from which women suffered and was, therefore, mostly concerned with the representation of women.

Advertising is a popular area of research, as it is assumed that, due to the nature of the medium, there are ample possibilities for stereotyping, including gender stereotyping (Sheehan, 2004). Stereotypes offer a way to systemise and simplify information and help us make sense of the world (Åkestam et al., 2017). While they are not inherently harmful, they can become harmful when they limit opportunities for one social category or create expectations about one social category over another (Grau & Zotos, 2016). Stereotypes can have real-life implications and may affect how people behave towards a member of the social group being stereotyped and impact the self-esteem or even societal standing of those being stereotyped (Eisend, 2010).

Advertising research often uses the terms “gender stereotypes”[1] and “gender roles”[2] (Eisend, 2019, p. 72) to examine the same notion: the belief that men and women are differentiated by certain attributes. Findings of previous studies confirm that advertising content largely consists of “androcentrism” (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 293). Television commercials, the subject of this

[1] Gender stereotypes refer to “the structured sets of beliefs about the personal attributes of women and of men” (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1979, p. 222).
[2] Gender roles encompass “the normative expectations that members of a given culture or subculture hold about the positions men and women should occupy (Spence & Buckner, 1995, p. 110).

study, not only overrepresent men and portray them in more socially valued gender roles but also perpetuate gender stereotypes by presenting male and female characters in significantly different ways (Collins, 2011). From the perspective of advertisers, gender[3] is an important segmenting variable when defining target groups and developing advertising strategies (Matthes et al., 2016; Milner & Higgs, 2004). Furthermore, the tendency to generalise is common in advertising, and stereotypes are a useful tool for that.

The concerns around the harmful implications of the perpetuation of gender stereotypes by advertising are widely recognised and have even been translated into policies in many countries (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). In Section II of their Code of Advertising Practice, South Africa's Advertising Regulatory Board (ARB)[4] (2021, p. 2) stresses that "[g]ender stereotyping or negative gender portrayal must not be permitted in advertising, unless, in the opinion of the ARB, such stereotyping or portrayal is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom". This critical stance is rooted in what the UK's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)[5] describes here: "[…] harmful stereotypes can restrict the choices, aspirations and opportunities of children, young people and adults and these stereotypes can be reinforced by some advertising, which plays a part in unequal gender outcomes" (Advertising Standards Authority, Committees of Advertising Practice, 2019). While legislation can provide a framework for gender equality, it cannot change deep-rooted attitudes or ideas about gender roles in society (UNESCO, 2020).

So, what makes television commercials a compelling research subject when it comes to gender stereotyping? Television commercials, with their evocative visual nature and their pervasive presence in our living rooms, have been a subject of research on gender portrayals for decades (Goffman, 1965; McArthur & Resko, 1975). This is due to the fact that it is assumed that advertising sells more than a product or a service, it presents the consumer with an aspirational version of themselves that supposedly can be attained through buying the advertised product

[3] In the context of this dissertation, gender is understood as a social construct (West & Zimmerman, 1991).
[4] https://www.arb.org.za.
[5] https://www.asa.org.uk.

or service (Williamson, 1978). Since advertising needs to relate to the consumer in order to be effective, it makes it a practical lens through which to study a society's gender norms and values.

Studying the way advertising portrays social identities may imply that there exists a 'right' image of this group, which is biased in advertising's depiction of that group (Grossberg et al., 2006). However, at times, stereotyping occurs if a particular group is not represented at all. But typically, the questions around stereotypical media representations revolve around the content of the images; around how the group is being represented. The underlying assumption of studying gender portrayals in television commercials is that "[t]he worth of characters… is symbolically communicated by their absence or abundance on screen and by the quality of their portrayals" (Lauzen & Dozier, 2005 cited in Luyt, 2011, p. 358).

When one pays attention to the changing nature of portrayals, it becomes clear that these are often connected with the group's standing in society (Grossberg et al., 2006). Advertising portrayals do not only reflect those social categories, such as gender, but, instead, play an active role in their construction (Grau & Zotos, 2016). Some research has focused on the theoretical construction of gender, some is more concerned with gender as an operational aspect of advertising, while other studies look at the media images of gender stereotypes (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991). This work focuses on the last mentioned and can, therefore, be situated in the intersection between gender and media studies.

Over the past decades, the role of men and their socialisation has become increasingly problematised in academic contexts (Connell, 1987; Connell, 2005; Morrell, 1998; Morrell, 2001b). This is because it is assumed that men, too, can be the subject of harmful stereotyping (Sheehan, 2004; Viljoen, 2008). Moreover, gender categories are understood to be constructed against and with each other, which is why it is crucial to analyse both male and female portrayals. Furthermore, there is a marginalised group that is often overlooked in discussions of gender, namely, individuals who identify with gender constructions that fall outside the binary (Eisend, 2019). Non-binary or genderqueer individuals, in particular, often

remain largely invisible in media representations, making it crucial to acknowledge their existence. This is especially important since more traditional gender norms and values may, in fact, completely negate their identities.

This dissertation draws on the traditions of psychology, sociology, media studies, marketing, and gender studies to provide a better understanding of the way gendered advertising interplays with individual identities and broader cultural contexts. As the opening quote suggests, the point is not for advertising to reflect the 'truth', but rather to make categories of identity available to the consumer and allow viewers to relate their own identities to other individuals in a way that forges an equitable society (Grossberg et al., 2006).

The study includes a cross-cultural comparison of South Africa and Germany. Many studies researching gender stereotypes in advertising compare different countries, and most of the cross-cultural quantitative content analyses compare at least two cultural contexts (Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Lay, 2019). Studies in the field typically compare one or more 'traditional' countries (often non-Western countries) with one or more 'less traditional' countries (often Western countries). The two country contexts for this study were chosen for the interesting insight that they offer into gender, and the dramatic shifts they have undergone socially and politically, which were expected to be reflected in their media representations of gender.

South Africa offers an interesting case study for examining gender representations in advertising, given its history of significant inequality. The country has grappled with racially based disparities that were enforced and maintained during the colonial and Apartheid era of white minority rule (Jackson, 2014). Consequently, race[6] issues have naturally been a prominent focus in both public and academic discourse (McClintock, 1991). However, in recent decades, there have been a growing awareness and discussion around gender inequality (Luyt, 2011). In particular, gender-based violence persists as an urgent issue in South Africa,

[6] In line with Luyt (2012), this dissertation understands race as a social construct rather than an inherent trait of individuals. Its usage is justified by its meaningfulness. The selected category descriptors reflect their current construction in South African society and include Asian, black African, coloured, and white.

serving as a stark reflection of the ongoing gender-related issues prevalent in the country (Gqola, 2007). The increasingly public discourse of gender, along with the societal shifts following the pivotal first democratic elections in 1994 (Morrell, 1998; Narunsky-Laden, 2008), provides a unique lens through which to explore the renegotiation of gender norms and practices in the country.

Germany offers a compelling context for examining gender representations in advertising, as it provides an interesting juxtaposition to the South African context, while also sharing historical similarities. In Germany, gender-related issues have been a prominent topic of public discourse, with a shift in focus from predominantly feminist issues in the 1970s to the examination of masculinities in recent years (Velte, 1995). Moreover, Germany is an ethnically and culturally diverse country with a complex history (Stibbe, 2012). This unique cultural context is the backdrop of negotiations of gender relations and the staging ground for gender representations in media, adding depth to the study of gender representations in advertising in this country.

This research examines the effects of different cultural values on gender portrayals in advertisements. It is quite common to compare different countries and their gender representation in advertisements to understand the impact of the cultural context on gender portrayals (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Gilly, 1988; Lim & Furnham, 2016; Matthes et al., 2016; Milner, 2005; Paek et al., 2010; Whitelock & Jackson, 1997). Because advertising is culture-specific, comparing two contrasting cultural contexts, such as a Western, developed non-English-speaking country and an African, developing, widely English-speaking country, is expected to lend insights into the accepted gender expressions in these societies.

This dissertation also offers a theoretical link between Apartheid and National-Socialism that adds to the significance of a comparative analysis of gender in South Africa and Germany, making it particularly promising in revealing similarities and differences in gender portrayals between these two countries. By taking into account the historical background that has shaped the construction of gender identities in South Africa and Germany, and acknowledging socio-

political similarities between these two countries, which encompass oppressive social structures and discriminatory practices, this study lays a valuable foundation for exploring similarities and differences in gender portrayals in the countries. By examining gender portrayals in television advertising through this lens, this study aims to shed light on the complex interplay between culture,[7] history, and gender in these distinct contexts.

The dissertation commences by briefly defining advertising and presenting methodological approaches of three key studies. This is followed by an extensive review of existing literature, with a specific emphasis on quantitative research conducted globally, as well as research carried out in South Africa and Germany. Subsequently, a comparison between historical gender dynamics as well as an overview of structural indicators of gender equality in South Africa and Germany is presented, positioning the research within its broader societal context and exploring the ways in which gender is portrayed and constructed in television advertising. Following that, the complex interplay between advertising, gender (identities), and the broader societal context is explored. The final literature review chapter introduces the concept of gender as applied in this research, and includes discussions on masculinities, femininities, and non-binary identities, and a critical examination of how gender can be used as an analytical category in media research.

The research's theoretical framework is established in the following chapter by synthesising Ashmore's (1990) gender identity framework with Mohanty's (2003) critique of methodological universalisms. This research adopts Mohanty's (2003) decolonial perspective, highlighting the need for culture-specific methodology to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the study's analysis and findings. Furthermore, Ashmore's (1990) gender model underpins the social-constructionist perspective on gender in this study. The study introduces a mixed-methods approach to develop and validate a new quantitative measurement, and then presents findings from both research phases. This dissertation concludes with an analytic summary that is firmly

[7] Culture can be defined as "the lens through which we see the world. It influences the way we think, feel and behave" (McCracken, 1986 cited in Lee & Yoo, 2012, p. 21).

grounded in historical and cultural gender constructions of the respective countries. By incorporating a South African perspective into a concept that has predominantly been viewed through a Western lens without much scrutiny, this work aims to challenge existing paradigms and introduce diverse cultural perspectives into the conversation.

1.1 Motivation for the Study

This study is interested in exploring gender stereotypes, how gender identities are shaped in different cultural contexts, and what constructions of gender are circulated in television commercials in South Africa and Germany. In doing so, this research addresses a gap in the literature by developing a new codebook for the quantitative measurement of gender portrayals in television commercials. Existing coding schemes have barely been updated since their first introduction in the 1970s and, hence, fail to reflect current, more nuanced approaches to gender (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Furnham & Lay, 2019). If existing codebooks were amended, this was usually not done systematically based on research, and, if new coding categories were added, the decision to do so was typically not thoroughly motivated (Furnham & Lay, 2019).

Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002) pointed out that using an outdated coding scheme is not ideal, since advertisements have changed throughout the last decades. Advertising images are not the same, and nuances of the content may not be captured by the outdated codebooks. It is crucial to consider the subtle and nuanced ways in which representations in television advertising may perpetuate harmful stereotyping, not only towards women, but also towards men and non-binary individuals. This highlights the importance of moving beyond simple frequency counts in quantitative assessments of gender portrayals, and also evaluating the nature of these portrayals in a more nuanced way.

This is the first study to address questions around gender portrayals with culture-specific methods that are newly developed as part of this study. While widely used coding categories were developed in Western countries, they have been frequently applied to a variety of cultural

contexts to measure the degree of gender stereotyping without assessing their relevance or meaning for the specific cultural setting. It can, therefore, be argued that established measures lack validity within the South African cultural context because of a conceptual overreliance on existing Western coding categories.

This research, thus, addresses what Mohanty (2003, p. 33) referred to as the issue of "methodological universalisms", by rethinking methods and suggesting new pathways for research on gender in advertising. By employing culture-specific methods, this study aims to address the limitations of established measures and provide a more nuanced understanding of gender representations in the specific cultural contexts. This study, therefore, is motivated by the importance of integrating newer gender concepts into advertising research and ensuring the fit of research methods in specific cultural contexts.

Moreover, there is a need for current research in South Africa and Germany. Most quantitative studies have been conducted in English-speaking countries, while Germany remains relatively under-researched, possibly due to language barriers (Holtz-Bacha, 2011; Rudy et al., 2010). The last studies conducted in South Africa were from 2011 (Holtzhausen et al., 2011; Luyt, 2011). Generally, only a handful of quantitative studies have been undertaken in South Africa over the years due to what seems to be an inclination towards qualitative research (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Mak, 1999; for an overview, see Furnham & Lay, 2019). Additionally, despite a substantial body of research on the representation of women and men across a variety of media forms, there remains a notable gap in the literature when it comes to comparing gender stereotyping in South African and German television commercials. Therefore, the current study not only contributes to the limited number of quantitative analyses in the respective countries, but also fills a gap in comparing current gender portrayals in South Africa and Germany.

1.2 Aims and Objectives of the Study

The overarching question of this research revolves around the representation of gender identity markers in TV commercials in South Africa and Germany, and the connotations

associated with these portrayals. Additionally, it aims to investigate potential systematic differences in the depiction of men and women in advertisements and how these differences might vary across countries or channels. The study examines factors that might influence these differences, their potential consequences, and the reciprocal relationship between gender portrayals in media, and society at large. Through these enquiries, this research aims to provide deeper insights into the complex interplay between gender portrayals in advertising and their wider cultural context.

This study aims to establish culture-specific methods for evaluating gender portrayals in television advertising. Its objective is to examine the extent of gender stereotyping in commercials and explore potential differences in portrayals between South Africa and Germany. By taking an integrated approach to analysing gender representations in advertising, this study aims to contribute to a more in-depth understanding of the complex ways in which gender is portrayed and reinforced in advertising. The aim of the study is to reveal a nuanced image of gender constructions and how different aspects of gender identity are communicated in advertising.

The research questions guiding the qualitative thematic analysis and development of the new codebook are the following:

1: What roles, activities and settings define gender in South African and German advertisements?

2: What physical and material attributes define gender in South African and German advertisements?

3: What symbolic and stylistic behaviours define gender in South African and German advertisements?

4: What interests define gender in South African and German advertisements?

5: What social relationships define gender in South African and German advertisements?

6: How do other identity categories mediate gender in South African and German advertisements?

For the quantitative phase of the research, three hypotheses are tested:

- There will be significant differences in gender portrayals in South African television commercials.
- There will be significant differences in gender portrayals in German television commercials.
- There will be more significant differences in gender portrayals in South African television commercials than German commercials.

1.3 Study Contribution

This research makes several contributions to the knowledge in the field. Firstly, the study includes a thorough conceptual framework including a detailed description of the concept of gender, also taking into account historical accounts. Many previous studies lack concise definitions of gender concepts or stereotyping (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991; Eisend, 2019), let alone historical accounts of gender (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). This research contributes a new perspective to the study of South African and German advertising in an academic context by developing and reviewing coding categories that capture gender stereotyping in the analysed cultural contexts. It addresses Furnham and Paltzer's (2010) call for increased creativity in content category development and accounts for changes over time by providing a meaningful variation in content categories. This innovative approach adds value to the existing literature on gender representations in advertising and contributes to a nuanced and updated understanding of the topic. Outdated methodology is updated and a current framework for future research in the field is provided, allowing for a more accurate

interpretation of representations in television advertisements. This is a crucial and timely addition to academic advertising research in South Africa and Germany and has not been done before.

To take into account both new gender concepts and different cultural contexts, this study develops a new codebook that reflects current understandings of gender, and incorporates culture-specific perspectives. Since the original coding scheme was developed in a Western context and has barely been adapted, neither for different cultural contexts nor for the changing nature of advertising (Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Lay, 2019), the new methodology presented in this dissertation is long overdue and provides an important addition to the field of advertising research. The codebook presented as part of this dissertation has never been used in previous studies and provides a valuable resource for future advertising research in South Africa and Germany. This study is not only original but also significant and timely, as it expands advertising research in these under-researched contexts, while ensuring that measuring tools are theoretically and contextually appropriate.

The study's novel approach utilises a newly developed coding scheme that is contextualised to the cultures in which it is applied, allowing the researcher to collect data on character's physical traits, psycho-social attributes, and contextual variables that indicate stereotyping. A quantitative content analysis allows for the objective measurement of the representation of gender in advertising, providing a standardised approach that can be replicated in future research. This study, therefore, contributes to scholarship in the under-researched contexts of South Africa and Germany, including the dearth of quantitative studies in both countries and produces original work that fills a gap in the literature.

1.4 Thesis Outline

The following outlines the structure of this dissertation, providing a succinct overview of the content of each chapter.

1.4.1 Chapter 1

Chapter 1 sets the stage for the study, highlighting the inadequacies in existing research marked by the absence of suitable theoretical frameworks, non-context-specific approaches, and outdated coding schemes. It emphasises the need for developing new, culturally relevant quantitative measures for examining gender portrayals in television advertising. Additionally, the chapter underscores the significance of investigating gender in advertising and explains why South Africa and Germany were chosen as suitable countries for a comparative analysis. Moreover, the chapter introduces the research objectives by presenting research questions and hypotheses.

1.4.2 Chapters 2 to 6

Chapters 2 through 6 constitute the literature review section of this dissertation, addressing key themes such as advertising, previous research, gender dynamics in South Africa and Germany, the interplay between gender, advertising and identity, and an in-depth examination of the concept of gender. Chapter 2 begins with a definition of advertising as a distinct form of communication, followed by a discussion of the continued relevance of television advertising in both South Africa and Germany. Subsequently, three pivotal studies are introduced, each employing slightly different methodological approaches. These include McArthur and Resko’s (1975) original study on gender portrayals in U.S. advertising, Gilly's (1988) seminal cross-cultural research, and Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's (2002) recent comparative study of gender portrayals in South African and British commercials.

Chapter 3 offers an overview of previous research on gender portrayals in television advertising with a main focus on quantitative content analyses, which are widely used in the field (Furnham & Lay, 2019). The chapter begins by illustrating overarching patterns observed globally, as identified through meta-analyses conducted between 1975 and 2019. It is then structured into two distinct sections, discussing findings from South Africa and Germany, respectively. Within each section, the latest research findings are reviewed, with the most

recent study in South Africa dating back to 2011 and, in Germany, to 2016. Furthermore, the section on South Africa includes studies that explore race as a mediating factor in gender portrayals. Additionally, cross-cultural studies that include South Africa and Germany are also examined. Finally, research gaps are addressed.

Chapter 4 consists of two sections, providing both historical and contemporary insights into gender dynamics in South Africa and Germany, which serve to justify the selection of these countries for study. The chapter explores similarities, differences, and cultural subtleties in how gender operates in both South Africa and Germany. It starts by comparing significant historical periods, specifically Apartheid in South Africa and National Socialism in Germany, to demonstrate how gender roles and practices were historically shaped in each country. The second section introduces a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)[8] (2019), enabling a comparison of the contemporary state of gender development between South Africa and Germany. This comparison includes various indicators like labour equity, governance structures, and societal norms related to gender roles.

Chapter 5 explores the complex interplay of gender identities, advertising practices, and societal factors. First, it establishes how advertising creates meaning (Williamson, 1978). The chapter then discusses the dynamic interaction between advertising and collective as well as individual identities to provide a nuanced understanding of identity formation within societal contexts (Narunsky-Laden, 2008). Finally, the chapter examines how advertising perpetuates stereotypes, acknowledging that stereotypes can be effective communication tools, while also considering their potential to reinforce unconscious group boundaries.

Chapter 6 serves as the concluding part of the literature review, aiming to deepen the understanding of the concept of gender used in this research. It begins by defining gender and related concepts, explores different gender theories and frameworks, including essentialist and non-essentialist perspectives, and establishes the social-constructionist view adopted in this

[8] https://www.oecd.org/about.

study. The chapter then outlines contemporary perspectives on masculinity and femininity, considering their expressions in both South Africa and Germany. It also examines the broader social context in which gender operates, including power dynamics, and elaborates on specific gender concepts like “hegemonic masculinity” and “emphasized femininity” (Connell, 1987, p. 183). Finally, it explores gender identities beyond the binary.

1.4.3 Chapter 7

This chapter outlines the research design, methods, and procedures, prefaced by a brief introduction to the study’s theoretical orientation, which serves as the foundation for the research methodology. The rationale behind the choices for the research design and methods is discussed, and their alignment with the study’s theoretical underpinnings, highlighted. The chapter provides a broad overview of the mixed methods design employed in this study, outlining the two research phases: a qualitative phase involving thematic analysis, and a quantitative phase comprising quantitative content analysis. This approach is well-suited for the research purpose of developing and validating a quantitative instrument.

1.4.4 Chapter 8

Chapter 8 details the first research phase, which involves conducting a qualitative thematic analysis and developing research instruments. It outlines the stages of the qualitative coding process, using a combined approach of inductive and deductive strategies (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Additionally, it describes the development of the quantitative instrument, the codebook, along with strategies for data validation. The latter part of the chapter presents the findings from the qualitative phase, systematically categorising variables into Ashmore’s (1990) gender domains and providing detailed explanations, including definitions, operational criteria, importance, and, where applicable, reflections and examples. The discussion highlights the relevance of each variable in addressing the research questions and draws parallels with culture-specific gender models.

1.4.5 Chapters 9 and 10

Chapters 9 and 10 detail the second research phase, the quantitative content analysis. Chapter 9 covers statistical assumptions and procedures, including coding, data transformations, and chi-square tests of independence. It discusses conceptual considerations regarding measuring equality, and establishes the reliability and validity of the content analysis. In the second section, the quantitative results are presented by gender categories and organised into prevalent gender archetypes in South African and German commercials. Moreover, the analysis briefly addresses the absence of portrayals representing non-binary and non-heteronormative identities. In Chapter 10, select findings are contextualised with census data on *gender*, *age*, *relationship status*, and *race*, further highlighting the specific gender constructions emphasised in advertising.

1.4.6 Chapter 11

Chapter 11 concludes the dissertation by summarising key findings from both research phases. Methodological limitations and researcher positionality are addressed, highlighting how the mixed-methods approach helped address some limitations and additional strategies employed to mitigate subjectivity. Furthermore, recommendations for future research include addressing coding categories that were omitted due to challenges in comparing them reliably between South Africa and Germany.

CHAPTER 2: ADVERTISING PERSPECTIVES AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Different types of media forms have been studied for their representation of gender stereotypes, and there are probably around 100 studies researching gender portrayals in television advertising that have been conducted across different continents (Furnham & Lay, 2019). This chapter aims to lay the groundwork for understanding these studies by first defining advertising—a key concept in this research. It explores the processes, involved parties, and societal context of advertising. After establishing advertising as a functional form of communication and motivating the continued relevance of television advertising, the chapter proceeds to introduce coding schemes from key studies. By comparing and contrasting the methodological approaches employed in the studies conducted by McArthur and Resko (1975), Gilly (1988), and Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002), the chapter illustrates the progression of research methods over time. This comparison provides a basis for reconsidering current methodologies.

2.1 Defining Advertising

Advertising is a key aspect of modern societies and has been a topic of research for more than a century (Sheehan, 2004). Cassim and Monteiro (2001, p. 107) define advertising as “a medium used by marketers to communicate with their target markets”. Richards and Curran (2002, p. 74) describe it as “a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future”. In classic models of communication, the receiver is typically defined as “a person or persons who make up the audience for the message” (Lee & Yoo, 2012, p. 29). In the specific context of advertising, “[t]he receiver may be the intended target or simply someone who is within the receiving range” (ibid, p. 29f.).

Since advertising is a form of communication with one or more communication goals, “advertisers carefully study the demographic, psychographic, geographic and a number of

other considerations of the target audience in order to frame the content and choose the media to transmit the communication appropriately" (Lee & Yoo, 2012, p. 30). In order to sell a product, service or idea, advertisers develop creative communication strategies that resonate with a defined target market, i.e., a specific group of individuals within the broader population, which is then repeatedly exposed to these advertising messages (Sheehan, 2004). Advertising messages are communicated via different media forms, such as television, radio, print, or the internet. All of this is part of the advertising strategy. The practice of advertising can be described as a process of choices and a collaborative effort, where the client has the final decision-making power (Lee & Yoo, 2012).

The artist Hank Willis Thomas,[9] renowned for his work in "unbranding" print advertisements targeting African American consumers (Thomas, 2016), offers an interesting perspective on advertising. He highlights that advertisements are often perceived as more objective than the work of an artist, given that no single individual is credited as the creator of an advertisement. However, this perspective fails to take into account the fact that whoever holds the frame affects the way we see, what we see, and the way we see others (Thomas, 2016). Therefore, an essential aspect to consider in discussions about advertising is the intentions of those who produce and commission advertisements.

Businesses seeking to advertise their products, services, or ideas, traditionally task advertising agencies to develop a creative communication strategy. Those who commission the advertisement may have a very clear idea about the commercial (Gill, 2008). Every element of an advertisement is carefully considered. Not only is every detail of the content intentional, so is the media placement, which includes the choice of media and channel selection and depends on the campaign's target audience (Sheehan, 2004). From initial briefing to production to launch, the creation of an advertisement involves numerous decisions made by both advertising professionals and clients. Advertisements are not objective products; rather,

[9] https://hankwillisthomas.com.

they are the result of collaboration among art directors, photographers, directors, and other creatives, and ultimately approved by clients (Sheehan, 2004).

When defining target groups and developing advertising strategies, gender is an important segmenting variable from the perspective of advertisers (Milner & Higgs, 2004). Segmenting variables are factors or characteristics employed to divide the target audience. But gender portrayals also have a potential effect on the purchase intentions of consumers and corporate images (Åkestam et al., 2017). Previous research has demonstrated that incorporating gender roles into advertising can either improve sales and brand evaluations or undermine advertising effectiveness. This outcome depends on various factors, including the gender attitudes of the audience (Eisend, 2019). Furthermore, other studies have indicated that consumers tend to respond positively to advertising messages that align with their cultural orientations (Lee & Yoo, 2012).

As a ubiquitous form of communication, advertising has been widely studied in different academic fields, such as media studies or marketing (Neuendorf, 2011). This research is motivated by what advertising reveals about cultures and societies, focusing less on its economic function (Paavola, 2015). As Kilbourne (2010, p. 86) famously said:

> *Advertising is our environment. We swim in it as fish swim in the water. We cannot escape it… advertising messages are inside our intimate relationships, our home, our hearts, our heads.*

Advertisements have been the focus of research because they are assumed to serve a double function (Williamson, 1978). Not only do they reflect the values and norms of the society in which they act, but they also have a socialisation function (Kilbourne, 2010). Advertising is believed to shape not only how individuals perceive themselves but also how they view others (Åkestam et al., 2017). This assumption underpins the two main approaches in content-analytic advertising research: "the marketing–advertising professional approach and the social effects approach" (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 288). While the professional approach to advertising

research focuses on optimising communication strategies and increasing sales, the social effects approach is driven by the impact of advertising on societies and individuals.

As mentioned above, media channels form an integral part of advertising strategy. Technological advances have shaped the evolution of advertising, going hand in hand with the inception of new advertising formats (Lee & Yoo, 2012). While the utilisation of mobile and digital technology has paved the way for innovative advertising channels, television continues to dominate as the primary medium for reaching consumers in both South Africa and Germany. In both countries, television accounts for the highest advertising spending across all forms of media (Statista, 2019; Statista, 2021a). Given its extensive reach and broad coverage, it is only logical that television advertising remains highly relevant as a medium.

In South Africa, over 81% of households owned television sets in 2019 (Statistics South Africa, 2020). In 2020, 97% of German households had a TV (Destatis, 2020). Average daily viewing time in South Africa was 192 minutes in 2020 (Nielsen, 2021), compared to an average of 220 minutes in Germany (Statista, 2021b). This equates to South Africans watching television for over 3 hours daily, and Germans for 3 hours and 40 minutes. According to the Establishment Survey conducted by Kantar TNS (2020, p. 33), television reached 95% of the South African population, while the internet reached only 66% of South Africans. Television also had double the viewing time compared to mobile devices with internet connection (Nielsen, 2022). Hence, the significance of television commercials cannot be underestimated. When examining how audio-visual media shape perceptions of reality, it is reasonable to assume that televised advertising still holds more influence than its digitised counterparts in South Africa, making it a crucial area of research.

As established by the quote cited at the beginning of this dissertation, the primary objective of advertising is not to reflect an objective 'reality', whatever that may be (Grossberg et al., 2006). It is crucial to acknowledge that commercials are fictional narratives that serve a very specific purpose, and, as such, they deviate from reality (Gill, 2008). Television commercials consistently present stereotypical portrayals to their viewers, potentially reinforcing these

stereotypes (Sheehan, 2004). This raises an important question: Do television commercials endorse gender equality or perpetuate gender inequality by exaggerating differences? Additionally, it is worth exploring whether certain social categories are entirely excluded from (television) advertisements.

2.2 Coding Schemes from Key Studies

Research on gender-role portrayals in advertising has evolved mainly from two works in the United States. Goffman (1965) conducted a semiotic content analysis on print advertisements in the United States. According to Goffman (1965, p. 3), the magazine advertisements communicated “gender displays” that he found to reinforce limiting, stereotypical assumptions about masculinity and femininity. The second work was a content-analytic study by McArthur and Resko (1975), which subsequently inspired around one hundred replications and extensions in various different countries (Furnham & Lay, 2019). In their influential study, McArthur and Resko (1975) defined a coding scheme to identify possible stereotypical portrayals, such as the overall stereotyping of an advert and the stereotyping of the central character, specifically. Most studies published today essentially still use the same coding categories (for an overview see Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Furnham & Lay, 2019).

Coding categories typically assess attributes of the commercial’s central character that indicate gender stereotyping and allow the comparison of the representation of male and female characters. Common hypotheses include that male characters are presented as the authority, and that women in advertisements are younger than their male counterparts, more often depicted at home than in a work setting, and typically associated with ‘feminine’ products, such as beauty products. This is then interpreted as harmful gender stereotyping because women in advertisements are shown to perform a limiting or ‘outdated version’ of femininity (Furnham & Lay, 2019). McArthur and Resko’s (1975) original content analysis of television commercials in the United States confirmed that women and men were portrayed in different ways, reflecting traditional gender stereotypes.

Typically, established coding schemes used in previous research measure both manifest and latent meanings of gender stereotyping by using content categories that pertain to various societal areas where gender stereotyping may become visible (Luyt, 2011). As Sheehan (2004) suggested stereotypes can be evaluated in terms of their range of portrayals, frequency, and valence or connotation. Content categories from established coding schemes are designed to capture the range of stereotypes shown and their frequency (Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Furnham & Lay, 2019). The subsequent sections outline three coding schemes that are relevant to this research. These include McArthur and Resko's (1975) original coding categories, Gilly's (1988) pioneering approach, which includes a cross-cultural comparison and culture-specific coding categories, and Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's (2002) adapted version of McArthur and Resko's (1975) original codebook, applied in a cross-cultural study of South Africa and Great Britain.

2.2.1 McArthur and Resko (1975)

McArthur and Resko's (1975) study was one of the first to examine the issue of gender stereotyping in television advertising using quantitative content analysis. Their study, using clearly defined coding categories, laid the foundation for an array of further studies that were conducted across various countries. The original study examined television commercials in the United States, and the sample consisted of 299 central characters. The categories defined by McArthur and Resko (1975) to help identify the stereotyping of the male or female central character in television commercials were the following:

Table 1: McArthur & Resko's (1975) Coding Categories

Variable	Codings
Sex	Male or female
Credibility	Product-user or authority

Variable	Codings
Role	Spouse, parent, homemaker, worker, professional, real-life celebrity, interviewer or narrator, boyfriend/girlfriend, and other
Location	Home, store, occupational setting, and other
Arguments for the product	Scientific, non-scientific, no argument
Rewards for using the product	Social enhancement, self-enhancement, practical rewards, other
Type of product	Body, home, foodstuffs, other

Source: McArthur and Resko (1975, p. 211f.).

Initially, the authors included a “punishment” variable in order to assess whether the central character is shown as getting punished for using a product (McArthur & Resko, 1975, p. 211). This variable, however, was not included in the final analysis due to its low frequency. McArthur and Resko’s (1975) coding scheme assessed the central character’s basis for credibility, their role, location, arguments for the product, rewards for using the product and the type of product advertised. Every variable was designed to capture a different aspect of gender stereotyping, with each central character being classified accordingly. Although McArthur and Resko’s (1975) paper did not explicitly state hypotheses, their analysis was grounded in the assumption that each coding category had either a stereotypical or non-stereotypical outcome. Gender stereotyping is considered to be present if:

- There will be more male central characters than female central characters (*sex*).
- Male central characters will be shown as authority, female central characters as product users (*credibility*).
- Male central characters will be depicted in professional roles, while female central characters will be represented in relational roles, such as spouse, parent or homemaker (*role*).

- Male central characters will be shown at work, while female central characters will be portrayed in a home setting (*location*).
- Male central characters will give scientific arguments, female central characters non-scientific arguments (*argument*).
- Male central characters will be more interested in self-enhancement, while female central characters will be interested in social enhancement (*rewards*).
- Male central characters will be associated with foodstuffs or other, female central characters with body and home products (*product type*).

The variable “arguments for the product” is informed by the assumed expert status attributed to men. Where male characters are shown providing scientific arguments, they are being positioned as a source of knowledge in advertisements. In terms of the rewards associated with the use of the advertised product, it is hypothesised that women are more likely to be portrayed pursuing social enhancement, while men display behaviour aimed at self-enhancement (McArthur & Resko, 1975). This coding category is grounded in the assumption that women prioritise social acceptance, while men are assumed to be more self-centred. Men are typically depicted as free from societal pressures and therefore “allowed” to seek self-enhancement without societal repercussions. McArthur and Resko (1975) found significant differences in the portrayal of male and female central characters for several coding categories (sex, credibility, role, location, argument, product type).

2.2.2 Gilly (1988)

Until today, most studies on gender portrayals in advertising have been conducted in the United States (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Craig, 1992; McArthur & Resko, 1975; Schneider & Schneider, 1979; Silverstein & Silverstein, 1974). While there were a limited number of studies conducted in non-English speaking countries, Gilly’s (1988) ground-breaking study was the first research to compare gender stereotyping across different countries using a cross-cultural approach. Through a comparative quantitative content analysis, Gilly (1988) examined gender portrayals in the United States, Mexico, and Australia. The analysis included a sample

of 275 American central characters, 204 Mexican central characters, and 138 Australian central characters, providing insights into how gender portrayals in advertising vary across different cultures. This research marked a departure from previous research that primarily focused on the United States, as Gilly's (1988) work included non-American countries and provided a comparative analysis of portrayals across multiple countries.

Gilly (1988) developed her coding scheme by drawing on some of McArthur and Resko's (1975) categories, while her quantitative analysis was also influenced by previous studies conducted by Schneider and Schneider (1979) and Silverstein and Silverstein (1974). A comprehensive overview of all coding categories used in Gilly's study, along with their respective sources, is provided in Tables 2 and 3. Gilly (1988) highlights that, while some coding categories were adapted from other studies, they were implemented with modified operational definitions. In addition to her marginally different coding approach, Gilly (1988) adopted a sampling technique inspired by Schneider and Schneider's (1979) research approach. Notably, Gilly's (1988) sample included repeated advertisements, aligning with Schneider and Schneider's (1979) argument that repeated exposure to an advertisement can reinforce its message. Unlike McArthur and Resko's (1975) coding technique, which included voice-overs as characters but distinguished them from visual portrayals, Gilly (1988) only coded characters that appeared for a minimum of three seconds or had at least one line of dialogue. Furthermore, she coded up to three characters per advertisement.

This pioneering study was also the first to introduce coding categories specifically designed for the cultural contexts under examination. Gilly (1988, p. 82f.) identified "frustration" as a potential area of stereotyping in Mexican advertisements and included it as a coding category. Additionally, Gilly distinguished between variables that applied to the entire commercial and coding categories specific to the central character, allowing for a distinction between demographic aspects and what she referred to as "the ad approach" (Gilly, 1988, p. 81) variables, which measured how male and female characters were utilised in the commercials.

Table 2: Gilly's (1988) Coding Categories: Variables for Each Commercial

Variable	Codings	Source
Product	(1) Food, snacks, soda (2) Personal and beauty care (3) Automobile and accessories (4) Restaurants and retail outlets (5) Drugs and medicines (6) Household appliances/furnishings (7) Institutional/public service (8) Alcoholic beverages (9) Pet food and related products (10) Household cleaning agents (11) Clothing (12) Finance and real estate (13) Others	Schneider and Schneider (1979)
Product user	(1) Females, (2) males, or (3) either sex	Silverstein and Silverstein (1974)
Voice-over	(1) Female, (2) male, (3) chorus, or (4) no	Dominick and Rauch (1988)
Setting	(1) Private residence, (2) store/restaurant, (3) occupational setting, (4) outdoors, or (5) other	McArthur and Resko (1975)

Source: Gilly (1988, p. 79f.).

Table 3: Gilly's (1988) Coding Categories: Variables for Each Character

Demographic Variables		Source
Sex	The character's sex	Schneider and Schneider (1979)
Age	Approximate age	Schneider and Schneider (1979)
Marital status	(1) Married, (2) not married, or (3) not identified	Schneider and Schneider (1979)

Demographic Variables		Source
Employment	(1) In a work situation, (2) in a non-work situation but appears to be employed, or (3) without indication of employment	Schneider and Schneider (1979)
Occupation	If employed, (1) professional/high-level business executive, (2) entertainer/professional athlete, (3) middle-level business, semi-professional, (4) nonprofessional, white-collar, (5) blue-collar, or (6) other	Courtney and Lockeretz (1988)
Ad Approach Variables		**Source**
Spokesperson	On-camera spokesperson for the product?	Schneider and Schneider (1979)
Credibility	If a spokesperson, (1) a product user or (2) an authority	McArthur and Resko (1975)
Help	(1) A recipient of help, (2) a provider of help, or (3) neither	Silverstein and Silverstein (1974)
Advice	(1) A receiver of advice, (2) a giver of advice, or (3) neither	Silverstein and Silverstein (1974)
Role	(1) Spouse/boyfriend/girlfriend, (2) parent, (3) homemaker, (4) worker, (5) real life celebrity, (6) interviewer or narrator, or (7) other	McArthur and Resko (1975)
Activity	(1) Engaged in physical activity or sport or (2) inactive	Poe (1988)
Frustration	(1) Frustrated or (2) not frustrated	Silverstein and Silverstein (1974)

Source: Gilly (1988, p. 80f.).

Gilly's (1988) coding scheme included four variables that applied to the overall advertisement, and twelve categories that specifically related to the central character. While she adopted most of McArthur and Resko's (1975) original coding categories, she omitted certain categories, such as *arguments* and *rewards*, and provided no explanation for this decision. Moreover, Gilly

(1988) included an extended version of “product type” inspired by Schneider and Schneider (1979), which captured a more detailed breakdown of types of products advertised.

Gilly’s (1988) coding scheme assessed gender stereotyping across three countries using various variables. The first set of variables applied to each commercial and included the advertised product, product user, voice-over used, and advertisement’s setting. For each individual character within the commercials, Gilly (1988) coded demographic variables such as the character’s sex, age, marital status, employment, and occupation. In addition to demographic factors, more subtle aspects were analysed through ad approach variables. These variables encompassed attributes like spokesperson, credibility, help, advice, role, activity, and frustration. Gilly (1988) did not situate these coding categories within a broader theoretical framework. Furthermore, it is worth noting that ‘frustration’ was a country-specific variable in the analysis, as identified by Gilly (1988) for its particular relevance to Mexico.

Gilly’s (1988) comparative study revealed that, while gender stereotyping was found in all three countries, Australian advertisements contained the least amount of stereotyping. In Australian commercials, the categories relating to ad characteristics variables revealed significant differences in the portrayal of male and female characters, particularly in terms of their depiction as *product users.* Among the significant demographic categories were *age* and *role*. In contrast, Mexican television commercials showed the highest degree of stereotyping among the three countries. The Mexican advertisements produced significant findings for ad characteristic categories, including *sex* and *product user.* Additionally, seven demographic variables, namely *age*, *employment*, *occupation*, *credibility*, *help*, *role*, and *frustration*, yielded significant results (Gilly, 1988).

American advertisements exhibited a moderate level of gender stereotyping, as evidenced by significant gender differences in ad characteristic variables such as *sex*, *product user*, and *setting*. Additionally, five demographic variables—*age*, *employment*, *credibility*, *advice*, and *role*—also produced significant results. After Gilly (1988) introduced this research approach of comparing gender portrayals across different countries, numerous subsequent studies

adopted this cross-cultural comparative format (Furnham & Farragher, 2000; Lim & Furnham, 2016; Whitelock & Jackson, 1997).

2.2.3 Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002)

Although numerous cross-cultural studies have been conducted since Gilly's (1988) pioneering research, only a handful of them have included South Africa or Germany in their comparative analyses (Matthes et al., 2016; Milner, 2005; Paek et al., 2010). One notable study that explored gender stereotyping by comparing South Africa with a Western country was conducted by Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002). As part of their quantitative content analysis of television commercials in South Africa and Great Britain, the researchers coded twelve attributes for the central characters of each advertisement. The sample consisted of 116 South African central characters and 127 British central characters.

The coding procedure was largely modelled after McArthur and Resko's (1975) original coding scheme. However, the researchers introduced culture-specific measures by capturing the race of the character. The novel contribution of this research was the distinction between primary and secondary character of the advertisement, and the examination of whether different levels of gender stereotyping occur and how they relate to the main character or a character in more of a background role. Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's (2002) argumentation for this modification was that this way of assessing stereotyping in commercials allows for more nuance, where if only the primary character of the advertisement is coded for, potential stereotyping could be overlooked. The researchers based their coding scheme largely on McArthur and Resko's (1975) original codebook.

Table 4: Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's (2002) Coding Categories

Variable	Codings
Mode of presentation	Voice-over (disembodied voice over) Visual/Silence (visual portrayal with no speaking part) Visual/Voice (visual portrayal with speaking part) Visual/Music (no speaking part but music in the background)

Variable	Codings
Age	Young (younger than thirty) Middle aged (31-60) Old (60+)
Credibility	User, Authority, Other
Role	Dependent (parent, spouse, partner or gender object) Professional (expert or researcher) Interviewer/Narrator (when the central figure described the product being advertised) Celebrity, Other
Location	Home, Leisure, Occupational, Outside Unknown/Other
Argument	Factual (facts/solid evidence/technical information) Opinion (personal views) None
Reward Type	Social Approval (social improvement in health or appearance) Self enhancement (self-improvement in health or appearance) Practical (delight and or social/career advancement) Pleasure (when rewards themselves were purely pleasurable) Other (when rewards were suggested but did not belong in any of the above categories)
Product Type	Body (if the product involved bodily health, hygiene, cleansing or clothing) Home (home or housework) Food (including drink) Electronics, Service, Property, Vehicles, Other
End Comment	Present, Absent
Humour	Situational, Object of ridicule, Verbal
Background	Mostly female, Mostly male, Mixed, Mostly Children, None
Race	White, Black, Indian Asian, Oriental Asian

Source: Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002, p. 470f.).

In their study, Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002) examined several coding categories, including the *mode of presentation* for the primary and secondary character, their *age*, *credibility*, *role*, *location*, *argument*, *reward type*, *product type*, *end comment*, *humour*, *background*, and *race*. A comparison of these coding categories with the original variables proposed by McArthur and Resko (1975) reveals that Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's (2002) coding scheme exhibits only minor variations from the original codebook. While certain coding categories were adopted, they were used with different operational definitions. Furthermore, in Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's (2002) study, some categories were collapsed, resulting in a modification of their meaning. Specifically, this applied to the variables *location*, *reward type*, and *product type*. It is likely that the researchers intentionally made minimal adjustments to the original coding scheme to ensure comparability with previous studies.

More notably, the researchers extended McArthur and Resko's (1975) original codebook by adding the categories *mode of presentation*, *age*, *end comment*, *humour*, *background*, and *race*. The categories *mode of presentation*, *age*, *end comment* and *background* are frequently used in newer content analyses (for an overview see Eisend, 2010, p. 424). *Humour* and *race*, however, are categories that are not very commonly included in quantitative studies assessing gender stereotyping (Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Lay, 2019). Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002, p. 462) argue that, for a South African context, *race* is a viable category in an assessment of gender stereotypes.

The variable "mode of presentation*"* captures whether characters are featured visually, speaking, or presented as voice-overs (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002, p. 465). Additionally, "age" has been identified as an important variable indicating gender stereotyping, as female characters in advertisements tend to be portrayed as younger compared to their male counterparts (ibid). The inclusion of "end comment" in the codebook serves as an indicator of authority, particularly if male protagonists are more frequently shown concluding the advertisement (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002, p. 460).

Similarly, the researchers identified “humour” as an important advertising attribute (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002, p. 465). In their study, humour was categorised into verbal humour, situational humour, or object of ridicule. Verbal humour refers to humorous statements made by the primary character or humorous dialogue in voice-overs. Situational humour occurs when the situation in which the primary character is portrayed is intended to be humorous, while object of ridicule involves the primary character becoming the target of someone else's joke or the consumer being encouraged to laugh at the primary character (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002).

Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002) followed the approach of previous studies in the field, where gender stereotyping occurred when male and female characters were portrayed in significantly different ways. For instance, stereotyping occurs if female characters are predominantly depicted in domestic settings, while male characters are frequently shown in occupational settings. Both South African and British television commercials were hypothesised to exhibit gender stereotyping, with a greater degree expected in South African advertisements than in British ones. The findings of the study confirmed all three hypotheses and revealed the presence of gender stereotyping in both countries. Moreover, South African television commercials exhibited a higher degree of gender stereotyping compared to British advertisements.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided an introductory overview of advertising as a specialised and targeted form of communication, along with methodological approaches in the field of advertising research. It began by defining the concept of advertising, outlining its processes and the various stakeholders involved. Emphasis was placed on its persuasive nature and the careful crafting of messages aimed at engaging specific target audiences. Moreover, this chapter highlighted the dual purpose of advertising, functioning not only as a marketing tool, but also as a vehicle for shaping attitudes and behaviours (Neuendorf, 2017). Research informed by the social effects approach acknowledges that advertising’s influence extends beyond

consumer choices and also affects broader societal dynamics. Additionally, the chapter underscored the significance of television as a dominant medium for reaching consumers in both South Africa and Germany, indicating that television advertising remained highly relevant up to the present day.

Subsequently, the chapter introduced three key coding schemes used in previous research: one by McArthur and Resko (1975), another by Gilly (1988), and a third by Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002). McArthur and Resko's (1975) seminal study was a quantitative content analysis of television commercials in the United States. This research, as the pioneering quantitative content-analytic study in the field, established the foundation for further exploration into gender stereotyping in advertising, inspiring around 100 replications (Furnham & Lay, 2019). McArthur and Resko's (1975) coding scheme, which focused on identifying stereotypical portrayals of male and female central characters, established a standardised methodology for assessing gender representations in advertisements.

Additionally, Gilly's (1988) groundbreaking research was discussed here, which expanded the scope of research on gender portrayals in advertising by conducting a comparative analysis across different countries—the United States, Mexico, and Australia. Gilly's coding scheme not only drew from previous works, like McArthur and Resko's (1975), but also introduced culture-specific variables, making it one of the few studies to do so. Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's study (2002), on the other hand, focused on gender stereotyping in television commercials in South Africa and Great Britain. While their coding scheme was largely rooted in McArthur and Resko's (1975) original framework, they introduced modifications and additional variables to capture nuances specific to the South African context, including factors such as race and humour.

This overview of methodological approaches in the field revealed several key insights. Firstly, there has been limited progress in the development of codebooks since McArthur and Resko's (1975) pioneering study. Secondly, researchers typically used the original coding scheme without adapting it to fit the cultural context of their study. Lastly, many studies lacked a robust

theoretical framework and failed to provide a clear rationale for the creation, adaptation, or omission of specific coding categories (Furnham & Lay, 2019). The following chapter will provide a detailed review of previous research, covering global trends in gender portrayals, studies conducted in South Africa and Germany, and identifying existing research gaps.

CHAPTER 3: PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON GENDER PORTRAYALS IN TELEVISION ADVERTISING

This chapter provides a selective overview of previous findings in the area of gender portrayals in television advertising. It reports global trends and presents research findings specific to South Africa and Germany. Since this has been a popular research field, especially since the influential study by McArthur and Resko in 1975, there is a wealth of findings to discuss. While numerous studies have explored gender stereotyping across various media forms, it is worth noting that the majority of these studies have primarily focused on television commercials (Furnham & Lay, 2019). The studies mentioned in this chapter almost exclusively employ quantitative content analyses, which have undoubtedly dominated the field (Furnham & Lay, 2019). The subsection on global trends will detail meta-analyses of studies spanning from 1975 to 2019.

Considering the volume of scholarship that is being reviewed and presented, this chapter is divided into two main themes in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, presenting findings from South Africa and Germany, respectively. In the section “Insights from South Africa”, current trends, research that considers race as a mediating factor, and cross-cultural studies will be discussed, before the chapter closes with a summary. Insights from Germany will include current trends as well as cross-cultural studies and studies from Austria. Due to the length of these sections and the number of studies included in each, both sections provide summaries, offering a quick overview of the key findings relevant to this dissertation. Finally, this chapter concludes by outlining the most important key insights from global trends, findings in the respective countries, and identifying relevant research gaps.

3.1 Global Trends

To provide an overview of global trends, this section will refer to meta-analytic studies that synthesise findings from multiple studies over different periods and countries. This will offer a broader perspective on gender stereotyping in advertising, both globally and historically. The

first paper that will be discussed is Furnham and Mak's (1999) review of 14 content-analytic studies between 1975-1999, followed by Furnham and Lay's (2019) review of over 50 content-analytic studies from 2000-2016, and lastly, Grau and Zotos' (2016) review of 13 content-analytic, experimental, interview, and meta-analytical studies from 2010-2016.

In 1999, Furnham and Mak provided a comprehensive review of 14 studies across five continents spanning from McArthur and Resko's (1975) pioneering work to studies conducted up until 1999. In their research, Furnham and Mak (1999) compare similar content-analytic studies to provide a comprehensive overview of the field. Their findings revealed that the portrayal of gender roles in television commercials had remained relatively unchanged over a span of 25 years. In the 1970s, women were often depicted confined to domestic settings, while men were portrayed as knowledgeable and authoritative figures. Most notably, these patterns persisted, not only over time, but also across different countries, as these findings were consistently replicated (Furnham & Mak, 1999).

Most of the studies found that male characters were often the voice-over in commercials, while female characters were typically presented visually (*voice-over*). Additionally, the majority of the studies confirmed that male characters tended to be portrayed as the authority on a product (*credibility*). Female characters were depicted as younger than their male counterparts (*age*), and they were more frequently associated with rewards related to self or social enhancement, while male characters sought pleasure (*rewards*). Products related to home or body were predominantly associated with female characters (*product type*). Female characters were also commonly featured against a children's background (*background*). Lastly, male characters were more frequently shown making the end comment in a commercial compared to female characters (*end comment*). However, findings for the categories *role* and *location* findings were less consistent across the studies (Furnham & Mak, 1999).

Overall, Furnham and Mak (1999) identified small but reliable trends. In line with the increase of working women, advertisements gradually depicted women in less domestic settings and as less dependent. However, certain stereotypical portrayals persisted, such as women

consistently being portrayed as younger than their male counterparts. These findings suggest that, while for some attributes, men and women are portrayed more equally, little changed over a span of 25 years since the 1970s (Furnham & Mak, 1999).

Interestingly, Furnham and Mak (1999) found that gender stereotyping was more prevalent in what they called “more traditional” countries, such as Hong Kong and Indonesia. The levels of stereotyping found in these countries were even higher than those in the original studies conducted in the United States in 1970. The researchers argued that these high levels of stereotyping might have been due to the delayed introduction of television when compared with more developed countries. Generally speaking, these findings align with a trend commonly observed in meta-analytic studies, where advertising continues to depict men and women in more traditional roles that equate with outdated lived experiences. Grau and Zotos (2016, p. 761) fittingly referred to this discrepancy as a “culture lag”.

In 2019, Furnham and Lay conducted another comprehensive review, building upon the previous work of Furnham and Mak (1999), by examining all content-analytic studies conducted since 2000. This recent large-scale review of the literature encompassed over 50 studies done between 2000 and 2016, and revealed insightful patterns. Female characters were routinely shown as attractive, young, and dependent individuals. They were predominantly depicted in domestic roles, such as homemakers, and featured in advertisements for personal, domestic, and medical products. Furthermore, female characters were more often visually presented in these advertisements (Furnham & Lay, 2019).

On the other hand, male characters were typically portrayed as middle-aged and employed, and served as voice-overs in the ads rather than being visually featured. They were also predominantly featured in commercials for cars and technology. Furnham and Lay (2019, p. 120) concluded that “[o]verall, these themes have been stable over time, channels, products, and countries”. Furnham and Lay (2019) thus, drew the conclusion that, despite the dramatic changes in male and female roles within society, traditional gender images continued to persist in television commercials. Another notable finding emerging from the analysis of numerous

studies is the prevalence of similarities, rather than differences, in gender portrayals across countries (Furnham & Lay, 2019).

In 2016, Grau and Zotos discussed previous research in the field and gave a broader overview of issues relating to gender portrayals in advertising by including not only quantitative content analyses, but also experimental, interview and meta-analytical papers. Their review of present-day research included a compilation of 13 papers published between 2010 and 2016. The researchers provided a short description of the historical context of research on gender stereotypes in advertising and more current key areas of interest. Grau and Zotos (2016) briefly touched on stereotypes in advertising and its interaction with societal shifts throughout history, such as the rise of feminism in the 1960s, changes in the labour market, and changing family structures.

Moreover, the researchers gave a broad overview of a long-standing debate around the interaction between advertising and society, which is typically referred to as the "'mirror' versus the 'mold' debate" (Grau & Zotos, 2016, p. 762). According to the "mirror" argument, advertising merely mirrors existing societal values, suggesting that its effect on societal value systems is minimal (Eisend, 2019). This perspective is grounded in the belief that various factors contribute to shaping societal values and norms, with advertising playing a relatively minor role.

In contrast, the "mold" argument states that advertising has the capacity to create and reinforce (gender) stereotypes due to constant exposure to advertising and other media content (Grau & Zotos, 2016, p. 762f.). The "mold" argument is informed by cultivation theory, which suggests that television's effects are small but gradual, shaping people's perception of reality to align with the portrayals in television programming over time (Gerbner, 1998). According to this viewpoint, advertising has a significant impact on gender norms and values, and actively co-creates socially accepted gender representations. Grau and Zotos (2016) proposed that the "mirror" and "mold" debate exists along a continuum, acknowledging that both perspectives

can be true at the same time. Advertising can simultaneously reflect and contribute to the construction of meaning and societal norms.

In addition to societal and historical contexts of gender stereotyping in advertising, Grau and Zotos (2016) reported on current trends by examining studies from Eisend (2010), Knoll et al. (2011), and Eisend et al. (2014). Eisend (2010) conducted a comprehensive review of 64 quantitative content-analytic studies, with a specific focus on the effects of gender stereotyping in commercials. The findings of Eisend's (2010) study indicated the persistent presence of stereotyping in television commercials, especially in relation to occupational status. Moreover, Eisend's (2010) meta-analysis revealed an overall decrease in stereotyping within advertising, primarily driven by a reduction in stereotyping in societies characterised by high masculinity according to Hofstede's framework, such as Japan.

Knoll et al.'s (2011) study of German television commercials will be discussed in detail in the upcoming Section 3.3.1, which provides detailed insights into gender stereotyping in German advertising. Additionally, Grau and Zotos (2016) present another noteworthy study by Eisend et al. (2014) that investigated gender stereotypes in German television commercials, with a specific focus on consumer perceptions and humour as a mediating factor. The findings of this study revealed that stereotypical portrayals are perceived as less serious when presented in the context of a humorous advertisement. Furthermore, male stereotypes were more prevalent in humorous ads, while female stereotypes were commonly associated with non-humorous ads (Eisend et al., 2014).

Besides that, Grau and Zotos (2016) highlighted the importance of researching advertising professionals and their role in the portrayal of gender in campaigns, the special case of gender stereotyping in political advertising, the role of European interventions, and the shift in the portrayal of men in advertising. Research on the 2015 Super Bowl advertisements suggested that men were shown in 'softer' roles and seen interacting with children, as exemplified by a Dove Men Care commercial. While it seems that there has been an interest in the changing

role of men, there is still little research about the depiction of men or male stereotypes in advertising (Grau & Zotos, 2016).

In their review, Grau and Zotos (2016) examined a content-analytic study conducted by Fowler and Thomas (2015), which focused on the analysis of male portrayals in prime-time commercials from 2003 to 2008. The findings of Fowler and Thomas' (2015) study suggest that, in 2008, compared to 2003, male characters were less frequently depicted as the lead character in commercials. Moreover, the results indicated an increasing representation of male characters in roles that reflect the changing nature of male roles in society, particularly an increase in depictions of men in paternal roles. Furthermore, Grau and Zotos (2016) cited other research indicating that consumer reactions to these newer portrayals of male characters in advertising were overwhelmingly positive.

In their discussion of future research avenues, Grau and Zotos (2016) highlighted the growing awareness of an often-overlooked consumer group, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual (LGBTQIA+) customer. Advertisers have started to acknowledge this group by incorporating imagery of same-sex couples into their communication strategies. Other advertisers adopt more subtle portrayals of LGBTQIA+ individuals that may go unnoticed by heterosexual viewers but are distinctly identifiable to LGBTQIA+ viewers.

Moreover, Grau and Zotos (2016, p. 769) highlighted another advertising trend coined "femvertising". This form of advertising uses the "empowered" woman to advertise products and celebrates her agency instead of objectifying her (Grau & Zotos, 2016, p. 769). The term, femvertising, is typically used for advertising campaigns that challenge traditional female gender stereotypes. What makes femvertising particular beside other advertising that speaks to female emancipation is that it partly addresses the role of advertising itself in creating these stereotypes. This way of advertising is a massive disruption to the status quo, since advertising is usually seen to perpetuate more traditional gender norms instead of questioning them and breaks with the typical portrayal of female characters (Åkestam et al., 2017).

One prominent example is the Dove Real Beauty campaign, which featured 'real' women, i.e., women with different physical attributes than the typical female character in ads, such as body sizes, but there are other campaigns addressing stereotyping related to roles, occupation, and personality traits (Åkestam et al., 2017). Research has shown that such 'femvertising' advertisements can contribute to dismantling gender stereotypes. In fact, the same study confirmed that this empowering portrayal of women in advertising has a direct effect on girls' self-esteem (Åkestam et al., 2017).

However, the concept of femvertising has also attracted critique. Gill (2008) points out that this type of advertising is mostly found in wealthy societies where it is perceived as a postfeminist approach. She argues that the notion of women being able to 'buy' their emancipation from men by purchasing products, such as tea or bras, can have harmful implications. Gill (2008) further highlights that, instead of addressing broader societal transformation, femvertising advertises self-transformation in terms of empowerment, independence, and agency, which may not effectively address the real structural problems women face in different areas of society. Her critique emphasises the need to acknowledge that challenges women face, are rooted in systemic structures rather than being solely individual or personal issues.

3.2 Insights from South Africa

Numerous quantitative studies have explored gender stereotypes in South Africa, adopting various perspectives. These studies included analyses of both men and women (Luyt, 2011), investigations focusing solely on women (Holtzhausen et al., 2011), analyses of the intersection of masculinities and race (Luyt, 2012), and assessments specifically examining only black role portrayals (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001). Additionally, cross-cultural research has been conducted in South Africa, comparing gender portrayals in South Africa and Great Britain (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002), and sex-role portrayals across South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya (Milner, 2005).

Milner conducted a follow-up study (2007) focusing solely on race portrayals in the mentioned countries, which will not be discussed here since it does not explore gender implications, and is, therefore, not directly relevant to this dissertation. Other significant studies on the continent include Mwangi's (1996) exploration of gender portrayals in Kenya and Furnham, Pallangyo and Gunter's (2001) research on gender portrayals in Zimbabwe. However, these studies from Kenya and Zimbabwe will not be further discussed here, as they are not directly related to this research on gender portrayals in South Africa.

3.2.1 Current Trends

This section will provide an overview of the most recent and relevant studies analysing gender stereotyping in South African television commercials, including Luyt's (2011) quantitative study on gender portrayals and Holtzhausen et al.'s (2011) content-analytic study on female roles.

In 2011, Luyt conducted one of the most widely cited and comprehensive quantitative studies on gender stereotyping in South African television commercials. The study featured a sizable sample of 5,803 advertisements, including 1,633 primary visual actors and 2,350 narrators. Data collection took place in 2003, incorporating advertisements from all free-to-air-channels, namely SABC (South African Broadcast Corporation) channels 1, 2, 3, and e.tv. Luyt (2011) employed a stratified sampling procedure and included repeat advertisements. The study adopted social constructionism as a theoretical framework. It built upon previous research and utilised a modified version of McArthur and Resko's (1975) original codebook to examine gender portrayals in South African advertising. The codebook included categories relating to the central character, as well as advertising attributes, drawing inspiration from both Western and non-Western contexts. The coding categories assessed advertising attributes, such as the *primary narrator*, *setting*, *actors*, and *product*. Additionally, categories related to the primary visual actor included *gender*, *age*, *social class*, *race*, and *portrayal* (Luyt, 2011, p. 361).

Luyt's (2011) study findings align closely with existing research in the field. In South African TVCs, men predominantly appeared as central characters (*primary visual actor*) and voice-

overs (*primary narrator*) compared to women. This finding contradicts the demographic composition reflected in national population statistics and indicates the reinforcement of male authority. Domestic settings were more commonly associated with female characters, while male characters were frequently depicted in public or occupational spaces (*setting*). Moreover, Luyt's (2011) hypothesis regarding the portrayal of female characters being more frequently shown alone with children than male characters (*actors*) was confirmed, although the difference was only marginal. Both of these findings reinforce the depiction of female characters as primarily associated with domestic responsibilities (Luyt, 2011).

Notably, both men and women were observed promoting domestic personal care products, although women did so more frequently (*products*). Luyt (2011, p. 366f.) argues that the association of female characters with domestic products, in contrast to male characters being featured in advertisements for vehicles, electronics, and other items, reinforces the traditional division where women are assigned responsibilities within the domestic sphere, while men are depicted occupying spaces beyond the domestic realm. Additionally, Luyt's (2011) findings confirmed gender stereotyping in terms of *age*, with women often portrayed as younger than men in South African advertisements. The author argues that this finding indicates the sexualisation of female characters and reinforces the portrayal of men in positions of greater authority compared to women.

An intriguing pattern identified by the findings was that male characters were more frequently portrayed as black rather than white compared to female characters (*race*), which contradicted Luyt's initial hypothesis. This unexpected finding may indicate the perpetuation of societal hierarchies among women, along with the reinforcement of white women being portrayed as the aesthetic ideal. Overall, Luyt (2011) concluded that these findings were indicative of traditional gender relations, as they portrayed female characters as subordinate and sexualised. In contrast, male characters were depicted as authoritative and dominant. The researcher suggested that these portrayals are a reflection of the social, political, and economic power disparities in South Africa in 2003. Luyt (2011) further hypothesised that

recent political changes might not have had an impact on advertising portrayals yet, supporting the assumption that advertising is a lagging indicator of social change (Eisend, 2010).

In the same year, Holtzhausen et al. (2011) analysed female portrayals in television commercials, focusing specifically on the various roles of women in advertising. The study examined a sample of television commercials collected from the free-to-air-channels SABC 1, 2, 3, and e.tv. The authors employed a non-probability purposive sampling strategy and recorded prime-time commercials on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays throughout March 2009. Repeat advertisements were excluded, resulting in a final sample of 1,404 television commercials that featured adult female characters with appearances lasting at least three seconds.

The authors identified various universal roles portrayed by female characters in television advertising, drawing from research conducted in both developed and developing countries. These roles, including *decorative*, *homemaker*, *work-related*, *sex object*, *social being*, *wife/mother*, and *product user*, were associated with specific products or services (Holtzhausen et al., 2011, p. 169f.). Another focal point of the study centred around advertising appeals, particularly examining a potential connection between female role portrayals and rational or emotional appeals. The commercials were subsequently coded based on these female roles by looking at the character, surrounding elements, setting, and the advertised products or services.

In their study, Holtzhausen et al. (2011) calculated percentage distributions and found that the most prevalent female role in South African television commercials was the *product user*, closely followed by the *social role*. Female characters were least frequently featured as *sex objects*. Notably, female characters were most frequently featured in advertising related to personal care products and were least likely to promote sport-related items. In terms of advertising appeals, rational appeals were the most commonly used in commercials featuring female characters, followed by a combination of rational and emotional appeals. However, the authors did not provide specific details on how these appeals were coded for.

Considering the study's purposive sample, it is crucial to approach the authors' inferences with some caution. Holtzhausen et al. (2011) critique the under-representation of women in work-related roles in commercials despite women comprising half of the workforce in South Africa. Interestingly, female characters were least likely to be depicted as sex objects, which the researchers attribute to South Africa's strong emphasis on women's rights and their protection against abuse. Surprisingly, women were rarely shown as homemakers or mothers, contrary to findings from previous research. Consequently, the researchers concluded that South African TV commercials do not depict women in stereotypical roles, as they were not portrayed in domestic roles or in a sexualised way.

On the contrary, the study's findings revealed that commercials depict women in various roles simultaneously, which Holtzhausen et al. (2011) suggest is a realistic portrayal of the multifaceted modern South African woman. Regarding product categories, women were predominantly associated with "low-involvement products" (Holtzhausen et al., 2011, p. 179), such as personal care, food and household items. The authors argue that this portrayal is not necessarily limiting or stereotypical since these products primarily target a female audience, and traditionally, these products are considered to be within a woman's domain in the household. However, it is worth questioning Holtzhausen et al. (2011) assumption, as it can be seen as perpetuating gender stereotypes in itself. It prompts us to consider why certain products are associated with specific genders. Moreover, even when viewing advertising through the lens of functional communication, this does not negate the fact that gender stereotypes can still be perpetuated through such advertisements –whether intended or not (Eisend, 2019).

3.2.2 Race as Mediating Factor

In this section, a culture-specific variable identified for the South African context – race – will be discussed. Two relevant studies will be detailed here: Luyt's (2012) quantitative content analysis, which focused on the co-construction of masculinities and race in South African television commercials, and Cassim and Monteiro's (2001) ground-breaking study of black role

portrayals in South African advertising. Additionally, race portrayals in Ghanaian, Kenyan, and South African television commercials were analysed in a study conducted by Milner (2007). However, it is important to note that her study did not include gender as a variable and will, therefore, not be discussed here.

In 2012, Luyt conducted a notable study that stands out for its exclusive focus on male portrayals. Moreover, Luyt's (2012) research explored the intersection of gender with other social categories, making it a noteworthy contribution to the field. Through a social constructionist lens, Luyt conducted a quantitative content analysis to examine the co-construction of masculinity and race in South African television commercials. The study aimed to determine whether men in these ads were represented significantly differently based on their race. Furthermore, Luyt (2012) employed Connell's (1987; 2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity in his study, to understand how media representations contribute to the maintenance of male dominance in the gender order.

Luyt (2012) collected a substantial sample of 5,803 advertisements, resulting in 876 commercials featuring male primary visual actors in his final selection. These television advertisements were collected from the free-to-air channels SABC1, 2, 3, and e.tv during a four-week period in 2003. To ensure the representativity of the sample, Luyt (2012) employed a stratified sampling strategy and constructed an artificial week. His codebook was primarily based on McArthur and Resko's (1975) original coding approach, while also incorporating insights from studies worldwide. He selectively included relevant categories and, when necessary, modified them to suit the specific context and research question, ensuring that the coding categories were informed by prior research and the collected data.

In his study, Luyt (2012) analysed both general advertising features, such as the *setting* and *product*, along with attributes related to the primary male actor, such as *race*, *social class*, *age*, and *portrayal*. To explore the constructions of masculinity in South African television commercials, Luyt (2012, p. 47) introduced so-called "masculinity norms" as additional coding categories, which emerged from his earlier research on rhetorical representations of

masculinity in South Africa (Luyt, 2003; 2005). While it is relatively common to adapt a coding scheme to suit the study's research objectives, such modifications are rarely supported by empirical research. The coding categories based on South African masculinity norms were the "sexuality norm", "toughness norm", "independence norm", "status norm", "responsibility norm", and "homophobia norm" (Luyt, 2012, p. 42f.).

The study's findings indicated significant differences in the portrayal of men in South African television advertisements based on their race. Notably, white men were more frequently featured as the primary visual actor (*primary visual actor*), which is a particular interesting finding given that black men constitute by far the largest population group in the country. Moreover, white men were more commonly portrayed as belonging to the upper or middle class compared to black men (*social class*). Additionally, white male characters tended to be older than their black counterparts (*age*), except for the very youngest age group (ages 0-10). This may reinforce the perception of black men holding less social authority and dominance (Luyt, 2012).

While both white and black men were approximately equally likely to be portrayed positively, black male characters were more often depicted in a negative light (*portrayal*). Interestingly, the study's findings concerning the categories of *setting* and *product type* contradicted Luyt's initial hypotheses, as black men were not shown in more 'feminine' settings or associated with more 'feminine' products. Instead, it was white men, who were more likely to be associated with these 'traditionally female' settings and products, leading the author to suggest this portrayal as an indicator of the "new man" (Luyt, 2012, p. 47). However, such portrayals might inadvertently reinforce the belief that black men are socially and emotionally distant.

Furthermore, the results revealed that white male characters were significantly more commonly associated with three of the six masculinity norms (*sexuality*, *toughness*, and *status*) compared to black male actors. Conversely, black men were not significantly more likely than white men to be associated with any of the masculinity norms. Luyt (2012), therefore, suggested that white men serve as the 'normative standard' against which appropriate

masculinity practices are examined. Additionally, white men were more successful in representing four out of the six masculinity norms (*sexuality*, *toughness*, *status*, and *independence*), whereas black men were not more likely than white men to embody any of the norms. Yet, black men were more likely to be depicted as failing to achieve two of the masculinity norms (*toughness* and *independence*). Luyt (2012) concludes that, not only are white men more successful in accomplishing traditional masculinity compared to black men, but black men are also more commonly represented as failing to achieve traditional masculinity when compared with white men.

Luyt's (2012) findings provide intriguing insights into male portrayals in advertising in relation to hegemonic masculinity, highlighting the differences between South African masculinities along the axis of race. White men were represented as the epitome of hegemonic masculinity, being of primary focus and occupying positions of greater social authority. On the other hand, black men in South African advertisements were depicted in a negative way, occupying lower status positions, and failing overall to achieve hegemonic masculinity as compared to white men. Luyt (2012) argued that these male representations mirror the distribution of social, economic, and political power in South Africa.

In 2001, Cassim and Monteiro conducted a significant study that centred on the depiction of black characters in South African television commercials during the mid-1990s. Their quantitative content analysis aimed to answer whether black characters were depicted in aspirational roles or according to their social reality. What sets this study apart is its unique approach of comparing advertising portrayals with real-life statistics, rather than implicitly assuming equality as a baseline. The researchers drew inspiration for their coding categories from Kassarjan's (1969) seminal longitudinal study on black portrayals in American magazine advertising. They examined both the environment of the black character, including the *area*, *kind of interaction*, *product category*, *appeal used*, and *occasion/activity*, as well as attributes related to the character themselves, such as *age*, *sex*, *bodyweight*, *occupation*, *clothing*

depicted, and *language*. In their analysis, Cassim and Monteiro (2001) also introduced sex as a mediating variable.

Cassim and Monteiro (2001) obtained a sample of 10,000 South African television commercials from Impact Information (Pty) Ltd, which consisted of all new commercials aired between April 1994 and July 1996. Employing a stratified random sampling technique, they narrowed down the sample to 2,400 commercials, including those with only black characters and excluding duplicate commercials. In the end, their final sample comprised 119 commercials featuring 348 black characters.

The study's findings indicated that black characters were over-represented in urban areas compared to census data (*area*). Additionally, they were mostly depicted as single individuals rather than with family, as a couple, with friends, or in other company (*kind of interaction*). Moreover, the results revealed that black characters were more frequently associated with 'social meaning' products and not commonly associated with high-value product categories; for instance, the sample only comprised one car commercial (*product category*). Moreover, male black characters were more commonly associated with typically 'male' products (*alcohol*, *appliance products*), while female black characters were more frequently featured with 'feminine' products (*household*, *beauty and personal products*). The most frequent appeal used in the commercials was product performance (*appeal*) (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001).

In terms of attributes related to the central character, the majority of characters were young adults and adults (*age*), which Cassim and Monteiro (2001) argued reflected the factual age distribution in South Africa. Both female and male characters were equally likely to be featured in the commercials (*sex*). The majority of the characters were of average weight; however, a larger percentage was overweight than underweight (*bodyweight*). Black female characters were more commonly portrayed as *overweight* compared to male characters, while no female character was depicted as *underweight*. Moreover, black characters were most commonly presented in professional occupations (*occupation*). When compared with the actual labour force, black characters in commercials were starkly over-represented in professional and semi-

professional occupations, and under-represented in low-skilled occupations. Notably, black female characters were featured as *housewives* but also very commonly depicted as *skilled worker* or *professional* (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001).

Many black characters in South African television commercials were also identified to be wearing high-fashion clothing (*clothing depicted*), confirming the popular belief that black South Africans are highly fashionable and brand-conscious. In this context, black female characters were more frequently depicted in *high fashion* and *traditional clothing* when compared with male characters, who were most commonly portrayed wearing a *uniform*. Regarding language, the majority of the characters were featured in a non-speaking role. Of those who did speak, English was the language most frequently used, and no protagonist spoke Afrikaans (*language*) (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001).

Cassim and Monteiro (2001) drew the conclusion that, when compared with national statistics, South African advertisers communicated a rather realistic view of black people in South Africa. The association of black characters with less expensive product categories might reflect the socio-economic realities of black South Africans during that time. The researchers (2001, p. 109, 120) further suggested that television advertising portrayed black characters in terms of an “assumption of equality”, meaning that black and white characters should be represented in the exact same way. This could be the reason that black characters were over-represented in professional occupations, while being under-represented in low-skilled occupations, which did not reflect the actual labour market during that time.

Moreover, the authors suggested that this over-representation was an indicator for South African commercials portraying black aspirations rather than the social reality. The authors concluded that no racial stereotyping could be found in South African television commercials. The results for gender stereotyping included mostly weak statistical relationships, yet they still provided some insight into the predominantly traditional representation of black men and women in South African television commercials.

3.2.3 Cross-cultural Studies

As mentioned before, cross-cultural designs are popular in this field of research, therefore, this section will discuss two cross-cultural analyses that included South Africa among their studied countries. Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002) conducted a quantitative content analysis, comparing gender stereotyping in British and South African television commercials. Similarly, Milner's (2005) quantitative study focused on gender stereotyping in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa.

In 2002, Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage conducted a notable study, the only one to date, that compares South Africa with a Western country. In their quantitative content analysis, the researchers compared South African and British television commercials to assess the extent of gender stereotyping in the respective countries. While following McArthur and Resko's (1975) original coding scheme, Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002) added specific categories, including *race*. Importantly, the researchers differentiated between primary and secondary characters in the advertisements, aiming to gain a nuanced understanding of the gender bias within the commercials. The study's hypotheses included the expectation of significant gender differences in British commercials, although less pronounced than in previous research. Additionally, the authors hypothesised gender stereotyping to be present in South African television commercials, with South African advertisements expected to exhibit higher levels of stereotyping compared to British commercials.

The sample was collected from SABC 1, 2, 3, and Channel 5 in the UK during two weeks in April (SA) and September (UK) 2000. This ensured that, for both countries, advertisements from the same season, autumn, were included. Commercials were recorded during primetime (7 pm-11 pm), which resulted in 118 South African and 208 English commercials. To refine the sample, repeated advertisements and those featuring animals or children as central characters were excluded, leading to a final sample of 77 South African and 95 British advertisements, which comprised 116 South African and 128 British central characters, respectively. The coding scheme has been comprehensively discussed in another section of this dissertation

(refer to Section 2.2.3). It was mostly modelled after McArthur and Resko's (1975) original study to ensure comparability with other studies and included the coding categories *mode of presentation*, *age*, *credibility basis*, *role*, *location*, *argument*, *reward type*, *product type*, *end comment*, *humour*, *background*, and *race* (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002).

The findings for British advertisements, for both primary and secondary characters, showed significant gender differences for *credibility*, suggesting that female characters are more likely to be depicted as product users, while male characters are portrayed as authorities. Male characters in British commercials were also more likely to be depicted as professionals or interviewers/narrators, while female characters were commonly associated with dependent roles (*role*). In the South African sample, the findings for both figures revealed that male characters were more commonly central characters compared to female characters, and male characters were more likely to be featured as voice-overs, while female characters were more often visually featured (*mode of presentation*). Moreover, the categories *credibility basis* and *role* were both significant for the South African sample. Lastly, male characters in the South African commercials were more likely to seek practical rewards, while female characters were more interested in self enhancement (*reward type*) (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002).

Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's (2002) findings revealed that the amount of stereotyping in British commercials has decreased over time, while the level of stereotyping in the South African sample aligned with earlier European studies, thus confirming hypotheses one and two. Additionally, the third hypothesis was also supported, as the South African sample exhibited more stereotyping compared to the British advertisements, with four categories (*mode of presentation*, *credibility*, *role*, *reward*) being significant for the South African sample compared to only two categories (*credibility* and *role*) for the British sample. Moreover, the researchers found that stereotyping increased when analysing primary characters, but less stereotyping was observed when focusing on secondary characters. Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002) suggested that this difference could be attributed to primary characters being

mostly represented visually, while secondary characters were primarily voice-overs. This may imply that visual representation offers more opportunities for gender stereotyping to occur.

In 2005, Milner conducted another cross-cultural study, comparing gender stereotyping in television commercials in South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana. Milner (2005) employed Hofstede's country classifications and selected those countries based on whether they represented masculine or feminine countries according to Hofstede's (1991 cited in Milner, 2005) masculinity index. This classification system is commonly used in advertising research to assess the impact of culture on values and norms and distinguishes societies as "masculine" or "feminine" (Milner, 2005, p. 76). South Africa was the only country explicitly classified in Hofstede's studies, while the rest of the continent was represented as regions. According to Hofstede, South Africa is categorised as the most masculine African country, while East Africa is perceived as more feminine. Therefore, Milner (2005) considers Kenya the most feminine country among the three, with Ghana falling in the middle of the masculinity-femininity spectrum.

The study's hypotheses were as follows: (1) Characters in Kenya, considered a feminine country, would be depicted in relationship roles more frequently compared to South Africa, considered a masculine country. (2) Employment situations would be more prevalent in the South Africa, the masculine country, compared to Kenya, the feminine country. (3) There would be more role differences in South Africa, the masculine country, compared to Kenya, the feminine country. Milner (2005) collected one day and night of programming from the most viewed television channels in each country on the same two days in May 2002. Duplicate commercials were included, and up to three characters per advertisement were coded for. This resulted in 56 Kenyan, 115 Ghanaian, and 55 South African commercials, with 56 Kenyan, 130 Ghanaian, and 71 South African central characters, respectively. Milner (2005, p. 82) utilised Gilly's (1988) coding scheme and coded certain variables for each commercial, such as *product*, *product user*, *voice-over*, and *setting*, as well as variables for each character,

including *sex*, *age*, *marital status*, *employment*, *occupation*, spokesperson, *credibility*, *help*, *advice*, *role*, *activity*, and *frustration*.

The study found that, across all three countries, male characters were more likely to be the voice-over in the ad (*voice-over*). For the variable “setting” only the Ghanaian sample yielded significant results. In Ghana, more male characters were shown in outdoor settings, while female characters were portrayed more often in "other" settings (*setting*). Moreover, the variable “employment status” yielded significant results for all three countries, revealing some interesting findings. In Kenya and Ghana, there was a rather traditional portrayal of the working male character and the unemployed female character, while in South African commercials, it was the exact opposite (*employment status*). Moreover, the variable “role” yielded significant results for Kenya and Ghana, but not for South Africa. Interestingly, female characters in Ghana were more likely to be represented in more independent roles, similar to male characters (*role*). In Kenya, the typical portrayal emerged, with male characters more likely to be depicted in independent roles, while female characters were more likely to be portrayed in relational roles (*role*). Therefore, none of Milner’s (2005) hypotheses were supported.

As possible reasons for the inconclusive hypotheses, the author pointed out a potential disconnect between Hofstede’s masculinity index and its application to the country contexts of South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya. Milner (2005, p. 87) suggested that this disconnect might be attributed to the difference between the predominantly “White African” population that Hofstede potentially collected data from between 1967-1973 and the predominantly black African viewership during Milner’s study. Consequently, Milner (2005) highlighted the importance of considering the representativeness of the people included in Hofstede’s study and advised caution in using Hofstede’s masculinity index in research including African countries.

3.2.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented an overview of research on gender portrayals conducted in South Africa between 2001 and 2012, covering current trends, studies exploring race as a mediating

factor, and cross-cultural research. Overall, the findings suggest that gender stereotyping remains a prevalent feature in South African television commercials. All the discussed studies confirm the prevalence of gender stereotyping. In fact, Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage's (2002) study even suggests that the levels of gender stereotyping in South African television commercials are similar to those found in earlier European studies. It is important to note that the most recent study on gender stereotyping in South African advertising, at the time of writing this dissertation, dates back over a decade. The persisting prevalence of stereotyping in these commercials highlights the urgent need for a more current assessment of gender portrayals in this context.

While the findings presented clearly point to the existence of gender stereotyping in South African television commercials, it is essential to consider some noteworthy details. Milner's (2005) study highlighted the complexities of gender portrayals in African countries. While evidence of gender stereotyping was present across all three countries analysed, there were intriguing variations among them. For instance, in Ghanaian television commercials, both male and female characters were frequently portrayed in independent roles, challenging traditional gender stereotypes (*role*). In contrast, South African commercials showed more female characters employed compared to male characters, which challenges another aspect of gender stereotyping (*employment status*).

Milner's (2005) study provided another noteworthy finding: her attempt to apply Hofstede's masculinity index in her cross-cultural research including South Africa, Ghana, and Kenya was unsuccessful. This serves as a reminder to approach the application of concepts from a Western or American context to an African context with caution. It underscores the importance of using nuanced and context-specific approaches to gain a deeper understanding of gender portrayals in diverse cultural settings. Studies conducted in South Africa also address further nuances for gender portrayals in advertising beyond the impact of the cultural context. Luyt's (2011) study on gender portrayals in South African television commercials revealed intriguing insights for male portrayals. It was found that male characters frequently appeared with

children, although female characters were still marginally more likely to do so (*background*). Additionally, both male and female characters were similarly associated with personal care products (*products*).

When examining intra-group differences, race played a mediating role in male portrayals in South African television commercials. Luyt's (2012) findings indicated that white male characters were over-represented, which is particularly concerning in a country with a predominantly black population. Furthermore, white male characters were depicted as successfully accomplishing traditional masculinity, rather than black characters. Generally speaking, black male characters were portrayed as less authoritative and dominant, which, according to Luyt (2012), mirrored the social and economic realities of South Africans in 2012. Surprisingly, Luyt (2012) found white male characters were associated with certain feminine traits, opposing his initial hypothesis. This may indicate a shift towards (white) men in softer roles, while black men were portrayed in more emotionally distant ways. Similar racial dynamics also applied to South African television commercials with female characters. In his earlier study including portrayals of both men and women, Luyt (2011) demonstrated that white female characters dominated television commercials in contrast with their non-white counterparts. Luyt (2011) stated that this suggested the perpetuation of societal hierarchies among women and reinforced the portrayal of white women as the aesthetic ideal.

Furthermore, Cassim and Monteiro (2001) conducted one of the earlier studies incorporating real life statistics as a comparative standard for advertising portrayals, a research technique that has been widely adopted in recent years. In their research, Cassim and Monteiro (2001) compared race portrayals with national statistics and found that black portrayals were often aspirational. It could be argued that there might have been a shift from the more aspirational portrayals described by Cassim and Monteiro in 2001 to the more 'realistic' race portrayals identified by Luyt in 2012. However, direct comparisons are impossible due to variations in sampling, coding and other research procedures. Interestingly, while racial stereotyping was

less prevalent, the research conducted by Cassim and Monteiro's (2001) revealed a significant amount of evidence for gender stereotyping.

This may suggest that, while cultural nuances can indeed be identified in gender portrayals, as demonstrated by Milner's (2005) results and the insights into race as a mediating variable, they might not be readily identifiable through the use of broad-stroke gender indices. Instead, research that takes the cultural context into careful consideration when conceptualising coding categories and the overall theoretical approach can successfully uncover the idiosyncrasies of gender portrayals within the specific country context (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001; Luyt, 2011; 2012).

3.3 Insights from Germany

Following a review of global trends and research from South Africa, in this section, I will now present notable research from Germany and Austria. Research on gender stereotyping in television advertisements in the German context remains limited, with only a relatively small number of studies conducted. This section will, therefore, also incorporate findings from an Austrian study for a more comprehensive overview (Ahlstrand, 2007). The discussion will include current trends and cross-cultural investigations.

Studies include analyses of the representation of men and women in German television commercials (Knoll et al., 2011), as well as studies that specifically focused on women, while also taking audience reception into account (Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011). Additionally, there are large-scale comparative studies, such as the study conducted by Matthes et al. (2016) and Paek et al.'s (2010) research. Other studies conducted in Germany that are not directly relevant to this dissertation will not be discussed. One such study is Eisend et al.'s (2014) research on the efficacy of television advertising, particularly focusing on humorous advertisements. Additionally, this section will address any existing research gaps and conclude with a summary of evidence.

3.3.1 Current Trends

This section will highlight two noteworthy studies. Firstly, I will explore Knoll et al.'s (2011) quantitative content analysis, which examined gender portrayals in German television commercials and provided a comparison between public and private television channels. Secondly, I will discuss Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha's (2011) mixed-methods approach, providing both a quantitative assessment of female portrayals in German television commercials and qualitative insights from focus group findings regarding audience perceptions.

In 2011, Knoll et al. conducted the most widely cited study on gender portrayals in Germany to this day. The main objective of their quantitative content analysis was to introduce a measure

for assessing and comparing the levels of gender stereotyping. This study is especially remarkable as it was the first to compare gender roles in television commercials across both public and private television channels. Given that advertising is more strictly regulated on public channels, and they were tasked with providing information in an unbiased manner to serve public interests, the researchers expected to find less stereotyping on these channels. Consequently, they explored two research questions: first, whether gender stereotyping in television commercials differed between public and private channels, and second, the ways in which they differed.

This research also stands out as one of the few to employ a theoretical framework. Knoll et al. (2011, p. 869, emphasis added) specified gender stereotypes as consisting of four components, namely, "*trait descriptors* (e.g. self-assertion, concern for others), *physical characteristics* (e.g. hair length, body height), *role behaviours* (e.g. leader, taking care of children), and *occupational status* (e.g. truck driver, elementary school teacher, housewife)". Each of these is understood to have both a masculine and feminine version, and most of the coding categories from previous research can be classified into these groups, except for *trait descriptors*, which are not directly observable.

The authors highlighted the use of equal representation as a common method for assessing gender stereotyping. However, they proposed a nuanced approach, stating that gender equality as a baseline was suitable for categories related to occupational status and role behaviour. Yet, when it came to physical characteristics, such as age, the authors suggested consulting their actual occurrence, such as comparing the representation of age in television commercials with the age distribution in society. This comparison allows for a better assessment of gender stereotyping in television advertising based on the degree of portrayal deviation from equality (Knoll et al., 2011).

For their quantitative analysis, Knoll et al. (2011) selected the most popular public and private channels based on market share – ARD (public) and RTL (private). The researchers recorded advertisements on several randomly chosen non-consecutive days during four weeks in June

2008. The time frame chosen was between 5 pm and 8 pm to ensure comparability across the channels, as public channels in Germany are not allowed to broadcast advertising before 5 pm and after 8 pm. Repeat advertisements were excluded, as well as commercials with unidentifiable central characters, cartoon characters, or children. Up to two adults with the most distinct roles appearing for at least three seconds were coded for. This resulted in 183 advertisements with 231 central characters, 113 commercials with 137 characters on RTL, and 70 advertisements with 94 characters on ARD (Knoll et al., 2011, p. 874).

The authors adopted their coding scheme from Furnham et al.(2000), which was closely modelled after McArthur and Resko's (1975) original coding scheme, but provided no justification for this. The coding categories included *age*, *credibility*, *location*, *product type*, and *role*, each corresponding to the stereotyping components of occupational status (*location*, *role*), physical characteristics (*age*), and role behaviours (*credibility*, *product type*). All categories were compared against the baseline of gender equality, representing an equal distribution of male and female characters across the categories. Subsequently, the researchers computed chi-square tests and odds ratios.

Results indicated that, on both channels, female characters were more likely to be depicted under 35 years old, whereas male characters were typically represented as 35 years and older (*age*). Additionally, female characters were commonly depicted as product users, while male characters tended to be portrayed as authorities (*credibility*) on both channels. Regarding *product type*, female characters were associated with domestic products, while male characters were linked to other products on both ARD and RTL. Moreover, female characters were more frequently portrayed at home on both channels, while male characters were typically shown at work (*location*). Interestingly, on ARD only, female characters were depicted in dependent roles when compared to their male counterparts (*role*).

Moreover, the odds ratios offered valuable insights into the level of stereotyping, allowing the researchers to rank the categories according to their degree of stereotyping. On the private channel RTL, stereotyping was predominantly strong for *product type*, followed by *age*,

credibility, *location*, and *role*. This finding suggested that stereotyping related to role behaviour and physical characteristics is more evident on RTL. The authors classified this as 'functional' and less harmful stereotyping, as it primarily served the purpose of selling a product (Furnham et al., 2000).

In contrast, on the public channel ARD, stereotyping was most pronounced in the following order: *location*, *credibility*, *age*, *role*, and *product type*, indicating that stereotyping predominantly revolved around occupational status. Particularly concerning, female characters on public channels were significantly less likely to be depicted in occupational roles and environments compared to their male counterparts (*role* and *location*). The authors pointed out that this form of stereotyping is especially unnecessary and harmful, as it does not serve the purpose of selling a product and directly contradicts progressive gender policies. Their findings highlighted the persistent gender stereotyping in German television commercials. While the degree of stereotyping did not significantly differ between public and private channels, their research revealed noticeable differences in the type of stereotyping on ARD and RTL.

In 2011, Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011) conducted a study focused on the portrayal of women in German television commercials, as well as the reception by the audience. Building upon the earlier research by Kotelmann and Mikos (1981), pioneers in studying female portrayals in the German context, Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011) aimed to assess how women were depicted in commercials and whether there had been shifts in female portrayals over time. Similar to Kotelmann and Mikos' (1981) study, Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011) combined their quantitative content analysis with group discussions to explore how female recipients perceive the female archetypes depicted in commercials, making it one of the few studies to take such an approach.

The researchers captured advertisements from both the public channels ARD and ZDF, as well as the private channels RTL and Sat.1, throughout a week in spring 2007, between 5 pm and 8 pm. This resulted in a total sample of 1,583 commercials. After excluding split-screens, sponsorships, repeat advertisements and those featuring male central characters, their final

sample consisted of 236 commercials. As a result of their quantitative content analysis, the researchers identified six distinct types of women: *the sex object, object, and decorative accessory*; *the housewife, mother, and family idyll*; *experts and working women*; *grandmas*; *the sporty one*; and *women at leisure*. The last was further divided into subcategories including *the young pretty woman*; *the natural woman*; and *the unconventional woman*.

Although the authors did not elaborate on the specifics of how these types of women were developed or their connection to Kotelmann and Mikos' (1981) prior research, their descriptions suggest that the classification was based on criteria, such as age groups, and physical appearance attributes, such as body weight, attire, and makeup. Additionally, Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011) used roles and occupations, such as housewives and professionals, as well as behaviours and attitudes, such as "confident" or "happy", to classify these types. Lastly, the context and settings in which female characters appeared in advertisements also played a role in categorising them into different types, such as whether they were depicted in domestic or work-related environments.

An in-depth explanation of the six types of women will be presented in a following section of this dissertation (refer to Section 6.3 Contemporary Femininities). The *sex object, object, and decorative accessory* included young women between 16 and 30 years old, characterised by their slim, attractive physique and erotic aura. The role of *housewife, mother, and family idyll* described women aged 20 to 35, with a slim and attractive, but natural appearance. Notably, Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011, p. 92) emphasised that the modern housewife was now portrayed as a competent authority in everyday matters. Meanwhile, *experts and working women*, aged 30 to 45, were slender and groomed, with a trustworthy appearance.

The *grandmas* were typically well-dressed and groomed, showing mental and physical vigour and openness to change. It is noteworthy that the authors highlighted the presence of both 'traditional' and unconventional grandmas in German television commercials. The archetype of *the sporty one* radiated confidence, was active, had a slim and groomed appearance, and was depicted enjoying sports activities. Lastly, the category of *women at leisure* included

diverse portrayals loosely linked to 'leisure', ranging from female characters engaged in leisurely pursuits to those depicted in more passive scenarios. Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011) identified female characters in German commercials as predominantly depicted as *women at leisure*. Additionally, they pointed out that, while traditional roles, such as housewife or mother still persisted, these roles had undergone a positive transformation.

The foundation for their subsequent all-female group discussions comprised six commercials, which represented different types of women: *the sex object*, *mother*, *grandma* and *the unconventional woman*, a subcategory of *women at leisure*. The authors recognised age as a moderating factor, thus dividing the group discussions into older and younger women. Among the younger demographic, the reception of the advertisements leant towards critical. The portrayals' artificiality was noted, and, according to the young focus group, the conventional female character in advertising was depicted as youthful, slender, attractive, with limited intelligence, existing primarily to showcase the product. However, the young women expressed appreciation for female portrayals in a "Dove" advertisement that showcased natural and older women.

The reception of female roles in commercials among the group of older women mirrored that of the younger women; they emphasised that the standard depiction of female characters in advertising either revolved around youth and sex appeal or conformed to the roles of housewives and mothers. Furthermore, the older focus group was particularly critical toward the representation of older female characters. They highlighted that portrayals of older characters predominantly revolved around health products or other stereotypically 'age-appropriate' items.

This goes to show that, interestingly, opinions regarding the portrayal of women in German advertising varied based on the respondents' age. The younger women were critical of how younger female characters were depicted in commercials, considering them exaggerated and overly ambitious. Conversely, the older women saw these portrayals as realistic representations of contemporary young women. The authors hypothesised that this disparity

could be linked to the older group's indirect connection to such portrayals. This may also explain why the older focus group members rejected the representations of older women in advertising, while younger women viewed them positively.

Overall, the authors noted that contemporary portrayals of femininity in German advertisements carried more positive implications, depicting female characters as self-reliant and confident, exuding carefreeness and joy. However, respondents still mostly associated women in advertising with traditional roles like, "housewife", "mother", or "young woman". Even when alternative female portrayals were introduced, they weren't universally well-received. The authors suggested that the simplified “female types” might not capture the nuances conveyed by the portrayals. Furthermore, the opinions of the focus group were likely influenced not only by the presented six advertisements, but also by their broader exposure to advertising across various media platforms (Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011).

3.3.2 Cross-cultural and Austrian studies

This section will undertake an examination of cross-cultural research and a relevant Austrian study. First, an overview of Matthes et al.’s (2016) extensive cross-cultural analysis on gender portrayals in 13 Asian, American, and European countries, including Germany, will be provided. Next, I will explore Paek et al.’s (2010) cross-cultural analysis of gender-role portrayals in seven countries, including Germany. Lastly, due to the limited scholarship on gender portrayals in German television commercials, an Austrian study by Ahlstrand (2007) will be touched upon, examining gender portrayals in Austrian television commercials.

In 2016, Matthes et al. conducted the most recent assessment of gender stereotyping in German television commercials as part of their comparative study. The aim of the study was to address the research question of how the country context impacted gender roles in television commercials. Their study used comparable measures and samples and both older and more recent gender indices to assess gender-role portrayals across countries. The authors pointed out that most cross-cultural studies employed one or two, often outdated, gender indices to

explain cultural differences, and compare only two or three countries. According to Matthes et al. (2016), this did not allow for inferences about how culture shapes portrayals. In a much larger than usual quantitative content analysis, the researchers compared gender portrayals in 1,755 television advertisements across a total of 13 Asian, American, and European countries. The countries were selected according to their gender indices scores and included Germany, Austria, Brazil, China, France, Japan, Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, South Korea, Spain, United Kingdom, and the United States.

The most frequently utilised framework in cross-cultural advertising research is Hofstede's (2001 cited in Matthes et al., 2016) cultural dimensions, specifically the masculinity dimension. In their research, Matthes et al. (2016) additionally employed a more recent model, the GLOBE project, as well as the Gender Development Index (GDI) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), as well as UNDP's Gender Inequality Index (GII) and the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). The researchers applied the five indices (Hofstede's masculinity index, GLOBE's gender egalitarianism index, the GDI, the GII, and the GGGI) to assess if and how they predict gender-role stereotyping in television commercials.

To ensure sample equivalence, 15 hours of television programming was recorded from the most viewed private channels in each country during one week in May 2014. Five (5) hours on three (3) days of the same week were recorded for each channel, including weekdays and weekends, during prime-time (6 pm-11 pm). Repeat advertisements and commercials with animals, children or comic figures as central characters were excluded from the sample. This resulted in a sample of 1,755 television commercials, with 144 German commercials and 222 Austrian commercials. The researchers adopted the codebook from previous research (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010), which was inspired by McArthur and Resko's (1975) original coding scheme. Coding categories included in the research were *primary character*, *product category*, *voiceover/narrator*, *age*, *dominant setting*, and *working role*.

Their findings revealed that female characters were more commonly depicted as younger than their male counterparts, which was the case in seven countries, including Germany and Austria

(*age*). Moreover, there were significantly more male voice-overs than female voiceovers across all countries except France (*voice-over*). Additionally, in all countries except Japan, female characters were more commonly associated with beauty or personal care products (*product type*). Conversely, in some countries, including Germany, male central characters were more frequently associated with technology or car products (*product type*). Similarly, in several countries, including Germany, female characters were more frequently depicted in a home setting, and male characters were more frequently shown in work settings in several countries, including Germany and Austria (*setting*) (Matthes et al., 2016).

In a second step, the researchers then examined why associations between gender and the portrayal of primary characters are found in some countries and not in others by assessing the relationship between these variations in gender stereotyping and a country's gender index. The findings of their multilevel analysis suggest that none of the five gender indices was able to predict why there was a weaker or stronger association between the central character and the coding categories in any of the countries. The authors therefore concluded that the effect of culture on stereotypical portrayals in advertising might be smaller than initially assumed (Matthes et al., 2016).

Their findings, therefore, stand in direct contrast with Eisend (2010), who found that gender stereotyping is dependent on the level of gender equality in a society instead of the other way around. This also implies that countries with more gender equality do not necessarily depict female characters in a more equal or progressive way in television commercials. Overall, the authors stated that, despite not one country having only non-stereotypical portrayals, several countries, like the United Kingdom and United States, had fewer stereotypical categories. Conversely, commercials in other countries, such as Germany, were found to exhibit stereotyping across nearly all variables tested for (Matthes et al., 2016).

In 2010, Paek et al. conducted a study with an approach similar to that of Matthes et al. (2016). In their cross-cultural study across seven countries, Paek Nelson and Vilela investigated whether two gender indices, namely Hofstede's masculinity index (MAS) (1984 cited in Paek

et al., 2010) and the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) (UNDP, 2002 cited in Paek et al., 2010), could predict the extent of gender stereotyping in these nations. To assess this, the researchers initially compared chi-square analysis results, which revealed stereotyping for individual coding categories in certain countries, while considering the countries' masculinity and GDI scores. Additionally, they examined the "match-up hypothesis" (Paek et al., 2010, p. 193), proposing that products traditionally associated with women would predominantly feature female characters and female voice-overs in their ads, and vice versa. Finally, the study explored the most effective framework among the "cultural (MAS), country-level (GDI), or execution-level (product type or gender of the typical user)" (Paek et al., 2010, p. 192) for predicting gender-role portrayals in television commercials.

The researchers criticised the scarcity of studies employing theoretical frameworks to explain cultural differences in gender portrayals. Previous use of Hofstede's cultural value framework in researching gender stereotyping in TV commercials produced mixed results (Milner, 2005). Therefore, Paek et al.'s (2010) research is noteworthy for incorporating gender frameworks beyond Hofstede's masculinity dimension to assess cross-cultural gender depictions. In addition to Hofstede's cultural framework, the researchers considered the country-level gender development index GDI relevant for gender portrayal studies in advertising due to assumptions that portrayals conform within political and sociocultural contexts. The study's hypotheses were that countries with higher MAS and lower GDI scores would exhibit more gender differences in central character, occupation, and voice-over of television commercials, and vice versa.

The examination of country-level and cultural gender equality is grounded in the belief that recipients respond positively to ads that resonate with their norms and values. Thus, the researchers proposed that incorporating the gender of the typical product user, distinguishing between 'feminine' (beauty, fashion, etc.) and 'masculine' (car, electronics, insurance, etc.) products, could offer valuable insights into gender portrayals in advertising. This was underscored by findings indicating a positive impact on ad effectiveness when the spokesperson's gender aligned with the product, known as the "match-up hypothesis"

(Whipple and McManamon, 2002 cited in Paek et al., 2010, p. 193). Consequently, another hypothesis predicts congruence between product type and the gender of the central character and voice-over in TV commercials.

Using quantitative content analysis, the authors examined 2,608 prime-time television commercials across Germany, Brazil, Canada, China, South Korea, Thailand, and the United States. These countries were selected for their diverse MAS and GDI scores, representing a spectrum of cultural values and gender-equality development. The sample was collected during prime time (6-11 pm) over two to six weekdays in 2002 from major television channels in all seven countries. While ads from Germany, Canada, and the United States were collected in November, those from Thailand, South Korea, China, and Brazil were recorded between July and August. This resulted in a large data set, including 182 German commercials. The coding scheme employed for their quantitative content analysis was loosely modelled after Gilly (1988) and Milner (2005) and included the categories *prominent character gender*, *prominent character occupation*, and *gender of the voice-over*.

Their findings suggested that neither ranking (MAS nor GDI) correlated with any of the coding categories (*gender*, *occupation*, *voice-over*). Notably, German commercials predominantly depicted both male and female characters as professional workers (*occupation*). Analysing the congruence between product type and gender portrayal revealed that 'male products' typically feature male central characters, as well as male voice-overs. Conversely, 'female products' tend to have female central characters, but male voice-overs are more commonly used. The authors, however, attributed this discrepancy to the overall prevalence of male voice-overs in the sample (Paek et al., 2010, p. 192).

Subsequently, the researchers employed a regression model, which indicated that the central character's gender was most strongly predicted by the typical product user, while both the MAS index and GDI exhibited only minimal predictive strength in terms of gender (*gender*). However, for the category *voice-over*, all three factors – MAS, GDI, and typical product user – successfully predicted the gender of the voice-over. The researchers concluded that their study

replicated the mixed results seen in previous applications of the MAS index to research on gender portrayals. Similarly, the GDI played a minimal predictive role. In fact, the typical product user emerged as the most significant predictor of both the character's gender and the voice-over, thereby supporting the match-up hypothesis. This may imply that gendered products utilise stereotypes irrespective of country context or culture, which may still potentially reinforce restrictive (consumption) roles for men and women. Overall, male characters continue to dominate television commercials (Paek et al., 2010, p. 192).

In 2007, Ahlstrand conducted a quantitative content analysis of television commercials in Austria. Despite being conducted in Austria, her study is mentioned in this dissertation due to the limited scholarship within German-speaking cultures. Ahlstrand introduced various iterations of the original McArthur and Resko (1975) coding scheme, such as Gilly (1988) and Furnham et al.'s (2000) interpretations, highlighting that minor deviations from the original scheme facilitate cross-temporal and cross-country comparisons. Ahlstrand (2007, p. 14) employed a modified version of Gilly's coding scheme in her research, explaining that Gilly's (1988) results indicated gender stereotyping across all the categories that Ahlstrand selected for her research. These categories included variables coded for each advertisement (*product*, *voice-over*, *setting*) and variables coded for each character (*sex*, *age*, *role*).

Ahlstrand (2007) collected advertising from the public broadcast channel ORF 1, chosen for its broad viewership. She recorded television commercials on two specific days, Wednesday and Saturday, during a two-week span in May 2005, between 6 pm and 12 am, resulting in a total of nine hours of programming. In line with prior studies, Ahlstrand (2007) excluded commercials featuring cartoons, animals, and children as central characters. However, in keeping with Gilly's (1988) approach, repeat advertisements were included. This resulted in a sample of 129 commercials with 203 central characters. Ahlstrand (2007) coded the central character of each advertisement, defining it similarly to previous research as any character with an appearance lasting at least three seconds or delivering a line of speech. She coded a

maximum of two central characters per advertisement, selecting the most prominent characters.

Subsequently, Ahlstrand (2007) conducted chi-square analyses. Due to some small counts, certain values within the *product* and *setting* categories were excluded or merged with other values. Her findings revealed that female characters in Austrian television commercials were more likely to promote body products, whereas male characters were frequently associated with finance and real estate products (*product*). Furthermore, men often were the voice-over of the advertisement (*voice-over*) and were also over-represented as central characters (*gender*). Additionally, male characters tended to be depicted in middle age, while their female characters counterparts were typically portrayed as younger (*age*). Moreover, male characters were more frequently represented as interviewer or narrator (*role*) (Ahlstrand, 2007).

Following this, Ahlstrand (2007) proceeded to compare some of the findings with real-life statistics. The researcher highlighted that, since Austria has near gender parity in actual age and gender distribution, advertisements significantly skew the depiction of age among advertising characters. Furthermore, the advertisements overrepresent male characters as central figures and voice-overs when contrasted with national statistics. Consequently, the author concluded that Austrian television commercials continued to perpetuate gender stereotypes. Nonetheless, Ahlstrand (2007, p. 22) emphasised that her research added nuance to the existing body of knowledge by suggesting that, in Austrian commercials, both male and female characters were equally likely to be depicted in dependent roles (*role*). Additionally, both genders were equally likely to be represented in a "private residence" or an "occupational setting" (*setting*), indicating intriguing deviations from conventional gender stereotypes.

3.3.3 Conclusion

Previous research conducted in Germany between 2007 and 2016 offers intriguing insights into gender stereotyping and related issues within German television commercials. This

section presented an overview of current trends, cross-cultural studies, and research conducted in Germany and Austria. Across the spectrum of these studies, findings consistently indicate that gender stereotyping remains a prominent phenomenon in the German context. Cross-cultural comparisons further suggest that, in fact, gender stereotyping is high in Germany when contrasted with other countries, and this trend has remained steady over time. This may appear counterintuitive in a country known for its gender progressiveness. The concern deepens when such stereotypes are found even on public television channels, which have a mandate to educate and offer unbiased programming. This observation may indicate the extent to which traditional gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained in German society (Knoll et al., 2011).

There appears to be a growing trend towards cross-cultural research that incorporates Germany as one of the countries. However, this kind of research often produces inconclusive results regarding the impact of culture on portrayals. For instance, Matthes et al.'s (2016) findings suggested that none of the five gender indices they applied in their research had any explanatory power. Similarly, the findings by Paek et al. (2010) indicated that, rather than Hofstede's MAS or the GDI, it is the typical product user that holds predictive power for differences in gender portrayals. This may sound familiar, as similar findings from South Africa were discussed in the previous section, where Milner's (2005) cross-cultural study also produced mixed results concerning the use of Hofstede's masculinity dimension to explain cultural disparities in gender portrayals.

Hence, one could argue that, while culture continues to hold a significant place in the study of gender portrayals in advertising, its limited explanatory capability may question the need to isolate culture as a mediating factor. Instead, novel research avenues could explore the nuance of portrayals across different countries. This could involve the introduction of culture-specific theoretical frameworks or coding categories to facilitate a more comprehensive analysis.

Methodologically, numerous German studies employed theoretical frameworks, with one even incorporating theoretical perspectives on the gender concept. These studies utilised a range of statistical analyses, such as chi-square analyses, in conjunction with other computations, like odds ratios (Knoll et al., 2011), regression models (Paek et al., 2010), multilevel analyses (Matthes et al., 2016), and even employed focus groups (Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011). These supplementary calculations often produced insightful findings. For example, Knoll et al. (2011) demonstrated that, while the degree of stereotyping remained consistent across public and private channels, the nature of stereotyping differed. Furthermore, Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha's (2011) findings revealed more progressive and positive female portrayals, yet female recipients' attitudes remained critical.

However, when it came to content coding categories, there appeared to be less advancement. Many studies utilised an adapted version of the original coding scheme developed by McArthur and Resko (1975). Often, these adaptations involved simplifying the original coding scheme by dropping content categories. This adjustment was typically made to accommodate the complexities of conducting large-scale cross-country comparisons or other forms of comparative research. A standout example in this context was the research by Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011). They modelled their approach after a study conducted by Kotelmann and Mikos (1981), which focused on both female roles in television commercials and audience perceptions. Unfortunately, Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011) did not provide further insights into how they extracted the typology of women in advertising from the German commercials.

In terms of the actual findings from quantitative content analyses, coding categories that consistently yielded significant results across both German and Austrian studies included *age*, *product type*, *setting*, *role*, and *voice-over* (Ahlstrand, 2007; Knoll et al., 2011; Matthes et al., 2016). One of the few studies to incorporate a theoretical framework for gender stereotypes was conducted by Knoll et al. (2011). They introduced the various components of gender stereotypes, such as traits, physical characteristics, roles, and occupations, and linked these

with coding categories. Additionally, it appears that considering real-life statistics has gained traction in German research. Several studies compared gender portrayals in advertising with national gender distributions (Ahlstrand, 2007; Knoll et al., 2011). Findings suggested that the overall gender parity in Germany is not accurately represented in television commercials.

3.4 Research Gaps

As evident from the previous sections, there is a wealth of scholarship on gender portrayals in television commercials, with research conducted on nearly every continent. However, the majority of studies centre on English-speaking countries, leaving Germany relatively under-researched in terms of gender portrayals in television commercials (Holtz-Bacha, 2011; Rudy et al., 2010). In fact, the bulk of the research seems to focus on other Western and Asian countries (Ahlstrand, 2007; Luyt, 2011). While there have been some quantitative assessments, the last study conducted in Germany is rather outdated, with the most recent large-scale comparative study conducted by Matthes et al. in 2016. Interestingly, findings from their comparative study suggest that gender stereotyping in German television advertising has remained relatively stable over the years, in contrast to the decrease in stereotyping seen in most other Western countries (Matthes et al., 2016). This makes it all the more important to provide a current assessment of gender portrayals in German television advertisements.

In a similar vein, research on gender portrayals in South African television advertising is rather limited, with the majority of research being conducted in developed countries. South Africa has experienced significant economic, political, and social shifts after its first democratic elections in 1994, resulting in improved access to television and media for previously disadvantaged communities, who have become active participants in the consumer market (Holtzhausen et al., 2011). Considering the changing cultural and consumer context in South Africa, it is plausible that representations have evolved since the last quantitative assessment of gender stereotyping conducted by Luyt in 2011.

The previous sections have already offered insights into gaps in research on both a global scale and specifically within the cultural contexts of South Africa and Germany. The following section aims to further discuss relevant gaps in the research on gender portrayals in advertising. It will elaborate on the gaps in knowledge, with a particular focus on the influence of cultural context and outdated coding schemes. This exploration will address themes that

have yet to find their place within coding schemes, including the intersection of gender with race and ethnicity as well as gender concepts that extend beyond the binary.

3.4.1 Impact of Country Context

While there is a strong body of research indicating that men and women are portrayed stereotypically around the world, it is less clear how precisely the country context impacts representations of gender in TV ads. Since Gilly's (1988) seminal study, numerous cross-cultural analyses have been conducted in the field, examining multiple cultural contexts rather than just one country. Scholars have repeatedly emphasised the importance of cultural differences in understanding gender portrayals, although the exact way in which the cultural context affects gender images is not clear (Matthes et al., 2016; Milner, 2005; Paek et al., 2010). It is assumed that advertisements communicate within the framework of culture-specific values and ideas to effectively resonate with consumers. Only when the consumer identifies with the characters in the ad, can the advertisement achieve its intended effect (Holtz-Bacha, 2011).

Milner and Higgs (2004) claimed that the way men and women were presented in advertisements could serve as an indicator of a society's attitude towards gender. Eisend (2019, p. 73) summarised past research by noting that gender stereotypes differed across countries due to factors like "gender equality, women empowerment, and gender-related values." According to Matthes et al. (2016), however, these differences have decreased over time. There are previous studies indicating that gender stereotyping is stronger in more traditional societies (Furnham & Mak, 1999). Researching gender equality on a country-level follows the assumption that the cultural context provides the framework for advertising professionals when creating a commercial. It also suggests that audiences are complacent with commercials that match their own experiences and cultural values (Paek et al., 2010).

In more recent years, scholars have employed structural indices to categorise countries, and there are several studies that assess the correlation between national indicators of gender

equality and gender representations in advertising. Cross-cultural studies have begun to incorporate gender indices, such as the GDI, to measure how a country's gender index score corresponds with advertising portrayals. This research approach is shaped by the mirror or mold debate (Eisend, 2010), and seeks to investigate whether advertising reflects or constructs societal gender stereotypes.

However, these cross-cultural studies have produced mixed results. Eisend's (2010) meta-analytic study of 64 research works showed that the GDI predicted the degree of gender stereotyping in the respective countries, suggesting that advertising portrayals were influenced by the levels of gender equality within the society, rather than the other way around. Hence, Eisend's (2010) findings validated the mirror hypothesis. In a study from the same year, Paek et al. (2010) found little to no evidence supporting the explanatory power of Hofstede's masculinity index or the GDI for differences in gender portrayals across seven countries. Furthermore, a few years later, Matthes et al. (2016) discovered no correlation whatsoever between gender stereotyping across 13 different countries and any of the five gender indices they examined.

This underscores the fact that the precise interaction between cultural context and gender portrayals remains somewhat unclear. Notably, very little contextual information is typically provided regarding the selection of countries besides the fact that they usually represent a range of scores on gender indices. Descriptions of historical gender identities and contemporary insights into gender within these countries are scarce, further limiting understanding of the intricate dynamics of gender portrayals across various cultural contexts. Additionally, it seems that, thus far, Gilly's (1988) study is one of the few that have adapted the coding scheme to suit the examined cultural context, ensuring that coding categories hold meaning within the societal framework.

3.4.2 Outdated Coding Schemes

What becomes evident from the scholarship is that, while there are more creative approaches being used today, such as incorporating gender indices to determine the effect of cultural differences (Eisend, 2010; Matthes et al., 2016), conducting focus groups to capture audience perceptions (Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011), or comparing portrayals with real-life statistics (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001), most studies today still rely on McArthur and Resko's original coding scheme from 1975. Furnham and Lay (2019) note that changes to the coding scheme have been modest, despite significant shifts in societal attitudes towards gender as well as changes in gender policies since 1975.

Researchers over the years have either added, split or very rarely removed categories from the original procedure (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Furnham & Lay, 2019). This is particularly noteworthy, as it can be assumed that stereotypes are not static concepts and that contemporary gender issues are viewed differently to former times. Yet, there has been limited development of content categories that could effectively capture more nuanced and contemporary aspects of TV commercials (Furnham & Lay, 2019; Lim & Furnham, 2016).

In their review of previous research, Furnham and Paltzer (2010) identified gaps in the scholarship on gender portrayals in advertising and specifically criticised scholars' lack of creativity in considering new subjects. In this regard, Furnham and Paltzer (2010) particularly mentioned the themes of humour, sex, and violence, which, according to previous studies, have been shown to influence advertising efficacy. Moreover, Furnham and Paltzer (2010) highlighted the drastic societal changes that have occurred since the initial introduction of McArthur and Resko's (1975) original coding scheme. Therefore, Furnham and Paltzer (2010) considered it crucial not only to review the original content categories but also to thoroughly reconsider the entire coding scheme.

Furthermore, Furnham and Paltzer (2010) highlighted the lack of theoretical frameworks and theory-driven research in the field. This gap becomes even more apparent when considering

theoretical frameworks that account for the specific cultural context. As further evidenced by the meta-analytic studies conducted to date, most research simply updated previous studies or compared countries (Furnham & Lay, 2019). A robust theoretical framework would offer a more comprehensive approach to research and analysis. It could potentially enhance the understanding of the cultural context's impact and give more meaning to the observed similarities and differences in gender portrayals.

In 2019, Furnham and Lay concluded their comprehensive review of previous scholarship by identifying several content categories that they believed had not received adequate attention in the realm of gender portrayals in advertising. Specifically, Furnham and Lay (2019) highlighted the language and speech aspects of advertisements, noting that commonly employed content categories tended to be predominantly visual. Moreover, the authors criticised the lack of scholarly attention given to music in advertising, despite its significant role. Additionally, Furnham and Lay (2019) emphasised the surprising lack of research on the physical attractiveness of central figures and the fame of advertising characters, even though these factors were central to many advertisements. Lastly, Furnham and Lay (2019) highlighted the sensitive issue of race, which had not received the necessary attention. In their comprehensive review of over 50 studies, the authors found that very few studies explicitly recorded race, thereby implying that primary characters belonged to the majority racial group in the country. This is concerning, considering that many countries have significant ethnic minorities that could be marginalised or misrepresented in media content.

For instance, Germany has a sizable Turkish minority group, accounting for around 13% of the overall population in 2020, due to the Gastarbeiter or migrant workers immigration in the 1960s (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2022, p. 207). Yet, this ethnic minority has remained largely invisible in television portrayals (Müller, 2015). Conversely, in South Africa, the white minority, which accounts for only around 8% of the total population (Statistics South Africa, 2022, p. 19), tended to be overrepresented in TV commercials (Jordaan & Maree, 2016; Luyt,

2011; 2012; Milner, 2007). However, limited research exists on how gender intersects with other demographic characteristics, such as race (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991).

As part of his extensive meta-analytic study, Eisend (2019) further pointed out that the attributes used to assess gender portrayals had not been updated or questioned to ensure their comprehensiveness in capturing newer portrayals. Eisend (2019) suggested that researchers should explore new ways to operationalise gender roles and incorporate updated gender concepts into their research. The author reiterated this point when addressing the fact that research on gender portrayals typically relied on outdated gender concepts, thus failing to encompass the entire spectrum of gender identities.

While the literature has addressed homosexual representations (Åkestam et al., 2017), concepts of gender beyond the binary have not been thoroughly explored in research on gender representation in advertising. Given that research in this field often stems from the expectation that advertising should represent all consumer groups fairly and impartially, it becomes particularly crucial to examine representations of gender that extend beyond the traditional male-female binary.

CHAPTER 4: GENDER IN SOUTH AFRICA AND GERMANY

In cross-cultural advertising research, it is essential to provide adequate justification for the choice of countries under study. Scholars in this field have argued that a country's stage of gender equality and development, in combination with its economic and political development, might be linked to advertising representations (Eisend, 2010; Matthes et al., 2016; Milner, 2005; 2007; Paek et al., 2010). One assumption in this research is that advertising reflects and shapes the cultural and social values of its cultural context, potentially serving both as a mirror and mould for societal perceptions of gender roles and equality (Grau & Zotos, 2016; Schneider & Schneider, 1979).

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, recent studies have started to incorporate countries, or their respective cultures, as mediating factors in advertising portrayals. Typically, researchers have used gender indices as indicators of a country's level of gender equality (Milner & Higgs, 2004). Large-scale comparative studies employed numerical indicators, such as gender indices, to identify socio-cultural disparities in television advertising portrayals across different countries (Matthes et al., 2016; Paek et al., 2010). Research hypotheses typically suggested that gender constructions in advertising might vary based on a country's overall score. For instance, countries with lower gender equality scores are expected to have more traditional gender portrayals in their advertising, while countries with higher scores may feature more progressive representations (Eisend, 2010).

However, these approaches, especially those that used a country's gender index scores as mediating variables, produced mixed and, sometimes, contradictory results (Matthes et al., 2016; Milner, 2005; Paek et al., 2010). Furthermore, in many cross-cultural studies with simpler, indirect comparisons that involved only two or a handful of countries, researchers often failed to provide a thorough justification for their country selection (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Gilly, 1988). This oversight can compromise the meaningfulness of the research approach and findings. It may result in oversimplifying complex factors, especially the role of cultural contexts in shaping gender constructions.

This chapter is divided into two sections: the first section offers a historical perspective on gender in South Africa and Germany, while the second section explores contemporary gender-related issues in these countries. This dual approach provides a solid rationale for selecting these countries for cross-cultural research, as gender is understood as a concept that is "historically rooted and culturally constructed" (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991, p. 622). The following discussion includes considerations of historical significance, unique cultural nuances, and their interactions with the social, economic, and political frameworks of each country context.

The first section of this chapter will delve into the historical dimensions of gender in South Africa and Germany, with a particular focus on two pivotal events: Apartheid and National Socialism. Beyond the United States, discussions have highlighted the importance of considering factors, such as colonisation, imperialism, and other global and local forms of stratification, to understand gender and related concepts (Oyěwùmí, 2002). This section will explore the development of masculinity and femininity under the influence of National Socialism and examine the distinctive features of Afrikaner and African nationalism (Beinart, 2001; Fritzsche, 2008; Jackson, 2018; Jahnz, 2016; Mark & Trapido, 2014; McClintock, 1991; 1995; Posel, 2004; Stevenson, 2011; Stibbe, 2012; Walker, 1990). Following this, the section will conclude with a summary of the commonalities identified within these two gendered discourses.

The following section will build upon these historical insights and present the current state of gender development in both countries. It will be primarily structured around data from an OECD report (2019), which allows a direct comparison of structural indicators related to gender development and an exploration of societal perceptions of gender roles in these nations. This section, thus, serves as an essential foundation for the examination of gender portrayals in television commercials in South Africa and Germany. Advertising portrayals are neither isolated nor static; they are shaped by, and in turn, influence, societal understandings of gender. Therefore, understanding the historical underpinnings of gender constructions, as well

as contemporary gender developments, is considered an essential prerequisite for this research.

4.1 A Look into the Past

When discussing the historical foundations of gender in South Africa and Germany, two pivotal historical events emerge. These historical events had far-reaching implications for both nations, not only in terms of broader societal changes but also in shaping gender constructions and gender roles. Consequently, they serve as solid starting points for understanding gender development in South Africa and Germany. It is important to note that the primary objective of this first section is to offer historical context by providing a broad overview of the subject. The literature in this field is extensive, and an exhaustive review is beyond the scope of this dissertation. In fact, the exploration of contemporary gender issues in the second section of this chapter holds particular significance for this research, as it provides a concrete basis for the comparative analysis of gender portrayals within their specific cultural contexts.

Parallels between Apartheid and the Holocaust were first drawn as early as 1945 when black leaders of the “Non-European Unity Movement” or NEUM (Shain, 1996, p. 680) presented a document to the United Nations outlining similarities between Nazism and the South African race laws. While the authors of the document were well aware that the German racism resulted in genocide, they were still able to draw thought-provoking analogies. For instance, in this document, members of NEUM equated the yellow patch used in Nazi Germany to skin colour in the South African context. They also drew further comparisons between the most highly discriminated group in South Africa, black South Africans, and Jews in Nazi Germany (Shain, 1996).

In the 1980s, Archbishop Desmond Tutu prominently compared the situation of the Jews to the circumstances of black South Africans. His statements on the similarities between Apartheid and Nazism generated polarising responses. It was around the same time that journalist Percy Qobosa wrote, “Our people have also died in detention. Our people were

stripped of their citizenship. The Jews couldn't fall in love with Germans and we're going to jail for falling in love with white people" (Shain, 1996, p. 685).

Indeed, there were even direct links between the countries during the Nazi regime, with Afrikaner student members of the "Broederbond (brotherhood)" (McClintock, 1991, p. 107) visiting Germany after 1933. One of these members even named their son "Izan – Nazi spelled backwards" (McClintock, 1991, p. 51). McClintock (1991) stated that the architects of Apartheid were directly inspired by the Nazis. She suggested that this inspiration went beyond the Afrikaners being influenced by Nazi ideology, particularly the concept of "*Blut und Boden*" (McClintock, 1991, p. 108), which fuelled the racist and nationalist agenda of the Afrikaners. It also extended to the adoption of Nazi symbolism and other propaganda tools.

Comparisons between National Socialism and Apartheid often focused on the central category around which these societies were restructured: race. In recent years, scholars have expanded their analysis of these two events to include other social categories, like class and gender, and how they functioned within these strictly segregated regimes (Jackson, 2014; McClintock, 1991; 1995; Ratele & Shefer, 2013; Shefer, 2013; Stibbe, 2012). This broader perspective offers valuable insights into additional socio-historical aspects of these two phenomena.

For instance, Stibbe (2012) argued that, as the Nazi regime fundamentally reshaped power dynamics along racial lines, this inevitably influenced gender constructs. Similarly, McClintock (1991) highlighted that the discourse about nationalism was intrinsically gendered. Both of these authors provided valuable insights into the gender dynamics that characterised Nazi Germany and Apartheid-era South Africa.

For the purpose of this dissertation, this chapter will have a particular focus on the intersection of race and gender, and discuss gendered understandings of Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa. The chapter will conclude by drawing parallels between the gender constructs that were prevalent in both regimes. It is important, however, to take notice of Stibbe's (2012) reminder that both Nazi Germany and Apartheid South Africa were primarily organised around

racial segregation and discrimination, not gender. Therefore, gender, while an important aspect, has its limitations in explaining these historical contexts.

4.1.1 A Gendered Perspective on National Socialism

Stibbe (2012, p. 161) noted that comparatively little is known about “men and masculinities in the Third Reich, or how they relate to constructions of women and femininity.” He further highlighted that more insights into these aspects would enable a better understanding of the development of Germany’s broader historical gender order. This exploration should include the First World War, through the process of “remasculinisation” (Stibbe, 2012, p. 161) in domestic and public spheres in West Germany during the 1950s, to the rebellion against the reinstated patriarchal logic in the 1960s.

Historians generally agree that Nazi Germany’s social policy had two main objectives, aggressive territorial expansion and economic satisfaction of German workers. To achieve these goals, the concept of the “*Volksgemeinschaft*” (people’s community) was promoted as a central idea, founded on the principles of “racial purity”, collective sacrifices for the nation, and recognition for individual performance (*Leistung*) (Stibbe, 2012, p. 161). All of these elements were considered essential to gain majority support of Germans, facilitate wartime mobilisation, and realise the Nazi regime’s ultimate goal—the “thousand-year Reich” or *das Tausendjährige Reich* (Stibbe, 2012, p. 161).

The Nazi strategy was partly driven by economic considerations, serving a dual purpose of ensuring economic stability to boost morale among the German population and preparing for war. Nazi economic policies aimed to reduce unemployment, improve living standards, and create a sense of economic prosperity among Germans to gain support for the regime's goals, including rearmament and expansion. By 1937, male unemployment had significantly decreased, and German women increasingly joined the workforce, encouraged to take on various salaried positions beyond social work or teaching (Stibbe, 2012).

Gender history lends some interesting insights into the reconstructions of masculinity and femininity that carried the Nazi's rearmament plans. According to Stibbe (2012), during this period, masculinity was reasserted by reclaiming the public sphere, which was perceived to have become 'feminised' during the Weimar Republic. Similarly, the *Deutsche Arbeitsfront* (German Labour Front), or DAF*,* aimed to "remasculinise" the workplace to restore the "honour […] of German labour" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 164).

In this context, the leader of the DAF, Robert Ley, emphasised that "real men" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 164) didn't place great importance on money; instead, they took pride in the quality of German products and their individual craftsmanship. Although women were not excluded from the workforce, the public discourse surrounding work and its association with individual performance was strongly linked to masculinity (Stibbe, 2012).

This remasculinisation of both the public and occupational spheres in Nazi Germany was further promoted through the propaganda of *Manneszucht*, which can be described as the "culture of manly restraint and discipline" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 165). This concept is believed to have emerged as an antithesis to the 'feminine' sexual chaos and excesses of the Weimar Republic and was rooted in the rejection of consumerism and desires. Additionally, both work and leisure became increasingly militarised in the years leading up to the war, as evidenced by strictly regimented organisations such as the *Hitlerjugend* ("Hitler Youth") (Stibbe, 2012, p. 165).

The concept of the "honour of labour" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 166) primarily applied to German men within both work and leisure spheres, while the equivalent for German women was found in the domestic realm. Nazi propaganda emphasised the virtues of order and cleanliness, which were to be achieved through efficient and rational housekeeping. Maintaining a clean home and practicing frugality in cooking and shopping were ultimately seen as signs of political loyalty. By fulfilling their domestic duties, women were not only serving their families but also contributing to the *Volksgemeinschaft* and the broader nation (Stibbe, 2012, p. 166).

Women who failed to keep their homes clean or were ‘bad mothers’ were subjected to forced “re-education” (Stibbe, 2012, p. 166). Due to their race, Jewish and Polish women could never achieve honourability, even through re-education, as they were considered politically unreliable and “unclean” (Stibbe, 2012, p. 166). In all this, German women retained a degree of agency in shaping their place within Nazi society. By asserting their superiority over Jewish and Polish women, German women aligned their social and racial worth with that of men (Stibbe, 2012).

In Nazi Germany, German women also asserted their racial superiority by marrying men of the ‘right’ race. These marriages were seen as contributing to the survival of the family and, ultimately, as a service to the nation, supporting the pursuit of the *Tausendjährige Reich*. Additionally, Stibbe (2012) highlighted the significance of space in shaping gender dynamics and societal inclusion and exclusion practices during the Nazi era. Individuals labelled as sexually deviant or racially inferior not only were denied personal privacy but also excluded from serving their country.

Marriage played a key role in the Nazis’ racial agenda, exemplified by the "Nuremberg Laws" (Fritzsche, 2008, p. 128), which directly linked citizenship to marital status. These laws encoded antisemitism and racism into legislation, and effectively stripped Jews of their German citizenship. "Aryan" (Fritzsche, 2008, p. 128) Germans, who married Jews and practised Judaism, were reclassified as Jews, whereas Jews, who had converted to Christianity, retained their status as Jews. The underlying assumption of this racial policy was the belief that relations with Jews ‘polluted’ German blood. This led to a ban on Jewish households employing helpers under the age of 45. Jewish men were seen as a threat to German women; the belief was that "the gender of the Jewish peril was male, while Aryan vulnerability was female" (Fritzsche, 2008, p. 129).

While around 20 million men served in the military, German women also took part in war-related missions. Particularly, the women sent to ethnic German families resettled in the East for ‘social work’, which involved ‘Germanising’ these families, have received the most scholarly

attention. These women were seen as “model Germans” (Stibbe, 2012, p. 169) and were expected to maintain their sexual honour and perform traditional female tasks. They were expected to avoid violence and adopt the role of the “carer” rather than the “warrior” (Stibbe, 2012, p. 169). However, it is increasingly clear that the view of women as passive bystanders in the male-dominated Nazi dictatorship is inaccurate. In reality, many women either indirectly enabled the Nazi regime and the Holocaust, or were directly involved in Nazi crimes (Stibbe, 2012).

The German military during wartime has been identified as the primary site for male socialisation and comradeship, where men were expected to show qualities of emotional toughness and individual heroism. While German men committed acts of mass violence, they were also expected to maintain self-control in order to stay “honourable” (Stibbe, 2012, p. 170). Similar to the tasks for women in the East, the construction of wartime masculinity brought about complexities. The male pursuit of space involved both killings and acts of violence as well as concessions to “‘feminine’ comforts” (Stibbe, 2012, p. 170). Additionally, the concept of comradeship served as a way to navigate the “hardness of war and the softness of home” (Stibbe, 2012, p. 171) and introduced further ambiguities into the gender order.

A stricter and more regimented form of masculinity was observed within the *Schutzstaffel*, or SS, commonly referred to as the “Nazis’ elite military guard” (Fritzsche, 2008, p. 2). The wartime SS followed a strict code of conduct in terms of marriage and birth. Due to their emphasis on racial purity, male SS members were required to marry racially pure Aryan women. Nevertheless, they were also allowed to engage in sexual relations with “‘ethnically inferior’ women” (Stibbe, 2012, p. 171) during wartime, as long as these women were not Jewish, and as long as no emotional attachment or reproduction occurred.

Meanwhile, during the empire-building in the East, there was a growing lack of restraint within both the SS and the Wehrmacht, which resulted in an increase in sexual violence. The few rape cases that were reported rarely led to justice for the female victims. Instead, these cases were used to reinstate the soldiers’ “honour” and re-emphasise the importance of “self-

restraint" (*Manneszucht*) in order to restore "orderly German masculinity" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 171). After the end of the war, the sexual violence experienced by German women contributed to the perception of Germany as a symbol of "feminine 'powerlessness'" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 174) and reinforced the feeling of complete subordination.

This notion was further reinforced by scenes of German refugees and male displaced persons, including deported foreign workers. There was no romanticisation of the fallen soldier after 1945. In the aftermath of World War II, the sentiment was that masculinity had failed, not only in protecting women but also in its pursuit of creating a racially superior German empire. The post-war years became known as the "hour of the women" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 174), symbolised by the popular image of the *Trümmerfrau* (rubble woman) reconstructing bombed cities. The majority of men were still absent, either dead, in internment camps, awaiting trial, or unaccounted for (Stibbe, 2012).

Until the 1950s, many families continued to be headed by women, and numerous children grew up without fathers, further solidifying the perception of "families being in crisis" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 174). However, the 1950s witnessed a reassertion of patriarchal values and heterosexual masculinity in both West and East Germany. This resurgence was evident in the economic reconstruction, which favoured male workers while relying on lower-paid female or foreign "guest" labour (Stibbe, 2012, p. 176). Additionally, male efforts during the Nazi regime were reframed to portray them as "manly defenders of the fatherland" (Stibbe, 2012, p. 176), responsible for protecting Germany from Communism. This narrative further served to restore patriarchal gender dynamics in the family, a mission spearheaded by the Catholic Church, and absolved German men from personal complicity in committing acts of atrocious violence (Jahnz, 2016).

4.1.2 A Gendered Perspective on Apartheid

Subsequent to the analysis of gender dynamics in Nazi Germany, this section will explore the prevailing masculinities and femininities during South Africa's Apartheid era. The discussion

will be centred around the influence of Afrikaner and African nationalism, with a special emphasis on the role of women. While there exists a substantial body of work on various aspects of South African history and culture, including, but not limited to, Afrikaner nationalism (du Pisani, 2001; Morrell, 2001b; 2001c; Swart, 2001) and Zulu nationalism (Waetjen & Maré, 2001), the scope of this dissertation necessitates a primary reliance on Anne McClintock's research (1991; 1995).

McClintock's work offers valuable insights into both Afrikaner and African nationalism during Apartheid, emphasising the often overlooked female perspective within this context. It is important to note that this section serves as a concise overview aligned with the specific objectives of this dissertation. Due to limitations, it does not provide an exhaustive examination of the topic; instead, it offers a contextual foundation for the subsequent discussion.

The Afrikaner nation was characterised by a division of roles: Afrikaner men assumed the economic and political power within the "*volk"* (McClintock, 1991, p. 108), while women held (unpaid) tasks related to spreading the *volk*'s moral mission and upkeep of its traditions. This gendered aspect became evident during the invention of Afrikanerdom after the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). Leading up to the establishment of the racially segregated state, the "Broederbond (brotherhood)" (McClintock, 1991, p. 107) played a pivotal role in shaping and advancing nationalist ideas. In fact, many members of the Broederbond were also members of the white supremacist "National Party" (Mark & Trapido, 2014), and played crucial roles in the development and implementation of Apartheid policies.

The Broederbond promoted the idea of the supremacy of the "Afrikaner *volk*" (Beinart, 2001, p. 120) and their role as the rightful rulers of South Africa. As its name implies, this organisation consisted solely of "chosen white Protestant men" (Beinart, 2001, p. 121). One central theme of Afrikaner nationalism was the male quest for territory, which was centred around "the myth of the empty land" (McClintock, 1995, p. 369). However, this portrayal of South Africa as 'empty' was far from accurate, as the land was already inhabited. Instead, a more truthful

perspective reveals that Africans were unjustly deemed to have a 'false claim' to the land (McClintock, 1991).

Post-1948, the National Party officially established racial segregation into law through the implementation of “Grand Apartheid (separateness)” (Jackson, 2014, p. 26). This system involved the creation of “Homelands” (Jackson, 2014, p. 26) surrounding the main “white ‘nation’” (McClintock, 1991, p. 111) and the domination of other racial groups, particularly black South Africans.

The white nation emerged as male nation, at its centre, the idea of the *volksmoeder* or “mother of the nation” (McClintock, 1995, p. 369). The concept of the *volksmoeder* reinforced traditional family structures and the division of labour. While the mother of the nation was integral to the white state, this ambivalent version of femininity also confined Afrikaner women to being the bearers of the Afrikaner nation. Stripped of her militarism after the Anglo-Boer War, the Boer woman was reduced from her role as a farmer and fighter to that of the self-sacrificing, apolitical mother with children. Afrikaner women were expected to selflessly serve their families and the *volk* and to subordinate their individual desires (McClintock, 1991).

The home was identified as an important domain for building the “Afrikaans spirit” (Mark & Trapido, 2014, p. 24). Following South Africa’s industrialisation after the Anglo-Boer War, white working-class women began gaining independence by working in factories. Much like Victorian-era Great Britain, the idea of motherhood was used to bring women back to the domestic sphere, where they would provide unpaid labour (McClintock, 1991; 1995). However, labelling white women as passive bystanders would be far from accurate. While white men were the driving force behind Apartheid policies, white women were active participants in both its inception and maintenance (McClintock, 1995).

Despite being denied political power, white women were given limited authority within the domestic sphere, where they reinforced the racism of Afrikaner nationalism. In the racially classified state, certain patriarchal structures were disrupted, where white women occupied

more powerful positions in society compared to non-white men. By fulfilling their domestic roles within the family as wives and mothers, white women both directly and indirectly contributed to the broader objectives of Afrikaner nationalism and actively reinforced the boundaries of the white Afrikaner nation (McClintock, 1991).

While citizenship in the apartheid state was primarily determined by a racial system, marital relations introduced a gender aspect to citizenship, where a woman's citizenship status was mediated through her husband's classification. Racial reclassifications based on marriage were mandated by "the Group Areas Act" (McClintock, 1991, p. 112), which stated that "'a white partner, male or female, takes the classification of the other partner, whether black or colored', [w]hereas if a 'colored' woman and a black man marry, the woman takes the man's classification" (McClintock, 1991, p. 111). Consequently, a woman might be classified as white according to the "Population Registration Act (by descent)" (McClintock, 1991, p. 111) but instantly be categorised as black when marrying a black man.

Legislation tied a woman's movements to a man's by introducing a gender component to spatial segregations. According to laws dating back to the thirties, black women were only allowed entry to a town when they could prove that they were married to men employed in the area. These laws became even more stringent in the subsequent decades. Since a black woman's legal status was based on her husband's, in case of divorce or her husband's death, she might lose the permission to stay in the area. Marriage was the only way for black women to attain any housing rights, but it was a double-edged sword. Matrimony also placed black women under the guardianship of their husbands, where they had no claim to their own money, could not enter contracts, and had no custody of their own children (McClintock, 1991; 1995).

Furthermore, labour migration in South Africa had a distinctly gendered pattern. The movement between rural and urban areas resulted in the separation of families, with African men pursuing wage work in urban areas, while women remained in the homesteads (Posel, 2004). This led to the emergence of new female-centred family structures. While the initial goal was to employ African men for economic purposes, a secondary effect was the restriction of African women's

mobility, confining them to their homesteads (Walker, 1990). The migrant labour system had complex effects on the situation of women. While the decline in patriarchal authority in rural society led to increased influence for previously subordinate groups, such as women and younger men, it also resulted in a decline in the social and economic security of women in the homesteads (Walker, 1990).

McClintock (1991) noted that the inception of African nationalism was similar to that of Afrikaner nationalism, but their trajectories differed significantly. At first, African nationalism was entirely male-dominated, and women's political roles were primarily mediated through marriage. As wives of political leaders of the African National Congress (ANC) (McClintock, 1991, p. 114), they were expected to create a home for their husbands. The passing of stricter pass laws for women in 1913, followed by women's subsequent protests, led to the establishment of the Bantu Women's League of the African National Congress (McClintock, 1995, p. 380) in 1918. In this context it is important to note that women's involvement in African nationalism came from their own politicisation, rather than being invited by men (McClintock, 1991).

During this time, women's involvement in politics was still mostly "domesticated" (McClintock, 1991, p. 115), characterised by subordination and responsibilities within the family context. Women were allowed to volunteer, but only if it served the African nation, and volunteer work included mostly domestic tasks. Due to laws that increasingly restricted women's movements, black women once again began demanding greater political participation. In response, the ANC's Women's League (McClintock, 1995, p. 381) was formed in 1943, sparking male concerns about women's growing political influence. By the 1950s, the ANC Women's League had gained momentum, and in 1955, Oliver Tambo officially recognised women's participation as a crucial element for achieving liberation (McClintock, 1991).

As in Afrikaner nationalism, motherhood was a central theme in African nationalism, but there were important differences. African women redefined motherhood to include unconventional aspects, such as forms of militancy, and they always viewed the concept as racially inclusive

(Stevenson, 2011). Unlike Afrikaner women, African women nationalists have become increasingly political since the 1970s, carving out a place for themselves in politics. African women have organised and actively participated in a wide range of political movements, while also not shying away from violence (McClintock, 1991; 1995).

4.1.3 Similarities in the Gendered Discourses of National Socialism and Apartheid

What becomes evident from the two previous sections is that, in both Nazi Germany and Apartheid-era South Africa, gender played a part in reinforcing nationalist ideologies. Nation-building was underpinned by traditional gender roles and segregation along both racial and gender lines. In Nazi Germany, German men were associated with traits such as emotional toughness, individual heroism, and self-discipline. Men were expected to be providers and defenders of the fatherland. The male quest for space was characterised by violence and restraint, and the German military was a primary site for male socialisation (Stibbe, 2012). In Apartheid-era South Africa, white Afrikaner masculinity was closely tied to political and economic power, and white men were expected to assert their dominance over other racial groups. Non-white men faced their unique challenges under Apartheid policies, being subordinated by white men and women, and marginalised by the racially discriminatory system (McClintock, 1991; 1995).

In Nazi Germany, femininity was associated with traditional roles and closely linked to the domestic sphere. Women were required to maintain clean and orderly homes, serve their families, and subordinate their individual desires to the *Volksgemeinschaft* (Stibbe, 2012, p. 166). While German women were allowed to work, their primary role was seen as that of homemakers and child-bearers. Jewish and Polish women were excluded from ever achieving this idealised version of femininity due to their race (Stibbe, 2012). Apartheid imposed traditional female roles, and Afrikaner women assumed the role of the *volksmoeder*, or mother of the nation (McClintock, 1995, p. 369). White women were expected to uphold Christian values, spread the *volk*'s mission, and maintain traditional family structures. Black women

faced both racialised and gendered discrimination, including being subject to pass laws and having their citizenship mediated through men (McClintock, 1991).

Despite the strict norms surrounding accepted gender expressions, both contexts exhibited ambivalences and transgressions. In Nazi Germany, wartime masculinity came with contradictions, as soldiers were expected to display emotional toughness while also being entitled to "feminine" comforts due to their war efforts (Stibbe, 2012, p. 170). German women were expected to fulfil traditional roles but retained a degree of agency, which allowed them to make decisions about their participation in the workforce and assert dominance over those deemed racially inferior (Stibbe, 2012).

Ambiguities in gender constructions were also present in Apartheid-era South Africa. Since racial classifications transcended gender distinctions, white women held more power than non-white men. While motherhood was a central concept for women of all races, black women redefined this restrictive concept to better align with their realities, challenging traditional gender norms. Additionally, black women gained full involvement in the male-dominated liberation movement after decades of their own uprisings (McClintock, 1991; 1995). Furthermore, labour migration patterns introduced additional complexity, as black women frequently took on the role of family heads within homesteads, all while grappling with diminishing economic and social security (Posel, 2004; Walker, 1990).

Comparing gender norms in Nazi Germany and Apartheid-era South Africa revealed striking similarities across various societal spheres, including the public, economic, and domestic domains. These commonalities extended to concepts, such as marriage, motherhood, female complicity, and issues related to (sexual) violence. This comparative analysis offered valuable insights into the gender dynamics during these historical periods and demonstrated how traditional gender roles and concepts were instrumental in reinforcing nationalist agendas.

4.2 A Glimpse of the Present

Historical parallels in gender constructions during times of societal upheaval having been explored, this section now presents a contemporary examination of gender dynamics in South Africa and Germany. In this section, I will employ a comprehensive report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to assess the current state of gender equality in South Africa and Germany. The report covers various aspects of gender equality, such as labour equity, governance structures, and social norms, providing a contemporary perspective on gender dynamics (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 5f.).

Cross-cultural research in the context of advertising aims to understand the complex relationship between advertising portrayals and the larger societal context. Advertisements are regarded as valuable sources of insight into the prevailing gender norms and rules within specific societies. Additionally, researchers often use structural indicators to measure and compare gender-related aspects across different cultures. Some of these indices, such as Hofstede's dimensions model (Milner, 2005; 2007), the Gender-related Development Index (GDI) (Paek et al., 2010) and others, have been utilised in previous studies to examine gender-related issues in advertising and society (Eisend, 2019; Matthes et al., 2016).

Gender indices serve various important functions in cross-cultural research. Firstly, they formalise cultural distinctions, enabling researchers to measure the influence of cultural contexts on advertising representations. Secondly, these indices offer a valuable tool for conducting comparative analyses because they provide directly comparable statistical indicators concerning gender-related issues across diverse countries (Eisend, 2019). Thirdly, they measure gender disparities, and usually indicate how much women are falling behind men (Eisend, 2019; Matthes et al., 2016; Milner, 2005; 2007; Paek et al., 2010). This helps identify areas where gender inequalities persist. Therefore, gender indices play a crucial role in guiding policy decisions by highlighting which areas require intervention to address gender

disparities (OECD Development Centre, 2019). Overall, gender indices are essential for understanding the impact of culture on gender norms.

Existing studies often relied solely on a country's overall gender score and might examine correlations with stereotyping in advertising. However, previous research often lacked in-depth explanations for these numerical values indicating gender equality in these countries. This study takes a different approach, as it does not use a gender index as a statistical tool but, instead, incorporates it as a foundational element to situate the research within the analysed cultural contexts. This approach aligns with the objectives of comparative research, aiming for a nuanced understanding of the cultural contexts under analysis, which is pivotal for establishing a robust foundation for the research.

4.2.1 Gender Equality in South Africa and Germany

In 2019, the OECD published a report titled, “From promises to action: Addressing discriminatory social institutions to accelerate gender equality in G20 countries“ about the challenges and progress made with regard to the W20 gender equality objectives. The W20, or Women 20, is one of the subgroups of the G20, or Group of Twenty,[10] which is a transnational forum made up of 19 countries and the European Union, which includes South Africa and Germany. In an effort to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the current status of gender equality in the cultural contexts researched, data from the OECD report (2019) will be presented in this section. The report combines data from various sources, including the Gender, Institutions and Development Database (GID-DB), the Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), as well as from the OECD and external sources (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 5).

The extensive document explores different dimensions of gender equality across member countries, providing individual profiles for each G20 member nation. The OECD data (2019) provides insights into how inequality is perceived and addressed politically, economically,

[10] https://www.g20.org/en/about-g20.

culturally, and in interpersonal relationships. To quantify gender equality, the report introduces structural indicators, such as labour equity, governance effectiveness, perceptions of gender roles within households, and attitudes toward women's political and managerial leadership (OECD Development Centre, 2019). The OECD's overview of gender equality objectives includes not only structural indicators but also perceptions of gender roles and attitudes, which goes to show that understanding and, possibly, changing social norms is considered an integral part of achieving gender equality.

Labour Equity in South Africa and Germany

Table 5: Labour Equity in South Africa and Germany

	South Africa		Germany	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
Participation in the labour market	66%	53%	83%	74%
Unwanted sexual experiences at work[11]	18%	30%	6%	24%

Source: OECD Development Centre (2019, pp. 98, 228).

South Africa's Labour Market

In South Africa, significant disparities remain between men and women in terms of workforce participation. Overall, workforce participation rates in South Africa are lower than those in Germany, for both men and women. Furthermore, when comparing the gender gap in labour equity between the two countries, South Africa shows a larger disparity between men and women than Germany. Additional insights into the composition of South Africa's labour market can be obtained from an unrelated analysis conducted by Casale (2004). Despite an increase in the number of women in formal employment in South Africa since the mid-1990s, these

[11] Data limited to urban South Africa.

changes did not benefit all groups of women equally. Democracy primarily opened up occupational opportunities for white women, whereas black women have had fewer opportunities for improved earnings and employment prospects.

According to the OECD report (2019), there have been positive developments in South Africa regarding parental leave, with fathers now granted 10 days of leave after childbirth. It is important to note that the most vulnerable segment of the workforce remain domestic workers, who are primarily women. These individuals often endure employment abuse and discrimination. Unfortunately, the data also suggest a significant prevalence of sexual harassment in South African workplaces, affecting both women and men. According to the OECD report (2019, p. 231), 30% of women and 18% of men have experienced unwanted sexual advances at work, with even higher percentages reporting incidents of unwelcome staring (42%) and unwanted touching (38%). While this data is limited to urban South Africa, it indicates a concerning trend, especially considering the existing legal framework prohibiting sexual harassment in the workplace.

Germany's Labour Market

It appears that in Germany, there are still large inequalities between women and men in terms of participation in the workforce. In 2018, women were still less likely than men to participate in the labour market. However, the gender gap in labour force participation has decreased over the years. Data indicates a decline from 10.7% in 2012 to 8.6% in 2018 (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 98). Overall, the gender gap in terms of labour force participation is smaller in Germany than in South Africa. In Germany, one in four women has experienced sexual harassment at work. Additional data on sexual advances in the workplace suggest that the actual number might be even higher. Citing fear of professional repercussions as one of the main reasons, only 44% of the women who experienced sexual harassment reported the incidents (Zeit Online, 2018, in OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 101).

Providing further insights into the structure of the German labour market, other reports indicate that Germany's workforce is strongly segregated along ethnic lines, especially for Germans with a migrant background, including migrant women. Access to opportunities, both in terms of status and earnings, is, at best, challenging for this group. Reasons cited for this insider-outsider dynamic of the German labour market include "language, transferability of qualifications, knowledge, and discrimination" (Knize Estrada, 2018 cited in OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 101).

Governance in South Africa and Germany

Table 6: Governance in South Africa and Germany

	South Africa		Germany	
	Men	**Women**	**Men**	**Women**
Leadership at boards of the largest companies	75%	25%	67%	33%
Members of Parliament	58%	42%	69%	31%

Source: OECD Development Centre (2019, pp. 105, 235).

South Africa's Political and Private Sector Leadership

Governance data for South Africa suggest that a significant gender gap persists when examining female representation on the boards of the country's largest companies. In 2018, women accounted for only 25% of board positions in major companies, with the remaining seats occupied by men. It is worth noting that there has been some progress since 2015 when women held just 19% of these seats (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 235). The report further highlights that male dominance in decision-making roles extends beyond the private sector to the South African public sector, particularly in high-ranking positions.

However, South Africa boasts a relatively high proportion of women in its parliament, with 42% of parliament members being women. In fact, South Africa has a higher representation of women in political leadership positions than Germany, ranking second only after Mexico among G20 member countries in terms of gender representation in parliament. This is a significant improvement from the 29.6% of women in parliament in 2002, and a substantial increase from the mere 2.8% female representation prior to 1994 (Holtzhausen et al., 2011, p. 169).

Germany's Political and Private Sector Leadership

Although not as drastic as in South Africa, there has been some improvement in the representation of women in decision-making roles in Germany, but achieving gender parity remains a distant goal. Compared to South Africa, Germany exhibits somewhat more gender parity in private sector leadership positions, with at least one-third of the positions held by women. Furthermore, Germany has seen an upward trend, as, in 2015, women occupied only 25% of board seats in the largest companies (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 105).

Predictably, the public sector in Germany exhibits a similar male dominance in decision-making roles. In 2019, only 31% of parliament members in Germany were women. What is particularly noteworthy is that this insight reveals a six-percentage-point decline in women's representation in parliament since 2014 (ibid). This suggests that Germany's Parliament remains largely male-dominated, especially when compared to South Africa. Moreover, the data indicate a recent downward trend, raising concerns that the under-representation of women in political decision-making roles may persist or worsen in the future.

Perceptions of gender roles in South Africa and Germany

Table 7: Perceptions of Gender Roles in South Africa and Germany

	South Africa	Germany
Percentage of the population who disagrees with "It is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants one".[12]	16%	4%
Percentage of the population agreeing or agreeing strongly that "when a mother works for pay, the children suffer".[13]	54%	32%
Female to male ratio of average time spent on unpaid domestic, care and volunteer work in a 24-hour period.[14]	2,36	1,51
Percentage of the population disagreeing with "a man who stays at home to look after his children is less of a man".	74%	71%

Source: OECD Development Centre (2019, pp. 100, 230).

South Africa's Gender Roles and Practices

The South African data on perceptions of gender roles in the family paint a nuanced picture. Discrimination against working women appears to be less prevalent in South Africa. Only 16% of the population disagrees with the statement: "It is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants one" (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 230). However, over half of South Africa's population still believes that "when a mother works for pay, the children suffer" (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 230). This suggests that South Africans hold more traditional views about the roles of working mothers in particular, which aligns with the fact that South African women still spend significantly more time on unpaid domestic work.

[12] Measures the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes towards working women.
[13] Measures the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes towards working mothers.
[14] Measures gender inequalities in domestic responsibilities.

However, South Africans are very aware of the prevailing gender inequality in the country, especially when it comes to household and caregiving responsibilities. Fifty-eight percent of the population acknowledges that "not enough is being done to achieve equal rights between women and men in South Africa when it comes to looking after children and the home" (Ipsos, 2019, in OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 230). Additionally, South Africans seem to hold a relatively progressive outlook on the role of men in society. Seventy-four percent of the population disagrees with the statement that "a man who stays at home to look after his children is less of a man" (Ipsos, 2019, in OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 230). This demonstrates that, while South Africans may still hold traditional views on the roles of mothers, they appear open to changing male roles, and have a general awareness of the work required to achieve gender equality the country.

Germany's Gender Roles and Practices

Only 4% of the German population disagrees with the statement that “it is perfectly acceptable for any woman in your family to have a paid job outside the home if she wants one” (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 100). This highlights that South Africans hold many more traditional views on the role of women, especially working women, in comparison to Germany. Another prevalent notion in Germany is the discriminatory view of working mothers, with 32% of the population believing that “when a mother works for pay, the children suffer” (ibid). These statistics suggest that traditional views on gender roles in the family, like the idea of the "*Rabenmutter*" or “bad mother” (Lamberti, 2018 cited in OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 100), still exist in Germany. Although less pronounced than in South Africa, Germans still tend to believe that a mother's role is incompatible with a career, and place greater emphasis on a woman's role as a mother.

Furthermore, women in Germany spend over 50% more time on unpaid care work, indicating that both societal expectations and gender practices in the family are relatively traditional in

the country. However, overall, Germans tend to hold slightly more progressive views on women's roles in society. It appears that Germans are open to redefining male roles, with 71% of respondents disagreeing with the notion that "a man who stays at home to look after his children is less of a man" (Lamberti, 2018 cited in OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 100). This suggests acceptance of diversifying male roles within the domestic sphere in both South Africa and Germany.

Attitudes toward women's leadership in South Africa and Germany

Table 8: Attitudes Toward Women's Leadership in South Africa and Germany

	South Africa	Germany
Percentage of the population who agrees or agrees strongly with "On the whole, men make better political leaders than women do".[15]	52%	20%
Percentage of the population agreeing with "I would feel uncomfortable if my boss was a woman".	24%	17%

Source: Ipsos (2019), OECD Development Centre (2019, pp. 106, 236).

South Africa's Views on Political and Managerial Leadership

Besides the microcosm of the family, views on women's leadership abilities are crucial indicators of gender equality. In South Africa, attitudes toward women in managerial and political leadership positions remain traditional, with a clear preference for male leaders. A significant 52% of South Africans believe that "on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do" (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 236). As previously mentioned, South Africa holds the second most equal representation of women in politics among all G20

[15] Measures the prevalence of discriminatory attitudes towards women's leadership abilities.

countries. This underscores that, despite these more traditional views on leadership abilities, women hold a substantial number of political decision-making positions in the country.

A similar trend exists in the private sector, where South Africans also appear to favour male leadership. While only 24% of the population indicated that they “would feel uncomfortable if their boss was a woman” (Ipsos, 2019, in OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 236), this still represents a quarter of the population. Considering the significant under-representation of women on corporate boards, this attitude is somewhat less surprising than South Africans' distrust in women’s political leadership abilities.

Germany's Views on Political and Managerial Leadership

In Germany, perceptions of women's leadership skills are generally positive. Approximately 46% of men and 51% of women agreed with the statement that "things would work better if more women held positions with responsibilities in government and companies" (Ipsos, 2018, in OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 106). Despite these overall positive attitudes towards women in leadership roles, the data reveal that 20% of the German population still believes that "on the whole, men make better political leaders than women do" (ibid). This observation aligns with the under-representation of women in Germany's Parliament and may partly explain it. Surprisingly, however, Germans perceive women as more capable political leaders than South Africans.

Similarly, in the private sector, Germans appear to have more confidence in women's leadership abilities compared to South Africans. Only 17% of the population agree with the statement "I would feel uncomfortable if my boss was a woman" (Ipsos, 2019, p. 11). However, another study's findings indicated that only 29% of the population claimed that they "would feel very comfortable having a woman as CEO of a major company" (OECD Development Centre, 2019, p. 106). Both these statistics suggest that patriarchal views on gender roles have not

completely disappeared, and women in Germany are still undervalued as decision-makers, particularly in the corporate world.

4.2.2 Gender Dynamics and Contradictions

The data from the OECD report (2019) reveal the complex landscape of gender equality in South Africa and Germany. Although progress is evident in various aspects, achieving full gender parity in both societies remains a significant challenge. Interestingly, the report suggests that there is not a substantial gap in the present state of gender equality in terms of labour equity and governance when comparing South Africa and Germany. However, the significant differences come to light in people's attitudes and beliefs regarding gender-related issues. South Africans tends to hold onto more traditional perspectives, especially regarding women's roles in the household, politics, and the workplace.

In fact, the statistics suggest a disconnect between the economic and political landscape and attitudes towards gender roles. Despite South African women having greater political representation than their German counterparts, this is not necessarily reflected in the general population's perception of women's leadership capabilities. In South Africa, over half of the respondents believe men make better political leaders than women, whereas Germans have considerably more confidence in female leaders (OECD Development Centre, 2019, pp. 106, 236).

Furthermore, discrimination against working women and working mothers is significantly higher in South Africa than in Germany (OECD Development Centre, 2019, pp. 100, 230). According to the OECD report (2019), South Africans still seem to believe that women's primary responsibilities revolve around caregiving and domestic work, rather than professional success or political influence. It is, therefore, unsurprising that South African women indeed bear a significantly greater burden of household chores compared to their male counterparts, and take on more domestic and caregiving responsibilities than German women.

Gqola (2007, p. 114) effectively summarised this paradox in South Africa, which she terms the "South African contradiction". Despite the South African Constitution's declarations of women's dignity and rights to full humanity, women continue to face disempowerment. Gqola (2007) supported this claim by pointing to the high rates of rape, gender-based violence, sexual harassment at work and in public spaces, homophobia, and the circulation of misogynistic imagery and language. The prevalence of workplace sexual harassment in South Africa was also confirmed in the OECD report (2019).

This South African paradox becomes evident when juxtaposing the prominent feminist presence and the substantial number of women holding influential positions in the country with the persistently high levels of violence against women. As Gqola (2007) noted, one reason these challenges persisted for South African women was that the focus on empowerment primarily applied to the public sphere, not the private sphere and all the spaces in between. Consequently, South African women might find themselves conforming to deeply entrenched patriarchal and outdated ideals of femininity outside the workplace.

In other words, South African women may be powerful in a work environment but are still expected to conform to traditional feminine traits everywhere else. Gqola's (2007) observations are somewhat mirrored in the report presented here. The OECD (2019) data suggest that, despite South African women's presence in the labour market and politics, societal attitudes still uphold traditional gender roles, creating a disconnect between women's actual roles and societal expectations. In Germany, on the other hand, views regarding female roles are more progressive, but women still face inequalities in both politics and the labour market.

Interestingly, in both countries, it appears that women's roles are subjected to greater scrutiny than men's. South Africans and Germans both seem to be open to the changing male roles in society, such as men embracing full-time fatherhood or taking on other responsibilities in the private sphere. Overall, the OECD report (2019) highlights the persistence of gender inequalities in both countries. It underscores the need for ongoing efforts to address gender

equality in terms of economic and political access, as well as addressing people's perceptions of gender roles and behaviours.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter provided a broad examination of the two countries under analysis, encompassing economic, political, and social aspects in both contemporary and historical contexts. The first part of the chapter explored gendered perspectives on National Socialism and Apartheid, highlighting remarkable parallels between these distinct periods. In both cases, the establishment of states was marked by an entrenched white supremacy, where gendered societal structures played a crucial role in reinforcing nationalist ideologies. This reinforcement manifested in various ways, including the concentration of political and economic power in the hands of (white) men, the traditional division of labour, the mediation of women's political participation through men, and the linkage of women's citizenship status to marriage (McClintock, 1991; 1995; Stibbe, 2012).

Gender lines intersected with the racial structuring of both societies, with white women in Apartheid-South Africa holding more power than black men, and German women subordinating racially inferior groups to assert their racial supremacy in Nazi Germany. In this context, it is essential to recognise that 'racially superior' women were not passive bystanders but actively contributed to the reinforcement of nationalist ideas in both contexts. In both societies, motherhood was a central concept essential for the reproduction of the racially supremacist nation. It was viewed as women's national duty, while simultaneously being used as a tool to subordinate women. However, black women in South Africa subverted the traditional concept of motherhood by reinterpreting it as racially exclusive and expanding its scope to include political engagement and militarism. Their active involvement in politics over the years stands in contrast to white women's lack of political engagement.

Collectively, these observations underscore the remarkable parallels between these historical periods, providing a solid foundation for comparing South Africa and Germany, especially

when exploring culturally accepted gender constructions. This is further supported by the second part of the chapter, where present-day gender equality in both countries is discussed. The OECD report (2019) reveals that, although both countries have work to do in achieving gender parity, the differences in gender equality between South Africa and Germany, particularly in politics and the economy, are surprisingly slight. One notable distinction is that women in South Africa appear to be more politically engaged than their German counterparts. While the quota system mandates that 30 percent of parliamentary seats be occupied by women, the South African Parliament exceeds this requirement with a remarkable female representation of 42 percent (Morrell et al., 2012, p. 16). However, in South Africa, there appears to be a significant gap between the actual realities of women and the persistence of traditional attitudes regarding their societal roles.

Despite similar gendered realities, South Africans tend to hold more traditional worldviews than Germans. This is reflected in the unequal burden of unpaid domestic labour experienced by South African women compared to those in Germany. Furthermore, the limited 10 days of parental leave offered in South Africa places a disproportionately greater caregiving burden on women. Moreover, according to the OECD report (2019), South Africans exhibit scepticism toward working mothers and show bias against working women in general. Paradoxically, South Africans are more accepting of non-traditional male roles in comparison to their German counterparts. This stark contrast highlights that, while men in South Africa enjoy more flexibility in their roles, traditional gender expectations seem not only to restrict women's (work) opportunities but also impact various other aspects of women's lives.

There are further important gender-related nuances between South Africa and Germany that the OECD report (2019) brings to light. In South Africa, the report reveals that women face challenges in their participation in the formal labour market, leading to relatively lower participation rates. While, at first sight, it may seem that German women have more access to the labour market, introducing ethnicity reveals a more complex reality. Not only do migrant women in Germany face restricted access to opportunities, but they also experience significant

wage disparities. While Germany appears to fare slightly better in terms of gender diversity on corporate boards, a closer look reveals that this achievement is influenced by the *Frauenquote,*[16] a legal requirement aiming for a minimum of 30% female representation. German companies narrowly surpass this minimum with 33%, highlighting the persistence of gender inequality in corporate leadership.

This chapter has made a valuable contribution to the research on gender portrayals in advertising by expanding the understanding of the historical and contemporary socio-political contexts of these advertising portrayals. Understanding how gendered structures reinforced nationalist ideologies in the historical context provides valuable context for the broader study of gender portrayals in advertising. Both South Africa and Germany share striking similarities in their historical gender constructions, which significantly influence contemporary gender portrayals. Discussing contemporary gender equality highlights the importance of examining gender portrayals in advertising within the broader context of politics, economics, culture, and society. These contexts both influence, and are influenced by, present-day perceptions and culturally accepted gender constructions. By connecting historical and contemporary insights in the South African and German contexts, this research aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of evolving gender perceptions, as they are reflected in television commercials.

[16] https://www.diw.de/de/diw_01.c.412682.de/frauenquote.html.

CHAPTER 5: GENDER, ADVERTISING, AND SOCIETY

This chapter will focus on the second fundamental pillar of this research: advertising. Building upon the exploration of how gender roles and identities have evolved in the two societies under study, the chapter examines the relationship between gender, advertising, and society. It will also investigate the impact of advertising on how people understand gender within the larger societal context, and how gender identities and advertising interrelate. Advertising is explored as a central theme in this research and its relevance for the study is justified based on its influential role in societies. Advertising offers a focused perspective for examining gender-related issues and provides unique insights into gender constructions in South Africa and Germany.

While the previous chapter discussed historical and contemporary gender constructions and real-life gender development issues, the subsequent exploration will delve into both how advertising itself ‘works’ and where it is situated within society. This exploration into advertising will occur in three sections, each contributing to a comprehensive conclusion. In the first section, I will draw upon Williamson's (1978) seminal work, which focuses on decoding advertisements to reveal the inner working of advertising and uncover how they create, reinforce and challenge social norms. Her framework particularly emphasises the social significance of advertising and its broader cultural implications. Thus, Williamson's (1978) theory offers a solid basis for understanding the societal and individual impacts of advertising by highlighting the process through which it creates meaning.

In the second section of the chapter, I will explore how advertising, with its ability to create and convey meaning, is connected with the formation of an individual's sense of self, a nation’s collective identity, and societal gender stereotypes. This exploration will involve defining identities and examining how advertising influences the way individuals construct their own identities. Additionally, I will introduce Narunsky-Laden’s (2008) observations concerning the role of advertising within the specific context of post-Apartheid South Africa and its influence

on shaping new norms and values. In this context, I will also investigate how advertising contributes to nation-building in South Africa and its role in fostering a shared national identity.

The third and final section of the chapter will delve into the concept of stereotypes, their purpose in advertising, their effectiveness, connotations, and real-life implications. It will explore the ways in which advertising constructs and perpetuates gender-related stereotypes, often depicting narrow and one-sided roles and behaviours for both men and women. Furthermore, it will examine how advertising tends to marginalise gender identities that do not fit within the binary framework, reinforcing the traditional gender dichotomy in society. The section will also analyse the association between advertising and power, particularly in its role in upholding traditional power structures within societies and conclude with a summary, offering a synthesis of the key insights.

5.1 Finding Meaning: Decoding Advertisements

While there is no doubt about the significance of gender as an integral and all-encompassing part of human lives, why should one study gender representations in television commercials? Considering the omnipresence of advertising, it is crucial to recognise its impact on shaping societal attitudes and expectations regarding gender (Kilbourne, 2010). Advertising is understood both to shape and reflect “the way people think, what moves them, how they relate to each other, how they live, eat, relax, and enjoy themselves” (de Mooij, 1998 cited in Paek et al., 2010, p. 195). Put differently, viewers often turn to television images to make sense of themselves and the world around them (Paavola, 2015).

In her seminal work, *Decoding Advertisements*, Judith Williamson (1978) described advertisements as one of the most important cultural phenomena that both mirror and mould our everyday lives. Rather than focusing on the effects of advertising, Williamson (1978) deconstructed the inner workings of advertising, with a specific emphasis on how it creates meaning. In her semiotic analysis, the author argued that advertising, in fact, serves two functions: to sell and to create meaning. Williamson (1978, p. 29) further revealed that

advertising communicates meaning, or an “ideology” (1978, p. 29) through the deliberate use of symbols. According to Williamson (1978), advertising works by establishing a relationship between the consumer and the product, giving objects meaning. Advertising, as a form of communication, is intentionally designed to be “decoded” (Williamson, 1978, p. 43) by the audience, suggesting that the meaning of an advertisement is often more complicated than it initially seems.

In her work, Williamson (1978, p. 12) deconstructed the process by which “structures of meaning” were created in advertising. She explained that advertisements work by simultaneously constructing new meaning while drawing on the consumer’s existing meanings. This reflects a shared characteristic between ideology and advertising: both derive their messages from the existing knowledge and societal norms within the consumer's context. Williamson’s analysis identified the four distinct stages that outline how advertising interacts with the consumer and facilitates the creation of meaning:

> *[F]irstly, how we create the meaning of a product in an advertisement; secondly, how we take meaning from the product; thirdly, how we are created by the advertisement; and fourthly, how we create ourselves in the advertisement* (Williamson, 1978, p. 41).

The meaning of a product in an advertisement is a result of a complex process that initially draws upon our existing knowledge, using it as a reference point. However, it is the consumer who interprets the advertisement, actively decoding its message. As viewers, we play an integral role in activating and re-creating the meanings conveyed by advertisements. These meanings are not simply “delivered to us from above” (Williamson, 1978, p. 174). Yet, this active participation in meaning creation can be deceiving. While it may appear that consumers have agency in deriving meaning from advertisements, Williamson (1978, p. 42) pointed out that these ads, in fact, have already made the decision for us: “[A]dvertisements work by a process in which we are completely enmeshed, and how they invite us 'freely' to create ourselves in accordance with the way in which they have already created us.”

In the second phase of meaning construction, once the product has assumed its meaning, it then gives meaning back to us. At this stage, the product's meaning serves to distinguish between users of different products. On one hand, advertisements portray the product as providing consumers with a desirable state, such as happiness. In a more subtle manner, advertisements capitalise on the consumer's existing preferences, a concept Williamson (1978, p. 47) referred to as the consumer's "already ness". Instead of making random choices among products, ads create the impression that consumers naturally select a brand because they see themselves as the type of person who already uses that specific brand.

Williamson (1978, p. 47) observed that you "do not simply buy the product in order to become a part of the group it represents; you must feel that you already, naturally, belong to that group and therefore you will buy it." While ads appeal to the consumer's sense of uniqueness, they simultaneously categorise them into a "totemic group" (Williamson, 1978, p. 48) centred around a product. In this second stage of advertising meaning creation, consumers extract meaning from the product by linking them to their self-perceptions and group affiliations.

The third stage of advertising's meaning creation includes the construction of the consumer by the advertisement itself. This fictional consumer is crafted by the advertisement and does not actually exist. However, through the appeal of the advertisement, real consumers start identifying with this persona and feeling like they belong to the group associated with the product. Or in Williamson's words, consumers begin to associate themselves with the artificial totemic group centred around the product. In this process, consumers become trapped by their "already ness" (Williamson, 1978, p. 51), since they identify as individuals who already use the product, which leads them to feel like they already belong to the group associated with that product.

In the fourth and final stage of advertising's meaning creation process, consumers actively construct themselves within the advertisement. According to Williamson, for an advertisement to be effective, it must appeal to the desires of consumers. To illustrate this point, Williamson (1978, p. 64) drew upon Lacan's mirror-phase theory, suggesting that advertising "offers us an

image of ourselves that we may aspire to but never achieve". Lacan's psychoanalytic mirror-stage theory describes a developmental stage in early childhood where individuals establish a cohesive sense of self through the mirrored gaze of others, primarily parents. These 'others' create the illusion of a unified ego in the observer and serve as an "Ego-Ideal" (Williamson, 1978, p. 63), providing behavioural guidelines.

Williamson (1978, p. 63) argued that this metaphor of the mirror phase is applicable to advertising, as ads similarly convey an imaginary and idealised version of the self, or "Ego-Ideal". Advertisements suggest that by purchasing the promoted product, consumers can become the individuals depicted in the advertisement. Nonetheless, in reality, it is impossible to ever achieve this "'objectified' image of yourself" (Williamson, 1978, p. 65). Within the advertisement, the product functions as a symbolic mirror, reflecting the portrayed individuals as idealised versions of the consumer. As consumers, we aspire to merge with this idealised, mirrored version of ourselves.

The advertisement's promise is that, by buying the product, consumers can recreate themselves and achieve this idealised self. As viewers of advertising, we simultaneously are "both product and consumer" (Williamson, 1978, p. 70). Consequently, this perspective asserts that our sense of self is not merely influenced, but actively constructed, through our purchases of products featured in advertisements. Williamson's (1978) work on "Decoding Advertisements" laid a critical foundation for engaging with advertisements beyond their surface-level communication strategies and enabled an exploration of their profound implications on individuals and groups.

Taking into account the meaning-making aspect of advertising enables us to challenge the assumption that advertising merely promotes products. Advertisements, Williamson (1978) argued, reflect both our desires as well as shape prevailing norms, values, and behavioural guidelines in a society. This approach encourages us to critically analyse how advertising, like a mirror and a mould, both reflects and shapes individual (consumer) behaviour, broader societal values, and power dynamics (Grau & Zotos, 2016; Nielsen, 2016).

5.2 Advertising and Identity

The inner workings of advertising itself and how it creates meaning having been explored, the following section will delve into the complex relationship between advertising, identities, and the broader societal context. In this dissertation, the following definition of identity as proposed by Grossberg et al. (2006, p. 234f.) has been adopted:

> *Identity is always an unstable and temporary effect of relations that define identities by marking differences. […] There is no single, universal, or essentialist content to [an identity] category and, consequently, the question of whether any specific person belongs to a social group must also be the product of cultural processes. Moreover, to say that such categories are relational is to say that categories are only defined by their relations to or differences from other categories.*

Advertising images not only circulate and create identity markers associated with particular groups but also possesses the power to shape mainstream social values by highlighting group differences. Therefore, advertising both reflects, and contributes to, the construction of identities, while also reinforcing societal values. Understanding advertising representations or, more generally, media representations, as an active part in the continuous construction of identities, it becomes increasingly clear that the formation of people's identities is not a simple process (Grossberg et al., 2006). Therefore, it is essential to examine how individuals develop a sense of belonging to particular groups and how identity categories acquire meaning within their cultural context.

According to Grossberg et al. (2006, p. 243), identity categories are effectively "products of cultural codes". These cultural codes represent the shared beliefs and values within a society that define various aspects of individual and collective identities, including factors such as, race, class, and gender. It is important to note that cultural codes are not universal but differ from one culture to another. They play a crucial role in shaping how individuals categorise and

attach meaning to different aspects of both individual and collective identities. In this context, cultural codes serve as the framework through which categories of identity are organised and defined in a given society (Grossberg et al., 2006).

Cultural codes not only influence how individuals perceive differences and commonalities between groups, but also contribute to the establishment of societal hierarchies. According to Grossberg et al. (2006), identities are not linear; they are characterised by complexity and contradictions. Therefore, identities are in a state of constant negotiation, with certain meanings emerging as the dominant expression. This dominant expression is not only implicitly accepted as the norm, but also positively regarded (Grossberg et al., 2006). Adhering to this dominant standard may come with certain privileges, while those who deviate from this accepted norm may experience marginalisation or discrimination.

Cultural codes function as a framework for identity categories, and advertising leverages these codes to communicate messages that resonate with the intended audience. At the same time, advertising has the power to influence these cultural codes over time. Recognising the role of advertising and broader media representations in constructing (gender) identities offers a deeper insight into how these identities evolve within specific cultural environments (Grossberg et al., 2006). Advertising conveys aspirations, hopes and dreams, suggesting that these can be achieved by purchasing the advertised product or service. In this way, advertisements offer recipients ways to construct both their individual and collective identities (Holtz-Bacha, 2011; Viljoen, 2008). This process is integral to what can be termed the "public action of gender" (Paavola, 2015, p. 20). It makes representations of gender widely available and highlights the active role of advertising in constructing gender identities.

South African scholar, Narunsky-Laden (2008, p. 127) called this the “social-semiotic function” of advertising, where advertisements conveyed markers that present a desirable construction of identity. She stated that the dynamic nature of human interaction needed to be taken into account when thinking about the construction of identity, which was mediated by “media discourses, popular culture (whatever this might mean), consumption patterns and everyday-

life routines, both local and global" (Narunsky-Laden, 2008, p. 141). Thus, advertising is a useful point of entry for understanding constructions of gender, since they create and reinforce socially accepted gender-related characteristics and behaviours.

In fact, advertisements have a powerful effect on identity formation because they show identity options that are framed as "authentic productions of the idealised self" (Narunsky-Laden, 2008, p. 126). These 'idealised productions of self', reminiscent of Williamson's (1978) observations, appear authentic because they mirror our lives and combine them with our desires. According to Narunsky-Laden (2008), the true power of advertising lies at this intersection of reality and aspiration. This space functions as a "staging ground" where individuals develop "strategies of action" (Narunsky-Laden, 2008, p. 127), essentially guiding their behaviour based on the images presented in advertisements.

In post-Apartheid South Africa, one observes the negotiation of new norms and value systems, accompanied by shifts in individual and collective identity choices, especially in increasingly urbanising areas. These changes are influenced by the growing consumer culture and its impact on identity formation on both personal and societal levels, leading to substantial changes in cultural and societal structures. In this context, Narunsky-Laden (2008) asserted that media discourse, including commercial messaging in advertising, did not simply advocate for Africans to adopt Western practices. Instead, this discourse represented a process of negotiating novel approaches for shaping individual and societal identities, reflecting the changing dynamics of culture and society.

Indeed, the dramatic changes that South Africa has undergone as a country have created a unique space for individuals to reimagine themselves and their society. In this transformative landscape, advertising serves as a framework, offering South Africans a set of "strategies of action" (Narunsky-Laden, 2008, p. 127). These strategies include detailed guidelines for recommended collective and individual behaviour. Consequently, advertisements function as a 'manual' for viewers, instructing them on how to incorporate identity constructions, including

gender expressions, as communicated by ads, into their everyday lives. Therefore, advertising plays a central role in the (re)production of (gender) identities.

Additionally, Narunsky-Laden (2008) underscored the broader social significance of advertising, extending beyond its impact on individual (gender) identities. Narunsky-Laden (2008, p. 129) highlighted advertising's role in nation-building, suggesting that advertising and other mass media created a platform for "the heterogeneity of South Africans to activate processes of objectification". Advertising and other mass media content fosters a shared experience of images and discourse, cultivating a sense of collective identity. Consequently, South Africans begin to perceive themselves as belonging to a "a nation which exists, as it were, outside themselves" (2008, p. 129). Narunsky-Laden (2008, p. 141) concluded that gendered advertising, in this context, served not only as a framework for individual consumers but also contributed to the shaping of "the New South Africa" by establishing new norms and value systems.

5.3 Advertising and Gender Stereotypes

Advertisements comprise dramatic stories that need to convey a message in a very short amount of time. This tendency to generalise in advertising makes stereotypes a useful tool. Stereotypes are often used to communicate narratives and establish characters in a quick and clear way. Simplified portrayals in advertisements help consumers quickly comprehend message contents, which is necessary due to the limited time consumers have for perception. Stereotypes offer a way to systemise and simplify information and help us make sense of the world. Therefore, the term 'stereotype' is considered "descriptive rather than derogatory" (Taylor & Stern, 1997, p. 48), indicating that it can carry both positive and negative connotations. Advertising serves as an ideal context for studying stereotypes.

A stereotype can be defined as "one group's generalized and widely accepted beliefs about the personal attributes of members of another group, and its essence is the perception of group members as generic exempla of a type rather than as individuals" (Taylor & Stern, 1997, p.

48). Put simply, stereotypes are simplified, often generalised beliefs that people hold about a certain social group. These beliefs are typically formed based on various characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation. As cognitive tools, stereotypes help us place other cultures or people from the perspective of the dominant discourse (Narunsky-Laden, 2008).

While stereotypes are a commonly used communication tool in advertising, the question of their effectiveness remains. Beyond the broader debate about the societal impact of stereotypical advertising, a key consideration is whether these stereotypical portrayals are genuinely effective in achieving the economic objectives of advertising. In this context, Furnham and Lay (2019, p. 113) made the following observation:

> *[T]he basic principles of capitalism tell us that advertisers continue to use such 'gender stereotypes' in TV ads because they work, or otherwise, they either would have stopped using them or would be driven out of business by companies that use more effective ads without 'gender stereotypes'.*

Scholarship in this area has suggested that advertising effectiveness depends on the consumers' predispositions (Eisend, 2019; Sheehan, 2004). Notably, a study by Antioco, Smeesters, and Boedec (2012 cited in Eisend, 2019) found that non-stereotypical gender portrayals had a positive effect on both brand attitudes and the inclination to make a purchase. However, the actual impact of stereotypical advertising representations on purchasing behaviour and brand recall remains somewhat ambiguous (Furnham & Lay, 2019).

A study conducted by Windel (2016 cited in Furnham & Lay, 2019, p. 121) revealed that American advertising practitioners employ stereotypes because "they are based in truth, attractive to audiences, communicate quickly, simplify cognitive processes and categorization, prevent distraction, prevent thinking and are the obvious solution" (Furnham & Lay, 2019, p. 121). In the same study, advertising professionals expressed a preference for using gender stereotypes in advertising when their goal is to challenge biases, while they found using them

to reinforce negative perceptions highly inappropriate (Furnham & Lay, 2019). This subject remains an important area of research, given that the worldviews of both advertising creators and clients influence the final product.

When discussing stereotypical representations in advertising, the conversation often implies the existence of a ‘correct’ way to portray the identity of a social group, and deviations from this 'correct' portrayal are typically seen as biased depictions in advertising. Sometimes, stereotyping occurs when a social group is invisible in advertising images. However, more often than not, stereotyping is a question of *how* a group is depicted (Grossberg et al., 2006). First and foremost, stereotypes serve as useful tools for efficient communication. The potential harm of stereotypes primarily comes from their connotations, especially when these stereotypes are directed towards specific groups or when they stem from systematic bias.

Sheehan (2004, p. 81) describes the actual power of stereotypes as “their ability to change the behaviour of the person holding the stereotype”. On an individual level, stereotypes can limit access to opportunities and promote a negative self-image. On a societal level, stereotypes can perpetuate systemic discrimination and contribute to inequality, such as the gender pay gap (Sheehan, 2004). Stereotypical depictions in advertisements shape perceptions of others and can solidify social boundaries, further perpetuating subtle prejudices and even institutional inequalities (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). Consequently, advertising images can reinforce harmful societal dynamics, such as unconscious biases, institutional racism, and gender discrimination.

Regarding gender, criticism of advertising often centres around the circulation of restrictive constructions of masculinity and femininity and the reinforcement of limiting gender stereotypes. Stereotypes are typically deemed harmful when they limit opportunities for one social category or create expectations that favour one social category over another. The importance of studying gender stereotypes and their connotations is underscored by the fact that stereotypes can have real consequences. In this context, it is important to note that the person most affected by a stereotype is the individual being stereotyped (Sheehan, 2004).

For instance, when physical attributes are stereotyped or narrow beauty ideals are promoted in advertising, it can lead to negative body image issues (Collins, 2011; Lazar, 2006). Recent research conducted in the US indicated that men, too, are negatively affected by the increasingly unrealistic portrayal of male characters with idealised physiques in advertising. This, in turn, can lead to body image issues among men, and, in some cases, even contribute to the development of eating disorders (Fowler & Thomas, 2015). Furthermore, research has uncovered links between "Body Dysmorphic Disorder (BDD)" (Walker et al., 2021, p. 3357), the booming plastic surgery industry, and the portrayal of idealised bodies. These depictions, commonly found in traditional media, are further amplified by the influence of social media and influencers (de Vries et al., 2014; Walker et al., 2021). Stereotyping role behaviours, such as portraying women as dependent and nurturing, can limit the desire for self-development, while stereotyping occupational representations may disadvantage women in their professional careers (Åkestam et al., 2017; Matthes et al., 2016).

When women in advertising are depicted solely as homemakers, it reinforces the assumption that women are unable to exist outside of the home without male assistance (Åkestam et al., 2017). Portrayals of women in passive roles may suggest that women cannot make their own decisions, are entirely dependent on others, and exist purely as objects for the male gaze (Gill, 2008). Similarly, when social roles for men are limited, it can inadvertently reinforce the notion that men are prohibited from participating in household tasks, further perpetuating the idea that these tasks can only be successfully carried out by women (Furnham & Lay, 2019; Sheehan, 2004).

Advertisements that repeatedly emphasise a narrow beauty ideal might communicate that external beauty is the most important characteristic for both society and the individual (Gill, 2008). In fact, numerous scholars have pointed out that advertisements have historically contributed to the valuation of women based solely on their physical appearance (Furnham & Lay, 2019; Lazar, 2006; Sheehan, 2004; Wang, 2018). This may lead some women to believe that their worth is primarily determined by their appearance, while other achievements are

deemed insignificant (Sheehan, 2004). By valuing individuals for only one part of their identity, other attributes and achievements are minimised.

Besides the limited portrayals of men and women in advertising, polarised gender images are often observed, which naturalise “compulsory heterosexuality” (Knopf & Schneikart, 2007, p. 225). This means that advertising tends to present heterosexuality as the only acceptable sexual orientation by using traditional gender characteristics linked to masculinity and femininity, which, in turn, create rigid, opposing categories for men and women. This suggests that only these binary gender categories are acceptable, which can be detrimental to individuals who do not fit neatly into these identities. Furthermore, gender diversity in television advertising is typically limited, and members of the LGBTQIA+ communities are often overlooked (Eisend, 2019; Grau & Zotos, 2016). The exclusion of individuals who do not conform to binary gender concepts in advertising, contributes to the marginalisation of this group and perpetuates a societal discourse that neither recognises nor values non-binary gender identities.

Since stereotypes are constructed from the dominant discourse, they rely on the context in which they are communicated and require a basic understanding of its components, such as cultural norms and the historical context. What is considered 'acceptable' in terms of gender constructions can vary across cultural contexts and can change over time. Advertising allegedly favours the male viewpoint and, as a result, reinforces traditional societal power structures, thereby promoting a patriarchal gender order (Holtz-Bacha, 2011; Paavola, 2015). Assuming that gender representations in advertising are constructed through a patriarchal logic, advertising becomes a useful instrument for defending patriarchal power (Luyt, 2011).

As stated in the opening quote of this dissertation, the purpose of advertising is not necessarily to mirror reality, but rather to provide a broad range of identity expressions to viewers. Therefore, this dissertation did not intend to chastise advertising but to bring attention to some of the problematic consequences of even positive stereotyping (Taylor et al., 1995). This research examined whether television commercials in South Africa and Germany effectively

represent the full spectrum of identity options available to individuals as they “shape their lives and carve out their identities” (Masina, 2010, p. 12). The objective for advertising is not to match a demographic profile but rather to provide a variety of “symbolic resources for negotiating equitable interactions among diverse peoples” (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000, p. 386).

The best strategy to counterbalance stereotypes is the exposure to as diverse realities as possible (Grossberg et al., 2006). Where such exposure is not possible, a first step in dealing with stereotypes is to make them visible. By understanding stereotypes, biased discourses about certain groups can be identified. This allows for the potential mitigation of stereotypes that have a negative impact on individuals and society, and highlights the need for a more nuanced understanding of who is being stereotyped and how. This is particularly important in the context of stereotypical advertising representations, since advertisements are created by a small group of people for a broad audience. It can thus be assumed that the range of stereotypes shown, their connotation, as well as their frequency, will reflect the beliefs of those creating and approving the advertisement, that is, employees at advertising agencies and clients, as well as perceived audience expectations and broader cultural norms. Therefore, a conversation about stereotypes is inherently a discussion about power—who holds the power to communicate stereotypes? And who is being stereotyped?

5.4 Conclusion

In mass-mediated consumer societies, advertising emerges as a powerful cultural tool. The discussion above highlighted how advertising not only conveys carefully crafted narratives, but also creates meaning in the form of societal values and cultural norms, providing platforms for the construction of individual and collective identities. Additionally, it plays a significant role in perpetuating gender stereotypes (Åkestam et al., 2017; Collins, 2011; Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Eisend, 2019; Furnham & Lay, 2019; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Grossberg et al., 2006; Holtzhausen et al., 2011; Kilbourne, 2010; Lazar, 2006; Luyt, 2011; Narunsky-Laden, 2008; Paavola, 2015; Sheehan, 2004; Viljoen, 2008; Williamson, 1978). This chapter offered a

concise, yet expansive, overview of advertising and examined key aspects relevant to the present study. It investigated the unique nature of advertising as a specialised form of communication and evaluated its societal impact, providing insights beyond its surface-level goal of promoting products or services.

According to Williamson (1978), advertising functioned as a tool that 'sells' a specific worldview, thereby perpetuating dominant ideologies and cultural norms. Her detailed analysis of how advertisements create meaning, exploring how individuals derive meaning from ads and create themselves through them, offered valuable insights into the inner workings of advertising. Williamson (1978) underscored the active role of consumers in the meaning-making process of advertisements. Despite this agency, consumers' ability to define themselves is confined within the predefined parameters set by these advertisements. Advertising's portrayal of an ideal self, which remains unattainable, holds particular relevance in a study of gender representations. It raises questions about the specific ideals perpetuated in various cultural contexts, how individuals interact with and respond to gender norms communicated by advertisements, and contributes to understanding the underlying structures and ideas that shape broader societal perspectives of gender. By grounding the understanding of advertising mechanisms in Williamson's (1978) observations, this dissertation contributed to the understanding of the intricate dynamics of advertising and the construction of self in mass-mediated consumer societies.

Furthermore, examining how gender identity is constructed and negotiated within a cultural context reveals how individuals navigate representations of identity categories. This exploration underscores the significant role of television advertising and other commercial media in shaping both individual and collective identities (Grossberg et al., 2006; Holtz-Bacha, 2011; Viljoen, 2008). According to Narunsky-Laden (2008), advertisements provided a shared toolkit of identity markers, offering a manual on how individuals could construct their identities within societal expectations. Narunsky-Laden (2008) further highlighted the specific role of advertising in post-Apartheid South Africa, where South Africans are reimagining their

individual and collective identities in response to cultural and societal changes. By uncovering this reciprocal relationship that emphasises its dual role, advertising, as a focal point of this study, is further motivated by the critical need to comprehend the dynamic interplay between individuals, their cultural context, and advertising.

Additionally, this chapter highlighted the specific mechanisms employed by advertising as a communication tool, notably the use of stereotypes as shortcuts to convey messages efficiently. While stereotypes are practical tools for effective storytelling, allowing the quick communication of intended messages, simplified or limiting stereotypical portrayals can lead to negative real-life consequences. According to Coltrane and Messineo (2000), television advertising not only aids individuals in shaping their identities through the consumption of products, but, unintentionally, can reinforce subconscious group boundaries. Therefore, advertising has the potential to contribute to the perpetuation of limiting or potentially detrimental depictions of gender. This includes the reinforcement of harmful beauty ideals, the promotion of traditional gender roles, and the support of heteronormativity. Furthermore, individuals identifying beyond a binary understanding of gender may find their realities absent in these depictions, further contributing to their marginalisation.

Lastly, this discussion emphasised the benefit of examining advertising, not only as a research subject, but also as a lens for research on societal gender constructions. By viewing advertising through this dual lens, researchers can uncover valuable insights into both the distinct dynamics of advertising and broader societal norms, as well as individual gender constructions reflected and reinforced by advertising messaging. Finally, this understanding laid the foundation for this study's exploration of how advertising, as a medium, not only provided recipients with a socially accepted framework for gender expressions but also allowed consumers to actively construct both their individual and collective identities. A nuanced examination of advertising portrayals is crucial for understanding their impact on the construction of (gender) identities. This involves identifying stereotypes, exploring individual

and collective identity categories, and understanding their relevance to individuals within the broader societal framework.

CHAPTER 6: THEORISING GENDER

This chapter will discuss theoretical and conceptual debates around gender. After establishing the historical and contemporary country context, examining advertising and its role in meaning creation, and investigating its interaction with individual and collective identities as well as stereotypes, the final critical component of this research is the concept of gender. As the third main pillar underpinning this research, it is imperative to establish a clear understanding of this nuanced concept. Given the inherent complexity of gender (Ashmore, 1990), it is crucial to provide theoretical and conceptual guidance that outlines the assumptions and definitions of gender to facilitate the analysis of gender portrayals in television advertising. This chapter draws on knowledge from various fields, including gender studies, psychology, and sociology, to establish a strong foundation for applying theoretical and conceptual approaches to gender and related aspects (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006).

This helps to ground the exploration of gender-related topics in this research, by reducing ambiguity, contextualising the findings, and enhancing the overall plausibility and meaningfulness of the study. The theoretical framework of gender introduced in this chapter forms the basis for analysing the origins of gender representations in commercials and their interaction with individuals, as well as the broader societal context. This chapter introduces gender and related concepts, including gender identity, societal norms, and power dynamics. This is particularly important because numerous studies examining television portrayals still often use the concept of gender or sex roles interchangeably with gender stereotypes without fully exploring the theoretical aspects of gender (Eisend, 2019). A thorough consideration of these theoretical aspects could enrich the research in this field (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991; Eisend, 2019).

First, various theoretical approaches to gender will be discussed, broadly classified into essentialist and non-essentialist ideas (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006). This discussion draws upon the works of Fausto-Sterling (1992), West and Zimmerman (1987), Butler (1990), Connell (1985; 1987), Spence and Buckner (1995), and Ashmore (1990). Additionally, this chapter

introduces contemporary perspectives on masculinity, femininity, and gender concepts that transcend conventional binary understandings. It includes insights from various scholars, such as Connell (1985; 1987; 1990; 1992; 2000; 2001; 2005; 2014a; 2014b), Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), Morrell (1998; 2001a; 2001b; 2001c), Morrell et al. (2013), Viljoen (2008), Gqola (2016), and Venneman and Holtz-Bacha (2011).

These modern gender perspectives will serve as the theoretical basis for developing a new codebook during the initial qualitative research phase of this study. Furthermore, this chapter will provide the foundation for a nuanced interpretation of the results, enabling a more in-depth understanding of the depiction of gender in television commercials and its connection to prevailing societal norms and values. By incorporating contemporary understandings of gender, a systematic exploration of the intricate interplay between advertising representations, gender, identity, culture, social norms, and power becomes possible.

6.1 Exploring Gender Concepts

What evolved as a distinct field of academic scholarship around the 1960s in Western countries arrived in the discipline of mass communication from the 1970s onward (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991; Coulthard & Castleman, 2006; Whitelock & Jackson, 1997). Traditionally, gender research was grounded in the understanding of inequalities between men and women, and was mostly concerned with the role of women (Grau & Zotos, 2016). The analysis of gender-related content can be traced back to the beginnings of the women's movement in the United States in the 1950s (Rudy et al., 2010). Since then, the research field has undergone increasing differentiation and academisation (Neuendorf, 2017). The growing public debates about the roles of women prompted scholars to differentiate between *sex*, defined by biological characteristics, and *gender*, acquired through social practice (Ashmore, 1990; Connell, 1987). Biological *sex* was understood to be determined by a person's physiology, while *gender* was seen as something learned through social conventions (Fausto-Sterling, 1992).

Yet, many studies analysing gender portrayals in television advertising failed to make clear distinctions between gender and related concepts. Eisend (2019) pointed out that the terms *gender stereotypes* and *gender roles* were often used interchangeably when referring to the distinctions made between men and women based on certain attributes. Blurring the lines between gender concepts can lead to adverse effects, including the risk of inaccurate findings, a lack of in-depth insights, and the possibility of misinterpreting research outcomes. Therefore, it is imperative to establish clear differentiations between these interconnected, yet distinct, concepts. In this dissertation, *gender* was defined as a socially constructed category, which included but was not limited to the biological category of *sex*, the social-psychological concept of *gender roles*, the psychological aspects of *masculine and feminine identity*, and the psycho-behavioural notion of *sexuality* (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991).

Broadly speaking, the concept of gender in gender studies can be distinguished into biological or essentialist ideas and social constructionist approaches (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006). Traditional social theory considered differences between men and women as inherent characteristics that did not require theoretical explanation (West & Zimmerman, 1987). These explanations of gender were based on the assumption of natural difference. From this reductionist perspective, two main theories emerged: biological and sex-role theories (Connell, 1987). Biological theories proposed that sex differences stem from evolutionary adaptation (Fausto-Sterling, 1992). These theories argued that gender was primarily determined by biology, suggesting that individuals were born as either male or female. According to this perspective, inherent biological differences lead to distinct gender characteristics and behaviours (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006).

However, scholars have outlined several reasons that this biologically reductionist perspective on gender is flawed. They argued that this perspective lacks empirical evidence and that its reliance on a priori reasoning made it difficult to test (Connell, 1987). Furthermore, it was noted that human behaviour was too complex to be explained solely by biological adaptation (Connell, 1985; 1987; Fausto-Sterling, 1992). Additionally, this view overlooked the collective

and social dimension of human behaviour, and in doing so, it failed to recognise that gender extended beyond being the attribute of an individual (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006). It also neglected the cultural and historical intricacies associated with gender and how these intricacies have shaped, and continue to shape, our understanding of gender (Sayers, 1982).

The second-wave feminism of the 1960s brought about a clear distinction between sex and gender, intensifying the critique against biological explanations (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006). This differentiation underscored that gender was, primarily, a result of arbitrary social practices, and not inherently determined by biology. The distinct separation introduced by second-wave feminism paved the way for the sex-role or gender-role approach, which posited that gender differences were socially constructed and not biologically predetermined (Connell, 1987; 2005). The concept of roles, originally introduced by Parsons (1956), referred to the learning of gender roles through agents of socialisation, such as, mass media, the state, and the family. According to this perspective, children gradually internalised social norms that corresponded to their biological sex (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006). Consequently, men and women were socialised into different roles. Spence and Buckner (1995, p. 110) defined *gender* or *sex roles* as follows:

> […] 'sex roles' is a collective term referring to normative expectations that members of a given culture or subculture hold about the positions men and women should occupy. 'Positions', in this context, stresses the division of labour between the genders within an organized social system, and the associated responsibilities, privileges and status of the position within the hierarchical power structure of that system.

One person could display a variety of gender roles at the same time, and these roles might change throughout a person's lifetime. For instance, a married man with children could simultaneously be a father, husband, brother, son, and son-in-law. This indicated that expected behaviours and responsibilities within and between these roles were multifaceted and fluid and could be combined simultaneously within a single individual. Gender roles represented societal agreements about the accepted behaviours of men and women and the positions they should

occupy in society. As such, the married man with children might take on roles that are typically associated with women. He might even choose to stay at home while his wife takes on the role of the primary breadwinner. Opinions about the legitimacy of roles could vary, especially during times when gender roles were being questioned (Spence & Buckner, 1995). This indicated that *attitudes* toward gender roles could differ. For example, some might argue that mothers with young children should not work outside the home, assigning the role of the earner exclusively to the father (OECD Development Centre, 2019).

The sex-role and gender-role approach, however, was, arguably, as essentialist as biological explanations of gender because it treated men and women as homogenous social groups (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006). The categories of 'man' and 'woman' are comprised of a wide range of experiences, making generalisations about sex groups problematic (Butler, 1990). Besides this oversimplification, other shortcomings of the sex-role or gender-role approach were identified, such as the blurring of norm and behaviour, and its lack of consideration for power dynamics (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Nonetheless, the concept of sex or gender roles has dominated empirical communication research (Das, 2011; Eisend et al., 2014; Fowler & Thomas, 2015; Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Knoll et al., 2011; Matthes et al., 2016; Milner & Higgs, 2004; Milner, 2005; Mwangi, 1996; Paek et al., 2010; Tan et al., 2002; Uray & Burnaz, 2003). In this context, Artz and Venkatesh (1991) proposed that advertising research should expand its scope beyond assessing gender roles and consider incorporating additional theoretical concepts, such as identity, to gain a better understanding of the multifaceted aspects of gender dynamics.

Decades of theoretical development and research have demonstrated that gender is more complex than categorising individuals into a binary man-woman system (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006). Gender cannot be reduced to biological sex or a fundamental attribute of two distinct groups (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Contemporary approaches to gender have moved beyond the notion of gender as an inherent attribute and, instead, have viewed it as a set of practices (West & Zimmerman, 1987). This perspective argued that gender

is not a fixed characteristic, but, rather, a collection of actions and behaviours in which individuals engage (Butler, 1990).

Contemporary approaches to gender no longer perceived it as a ‘natural’ category. Instead, gender theorists viewed gender as a process in which individuals actively participated and one that was socially constructed (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This paradigm shift laid the groundwork for exploring the interactive nature of gender and interconnected concepts, as articulated by West and Zimmermann (1987) in their definitions of sex, sex category, and gender. According to their framework, sex was the result of “socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying persons as females or males” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127). In daily interactions, individuals classified others into sex categories based on observable “identificatory displays” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 127), such as clothing or hairstyle. In this context, gender was construed as the expression of one’s sex category, which might deviate from one’s biological sex (West & Zimmerman, 1987).

Similarly, Butler (1990, p. 136) argued that gender was not a stable identity and lacked any inherent gender “core”. Instead, she proposed that gender was produced through gestures and acts, asserting that it only exists within the realm of these performative acts. Butler (1990) underscored the absence of an inner sense of maleness or femaleness within individuals. In her characterisation, gender was “performativity” (Butler, 1990, p. 139), devoid of any underlying subject directing these performances. Similar to gender, the subject itself emerged and took form through its enactment. From this perspective, the distinct behaviours and attributes traditionally associated with men and women were considered products of historical and arbitrary conventions (Butler, 1990; Grossberg et al., 2006). This relational view on gender recognised the fluidity and multiplicity inherent in the representation and practice of gender (Connell, 1985; 1987; 2005).

Despite its constructed nature, gender remains a significant component of our identity and understanding of the world. Gender-specific behaviours are learned through societal practises, then replicated, and individually performed. In addition to other sites where our identities are

shaped, such as families and places of work, advertisements play a crucial role in the construction of gender (Grossberg et al., 2006). Therefore, much of what has been presented in this dissertation is about the space where sex and gender overlap, especially within the context of societal norms and expectations surrounding gender identity, often manifested in what Collins (2011, p. 294) referred to as “gendered sexual scripts and sexual gender scripts”. This research explored how these intersecting scripts interacted with individuals' behaviours in diverse social settings, with a particular focus on advertising as a key site of influence.

6.2 Contemporary Masculinities

The terms, masculinity and femininity, are often used by researchers and lay persons alike without defining them. In most cases, “it is assumed that context and a shared knowledge of societal customs and stereotypes make their referents clear so that elaboration is unnecessary” (Spence & Buckner, 1995, p. 108). In recent decades, there has been a growing interest in the broader study of masculinity across various academic disciplines (du Pisani, 2001; Gqola, 2007; Langa, 2020; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2008; Mfecane, 2016; 2018; 2020; Moolman, 2013; Morrell, 1998; 2001b; 2001c; Ratele, 2008a; 2008b; Ratele & Shefer, 2013; Ratele, 2016; Shefer et al., 2007; Swart, 2001; Waetjen & Maré, 2001). While numerous content analyses exclusively focused on female portrayals (Holtzhausen et al., 2011; Jordaan & Maree, 2016; Silverstein & Silverstein, 1974; Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011; Whitelock & Jackson, 1997), only a few were dedicated to exploring male portrayals (Fowler & Thomas, 2015; Luyt, 2012; Viljoen, 2008). The recent shift in focus within the field of media studies acknowledged that men, too, were “subject to the homogenising machinations of the media and popular politics” (Viljoen, 2008, p. 312). However, one-sided approaches, exclusively focusing on either masculinity or femininity, introduced a significant limitation in the research on gender portrayals in television advertising (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991). To avoid oversimplifying the concept of gender, this research aimed to examine portrayals across different gender identities.

In her influential work on masculinity studies, Connell (1985; 1987; 1990; 1992; 2000; 2001; 2005; 2014a; 2014b) challenged the theoretical limitations of gender by emphasising the unequal positions of men and women in society. Her groundbreaking relational perspective on masculinity and femininity served as a catalyst for moving beyond the confines of sex-role theory. While recent scholarship critiqued and expanded upon Connell's work, it was Connell (1985; 1987; 2005) who originally redefined masculinity and femininity as dynamic, socially constructed collective gender identities rather than innate characteristics. According to her framework, there was no singular, universal masculinity; instead, multiple masculinities coexisted within societies. These multiple masculinities intersected with factors, such as, social class, race, sexuality, and history (Connell, 2001; 2005). Importantly, these multiple masculinities evolved, and continue to evolve, over time, influencing and being influenced by societal changes (Connell, 2005).

While various masculinities and femininities coexist within a society, they are structured within a hierarchical framework known as the “gender order” (Connell, 1987, p. 119ff.; see also Connell, 1990; 1992; 2000). In the context of the patriarchal gender system, Connell (1987, p. 183) introduced the term “hegemonic masculinity” to describe the dominant expression of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Connell (2005, p. 77), represented “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women”. Contrary to a simplistic view of domination through force, hegemonic masculinity is characterised by institutionalisation, its prevalence in public discourse, and the marginalisation of alternative forms of masculinities (Connell, 1987; 1990; 2005).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has sparked both criticism and further exploration. In the South African context, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is widely used (Mfecane, 2016; Moolman, 2013; Morrell, 2001a; Morrell et al., 2012; Ratele, 2008a; 2008b; 2016; Shefer et al., 2007). Morrell (1998; 2001a) is often credited with early contributions to the application

of the concept of hegemonic masculinity in the South African context. In his work, he suggested the existence of at least three masculinities hegemonic in their respective spheres: “white (though divided along ethnic (Afrikaans and English) lines), African, rural masculinity and Black, urban masculinity” (Morrell et al., 2013, p. 7). Morrell’s (1998; 2001b) application of the concept differed from the conventional understanding, which typically associated hegemonic masculinity with a single dominant ideal (Morrell et al., 2013).

Morrell’s (1998; 2001b) work intricately explored the dynamics of hegemonic masculinities in the South African context, revealing a complex interplay of competing patriarchies. His observations highlighted the distinctly localised nature of hegemonic masculinities in South Africa, emphasising that "white" and "black" masculinities did not evolve independently, and also urban and rural realities were interconnected (Morrell, 1998). Rooted in the concept of a pre-colonial “patchwork of patriarchies”, Morrell (1998, p. 613) underscored that coexisting hegemonic masculinities were notably delineated along racial lines in South Africa. While recognising the limitations of this rigid categorisation of masculinities along racial lines, Morrell employed this approach to explain the broader landscape of masculinity in the country (Morrell et al., 2013).

In Connell's (1987) original conceptualisation, hegemonic masculinity was constructed against other, subordinate masculinities and women. Connell (2005) identified four types of masculinities, *dominant*, *complicit*, *submissive* and *protest* masculinities. Contestation between these occurred, and it was crucial to note that the boundaries between masculinities were unclear, with their inherent fluidity making definitive categorisation challenging (Connell, 2005). While masculinities were often simplistically associated with their superiority over women, this generalisation overlooked the important nuances between different masculinities themselves (Connell, 1987). For instance, black, gay, and working-class men might be either subordinated or altogether excluded from hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005).

However, this theorisation of masculine hierarchies has been contested in a South African context. In his work on Xhosa constructions of masculinities, Mfecane (2016, p. 210) pointed

out that "[w]ithin *ulwaluko*[17] discourse, being *indoda*[18] represents hegemony since it is the most honoured way of being a man". Unlike the Western gender order, which is based on sexual orientation, the masculine hierarchy based on *indoda* is determined by circumcision status. Therefore, this status can be achieved also by gay men if they underwent *ulwaluko*, which makes the most subordinate forms of masculinity in a Xhosa gender uncircumcised adult men and medically circumcised men (Mfecane, 2016). Furthermore, Mfecane (2018) highlighted that theorisations of African masculinities, such as Morrell's (1998; 2001b) work, were largely based on gender theories developed in the Global North. Despite the dominance of these theories in gender studies, there is an ongoing discussion in South Africa about the necessity to develop theories tailored to the African context (Bhana et al., 2007; Mfecane, 2020; Morrell & Clowes, 2016; Oyěwùmí, 2002; Ratele, 2008a). Scholars in South Africa have criticised the reliance on gender theories from the Global North, arguing that these theories offered a limited understanding of African masculinities (Mfecane, 2018; 2020).

In South Africa, hegemonic stereotypes include social representations of men as providers, competitive, aggressive, violent, strong, highly sexual, brave, powerful, and striving for dominance, often engaging in multiple concurrent sexual relations, and placing importance on being well-dressed (Bhana et al., 2007; Langa, 2020; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2008; Mfecane, 2016; Mfecane, 2020; Ratele, 2016). It is important to note that attributes associated with the masculine ideal may vary depending on the cultural context (Connell, 2014a; Connell, 2014b). Goffman (1963 cited in Morrell, 1998, p. 608) characterised the American masculine ideal as "young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father, of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height, and a recent record in sports". In her analysis of masculinities portrayed in South African men's glossies, Viljoen (2008, p. 314) employed a Western masculine ideal, characterised by a blend of middle-class Christian norms: "[H]onesty, strength, courage and self-control – and an ideal of the male physique

[17] "Xhosa notions of masculinity centre on the practice of *ulwaluko*, the customary rite of passage from boyhood to manhood […]" (Mfecane, 2016, p, 204).
[18] "After the completion of the *ulwaluko* ritual, a Xhosa initiate is reintegrated into the community and officially regarded as a man, an *indoda*" (Mfecane, 2016, p, 204).

drawn from classical Greek philosophy and art". Walker (2005, p. 227) defined aspirational South African masculinity, as per the South African Constitution, as "non-violent, a good father and husband, employed and able to provide for his family". However, it is important to note that contemporary perspectives recognise a diversity of South African masculinities beyond Walker's (2005) now outdated work on the subject.

Meuser (2010) highlighted a generational shift in Germany, where young men anticipated women rejecting patriarchy, leading to the emergence of their own version of "pragmatic egalitarianism". This illustrated the dynamic nature of masculinities, indicating that hegemonic masculinity, in particular, was subject to change as it was contested and replaced over time (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, Connell argued that hegemonic white masculinity maintained its global dominance (Connell, 2005). This suggested that, while there were shifts and contestations, a broader pattern of dominance persisted. These hierarchical relations among men, encompassing social categories, such as social class and sexuality in addition to race, are evident in South Africa. The historical pattern indicates that white men have traditionally held dominant positions over black men (Morrell, 1998; Morrell, 2001a; Ratele, 2016). This underscores the intersectionality of masculinities, shaped by historical power dynamics and social structures.

South African scholar, Luyt (2012) offered a unique perspective by exploring specific norms essential for achieving the ideal version of masculinity, a departure from the conventional research focus on masculine attributes. Grounded in the framework of hegemonic masculinity, Luyt (2012) extended his previous work on masculinity norms (Luyt, 2003; 2005). Through his analysis of the contemporary idealised masculinity in South Africa, he identified key factors for masculinity in the country, such as control, (un)emotionality, physicality and toughness, competition, success, (hetero)sexuality, and responsibility (Luyt, 2003; 2012). In his quantitative content analysis of masculinity and race portrayals in South African television advertising, Luyt (2012, p. 42f.) incorporated six "masculinity norms"—"*sexuality, toughness,*

independence, status, responsibility, and homophobia". A more detailed discussion of Luyt's (2012) research was presented in Section 3.2 Insights from South Africa.

Hegemonic masculinity operates through prominent or representative examples of masculinity—representations that have cultural dominance, even if they may not be a common feature of men's everyday lives (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell (1987; 2005) highlights the crucial role of mass media in communicating various versions of masculinities and femininities at local, regional, or national levels. Emphasising the public nature of hegemonic masculinity, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) argued that its symbolic elements were conveyed through media images. Advertising, in particular, served as a tool for communicating a hegemonic blueprint for socially accepted behaviours, character traits, and interests within the bounds of masculinity (Horsley, 2005). As a result, mass media not only communicated but also shaped and reinforced hegemonic masculinity by depicting representations of desirable male lifestyles (Viljoen, 2008).

In discussions surrounding the concept of hegemonic masculinity, critiques have been raised by psychology and gender theorists, focusing on various aspects of the concept. Critics argued that, in Connell's (1987; 2005) earlier conceptualisation, masculinities (and femininities) were rigidly categorised, failing to acknowledge the fluid nature of identities. This fixed understanding resulted in numerous studies associating hegemonic masculinity with negative male behaviour, including tendencies toward risk-taking and violence (Langa, 2020; Lindegger & Maxwell, 2008; Mfecane, 2018; Ratele, 2008a). Additionally, South African researchers, including Morrell et al. (2013), pointed out that the term "hegemonic masculinity" was frequently applied universally in studies, overlooking the impact of factors like race and class. Morrell et al. (2013) stressed the significance of acknowledging how these elements shaped the expression of masculinities. Ratele (2016) highlighted that, even within a specific race, there was not a singular form of masculinity. Responding to such critiques, Connell (2001) later addressed this issue herself, urging a more nuanced application of hegemonic masculinity.

She stressed the importance of viewing masculinities as "patterns of conduct" (Connell, 2001, p. 20) rather than fixed and universally applicable categories in research.

Furthermore, critiques of studies on hegemonic masculinity included the observation that they often focused on power relations among men, while neglecting the establishment of hegemony between men and women (Hearn, 2004; 2007). Additional concerns about Connell's work were raised by Wetherell and Edley (1999 cited in Lindegger & Maxwell, 2008), who questioned the notion that boys must either align themselves with hegemonic ideals or be marginalised. Demetriou (2001) argued that Connell's conceptualisation of hegemonic masculinity was problematic as it portrayed it as a closed unit. According to Demetriou (2001, p. 347), hegemonic masculinity was framed as a "dualistic concept with a complete separation between hegemonic practices, such as aggression, rationality, violence and non-hegemonic practices such as non-violence, emotionality and tenderness". This perspective failed to clarify the dialectic relationship between hegemonic masculinity and other masculinities and how the latter contributed to the construction of the former (Demetriou, 2001).

Hearn (2004; 2007) highlighted the growing complexity of discussions surrounding hegemonic masculinity, including its connection to the nation-state, other social divisions, its various operationalisations, and the rigid interpretation of hegemony itself. This heightened complexity posed challenges to the meaningful application of the concept in research. Therefore, Hearn (2004, p. 66) advocated for a shift from hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men, emphasising the need to differentiate between "the hegemony of the category of men 'as a whole' (and in relation to women, other genders, and in different ways, boys); and hegemony within and among men, whether in terms of ways of being men or men's practices". Similarly, Morrell et al. (2013) suggested that, to fully leverage the value of the concept of hegemonic masculinity, it was essential to specify its application in relation to race, class, and age, along with considering its different levels (global, national, and local).

Despite facing criticism, the concept of hegemonic masculinity continues to wield significant influence as a functional theoretical framework for research on masculinity and gender overall

(Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). While insightful for understanding socially accepted ideals, it is crucial to recognise that the idealised form of masculinity, as a concept in research, is a model rather than a literal representation of daily social practices. This acknowledges its role as a theoretical construct rather than a mirror of lived experiences. Nevertheless, the concept provides insights into socially accepted ideals and serves as a framework for understanding the dynamics between the genders. Hegemonic masculinity remains a valuable tool for understanding social positioning, shedding light on how specific expressions of masculinity gain legitimacy, dominance, and celebration, while others are marginalised.

6.3 Contemporary Femininities

While recognising the emergence of newer gender theories and critiques of Connell's work, I still predominantly employed Connell's theory to frame my work due to its ability to capture key aspects that formed the basis for subsequent discussions on contemporary femininities. The relational nature of masculinities and femininities implies that their meanings are interdependent, constructed in relation to each other (Connell, 1987; 1992; 2005). Some scholars have argued that masculinity only gained meaning when contrasted with femininity, and vice versa (Connell, 2005; Horsley, 2005). Connell's (1987) gender order logic supported this perspective, asserting that, in a society, femininities were constructed in subordination to hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1987, p. 183) initially conceptualised "hegemonic masculinity" in conjunction with "emphasized femininity". This underscored the relational nature of gender, where masculinities were defined against each other and against femininities, whether as real-life examples or idealised models (Connell, 1987; 2005; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Excluding femininities from this discussion would neglect the integral part they play in constructing masculinities, whether as partners, mothers, participants in the sexual division of labour, and so on (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Emphasised femininity serves as the primary counterpart to hegemonic masculinity, reinforcing men's interests. Similar to masculinities, femininities occupy various positions in the societal

hierarchy (Connell, 1987; 2005). Hegemonic or emphasised femininity represents the dominant paradigm of femininity within a specific culture, being compliant with patriarchy and accepting its own subordination. Linked to dominant cultural values, emphasised femininity outlines what it means to be a 'real' woman in a given society (Connell, 1987; 1992; 2005). Depending on the local, regional, or national context, emphasised femininity is often associated with traits like beauty, softness, and passivity. Other femininities are characterised by their non-compliance with their own subordination, while a range of femininities displays more complex patterns of cooperation and non-compliance (Connell, 1987).

According to Connell (1987; 2005), all femininities are constructed in relation to hegemonic masculinity, involving their construction within a framework of subordination to men, thereby legitimising the global subordination of women. Furthermore, this structural inequality restricts women from gaining institutionalised power over other women. Despite the existence of power dynamics between women, such as between mothers and daughters, Connell (1987, p. 187) argued that the "domination" observed among masculinities was notably absent in relations between femininities. Consequently, the dynamics between femininities differed, as there was no need to subjugate another form of femininity, unlike in the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and other masculinities. Furthermore, Connell (1987) suggested that femininities exhibited more complexity in society than masculinities, as they could not evade the influence of hegemonic masculinity and were shaped by their resistance to, or compliance with, hegemonic masculinity.

Like hegemonic masculinity, the construction of emphasised femininity is very public. While closely associated to the private or domestic sphere, this type of femininity is aggressively and visibly perpetuated in media images, particularly in advertising, marketing campaigns, and mass media, such as women's magazines or soap operas (Connell, 1987). At its core, the public visibility of emphasised femininity serves the purpose of preventing other forms of femininity from accessing cultural relevance. Its highly visible construction leaves little room for the representation of other femininities in public discourse. Connell (1987) noted that the

invisibility of other femininities became particularly evident in historiography, which often focused on conventional femininity. Notably absent from historical accounts were individuals such as “spinsters, lesbians, unionists, prostitutes, madwomen, rebels and maiden aunts, manual workers, midwives and witches” (Connell, 1987, p. 188). As a conclusion, Connell (1987) suggested that a vital component of any radical feminist agenda involved acknowledging these invisible or marginalised forms of femininity.

Most notably, these images of emphasised femininity are still primarily constructed, financed, circulated, and supervised mostly by men (Connell, 1987; Gill, 2008). According to Connell (Connell, 1987, p. 188), emphasised femininity was characterised by traits like “compliance, nurturance and empathy”. This included “the display of sociability rather than technical competence, fragility in mating scenes, compliance with men’s desire for titillation and ego-stroking in office relationships, acceptance of marriage and childcare as a response to labour-market discrimination against women”. For young women, emphasised femininity was associated with being sexually receptive, while for older women, it revolved around motherhood (Gill, 2008; Ligaga, 2020). It is important to recognise that femininities, like masculinities, are shaped in specific spaces, such as workplaces, families, and other sites of socialisation (Connell, 1987; 2005).

In colonial and postcolonial states, gender dynamics also exhibit a strong spatial dimension (Posel, 2004; Walker, 1990). The ideal African woman was traditionally envisioned in rural settings, adhering to traditional gender roles. Conversely, the woman embracing modernity and residing in urban spaces was perceived as the antithesis to this ideal (Ligaga, 2020). This economically independent, unmarried yet sexually active young woman was viewed as a societal threat. Referred to as the “modern girl” (Ligaga, 2020, p. 39), she was constructed as a source of distraction for men, perceived as a threat to traditional family structures, and seen as a disruptor of colonial and postcolonial orders. Her independence often led to accusations of dressing aimed at 'luring' men, she was deemed promiscuous and as creating competition for men in the workplace (Berger, 2016; Ligaga, 2020). The post-independence period

witnessed a surge in women migrating to urban areas in various African countries, and during this time, the portrayal of the 'modern girl' functioned as a cautionary tale (Ligaga, 2020).

In the previous section on contemporary masculinities, I presented data on the portrayal of men in media, including hegemonic stereotypes and South African masculinity norms. In this section of the dissertation, I contrast these with constructions of femininity often portrayed in television and advertising. In her analysis of Lebogang Mashile's column in *True Love* magazine, South African scholar, Gqola (2016, p. 123) explored a specific manifestation of idealised post-Apartheid femininity, which she termed "the New South African Woman" or "NSAW". Gqola (2016) stated that the emergence of this trope was rooted in the transformative changes in South Africa, representing a particular expression of female agency following the decline of 'hegemonic' apartheid femininities. Therefore, she recognised the historical evolution of femininities, wherein new forms emerged while others faded away. Gqola (2016, p. 123) proceeded to define the contemporary South African emphasised femininity as follows:

> *The 'New South African woman' is a working, urban, upwardly mobile woman. She has a career, and she is ambitious and driven. She has smooth skin, straight, shiny hair and "tastefully" manicured nails, and an arched brow […].*
>
> *[...]*
>
> *Although she has other assumed attributes, such as assumed professional qualifications, religious affiliation, English language fluency, and worldliness, she is constructed primarily visually (as body) and relationally (to assumed heterosexual men).*
>
> *[….]*
>
> *As an embodied, consuming, heterosexual subject, the NSAW lives in the suburbs, is a cisgendered heterosexual woman, aspires to reproductive marriage, two cars, and travel outside the continent for business and leisure.*

In her description of the New South African women, Gqola (2016) emphasised the aspirational and normative attributes characterising this specific construction of femininity. Gqola (2016) highlighted the historical conditions that gave rise to this femininity trope, tracing its roots back to the restrictive conditions of Apartheid that significantly shaped the modern construction of aspirational South African femininity. In this context, Gqola (2016, p. 120) emphasised the "triple violence" emerging from patriarchy, class oppression and white supremacy. Characterised by financial independence and a growing role as a consumer, the NSAW symbolised economic progress and asserted her societal presence through her active participation in consumerism. Despite leading a highly privileged urban lifestyle, she has not entirely shed the stereotypical feminine role or the societal expectation of being a 'good wife'. Importantly, Gqola (2016) highlighted that the NSAW was remarkably universal, illustrating that her construction was strikingly similar across diverse racial backgrounds. Given her aspirational nature, the New South African Woman was publicly celebrated. Consequently, this feminine ideal was constructed both textually and visually, and widely circulated in magazines and television (Gqola, 2016).

In her examination of contemporary portrayals of femininity, Gqola (2016) distinguished between different spheres, noting that, while women in the workplace in South Africa were highly empowered, societal expectations imposed limiting ideas on femininity outside of work. She illustrated this by pointing out instances where (economically) powerful women were interrogated about their 'true identity' in media interviews, with the aim of uncovering their conformity to traditional feminine traits (Gqola, 2007). Consequently, Gqola (2007) argued that South African media acted as a mirror of the society they exist in. Addressing various South African femininities, Gqola (2016, p. 131) briefly touched upon *pre-modern femininity*, which she associated with "rural" or unsophisticated women, as well as the *female militant activist*. The New South African Woman's unpopular counterpart is the "train-wreck" (Gqola, 2016, p. 133), a gender construction she did not further elaborate on.

To examine contemporary constructions of femininity in Germany, Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011, p. 90ff.) conducted a study focused on television advertising. In their analysis, they categorised female protagonists into six distinct archetypes, which they also referred to as “types of women”:

1. *Sex Object, Object, and Decorative Accessory*

   This archetype of femininity was characterised by its erotic component, often embodied by young women aged 16 to 30. These women were depicted as slim, beautiful, and exuding an erotic aura.

2. *Housewife, Mother, and Family Idyll*

   All women depicted in a home environment were between the ages of 20 and 35. They were typically slim, attractive, and had a natural appearance. This archetype was constructed in the domestic setting, portraying women as hard-working housewives, loving mothers, or simply enjoying family life. This archetype included diverse representations, ranging from the idealised "uber mom" to more realistic portrayals of modern mothers successfully balancing professional success with caring motherliness. The most prevalent manifestation of this femininity was the portrayal of a woman who appeared content and surrounded by her family.

   The role of the housewife underwent a positive transformation, having evolved into a "competent expert for all eventualities of everyday life" (Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011, p. 90 ff.). This modern portrayal highlighted the housewife's confidence, even expressing appreciation for her partner's household expertise, signalling a shift away from traditional gender roles. Notably, the depiction suggested that housework was no longer exclusively a woman's responsibility.

3. *Experts and Working Women*

   This portrayal of femininity included women depicted as experts in various fields and professionals across a broad spectrum of professions. Typically aged between 30 and 45,

these women were slightly older than the housewives and mothers. They were slender, well-groomed, wear modest makeup, and had a trustworthy appearance.

4. Grandmas

Advertisements featured both traditional and unconventional grandmas, with the unconventional ones often depicted in humorous settings. Regardless of the type, all grandmas were depicted as well-dressed, mentally and physically sound, and open to change.

5. The Sporty One

The sporty woman was characterised by confidence, activity, a slim physique, well-groomed appearance, and an enjoyment of engaging in sports activities.

6. Women at Leisure

This category comprised diverse female portrayals that did not fit into the previous types but were loosely connected to ‘leisure’. What these portrayals had in common was that women were either shown participating in leisure activities or essentially not doing anything, rendering them redundant. These included:

The Young Pretty Woman

Typically under 30, slim, beautiful, well-dressed, and content with her situation.

The Natural Woman

Slightly older (under 40), not conventionally beautiful but attractive, exuding self-assurance and inner peace.

The Unconventional Woman

Encompassing a broad spectrum of femininities that did not fit any of the other portrayals. Despite sharing physical traits with the young, skinny, and beautiful type, unconventional women displayed a unique self-confidence. For instance, this category

included the "Anti-Frau" or Anti-Woman, characterised by negatively connotated traits like arrogance, recklessness, and simplicity.

While Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011) did not explicitly anchor these types of women in historical developments, the changing nature of these roles is being addressed. Notably, the role of housewife, historically regarded as negative, has undergone a positive transformation in recent years. It is noteworthy that both perspectives, the New South African Woman highlighted by Gqola (2016) and the typologies of women in German advertisements presented by Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011), acknowledged the historical evolution of femininities. This acknowledgment might stem from the fact that femininities had always been highly public, inherently making them subject to public scrutiny. Given the shifts in the constructions and meanings associated with publicly portrayed femininities, there was a heightened importance for a critical examination of the femininities communicated in advertising.

In this context, Gill (2008) presented a thought-provoking critique, suggesting that, while the most visible forms of femininity might have evolved over time, the underlying subordination of women in the construction of femininities persisted; however, it had now shifted to a different aspect of women's lives. This shift was evident in the meticulous physical construction of the New South African Woman and the standardised portrayal of women in German advertisements, where thinness and attractiveness remained prevalent traits across almost every feminine archetype (Gqola, 2016; Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011). Gill (2008) argued that, in the 1950s, a woman's worth was evaluated in the home, based on her domestic and mothering capabilities. However, in the 21st century, the focus has shifted to centre around her body. Essentially, emphasised femininity might now place less emphasis on a woman's domestic skills and more on her beauty. Gill (2008) argued that the transition away from domestic responsibilities resulted in a heightened focus on women's physical appearance. This emphasis on appearance became a new societal norm, creating expectations for women to conform to physical ideals to embody emphasised femininity. Importantly, Gill (2008) suggested that this shift contributed to the ongoing perpetuation of gender discrimination.

6.4 Gender Beyond the Binary

When discussing gender and related concepts within the framework that perceives gender as fluid and ever-changing, it raises further questions about gender as a binary model (Butler, 1990). As earlier sections of this chapter have established, gender is a learned social construct rather than a fixed biological trait (Connell, 1985; 1987; 2005; West & Zimmerman, 1987). In a fluid and socially constructed understanding of gender, individuals are not confined to rigid categories based on their assigned sex at birth. Instead, gender becomes a nuanced interplay of various elements, such as personal attributes, societal norms, and cultural characteristics (Coulthard & Castleman, 2006). Inferences about gender are often drawn from different aspects, including gender assigned at birth, gender role and sexuality. For instance, when an individual is assigned the male sex at birth based on their genitals, it is presupposed that their gender will align with the male category, that they will likely embody masculine gender roles, and be attracted to women (Richards et al., 2016).

At the same time, deviations from traditional gender expressions. such as women being attracted to other women or individuals assigned male at birth identifying with the opposite gender, are widely acknowledged (Connell, 1987). However, even those with intersex conditions, who fall outside the traditional binary spectrum due to physical attributes, often align themselves with one of the two gender binaries (Richards et al., 2016). Therefore, it is crucial to note that these deviations still operate within the framework of the binary understanding of gender. Then again, there are individuals whose gender identity does not conform to the binary classification, whether or not they are intersex. These individuals, often identified as non-binary or genderqueer, challenge the binary concept of gender, and are found across various cultures (Schilt, 2018).

Individuals may predominantly identify as male or female, while expressing characteristics typically associated with the opposite gender (Ashmore & Sewell, 1998; Ashmore, 1990). Despite this, they may use the conventional labels 'male' or 'female' to describe themselves.

Alternatively, these individuals may embrace the term 'genderqueer', particularly in environments that acknowledge non-binary gender identities or when neither of the traditional labels fully captures their experiences (Lorber, 2018). Some individuals embodying characteristics of both genders but, perceiving their identity as fixed, may prefer terms like ‘mixed gender’, ‘androgynous’, or ‘pangender’. On the contrary, those who identify as ‘gender fluid’, ‘bigender’, or ‘pangender’, a flexible term, move between genders fluidly (Richards et al., 2016).

Myriad terms exist to describe gender identities beyond the binary spectrum (Lorber, 2018). Some individuals reject the binary altogether and embrace terms like 'genderfuck' or 'genderqueer'. Others may identify as ‘gender neutral’, ‘non-gendered’ or ‘agender’, indicating a complete absence of gender identity. These terms collectively fall under the umbrella of ‘genderqueer’ or ‘non-binary’ gender identities, highlighting the diverse ways in which non-binary individuals express their gender (Richards et al., 2016). Non-binary persons exhibit diverse gender expressions that can be entirely independent of their biological sex. While many identify as transgender, signifying a misalignment between their gender identity and assigned biological sex, this is not a prerequisite for being non-binary (Connell, 1987; Schilt, 2018). Essentially, anyone diverging from a strict male or female identification can embrace the label non-binary, as it encompasses a broad spectrum of gender identities beyond the traditional binary concept. It is noteworthy that some non-binary individuals may even reject the notion of ‘gender identities’ altogether (Richards et al., 2016).

While the idea of nonbinary genders may seem unconventional to some, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that they fall outside the norm. No psychological field assumes a discrete gender binary; instead, there appears to be significant overlap between genders, given the diverse tasks men and women must fulfil in society (Richards et al., 2016). Interestingly, individuals who align more closely with the extremes of the assumed gender spectrum may find themselves constrained by their rigid adherence to gender roles (Bem & Lenney, 1976). Moreover, conforming strictly to gender stereotypes not only limits self-confidence but also

impacts performance, particularly in fields traditionally associated with the ‘other’ gender, such as women and mathematics. Therefore, affirming diverse gender expressions and identities is crucial (Eisend, 2019; Grossberg et al., 2006).

Interestingly, the increasing visibility and advocacy of LGBTQIA+ communities have brought to light implicit assumptions about gender identities in general. Some individuals now openly declare their gender identification, even if they identify as male or female, by specifying their preferred pronouns (Lorber, 2018). The most common pronouns used are “he/him” and “she/her”, while individuals who identify outside the gender binary often use “they/them”. Some individuals also use a combination of these pronouns (e.g., “she/they”) (Richards et al., 2016). Conversations about gender need to be inclusive, acknowledging individuals who do not conform to the binary, as they are often restricted or potentially harmed by inflexible gender norms. Richards et al. (2016) highlighted that the increasing acceptance of non-binary identities was reflected in more positively connotated media coverage, especially in online and youth-targeted media outlets. This further underscored that it was, in fact, not the number of people identifying with a non-binary gender that was on the rise, but rather their visibility. However, since these gender identities outside of the binary are relatively new concepts in the public sphere, they have yet to receive adequate scientific attention.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter established the third main pillar of this research—gender. By defining the concept, uncovering implicit assumptions, and delineating related concepts, this chapter provided a solid theoretical foundation for the study of gender in advertising. This groundwork enabled a thorough exploration of gender portrayals, individual gender constructions and the historical and contemporary models of idealised gender identities in their local contexts. In this research, gender was perceived as a fluid and socially constructed concept (Butler, 1990; West & Zimmerman, 1987). This perspective implies that masculinities and femininities are social practices, challenging the notion that what is deemed socially appropriate within these gender categories is ‘natural’; however, it is, rather, a result of historic and cultural processes (Connell,

1987; 2005). This sets the stage for investigating how masculinity, femininity and non-binary gender identities are constructed in television advertising and how these identities intersect with other social categories, such as race and social class.

Furthermore, the notion of power dynamics was introduced into this gender discourse to reveal implicit aspects often discussed in relation to the model of dominant, hegemonic masculinity (Mfecane, 2016; Moolman, 2013; Morrell, 2001a; Morrell et al., 2012; Ratele, 2008a; 2008b; 2016; Shefer et al., 2007). Connell (1987, p. 183) originally outlined this model, which was both upheld by, and constructed against, what she terms “emphasized femininity”. It is important to note that these idealised gender expressions are dependent on the cultural context and highly visible in society (Connell, 1987; Mfecane, 2018; Morrell et al., 2013; Ratele, 2008b). Building on this, the chapter introduced local manifestations of masculinities and femininities. It specifically examined Luyt’s (2012) South African masculinity norms, Gqola’s (2016) widely aspirational post-Apartheid femininity, termed “the New South African Woman”, and Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha’s (2011) feminine archetypes identified in German television commercials. Through this exploration, the discussion highlighted the localised and intersectional nature of gender, emphasising the importance of acknowledging both the diversity of gender expressions in a society and the dominant cultural ideal.

Advertisements function as a platform through which gender is constructed and perpetuated across cultures (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991; Eisend, 2019; Grau & Zotos, 2016). This implies that the portrayal of gender in advertising plays a central role in constructing masculinities, femininities, and, where visible, non-binary gender identities. Advertising and other mass media are recognised as crucial components of the cultural process through which a particular version of masculinity and femininity achieves and maintains hegemony (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). However, there are still no clear answers about how exactly advertising portrayals influence gender constructs in society and vice versa (Eisend, 2019; Knoll et al., 2011; Matthes et al., 2016; Paek et al., 2010).

Given the understanding of gender as a social construct in this research, this chapter also included a critical reassessment of related concepts, including traditional gender categories. This perspective suggested that the typical classification into male and female is insufficient in capturing the intricate nuances of gender identities (Lorber, 2018). Gender experiences are diverse, comprising a range of expressions that may not neatly align with the traditional man-woman dichotomy (Richards et al., 2016). Hence, it is essential to acknowledge the multiplicity of gender identities and work towards a broader understanding of gender and its related concepts. This involves not only recognising the diversity but also the complexity of individual gender experiences. As a crucial first step, it is imperative to uncover the socially accepted gender ideals communicated in advertising and also bring to light realities that often remain invisible.

CHAPTER 7: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, RESEARCH DESIGN, STUDY METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This study was interested in gender portrayals in television advertising, specifically identifying similarities and differences between depictions in South Africa and Germany through a mixed-methods approach. This approach, particularly suitable for developing a new research instrument, employed a sequential qualitative-quantitative design. Initially, a qualitative thematic analysis was conducted to uncover gender constructions in television commercials. The findings from this qualitative phase guided the development of the new codebook, which was then applied in a quantitative content analysis to test the instrument's effectiveness. The selection of the research design, study methods, and procedures was grounded in a social constructionist view on gender, acknowledging the multiplicity and fluidity of gender constructs, as well as a decolonial approach that challenges the universality of existing codebooks in cross-cultural advertising research.

The chapter commences with a brief introduction to the study's theoretical orientation. Following this, it discusses the mixed methods research design, specifying the procedures used—qualitative thematic analysis and quantitative content analysis—as well as the selection of the television channels. Methodological steps for each phase are then outlined: the qualitative phase covers sampling, data collection, transcription, and analysis, followed by a section on the interim phase of instrument development. The subsequent part focuses on the quantitative phase, detailing the sampling strategy, data collection, filtering, unitising, and data analysis procedures. Finally, the chapter concludes with a succinct summary of key points.

7.1 Theoretical Orientation

This section outlines the epistemological assumptions underpinning this study. The first part introduces a social constructionist framework of gender (Ashmore & Sewell, 1998; Ashmore, 1990), which was used in the development of the research instrument. The second part presents a decolonial perspective (Mohanty, 2003), underscoring the necessity of addressing

methodological universalism in quantitative gender research and motivating the creation of a new quantitative instrument. Lastly, the rationale for combining these perspectives to examine gender portrayals in advertising is presented.

7.1.1 Social Constructionist Perspective on Gender

This research adopted a social constructionist perspective on gender (Connell, 1985; 1987; 2005; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Social constructionism, as an epistemological approach, posits that our understanding of the world is jointly constructed (Burr, 2003; Galbin, 2014). Within this framework, gender is not perceived as a fixed and measurable attribute but understood as maintained and constructed through cultural and social practices (Artz & Venkatesh, 1991). Furthermore, the social constructionist perspective emphasises the intersectionality of gender with other identity attributes, such as race, social class, and other social categories (Frable, 1997). Adopting this lens also acknowledges the role of language, such as media texts, which serve as mediators for constructing reality (Grossberg et al., 2006; Hall, 1997).

Consequently, media texts play a significant role in conveying the socially constructed concept of gender by implicitly communicating these ideas through their content. Images disseminated through mass media, particularly those found in advertising, serve as valuable tools for uncovering these tacit assumptions about how gender is constructed within a specific cultural context. In order to explore gender as a multi-faceted construct that relates to social, individual, and cultural factors, this study employed Richard Ashmore's (1990) gender identity framework. Ashmore's (1990) gender domains specified five areas where individuals construct their gender identities. Originally developed in psychology to measure self-attributed characteristics, Ashmore's (1990) gender domains offered a valuable approach to measuring gender at the individual level (Frable, 1997). Koestner and Aube (1995) argued that the challenges faced by gender researchers in assessing the construct of gender share similarities with grappling with addressing personality functioning in psychology. Recent theoretical

advancements considered gender as a multiplicity of constructs; a perspective formalised in Ashmore's (1990) model.

While originally designed for self-analysis, this framework still offers valuable insights when applied to externally categorised entities, such as advertising characters. Indeed, previous research successfully employed self-reported psychology measures in quantitative content analyses (Neuendorf, 2017). Ashmore's (1990) framework captured observable aspects of gender construction in these external representations, allowing for a nuanced examination of how characters express specific attributes and characteristics within these depictions. Although individuals exhibit diverse combinations of gender-related categories to express their gender identity, the beliefs and characteristics that form these combinations typically draw from a shared set that is socially accepted (Ashmore & Sewell, 1998; Ashmore, 1990). In an effort to systematise this set of socially accepted gender-related characteristics and behaviours, which are understood to be highly visible and circulated in media texts, Ashmore and Sewell (1998, p. 397, emphasis added) identified five general domains that relate to:

> "(a) **Personal-social attributes**, such as traits and roles, are relatively enduring and cross-situationally consistent qualities. These are also the most widely studied aspects of gender and the individual. The Bern Sex-Role Inventory, for example, uses self-perceived instrumental and expressive personality traits to index the broad-gendered personality trait gender schema.
>
> (b) **Biological/physical/material attributes** refer to the person's body, what he or she does to it and puts on it, as well as the things that the person values as self-defining.
>
> (c) **Symbolic and stylistic behaviors** are ways of walking and talking and include nonverbal behaviors.
>
> (d) **Interests and abilities** are self-definitions that describe what the person likes to do (e.g., preferred leisure activities) and what he or she is good and not so good at (e.g., self-perceived abilities).

(e) **Social relationships** are the way that individuals answer the question, Who am I? They refer to important people in their lives and how they experience self when with these people."

Ashmore's (1990) model of gender identity comprised personal and social attributes, biological/physical/material attributes, symbolic and stylistic behaviours, interests and abilities, and social relationships. This inclusive model was, therefore, particularly effective in capturing the diverse components that constituted an individual's gender identity, highlighting the multifaceted ways through which individuals constructed their gender identities (Frable, 1997). The model further allowed for a multi-dimensional perspective on gender by measuring all aspects of an individual's gender identity and how it related to other people and society at large (Koestner & Aube, 1995).

Common criticism of Ashmore's (1990) gender model is its perceived limitation in explaining how individuals organise a complex array of loosely connected gender attributes into a coherent sense of gender identity (Frable, 1997; Lippa, 2005). However, for the current research, the model's strength lay in its flexibility. This adaptability allowed the model to accommodate diverse patterns in how individuals construct their gender identities. Ashmore's (1990) conceptualisation of gender identity aligned well with the understanding of gender as a dynamic process in this research. He emphasised that individuals actively constructed their gender identity by selecting from diverse and conflicting expressions of gender encountered in daily interactions and mass media. It is essential to note that, while socially desirable aspects were part of this construction, they represented only a fraction of the multitude of active choices individuals made to shape their gender identity (Koestner & Aube, 1995).

While Ashmore's (1990) gender domains have not been previously applied in the context of gender research in advertising, it becomes evident that several of these domains have been explored in-depth within this dissertation. This gender framework essentially served as the formalisation of domains in which historical and contemporary gender constructions unfolded. In the case of contemporary constructions, such as Gqola's (2016) New South African Woman,

the author unwittingly mirrored the structure of Ashmore's (1990) gender domains to illustrate this postcolonial feminine ideal. She outlined personal-social aspects (*working, urban, upwardly mobile*), physical characteristics (*smooth skin, straight, shiny hair and "tastefully" manicured nails, and an arched brow*), symbolic behaviours (*professional qualifications, religious affiliation, English language fluency, and worldliness*), interests (*reproductive marriage, two cars, and travel outside the continent for business and leisure*), and social relationships (*heterosexual men)*. The adoption of Ashmore's (1990) gender framework proved valuable for transcending simplistic gender role approaches, facilitating a nuanced understanding of how gender was systematically constructed in media images. Notably, its flexibility allowed for the incorporation of local meanings.

7.1.2 Decolonial Approach

This section builds upon and extends the theoretical orientation of the social constructionist perspective in this research by introducing a decolonial approach to examine gender portrayals. Quantitative research on gender portrayals in advertising has gained significant popularity throughout the years (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Furnham & Lay, 2019). However, there has been criticism regarding the lack of relevant theoretical frameworks and methodologies in this field (Collins, 2011; Eisend, 2019; Furnham & Lay, 2019; Rudy et al., 2010; 2011). A decolonial perspective facilitates the reconsideration of 'universal' methodologies, typically formulated in the Global North and then applied to contexts in the Global South (Bhana et al., 2007; Mfecane, 2020; Morrell & Clowes, 2016; Oyěwùmí, 2002; Ratele, 2008a). It enables questioning implicit Western-centric assumptions underlying gender scholarship, allowing for a critical examination of the presumed universal applicability of Western approaches to gender research.

In her seminal essay, ”Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”, Mohanty (1984) critically examined the construction of the “Third World woman” in Western[19] feminist texts. Later incorporated into her book *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Mohanty’s (2003) critique exposed how simplified dichotomies between first-world and third-world women led to the creation of a uniform category of woman on both sides. This oversimplification had particularly negative consequences for women from the Global South, who were, and still are, often assumed to be “ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domesticated, family-oriented, victimized” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 22). In contrast, Western women were constructed as “educated, modern, having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 22). This homogenised Third World woman is then typically measured against Western values, norms, and customs (Ehlers, 2016). A perspective from the Global South not only challenges inaccurate perceptions of Third World women but also underscores the legitimisation of Western norms in determining what is considered normal or abnormal, liberating or oppressive for women (Minh-Ha, 1989).

Despite limited direct influence on quantitative content analysis practices, Mohanty’s (2003) work raised critical questions about the limitations of Western perspectives in the cross-cultural analyses of gender (Persard, 2021). This was encapsulated in Mohanty's (2003, p. 33) concept of “methodological universalisms”, which critically examined approaches assuming the universality of certain concepts without adequately considering specific historical or cultural variations. She identified three methodologies employed by Western feminists to establish the universal existence of male dominance and female exploitation: the "arithmetic method", the use of gender concepts without contextual specification, and the tendency to assume universality at the empirical level when applying analytical categories of gender.

[19] I use the term “Western” without the implication of any ontological meaning and rather as a description of individuals who live in the space traditionally identified as the “West”, coinciding with past colonial empires and/or industrialisation. It is essential to note that the concept of the “Third World” is as inadequate as the term “West” (Lazreg, 2005).

Firstly, Mohanty (2003, p. 33) highlighted the shortcomings of what she termed the “arithmetic method”. While a numerical analysis of a certain practice, such as the wearing of veils by Muslim women, might be descriptively valid, she cautioned against drawing universal analytical conclusions from descriptive numerical data and emphasised the need to consider cultural and historical contexts. She used a study on veiling practices across different countries to illustrate her point (Deardon 1975, cited in Mohanty, 2003). For instance, during the 1979 revolution in Iran, middle-class women wore veils to express solidarity with veiled working-class women. However, in contemporary Iran, wearing a veil is dictated by Islamic law. Mohanty thus warned against conflating descriptive analysis with analytical conclusions, emphasising that identifying numerous instances of a practice considered 'oppressive' did not necessarily indicate increased sexual control over women in those societies.

Secondly, Mohanty emphasised the necessity of specifying theoretical concepts measuring women’s subordination, such as the sexual division of labour, reproduction, family, marriage, and household, in the cultural context under analysis. According to Mohanty (2003), conflating the descriptive and explanatory power of these concepts could lead to oversimplified perspectives. Situations might seem similar on the surface across different societies but have distinct underlying causes, demanding different explanations. For instance, an increase in female-headed households might be perceived as empowering in middle-class America, indicating women’s choice to be single parents. However, in Latin America, economic constraints, rather than empowered life choices, might predominantly drive the rise in female-headed households. This oversimplified view overlooked crucial factors like race and class, assuming generalised commonalities among women (Mohanty, 2003).

Lastly, Mohanty (2003) highlighted the misconception of gender as a universally applicable category of analysis. Treating gender as a superordinate category in research could lead to the assumption that its conceptualisation in one cultural context could be universally extended to all cultures. This perspective contributed to methodological universalisms, simplifying analytic categories, like male:female, and reducing their complex meanings to mere empirical

proof of existence across different cultures. This reduction blurred the distinction between discourse about representation and the material realities of gender. Consequently, it might result in the construction of “monolithic images of Third World women” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 37), oversimplifying the intricate interplay between the material realities of women’s lives and their portrayals.

Methodological universalisms impact every stage of the research process. Researchers may inadvertently allow these universalisms to influence their analyses by not critically reassessing the suitability of chosen theories and methodologies as the study progresses. Failing to adapt to context-specific nuances during data collection and analysis can perpetuate methodological universalisms, potentially impacting the validity and cultural relevance of research findings (Mohanty, 2003). The concept of methodological universalisms was particularly relevant for the primary method employed in this study, quantitative content analysis, where coding schemes developed in one cultural context and time are often applied uncritically in studies of different cultures and times (Furnham & Mak, 1999). Scholars have expressed concerns about the limited integration of theoretical frameworks and stagnant development of coding schemes, which have showed minimal progress since their original formulation in the 1970s (Collins, 2011; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Lim & Furnham, 2016). Artz and Venkatesh (1991) argued that content analyses relying solely on frequency counts of role portrayals might lead to rather superficial or even self-evident results, potentially trivialising the issue of gender representation or overlooking important contextual and cultural nuances. Along similar lines, Ligaga (2020) critiqued Mwangi’s (1996) quantitative research on gender roles in Kenyan television commercials, highlighting that the study neglected important contextual and historical backgrounds.

To address methodological universalisms, this research conducted a thorough literature review, (Chapters 2-6), meticulously considering theories specific to the cultural contexts of South Africa and Germany. In Chapter 4, a detailed historical and contemporary exploration of gender in these regions was undertaken, while Chapter 6 explored the material realities of

men, women, and genders beyond the binary. This nuanced approach not only facilitated context-specific research planning but also established a robust foundation for the meaningful recontextualisation of findings. Alongside theoretical considerations, a new quantitative instrument was developed to ensure alignment with the specific cultural contexts under analysis. In line with Mohanty's (2003) recommendations, this research included a historicised and contextualised comparative examination, carefully considering the unique historical and cultural factors influencing gender dynamics. This reconsideration was crucial for ensuring that measures adequately captured the nuanced and dynamic nature of contemporary gender portrayals in South Africa and Germany.

7.1.3 Synthesis of Perspectives

Gender constructions in advertising were examined through a dual theoretical lens, combining Ashmore's (1990) Gender Identity Framework—representing a social constructionist perspective on gender—with a decolonial approach inspired by Mohanty's (2003) critique of methodological universalisms. While it might initially appear contradictory to combine a decolonial approach with a gender framework developed by an American psychologist, the integration of Ashmore's (1990) framework was considered a flexible starting point. This flexibility allowed for adaptation to the specific cultural contexts of South Africa and Germany, exemplified by the classification of Gqola's (2016) New South African woman into Ashmore's (1990) model as shown earlier.

By synthesising this framework with local insights from South Africa and Germany, the study aimed to create a culturally relevant instrument that successfully captured gender constructions in a nuanced way. To allow for the rethinking of methodologies and methods, this research was therefore located in a decolonial approach. The synergy between the social constructionist approach and the decolonial perspective was evident in their shared emphasis on cultural context, fluidity, and multiplicity. While the social constructionist approach examined the dynamic nature of gender within specific socio-cultural contexts, the decolonial perspective

prompted critical reflection on the cultural specificity of these contexts, thereby avoiding the imposition of Western-centric theories. Together, these frameworks offered a broad lens through which to navigate the complexities of analysing gender constructions in advertising.

Furthermore, incorporating a dual theoretical lens into this research underscored the compatibility of employing a mixed-methods approach, integrating qualitative and quantitative research methods. This research design allowed for a thorough exploration of gender constructions, capturing both detailed experiences (qualitative) and overarching patterns (quantitative) within the studied societies. The convergence of the social constructionist perspective and the decolonial approach was manifest in the development of a new codebook. Combining these two frameworks ensured that the coding categories aligned with the cultural context, effectively capturing the intricacies of gender portrayals in advertising in South Africa and Germany.

7.2 Research Design

In adopting a dual theoretical framework, the research design aimed to bridge theoretical insights with practical methodologies, enabling a thorough exploration of gender constructions in advertising with both depth and nuance. Subsequent sections introduce the research design, procedures used, and the rationale behind the selection of television channels. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, involving an initial qualitative exploration through thematic analysis, followed by quantitative content analysis. This methodology aligned well with the study's objective of developing and testing an instrument guided by the social constructionist and decolonial perspectives underlying this research.

7.2.1 Mixed Methods

This section provides a concise overview of mixed-methods research, highlighting its emphasis on “collecting, analyzing and mixing or integrating both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 461). The adoption of mixed methods in this study was motivated by the belief that combining

qualitative and quantitative methods offered a better understanding of the research problem than either approach alone. This choice was also directly underpinned by the theoretical orientation of this research. Specifically, the chosen research design was a “exploratory sequential design” (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018, p. 123), comprising two phases. In this design, the researcher first explores the subject during a qualitative research phase, which guides the development of a relevant and context-specific quantitative instrument (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The initial phase involved collecting and analysing qualitative data, which informed the development of the quantitative instrument during the interim phase. This newly developed instrument was subsequently tested in the second quantitative phase (Creswell, 2010; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The exploratory design proved valuable for identifying crucial variables for quantitative assessment and exploring the various dimensions of the research issue (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This research design aligned with the decolonial aim of challenging existing theories and methodologies by anchoring the study in the specific cultural contexts under analysis, emphasising the importance of context and specificity. Beyond its theoretical alignment, this research design was particularly relevant for this study for several reasons. Firstly, the sequential qualitative-quantitative approach was especially conducive to the development and testing of an instrument. Secondly, it enhanced the instrument’s relevance to the specific cultural context. Thirdly, it enabled a broader exploration of gender constructions in advertising by integrating contextual insights and quantitative patterns. Fourthly, by grounding the development of the quantitative instrument in qualitative data, it established a strong connection between the qualitative and quantitative aspects of the study. Lastly, it allowed for testing the generalisability of the newly developed instrument (Creswell, 2010; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Figure 1 below provides an overview of the study’s research design, outlining the phases and procedures of the mixed methods approach adopted in this study:

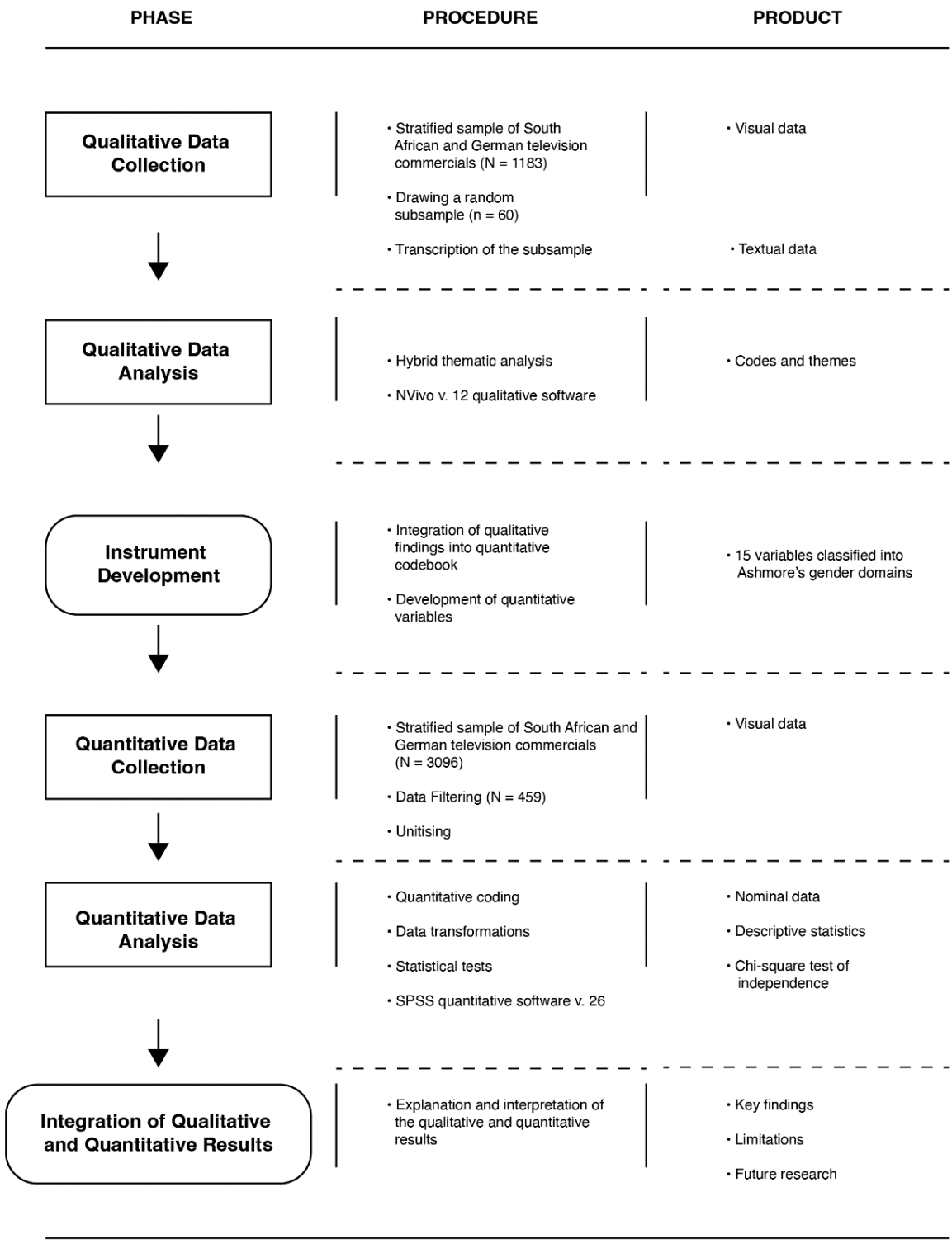


Figure 1: Phases and Procedures of the Exploratory Sequential Design.

Modified from source: Ivankova, Creswell & Stick (2006, p. 16).

The exploratory sequential design, while valuable, comes with challenges. Anticipating procedures for the quantitative phase can be difficult due to unpredictable outcomes from the qualitative phase. Determining which qualitative data to use and how to construct the quantitative instrument adds complexity, along with decisions on sampling and whether to use the same sample in both phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). However, in this study, planning the quantitative procedures upfront did not pose a challenge, as the research originated from quantitative research questions. To address challenges in the instrument development phase and enhance focus on outcome variables, I employed Ashmore's (1990) gender domain framework to ensure precision in this process. Lastly, conducting the phases on different datasets collected at different times aimed to strengthen the generalisability of the findings.

7.2.2 Procedures

For the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was chosen as procedure to align with the social constructionist approach of the research, highlighting the dynamic and context-dependent nature of gender constructions, and allowing for a reflexive stance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The results from this qualitative exploration on a small sample informed the development of the quantitative instrument, which was then tested on a large sample in the subsequent quantitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Due to the quantitative instrument being rooted in the findings of the qualitative thematic analysis, the quantitative coding categories were contextually appropriate and reflected the nuances revealed in the qualitative phase. In the second research phase, a quantitative content analysis was conducted, facilitated by the codebook developed through qualitative analysis. In line with the decolonial perspective of this research, the codebook was specifically anchored in the analysed contexts, aligning with the study's aim to challenge universalised frameworks and explore the unique socio-cultural landscapes of the studied countries. Figure 2 below provides a detailed overview of the timeline, research phases, methods, products, and instrument development:

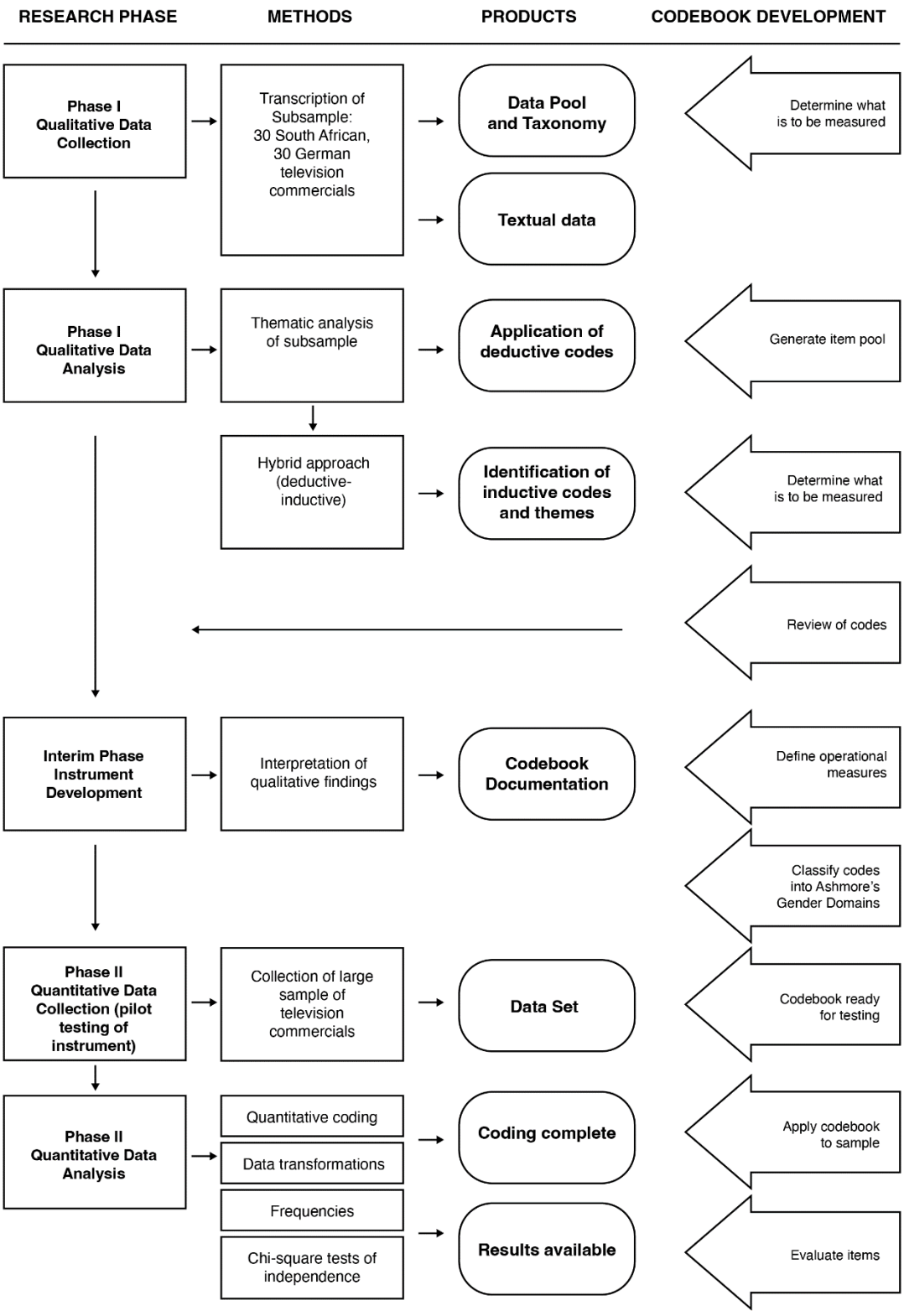


Figure 2: Procedures of the Exploratory Sequential Study with Instrument Development.

Modified from source: Bulling (2006 cited in Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The following sections dive into further details about the procedures used in this research: a qualitative thematic analysis, and a quantitative content analysis.

7.2.2.1 Qualitative Thematic Analysis

For the initial qualitative research phase, a thematic analysis was employed, defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a flexible research approach that involves searching a data set to identify, analyse, and report patterns or themes. Thematic analysis is not only a method for describing data but also includes an interpretative element where themes are constructed from codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is particularly well-suited for a constructionist research paradigm, as the analytical process can illuminate the formation of social constructs. Therefore, constructionist thematic analyses typically seek to uncover more latent themes in the data (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Adopting a latent level of analysis indicates that underlying assumptions and ideologies are being investigated, therefore, identifying latent themes in the data includes more interpretative work (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Themes in the data can be discovered through a deductive, "theoretical" approach or an inductive method (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). The current study adopted a hybrid approach to thematic analysis, incorporating both deductive and inductive methods to integrate pre-existing frameworks with a data-driven perspective (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Swain, 2018). When conducting thematic analysis, researchers can identify themes irrespective of how frequently a particular segment of meaning related to the theme appears in the dataset. Similarly, the importance of a theme may not necessarily correlate with its frequency of appearance in a dataset. While the process of thematic analysis is highly flexible, the researcher should pay careful attention to identifying themes that answer the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Thematic analysis was selected as the appropriate research method for this study because it facilitated the exploration of a range of gendered portrayals across the dataset, uncovering shared meanings beyond individual experiences (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This approach proved

particularly valuable in examining gender constructions in advertising. Advantages of thematic analysis include its accessibility as a qualitative method, yet it remains powerful in enabling the interpretation of key highlights across a broad range of datasets. The analysis was conducted on a smaller dataset to accommodate the time-consuming practice of reading and re-reading the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As a research method, thematic analysis may present several potential pitfalls as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). Firstly, the underlying research paradigm, theoretical assumptions, and the methodology employed need to be explicitly stated, while ensuring alignment with the research question. Secondly, the analysis should involve more than a mere description of findings; it should include actual interpretative work. Thirdly, thematic analysis runs the risk of producing weak results if findings are unsupported or unconvincing, possibly due to incoherent, inconsistent, overlapping and/or nonsensical themes.

However, by integrating thematic analysis with quantitative content analysis, this study strategically balanced the inherent limitations of thematic analysis. While thematic analysis may face criticism for potential subjectivity and lack of rigour, the subsequent quantitative analysis served to validate the significance of the identified themes across a larger dataset. To address remaining concerns about rigour, the research followed a meticulous six-step approach to thematic analysis, guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006), thereby ensuring a systematic and rigorous procedure. A detailed walkthrough of the hybrid thematic analysis is presented in Chapter 8.

7.2.2.2 Quantitative Content Analysis

In the subsequent quantitative content analysis, I applied the newly developed codebook, informed by the qualitative thematic analysis, to a sizable sample of 459 commercials. This investigation aimed to reveal the prevalent gender constructions presented in television advertising in the respective cultural contexts. Originating from a long-standing tradition of quantitative newspaper analysis, the initial shift in employing content analysis as a research

method arose from a growing interest in understanding social stereotypes (Lippmann, 1922). Therefore, content analysis has historically been utilised as a tool to research media representation (Krippendorff, 2004). Krippendorff (2004, p. 18) described content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use". Put simply, content analysis serves as a method to examine the content of messages, such as advertisements, with the aim of uncovering patterns and themes. Widely used in communication studies, this method allows for the examination of content that holds symbolic meaning (Riffe et al., 2019).

A quantitative approach allowed for the systematic assessment of the degree to which gender groups were presented differently in television advertisements, which might reflect traditional societal hierarchies and gender stereotypes (Luyt, 2011). Analysing a significant number of advertisements was crucial since socially accepted gender constructions are shaped by the persistent exposure of audiences to "patterns of imagery" (Sheehan, 2004, p. 91). The constructions or stereotypes are not formed by a single advertisement or portrayal of a group, but rather through the ongoing reinforcement of information about that group (Sheehan, 2004). Content analysis provided a useful tool to broadly examine the ways in which masculinity, femininity, and non-binary genders were constructed and intersected with other social categories, like social class and race, in television advertising (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Luyt, 2012).

It is crucial to note that, while the effects of stereotypical representations remain a significant area of interest, content analysis merely describes the content itself and does not allow for inferences regarding the *effects* of this media content (Collins, 2011). This research can therefore be classified as "descriptive", for the study aimed to "describe the situation without explaining how it arose" (Ahlstrand, 2007, p. 16), or what possible effects it had on the audience. Importantly, adopting a social constructionist perspective means that when quantifying gender portrayals, these numerical findings are not objective truths but rather reflections of socially constructed meanings. Other limitations of content analysis include its

reductionist nature (Riffe et al., 2019). However, this study mitigated this limitation by adopting a mixed-methods approach, incorporating nuance and context to counteract the potential oversimplification of the quantitative analytical method (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Cross-cultural content analyses have been a common practice in the field since the 1980s (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Furnham & Lay, 2019). In the context of this research, a cross-cultural content analysis comparing South African and German television commercials aimed to broaden the research context and implicitly measure the impact of culture on gender portrayals in advertising. This approach sought to explore how portrayals vary across countries and how these depictions might reflect country-specific gender norms and hierarchies. However, there are certain challenges associated with cross-cultural study designs, which have been summed up by Furnham and Mak (1999, p. 415) as follows:

> *These include stimulus and sample equivalence, the functional and meaning equivalence of particular behaviors, and changes over time if studies are carried out or compared at different points in time. […] This is because a content coding category scheme developed in one country at one particular time period is applied to other stimuli resulting from and mirroring a different and unique culture at very different periods of time. There always remains the question of whether the coding scheme is sufficiently robust and sensitive to interpret the many subtle nuances, particularly in the area of sex-role portrayal.*

These methodological challenges highlighted by Furnham and Mak (1999), echoing concerns about methodological universalisms (Mohanty, 2003), were also addressed through the study's adoption of a mixed methods approach. By developing the coding scheme in the initial qualitative research phase, the study aimed to avoid the imposition of generic Western coding schemes and ensure the scheme's relevance. The subsequent quantitative cross-cultural content analysis, conducted using the newly developed context-specific instrument informed

by the qualitative research phase, ensured the instrument's effectiveness in capturing gender portrayals in South Africa and Germany.

7.2.3 Channel Selection

When analysing gender portrayals in television advertising, particularly in a cross-cultural context, the selection of channels becomes a critical methodological consideration. Channels differ not only in financial structures and histories but also in their target audience, shaping both programming and advertising contents (Furnham & Lay, 2019). Given the variations in viewership demographics and programming types, a meticulous channel selection process in different countries was imperative to ensure channel equivalence (Furnham & Mak, 1999). This study focused on nationally available channels, selecting all four free-to-air channels in South Africa: the public broadcaster, SABC (South African Broadcast Corporation) channels 1, 2, 3, and the private free-to-air channel, e.tv. The decision to include these channels was based on their widespread accessibility and high viewership among the South African population (The Broadcast Research Council of South Africa, 2022). Channel descriptions for the selected South African television channels are provided as follows:

SABC1 (2021) *SABC1 is a free-to-air channel targeting the youth with content in indigenous South African languages and English. Established in 1996 after the restructuring of South African television channels, its primary focus is on local entertainment for a young audience.*

SABC2 (2021) *SABC2, a full public service channel, focuses on family, community, and culture in languages such as Sesotho, SeTswana, Sepedi, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, as well as Afrikaans and English. Its brand proposition revolves around family entertainment.*

SABC3 (2021) *SABC3, a public commercial channel launched in 1996, offers diverse content primarily in English, with 10% in indigenous languages. It*

predominantly targets South Africa's affluent English-speaking community.

e.tv (2023) *e.tv, South Africa's largest independent free-to-air channel launched in 1998, appeals to a diverse audience and is the most-viewed English channel in the country.*

In Germany, the channels with the highest market shares were selected—specifically, ARD, ZDF, RTL, SAT.1, and VOX (AGF Videoforschung in Zusammenarbeit mit GfK VIDEOSCOPE 1.4, 2022). Since all major German TV channels are free-to-air, selecting those with the largest market shares ensures a broad and representative viewership. All selected channels exclusively broadcast in German. Descriptions of the chosen German television channels are provided below:

ARD (2018) *ARD's national programme is a public service television channel that was founded in 1950. Known as "Das Erste", ARD offers independent, high-quality journalism for all age groups and segments of the population, its annual programming output comprises 42% informational and 38% fictional content. ARD attracts a viewer base that includes an older demographic.*

ZDF (2022) *ZDF, short for Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen, is another major public service television channel in Germany. Established in 1963, it focuses on a diverse range of programming, spanning information, education, arts, entertainment, and sports. Similarly, ZDF is often associated with an audience that leans towards an older demographic.*

RTL (2023) *RTL, a private television channel, is one of Germany's leading commercial broadcasters. Since its establishment in 1984, RTL has been known for its entertainment-centric programming, featuring reality shows, dramas, and popular series.*

Sat.1 (2000) *Sat.1 has been entertaining audiences since 1984 and was the first German commercial television company to go on air. Known for its mix of movies, series, and reality shows, Sat.1's motto is "entertainment for the whole family". While appealing to a broad audience, Sat.1's target demographic tends to slightly favour female viewers.*

VOX (2021; 2023) *Established in 1993 and owned by RTL Group, VOX mainly broadcasts US movies, series, and documentaries. The channel primarily caters to a younger audience, specifically in the age range of 14-49 years.*

This selection of channels aimed to represent the general population's access and viewing habits. It encompassed a diverse range of channels with various programming foci and target audiences, and was, therefore, expected to encompass a broad spectrum of gender representations. Although five German channels were included compared to only four South African channels, the number of advertisements is expected to level out, since advertising on Germany's public broadcaster channels ARD and ZDF is heavily restricted (Knoll et al., 2011).

The subsequent discussion details the two research phases, beginning with the first phase—qualitative thematic analysis. This section includes an explanation of the sampling strategy, data collection, transcription, and analysis. Moving forward, the interim phase, which focuses on the development of the codebook, is outlined, reflecting the social constructionist approach to gender in this research. Lastly, the chapter delves into the second phase—quantitative cross-cultural content analysis—which aims to review and test the newly developed instrument.

7.3 Phase One: Qualitative Thematic Analysis

This section details the sampling strategy, data collection and filtering, unitising, and data analysis of the initial qualitative research phase. This stage focused on uncovering gender portrayals in television commercials across South Africa and Germany, exploring both commonalities and differences to highlight various aspects of gender representation, while also investigating patterns and outliers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A hybrid thematic analysis was employed to examine how gender was constructed in advertising (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Swain, 2018), integrating insights from previous research and exploring emerging themes from the data itself through both deductive and inductive coding approaches (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This methodological approach facilitated a nuanced investigation specific to the cultural context, producing in-depth findings that informed the subsequent development of the new codebook.

7.3.1 Sampling

A multi-stage random sampling strategy was employed in the first phase of the study, involving a two-stage selection process, to collect a diverse sample of television commercials aired on SABC1, 2, 3, e.tv, ARD, ZDF, RTL, SAT.1, and VOX. This approach is particularly useful for studies with large populations, allowing for a systematic sampling process (Omona, 2013; Riffe et al., 2019).

First, a stratified approach was used to construct an artificial week, which has been shown to best represent the cyclical nature of traditional media, such as television advertising (Connolly-Ahern et al., 2009). Stratified sampling includes breaking the population into smaller sub-populations or strata that are more homogenous regarding certain characteristics than the overall population (Riffe et al., 2019). To draw a stratified random sample, the sampling frame is first divided into strata, then a random sample is selected from each stratum (Krippendorff, 2004; Omona, 2013).

The stratified sampling technique addressed the variability in programming and advertising content across different days and time slots (Craig, 1992; Ha, 2012) to create artificial weeks for each channel, which takes into account the cyclical nature of media content like television commercials (Ha, 2012; Riffe et al., 2019). Each day was divided into six 2-hour intervals from 10 AM to 10 PM, resulting in a total of 6 dayparts for every day of the week. The sample was systematically stratified by channel, day, and time slot to capture variations in advertising content across different channels, days, and times, while minimising repetitions and balancing potential daily, weekly, and seasonal fluctuations (Luyt, 2011). Sundays and day parts after 20:00 for the German public channels ARD and ZDF were not included in the sampling due to legal restrictions on advertising (Knoll et al., 2011).

Using a rotation principle, I randomly selected dates and times within the predefined period to systematically construct an artificial week, ensuring equal chances for each day and time slot to be included in the sample and enhancing the representativeness of the data. This strategy was employed to mitigate the well-documented "time-of-day effect" (Furnham & Mak, 1999, p. 415) observed in previous research. The sample in this study included different time slots throughout the day and covered both weekdays and weekends (Craig, 1992). This approach aimed to account for varying viewing patterns across different target groups, as different audiences engage with TV during specific periods (Davies & Mosdell, 2006). For instance, children tend to watch TV early in the morning and evening, while homemakers, shift workers, and unemployed and retired individuals are more likely to view television during the day (Craig, 1992). Consequently, products advertised and portrayals in advertisements can vary based on the time of day, day of the week, and season, as they are tailored to reach different target audiences (Furnham & Mak, 1999).

From the large sample of 1183 advertisements obtained through the stratified week sampling approach, a small subsample of 60 commercials (30 South African, 30 German) was drawn for the qualitative research phase of this study. Given the in-depth nature of qualitative thematic analysis, including the entire sample would have surpassed the study's defined scope and

hindered the depth of investigation necessary for this analytical approach. Furthermore, this sampling strategy aligns with the mixed-methods approach of the study, where the qualitative sample is typically much smaller than the quantitative sample (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Individual television commercials were chosen using a random numbers table, ensuring that each unit within the larger sample had an equal chance of being selected (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

7.3.2 Data Collection

This study collected data from global television networks, particularly through their online streaming websites. Since the data was collected from South Africa, a VPN was used to access German television programming due to geographical restrictions. To collect the German data, *Zattoo,*[20] a third-party online TV streaming platform, was used in conjunction with a VPN to bypass geo-blocking. South African programming was accessed via DStv online. South African and German programming streams from their respective online websites were captured using the free screen recording tool *OBS Studio.*[21] Technical difficulties caused by scheduled electricity blackouts ("loadshedding") and occasional connectivity issues posed challenges during data collection.

Data for the qualitative thematic analysis were collected over a two-month period, from April 30 to June 28, 2020. To produce more general results, efforts were made to avoid special time periods. However, it is important to note that this data collection period coincided with the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, which might have influenced the content of the advertisements. Television programmes were recorded in two-hour slots, accumulating a total of more than 84 hours of recorded content. This resulted in a total of 1183 commercials, consisting of 377 South African and 806 German ads. After collecting the data, the full sample

[20] https://zattoo.com.
[21] The software is available to download for free here: https://obsproject.com.

was refined by applying several filtering criteria before selecting a smaller subset of 60 advertisements for qualitative analysis. The criteria are described below.

Duplicates (26% or 304 ads) were excluded. While some studies include repeat ads (Ahlstrand, 2007; Gilly, 1988; Luyt, 2011; Milner, 2005), the practice of excluding duplicate commercials has gained widespread acceptance (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001; Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Knoll et al., 2011; Matthes et al., 2016; McArthur & Resko, 1975; Schneider & Schneider, 1979; Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011). This approach aimed to eliminate biases by enabling the examination of distinct gender portrayals rather than analysing multiple iterations of the same advertisement. Those featuring celebrities (3.5% or 41 ads) were also excluded, a common practice in previous research to ensure that the sample exclusively includes product advertising (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001; Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Knoll et al., 2011; Matthes et al., 2016; McArthur & Resko, 1975; Schneider & Schneider, 1979; Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011). To maintain alignment with the research emphasis on gender constructions, the study focused on advertisements promoting goods or services and excluded public service announcements, political advertisements, and promotions for movies or television shows. From this adjusted sample, a random subsample of 30 commercials per country was drawn for the qualitative phase, forming the final dataset. Detailed information on brands, channels, times, and dates for the commercials in the qualitative sample is available in Appendix A. All collected data are available from the researcher upon request.

7.3.3 Transcription

Since the dataset comprised verbal data in the form of television advertising, it had to be transcribed into written form before conducting a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To achieve this, the researcher manually transcribed the small subsample of 60 advertisements using the free transcription software *Express Scribe.*[22] This initial transcription process not only

[22] The software is available to download for free here: https://www.nch.com.au/scribe/index.html.

facilitated data analysis but also allowed the researcher to become familiar with the content. While there is no fixed method for transcribing verbal data into textual data, a rigorous and systematic approach is crucial (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). Additionally, transcriptions should, at a minimum, provide a "verbatim" account to account for all verbalised content (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91). This study adopted a meticulous transcription approach that focused on distinct aspects for each advertisement, encompassing audio cues, such as dialogue or voice-overs, visual elements, and attributes of the featured characters to ensure a comprehensive understanding.

In the initial step, the "verbatim" content of verbal data, encompassing audio cues, like dialogue or voice-overs, was transcribed (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thabiso Junior Ntuli, Creative Group Head at VMLY&R, assisted in transcribing and translating languages other than English. Proficient in several of South Africa's official languages, including isiZulu, isiXhosa, Sesotho, and Afrikaans, with varying levels of fluency in each, Ntuli's contribution was limited to the transcription process and did not extend to the coding phase. The subsequent step of transcription focused on capturing visual elements, including the setting, plot, and nonverbal cues, like emotions portrayed through bodily expressions. The final step meticulously documented attributes of featured characters, including age, race, figure, outfit, hairstyle, and other visual characteristics (Boyatzis, 1998).

To capture nuanced aspects of the advertisements that contribute to their overall impact, certain subjective descriptors such as "attractive", "graceful", or "humorous" were used in the transcriptions. While inherently subjective, these descriptors were consistently and transparently applied to ensure credibility in the transcription process. For example, labelling a female character as "graceful" was based on specific observable behaviours like fluid movements, posture, and demeanour, which were cross-referenced with culturally understood norms of gracefulness. This approach preserved the richness of the data, capturing nuanced aspects crucial for thematic analysis. To mitigate biases, my supervisor reviewed the transcripts to maintain consistency and minimise subjective interpretation. This collaborative

approach ensured that subjective descriptors were validated through collective discussion rather than solely based on my perception. Transcripts of selected advertisements quoted in the qualitative findings are available in Appendix B for reference.

7.3.4 Data Analysis

After the thorough transcription of the 60 commercials, a thematic analysis was conducted on the textual data. Thematic analysis is a method that involves identifying and encoding patterns of meaning in the data; it is the search for themes in data that emerge as crucial for explaining the phenomenon (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In this process, data are separated from the context of individual cases, where assigned codes represent units of meaning. The data are then analysed for patterns, leading to the identification of central themes across cases. Themes that emerge from the data become categories for analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, the coding process involves assigning codes to represent concepts and organising the data to identify and develop themes. In line with Swain's (2018) approach, the distinction between codes and themes in this study was not rigid, as it was not considered theoretically necessary. Instead, codes or themes were broadly understood as units of meaning.

This qualitative thematic analysis adopted a hybrid approach (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Swain, 2018), combining both deductive, theoretical elements (Crabtree & Miller, 2023) and an inductive, data-driven approach (Boyatzis, 1998). The procedures included both deductive elements, guided by the research question, coding schemes from previous research and culture-specific gender models, and inductive aspects that allowed themes to be identified directly from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The deductive aspect of the analysis employed a template approach to coding, involving a collection of predefined or *a priori* codes applied to the text for subsequent interpretation (Crabtree & Miller, 2023). Furthermore, the thematic analysis was guided by the research questions, reflecting the key aspects of the theoretical framework adopted in this study, namely, Ashmore's (1990) social constructionist gender model:

1: What roles, activities and settings define gender in South African and German advertisements?

2: What physical and material attributes define gender in South African and German advertisements?

3: What symbolic and stylistic behaviours define gender in South African and German advertisements?

4: What interests define gender in South African and German advertisements?

5: What social relationships define gender in South African and German advertisements?

6: How do other identity categories mediate gender in South African and German advertisements?

Additionally, the inductive element of the thematic analysis involved the process of recognising (seeing) significant aspects or patterns in the data and encoding it (Seeing it as Something) prior to interpretation (Boyatzis, 1998; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This resulted in a set of *a posteriori* or inductive codes (Boyatzis, 1998). Therefore, this inductive aspect reflected the decolonial approach of this research, where meanings were discovered directly from the field. The thematic analysis began with 6 deductive codes, expanding to 35 codes as inductive insights were identified in the data. Through an iterative coding process with multiple stages, a final set of 15 codes was established. The thematic analysis was conducted using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo v.12. The transcripts were imported into the program, and an in-depth process of coding and theme identification was undertaken. NVivo was helpful for coding, as it allowed the researcher to divide the text into small units, assign descriptive labels to these units, and group codes into themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Section 8.1 of the following chapter provides a detailed account of this step-by-step, systematic coding process. While the analysis is reported as a linear procedure, the research process was reflexive and iterative (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

7.4 Interim Phase: Instrument Development

In an exploratory sequential design involving instrument development and testing, researchers need to determine how information from the qualitative phase informs the instrument development. Typically, qualitative findings, such as emergent codes and themes, are appropriate for developing a quantitative measurement (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The process of developing measuring techniques for content analysis, or "operationalization" (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 132), involves the development of a collection of measures documented in a codebook. This codebook serves as a detailed documentation of all measures for quantitative content analysis, along with a corresponding coding form where the actual codes for the corresponding variables can be recorded (Krippendorff, 2004). The codebook and the coding form are all that is needed for conducting a quantitative content analysis (Neuendorf, 2017). These two documents can be found in Appendix D: Codebook and Appendix E: Coding Form.

During the interim instrument development phase, specific guidelines were followed to create the quantitative instrument, focusing particularly on the criteria necessary for developing codebooks for quantitative content analyses. The objective in creating the codebook and coding form was to ensure clarity and comprehensiveness to make differences in codings between different times or individual coders almost non-existent (Neuendorf, 2017). The design of coding categories aimed for mutual exclusivity, ensuring that each code was distinct, and each character was assigned a single value for each variable (Neuendorf, 2011). In cases where values were not mutually exclusive, they were further broken down into separate variables for clarity. Categories were also designed to be exhaustive, meaning there was an appropriate code for every case, often including the value "other" to capture cases that did not fit into defined codes (Riffe et al., 2019).

During this interim phase, the qualitative findings were loosely organised into Ashmore's (1990) gender domains to align with the measurement of the intended phenomenon and

address the research question. This step not only confirmed the reliability of the qualitative findings but also served as a crucial tool for validating the new instrument. Ashmore's (1990) model was particularly relevant for this study, given that all components of gender identity within his framework are anchored in the self, yet socially accepted. Thus, the five gender domains proved especially valuable in examining individual gender constructions in advertising, where the individual character takes centre stage.

While there might be shared aspects in the gender domains and dimensions covered by other coding schemes used for evaluating gender portrayals, the absence of explicitly stated theoretical gender frameworks in most studies raises concerns about whether these methodologies encompass the entire spectrum of gender-related characteristics (Collins, 2011; Eisend, 2019; Furnham & Lay, 2019; Rudy et al., 2010; 2011). Building upon the qualitative findings, a concise codebook was developed that captured how gender was constructed in South African and German advertising, addressing roles, activities, and settings (*RQ1*), physical and material attributes (*RQ2*), symbolic and stylistic behaviours (*RQ3*), interests (*RQ4*), social relationships (*RQ5*), and other mediating identity categories (*RQ6*).

7.5 Phase Two: Quantitative Content Analysis

In line with the majority of previous research, the second research phase employed a quantitative content analysis to examine gender portrayals in television advertising (Collins, 2011; Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Furnham & Lay, 2019; Grau & Zotos, 2016). This methodical approach facilitated the systematic exploration of patterns and provided an extensive overview of advertising portrayals, while also testing the newly developed instrument. To strengthen the instrument's generalisability, the quantitative content analysis used a new sample (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Similar to the qualitative sampling strategy, the quantitative phase employed a stratified sampling approach, collecting data over 11 weeks in 2022. Frequency calculations and chi-square analyses revealed overarching trends in gender portrayal across the dataset.

7.5.1 Sampling

The sampling strategy for the quantitative phase closely resembled that of the qualitative phase. However, unlike the qualitative phase, which employed both stratified and simple random sampling to obtain a smaller sample, the quantitative phase exclusively employed stratified sampling. This approach aimed to generate a large sample for a systematic quantitative examination of the topic and to meet the requirements of statistical tests (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The decision to sample, collect, and analyse two different samples was made to enhance the validation of the instrument and improve the overall generalisation of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Sampling is crucial not only for the validity of quantitative research but also for determining the generalisability of results to the population under investigation. In terms of research design, sampling must be seen as a compromise between the study's purpose, the margin of error, and the available resources (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 112).

The sampling units for this phase were television advertisements, and, following best practices in previous quantitative research (Luyt, 2011), a stratified sampling approach was employed to construct an artificial week (Ha, 2012; Riffe et al., 2019). As detailed in the previous section where the sampling for the qualitative phase was explained, the collected data formed a constructed week, with each day stratified into six 2-hour parts over a specific time period. This resulted in each day being divided into 6 dayparts, each 2 hours long, within the sampling frame of television programming from 10 AM to 10 PM, Monday to Sunday. The sampling included both prime-time programming and non-prime-time programming, ensuring the collected commercials were representative of channel and day segment (Ha, 2012). As mentioned in the previous section on sampling in the qualitative phase, the sample was stratified by channel, day, and time.

Using a rotation principle, the artificial week for each channel was constructed by selecting dates and times within the predefined time frame to record programming, resulting in 4 constructed weeks for South Africa and 5 for Germany. Each day part was selected randomly

for every day of the week for each channel until all day parts under a specific day had been selected (Luyt, 2011). This way, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday were included in the sample, but not from the same week. Similar to the sampling approach of the qualitative phase, Sundays and day parts after 20:00 for the German public channels ARD and ZDF were excluded (Knoll et al., 2011).

The constructed week is a useful tool to mitigate seasonal fluctuation, as media contents not only fluctuate depending on the season but also on the day of the week (Craig, 1992; Ha, 2012). Additionally, this approach meets the requirements of probability sampling and produces a more representative outcome of the researched time period than simple random sampling (Connolly-Ahern et al., 2009). While the stratified week sampling method is more complex, it has proven salient in previous research and is commonly used in advertising research (Ha, 2012; Riffe et al., 2019). However, due to the constraints of doctoral research, the generalisability of the results obtained from this sampling method may have limitations. While stratified random sampling helps ensure a representative mix of TV advertisements from different days and time slots, the results may not fully generalisable to the entire population of TV commercials.

7.5.2 Data Collection and Filtering

To facilitate a meaningful comparison of broadcast television advertising in South Africa and Germany, a suitable time period was chosen accordingly. The months of April, May, June, and July 2022 were selected, from which one artificial week per channel was constructed (Connolly-Ahern et al., 2009). Given that the sample consisted of two countries in different hemispheres, data collected occurred during South African autumn and winter, while it was spring and summer in Germany. Additionally, it is worth noting that, at the beginning of 2022, the world was still grappling with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which may have influenced advertising content. Over a span of 10 weeks, from May 5 to July 14, 2022, more than 120 hours of television programming were recorded. However, some day parts had to be

re-sampled over a one-week period from the July 15 to July 21, 2022. This was due to constraints related to scheduled electricity blackouts (“loadshedding”) or signal failure.

This resulted in a total of 13 hours, 48 minutes, and 54 seconds of advertising, comprising 3096 individual commercials. The full sample consisted of 1067 South African and 2029 German ads. Different numbers of ads in cross-cultural studies are not unusual, since countries can have different advertising lengths and advertising-to-programme ratios (Paek et al., 2010). During a similar amount of programming, South Africa had fewer ads, since there were fewer ad breaks per hour of programming in South Africa. Additionally, individual ads in South Africa tended to be longer compared to those in Germany.

After data collection was completed, several filtering criteria were applied to the sample. Similar to the filtering process of the sampling during the qualitative phase, only advertisements promoting goods or services were included, while public service announcements, political advertisements and commercials promoting movies or television shows were filtered out (Matthes et al., 2016). Additionally, infomercials and testimonials were omitted due to their emphasis on product promotion and hard-sell tactics, resulting in minimal focus on the central character of the advertisement. This stringent filtering process ensured that there was sufficient information about individual advertising characters, allowing for meaningful conclusions to be drawn from the data.

As in the qualitative phase, duplicate ads were excluded. In the sample, duplicate ads constituted 28.6% (305) of the total South African subsample of 1067 and 26.3% (533) of the German total subsample of 2029. Celebrities were also excluded from the sample, as celebrities may not necessarily convey gender constructions but rather represent themselves and their brand (Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011). Advertisements featuring celebrities constituted 6% (64) of the South African subsample of 1067 and 6% (121) of the German subsample of 2029. Furthermore, advertisements with central figures that were cartoon characters, children or unidentifiable were excluded from the analysis (Holtzhausen et al., 2011). If only body parts were visible, the advertisements were not considered for analysis

(Ahlstrand, 2007). This ensured that the analysis specifically examined portrayals of everyday people in ads.

In summary, the sample was refined by applying the following filtering criteria: 1) excluding public service announcements, political advertisements, commercials promoting movies or television shows, infomercials, and testimonials; 2) excluding duplicate commercials; 3) excluding commercials featuring celebrities; and 4) excluding advertisements with central figures that were cartoon characters, children, or unidentifiable. With these filtering criteria applied, the final sample exclusively consisted of product advertising and product representatives, aligning with the research focus on measuring individual gender representations and how they are constructed in advertising. This resulted in a total adjusted sample of 459 commercials—170 South African and 289 German ads—constituting a valid dataset for the analysis of gender constructions in television commercials in South Africa and Germany. For a detailed breakdown of the data collection, including dates and time slots for each channel, please refer to Appendix C: Quantitative Sample.

7.5.3 Unitising

In context analysis, researchers need to choose what to observe and how to record these observations, which provides the basis for what is considered the data of the study (Krippendorff, 2004; Riffe et al., 2019). Krippendorff (2004) distinguished between three different kinds of observations or units, *sampling*, *coding*, and *context*. *Sampling units* are "units that are distinguished for selective inclusion in an analysis" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 98). In this study, the sampling units were individual television advertisements. *Coding units* specify "units that are distinguished for separate description, transcription, recording, or coding" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 99). In this research, the coding unit or unit of analysis were the central characters of the advertising, which were defined as adult characters with on-camera appearances of at least three seconds or at least one line of dialogue. If there were only two adults present, both were always coded. If there were more than two adults featured in the

commercial, those appearing most prominent were chosen. When it was not clear which two figures were the most central, one central character of each gender was picked (Gilly, 1988; McArthur & Resko, 1975; Milner, 2005; Schneider & Schneider, 1979; Uray & Burnaz, 2003; Wee et al., 1995). In this research, *context units*, defined as "units of textual matter that set limits on the information to be considered in the description of recording units" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 101), were equivalent to sampling units, which were individual television commercials. The commercials served as context for applying codes to the individual television characters.

This approach was not only in line with previous research (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001; Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Knoll et al., 2011; Matthes et al., 2016; McArthur & Resko, 1975; Schneider & Schneider, 1979; Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011) but also established a meaningful frame of reference for capturing variations in gender portrayals, aligning with the research's goal to measure patterns related to individual constructions of gender. Moreover, employing individual characters as coding units aligned with the research's adoption of Ashmore's gender domains (1990) as its framework, which explored individual gender identities within broader societal contexts. For the total adjusted sample of 459 advertisements, a total of 672 central figures were coded for and analysed, comprising 247 central characters for South Africa and 399 for Germany.

7.5.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis involved the application of the newly developed codebook to unitised text segments, where the primary characters in the advertisements served as the coding units (Wee et al., 1995). The quantitative coding adhered to the instructions outlined in the codebook, and more details about the codebook and coding instructions will be provided in Section 8.4. The complete codebook, along with the coding form, can be found in Appendix D: Codebook and Appendix E: Coding Form. In the quantitative phase of the research, three hypotheses were tested:

- There will be significant differences in gender portrayals in South African television commercials.
- There will be significant differences in gender portrayals in German television commercials.
- There will be more significant differences in gender portrayals in South African television commercials than German commercials.

The study adopted a nominal level of measurement, where each value was assigned a number without inherent numerical meaning (Davies & Mosdell, 2006). Due to the nominal nature of the data, parametric statistics were not applicable (Pallant, 2010). Descriptive statistics, such as frequency tabulations, were used to explore the nominal data, to represent the number of occurrences for each category in a dataset. Additionally, inferential statistics, in this case the Chi-Square Test of Independence, was used to analyse relationships among variables, assessing the association between two categorical variables. The chi-square test was employed to determine the independence of two nominal variables by examining whether there was a significant difference between observed and expected frequencies in a contingency table (Riffe et al., 2019). An important limitation of chi-square tests is their ability to detect associations between variables without providing information about the direction or strength of the association (Pallant, 2010).

The p-value in chi-square tests is a measure of probability that the observed data's deviation from the expected distribution is purely random. It assesses the statistical significance of the association between categorical variables, with a lower p-value indicating stronger evidence against the null hypothesis of independence (Pallant, 2010; Riffe et al., 2019). For the quantitative coding process, IBM Statistics SPSS 26[23] was used for data management and advanced analytics. Initially, the data file structure was established, followed by data entry. A

[23] https://www.ibm.com/products/spss-statistics.

thorough data screening for errors preceded the exploration of data through descriptive statistics and subsequent analyses to uncover relationships between variables (Pallant, 2010).

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the theoretical orientation and methodology employed in this study. Grounded in a social constructionist perspective with a decolonial approach, the research adopted a mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This methodological choice was consistent with the study's epistemological foundations and facilitated the development and testing of a new research instrument. The use of Ashmore's (1990) gender framework allowed for a nuanced exploration of gender characteristics and behaviours, while the decolonial approach emphasised alignment with local insights and cultural contexts (Mohanty, 2003). The research followed an explanatory sequential design, consisting of two phases—an initial qualitative phase followed by a subsequent quantitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In the qualitative phase, a thematic analysis was conducted on a subsample of 30 South African and 30 German television advertisements, randomly selected from a larger, stratified sample collected over two months in 2020. This extensive sample comprised advertisements from the most viewed channels in South Africa and Germany, spanning all days of the week, including weekends, from 10 AM until 10 PM. The meticulous sampling strategy aimed to ensure that a broad range of gender portrayals in advertisements was captured.

In the initial qualitative phase, the small sample of 60 advertisements was transcribed to generate textual data for thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This research employed a hybrid thematic analysis, combining deductive (*a priori*) and inductive (*a posteriori*) coding approaches (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Swain, 2018). Using NVivo, the qualitative coding process comprised several stages, starting with the application of deductive codes and capturing emerging inductive codes or themes from the data. This iterative, non-linear process resulted in the identification of 15 codes, subsequently translated into a comprehensive codebook during the interim instrument development phase. To ensure credibility and validity,

the codes were reviewed by colleagues in the field. Additionally, the codes were classified into Ashmore's (1990) gender domains, providing a theoretically grounded basis for interpreting the gender-related themes that emerged from the data.

Following the development of the instrument, the subsequent quantitative research phase involved testing it through a quantitative content analysis. Similar to the qualitative phase, the sampling approach for the second phase employed a stratified approach, accounting for variations in television advertising across different channels, days, and times (Connolly-Ahern et al., 2009). Data for this extensive sample were collected over 11 weeks in 2022, comprising 3096 ads, with 1067 from South Africa and 2029 from Germany. Filtering criteria were applied to ensure that the analysed advertisements exclusively featured everyday individuals, excluding celebrities and fictional characters. Reflecting the study's emphasis on individual gender portrayals, adult advertising characters served as the coding units (Krippendorff, 2004). After applying the new codebook for quantitative coding, which was recorded in SPSS, the researcher conducted relevant statistical analyses. Since the data level was nominal, analysis included simple frequency tables and chi-square tests to explore associations in the data (Riffe et al., 2019). Detailed insights into the respective data analyses and the findings from both the qualitative and quantitative phases are presented in the upcoming chapters.

CHAPTER 8: UNCOVERING GENDER CONSTRUCTIONS: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

This chapter presents a comprehensive overview of the initial qualitative phase. It covers the qualitative analysis, findings, and validation, and includes a discussion on the development of the new codebook, concluding with a summary of key points. Building on the concise presentation of the qualitative analytical approach in the previous chapter, the first section of this chapter elaborates on the coding stages in the thematic analysis. The chapter proceeds to discuss the validation of qualitative findings and introduces the newly developed codebook. In the section on instrument development, each variable is explained with its definition, operationalisation, origin, importance, and, where applicable, a reflection and/or illustrative quote. The codebook, serving as the quantitative research instrument, was employed in the subsequent quantitative content analysis, which will be detailed in the following chapter.

8.1 Thematic Analysis: Stages of Data Coding

In conducting the qualitative thematic analysis for this study, a hybrid approach was employed, allowing for the exploration of theoretical concepts and the extraction of new insights from the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Swain, 2018). The text underwent coding, leading to the development of themes, codes, and descriptions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This hybrid thematic analysis integrated both deductive, *a priori*, and inductive, *a posteriori*, codes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). The qualitative coding process commenced with a predefined list of deductive codes, informed by topics of interest, existing theories, frameworks, and the literature review (Crabtree & Miller, 2023). Inductive codes were generated by the researcher from the data and captured segments of meaning relevant to the research question (Boyatzis, 1998), including social and cultural factors influencing gender portrayals. The inductive approach ensured that themes and codes maintained contextual relevance, as they were directly derived from the data.

Throughout the thematic analysis, notes were taken to document crucial information useful for the subsequent instrument development (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To maintain rigour and systematise the analytical process, a modified six-step approach to thematic analysis was followed (Braun & Clarke, 2006), incorporating elements from Fereday and Muir-Cochrane's (2006) hybrid thematic analysis. Despite the linear presentation of the coding process, it is important to note that the hybrid thematic analysis was an iterative, non-linear process (Saldaña, 2013). The figure below provides a concise overview of the coding stages and their respective foci:

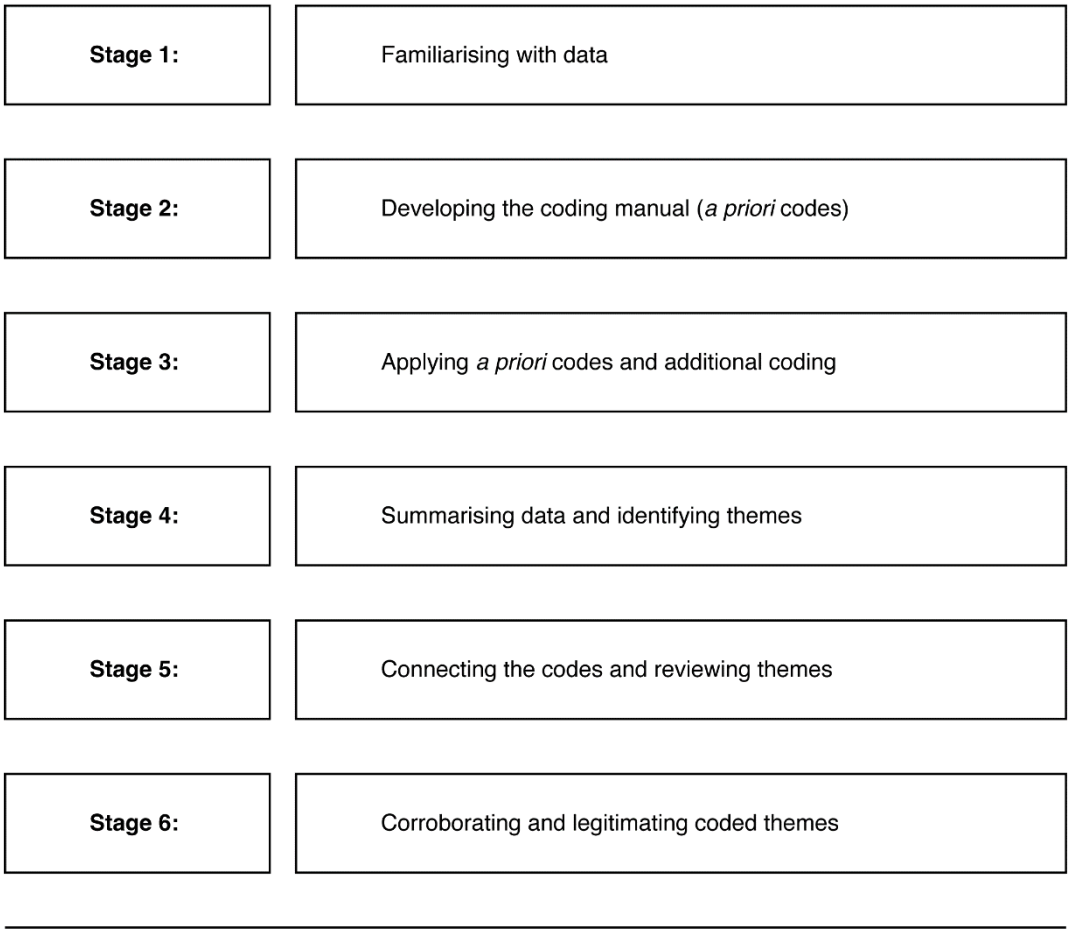


Figure 3: Stages Undertaken to Code the Data.

Modified from source: Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006, p. 84).

The first stage of the hybrid thematic analysis involved the researcher familiarising herself with the data set through repeated and active reading of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this phase, the researcher also imported the transcriptions of the 60 advertisements into NVivo. The second stage comprised the development of the qualitative coding manual, which meant compiling a set of *a priori* (deductive) codes. This process was guided by key concepts from existing research and the literature (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Gqola, 2016; Luyt, 2012; McArthur & Resko, 1975; Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011; Viljoen, 2008). Deductive codes allowed for the application of insights from the literature and ensured synchronisation with the study's theoretical underpinnings and research objectives. These codes were selectively included based on their relevance to the South African and German cultural and social contexts. The study began with a small set of deductive codes: *gender*, *setting*, *product type*, *role*, *age,* and *race*. These *a priori* codes were then incorporated as nodes in NVivo.

In the third coding stage, the researcher applied the *a priori* codes and conducted additional coding. The text was coded by matching the deductive codes with relevant data segments that represented the code (Saldaña, 2013). Additionally, this phase involved further coding, where the data were categorised based on gendered meanings and different representations of gender. New meanings in the text were captured by assigning inductive (*a posteriori*) codes to relevant data segments (Boyatzis, 1998). These additional codes either expanded upon existing deductive codes or introduced entirely new ones. Throughout this stage, the initial six provisional nodes expanded to 35 nodes, incorporating both *a priori* and inductive codes capturing a broad range of meanings. As the number of codes gradually increased with the analysis of more transcripts, the researcher revisited earlier transcripts to ensure the application of the full set of 35 codes, creating a circular analysis. Codes could be applied to words, phrases, or entire paragraphs, and the same segment could be coded with more than one code. The 35 nodes comprised:

Age, Gender, Race, Setting, Product Type, Body Type, Role, Activity, Product Promise, Passive vs Active Role, Company, Interaction with Camera, Uses Product, Symbolic

Behaviours, Attire, Wearing Wedding Band, Physical Affection, Receiving Praise, Advice, Bravery, Black female staff, Not being hungry, Driving or in Car, Incompetent, Dignity, "Kasi", Nothing gets in her way, Voice over as Product Expert, Humour, Relationship, Memory (Loss), No Time, More Variety, "I do it Myself", Plastic Surgery.

In the fourth coding stage, the researcher started synthesising the data, and identified overarching themes. To uncover patterns in the data that answered the research question, codes were connected, reorganised, and examined for similarities and differences. The 'References' count in NVivo was used to identify patterns by reviewing the number of times nodes were applied to the data. It is important to note, however, that the primary focus of the coding was on capturing in-depth meanings, and the number of node applications only served as a supplementary technique. The visual representation of "coding stripes" in NVivo offered insights into the concentration of codes in the data and the explanatory power of nodes. The structure of nodes underwent refinement during this stage, involving adjustments, combinations, renaming, and the reclassification of certain nodes as "child nodes" under higher category nodes. The initial themes that emerged from this refinement process were the following:

- demographic characteristics (age, gender, race)
- context (setting, relationship, physical affection, receiving praise, humour, wearing wedding band, "kasi")[24]
- behaviours and roles (role, activity, passive vs. active role, uses product, symbolic behaviours, sharing food, driving or in car)
- advertising and consumers (product type, product promise, interaction with camera, uses product)
- symbolic themes (bravery, dignity, symbolic behaviours, "nothing gets in her way", "I do it myself", memory (loss), no time, more variety)
- physical attributes (body type, attire, plastic surgery)

[24] "Kasi" is a colloquial term for the township, originating from the Afrikaans word "lokasie", meaning "location" (Sulelo, 2016).

- specific themes (not being hungry, incompetent, voice over as product expert, etc.)

The restructuring and grouping process led to a reduction in the number of nodes, resulting in a total of 28. Notably, the nodes “humour”, “relationship”, “memory (loss)”, “no time”, “more variety”, “I do it myself”, and “plastic surgery” were found to lack sufficient meaning in explaining the research question, or their meaning was better captured by another node. Consequently, these nodes were either grouped under a “miscellaneous” theme or included as child nodes, providing clarity to higher-order nodes.

In the fifth coding stage, the set of 28 nodes underwent further review and refinement. The codes were merged and collapsed into “families”, a process aimed at creating a more manageable set of codes (Swain, 2018, p. 22). Connecting codes is an integral aspect of the coding process, contributing to the discovery of patterns and themes in the data (Crabtree & Miller, 2023). These family codes or themes were interconnected and might overlap with the primary areas of enquiry explored in the study (Swain, 2018). The refinement of nodes led to the identification of 16 family codes, grouped into 6 overarching themes. These themes represented key patterns related to gender portrayals in South African and German television advertising. The themes and associated codes that emerged from the qualitative analysis were as follows:

- demographic characteristics (*age*, *gender*, *race*)
- context (*setting*, *company*, *assumed relationship status*)
- roles and activities (*role*, *activity*, *occupation*)
- advertising-specific aspects (*product type*, *interest or product promise*)
- nonverbal expression (*symbolic behaviours*, *interaction with camera*, *passive vs. active behaviour*)
- physical attributes (*body type*, *attire*)

The sixth and final stage of the coding process comprised the corroborating or legitimating of the (family) codes, which can be a common challenge when interpreting data. At this stage, all

previous stages were also closely reviewed to ensure that the clustered themes adequately represented the assigned codes and initial data analysis. Furthermore, an additional step involved reviewing the codes to assess their relevance and applicability to the dataset. To make the instrument development consistent with the text included several iterations before the qualitative phase proceeded to the interpretive phase, which included the connection of the codes to the organising framework of Ashmore's (1990) gender domains.

8.2 Instrument Development: The New Codebook

Following the completion of the hybrid thematic analysis coding, the researcher transitioned into the interim phase of instrument development. In an exploratory sequential design, the outcomes from the initial qualitative phase directly inform the subsequent quantitative phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). During this interpretive phase, the units in the qualitative analysis were systematically linked with an explanatory theoretical framework (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). This included categorising the final list of 16 qualitative codes, derived from the qualitative coding process, into gender domains based on Ashmore's (1990) model. Ensuring the validity of measures required that each operationalisation corresponded with a theoretical concept (Neuendorf, 2017). By integrating qualitative findings with the theoretical framework, the quantitative tool aligned seamlessly with the theoretical foundations of the research. This step also confirmed the alignment among the codes, the collected data, and the underlying theoretical framework.

The qualitative findings were categorised based on their relevance to the advertising characters' roles, activities, physical and material attributes, as well as symbolic and stylistic behaviours. Furthermore, the qualitative findings were organised according to the characters' interests, social relationships, and mediating identity categories, such as gender and the characters' race. Additionally, a new 'domain' was introduced to encompass advertising attributes, providing insights into the type of product promoted by the character. Structuring the codebook according to Ashmore's (1990) gender identity domains not only ensured that

the instrument captured every aspect of an individual's gender identity but also strengthened the credibility of both qualitative findings and the instrument itself.

During this interim development phase, any remaining ambiguities and discrepancies were addressed. As a result, the code "Interaction with Camera" was integrated with the variable "Passive vs. Active Behaviour", reducing the total number of distinct codes to 15. Codes were defined succinctly to avoid any overlap, and meaningful operational definitions were developed based on insights from the qualitative data. Operational definitions were formulated using researcher notes and inductive insights from the data. Consideration was given to cultural nuances, while ensuring that the operational definitions were relevant to both country contexts. The goal was to create a concise set of codes that effectively captured the data's meaning and nuances within each category. Coding instructions were meticulously documented to ensure clarity and guidance for the upcoming quantitative content analysis. The next section will explore details of the codes, including definitions, operational definitions, origins, importance, reflections, and examples.

8.3 Data Validation

Several steps were taken to ensure the overall validity of the qualitative thematic analysis findings. Qualitative validity is crucial to ensure the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability of findings (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In response to a common critique of thematic analysis that suggests it may lack clarity or precision (Braun & Clarke, 2006), emphasis was placed on making the research process as transparent as possible. The detailed, step-by-step process of the hybrid thematic analysis in the preceding section facilitated a comprehensive understanding for the evaluation of the methodology employed. While thematic analysis is known for its flexibility, it is also systematic (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). A detailed presentation of the analysis is essential in sustaining its credibility and veracity (Swain, 2018). Additionally, pilot testing was conducted on the qualitative data to assess the clarity and applicability of operational definitions (Neuendorf, 2017).

Moreover, to confirm the robustness of my analysis and findings, I tested my data in a collaborative session with my supervisor, Dr Ronald Irwin. Dr Irwin actively contributed to reviewing and enhancing the analysis and categories, thereby strengthening the validity of my findings (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Additionally, these findings were presented at renowned conferences, such as The International Communication Association (ICA)[25] 2023 in Stellenbosch, The South African Communications Association (SACOMM)[26] 2022 in Johannesburg, and in peer-reviewed Online Conference Papers at The International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR)[27] in 2022 and 2023. These presentations facilitated cross-verification of qualitative findings with fellow researchers, refining the analysis and supporting the validation of my results.

Colleagues provided valuable feedback, recognising the clarity, conciseness, and relevance of the qualitative findings. They also noted that the instrument derived from these findings effectively measured the intended constructs and phenomena. This collaborative process ensured that variables and operational definitions were precise and aligned with the intricacies of gender portrayals in advertising across different cultures. Furthermore, the qualitative findings, or the resulting quantitative instrument, will be subjected to testing in the subsequent quantitative research phase.

8.4 Definition, Operationalisation, and Importance of Variables

This section discusses the specific codes included in the quantitative codebook. In the context of a quantitative instrument, a variable is understood as a measurable and definable concept that has different values for individual cases or units. These values, commonly referred to as "categories" or operationalisations, represent specific measures (Neuendorf, 2017). Organised according to Ashmore's (1990) gender domains, both the codebook and the subsequent presentation of individual codes adhered to the structure outlined below:

[25] https://www.icahdq.org/.
[26] http://sacomm.org.za/.
[27] https://iamcr.org/.

RQ0: Advertising Attributes

RQ1: Roles, Activities, and Settings

RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes

RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours

RQ4: Interests

RQ5: Social Relationships

RQ6: Mediating Identity Categories

Figure 4 below presents a comprehensive overview of the variables classified into Ashmore's (1990) gender domains:

Gender Domain	Variable
RQ0: Advertising Attributes	Product Type
	Gender
RQ1: Roles, Activities and Settings	Role
	Occupation
	Activity
	Setting
RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes	Age
	Body Type
	Attire
RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours	Passive vs. Active Behaviour
	Symbolic Behaviours
RQ4: Interests	Interest or Product Promise
RQ5: Social Relationships	Company
	Relationship Status
RQ6: Mediating Identity Categories	Race

Figure 4: Overview of Variables.

To offer in-depth insights into each coding category, including their cultural relevance and direct connections to the qualitative data, this section adopts the reporting approach outlined by Mihas and Odum Institute (2019). The reporting approach includes the following components for each coding category:

- *Definition:* Describing the variable's application and if it is descriptive or interpretive, where interpretive codes capture abstract concepts and implied meanings
- *Operational definitions:* Outlining the values that can be coded
- *Origin*: Explaining whether the code is deductive, originating from the literature review, or inductive, emerging from the data
- *Importance*: Specifying the code's relevance to the overarching research question and its justification in the study
- *Reflections*: Exploring how the code has evolved during analysis, its connections to prior studies, or broader literature
- *Example*: Providing illustrative examples, which may feature verbatim quotes and include exclusion and inclusion criteria

In the upcoming sections, each individual variable is introduced, providing a clear understanding of it through its definition, operational definition, origin, importance, and, if relevant, reflection and example.

RQ0: Advertising Attributes

The domain *advertising attributes* is unique to this research and was not derived from Ashmore's (1990) gender identity framework. It was introduced to account for advertising-specific characteristics that were relevant to the research question. Variables within this domain included the *type of product* being advertised in the advertisement and the *gender* of the character(s) featured in the advertisement.

0.1 Product Type

Definition: A descriptive code capturing the type of product associated with the primary character in the commercial.

Operational definitions: Beauty, Personal Care and Fashion, Electronics and Cars, Entertainment and Travel, Food, Health, Home and Household, Insurance and Taxes, Property, Other

Origin: Initially introduced as a deductive code based on the literature review, the operational definitions were reviewed during the qualitative thematic analysis.

Importance: Crucial for understanding the advertising landscape and target audiences, as the primary aim of commercials is to promote specific goods or services. Examining associations of certain products with specific genders sheds light on societal expectations, such as women being linked to cleaning products and men to insurance or electronics, reinforcing traditional gender roles.

Reflection: During the review of operational definitions against the data, context-specific categories ("Health", "Insurance", and "Property") were identified and added. This adjustment was made to reflect distinct differences between commercials promoting health products and beauty items. The inclusion of "Insurance" was influenced by the significant market in South Africa, while "Property" in the German data aligned with the country's consistent real estate demand over the last decade.[28]

In establishing the operational definitions for this variable, careful consideration was given to advertising regulations. In South Africa, advertising of tobacco products and prescription medication is forbidden,

[28] https://www.wiwo.de/finanzen/immobilien/immobilien-in-deutschland-2022-entwicklung-und-prognosen-von-mieten-und-kaufpreisen-im-ueberblick/28584134.html.

and the promotion of alcoholic beverages is restricted in certain contexts.[29] Similarly, in Germany, advertising for prescription medication and specific forms of gambling is prohibited, and tobacco products are restricted in certain contexts. Notably, there are no restrictions on advertising alcoholic beverages in Germany.[30]

0.2 Gender

Definition:	A descriptive code capturing the central character's gender.
Operational definitions:	Male, Female
Origin:	Initially introduced as a deductive code integral to this research, with subsequent review of operational definitions against the data.
Importance:	Critical in this research, enabling the categorisation of central characters into gender classifications. This variable provides valuable insights into how gender is constructed in commercials and allows for comparisons of group differences for identifying potential gender stereotyping in advertising.
Reflection:	Gender was coded based on visual cues or verbal self-definitions of the characters. Although non-binary gender identities were acknowledged in the literature review, they were not represented in the qualitative sample and, consequently, not included as a value.

RQ1: Roles, Activities, and Settings

For clarity in the context of this study, Ashmore's (1990) original gender domain title, "personal-social attributes", was revised to "roles, activities and settings". This adjustment aimed to better encapsulate the coding categories within this domain, which included the advertising character's role, occupation, activity, and setting. The variables within this gender domain—

[29] https://www.arb.org.za/.
[30] https://werberat.de/.

role, *occupation*, *activity*, and *setting*—provided valuable insights into how individual behaviours and characteristics interacted with, and were influenced by, their societal context.

1.1 Role

Definition:	An interpretive code describing the character's role in everyday life.
Operational definitions:	Homemaker, Parent or Grandparent, Product Expert, Spouse or Partner, Worker, At Leisure, Other
Origin:	Deductive, included as an initial code; however, operational definitions were created inductively from the data.
Importance:	The role category is crucial for identifying gender constructions in commercials, reflecting societal expectations linked to gender. Gender role portrayals can reveal cultural differences, providing insights into prevailing norms and values. Persistent reinforcement of traditional gender roles may limit opportunities for individuals based on gender. For instance, if women are predominantly shown as homemakers or parents, it reinforces the perception that their role is confined to domestic tasks or emphasising physical attractiveness. Conversely, male characters depicted as professionals or experts may suggest they are perceived as experts or primary "breadwinners". Such depictions contribute to the perpetuation of distinct societal gender expectations.
Example:	"[…] A young attractive woman turns around and admires the surroundings. She has shoulder-length blonde hair and wears stylish clothes. Kneeling, she touches the flowers, then smiles at her husband. Spotting a birdhouse, she expresses joy and hugs her husband. […]" Brand and Country: Bauhaus, Germany Category: Spouse or Partner

Reflection: Stereotyping with regard to roles is often assessed based on the character's relationships with others, determining whether the character is portrayed in a self-serving or caregiving role. Operational definitions reflect new roles, and the theme of being "At Leisure" emerges as particularly important in German advertising (Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011).

1.2 Occupation

Definition: A descriptive code detailing the character's occupational status.

Operational definitions: Professional or High-Level Business Executive, White-collar, Blue-collar, Unable to determine occupation

Origin: This code emerged inductively from the qualitative data.

Importance: While many studies assessed whether a character was employed, this research introduced a novel variable that not only evaluated the character's employment status but also considered the societal status associated with the occupation. This distinction was crucial for understanding the character's socioeconomic standing, given the challenge of inferring someone's social class, particularly when relying solely on visual characteristics or limited information. Blue-collar workers are associated with the working class, white-collar workers with middle class, and professional or high-level business executives with the upper class. Harmful stereotypes emerge when male characters consistently hold higher occupational positions, limiting professional opportunities for women and contributing to gender inequality.

Reflection: Similar operationalisations were identified by Gilly (1988).

Example: "We see a middle-aged white man entering an office and interacting with a colleague. The man is attractive, has full short brown hair, a full beard, and is dressed in office clothing. […]"

Brand and Country: "Iberogast", South Africa

Category: "White-collar"

Reflection: This code was specifically applied to characters engaged in work-related activities, enabling an analysis of the intersection between gender representations and social categories, such as social class (Luyt, 2011). Limited to characters involved in professional activities, it also functioned as an indicator of employment status across genders and races, revealing who was depicted as employed or unemployed in advertisements.

1.3 Activity

Definition: This interpretive code captured the central character's activity.

Operational definitions: Cleaning, Cooking or Preparing Food, Home Improvement, Parenting, Self-Care, Working Out, Other Leisure Activity, Other

Origin: This code was inductive and described a recurring theme in the qualitative data.

Importance: This code was innovative in its focus on the central character's activity, introducing a nuanced perspective to the study. It examined whether characters engaged in hedonistic or self-serving activities, or if they were depicted taking care of others or performing tasks for others. For example, when male characters are shown participating in work-related or self-centred activities, this may imply ambition and independence, reinforcing acceptable male behaviour. Conversely, if female characters are predominantly shown in activities related to the home, others, or personal appearance, it may

perpetuate limiting notions about women's priorities. Additionally, this variable evaluates the reinforcement of beauty stereotypes by noting whether characters are shown participating in self-care or exercising, suggesting a focus on appearance. Overall, this category aimed to complement and expand upon the "role" category.

Example: “[…] Suddenly, we see the woman and two other older women practicing yoga in a park. The dog takes on the role of their yoga instructor, demonstrating the yoga pose “downward facing dog. […]”

Brand and Country: “Voltaren Schmerzgel Forte”, Germany

Category: Working Out

Reflection: A “Leisure Activity” category was included, describing a behaviour frequently observed in the qualitative data. This category also resonated with Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha’s female typology. Additionally, Milner (2007, p. 54) argued that advertising often presented a “fantasy of leisure”, rather than prompting reflection on our professional lives. This addition examined the association between gender (and race) and leisure activities, offering insights into who was depicted leading a life of leisure and who was not (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001). Additionally, the representation of characters engaging in fitness workouts, a theme particularly relevant in German commercials and not adequately addressed by previous coding schemes, might indicate increasing body consciousness.

1.4 Setting

Definition: This descriptive code captured the central character’s setting.

Operational definitions: Kitchen, Somewhere Else in the Home, Occupational, Outside, Undefined or Other

Origin: Deductive; included as an initial code based on the literature review.

Importance: The central character's setting is a well-established code in the literature, playing a crucial role in assessing gender representation in advertising. Originating from the division of men and women into public and domestic spheres, this code examines whether male characters predominantly appear in public or professional settings, implying influence and responsibilities beyond the home. In contrast, frequent depictions of female characters in domestic settings may reinforce limiting ideas confining women's perceived influence to the socially undervalued domestic sphere. This code highlights the gender-based division into distinct spheres of influence and the potential exclusion of women from decision-making roles.

Example: "We witness a young, attractive black woman, wearing a beautiful red dress, serving plates full of food to her partner in their kitchen. […]"

Brand and Country: "Doom", South Africa

Category: Kitchen

RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes

Ashmore's (1990) second gender domain includes physical and material attributes relevant to the research question, such as the character's *age*, *body type* and *attire*.

2.1 Age

Definition: An interpretive code capturing the character's age.

Operational definitions: Young (under 30), Middle-Aged (31-60), Old (60+)

Origin: This code, adapted from Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002), was deductive and included as an initial code.

Importance: Advertisements often depict younger women, while men are frequently portrayed as middle-aged or old. Such depictions of older men may imply authority and respect. Conversely, older women are often underrepresented in television commercials, with young women primarily featured for their physical beauty, potentially reducing them to objects of desire rather than active agents. Furnham and Lay (2019) argued that the concept of "sexualisation" in advertisements should be examined through the lens of age, particularly in the portrayal of young women, and marital status, with a specific focus on unmarried women.

Reflection: Age was either estimated by the researcher or mentioned in the advertisement. Broad age ranges were employed to maintain consistency in the coding process.

2.2 Body Type

Definition: A descriptive code capturing the character's body type.

Operational definitions: Underweight, Average Weight, Overweight, Athletic

Origin: This code was inductive and emerged as an important theme in the qualitative data.

Importance: Historically, advertising has imposed unrealistic physical ideals, particularly on women. Despite this, the assessment of characters' body types has not been a common focus in prior research. In the United States, media imagery consistently depicts women as thin and men as muscular, setting unattainable body standards (Neuendorf, 2017). Recent literature highlighted a growing

trend in subjecting men to unrealistic beauty ideals, exemplified by commercials portraying male characters with disproportionately muscular physiques (Grau & Zotos, 2016; Viljoen, 2008). Furthermore, this variable may reveal potential cultural nuances, as physical ideals vary globally.

Reflection: The character's body type was evaluated through a visual guide adapted from a psychological study on body evaluation conducted by Voges et al. (2019). This guide categorised both men and women into five broad classifications: thin, average-weight, overweight, athletic, and hyper-muscular. Notably, "hyper-muscular" was excluded, as it did not align directly with the study's objectives. The application of this guide to characters in television commercials facilitated a straightforward yet meaningful classification, ensuring consistency in the code's application. The visual guide is included in the codebook, which can be found in Appendix D.

2.3 Attire

Definition: A descriptive code capturing the character's attire.

Operational definitions: Non-revealing, Revealing, Naked

Origin: This code was inductive.

Importance: This coding category aimed to measure whether a character is portrayed in a sexualised or objectified manner. While a central theme in the discussion on gender portrayals in advertising, this was not typically captured in previous studies (Holtz-Bacha, 2011). Advertising characters might be depicted in revealing attire or even naked, reinforcing the perception that they are objects of desire or sexually available. Recent decades witnessed a rise in the sexualisation of male characters in advertising as well, selling products by presenting carefully sculpted male bodies (Sheehan, 2004; Viljoen, 2008).

Reflection: While attire is just one aspect of sexualised advertising portrayals, this category offers a practical way to collect data on a challenging-to-operationalise topic. Focusing on clothing choices, a very conscious decision in any advertising production, provides a functional and meaningful approach to assessing the presence of sexualisation, while minimising subjectivity, in the coding process.

RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours

Ashmore's (1990) third gender domain comprised more abstract gender markers, exploring *symbolic and stylistic behaviours*. In this research, two categories fall into this domain. The first involved evaluating whether the character was portrayed as passive or active ("Passive vs. Active Behaviour"). The second variable captured the spectrum of symbolic behaviours demonstrated by advertising characters, termed, "Symbolic Behaviours".

3.1 Passive vs Active Behaviour

Definition: A descriptive category indicating whether the central character is portrayed displaying passive or active behaviour.

Operational definitions: Conversation or Speaking, No Speaking, Smiling or Laughing, Speaking and Smiling

Origin: An inductive code from the qualitative data.

Importance: While previous studies often captured the mode of presentation, distinguishing between visual or non-visual portrayals (Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Lay, 2019), this category offered a nuanced exploration of how characters were represented. Specifically, it aimed to measure the degree of passive or active behaviour exhibited by the central character in the advertisement. This involved assessing whether the

character is portrayed as silent, perhaps only smiling, or actively engaging in conversation and speaking confidently to the camera.

By evaluating whether characters assumed speaking roles or were presented solely with smiles, the analysis aimed to uncover how gender was depicted in terms of authority or decoration in advertising. If male characters were consistently portrayed as serious, contrasting with female characters depicted as approachable and friendly, it might reinforce societal expectations that men should be in control, while women were expected to be pleasant and accommodating.

Example: "[…] After lifting him over her shoulder and checking his temperature, she administers the product, and they share a smile. The boy grabs a cookie, playfully placing it on his cheek, and she responds with a playful smile. The scene concludes with her holding him with a cookie in her mouth, and the little boy seems amused. […]"

Brand and Country: Calpol, South Africa

Category: Smiling or Laughing

3.2 Symbolic Behaviours

Definition: An interpretive code describing the symbolic behaviours exhibited by the advertising character.

Operational definitions: Looking at Self in Mirror, Touching Something or Self, Touching and Looking at Self in Mirror, Smelling Something or Someone, None

Origin: This code was inductive and a recurring theme in the qualitative data.

Importance: This coding category further enabled the measurement of character sexualisation by examining whether the advertising character displayed any sexual cues. Behaviours like touching oneself, looking in a mirror, or smelling

something, suggest that the character is portrayed as a sexual object or the subject of another's gaze. These nonverbal cues, typically associated with female characters, convey notions of sensuality, sexuality, and social subordination, positioning the character as an object within the advertisement.

Reflection: This code emerged as a recurring theme in the qualitative data. The variable "symbolic behaviours" is reminiscent of Goffman's (1965, p. 29f.) concept of "The Feminine Touch" originally observed in print magazines. While these behaviours may not be typical or natural outside the advertising context, they are commonly featured in the fictional universe of advertising.

Example: A graceful older white woman with a ponytail of grey hair and wrinkles smiles at herself in the mirror, touches her skin and marvels at herself. […] Back at home, she opens the product, inhales its fragrance, and gently applies it to her cheek. […]

Brand and Country: "NIVEA Vital Strahlender Teint", Germany

Category: Touching and Looking at Self in Mirror

RQ4: Interests

Ashmore's (1990) fourth gender identity dimension originally included both interests and abilities of individuals. However, this research specifically focused on interests as a relevant variable within this gender domain. Firstly, the qualitative data did not reveal any relevant themes explaining characters' abilities. Secondly, measuring the abilities of advertising characters would have presented challenges due to the necessity of making numerous assumptions. By exploring the implied interests of advertising characters, this study aimed to provide nuanced insights into how advertisers constructed the motivations, aspirations, and desires of these characters.

4.1 Interest or Product Promise

Definition: This interpretive code captures the character's implied interest through the product promise.

Operational definitions: Be Healthy, Look or Smell Good, Make a Home, Cleaning or Hygiene, Protection or Safety, Relationships, Rest, Save Money, Other

Origin: This code was inductive and a prominent theme in the qualitative data.

Importance: Surprisingly absent in the literature, this variable addressed a critical aspect of advertising, where products were usually sold alongside intangible concepts, such as status, power, love, beauty, and more. While previous research overlooked these important aspirational aspects of advertising, this variable aimed to reveal the underlying desires of characters. Normative gender behaviours might be communicated by advertising if male characters were depicted as interested in practical matters, like saving money or safety, while female characters were portrayed as desiring beauty, homemaking, and relationships.

Reflection: The tagline can serve as a valuable initial indicator of the product promise, as it summarises the overall message of the commercial. Aspiration plays an important part in the construction of idealised gender models, as highlighted by Gqola (2016).

Example: We see a hand on a laptop in a living room. A young, overweight black man sits on the sofa, reading a tagline on his laptop out loud: "Cheap car insurance!" Beside him, a plush hippo taps him on the shoulder and grunts disapprovingly. The man, dressed in casual clothes with short hair, defends himself while pointing at his laptop: "What? It'll be quick and easy. […]"

Brand and Country: "hippo", South Africa

Category: Save Money

RQ5: Social Relationships

Ashmore's (1990) fifth and final domain of gender identity centred on individuals' social relationships. In the context of this research, relationships were analysed by examining the advertising character's *company* and their *relationship status*.

5.1 Company

Definition:	A descriptive code that outlines the central character's company.
Operational definitions:	One or several children, Partner, Children and Partner or Family, Friends, Pet, Other, None
Origin:	This code was inductive and a recurring theme in the qualitative data.
Importance:	Despite its clarity, this variable was notably absent in the existing literature. It offered a concise way to reveal the social context of the advertising character. Whether the character was portrayed alone, with dependents, or in the company of pets or friends provided valuable insights into their relationships, which might be mediated by gender. Female characters in advertising might be depicted with children, reinforcing the perception of women as primary caregivers. They might also be shown with romantic partners or their entire family, suggesting a focus on maintaining relationships. Conversely, male characters might be seen surrounded by friends or alone, implying an interest in relationships outside the home or independence.
Reflection:	While previous studies touched on elements like the character's "background" (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002), this variable introduced a unique dimension by explicitly focusing on social relationships. Additionally, it might reveal cultural differences; for instance, in South Africa, the importance of

family and community might impact the social context in which advertising characters were portrayed.

Example: "We are introduced to a beautiful young white woman with blonde hair, seated in a café, using a spoon as a makeshift mirror to apply her mascara. In the next scene, she is joined by another woman, and the two joyfully run through the city streets. Two other women make an appearance, with one of them using her friend's sunglasses as a mirror to apply mascara in the middle of the street. All the women are stylishly dressed and effortlessly slender. […]"

Brand and Country: "M.Asam Magic Finish Volume Mascara", Germany

Category: Friends

5.2 Relationship Status

Definition: A descriptive code capturing the character's relationship status as indicated by a wedding band.

Operational definitions: Married, Not Married, Unclear

Origin: This code was inductive and emerged as a meaningful theme from the qualitative data.

Importance: Despite its potential explanatory power, this category was largely overlooked in previous research. It served as a simple yet meaningful variable that revealed latent meanings. For example, male characters in commercials might be portrayed as single and independent, while female characters might frequently appear in committed relationships. Age could also influence portrayals, with younger women potentially depicted without wedding bands to suggest sexual availability (Furnham & Lay, 2019). Additionally, this

variable has the potential to offer insights into the cultural importance of marriage in different countries.

Reflection: Gilly's (1988) analysis included a similar category named "marital status", but it appeared less meaningful in her study, as the majority of characters lacked any indication of marital status.

RQ6: Mediating Identity Categories

While the original gender identity framework proposed by Ashmore (1990) did not explicitly include the concept of mediating identity categories, this research recognised the importance of intersecting identity factors in the co-construction of gender, aligning with the social constructionist perspective of this research (Frable, 1997; Morrell et al., 2013; Ratele, 2016). In this study, *race* was identified as a particularly meaningful mediating social category, evident in both the qualitative data and the literature (Cassim & Monteiro, 2001; Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Luyt, 2011; 2012).

6.1 Race

Definition: A descriptive code capturing the character's race.

Operational definitions: Black, Asian, White, Other

Origin: This code was deductive and adapted from previous studies, including Furnham and Spencer-Bowdage (2002) and Luyt (2011).

Importance: In multicultural societies, like those studied, with diverse ethnic and racial groups, it is crucial to document the central character's race. Not recording race may imply that "white" is assumed as the implicit standard (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000). Additionally, documenting race enables the assessment of portrayals across racial groups.

The over-representation or under-representation of a specific race may indicate the societal standing of that group. For instance, an over-representation of white characters in South African ads may suggest the perception of the White minority group as disproportionately important. Similarly, an over-representation of the white majority group in German commercials may neglect the diversity of the German population and project a fictional homogenous society. Conversely, an over-representation of black characters in German ads may suggest the commodification of black bodies for product promotion.

Reflection: Grounded in a social-constructionist perspective, race is viewed as a social construct rather than a defining characteristic of an individual (Luyt, 2012). While acknowledging that capturing the complex topic of race in a simplified form might introduce some inaccuracies, the use of this category was justified by the "social and analytical weight" (Morrell, 2001a, p. xi) it carried. The character's race was assessed based on physical characteristics, such as skin colour and dress, as well as the character's name.

The final codebook, available in Appendix D, discusses the technical aspects of coding, outlining succinct definitions and operational instructions for each variable. It also details inclusion and exclusion criteria, offering clarity on conditions that warrant the code and exceptions that do not (Neuendorf, 2017). The detailed codebook plays a crucial role in ensuring intercoder reliability and maintaining consistency throughout the quantitative content analysis process (Krippendorff, 2004).

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the qualitative thematic analysis process, including the interim phase of instrument development, the validation of findings, and the subsequent compilation of variables into a codebook. The variables were either informed by the literature

or developed based on insights from qualitative findings. The categorisation into Ashmore's (1990) gender domains served a dual purpose: validating that each variable effectively measured gender constructions, and ensuring the capturing of various aspects of individual gender expressions. Consistent with contemporary research practices in the field, the variables assessed both manifest and latent content (Neuendorf, 2011; Riffe et al., 2019). The quantitative instrument included variables examining demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and race. The portrayal of work in the advertising context was examined through two distinct lenses: one by capturing the character's role as "worker", and the other variable, "occupation", measured the socioeconomic status associated with the character's job, offering potential insights into their social class.

Additionally, the quantitative codebook comprised variables that evaluate physical attributes, along with coding categories that analysed how characters interact with their broader social context, including the roles they occupied, the setting they were depicted in, and their relationships. Another integral aspect of advertising involves the desire and aspirations that advertisers inscribe on advertising characters, a dimension captured by the variable "interest". Furthermore, in the gender domain of symbolic and stylistic behaviours, two variables revealed advertising-specific behaviours. While these might not reflect typical behaviours in everyday life, they provided intriguing insights into gender constructions in commercials. The variable "symbolic behaviours" explores nonverbal cues that convey notions of sensuality and social subordination, while "passive vs active behaviour" analysed the portrayal's connotation, determining whether the character exuded confidence or submissiveness. The next chapter details the results of the systematic application of these contextually driven variables to a substantial sample of television commercials during the quantitative content analysis.

CHAPTER 9: GENDER PORTRAYALS IN SOUTH AFRICA AND GERMANY: QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

This chapter describes the second phase of the research, the quantitative cross-cultural content analysis. Here, the set of newly developed variables detailed in the previous chapter, was applied to a large sample of South African and German television commercials. The objective was to assess and compare gender portrayals between the two countries. The introduction of the new codebook allowed for meaningful and context-specific insights into gender portrayals within each country. Through quantitative analysis, this phase of the research aimed to identify prevailing constructions of gender and the different norms and values related to gender conveyed in the commercials.

After coding was complete, the data were subjected to relevant statistical tests, including frequency counts and chi-square tests of independence to explore potential relationships between gender and the variables in the codebook. The chapter begins with an overview of statistical assumptions, detailing how equality was measured and the performed data transformations. Additionally, evaluative measures are discussed, including the reliability and validity of the quantitative research. Finally, the chapter presents the results of the quantitative content analysis, systematically organised by variables and broadly categorised into male and female portrayals across the two countries. The discussion also brings attention to portrayals that remained invisible in television advertising. A concise summary of key points concludes the chapter.

9.1 Content Analysis: Statistical Assumptions and Evaluation

This section provides an overview of the quantitative coding process, data transformations, and statistical tests employed in the analysis of the quantitative data. Additionally, it includes information on the reliability and validity of the content analysis. Following this, the second section of the chapter presents the quantitative results from the chi-square tests.

9.1.1 Quantitative Coding

While thematic analysis allows for the flexible identification of themes in the data, quantitative content analysis demands strict adherence to a predefined codebook. In this quantitative content analysis, the newly developed codebook was applied to 247 characters from South African commercials and 399 characters from German commercials. The coding process involved assigning codes to advertising characters based on the guidelines outlined in the codebook. These codes were applied to coding units, specifically the central characters in the advertisements, as defined previously (see Section 7.5.3, "Unitising"). The definition is repeated here as an aid to memory: […] adult characters with on-camera appearances of at least three seconds or at least one line of dialogue. If there were only two adults present, both were always coded. If there were more than two adults featured in the commercial, those appearing most prominent were chosen. When it was not clear which two figures were the most central, one central character of each gender was picked.

Each variable was coded for every character, except for "occupational status", which was only considered if the character was coded as a "worker" for their role. General advertising attributes coded for were channel, date, day part, week part, country, and brand name. These were, however, not central to the analysis and, therefore, not included in the results. The researcher acted as the sole coder in this study. Being of German origin but having lived in South Africa for several years, the researcher is knowledgeable of both interpretative contexts. For additional language requirements, Thabiso Junior Ntuli was consulted. All codes were directly input into SPSS 26. The data level was nominal, where each assigned value had no numerical meaning (Riffe et al., 2019).

Typically, quantitative content analysis is employed to reveal gender inequalities by comparing the independent variable of gender with several dependent variables (Rudy et al., 2011). An essential conceptual consideration in data analysis is defining a benchmark that signifies unbiased representation. Many studies, implicitly or explicitly, used equality as a reference point (Eisend, 2010). In this context, equality referred to the balanced representation of

genders across different variables (Eisend, 2019), and deviations indicated disparities in gender portrayals (Knoll et al., 2011). This approach offered a relative measure of gender representation, assessing "how much more" (Knoll et al., 2011, p. 871) one gender was associated with a certain behaviour or physical attribute than the other. This is common practice in the literature and logically sound—to compare variables against a baseline of gender equality, particularly when not all variables have corresponding population statistics (Eisend, 2019).

Additionally, where factual data was available, sample distributions were compared with actual population demographics in the two countries. Detailed findings for this comparative analysis are discussed in the next chapter. Census data, specifically for the variables *gender*, *age*, *marital status*, and *race*, served as a meaningful benchmark for evaluating disparities between advertising portrayals and real-world demographics (Wee et al., 1995). In this context it is important to note that the expectation was not for advertising to objectively “mirror” reality, given its fictional nature and creative storytelling elements (Grossberg et al., 2006). Nonetheless, this approach allowed for an in-depth understanding of how fictional gender constructions in advertising might differ from material realities of gender in the respective countries.

9.1.2 Data Transformations and Statistical Tests

After the completion of the quantitative coding, the nominal data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 26, a software package used for the analysis of statistical data. Prior to the data analysis, a thorough review of variable distributions was conducted, and necessary data transformations were performed (Neuendorf, 2011). Operational definitions for some variables were combined in SPSS to meet the requirement for chi-square tests, ensuring that no more than 20% of cells had expected frequencies of 5 or less (Pallant, 2010). For the variable “product type”, the category “electronics and cars” had low counts in the South African sample and was thus merged with the “other” category. Additionally, to ensure comparability,

categories exclusively coded in the German sample, namely “entertainment and travel” and “property”, were recoded as “other”. For the “activity” variable, categories with low counts, such as “home improvement” in the South African sample, were merged with the “other” category. Similarly, the “working out” category, with expected counts below 5 in the South African sample, was included in the “self-care” category.

The “attire” variable, initially differentiating between revealing and naked, was modified to consolidate both values under “revealing” due to low counts in both countries. Similarly, the detailed breakdown of symbolic behaviours was simplified into the categories “no symbolic behaviour” and “symbolic behaviour” due to low counts in both country samples. For the “interest” variable, the category “rest” was applied to the whole sample only twice, resulting in its merging with the “other” category. Additionally, the South African sample did not include any instances of “pets” when coding for the character's “company”. While this indicated an interesting cultural difference, for the sake of data comparability, “pet” was recoded to “other”. The table below provides a comprehensive overview of all performed data transformations:

Table 9: Categories After Data Transformations

Gender Domain	Variable	Values	Amendments
RQ0: Advertising Attributes	Product Type	Beauty, Personal Care and Fashion Food Health Home and Household Insurance and Taxes Other	‘Electronics and Cars’, ‘Entertainment’, ‘Property’ recoded into ‘Other’
	Gender	Male Female	N/A
RQ1: Roles, Activities and Settings	Role	Homemaker Parent or Grandparent Product Expert Spouse or Partner Worker At Leisure	‘Other’ excluded from analysis
	Occupation	Professional/High-Level Business Exec White-collar Blue-collar Unable to determine occupation	N/A

	Activity	Cleaning Cooking or Preparing Food Parenting Self-Care Other Leisure Activity Other	‘Home Improvement’ recoded into ‘Other’. ‘Working Out’ recoded into ‘Self-Care’.
	Setting	Kitchen Somewhere Else in the Home Occupational Outside Undefined or Other	N/A
RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes	Age	Young (under 30) Middle-Aged (31-60) Old (60+)	N/A
	Body Type	Underweight Average Overweight Athletic	N/A
	Attire	Non-revealing Revealing	‘Naked’ recoded into ‘Revealing’.
RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours	Passive vs. Active Behaviour	Conversation or Speaking No Speaking Smiling or Laughing Speaking and Smiling	N/A
	Symbolic Behaviours	Symbolic Behaviour No Symbolic Behaviour	‘Looking at Self in Mirror’, ‘Touching Something or Self’, ‘Touching while Looking at Self in Mirror’, ‘Smelling Something or Someone’ recoded into ‘Symbolic Behaviour’
RQ4: Interests	Interest or Product Promise	Be Healthy Look or Smell Good Make a Home Cleaning or Hygiene Protection or Safety Relationships Save Money Other	‘Rest’ recoded into ‘Other’.
RQ5: Social Relationships	Company	One or several children Partner Children and Partner or Family Friends Other None	‘Pet’ recoded into ‘Other’.
	Relationship Status	Married Not Married Unclear	N/A
RQ6: Mediating Identity Categories	Race	Black White Other	‘Asian’ recoded into ‘Other’.

After completing data transformations, inferential statistics were carried out to test the study's hypotheses. To examine systematic differences in gender portrayals across countries, a total of 15 chi-square analyses were performed on contingency tables that cross-tabulated gender with diverse variables, including *product type*, *role*, *occupation*, *activity*, *setting*, *age*, *body type*, *attire*, *passive vs. active behaviour*, *symbolic behaviours*, *interest or product promise*, *company*, *relationship status*, and *race*. The analysis tested the association between two or more categorical variables, where systematic differences in the depiction of male and female characters were indicated by significant chi-square values. Chi-square tests, used with equality as a baseline for analysis, are commonly employed in cross-cultural advertising research (Furnham et al., 2000; Furnham & Farragher, 2000; Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Gilly, 1988; Lim & Furnham, 2016; Matthes et al., 2016; Paek et al., 2010; Tan et al., 2002; Wee et al., 1995).

9.1.3 Reliability and Validity

To determine the quality of the quantitative content analysis, it was crucial to consider reliability and validity as key indicators. Reliability, defined as "the extent to which a measuring procedure yields the same results on repeated trials" (Neuendorf, 2017, p. 18), is of central importance for content analyses. Without adequate levels of reliability, content analytical assessments are meaningless (Neuendorf, 2017). In this study, the development of a new quantitative instrument underscored the importance of establishing the reliability of the measurement tool (Riffe et al., 2019). Krippendorff highlighted that "replicability is the most important form of reliability" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 18), emphasising the need for measurements to be consistent across coders, locations, and times. According to Riffe et al. (2019), establishing reliability consists of three parts: defining relevant variables and categories, training coders on their application to content, and conducting reliability tests.

As an integral part of ensuring reliability, coding procedures and definitions need to be clearly and unambiguously articulated in a comprehensive codebook (Neuendorf, 2017). Following

the recommendations of Riffe et al. (2019), the codebook for this study incorporates three main sections to facilitate replication by other researchers. The first section introduces major concepts and goals of the study. The second section outlines how the content was processed, specifying which advertising characters to include and exclude in the analysis. The third section discusses every variable used in the content analysis, along with operational definitions, and the numerical values assigned to the categories. The codebook is accompanied by a coding sheet that can be used to record the characteristics of each coded unit in the study (Riffe et al., 2019). These documents are available in Appendix D: Codebook and Appendix E: Coding Form.

Due to constraints inherent in doctoral studies, the principal investigator also acted as the sole coder, therefore, no formal coder training was conducted. However, this also introduced potential bias to the study that could compromise reliability and validity, as the investigator was aware of the purpose of the study (Neuendorf, 2017). If multiple coders were involved, subjectivity might have been less of a concern (Riffe et al., 2019). To ensure the integrity of the study, reliability tests were employed to assess the extent to which the codebook could reliably be re-applied (Neuendorf, 2011). The reproducibility of the quantitative content analysis was assessed by evaluating inter-coder agreement to determine if measuring procedures would produce consistent results on repeated occasions (Riffe et al., 2019).

Given that this study involved only one coder, a subsample of the data was selected and coded again at a different time, allowing for the comparison of results (Ahlstrand, 2007). Typically, 10-20% of the full sample is chosen for a reliability subsample (Neuendorf, 2017). For this study, a subsample comprising the first 10% of advertisements in both the South African and German samples was selected. These reliability subsamples were coded again after 2 months, and the coding results were compared (Ahlstrand, 2007). To mitigate the fact that only the researcher coded the data, a more stringent measure than percentage agreement, commonly used in content analyses of gender portrayals (Luyt, 2011), was employed. The study calculated Kappa Measure of Agreement, or Cohen's Kappa, to test the agreement between

the two sets of measures (Riffe et al., 2019). The table below presents Cohen's Kappa for each individual variable:

Table 10: Measure of Inter-coder Agreement (Cohen's Kappa)

	Variable	Cohen's Kappa (*n*=65)
RQ0: Advertising Attributes	Product Type	.90
	Gender	.90
RQ1: Roles, Activities and Settings	Role	.70
	Occupation	.56
	Activity	.54
	Setting	.74
RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes	Age	.82
	Body Type	.60
	Attire	.82
RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours	Passive vs. Active	.58
	Symbolic Behaviours	.54
RQ4: Interests	Interest	.75
RQ5: Social Relationships	Company	.71
	Relationship Status	.50
RQ6: Mediating Identity Categories	Race	.90

Inter-coder reliability is considered moderate above .5, good above .7 and very good above .8 (Pallant, 2010, p. 226). Across all variables, the total reliability scores in this study ranged between κ=.9 and κ=.5, indicating an overall level of reliability from acceptable to very high. Notably, variables, such as relationship status (κ=.50), symbolic behaviours (κ=.54), and activity (κ=.54), exhibited lower levels of agreement. This could be attributed to the fact that these variables measure more latent content and required a greater degree of interpretation. On the contrary, variables measuring manifest content, such as product type (κ=.90), gender (κ=.90), and race (κ=.90), demonstrated higher inter-coder agreement, suggesting less ambiguity in their assessment.

Validity, like reliability, is a critical concept in evaluating the quality of research. Validity describes the extent to which the measuring procedure effectively captures the content intended for measurement. Neuendorf (2017, p. 19) describes validity as addressing whether we are "really measuring what we want to measure". While reliability is a necessary condition

for validity, it alone is not sufficient in establishing validity (Neuendorf, 2011). Validity is broadly distinguished into internal and external validity (Neuendorf, 2017; Riffe et al., 2019). Internal validity focuses on the design and data collection process, determining their effectiveness in facilitating valid inferences (Riffe et al., 2019). It examines the definition and operationalisation of variables, querying whether they are measuring the intended concept (Krippendorff, 2004; Neuendorf, 2017). Conversely, external validity, also known as generalisability, explores the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts, time periods, and similar situations. It describes the broader relevance of research findings in understanding complex dynamics in the real-world (Riffe et al., 2019).

To strengthen the internal validity of this research, a mixed methods approach was adopted, combining content analysis with thematic analysis. Additionally, face validity, a widely used test in content analysis, was employed to ensure the meaningfulness of the chosen measures for concepts (Riffe et al., 2019). Measurement validity was rigorously established in the previous chapter, where each variable was defined, reflected upon and explained in terms of its significance for the study. The development of the instrument itself adhered to a relevant gender framework to ensure its congruence with the intended measurements. Lastly, both qualitative findings and the quantitative instrument underwent cross-referencing with colleagues and were presented at peer-reviewed conferences. This suggests that the research tool effectively measures its intended constructs, guaranteeing internal validity.

For external validity, content analysis is a robust research approach (Riffe et al., 2019). Evaluating generalisability involves examining the sample's representativeness and whether it is a random sample from a defined population (Neuendorf, 2017). The quantitative sample was a stratified probability sample and included sufficient cases to constitute an appropriate sample. Additionally, the peer-review process enhanced external validity. Further strengthening of both internal and external validity could occur through replication of the study, as Neuendorf (2017) suggests that full validation ideally takes place across a series of studies.

9.2 Results: Gender Portrayals in South African and German Television Commercials

This chapter presents the quantitative findings of the study. The quantitative findings result from chi-square crosstabulations of *gender* x *variable* for both South Africa and Germany. Subsequent sections explore variables that were significant in either or both countries. These findings are grouped into distinct archetypes aimed at capturing essential characteristics of portrayals. Male characters were depicted as practical providers, embracing the average, expressive and approachable, and free from responsibilities. On the contrary, female characters were portrayed dealing with the mental load, focusing on their physical appearance, being sensual objects, and juggling expectations. The results of the quantitative content analysis are organised around these archetypes, with indications of the variables included in each archetype:

Men and Masculinities

- Practical Providers — Results for *product type*, *setting*, and *interest*
- Embracing the Average — Results for *age* and *body type*
- Expressive and Approachable — Results for *symbolic behaviours* and *passive vs active*
- Free from Responsibilities — Results for *company* and *relationship status*

Women and Femininities

- The Mental Load — Results for *product type* and *setting*
- Looks, Looks, Looks — Results for *age*, *body type*, *attire*, and *interest*
- Sensual Objects — Results for *symbolic behaviours* and *passive vs active*
- Juggling Expectations — Results for *company* and *relationship status*

Appendix F includes a brief summary of the findings for each variable, specifying whether the results were significant or non-significant. The following appendix, Appendix G, presents

detailed tables with all chi-square results, offering a comprehensive overview of the study's outcomes. It is important to note that the variables, *role*, *occupation*, *activity*, and *race,* did not show significant results for any of the samples and, thus, were not included in the following section. Detailed results for these variables can be found in Appendix G. Furthermore, the variable, *race,* is discussed in more detail in the subsequent chapter, where certain variables are recontextualised with census data.

9.2.1 Male Portrayals

The archetypical male character in South African television commercials primarily promoted food products (*product type*), fell into the middle-aged category (*age*), possessed an average body type (*body type*), and was unmarried (*relationship status*). The typical male character in German advertisements was linked to food products (*product type*), often portrayed outdoors (*setting*), fell within the middle-age range (*age*), maintained an average weight (*body type*), and was depicted smiling or laughing (*passive vs active behaviour*). Unlike their South African counterparts, German male characters were objectified (*symbolic behaviour*), expressed an interest in staying healthy (*interest*), and were commonly seen in the company of individuals categorised as "other" (*company*).

9.2.1.1 Practical Providers

Portrayals of male characters as practical providers were indicated by the variables *product type*, *setting*, and *interest*. The statistical results revealed a statistically significant relationship between product type and gender in both South African television commercials, $\chi 2$ (5, n=247)=16.3, p<.01, and in German television commercials, $\chi 2$ (5, n=399)=27.45, p<.001. In South African commercials, male characters were most likely to advertise food (40.2%), while, in German advertisements, male characters were most likely to advertise "other" products, followed by food products. Surprisingly, in South African advertising, more male characters than female characters were seen advertising food. This could be due to the fact that, in South African advertising, men were presented as 'family providers'.

Table 11: Gender x Product Type

RQ:0 Advertising Attributes	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%		%
Product Type								
Beauty, Personal Care and Fashion	8	7.1	33	24.4	16	8.7	55	25.6
Food	45	40.2	41	30.4	45	24.5	46	21.4
Health	15	13.4	19	14.1	24	13.0	39	18.1
Home and Household	12	10.7	17	12.6	31	16.8	20	9.3
Insurance and Taxes	24	21.4	21	15.6	7	3.8	3	1.4
Other	8	7.1	4	3.0	61	33.2	52	24.2
			$\chi 2$ = 16.3**				$\chi 2$ = 27.45***	

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Interestingly, in German commercials, more male than female characters were associated with home and household products while, in South Africa, it was ‘more traditionally’ the other way around. The higher number of male characters advertising home or household products in Germany might be attributed to the inclusion of gardening or home improvement products in this category, which are typically male-dominated domains in Germany. In both countries, male characters were more frequently associated with non-domestic products, like insurance and taxes, suggesting societal expectations for men to assume financial responsibility. Cultural differences emerged, with South African male characters mostly associated with food and insurance and tax products, while German male characters were more likely to advertise home and household, as well as "other" products compared to their South African counterparts.

German male characters being associated with traditionally considered female-dominated home and household products might be an indicator for Meuser’s (2010) observation of a shift in perceptions of domestic roles among younger generations in Germany. Additionally, South African male characters being predominantly associated with food and insurance and taxes resonated strongly with Luyt’s (2012, p. 42) “responsibility” norm. This also aligned with South

African hegemonic stereotypes of men being represented as providers, illustrated by other authors (Shefer et al., 2007).

The statistical analysis revealed no significant association between setting and gender in South African television commercials, $\chi 2$ (4, n=247)=6.39, *ns,* suggesting that gender did not affect the setting in which the central character was depicted. Conversely, in German television commercials, a significant association between setting and gender was observed, $\chi 2$ (4, n=399)=12.97, p<.01. This suggested that, in German advertising, male characters were predominantly portrayed outside, and had a marginally higher likelihood of being depicted in occupational settings compared to their female counterparts. While the results for the character's setting in South African advertisements were not significant, the distribution indicated a similar pattern, with male characters most frequently featured outside. This might underscore traditional expectations, where men were associated with the socially valued public sphere.

Table 12: Gender x Setting

	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
RQ1: Roles, Activities and Settings	**Male (n=112)**		**Female (n=135)**		**Male (n=184)**		**Female (n=215)**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Setting								
Kitchen	5	4.5	10	7.4	6	3.3	8	3.7
Somewhere Else in the Home	28	25.0	49	36.3	56	30.4	102	47.4
Occupational	20	17.9	17	12.6	19	10.3	17	7.9
Outside	49	43.8	45	33.3	91	49.5	80	37.2
Undefined or Other	10	8.9	14	10.4	12	6.5	8	3.7
	n.s.				$\chi 2$ = 12.97**			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

The results showed no significant association between gender and interests in South African television commercials, $\chi 2$ (7, n=247)=9.8, *ns*. In contrast, German television commercials exhibited a significant association between gender and interests, $\chi 2$ (7, n=399)=19.03, p<.01.

This suggested that male characters in German commercials were most interested in “other” topics, followed by “being healthy” and “relationships”. Although the South African sample did not produce statistically significant results, the distribution of “interest” indicated that male characters in South African commercials were predominantly interested in "other", followed by “saving money”.

Table 13: Gender x Interests

RQ4: Interests	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Interest								
Be Healthy	11	9.8	17	12.6	23	12.5	37	17.2
Look or Smell Good	5	4.5	15	11.1	11	6.0	39	18.1
Make a Home	1	0.9	5	3.7	10	5.4	10	4.7
Cleaning or Hygiene	6	5.4	10	7.4	16	8.7	14	6.5
Protection or Safety	10	8.9	16	11.9	5	2.7	9	4.2
Relationships	9	8.0	9	6.7	21	11.4	22	10.2
Save Money	21	18.8	17	12.6	12	6.5	10	4.7
Other	49	43.8	46	34.1	86	46.7	74	34.4
	n.s.				$\chi 2 = 19.03$**			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Male characters in German ads demonstrated interest in being healthy and relationships, with the latter appearing slightly more important to male characters than to their female counterparts. This highlighted an interesting portrayal of male German characters, depicting interests that might not conform to conventional expectations associated with masculinity. Meanwhile, South African ads, despite lacking statistical significance, seemed to portray male characters with a more classic emphasis on financial responsibilities.

9.2.1.2 Embracing the Average

The variables that contribute to male characters being portrayed as embracing the average included *age* and *body type*—attributes associated with physical and material characteristics.

The statistical results revealed a significant association between gender and age in both South African television commercials, $\chi 2$ (2, n=247)=6.97, p<.05, and German advertisements, $\chi 2$ (2, n=399)=14.92, p<.001. In South African ads, gender distributions across age groups were generally similar, except for old age, where only one male character was featured compared to several female characters. This unexpected finding in the South African data challenged a common assumption where older women, not men, are typically the ones often overlooked in advertising. The most common age group for both genders in South Africa was middle-aged. Similarly, in German commercials, male characters were most commonly portrayed as middle-aged, with a slightly higher representation of older male characters compared to the South African sample. This firmly situated male characters in both countries in the middle-aged demographic.

Table 14: Gender x Physical and Material Attributes

	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes	**Male (n=112)**		**Female (n=135)**		**Male (n=184)**		**Female (n=215)**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Age								
Young (<30)	37	33.0	41	30.4	61	33.2	109	50.7
Middle-Aged (31-60)	74	66.1	83	61.5	100	54.3	77	35.8
Old (>60)	1	0.9	11	8.1	23	12.5	29	13.5
	$\chi 2$ = 6.97*				$\chi 2$ = 14.92***			
Body Type								
Underweight	22	19.6	55	40.7	26	14.1	152	70.7
Average Weight	52	46.4	44	32.6	116	63.0	43	20.0
Overweight	27	24.1	35	25.9	21	11.4	16	7.4
Athletic	11	9.8	1	0.7	21	11.4	4	1.9
	$\chi 2$ = 22.23***				$\chi 2$ = 133.34***			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

The results demonstrated a significant and strong association between gender and body type in both South Africa, $\chi 2$ (3, n=247)=22.23, p<.001, and Germany, $\chi 2$ (3, n=399)=133.34,

p<.001. This suggested that, in South African television commercials, male characters were marginally more likely to be of average weight and were more likely to be athletic compared to their female counterparts. Similarly, in German advertisements, male central characters were more likely to have an average weight and athletic physique compared to their female counterparts. Additionally, German male characters were slightly more likely to be portrayed as athletic compared to their South African counterparts. This observation in German television commercials aligns with Viljoen's (2008) description of a Western masculine aesthetic, which emphasises a male physique inspired by classical Greek ideals. Conversely, South African male characters were more likely to be overweight than their German counterparts. "Average weight" emerged as the predominant body type among male characters in both countries, with a higher prevalence in Germany (63%) than in South Africa (46%). This suggested that male characters in both countries were portrayed with a more realistic body image, free from the pressure to conform to particularly underweight or athletic standards.

9.2.1.3 Expressive and Approachable

Male characters as expressive and approachable were observed through variables related to symbolic and stylistic behaviours, specifically "symbolic behaviours" and "passive vs active behaviour". The variable "passive vs active behaviour" produced significant results in the German sample, $\chi 2$ (3, n=247)=3.03, *ns*, while no association was found in the South African sample, $\chi 2$ (3, n=399)=11.80, p<.01. In German advertisements, both genders had relatively similar distributions, with male characters more likely than their female counterparts to engage in conversations without smiling. However, in German commercials, male characters were by far most likely to be depicted as smiling or laughing without a speaking part. These findings from German commercials were an interesting departure from expected portrayals where male characters were typically depicted as serious or authoritative. In contrast, although not statistically significant, South African male characters were predominantly shown speaking or conversing without the necessity to smile, especially in comparison to their female

counterparts. This aligned with common findings in advertising research where male characters often assumed roles as dominant figures and expert voice-overs.

Table 15: Gender x Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours

RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Passive Vs. Active								
Conversation or Speaking	43	38.4	40	29.6	49	26.6	29	13.5
No Speaking	15	13.4	16	11.9	15	8.2	16	7.4
Smiling or Laughing	24	21.4	39	28.9	79	42.9	106	49.3
Speaking and Smiling	30	26.8	40	29.6	41	22.3	64	29.8
			n.s.				$\chi 2$ = 11.80**	
Symbolic Behaviours								
Symbolic Behaviour[31]	11	9.8	18	13.3	28	15.2	58	27.0
No Symbolic Behaviour	101	90.2	117	86.7	156	84.8	157	73.0
			n.s.				$\chi 2$ = 8.11**	

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

In South African television commercials, $\chi 2$ (1, *n*=247)=.73, *ns*, the statistical results revealed no significant association between gender and symbolic behaviours. Conversely, in German advertisements, $\chi 2$ (1, *n*=247)=.73, *ns*, symbolic behaviours were significantly associated with gender. This indicated that some male central characters in German commercials engaged in behaviours like touching something or looking at themselves in the mirror, which could be categorised as sensual or self-centred. However, male characters in German advertising were still less likely to engage in symbolic behaviours compared to their female counterparts.

This highlighted that, in general, male characters were subjected to less objectification compared to their female counterparts, considering both passive or active, as well as symbolic

[31] Looking at Self in Mirror, Touching Something or Self, Touching while Looking at Self in Mirror, Smelling Something or Someone

behaviours. However, an intriguing observation could be made concerning the prevalence of smiling characters in German advertising compared to South African commercials. In the context of male characters, this suggested that German advertisers might be challenging traditional expectations by presenting men in a more emotionally expressive and approachable manner, departing from the conventionally serious depictions.

9.2.1.4 Free from Responsibilities

The portrayal of male characters as free from responsibilities was indicated by social relationships, particularly the variables *company* and *relationship status*. In South African television commercials, the statistical results revealed no significant association between gender and company, $\chi 2$ (5, n=247)=2.29, *ns*. This indicated that, in South African ads, there was no consistent pattern linking male characters to any specific type of company more than female characters. Conversely, the results for German advertisements demonstrated a significant association between gender and company, $\chi 2$ (5, n=399)=18.83, p<.01. This suggested that male central characters in German commercials were most frequently associated with "other" company, followed by "partner".

Table 16: Gender x Social Relationships

	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
RQ5: Social Relationships	**Male (n=112)**		**Female (n=135)**		**Male (n=184)**		**Female (n=215)**	
	n	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**	**n**	**%**
Company								
One or several children	12	10.7	19	14.1	6	3.3	13	6.0
Partner	6	5.4	5	3.7	35	19.0	43	20.0
Children and Partner or Family	19	17.0	29	21.5	21	11.4	23	10.7
Friends	12	10.7	14	10.4	31	16.8	34	15.8
Other	29	25.9	28	20.7	60	32.6	37	17.2
None	34	30.4	40	29.6	31	16.8	65	30.2
	n.s.				$\chi 2$ = 18.83**			

RQ5: Social Relationships	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Relationship Status								
Not Married	61	54.5	49	36.3	81	44.0	100	46.5
Married	33	29.5	49	36.3	31	16.8	52	24.2
Unclear	18	16.1	37	27.4	72	39.1	63	29.3
	$\chi 2 = 8.93$**				*n.s.*			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Although the South African sample did not produce significant results, the distribution suggested that male characters were predominantly associated with “none”, as in depicted alone, which, interestingly, was the most common category for both genders in South Africa. The prevalence of male characters in German commercials associated with the category "other" might indicate a tendency to portray male characters with less specific responsibilities, a trend also supported by the depictions of male characters as independent in South African advertisements.

The statistical results indicated a significant association between relationship status and gender in South African commercials, $\chi 2$ (2, n=247)=8.93, p<.01, implying that male characters were more likely than female characters to be shown as unmarried. In German television commercials, no significant association between relationship status and gender was found $\chi 2$ (2, n=399)=5.53, *ns*, indicating that the central character’s gender was not linked to their marital status. Interestingly, despite the lack of statistical significance in the German sample, the distribution indicated that both genders were predominantly depicted as unmarried. This contrasted with South African portrayals, where the majority of male characters were shown as unmarried, reinforcing the archetype of men being portrayed as free from certain responsibilities or not being in committed relationships, while there was a slight inclination toward depicting female characters as married.

9.2.2 Female Portrayals

The typical female character in South African advertising was portrayed promoting food products (*product type*), middle-aged (*age*), characterised as underweight (*body type*), and more likely to be depicted as married (*relationship status*). In German advertising, the typical female character was associated with beauty, personal care, and fashion items (*product type*), and presented in a domestic setting (*setting*). She was portrayed as young (*age*), underweight (*body type*), wore revealing clothing (*attire*), and was seen smiling and laughing (*passive vs active behaviour*). The typical female character in German commercials tended to display behaviour suggestive of sexual availability (*symbolic behaviour*), expressed an interest in looking or smelling good (*interest*), and was commonly portrayed alone (*company*).

9.2.2.1 The Mental Load

The analysis of how female characters were portrayed in relation to the “mental load” included the consideration of variables like *product type* and *setting*. The gender x product type association was significant in both the South African, $\chi 2$ (5, n=247)=16.3, p<.01, and German sample, $\chi 2$ (5, n=399)=27.45, p<.001, indicating that male and female characters in both countries tended to endorse different products. In South Africa, female characters were predominantly associated with food products, a noteworthy finding as it mirrored the most common product category for male characters in the country. In Germany, “beauty, personal care, and fashion” emerged as the leading product category for female characters, closely followed by "other". These portrayals align with previous research, reinforcing the common association of female characters with traditionally feminine products, including those related to the home/household or physical appearance.

Table 17: Gender x Product Type

RQ:0 Advertising Attributes	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%		%
Product Type								
Beauty, Personal Care and Fashion	8	7.1	33	24.4	16	8.7	55	25.6
Food	45	40.2	41	30.4	45	24.5	46	21.4
Health	15	13.4	19	14.1	24	13.0	39	18.1
Home and Household	12	10.7	17	12.6	31	16.8	20	9.3
Insurance and Taxes	24	21.4	21	15.6	7	3.8	3	1.4
Other	8	7.1	4	3.0	61	33.2	52	24.2
			$\chi 2$ = 16.3**				$\chi 2$ = 27.45***	

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

The gender x setting association was not significant in South African advertisements, $\chi 2$ (4, n=247)=6.39, *ns*, with the German sample producing significant results for the character's setting, $\chi 2$ (4, n=399)=12.97, p<.01. In German ads, nearly half of the female characters were depicted in domestic settings, and they were slightly more likely to be shown in the kitchen compared to their male counterparts. Although the character's setting in South African advertisements did not yield significant results, the distribution indicated a similar trend, with female characters more likely to be portrayed in the home or specifically in the kitchen compared to male characters.

Table 18: Gender x Setting

RQ1: Roles, Activities and Settings	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Setting								
Kitchen	5	4.5	10	7.4	6	3.3	8	3.7
Somewhere Else in the Home	28	25.0	49	36.3	56	30.4	102	47.4
Occupational	20	17.9	17	12.6	19	10.3	17	7.9
Outside	49	43.8	45	33.3	91	49.5	80	37.2
Undefined or Other	10	8.9	14	10.4	12	6.5	8	3.7
	n.s.				$\chi 2$ = 12.97**			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

While caution should be exercised in drawing definitive conclusions about South African portrayals, the observed trend in German advertisements suggests that advertisers might be reinforcing limiting societal expectations about women's sphere of influence. It implies that women were still predominantly associated with domestic responsibilities, such as cooking or managing the household. This aligns with Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha's (2011, p. 90) observation of the prevalent "Housewife, Mother, and Family Idyll" archetype in German commercials, which was primarily constructed in a domestic setting.

9.2.2.2 Looks, Looks, Looks

The archetype of female characters being portrayed with a focus on their looks emerged from variables such as *age*, *body type*, *attire*, and *interest*. All variables, except for *attire* and *interest* in the South African sample, produced significant results for gender x variable. In terms of age, both the South African, $\chi 2$ (2, n=247)=6.97, p<.05, and German sample, $\chi 2$ (2, n=399)=14.92, p<.001, showed significant associations. In German advertisements, female characters were predominantly portrayed as young. In South African television commercials, the most prevalent age category for both male and female characters was middle-age. Interestingly, German advertising showed a comparatively higher representation of older individuals for both genders

compared to South Africa, aligning with the demographic profile of the country. Overall, age distributions in South Africa were relatively similar across genders. In Germany, however, there was a clear preference for younger female characters. As suggested by Furnham and Lay (2019), highlighting young women in advertising portrayals might imply sexualised depictions, potentially reinforcing the perception that women are expected to be young and attractive, in contrast to older and more respected male characters. Additionally, this finding aligned with Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha's (2011) observations of predominantly young female archetypes in German television commercials.

Table 19: Gender x Physical and Material Attributes

RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age								
Young (<30)	37	33.0	41	30.4	61	33.2	109	50.7
Middle-Aged (31-60)	74	66.1	83	61.5	100	54.3	77	35.8
Old (>60)	1	0.9	11	8.1	23	12.5	29	13.5
	$\chi2$ = 6.97*				$\chi2$ = 14.92***			
Body Type								
Underweight	22	19.6	55	40.7	26	14.1	152	70.7
Average Weight	52	46.4	44	32.6	116	63.0	43	20.0
Overweight	27	24.1	35	25.9	21	11.4	16	7.4
Athletic	11	9.8	1	0.7	21	11.4	4	1.9
	$\chi2$ = 22.23***				$\chi2$ = 133.34***			
Attire								
Non-revealing	103	92.0	119	88.1	173	94.0	181	84.2
Revealing	9	8.0	16	11.9	11	6.0	34	15.8
	n.s.				$\chi2$ = 9.59**			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Both South African, $\chi2$ (3, n=247)=22.23, p<.001, and German commercials, $\chi2$ (3, n=399)=133.34, p<.001, produced significant results for gender x body type, with strong

associations in both countries. In both contexts, female characters were most commonly depicted as underweight, with 70% of female characters in German television commercials portrayed as underweight. In South Africa, although female body types were more varied, 40% of female characters were still portrayed as underweight. In both countries, there was a notable prevalence of underweight female characters compared to their underweight male counterparts. Conversely, very few overweight female characters were featured in German commercials, while South African commercials depicted female characters with a range of body types, including overweight and average weight.

This pattern suggested a troubling reinforcement of thinness as an aspirational standard, particularly in a German context. Overall, these depictions might contribute to the promotion of negative body image among viewers who do not align with these stereotypical ideals (de Vries et al., 2014; Walker et al., 2021). While Gqola (2016) did not specifically discuss the body type of the New South African Woman, Vennemann and Holtz-Bacha (2011) noted that a slim physique is a common criterion across nearly all types of women in German television commercials. In South African commercials, the prevalence of underweight female portrayals might contribute to the perpetuation of predominantly white beauty standards (Iqani & Pilane, 2016).

The statistical analysis showed no significant relationship between gender and attire in South African television commercials, $\chi 2$ (5, n=247)=16.3, p<.01. Conversely, in German television commercials, a statistically significant association for attire was observed, $\chi 2$ (5, n=399)=27.45, p<.001. The significant results for Germany indicated systematic differences in how central characters were dressed based on gender. Female characters in German commercials were more likely to be portrayed in revealing clothing, or even depicted as naked, than their male counterparts. Although the results for attire in the South African sample were not statistically significant, it was worth noting that, among all the groups, female characters in German commercials were most likely to be depicted in revealing clothing or naked. Such portrayals might have negative effects on female viewers, where the sexualisation and

objectification of female characters in advertising might perpetuate the idea that women should prioritise attractiveness and be perceived as sexually available.

Table 20: Gender x Interests

RQ4: Interests	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Interest								
Be Healthy	11	9.8	17	12.6	23	12.5	37	17.2
Look or Smell Good	5	4.5	15	11.1	11	6.0	39	18.1
Make a Home	1	0.9	5	3.7	10	5.4	10	4.7
Cleaning or Hygiene	6	5.4	10	7.4	16	8.7	14	6.5
Protection or Safety	10	8.9	16	11.9	5	2.7	9	4.2
Relationships	9	8.0	9	6.7	21	11.4	22	10.2
Save Money	21	18.8	17	12.6	12	6.5	10	4.7
Other	49	43.8	46	34.1	86	46.7	74	34.4
	n.s.				$\chi 2$ = 19.03**			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

In German advertisements, a statistically significant association between gender and "interests" was found, $\chi 2$ (7, n=399)=19.03, p<.01, whereas the South African sample did not yield significant results, $\chi 2$ (7, n=247)=9.8, *ns*. In German commercials, female characters predominantly exhibited interest in a range of "other" topics, followed by an emphasis on looking or smelling good and being healthy. Notably, the desire to look and smell good was more prevalent among female characters in Germany compared to their male counterparts. While the South African results were not significant, some interesting differences can be observed. In South African commercials, female characters displayed a spectrum of interests, including a focus on health, as well as practical matters like saving money and concerns related to protection and safety. This contrasted with their German counterparts, who showed a comparatively shallower preoccupation with appearance.

9.2.2.3 Sensual Objects

The portrayal of female characters as sensual objects was identified by analysing specific variables related to their behaviours, namely “passive vs active behaviour” and “symbolic behaviours”. In the German sample, both variables showed statistically significant associations with gender. In contrast, the South African results did not show significant associations for either variable. In Germany, the analysis revealed a significant result for “passive vs active behaviour”, with the overall chi-square being significant, $\chi 2$ (3, n=399)=11.80, p<.01. Half of the female characters in German advertisements were depicted as smiling or laughing without a speaking part. This prevalence of smiling was also observed among male characters. However, when compared to their male counterparts, female characters were still, overall, more likely to be depicted as smiling in commercials ("smiling or laughing", "speaking and smiling"). While the South African results did not show significant associations, the distribution suggested a more balanced portrayal of female characters. Still, in South Africa, more male characters took on speaking roles than their female counterparts. These findings highlight a consistent pattern in German commercials, where female characters tended to be portrayed in more passive roles, smiling more often than speaking.

Table 21: Gender x Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours

RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Passive Vs. Active								
Conversation or Speaking	43	38.4	40	29.6	49	26.6	29	13.5
No Speaking	15	13.4	16	11.9	15	8.2	16	7.4
Smiling or Laughing	24	21.4	39	28.9	79	42.9	106	49.3
Speaking and Smiling	30	26.8	40	29.6	41	22.3	64	29.8
	n.s.				$\chi 2 = 11.80^{**}$			
Symbolic Behaviours								
Symbolic Behaviour[32]	11	9.8	18	13.3	28	15.2	58	27.0
No Symbolic Behaviour	101	90.2	117	86.7	156	84.8	157	73.0
	n.s.				$\chi 2 = 8.11^{**}$			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Analysing the character's "symbolic behaviours" in German commercials once again revealed significant results, $\chi 2$ (1, n=399)=8.11, p<.01, whereas no association was found in the South African sample, $\chi 2$ (1, n=247)=.73, *ns*. Female characters in German advertisements were observed to be twice as likely as their male counterparts to engage in symbolic behaviours, such as looking at themselves in the mirror, touching something or themselves, and smelling something or someone. While the South African sample did not yield significant results, it was noteworthy that the overall prevalence of symbolic behaviours in South African advertising was lower for both genders compared to Germany. The pattern observed in German television commercials suggested that female characters, in particular, were portrayed exuding sensuality and nurturance, while being preoccupied with their looks. What is described here as "symbolic behaviours", such as overtly touching oneself or smelling something, are not typical expressions in real-life situations. This suggests that these actions were advertising-

[32] Looking at Self in Mirror, Touching Something or Self, Touching while Looking at Self in Mirror, Smelling Something or Someone

specific behaviours intentionally included to capture attention. As a by-product, these behaviours might emphasise the visual construction of female characters, as they draw attention to their physical appearance, particularly evident in German advertising.

9.2.2.4 Juggling Expectations

The analysis of social relationships, specifically through variables like "company" and "relationship status", revealed the portrayal of female characters as juggling expectations. In the South African sample, there was no significant association between gender and company, $\chi 2$ (5, n=247)=2.29, *ns*. Conversely, in German television commercials, a statistically significant association was observed between gender and company, $\chi 2$ (5, n=399)=18.83, p<.01. Interestingly, the most prevalent company for female characters in German ads was “none”, i.e., female characters were most commonly depicted alone. This was noteworthy because, even when compared to their male counterparts, female characters in German commercials were more likely to be shown alone. This finding presented a departure from traditional female portrayals, indicating a possible shift in the representation of women as independent and self-reliant. Although the South African results were not statistically significant, the distribution suggested a similar trend, with the most common portrayal of female characters being alone. In South Africa, this was closely followed by “children and partner or family”, while, in German ads, the second-most common company was “partner”. When comparing the portrayal of South African characters being depicted either alone or in a family context, the depiction of German characters, either alone or with their partners, might suggest a preference for smaller family arrangements.

Table 22: Gender x Social Relationships

RQ5: Social Relationships	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Company								
One or several children	12	10.7	19	14.1	6	3.3	13	6.0
Partner	6	5.4	5	3.7	35	19.0	43	20.0
Children and Partner or Family	19	17.0	29	21.5	21	11.4	23	10.7
Friends	12	10.7	14	10.4	31	16.8	34	15.8
Other	29	25.9	28	20.7	60	32.6	37	17.2
None	34	30.4	40	29.6	31	16.8	65	30.2
	n.s.				$\chi 2$ = 18.83**			
Relationship Status								
Not Married	61	54.5	49	36.3	81	44.0	100	46.5
Married	33	29.5	49	36.3	31	16.8	52	24.2
Unclear	18	16.1	37	27.4	72	39.1	63	29.3
	$\chi 2$ = 8.93**				*n.s.*			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

While relationship status and gender did not show significant associations in German television commercials, $\chi 2$ (2, n=399)=5.53, *ns,* the South African sample produced statistically significant results for the "relationship status" variable, $\chi 2$ (2, n=247)=8.93, p<.01. These results indicated that, in South African commercials, female characters were more likely to be depicted as married than their male counterparts. This suggests an interesting nuance where South African female characters might be expected to be married, while male characters might not face the same expectation. While the findings for the German sample were not statistically significant, the distribution indicated a general trend toward portraying both genders as unmarried. However, even in Germany, female characters were slightly more likely to be depicted as married. This overarching pattern provides intriguing insights into societal norms in South Africa, hinting at the persistence of more traditional norms concerning the institution

of marriage, especially for women. Furthermore, this finding aligns with Gqola's (2016, p. 123) description of the New South African woman as "aspiring to reproductive marriage".

9.2.3 What We Don't See

Several key points discussed in the theoretical part of this dissertation remained unexplored during the research phase of this doctoral study. This gap could be attributed to the absence of portrayals related to specific gender constructs in the collected data. Notably, the television commercials lacked representations of homosexual relationships and non-binary individuals. This was already reflected in the newly developed codebook, which did not include a variable for capturing homosexual relationships, as this theme did not emerge during the qualitative research phase. Additionally, during the quantitative research phase, only two out of the total 459 advertisements depicted a homosexual relationship, which was recorded as a note in SPSS. Both instances occurred in the German sample and involved same-sex male relationships, featured in advertisements for furniture and home goods stores, namely IKEA and Wayfair.

While it needs to be noted that the observation regarding the occurrence of homosexual relationships lacks statistical significance and was not formally incorporated into the quantitative analysis, it is still noteworthy as an informal observation. South Africa legally recognises same-sex marriage; however, the lack of portrayals may suggest a lower level of mainstream visibility for such relationships. This observation would also align with Luyt's (2012) masculinity norms, where he highlighted the integral role of homophobia in the construction of South African masculinity. Yet, it is plausible that both datasets may include less overt homosexual portrayals, often referred to as "gay window advertising" (Grau & Zotos, 2016, p. 768). In such cases, the representations may be subtle or invisible to heterosexual individuals but could be interpreted as "gay" by LGBTQ viewers (Grau & Zotos, 2016).

Furthermore, while extensively discussed in the theoretical part of this research, non-binary portrayals were evidently absent from the data, with only one advertisement from the

quantitative sample featuring a non-binary person. This specific commercial, aired in South Africa, was an interview-style ad for Nescafé, showcasing a series of individuals, including a person with an androgynous appearance. This individual became visibly emotional while reading a personal note aloud, in which a friend acknowledged their strength for "staying true to who they are". The rarity of such portrayals raises intriguing questions and warrants further exploration. However, the scarcity of non-binary portrayals might also be due to the difficulty in identifying them. People who identify as non-binary might not always have “visible” characteristics that make their classification straightforward.

9.3 Conclusion

This chapter detailed the process of quantitative coding, data transformations, statistical tests, and the establishment of reliability and validity. Subsequently, the quantitative results were presented, categorised into male and female portrayals, and exemplified with archetypes. Two of the study’s hypotheses were confirmed, as the chi-square tests revealed significant differences in gender portrayals in both South African and German television commercials. However, the third hypothesis, which predicted more systematic differences in gender portrayals in South African compared to German advertising, was not confirmed. Surprisingly, German advertisements produced more significant results for 9 out of 14 variables, while South African commercials exhibited significant results in only 4 out of 14 variables. These results challenged the initial assumption that South African television commercials, influenced by the country's history, culture, and more traditional views on gender roles, would feature more traditional gender portrayals, especially when compared to the more ‘liberal’ German context.

The results of the quantitative analysis strengthen the credibility of the research’s measurement tool, as numerous variables showed statistically significant and meaningful results. In the South African sample, the variables *product type*, *age*, *body type*, and *relationships status* were significant. Both male and female characters were most commonly associated with food products and were of average weight. Male characters in South African advertisements were more likely to have an average body type and be unmarried, while female

characters were typically depicted as underweight and married. These findings suggest that, although overall portrayals in South African television commercials were relatively egalitarian, female characters still appeared to be expected to conform to a thin body standard and uphold a notion of 'respectable' femininity, such as being married. In contrast, male characters in South African commercials were allowed to be average and free from responsibilities, portrayed as middle-aged, average weight, and unmarried. Additionally, it is noteworthy that male characters in both South African and German advertising were commonly depicted in connection with food, suggesting a narrative of men as family providers.

In German advertising, several variables, including *product type*, *setting*, *age*, *body type*, *attire*, *passive vs active behaviour*, *symbolic behaviour*, *interest*, and *company*, were found to be significant. The high number of significant variables further underscored the validity of the research instrument. Male characters in German commercials were often associated with food products, while female characters were frequently depicted promoting "beauty, personal care, and fashion" items. Additionally, male characters in German commercials were portrayed outside, middle-aged, and of average weight, while female characters tended to be young and underweight. The attire of female characters in Germany was more likely to be revealing compared to male characters, and female characters exhibited more sensual or self-objectifying "symbolic behaviours". In German commercials, both genders were frequently portrayed smiling or laughing without speaking, suggesting a deliberate strategy to construct overtly friendly advertising characters.

German male characters were portrayed with an interest in staying healthy, while female characters were associated with more appearance-centric interests. Interestingly, female characters in German ads were predominantly portrayed alone, suggesting a depiction of women in German commercials as self-reliant and independent. However, considering other insights, this could also contribute to reinforcing an image of an attractive, carefree, young, and seemingly shallow lifestyle. In German advertising, male characters were generally less sexualised, allowed to have an average appearance, and displayed more practical interests.

The chapter also addressed the absence of specific portrayals, notably, homosexual relationships and non-binary individuals. While only very few instances of homosexual relationships were found in the German sample, it needs to be acknowledged that the actual number might be higher, given the possibility of more subtle gay portrayals (Grau & Zotos, 2016). Furthermore, non-binary gender identities were nearly non-existent in television commercials. Additionally, quantifying non-binary portrayals may pose challenges, since individuals identifying as non-binary may not have easily identifiable characteristics, making it difficult to identify them accurately in media portrayals. Despite not being a formal part of the codebook, these observations provide valuable insights into the types of portrayals that were conspicuously absent or, at the very least, not explicitly represented in television advertising.

The upcoming chapter will recontextualise select findings using real-world data, where available, with a specific focus on *gender*, *age*, *relationship status*, and a variable not yet mentioned—*race*. Comparing advertising portrayals with census data will provide a broader perspective on how these fictional portrayals match, or differ from, societal demographic patterns.

CHAPTER 10: REALITY CHECK: RECONTEXTUALISING SELECT QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS WITH CENSUS DATA

The current chapter seeks to deepen the insights gained from the quantitative results by comparing certain variables with corresponding real-life distributions (Ahlstrand, 2007; Cassim & Monteiro, 2001; Knoll et al., 2011). Census data, acting as a meaningful benchmark, was available for *gender*, *age*, *marital status*, and *race*. It is crucial to note that this analysis was not based on the expectation for advertising to perfectly reflect "reality" but intended to explore how gender portrayals might systematically deviate from material realities of gender in the respective countries (Grossberg et al., 2006; Mohanty, 2003). The census data for 2022 was unavailable during the research period for both Germany and South Africa (Pressestelle Statistisches Bundesamt, 2023; Statistics South Africa, 2023). Therefore, older census data from 2011 was utilised in this study (Statistics South Africa, 2012; Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2016), supplemented by some more recent statistical reports (Statistics South Africa, 2012; Statistics South Africa, 2016; Statistics South Africa, 2019; Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2016; Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2016; Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2020).

10.1 Gender Distribution and Age

The chi-square tests for the overall gender distribution in commercials did not produce significant results, indicating that male and female characters were equally likely to appear as central characters in both the South African, $\chi 2$ (1, n=247)=.04, ns, and the German sample, $\chi 2$ (1, n=399)=.04, ns. While the gender distribution in advertising lacked statistical significance, a comparison of the quantitative findings with census data revealed nuanced insights. The census data indicated a slight overrepresentation of women in the population of both countries (Statistics South Africa, 2012; Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2016). This overrepresentation in the population corresponded with the observed overrepresentation of female characters in commercials, despite not being statistically significant. However, a closer examination against census statistics showed that female

characters were slightly more overrepresented in advertising than in the actual population. This suggested that, although women were slightly overrepresented in advertising compared to the population, the difference was minimal and might not have significant implications for gender portrayals in commercials.

Table 23: Gender: Census x Advertising

	South Africa %		Germany %	
Gender	**Census 2011**	Advertising Data	**Census 2011**	Advertising Data
Male	48.2	45.3	48.8	46.1
Female	51.7	54.7	51.2	53.9

Source: Statistics South Africa (2012, p. 19), Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder (2016, p. 12).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the quantitative analysis revealed significant results for the variable “age” in both countries. To gain further insights, the age distributions in advertising were compared with census statistics. It is crucial to note that, in 2011, 38.8% of the South African population was under 19 years old, indicating that a substantial portion of the country’s population is young (Statistics South Africa, 2012, p. 28). However, for the purpose of this study, the focus was specifically on individuals aged 18 and older. To ensure comparability, the census data was standardised by excluding the under-19-year-old group from the analysis.[33] While the age distribution in German commercials was more balanced compared to South African advertisements, the latter presented a more accurate depiction of people as they existed in society.

[33] To ensure comparability, the census data were standardised by excluding the under 19-year-old group. Subsequently, the distribution of the remaining age groups was recalculated to represent 100% of the population, providing a more precise representation of age demographics for comparison.

Table 24: Age: Census x Advertising

	South Africa %		Germany %	
Age	**Census 2011**	Advertising Data	**Census 2011**	Advertising Data
Young (18-30)[34]	33	31.6	17	42.6
Middle-Aged (30-60)	53.9	63.6	58.4	44.4
Old (>60)	13.1	4.9	24.6	13.0

Source: Statistics South Africa (2012, p. 28), Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder (2016, p. 14).

In South Africa, the age distribution in TV commercials closely mirrored national statistics, with a slight over-representation of middle-aged characters and a marginal under-representation of older characters when compared to the demographic distribution (Statistics South Africa, 2012). Similarly, in Germany, the advertising data indicated a slight under-representation of older characters compared to the demographic distribution (Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2016). Notably, German advertising portrayed a higher proportion of young characters compared to the actual age distribution in real-life demographics. This disparity suggested that the prevalence of young characters in television commercials did not align with the age distributions observed in the country's population. This further underscored the strong emphasis on youthfulness in German commercials, particularly among female characters, suggesting a promotion of youth as a desirable and marketable characteristic.

10.2 Marital Status Revisited

As discussed in the previous chapter, the variable "relationship status" yielded significant results only for the South African data in the quantitative content analysis. In contrast to German commercials, South African television commercials seemed to place emphasis on the portrayal of married individuals. This inclination became even more pronounced when

[34] The census data in the countries employs marginally different age segments; for example, "young" in the South African Census data corresponds to ages 19-30, while "middle-aged" in the German census encompasses ages 30-65.

comparing advertising portrayals with census data, suggesting an over-representation of married characters in advertising compared to census statistics (Statistics South Africa, 2016). This trend might suggest a preference among advertisers or clients for depicting married individuals, possibly reflecting their own beliefs, or indicating a perception that married characters were more relatable to their target audience.

Table 25: Marital Status: Census x Advertising

	South Africa		Germany	
	%		%	
Marital Status	**Community Survey 2016**[35]	Advertising Data	**Bevölkerungs-fortschreibung 2016**[36]	Advertising Data
Not Married	61.7[37]	57.3	49.5[38]	68.6
Married	38.3[39]	42.7	50.5[40]	31.4

Source: Statistics South Africa (2016, p. 36), Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis) (2016, p. 15).

While the quantitative analysis of the German sample did not yield statistically significant results, a comparison with German census data revealed a noteworthy disparity in the representation of relationship statuses between television commercials and real-life demographics (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2016, p. 15). Unlike census data, which indicated a slightly larger proportion of the German population being married (50.5%) than unmarried (49.5), advertising portrayals seemed to emphasise individuals who were unattached (68.6%). This discrepancy might suggest that, in the realm of German advertising, a lack of attachment was considered important, alongside the already noted emphasis on youth. However, this portrayal did not reflect the actual distribution of relationship status in Germany.

[35] Percentage of the population aged 12 years and above.
[36] Percentage of the population aged 18 years and above.
[37] Includes “divorced”, “separated; but still legally married”, “single; but have been living together with someone as husband/wife before”, and “single and have never been married/never lived together as husband/wife before”.
[38] Includes “single” and “divorced”.
[39] Includes “legally married”, “living together like husband and wife”, and “widowed”.
[40] Includes “married or in a registered partnership” and “widowed”.

10.3 Unpacking Gender and Race

The variable “race” did not produce significant results for either country in the quantitative content analysis, suggesting that the representation of race in these advertisements was not consistently associated with gender. As anticipated, South African advertisements predominantly featured black characters, while the majority of characters in German ads were white. When comparing the racial distribution of South African advertising portrayals with census data, it became apparent that white characters were over-represented in television commercials compared to real-life statistics. Specifically, 10.9% of the total advertising characters observed were white, whereas the white population in South Africa comprised only 7.9% (Statistics South Africa, 2019, p. 8). This discrepancy suggested potential biases within the advertising industry regarding which portrayals were deemed more relatable or which target audience was perceived as more economically influential.

Table 26: Race: Census x Advertising

	South Africa %		Germany %	
Race	Population estimates 2019	Advertising Data	Mikrozensus 2019	Advertising Data
Black	89.5[41]	89.1	1.2[42]	5.8
White	7.9	10.9	91.0[43]	92.5
Other	2.6	0	7.8	1.8

Source: Statistics South Africa (2019, p. 8), Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis) (2020, p. 68).

In the German context, comparing the advertising data to real-life statistics came with challenges, as Germany lacked official race statistics, relying instead on indicators like "Migrationshintergrund" (migration background) that detail individuals' migration history, heritage, and generational immigrant status (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2020). Without specific race statistics, in-depth insights were limited, and the discussion needed to

[41] Comprised of “black African” and “coloured”.
[42] Comprised of “Personen mit Migrationshintergrund” from “Afrika”.
[43] Comprised of “Personen ohne Migrationshintergrund” and “Personen mit Migrationshintergrund” from “Europa”.

be approached with caution. According to the Mikrozensus 2019, individuals with an African background constituted 1.2% of the German population (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2020, p. 68). If all Afro-Germans were encompassed within the category of “individuals with African background”, the advertising data appeared to over-represent black individuals, while predominantly white advertising portrayals aligned with the majority white German population.

10.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored how advertising portrayals compared to demographic realities in South Africa and Germany, specifically focusing on the variables *gender*, *age*, *relationship status*, and *race*. The findings indicated that, overall, gender representations in advertising reflected the demographic distribution in both countries. Female characters in South African and German commercials were slightly over-represented compared to their male counterparts, though this over-representation lacked statistical significance. However, when contrasted with population statistics in both countries, the over-representation became more pronounced (Statistics South Africa, 2012; Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2016). Additionally, notable discrepancies were observed in the portrayal of age, with German advertising significantly over-representing young characters compared to South African advertisements and the general demographics of the German population (Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder, 2016). This suggests that, in both countries, there was a slight preference for female characters, coupled with a noteworthy inclination to depict advertising characters as young in the German context.

Furthermore, South African commercials showed a statistically significant over-representation of married characters compared to their German counterparts. This contrast became even more pronounced when juxtaposed with the distribution of marital status in the South African population, as indicated by census data, which revealed a lower prevalence of married individuals (Statistics South Africa, 2016). While the quantitative findings for the “relationship status” variable in the German sample did not reach statistical significance, an intriguing observation emerged when comparing the inclination toward unmarried advertising portrayals

with real-life statistics. Unlike the unmarried advertising portrayals, the census data suggested that the majority of Germans were, in fact, married (Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2016). This underscored a noteworthy preference for portraying advertising characters as married in the South African context, juxtaposed with a preference for depicting characters as unmarried in German commercials.

Analysing the racial distribution in advertising alongside census data revealed that South African commercials over-represented white characters, while German commercials over-represented black characters (Statistics South Africa, 2019; Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), 2020). This may suggest a deliberate choice by German advertisers to intentionally diversify their portrayals to appeal to a broader audience. In contrast, South African advertisers' preference for white portrayals may reflect both their own demographic makeup and the economic influence associated with this demographic.

CHAPTER 11: DISCUSSION

This chapter includes a final discussion, summarising key findings, addressing study limitations, and proposing recommendations for future research. This study explored advertising beyond its influence on consumer choices (Williamson, 1978), aiming to understand the intricate relationship between advertising and broader societal dynamics, as well as individual identities. Particularly, it focused on examining the interplay between television advertising and the construction of gender (Narunsky-Laden, 2008). By recognising advertising's active role in the construction of gender identities (Grossberg et al., 2006), this research aimed to unravel the complex processes through which individuals' identities are formed within their cultural context, emphasising the interconnectedness of cultural representation and social reality.

To implicitly investigate the impact of cultural context on advertising, this study conducted a cross-cultural analysis, comparing television commercials in South Africa and Germany. Notably, it stands as the first study to undertake such a cross-cultural examination. Employing a mixed-methods design, this research not only explored new areas of investigation but also addressed methodological concerns prevalent in the field (Collins, 2011; Furnham & Mak, 1999; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Grau & Zotos, 2016; Lim & Furnham, 2016). To overcome critiques related to the use of outdated and non-culture-specific measurement tools in quantitative content analyses, this study developed and validated a new, culturally relevant quantitative instrument. By adopting a decolonial perspective (Mohanty, 2003), the primary objective was to introduce a South African lens to a "Western" concept, which remains largely unquestioned.

In this research, the gender framework proposed by Ashmore (1990) was employed, aligning with the social-constructionist perspective that views gender as a multifaceted and flexible concept shaped by social, cultural, and historical factors. The study highlighted the historical and cultural nuances of South Africa and Germany, aiming for a context-specific examination of gender portrayals in both the qualitative and quantitative research phases. By combining

thematic analysis with content analysis, the focus was on exploring media representations rather than their effects, investigating how television advertising interacts with gender identities only indirectly (Gilly, 1988). The underlying assumption was that power operated not by silencing or suppressing but by actively constructing portrayals of gender in highly specific ways (Gill, 2008). Consequently, a detailed and context-specific analysis of advertising portrayals became essential to gain a nuanced understanding of the messages conveyed regarding gender.

Furnham and Lay (2019) argued that advertising patterns could stem from practical choices made by advertisers and clients, such as strategically linking specific products with particular demographics to better appeal to their intended audience. However, these perspectives are not necessarily mutually exclusive; even practical considerations in advertising may inadvertently reinforce certain gender constructions. Although advertisers or clients may not deliberately intend to convey particular gender constructions, they may still unintentionally communicate them through the content of advertising portrayals. Returning to the opening premise of this dissertation, this research did not centre on the expectation for advertising to "truthfully" represent gender constructions as they exist in society (Grossberg et al., 2006). Instead, it questioned whether advertising effectively conveyed the intricate and varied aspects of gender, and explored the relationship between gender representations in advertising and the lived experiences of gender in society.

11.1 Key Findings

The initial thematic analysis revealed both similarities and differences compared to typical themes explored in cross-cultural advertising research. Gender-related patterns in the qualitative data comprised demographic characteristics, contexts, roles and activities, advertising-specific aspects, nonverbal expressions, and physical attributes. These themes corresponded with characteristics described by culture-specific gender models (Gqola, 2016; Luyt, 2012; Meuser, 2010; Ratele, 2016; Vennemann & Holtz-Bacha, 2011; Viljoen, 2008). The qualitative findings served as the foundation for the systematic development of a context-

specific quantitative codebook. During the subsequent quantitative content analysis, the newly developed quantitative instrument was found to be effective, as it yielded significant results for several out of the 15 variables. Surprisingly, the German sample produced more significant results than the South African sample, challenging initial assumptions and contradicting prior research (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002).

Significant findings highlighted a common theme of male characters frequently being associated with food in both South African and German commercials. This statistically significant result suggested a shared cultural ideal emphasising men's responsibilities related to food. Additionally, in South African advertising, female characters were primarily associated with food products, underscoring the cultural significance of food in the South African context. Besides that, South African female characters challenged many archetypes of femininity, except for being portrayed as underweight and married. The focus on portraying South African female characters as thin could indicate an adoption of beauty ideals commonly associated with white cultures (Iqani & Pilane, 2016).

German advertising emphasised a narrow spectrum of feminine attributes, behaviours, and interests. This included a preference for youthfulness and a slender physique, a strong emphasis on appearance, an affinity for beauty and fashion products, along with portrayals in domestic settings and solitary situations. These characteristics aligned with conventional female advertising archetypes and might reinforce limiting notions about female appearances, aspirations, and spheres of influence. The consistent portrayal of female characters associated with specific *product types*, *settings*, *ages*, *body types*, *attire*, *passive behaviour*, *symbolic behaviour*, *interests*, and *company* might contribute to the perception that embodying characteristics such as youthfulness, thinness, passivity, sexual appeal, being home-bound, appearance-centred, and independent, are all expected aspects of German femininity.

In German advertisements, male characters seemed to face fewer societal pressures, particularly regarding physical standards. However, upon closer examination, subtle signs of a more objectified depiction of male characters in German ads surfaced in comparison to their

South African counterparts. These subtle indicators included various elements, such as a higher frequency of smiling without apparent reason, a lower prevalence of overweight portrayals, and a slightly increased frequency of athletic portrayals. Nevertheless, in German advertisements, male characters exhibited greater complexity than their female counterparts. This was evidenced by their involvement and interest in more practical matters, among other indicators. Moreover, a distinct pattern was observed in German commercials where the majority of characters were consistently depicted with an overtly friendly demeanour. The non-significant chi-squares for the variables *role*, *occupation*, *activity*, and *race* suggest that, in both countries, characters were not systematically portrayed differently based on their gender in terms of the roles they occupy, occupational status, activities, or race.

Comparing the findings with real-life data provided additional insights. In both countries, there was a slight overrepresentation of female characters in advertisements when compared to the actual population. Furthermore, the overrepresentation of young (female) characters in German advertisements became even more pronounced when considering census statistics, which revealed a relatively lower proportion of young individuals in the overall population of Germany. Moreover, a subtle overrepresentation of married characters was observed in South African advertising compared to statistical reports, alongside an overrepresentation of unmarried characters in German commercials. Lastly, black characters were overrepresented in German advertisements, while South African ads exhibited a slight overrepresentation of white characters.

The overall findings brought to light distinct patterns in gender portrayals within television commercials in both countries, underlining the importance of continuous research in the field. The indication of less systematically gendered portrayals in South African advertisements might be attributed to the introduction of a new, context-specific quantitative measurement tool developed as part of the study. Alternatively, these findings could signify a heightened awareness among South African advertisers regarding complex societal issues. The media landscape in post-liberation South Africa, shaped by the country's history, might have

contributed to a heightened focus on addressing issues related to gender and race in South African advertising (Narunsky-Laden, 2008).

Furthermore, intriguing parallels can be drawn between advertising representations and the portrayal of gender, class, and race within the context of Nazi and Apartheid era policies and culture. The portrayal of male characters associated with food products in both countries may reflect enduring norms of male provision and economic responsibility, aligning with historical expectations of masculinity (McClintock, 1991; Stibbe, 2012). In South African commercials, the preference for depicting married female characters resonates with historical ideals of domesticity and respectability (McClintock, 1991). Conversely, the portrayal of unmarried male characters in German ads may indicate shifts in societal norms towards delaying marriage and emphasising personal autonomy.

Moreover, there was a notable trend where nearly half of female characters in German ads appeared in domestic settings, with some specifically depicted in kitchens. This might reflect a lingering influence from the idealisation of the domestic sphere as essential to German womanhood, promoting values of order, cleanliness, and domestic responsibilities (Jahnz, 2016; Stibbe, 2012). In contrast, female characters in South African advertising challenging traditional archetypes of femininity may embody the country's historical narrative of women who defy norms, claim their own space, and redefine femininity on their own terms.

Lastly, the depiction of male characters in German ads as friendly, expressive, and in typically female roles suggests a growing acceptance of diverse masculine identities. This contrasts with historical periods that defined masculinity more rigidly, emphasising traits like emotional toughness, stoicism, and militaristic heroism (Fritzsche, 2008). Comparing current masculine portrayals in German advertisements with historical remasculinisation efforts, which emphasised associations with work, discipline, and public roles (Stibbe, 2012), reveals that while male characters are depicted engaging in traditionally masculine activities and settings, there has been a notable departure from traditional portrayals of male authority and seriousness.

11.2 Limitations of the Study

Like any study, this research has inherent limitations, particularly concerning methodology and the researcher's positionality. Because of the nature of a doctoral study, both the qualitative and quantitative analyses were conducted by one person and then discussed with a supervisor. While this process allowed for consistency in the method, it failed to provide multiple perspectives from a variety of people with differing expertise (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Therefore, it is important to emphasise the interpretive role of the researcher in both research phases. In the qualitative thematic analysis, the researcher actively coded data and identified themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Even in the seemingly objective quantitative content analysis, the researcher's coding decisions inevitably introduced a level of subjectivity into the data (Neuendorf, 2017). Therefore, it is critical to address both methodological limitations and the researcher's positionality.

To enhance the rigour of thematic analysis in this dissertation, several measures were taken. Firstly, the analysis began with a thorough explanation of the underlying assumptions that guided the thematic analysis. Secondly, the qualitative analysis was meticulously conducted, and the interim phase of instrument development further contributed to an understanding of key aspects within the qualitative data. Thirdly, to address concerns related to weak analysis, where inferences might be unfounded or unconvincing, themes were thoroughly explained in Chapter 8. Exemplary data extracts were presented to demonstrate that themes were not lacking internal consistency, overlapping, or nonsensical (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This rigorous approach was maintained by adhering to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane's (2006) six-step framework, ensuring both completeness and internal coherence of the thematic analysis.

Moreover, there was a legitimate concern about the potential oversimplification of social categories when employing quantitative methods for analysis. This approach might unintentionally have reified existing configurations of these categories, such as promoting a binary understanding of gender (Luyt, 2011). Striking a balance is essential: While creating

measurable parameters is crucial, operationalising a concept for quantitative measurement should not oversimplify it to the extent of disregarding the dynamic and complex nature of gender constructs (Neuendorf, 2017). Given the complexity of the concept of gender, using a reductionist method, like quantitative content analysis, inevitably posed challenges in accurately measuring its nuances (Krippendorff, 2004). Employing an intersectional perspective, which accounts for various intersecting factors, would have offered more nuanced insights, including the analysis of how gender portrayals vary based on race. However, the scope required for such an analysis exceeded the parameters of this doctoral study.

Generally speaking, quantitative content analysis comes with several limitations. While it can provide valuable descriptive data, a significant drawback is its inability to offer insights into the underlying causes, as it produces purely descriptive results (Krippendorff, 2004). Consequently, any further inferences must be firmly grounded in theoretical underpinnings to avoid subjective suggestions (Mohanty, 2003). Furthermore, while content analysis provides an overview of the frequencies of gender presentations and current portrayals, it falls short in illuminating the advertiser's intent or the effectiveness of ad portrayals in reaching their intended target audiences (Paek et al., 2010). Quantitative content analysis cannot detect subtleties or provide deep insights into the complex interplay between advertising content, identity formation, and broader societal contexts. Some of these limitations were mitigated by employing a mixed-methods approach in this study, which facilitated a thorough exploration of the qualitative aspects of gender portrayals during the initial research phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

One significant limitation of this research was that the quantitative analysis fell short of documenting gender representations in a representative sample of TV advertisements (Neuendorf, 2017). However, the analysis, despite not covering a representative sample, captured important content to which large numbers of people are regularly exposed. The sample used in this study was drawn from the period between May and July 2022, meaning that the findings reflected only that specific timeframe. Additionally, it is important to

acknowledge that the findings of this research cannot be generalised to broader regions such as “Europe”, “Western countries” or “African” countries, partly due to the judgemental nature of the country selection.

Lastly, it is imperative to address the researcher’s positionality in this study. Despite the systematic and rigorous approach employed in this mixed-methods study, the researcher played an active role in conducting the analysis. Hence, providing information about the researcher's demographics is crucial, as her personal characteristics may have shaped coding decisions. The researcher, fulfilling the dual role of researcher and coder, is a white German woman residing in South Africa, with proficiency in both English and German. This background equipped her with a nuanced understanding of the cultural contexts under investigation. To address the diverse linguistic landscape of South Africa, Thabiso Junior Ntuli, fluent in isiZulu and knowledgeable in isiXhosa, Sesotho, and Afrikaans, provided valuable assistance. Techniques to mitigate subjectivity in both the qualitative and quantitative research phases were detailed in the corresponding sections on data validation in Chapter 8 and reliability and validity in Chapter 9.

11.3 Future Research

In concluding this dissertation, potential avenues for future research are outlined as follows. The study briefly addressed the invisibility of non-heteronormative and non-binary individuals, indicating the need for further exploration in this area. Furthermore, to ensure cross-cultural comparability, certain variables that might have held distinct meanings in each cultural context were not part of the quantitative analysis. One variable that holds the potential for valuable insights, particularly in the South African context, is the differentiation between urban and rural settings. This theme resonates with Gqola's (2016, p. 123) characterisation of the New South African woman as a “working, urban, and upwardly mobile” figure. Moreover, South African advertisements frequently depicted black individuals dancing, raising concerns about the potential reinforcement of racial stereotypes.

Additionally, in the South African sample, a recurring pattern was the portrayal of characters assuming the role of the "adult child". For instance, scenarios depicted adult daughters taking care of their mothers or adult sons seeking guidance from their mothers on health-related issues. These portrayals may reflect cultural values in South Africa that prioritise family and close intergenerational relationships, potentially offering valuable insights into the social fabric of the country. Furthermore, the linguistic diversity of South Africa, with its 11 official languages, presents an intriguing opportunity to explore the role of language in advertising. Previous research by Cassim and Monteiro (2001) highlighted language as an indicator of characters' Westernisation in South African television commercials, showing a significant association between black South Africans and the use of English. Considering the predominantly visual nature of many content-analytic variables (Furnham & Lay, 2019), examining language considerations can introduce additional layers of nuance to the evaluation of gender portrayals.

Although ethnicity was not a specific focus of the quantitative analysis, an important observation surfaced from the German television commercials, indicating a notable absence of portrayals representing "Turkish" or "Semitic Arab" individuals. Turks constitute a substantial minority group in Germany, comprising around 10% of the population (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, 2022, p. 207). This percentage is higher than the proportion of the white minority population in South Africa, which is estimated to be around 8% (Statistics South Africa, 2022, p. 19). Future research could examine the ethnic diversity of advertising portrayals, providing valuable insights into the representation of different ethnic groups in German advertising.

Aside from identifying potential content categories for future research, the dataset generated by this study presents opportunities for further analysis. Since the study recorded the race of each character, conducting additional cross-tabulations could provide insights into how racial portrayals vary across all analysed variables. Additionally, future research could explore broadening its scope beyond traditional television advertising to include diverse advertising

media, given the shift of younger demographics to streaming services and the rising importance of social media. Finally, there always remain the essential considerations of both audience reception and the intentions of advertisers or clients when studying gender portrayals in advertising (Paek et al., 2010). Combining content analysis with audience research can provide deeper insights into advertising perceptions and effects. Additionally, future research could investigate the decision-making processes of those creating advertisements, such as advertisers and clients, to understand how their shared backgrounds and perspectives might influence the diversity of gender representations in advertisements.

REFERENCES

Advertising Regulatory Board. (2021). *Code of Advertising Practice: Section II - General Principles.* Available: https://www.arb.org.za/assets/section-ii-general-principles-v2021.1.pdf.

Advertising Standards Authority, Committees of Advertising Practice. (2019, June). *Ban on harmful gender stereotypes in ads comes into force.* Retrieved June 2021, from www.asa.org.uk/news/ban-on-harmful-gender-stereotypes-in-ads-comes-into-force.html.

AGF Videoforschung in Zusammenarbeit mit GfK VIDEOSCOPE 1.4. (2022, 04.01.). *Marktstandard: TV (Systemdefault), 01.01.2021-31.12.2021.* Retrieved 18 July 2022, from https://www.agf.de/daten/tv-daten.

Ahlstrand, M. (2007). *Gender Stereotyping in Television Advertisements A Case of Austrian State Television.* Available: https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1018680/FULLTEXT01.pdf.

Åkestam, N., Rosengren, S., & Dahlen, M. (2017). Advertising “like a girl”: Toward a better understanding of “femvertising” and its effects. *Psychology & Marketing, 34*(8), 795-806. 10.1002/mar.21023.

Artz, N., & Venkatesh, A. (1991). Gender Representation in Advertising. *Advances in Consumer Research, 18*, 618.

Ashmore, R. D., & Del Boca, F. K. (1979). Sex Stereotypes and Implicit Personality Theory: Toward a Cognitive—Social Psychological Conceptualization. *Sex Roles, 5*(2), 219-248. 10.1007/BF00287932.

Ashmore, R. D. (1990). Sex, gender, and the individual. In L. A. Pervin (Ed.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (pp. 486-526). The Guilford Press.

Ashmore, R. D., & Sewell, A. D. (1998). Sex/gender and the individual. In D. F. Barone, M. Hersen & V. B. Van Hasselt (Eds.), *Advanced personality* (pp. 377-408). Springer.

Association of Public Broadcasting Corporations in the Federal Republic of Germany, (ARD). (2018). *Wir sind deins. ARD.* ARD Presidency.

Beinart, W. (2001). *Twentieth-century South Africa* (2. ed.). Oxford Univ. Press.

Bem, S. L., & Lenney, E. (1976). Sex Typing and the Avoidance of Cross-Sex Behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 33*(1), 48-54. 10.1037/h0078640.

Berger, I. (2016). *Women in Twentieth-Century Africa*. Cambridge University Press. 10.1017/CBO9780511979972.

Bertelsmann. (2021, Feb 3,). *Vox Among Germany's Top 3 Commercial Channels.* https://www.bertelsmann.com. Retrieved 8 November 2023, from https://www.bertelsmann.com/news-and-media/news/vox-among-germany-s-top-3-commercial-channels.jsp.

Bhana, D., Morrell, R., Hearn, J., & Moletsane, R. (2007). Power and Identity: An Introduction to Sexualities in Southern Africa. *Sexualities, 10*(2), 131-139. 10.1177/1363460707075794.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information*. SAGE Publications, Inc.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. (2022). *Migrationsbericht der Bundesregierung: Migrationsbericht 2020.*DEU. Retrieved from https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2020.html?view=renderPdfViewer&nn=1018856.

Burr, V. (2003). *Social constructionism* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Butler, J. (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.

Casale, D. (2004). What has the Feminisation of the Labour Market 'Bought' Women in South Africa? Trends in Labour Force Participation, Employment and Earnings, 1995–2001. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics, 15*(3-4), 251-275. 10.1177/02601079X04001500302.

Cassim, S., & Monteiro, M. (2001). Black role portrayals in South African television advertising. *Ecquid Novi: African Journalism Studies, 22*(1), 106-123. 10.1080/02560054.2001.9665884.

Collins, R. L. (2011). Content Analysis of Gender Roles in Media: Where Are We Now and Where Should We Go? *Sex Roles, 64*(3-4), 290-298. 10.1007/s11199-010-9929-5.

Coltrane, S., & Messineo, M. (2000). The Perpetuation of Subtle Prejudice: Race and Gender Imagery in 1990s Television Advertising. *Sex Roles, 42*(5), 363-389. 10.1023/A:1007046204478.

Connell, R. W. (1985). Theorising Gender. *Sociology (Oxford), 19*(2), 260-272. 10.1177/0038038585019002008.

Connell, R. W. (1987). *Gender and Power: Society, the Person and Sexual Politics*. Polity Press.

Connell, R. W. (1990). The State, Gender, and Sexual Politics: Theory and Appraisal. *Theory and Society, 19*(5), 507-544. 10.1007/BF00147025.

Connell, R. W. (1992). A Very Straight Gay: Masculinity, Homosexual Experience, and the Dynamics of Gender. *American Sociological Association, 57*(6), 735-751. 10.2307/2096120.

Connell, R. W. (2000). *The Men and the Boys.* Allen & Unwin.

Connell, R. W. (2001). Understanding Men: Gender Sociology and the New International Research on Masculinities. *Social Thought & Research, 24*(1/2), 13-31. 10.17161/STR.1808.5186.

Connell, R. W. (2005). *Masculinities*. Taylor & Francis Group.

Connell, R. W. (2014a). Rethinking Gender from the South. *Feminist Studies, 40*(3), 518-539. 10.1353/fem.2014.0038.

Connell, R. W. (2014b). The sociology of gender in Southern perspective. *Current Sociology, 62*(4), 550-567. 10.1177/0011392114524510.

Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender & Society, 19*(6), 829-859. 10.1177/0891243205278639.

Connolly-Ahern, C., Ahern, L. A., & Denise, S. B. (2009). The Effectiveness of Stratified Constructed Week Sampling for Content Analysis of Electronic News Source Archives: AP Newswire, Business Wire, and PR Newswire. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly, 86*(4), 862-883. 10.1177/107769900908600409.

Coulthard, D., & Castleman, T. (2006). Approaches to Conceptualising Gender. In E. M. Trauth (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Gender and Information Technology* (pp. 31-36). IGI Global.

Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (2023). *Doing Qualitative Research* (Third ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.

Craig, R. S. (1992). The Effect of Television Day Part on Gender Portrayals in Television Commercials: A Content Analysis. *Sex Roles, 26*(5-6), 197-211. 10.1007/BF00289707.

Creswell, J. W. (2010). Mapping the Developing Landscape of Mixed Methods Research. *SAGE Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research* (2nd ed., pp. 45-68). SAGE Publications, Inc. 10.4135/9781506335193.n2.

Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2018). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Das, M. (2011). Gender Role Portrayals in Indian Television Ads. *Sex Roles, 64*(3-4), 208-222. 10.1007/s11199-010-9750-1.

Davies, M. M., & Mosdell, N. (2006). *Practical Research Methods for Media and Cultural Studies: Making People Count*. University of Georgia Press.

de Vries, D. A., Peter, J., Nikken, P., & de Graaf, H. (2014). The Effect of Social Network Site Use on Appearance Investment and Desire for Cosmetic Surgery Among Adolescent Boys and Girls. *Sex Roles, 71*(9-10), 283-295. 10.1007/s11199-014-0412-6.

Demetriou, D. Z. (2001). Connell's Concept of Hegemonic Masculinity: A Critique. *Theory and Society, 30*(3), 337-361. 10.1023/A:1017596718715.

Destatis. (2020). *Daten aus den Laufenden Wirtschaftsrechnungen (LWR) zur Ausstattung privater Haushalte mit Unterhaltungselektronik.* Retrieved from https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Einkommen-Konsum-Lebensbedingungen/Ausstattung-Gebrauchsgueter/Tabellen/a-unterhaltungselektr-d-lwr.html;jsessionid=E9A0C7F4B35023F36DFDE74C843057F1.live712#fussnote-2-115510.

du Pisani, K. (2001). Puritanism Transformed: Afrikaner Masculinities in the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Period. In R. Morrell (Ed.), *Changing Men in Southern Africa* (pp. 157-176). Univ. of Natal Press.

e.tv. (2023, 22 June). *About.* https://www.etv.co.za/. Retrieved 22 June 2023, from https://www.etv.co.za/about.

Ehlers, N. (2016). Identities. In L. J. Disch, & M. Hawkesworth (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory* (pp. 346-366). Oxford University Press.

Eisend, M. (2010). A Meta-analysis of Gender Roles in Advertising. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 38*(4), 418-440. 10.1007/s11747-009-0181-x.

Eisend, M. (2019). Gender Roles. *Journal of Advertising, 48*, 72-80. 10.4324/9781315664095.

Eisend, M., Plagemann, J., & Sollwedel, J. (2014). Gender Roles and Humor in Advertising: The Occurrence of Stereotyping in Humorous and Nonhumorous Advertising and Its Consequences for Advertising Effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising, 43*(3), 256-273. 10.1080/00913367.2013.857621.

Fausto-Sterling, A. (1992). *Myths of Gender: Biological Theories about Women and Men* (2nd ed.). Basic Books.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006). Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 5*(1), 80-92. 10.1177/160940690600500107.

Fowler, K., & Thomas, V. (2015). A Content Analysis of Male Roles in Television Advertising: Do Traditional Roles Still Hold? *Journal of Marketing Communications, 21*(5), 356-371. 10.1080/13527266.2013.775178.

Frable, D. E. S. (1997). Gender, Racial, Ethnic, Sexual, and Class Identities *Annual Review of Psychology, 48*(1), 139-162. 10.1146/annurev.psych.48.1.139.

Fritzsche, P. (2008). *Life and Death in the Third Reich.* The Belknap Press of Harvard Univ. Press.

Furnham, A., Babitzkow, M., & Uguccioni, S. (2000). Gender Stereotyping in Television Advertisements: A Study of French and Danish Television. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monographs, 126*(1), 79-104.

Furnham, A., & Farragher, E. (2000). A Cross-Cultural Content Analysis of Sex-Role Stereotyping in Television Advertisements: A Comparison Between Great Britain and New Zealand. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 44*(3), 415-436. 10.1207/s15506878jobem4403_5.

Furnham, A., & Lay, A. (2019). The Universality of the Portrayal of Gender in Television Advertisements: A Review of the Studies This Century. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 8*(2), 109-124. 10.1037/ppm0000161.

Furnham, A., & Mak, T. (1999). Sex-Role Stereotyping in Television Commercials: A Review and Comparison of Fourteen Studies Done on Five Continents Over 25 Years. *Sex Roles, 41*(5), 413-437. 10.1023/A:1018826900972.

Furnham, A., Pallangyo, A. E., & Gunter, B. (2001). Gender-role Stereotyping in Zimbabwean Television Advertisements. *South African Journal of Psychology, 31*(2), 21-29. 10.1177/008124630103100203.

Furnham, A., & Paltzer, S. (2010). The Portrayal of Men and Women in Television Advertisements: An Updated Review of 30 Studies Published since 2000. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology, 51*(3), 216-236. 10.1111/j.1467-9450.2009.00772.x.

Furnham, A., & Spencer-Bowdage, S. (2002). Sex Role Stereotyping in Television Advertisements: A Content Analysis of Advertisements from South Africa and Great Britain. *Communications, 27*(4), 457-483.

Galbin, A. (2014). An Introduction to Social Constructionism. *Social Research Reports, 6*(26), 82-92.

Gerbner, G. (1998). Cultivation Analysis: An Overview. *Mass Communication and Society, 1*(3-4), 175-194. 10.1080/15205436.1998.9677855.

Gill, R. (2008). Empowerment/Sexism: Figuring Female Sexual Agency in Contemporary Advertising. *Feminism & Psychology, 18*(1), 35-60. 10.1177/0959353507084950.

Gilly, M. C. (1988). Sex Roles in Advertising: A Comparison of Television Advertisements in Australia, Mexico, and the United States. *Journal of Marketing, 52*, 75-85.

Goffman, E. (1965). *Gender Advertisements*. Harper & Row.

Gqola, P. D. (2007). How the 'cult of femininity' and violent masculinities support endemic gender based violence in contemporary South Africa. *African Identities, 5*(1), 111-124. 10.1080/14725840701253894.

Gqola, P. D. (2016). A peculiar place for a feminist? The New South African woman, True Love magazine and Lebo(gang) Mashile. *Safundi (Nashville, Tenn.), 17*(2), 119-136. 10.1080/17533171.2016.1178470.

Grau, S. L., & Zotos, Y. C. (2016). Gender stereotypes in advertising: a review of current research. *International Journal of Advertising, 35*(5), 761-770. 10.1080/02650487.2016.1203556.

Grossberg, L., Wartella, E., Whitney, D. C., & Wise, J. M. (2006). *Mediamaking: Mass media in a popular culture*. Sage.

Ha, L. (2012). Sampling in international advertising research. In S. Okazaki (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on International Advertising*. Edward Elgar Publishing. 10.4337/9781781001042.

Hall, S. (1997). *Representation: cultural representations and signifying practices*. Sage in association with the Open University.

Hearn, J. (2004). From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men. *Feminist Theory, 5*(1), 49-72. 10.1177/1464700104040813.

Hearn, J. (2007). The problems boys and mean create, the problems boys and men experience. In T. Shefer, K. Ratele, A. Strebel, N. Shabalala & R. Buikema (Eds.), *From Boys to Men: Social Constructions of Masculinity in Contemporary Society* (pp. 13-32).

Holtz-Bacha, C. (2011). Falsche (Vor) Bilder? Frauen und Männer in der Werbung. *Stereotype?* (pp. 9-24). Springer.

Holtzhausen, T., Jordaan, Y., & North, E. J. (2011). The portrayal of women in South African television commercials. *Southern African Business Review, 15*(3).

Horsley, R. (2005). *Men's lifestyle magazines and the construction of male identity* (Doctoral dissertation). http://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.432644.

Ipsos. (2019). *International Women's Day 2019: Global attitudes towards gender equality.* München: http://bvbr.bib-bvb.de:8991/F?func=service&doc_library=BVB01&local_base=BVB01&doc_number=027081131&sequence=000001&line_number=0001&func_code=DB_RECORDS&service_type=MEDIA.

Iqani, M., & Pilane, P. (2016). Miss-represented: A critical analysis of the visibility of black women in South African Glamour magazine. *Communicare: Journal for Communication Sciences in Southern Africa, 35*(1), 126-171. https://journals.co.za/doi/pdf/10.10520/EJC195353.

Ivankova, N. V., Creswell, J. W., & Stick, S. L. (2006). Using Mixed-Methods Sequential Explanatory Design: From Theory to Practice. *Field Methods, 18*(1), 3-20. 10.1177/1525822X05282260.

Jackson, S. (2014). Gendering the Nation and Empire: Anthropological Investigations in Retrospect. *Nexus (Hamilton), 22*, 19-31. 10.15173/nexus.v22i1.18.

Jackson, S. (2018). Why “Heteronormativity” Is Not Enough: A Feminist Sociological Perspective on Heterosexuality. *Gender Reckonings* (pp. 134-155). NYU Press. 10.18574/9781479866342-009.

Jahnz, C. (2016). *Geschlechterrollen in deutschen Frauenzeitschriften 1941 bis 1955* (Master’s thesis). http://charlottejahnz.de/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Masterarbeit_online.pdf.

Jordaan, Y., & Maree, T. (2016). Rainbow nation, rainbow advertising? Racial diversity of female portrayals in South African television commercials. *Gender & Behaviour, 14*(1), 6814-6825.

KANTAR TN. (2020). *The Establishment Survey*. Broadcast Research Council of South Africa, Publisher Research Council. https://695618.n3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ES_Mar20-release_.pdf.

Kassarjian, H. H. (1969). The Negro and American Advertising, 1946-1965. *Journal of Marketing Research (JMR), 6*(1), 29-39. 10.2307/3149994.

Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher, 42*(8), 846-854. 10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030.

Kilbourne, J. (2010). Socialization and the Power of Advertising. In J. J. Macionis, & N. V. Benokraitis (Eds.), *Seeing ourselves: classic, contemporary, and cross-cultural readings in sociology* (8th ed., pp. 83-88). Prentice Hall.

Knoll, S., Eisend, M., & Steinhagen, J. (2011). Gender roles in advertising. *International Journal of Advertising, 30*(5), 867-888. 10.2501/IJA-30-5-867-888.

Knopf, K., & Schneikart, M. (2007). Sex/ismus und Medien. Paper presented at the *Herbsttagung 2004 Des Zentrum Für Interdisziplinäre Frauen- Und Geschlechterforschung, 44.* https://d-nb.info/1192187997/34.

Koestner, R., & Aube, J. (1995). A Multifactorial Approach to the Study of Gender Characteristics. *Journal of Personality, 63*(3), 681-710. 10.1111/j.1467-6494.1995.tb00510.x.

Kotelmann, J., & Mikos, L. (1981). *Frühjahrsputz und Südseezauber: die Darstellung der Frau in der Fernsehwerbung und das Bewusstsein von Zuschauerinnen*. Baur.

Krippendorff, K. (2004). *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Langa, M. (2020). *Becoming Men: Black Masculinities in a South African Township*. Wits University Press.

Lazar, M. M. (2006). Discover The Power Of Femininity! *Feminist Media Studies, 6*(4), 505-517. 10.1080/14680770600990002.

Lazreg, M. (2005). Decolonizing Feminism. In O. Oyěwùmí (Ed.), *African gender studies: a reader* (1st ed., pp. 67-80). Palgrave Macmillan. 10.1007/978-1-137-09009-6.

Lee, W., & Yoo, J. J. (2012). Understanding the Role of Culture in Advertising. *Handbook of Research on International Advertising*. Edward Elgar Publishing. 10.4337/9781781001042.00010.

Ligaga, D. (2020). *Women, visibility and morality in Kenyan popular media*. NISC (Pty) Ltd. 10.2307/j.ctvxcrxrj.

Lim, G., & Furnham, A. (2016). The Universality of the Portrayal of Gender in Television Advertisements: An East-West Comparison. *Psychology (Irvine, Calif.), 7*(13), 1608-1623. 10.4236/psych.2016.713154.

Lindegger, G., & Maxwell, J. (2008). Teenage masculinity: the double find of conformity to hegemonic standards. In T. Shefer, K. Ratele, A. Strebel, N. Shabalala & R. Buikema (Eds.), *From Boys to Men* (pp. 94-111). UCT Press.

Lippa, R. A. (2005). *Gender, Nature, and Nurture* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 10.4324/9781410612946.

Lippmann, W. (1922). Stereotypes. (pp. 79-94). MacMillan Co. 10.1037/14847-006.

Lorber, J. (2018). Paradoxes of Gender Redux: Multiple Genders and the Persistence of the Binary. *Gender Reckonings* (pp. 297-313). NYU Press. 10.18574/9781479866342-017.

Luyt, R. (2003). Rhetorical representations of masculinities in South Africa: moving towards a material-discursive understanding of men. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 13*(1), 46-69. 10.1002/casp.706.

Luyt, R. (2005). The Male Attitude Norms Inventory-II. A Measure of Masculinity Ideology in South Africa. *Men and Masculinities, 8*(2), 208-229. 10.1177/1097184X04264631.

Luyt, R. (2011). Representation of Gender in South African Television Advertising: A Content Analysis. *Sex Roles, 65*(5), 356-370. 10.1007/s11199-011-0027-0.

Luyt, R. (2012). Representation of masculinities and race in South African television advertising: a content analysis. *Journal of Gender Studies, 21*(1), 35-60. 10.1080/09589236.2012.639176.

Mark, S., & Trapido, S. (2014). The politics of race, class and nationalism. In S. Marks, & S. Trapido (Eds.), *The Politics of Race, Class and Nationalism in Twentieth Century South Africa* (pp. 1-70). Routledge. 10.4324/9781315835808-9.

Masina, N. L. (2010). *Black like me: Representations of Black women in advertisements placed in contemporary South African magazines*.

Matthes, J., Prieler, M., & Adam, K. (2016). Gender-Role Portrayals in Television Advertising Across the Globe. *Sex Roles, 75*(7), 314-327. 10.1007/s11199-016-0617-y.

McArthur, L. Z., & Resko, B. G. (1975). The portrayal of men and women in American television commercials. *The Journal of Social Psychology, 97*(2), 209. https://search.proquest.com/docview/1290627221.

McClintock, A. (1991). "No Longer in a Future Heaven": Women and Nationalism in South Africa. *Transition (Kampala, Uganda), 51*(51), 104-123. 10.2307/2935081.

McClintock, A. (1995). "No Longer in a Future Heaven": Women and Nationalism in South Africa. In A. Mcclintock (Ed.), *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (1st ed., pp. 352-389). Routledge. 10.4324/9780203699546.

Meuser, M. (2010). *Geschlecht und Männlichkeit. Soziologische Theorie und kulturelle Deutungsmuster.* (3rd ed.). Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften (GWV). doi:rg/10.1007/978-3-531-92046-7. Retrieved from https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-531-92046-7.

Mfecane, S. (2016). "Ndiyindoda" [I am a man]: theorising Xhosa masculinity. *Anthropology Southern Africa, 39*(3), 204-214. 10.1080/23323256.2016.1208535.

Mfecane, S. (2018). Towards African-centred theories of masculinity. *Social Dynamics, 44*(2), 291-305. 10.1080/02533952.2018.1481683.

Mfecane, S. (2020). Decolonising Men and Masculinities Research in South Africa. *South African Review of Sociology, 51*(2), 1-15. 10.1080/21528586.2020.1803763.

Mihas, P., & Odum Institute. (2019). Learn to build a codebook for a generic qualitative study. *SAGE Research Methods Datasets Part 2*. SAGE Publications, Ltd.

Milner, L. M. (2005). Sex-role portrayals in African television advertising: A preliminary examination with implications for the use of Hofstede's research. *Journal of International Consumer Marketing, 17*(2-3), 73-91.

Milner, L. M. (2007). Race Portrayals in Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa Television Advertisements. *Journal of African Business, 8*(2), 41-59. 10.1300/J156v08n02_04.

Milner, L. M., & Higgs, B. (2004). *Gender Sex-Role Portrayals in International Television Advertising Over Time: The Australian Experience.*

Minh-Ha, T. T. (1989). *Woman, Native, Other* (1st ed.). Indiana University Press.

Mohanty, C. T. (1984). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Boundary 2, 12/13*(3), 333-35. 10.2307/302821.

Mohanty, C. T. (2003). *Feminism without borders: Decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity*. Duke University Press.

Moolman, B. (2013). Rethinking 'masculinities in transition' in South Africa considering the 'intersectionality' of race, class, and sexuality with gender. *African Identities, 11*(1), 93-105. 10.1080/14725843.2013.775843.

Morrell, R. (1998). Of boys and men: masculinity and gender in Southern African studies. *Journal of Southern African Studies, 24*(4), 605-630. 10.1080/03057079808708593.

Morrell, R. (2001a). *Changing men in Southern Africa* (1. publ. ed.). Univ. of Natal Press [u.a.].

Morrell, R. (2001b). *From boys to gentlemen: Settler masculinity in Colonial Natal, 1880-1920*. Unisa Press.

Morrell, R. (2001c). The Time of Change: Men and Masculinity in South Africa. In R. Morrell (Ed.), *Changing men in Southern Africa* (pp. 3-37). Univ. of Natal Press.

Morrell, R., & Clowes, L. (2016). *The Emergence of Gender Scholarship in South Africa – reflections on Southern Theory*. University of Cape Town. Retrieved from http://cssr.uct.ac.za/pub/wp/359/.

Morrell, R., Jewkes, R., & Lindegger, G. (2012). Hegemonic Masculinity/Masculinities in South Africa. *Men and Masculinities, 15*(1), 11-30. 10.1177/1097184X12438001.

Morrell, R., Jewkes, R., Lindegger, G., & Hamlall, V. (2013). Hegemonic Masculinity: Reviewing the Gendered Analysis of Men's Power in South Africa. *South African Review of Sociology, 44*(1), 3-21. 10.1080/21528586.2013.784445.

Müller, D. (2015). Die Darstellung ethnischer Minderheiten in deutschen Massenmedien. In R. Geißler, & H. Pöttker (Eds.), *Massenmedien und die Integration ethnischer Minderheiten in Deutschland* (pp. 83-126). Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

doi:10.1515/9783839402801-004. Retrieved from http://www.degruyter.com/doi/10.1515/9783839402801-004.

Mwangi, M. W. (1996). Gender Roles Portrayed in Kenyan Television Commercials. *Sex Roles, 34*(3), 205. https://search.proquest.com/docview/1308098639.

Narunsky-Laden, S. (2008). Identity in post-apartheid South Africa: 'Learning to belong' through the (commercial) media. In A. Hadland, E. Louw, S. Sesanti & H. Wasserman (Eds.), *Power, politics and identity in South African media: selected seminar papers* (pp. 124-148). HSRC Press.

Neuendorf, K. A. (2011). *Content Analysis—A Methodological Primer for Gender Research*. Springer US. 10.1007/s11199-010-9893-0.

Neuendorf, K. A. (2017). *The Content Analysis Guidebook*. SAGE Publications, Inc. 10.4135/9781071802878.

Nielsen. (2021). *COVID-19 Television Viewing.* Retrieved from https://dashboard-eu-iport.nielsen-iwatch.com/#live/aace0493-334e-4492-8ac5-bf134e14b35a.

Nielsen. (2022). *TV Audience Measurement Study (TAMS): TV Market Overview*. Broadcast Research Council of South Africa (BRC). Retrieved from https://695618.n3cdn1.secureserver.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TAMS-TV-Market-Overview-February-2022.pdf.

Nielsen, M. (2016). Die heile Welt in der Werbung - stereotype als Bestandteil von Werbestil. *Linguistik Online, 79*(5), 231. 10.13092/lo.79.3345.

OECD Development Centre. (2019). *From promises to action: Addressing discriminatory social institutions to accelerate gender equality in G20 countries.*

Omona, J. (2013). Sampling in Qualitative Research: Improving the Quality of Research Outcomes in Higher Education. *Makerere Journal of Higher Education, 4*(2), 169-185. http://dx.doi.org/10.4314/majohe.v4i2.4.

Oyěwùmí, O. (2002). Conceptualizing Gender: The Eurocentric Foundations of Feminist Concepts and the Challenge of African Epistemologies. *JENdA: A Journal of Culture and African Women Studies, 2*(1).

Paavola, A. (2015). *The Value of a Woman: Representations of Femininity in the Advertisements of Vogue Magazine* (Master's thesis). https://www.openaire.eu/search/publication?articleId=od_____1073::76110a07c319bc1f656e357a938cc640.

Paek, H., Nelson, M. R., & Vilela, A. M. (2010). Examination of Gender-role Portrayals in Television Advertising across Seven Countries. *Sex Roles, 64*(3-4), 192-207. 10.1007/s11199-010-9850-y.

Pallant, J. (2010). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS* (4th ed.). Open University Press/McGraw-Hill.

Parsons, T. (1956). The American Family: Its Relations to Personality and to the Social Structure. In T. Parsons, & R. F. Bales (Eds.), *Family: Socialization and Interaction Process* (pp. 21-52). Routledge. 10.4324/9781315824307-7.

Persard, S. C. (2021). The Radical Limits of Decolonising Feminism. *Feminist Review, 128*(1), 13-27. 10.1177/01417789211015334.

Posel, D. (2004). Have Migration Patterns in Post-Apartheid South Africa Changed? *Journal of Interdisciplinary Economics, 15*(3-4), 277-292. 10.1177/02601079X04001500303.

Pressestelle Statistisches Bundesamt. (2023, Dec 11,). *Ergebnisveröffentlichung verschiebt sich in den Sommer 2024.* https://www.zensus2022.de/. Retrieved 15 December 2023, from https://www.zensus2022.de/DE/Aktuelles/Zensus_2022_Ergebnisveroeffentlichung_verschiebt_sich_in_Sommer_2024.html.

ProSiebenSat.1 Media, A. G. (2000). *Annual Report 2000.* Munich: ProSiebenSat.1 Media AG. Retrieved from https://www.prosiebensat1.com/uploads/2015/11/03/gb00_en.pdf.

Ratele, K. (2008a). Analysing Males in Africa: Certain Useful Elements in Considering Ruling Masculinities. *African and Asian Studies, 7*(4), 515-536. 10.1163/156921008X359641.

Ratele, K. (2008b). Ruling masculinities in post-apartheid South Africa. In A. Cornwall, S. Corrêa & S. Jolly (Eds.), *Development with a Body: Sexuality, Human Rights and Development* (pp. 121-135). Zed Books.

Ratele, K. (2016). *Liberating Masculinities* (1st ed.). HSRC Press.

Ratele, K., & Shefer, T. (2013). Desire, Fear and Entitlement: Sexualising Race and Racialising Sexuality in (Re)membering Apartheid. *Race, Memory and the Apartheid Archive* (pp. 188-207). Palgrave Macmillan UK. 10.1057/9781137263902_10.

Richards, C., Bouman, W. P., Seal, L., Barker, M. J., Nieder, T. O., & T'Sjoen, G. (2016). Non-binary or genderqueer genders. *International Review of Psychiatry (Abingdon, England); Int Rev Psychiatry, 28*(1), 95-102. 10.3109/09540261.2015.1106446.

Richards, J. I., & Curran, C. M. (2002). Oracles on Advertising: Searching for a Definition. *Journal of Advertising, 31*(2), 63-77. 10.1080/00913367.2002.10673667.

Riffe, D., Lacy, S., Watson, B. R., & Fico, F. (2019). *Analyzing Media Messages* (4th ed.). Routledge. 10.4324/9780429464287.

RTL Group. (2023, Oct,). *History.* https://company.rtl.com/en/homepage/. Retrieved 8 November 2023, from https://company.rtl.com/en/about-rtl/overview/our-history/.

RTL Group SA. (2023, *Profile.* https://company.rtl.com/en/. Retrieved 8 November 2023, from https://company.rtl.com/en/about-rtl/overview/profile/.

Rudy, R., Popova, L., & Linz, D. (2010). The Context of Current Content Analysis of Gender Roles: An Introduction to a Special Issue. *Sex Roles, 62*(11), 705-720. 10.1007/s11199-010-9807-1.

Rudy, R., Popova, L., & Linz, D. (2011). Contributions to the Content Analysis of Gender Roles: An Introduction to a Special Issue. *Sex Roles, 64*(3), 151-159. 10.1007/s11199-011-9937-0.

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed.). SAGE.

Sayers, J. (1982). *Biological politics: feminist and anti-feminist perspectives*. Tavistock Publications.

Schilt, K. (2018). From Object to Subject: Situating Transgender Lives in Sociology. *Gender Reckonings* (pp. 57-70). NYU Press. 10.18574/9781479866342-005.

Schneider, K. C., & Schneider, S. B. (1979). Trends in Sex Roles in Television Commercials. *Journal of Marketing, 43*(Summer), 79-84. 10.2307/1250149.

Shain, M. (1996). South Africa. In D. S. Wyman (Ed.), *The World reacts to the Holocaust* (pp. 670-692). Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sheehan, K. (2004). *Controversies in contemporary advertising*. Sage Publications.

Shefer, T. (2013). Intersections of 'Race', Sex and Gender in Narratives on Apartheid. *Race, Memory and the Apartheid Archive* (pp. 169-187). Palgrave Macmillan UK. 10.1057/9781137263902_9.

Shefer, T., Ratele, K., Strebel, A., Shabalala, N., & Buikema, R. (2007). *From boys to men: Social constructions of masculinity in contemporary society*. UCT Press.

Silverstein, A. J., & Silverstein, R. (1974). The Portrayal of Women in Television Advertising. *Federal Communications Bar Journal, 27*(1), 71-93.

South African Broadcasting Corporation (SOC) Limited. (2021). *Annual Report 2021.* Johannesburg: South African Broadcasting Corporation (SOC) Limited. http://web.sabc.co.za/digital/stage/corporateaffairs/SABC_Annual_Report_2021_-_2022.pdf.

Spence, J. T., & Buckner, C. (1995). Masculinity and Femininity: Defining the Undefinable . *Gender, Power, and Communication in Human Relationships* (pp. 111-144). Routledge. 10.4324/9780203052792-12.

Statista. (2019). *African advertising industry - Statistics & Facts.* Statista. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/topics/4881/advertising-in-africa/.

Statista. (2021a). *Advertising in Germany - Statistics & Facts.* Statista. Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/topics/6261/advertising-in-germany/.

Statista. (2021b). *Fernsehkonsum: Entwicklung der Sehdauer in Deutschland bis 2020.* Statista. Retrieved from https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/118/umfrage/fernsehkonsum-entwicklung-der-sehdauer-seit-1997/#professional.

Statistics South Africa. (2012). *Census 2011: Census in brief.* Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. http://www.statssa.gov.za/census/census_2011/census_products/Census_2011_Census_in_brief.pdf.

Statistics South Africa. (2016). *Community Survey 2016 in Brief.* Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. http://cs2016.statssa.gov.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CS-in-brief-14-07-2017-with-cover_1.pdf.

Statistics South Africa. (2019). *Mid-year population estimates 2019.* https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022019.pdf.

Statistics South Africa. (2020). *General Household Survey 2019.* http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0318/P03182019.pdf.

Statistics South Africa. (2022). *Mid-year population estimates.* Pretoria: Statistics South Africa. https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/P0302/P03022022.pdf.

Statistics South Africa. (2023). *MEDIA RELEASE: Census 2022 Population Count Results 10 October 2023.* https://www.statssa.gov.za/. Retrieved 15 December 2023, from https://www.statssa.gov.za/?p=16716.

Statistische Ämter des Bundes und der Länder. (2016). *Vielfältiges Deutschland: Zensus 2011 – endgültige Ergebnisse.* Retrieved from https://www.zensus2011.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Publikationen/Aufsaetze_Archiv/2016_12_NRW_Zensus_Vielfalt.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=2.

Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis). (2016). *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerungsfortschreibung auf Grundlage des Zensus 2011.* Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis). https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Bevoelkerungsstand/Publikationen/Downloads-

Bevoelkerungsstand/bevoelkerungsfortschreibung-2010130167004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis). (2020). *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund – Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus 2019.* https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Publikationen/Downloads-Migration/migrationshintergrund-2010220197004.pdf?__blob=publicationFile.

Stevenson, J. (2011). "The Mamas Were Ripe": Ideologies of Motherhood and Public Resistance in a South African Township. *Feminist Formations, 23*(2), 132-163. 10.1353/ff.2011.0027.

Stibbe, M. (2012). In and Beyond the Racial State: Gender and National Socialism, 1933-1955. *Politics, Religion & Ideology, 13*(2), 159-178. 10.1080/21567689.2012.675712.

Sulelo, N. (2016). *Re-narrating and re-masculating the 'brute' in the first season of eKasi: our stories* (Master of Arts). http://hdl.handle.net/10539/19879.

Swain, J. (2018). A Hybrid Approach to Thematic Analysis in Qualitative Research: Using a Practical Example. *Sage Research Methods Cases Part 2.* SAGE Publications, Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526435477.

Swart, S. (2001). 'Man, gun and horse': Hard right Afrikaner masculine identity in post-apartheid South Africa. In R. Morrell (Ed.), *Changing men in Southern Africa* (pp. 75-90). Univ. of Natal Press.

Tan, T. T. W., Ling, L. B., & Theng, E. P. C. (2002). Gender-role portrayals in Malaysian and Singaporean television commercials: an international advertising perspective. *Journal of Business Research, 55*(10), 853-861. 10.1016/S0148-2963(00)00225-3.

Taylor, C. R., Lee, J. Y., & Stern, B. B. (1995). Portrayals of African, Hispanic, and Asian Americans in Magazine Advertising. *American Behavioral Scientist, 38*(4), 608-621. 10.1177/0002764295038004010.

Taylor, C. R., & Stern, B. B. (1997). Asian-Americans: Television Advertising and the "Model Minority" Stereotype. *Journal of Advertising, 26*(2), 47-61. 10.1080/00913367.1997.10673522.

The Broadcast Research Council of South Africa. (2022). *TAMS TV Market Overview: February 2022.* Nielsen. Retrieved from https://brcsa.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/TAMS-TV-Market-Overview-February-2022.pdf.

The Museum of Modern Art (Producer), & Thomas, H. W. (Director). (2016, 10.02.). *Hank Willis Thomas: Unbranded* | *ARTIST STORIES.* [Video/DVD] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YdR0GOLF918.

UNESCO. (2020). *Promise of Gender Equality: Key actions 2018 - 2019.* Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

Uray, N., & Burnaz, S. (2003). An analysis of the portrayal of gender roles in Turkish television advertisements. *Sex Roles, 48*(1-2), 77-87. 10.1023/A:1022348813469.

Velte, J. (1995). Die Darstellung von Frauen in den Medien. *Frauen und Medien* (pp. 181-253). Springer.

Vennemann, A., & Holtz-Bacha, C. (2011). Mehr als Frühjahrsputz und Südseezauber? Frauenbilder in der Fernsehwerbung und ihre Rezeption. In C. Holtz-Bacha (Ed.), *Stereotype? Frauen und Männer in der Werbung* (pp. 88-118). Springer.

Viljoen, S. (2008). Masculine ideals in post-apartheid South Africa: The rise of men's glossies. In A. Hadland, E. Louw, S. Sesanti & H. Wasserman (Eds.), *Power, politics and identity in South African media* (pp. 312-342). Human Sciences Research Council Cape Town.

Voges, M. M., Giabbiconi, C., Schöne, B., Waldorf, M., Hartmann, A. S., & Vocks, S. (2019). Gender Differences in Body Evaluation: Do Men Show More Self-Serving Double Standards Than Women? *Frontiers in Psychology; Front Psychol, 10*, 544. 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00544.

Waetjen, T., & Maré, G. (2001). 'Men amongst men': Masculinity and Zulu nationalism in the 1980s. In R. Morrell (Ed.), *Changing men in Southern Africa* (pp. 195-208). Univ. of Natal Press.

Walker, C. E., Krumhuber, E. G., Dayan, S., & Furnham, A. (2021). Effects of social media use on desire for cosmetic surgery among young women. *Current Psychology, 40*(7), 3355-3364. 10.1007/s12144-019-00282-1.

Walker, C. (1990). Gender and the development of the migrant labour system, c. 1850-1930: An overview. In C. Walker (Ed.), *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945* (pp. 168–196). David Philip Publishers.

Walker, L. (2005). Men behaving differently: South African men since 1994. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, 7*(3), 225-238. 10.1080/13691050410001713215.

Wang, S. (2018). *Empowering Women Through Advertising: A Content Analysis on 'Femvertising' Campaigns* https://opensiuc.lib.siu.edu/theses/2318.

Wee, C., Choong, M., & Tambyah, S. (1995). Sex role portrayal in television advertising. *International Marketing Review, 12*(1), 49-64. 10.1108/02651339510080098.

West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. (1987). Doing Gender. *Gender & Society, 1*(2), 125-151. 10.1177/0891243287001002002.

Whitelock, J., & Jackson, D. (1997). Women in TV advertising: a comparison between the UK and France. *European Business Review, 97*(6), 294-305. 10.1108/09555349710189996.

Williamson, J. (1978). *Decoding advertisements: ideology and meaning in advertising*. Boyars: Distributed by Calder and Boyars.

ZDF German Television. (2022), *Facts and Figures 2022.* https://www.zdf.de. Retrieved 18 December 2023, from https://www.zdf.de/assets/factsheet-100~original.

APPENDICES

A Qualitative Sample

The qualitative sample data for South African and German television commercials is available from the researcher upon request.

Table 27: Qualitative Sample South Africa (N=30)

	Brand	Channel	Time	Date
1	Doom			
2	Iberogast	SABC2	14-16	30/04/20
3	Securex Soap			
4	ACC 200			
5	Kotex	e.tv	12-14	01/05/20
6	Spar			
7	Fattis & Monis			
8	LifeBuoy			
9	Buysmart Tastic	SABC1	18-20	02/05/20
10	Buysmart Albany Tamperproof			
11	MiWay	SABC3	20-22	03/05/20
12	Hippo			
13	Nestle Cerelac Little			
14	Calpol			
15	Ingram's	e.tv	16-18	26/05/20
16	Grand-Pa			
17	Disprin			
18	PediaSure			
19	Disprin			
20	TransAct			
21	Clientèle Rewards	e.tv	20-22	15/06/20
22	Shoprite			
23	Lux			
24	Robertsons			
25	Shield			
26	1Life Insurance	SABC1	14-16	16/06/20
27	Voltaren Emugel	SABC1	20-22	19/06/20
28	Chicken Licken			
29	Nestle Nido 3 Plus	SABC1	10-12	23/06/20
30	LifeBuoy	SABC3	10-12	28/06/20

Table 28: Qualitative Sample Germany (N=30)

	Brand	Channel	Time	Date
1	Hyaluron Sanfte Bräune	ZDF	18-20	05/05/20
2	Vitasprint B12			
3	Voltaren Schmerzgel Forte	ARD	16-18	11/05/20
4	SKY	SAT.1	20-22	12/05/20
5	NIVEA Q10 POWER			
6	Ibuprofen Schmerzgel			
7	Appenzeller			
8	Nintendo Switch	RTL	14-16	13/05/20
9	Persil Discs			
10	Dermasence	ARD	18-20	13/05/20
11	Dyson V11	VOX	16-18	20/05/20
12	M.Asam Magic Finish Volume Mascara			
13	Gingium	ARD	14-16	25/05/20
14	Bauhaus	SAT.1	12-14	13/06/20
15	MAXCARE			
16	Facebook	VOX	20-22	13/06/20
17	Bauhaus			
18	Calgon			
19	Homeday			
20	bett1.de			
21	Tink	SAT.1	18-20	14/06/20
22	Otto			
23	Swiffer			
24	IKEA			
25	Shop Apotheke	RTL	10-12	15/06/20
26	Odol-med 3			
27	NIVEA Vital Strahlender Teint	RTL	18-20	19/06/20
28	Provinzial Versicherung			
29	VitaSprint B12	ZDF	16-18	27/06/20
30	Tebonin			

B Transcripts of Selected Advertisements

The full transcripts, from which quotes were extracted to exemplify specific variables, are included in this section. These transcripts are referenced in Chapter 8.4.

Iberogast (South Africa)

We see a middle-aged white man entering an office and interacting with a colleague. The man is attractive, with full, short brown hair, a full beard, and dressed in office attire. Following the conversation with his colleague, he is depicted holding his stomach in pain, a scene conveyed through an overlay featuring the product. Subsequently, he is seen outdoors, kneeling down to embrace his two children—a boy and a girl—who eagerly run towards him. The narrative conveys the message, ”Life is beautiful and sometimes quite a big challenge for us and for a stomach. Iberogast relieves multiple digestive symptoms effectively and quickly brings you back into life. Iberogast, Nature's healing power”.

Doom (South Africa)

We observe a young, attractive black woman wearing a beautiful red dress as she serves plates full of food to her partner in their kitchen. She sports a short afro and earrings. As her partner leans in to kiss her on the cheek from the counter, a sudden appearance of a cockroach is observed from an onlooker's perspective. The woman lets out a small shriek, and her partner quickly grabs a masher in an attempt to eliminate the insect. Her handsome black partner, with neatly tied dreadlocks and a beard, wears black glasses, a buttoned shirt, and a watch. The couple's humorous attempts at getting rid of the bug involve using various items from their kitchen. Eventually, the woman takes matters into her own hands and effectively eliminates the pest using Doom spray. She then places the can beside the lifeless insect. Throughout the scene, we hear the cockroach mock the couple: “Ya, Mapasa. I was the *vat* to your *sit*. Then

you klapped me with your slippers, but I survived. Ya, now this cockroach is back, sisi. Mh-hm. Your visitors will love it when they see me and taste me in your chakalaka. I even dressed your salad with a little something-something. Hehehe. You should have used fast, deadly Doom. *Fast. Deadly. Doom*.

Calpol (South Africa)

We observe a middle-aged black woman transferring cookies from a pan to a plate. She is attractive, slim, and dressed casually with an apron on top. She has a natural look with no makeup. Her son eagerly attempts to grab cookies from the plate, and she bends down to stop him. The son, with an afro, is seen next with a helmet, and his fallen bike suggests a mishap. The mom applies a plaster to his arm and offers a comforting hug. Transitioning to the lounge, she takes the phone away from him, and he complains. In the next scene, she's sleeping in bed, and the boy wakes her up. After lifting him over her shoulder and checking his temperature, she administers the product, and they share a smile. The boy grabs a cookie, playfully placing it on his cheek, and she responds with a playful smile. The scene concludes with her holding him with a cookie in her mouth, and the little boy seems amused. VO: “Parenting is not easy. Some days, you've got to be tough mum. Other days, gentle mom. Tough mum, gentle mom. But when it comes to fever you need to be both. Calpol starts to work on fever in 15 minutes and is gentle on the tummy. Mhm! Tough call. Calpol. Tough on fever, gentle on your child.”

Hippo (South Africa)

We see a hand on a laptop in a living room. A young, overweight black man reads out loud: "Cheap car insurance!" Beside him, a plush hippo taps him on the shoulder and grunts disapprovingly. The man, dressed casually with short hair, defends himself while pointing at his laptop: "What? It'll be quick and easy". The hippo responds with a sarcastic grunt, tilting its

head mockingly. “It was one time,” the man retorts. The scene shifts, and the title reads "That one time". We now see the man and the hippo sitting at a kitchen table. The man excitedly circles a job ad in the newspaper for "Fish in Alaska. No experience needed! Earn $20,000!" Next, we see a large ship in rough seas, with the man and hippo in their raincoats holding onto the ship's rail. Cut to the man wrapped in an emergency blanket in a medical tent, with an attractive middle-aged white man wearing a red vest - the doctor - inspecting his bandaged hand. The doctor diagnoses the man with frostbite, and the man's face swells as he exclaims, "What??" The doctor clarifies, avoiding eye contact and gesturing to his face, "You're allergic to shellfish". We're back in the man's living room, where he holds his wooden hand over his lips, reminiscing about the memory and then looking at the hippo. The hippo frantically types on the laptop, using the service advertised, and the man claps his hands lightly, showing his wooden hand again, nodding approvingly. The tagline reads: "Before you commit, hippo it. I compare car insurance costs to find the right one for you with just a few clicks".

Bauhaus (Germany)

We see an attractive, slim middle-aged white man with a grey beard and short dark hair standing in his garden, looking disappointedly at a messy corner. He wears a buttoned shirt, shakes his head, and walks towards the mess. The scene transitions to him digging soil, planting flowers, and using an electric lawn mower. Later, he hovers over a tall bush, cutting it. A young attractive woman turns around and admires the surroundings. She has shoulder-length blonde hair and wears stylish clothes. Kneeling, she touches the flowers, then smiles at her husband. Spotting a birdhouse, she expresses joy and hugs her husband. “Zuhause ist, was ihr draus macht. Denn mit schönen Pflanzen und den richtigen Maschinen wird alles ein bisschen besser. Damit der Garten auch dein Herz aufblühen lässt. Bauhaus. Wenn’s gut werden muss.“

Voltaren Schmerzgel Forte (Germany)

We are transported to a cosy living room where an older woman, dressed in casual attire with a chic bob haircut, sits on her couch accompanied by her pug. She is white and relatively slim. The woman opens her laptop and clicks on a video titled "Voltaren Forte, jetzt neu mit Klickverschluss". The voice-over says, “Probieren Sie Voltaren Schmerzgel forte. Neu, mit leicht zu öffnenden Klickverschluss”. As the woman applies the gel to her lower back, her dog thinks to himself, “Hm! Damit will sie wieder Sport machen. Ich nicht!” (*Looks like she's getting ready for another workout. Not me!*). The voice-over explains “Der entzündungshemmende Wirkstoff von Voltaren reichert sich direkt im Gewebe an und lindert so akute Rückenschmerzen bis zu 12 Stunden”. Suddenly, we see the woman and two other older women practicing yoga on mats in a park. The dog takes on the role of their yoga instructor, demonstrating the yoga pose “downward facing dog”. The women follow his lead with smiles on their faces. The pug thinks/says, “Och, daran könnte ich mich gewöhnen.” “Voltaren. Wieder Freude an Bewegung. Zu Risiken und Nebenwirkungen lesen sie die Packungsbeilage und fragen sie ihren Arzt oder Apotheker“.

NIVEA Vital Strahlender Teint (Germany)

We see a graceful older white woman with a ponytail of grey hair and wrinkles, smiling at herself in the mirror. She touches her skin and marvels at her reflection. Wearing a wedding ring, a tank top, and tasteful makeup, she exudes confidence. Next, we see her joyfully running on the beach with a young woman and two dogs, dressed in snug workout clothes that highlight her slim physique. As the scene shifts, she closes her eyes and takes a deep breath, savouring the fresh air. Back at home, she opens the product, inhales its fragrance, and gently applies it to her cheek. Finally, she beams at the camera, clutching a large bouquet of roses. While we see these scenes, the voiceover states: „Mein Geheimnis für eine frische Ausstrahlung? Ganz einfach: Bewegung, Gelassenheit mit meiner neue Tagespflege. Nivea Vital strahlender Teint

mit wertvollem Rosenblütenöl und reichhaltiger Pflege lässt sie anspruchsvolle Haut aufblühen. Neu von Nivea, Vital strahlender Teint. Jetzt bestellen auf nivea.de“ (*My secret for a fresh glow? Simple: exercise and my new daily skincare. Nivea Vital Radiant Complexion with precious rose oil and nourishing care revitalizes demanding skin. Newly launched by Nivea, Vital Radiant Complexion. Order now at nivea.de*)

M.Asam Magic Finish Volume Mascara (Germany)

We are introduced to a beautiful young white woman with blonde hair, seated in a café, using a spoon as a makeshift mirror to apply her mascara. In the next scene, she is joined by another woman, and the two joyfully run through the city streets. Two other women make an appearance, with one of them using her friend's sunglasses as a mirror to apply mascara in the middle of the street. All the women are stylishly dressed and effortlessly slender. Cut to a dressing room, where a stylist is applying mascara to a young white woman's eyelashes. The voice-over explains, “Magic Finish Volume Mascara. Mehr Volumen, extra Länge, dichte Wimpern. Perfekt aussehen in einer Minute. Magic finish Volume Mascara mit Spider Technology, für extra Länge und verführerisch dichte Wimpern”. In the next scene, a brown-haired woman holds up a two-panel image of herself in front of her face, then breaks the panels apart to reveal her beautifully made-up face. “Jetzt auf asambeauty.com”. The commercial concludes with a gorgeous brown-haired woman applying mascara and lipstick while playfully flirting with the camera on the street.

C Quantitative Sample

The quantitative data of television commercials is available from the researcher upon request.

Table 29: Quantitative Sample

	Channel	Date	Time	Day
1	ARD	05-05-22	10:00-12:00	Thursday
2	ARD	14-05-22	12:00-14:00	Saturday
3	ARD	23-05-22	14:00-16:00	Monday
4	ARD	01-06-22	16:00-18:00	Wednesday
5	ARD	10-06-22	18:00-20:00	Friday
6	ARD	28-06-22	18:00-20:00	Tuesday
7	e.tv	24-05-22	10:00-12:00	Tuesday
8	e.tv	30-06-22	12:00-14:00	Thursday
9	e.tv	28-05-22	14:00-16:00	Saturday
10	e.tv	06-06-22	16:00-18:00	Monday
11	e.tv	15-06-22	18:00-20:00	Wednesday
12	e.tv	24-06-22	20:00-22:00	Friday
13	e.tv	17-07-22	20:00-22:00	Sunday
14	RTL	07-05-22	10:00-12:00	Saturday
15	RTL	16-05-22	12:00-14:00	Monday
16	RTL	25-05-22	14:00-16:00	Wednesday
17	RTL	03-06-22	16:00-18:00	Friday
18	RTL	12-06-22	18:00-20:00	Sunday
19	RTL	30-06-22	18:00-20:00	Thursday
20	RTL	19-07-22	20:00-22:00	Tuesday
21	SABC1	11-05-22	10:00-12:00	Wednesday
22	SABC1	20-05-22	12:00-14:00	Friday
23	SABC1	29-05-22	14:00-16:00	Sunday
24	SABC1	07-06-22	16:00-18:00	Tuesday
25	SABC1	16-06-22	18:00-20:00	Thursday
26	SABC1	18-07-22	18:00-20:00	Monday
27	SABC1	16-07-22	20:00-22:00	Saturday
28	SABC2	12-05-22	10:00-12:00	Thursday
29	SABC2	16-07-22	12:00-14:00	Saturday
30	SABC2	30-05-22	14:00-16:00	Monday
31	SABC2	08-06-22	16:00-18:00	Wednesday
32	SABC2	17-06-22	18:00-20:00	Friday
33	SABC2	19-07-22	18:00-20:00	Tuesday
34	SABC2	10-07-22	20:00-22:00	Sunday
35	SABC3	13-05-22	10:00-12:00	Friday
36	SABC3	26-06-22	12:00-14:00	Sunday
37	SABC3	31-05-22	14:00-16:00	Tuesday
38	SABC3	09-06-22	16:00-18:00	Thursday
39	SABC3	13-07-22*	18:00-20:00	Wednesday
40	SABC3	16-07-22*	18:00-20:00	Saturday
41	SABC3	27-06-22	20:00-22:00	Monday
42	SAT.1	08-05-22	10:00-12:00	Sunday
43	SAT.1	17-05-22	12:00-14:00	Tuesday
44	SAT.1	26-05-22	14:00-16:00	Thursday
45	SAT.1	04-06-22	16:00-18:00	Saturday

	Channel	Date	Time	Day
46	SAT.1	13-06-22	18:00-20:00	Monday
47	SAT.1	01-07-22	18:00-20:00	Friday
48	SAT.1	22-06-22	20:00-22:00	Wednesday
49	VOX	09-05-22	10:00-12:00	Monday
50	VOX	18-05-22	12:00-14:00	Wednesday
51	VOX	27-05-22	14:00-16:00	Friday
52	VOX	05-06-22	16:00-18:00	Sunday
53	VOX	14-06-22	18:00-20:00	Tuesday
54	VOX	02-07-22	18:00-20:00	Saturday
55	VOX	23-06-22	20:00-22:00	Thursday
56	ZDF	06-05-22	10:00-12:00	Friday
57	ZDF	24-05-22	12:00-14:00	Tuesday
58	ZDF	23-05-22	14:00-16:00	Monday
59	ZDF	02-06-22	16:00-18:00	Thursday
60	ZDF	11-06-22	18:00-20:00	Saturday
61	ZDF	29-06-22	18:00-20:00	Wednesday

D Codebook

Gender Portrayals in Television Commercials

Coding Unit: The central characters of the advertising: Adult characters with on-camera appearances of at least three seconds or at least one line of dialogue. If there are only two adults present, code both. If there are more than two adults featured in the commercial, choose those appearing most prominent. When it is not clear which two figures are the most central, pick one central character of each gender.

Other Coding Instructions: Always watch the full advertisement once in full and only when viewing the commercial a second time start coding characters within the ad. Code only advertisements that endorse goods or services. *Do not* code public service announcements, political advertisements, commercials promoting movies or television shows, infomercials, and testimonials. *Do not* code advertisements featuring central figures that are cartoon characters, children, or unidentifiable. Similarly, *do not* code central characters where only body parts are visible.

Coder ID: Indicate the individual who coded, according to the Coder ID list.

Filename: Enter the name of the file.

Channel: Specify the channel where the ad aired based on the filename.

1. SABC1
2. SABC2
3. SABC3
4. e.tv
5. ARD
6. ZDF
7. RTL
8. 8 SAT.1
9. 9 VOX

Date: Fill in the date the advertising was aired, in the following format: mm/dd/yy.

Day Part: Indicate the day part the advertisement was aired, as per the filename.

0. daytime (10-16)
1. evening (16-22)

Week Part: Indicate the week part the advertisement was aired, based on the date.

0. weekday
1. weekend

Country: Specify the country where the advertisement aired based on the channel.

0. South Africa
1. Germany

Character ID: Assign a unique number to each character starting from 1.

Brand: Enter a short version of the name of the advertised brand.

1. **Product Type**: Indicate what type of product the advertisement is promoting.
    1. Beauty, Personal Care, and Fashion: Encompasses beauty and personal care products, including baby care items, and ads for clothing brands.
    2. Electronics and Cars: Code for electronic devices and automotive products.
    3. Entertainment and Travel: Relates to ads for entertainment, including social media, and travel. If advertising a gaming console, code under electronics; if advertising a game, code under entertainment.
    4. Food: Apply to advertisements for food products. If the ad is for a supermarket, also code under food.
    5. Health: Applies to all health-related products, including pharmacies, hearing aids, and glasses. In Germany, if the ad features the disclaimer "Zu Risiken und Nebenwirkungen....," code automatically as health. If it doesn't have this disclaimer but claims to be medical, code under "Beauty, Personal Care, and Fashion."
    6. Home and Household: Includes products related to the home and household, as well as home appliances.
    7. Insurance and Taxes: Encompasses advertisements for insurance and tax services.
    8. Property: Involves ads related to real estate and property.
    9. Other: Reserved for products that do not fit into the defined classifications above.

2. **Gender**: Indicate the character's gender.
    0. Male
    1. Female

3. **Role**: Indicate the character's role. If the character is shown in several roles, code for the dominant one in terms of time allocation or emphasis.
    1. Homemaker: If characters are engaged in various domestic activities, including parenting. Code for homemaker when involved in household chores, preparing food for

children, conversations about cleaning/chores, grocery-related activities, or moving preparations.

2. Parent or Grandparent: If characters are seen taking care of children. Always code for parent when portrayed as both a spouse and a parent.
3. Product Expert: If characters demonstrate expertise about a product. If simultaneously shown in another role, code for that role instead. Ensure the character themselves is actively providing expert insights, not just the voiceover. Does not apply to characters merely presenting a product without in-depth knowledge.
4. Spouse or Partner: If the character is portrayed solely as a spouse or partner. Code for spouse when mentioned but not seen. Always code for parent when both a spouse and a parent. Code for homemaker when involved in domestic activities.
5. Worker: If characters are shown in work-related contexts or activities.
6. At Leisure: If characters are depicted in leisure or recreational activities, excluding chores. Code when relaxing or engaging in leisure, such as reading in a café or working out.
7. Other: If character's role does not fit into the classifications above.

4. **Occupation**: Code for the character's occupation only if their role was previously coded as "Worker." Specify the occupational level:

1. Professional or High-Level Business Executive: If character is depicted in high-ranking business role, including entrepreneurs.
2. White Collar: If character is portrayed in an office job, may also be inferred from smart-casual dressing or commuting. Includes lower management and teachers.
3. Blue Collar: If character is depicted in lower skilled job position, typically manual or industrial work.

99. Unable to determine occupation: If unable to assess the character's occupation.

5. **Activity**: Code for the type of activity the character is seen engaging in. Code for the longest, first, or last activity, depending on significance:

1. Cleaning: If character is seen doing any form of cleaning, including the physical act, conversations about cleaning, or discussions on improving cleaning methods.
2. Cooking or Preparing Food: If character is involved in cooking, preparing food, or feeding someone. Code for this activity, not "Parenting", when engaged in parenting tasks related to cooking for or feeding an infant or child.
3. Home Improvement: If the character is engaging in home improvement activities, such as renovating, decorating, or organising living spaces. Also includes tasks related to moving house or packing boxes.
4. Parenting: If character is actively involved in parenting activities with children or grandchildren.

5. Self-Care: If character engages in activities focused on personal well-being, including grooming, skincare, makeup, or purchasing items related to personal care and relaxation.
6. Working Out: If the character is depicted engaging in physical exercise or working out, indicated by workout clothes, mats, gyms, etc.
7. Other Leisure Activity: If the character engages in any leisure activity not covered in specific categories, including resting in a bed. If passive, merely standing without engaging in an activity, code as "Other."
8. Other: If the character's main activity cannot be identified or does not fit any predefined category.

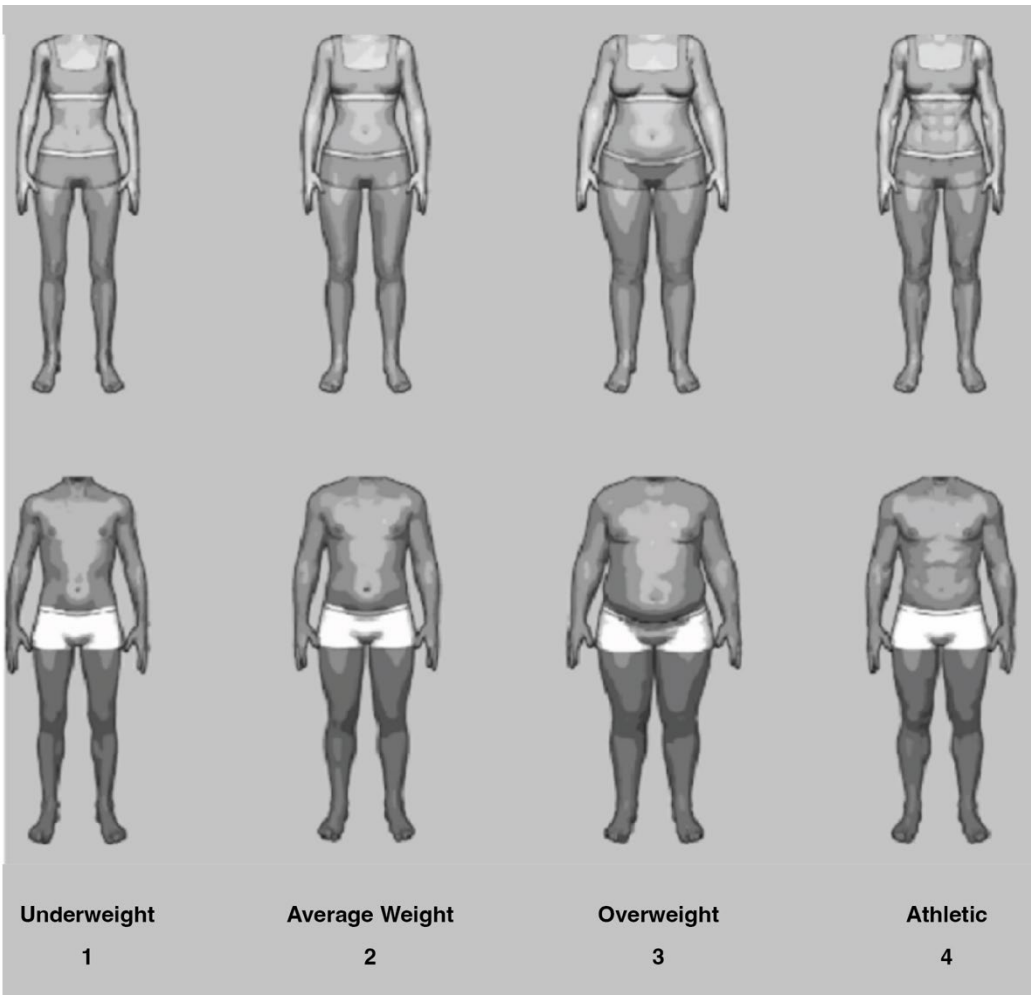
6. Setting: Indicate the character's primary location. If there are only two settings, code for the first setting, even if there are scenes in different places before returning to the initial setting. If there are more than two different settings and the narrative does not return to the initial setting, then code for "Other."

1. Kitchen: If the character is primarily depicted in a kitchen setting.
2. Somewhere Else in the Home: If the character is primarily depicted in a setting within the home other than the kitchen.
3. Occupational: If the character is primarily depicted in an occupational setting (office, workplace, or any location related to their profession).
4. Outside: If the character is seen in any location outside the home, excluding occupational settings (natural environments, cafés, airports, etc.).
5. Undefined or Other: If the character's primary setting does not fit specified categories, or if there are more than two different settings without a return to the initial one.

7. Age: Report or estimate the character's age. Code for the older category if perceived age falls between two groups.

1. Young (<30)
2. Middle-Aged (31-60)
3. Old (60+)

8. Body Type: (from Voges et al., 2019) Using these figures, indicate the number that best matches the body shape of the character. If uncertain, code as "average weight." In case of ambiguity between two choices, choose the larger number.



9. **Attire**: Indicate the character's attire and categorise the extent of coverage or nudity.

1. Non-revealing: If the character is fully or almost fully dressed, exposing only the face, neck, legs below the knees, and hands.

2. Revealing: If character is seen with at least one (sexual) body part fully or partially displayed. Also code if the character is wrapped in a towel, male characters are shown shirtless, and female characters are showing their belly buttons. Code for the sensual highlighting of naked body parts, like a woman's naked leg. Only code for revealing when the person shows significant naked skin or individual body parts, such as wearing revealing clothing, bikinis, shorts with a small top, or when men wear half-opened buttoned shirts.

3. Naked: If the character is fully or almost fully naked, even if somewhat blurred or covered by an object. This includes silhouettes or when the character is shown only wearing underwear.

10. **Passive vs. Active Behaviour**: Indicate the advertising character's behaviours and expressions.

    1. Conversation or Speaking: If the character is engaged in conversation or speaking. Also code when the character is not moving their mouth in the ad, but the voiceover is clearly them speaking.
    2. No Speaking: If the character is neither engaged in speaking nor smiling.
    3. Smiling or Laughing: If the character is seen smiling or laughing, particularly into the camera. Only code when the character does not speak.
    4. Speaking and Smiling: If the character is both engaged in speaking and is seen smiling or laughing.

11. **Symbolic Behaviours**: Indicate if the character is portrayed engaging in specific symbolic behaviours or gestures. If the character exhibits multiple symbolic behaviours, always code the first one.

    1. Looking at Self in Mirror: If the character looks at themselves in a mirror.
    2. Touching Something or Self: If the character is touching something sensually or themselves while applying a product. Always code for when the character touches someone else or a pet. *Do not* code when the touch indicates a nonverbal emotional expression (e.g. slapping forehead in a gesture of forgetfulness or frustration) or when touching a body part indicates pain.
    3. Touching and Looking at Self in Mirror: If the character simultaneously touches something or themselves and looks at themselves in a mirror.
    4. Smelling Something or Someone: If the character is shown smelling something or someone, or when there is verbal expression of smelling (e.g., "You smell good!").
    5. None: If the character exhibits none of the specified behaviours.

12. **Interest**: Indicate the assumed interest of the character, often found in the tagline. If the character specifies a particular interest, code for that. Usually consistent for all characters in one ad. If there are two product promises and the character evolves, code for the last interest.

    1. Be Healthy: If the character expresses an interest in well-being, including instances where parents care for their children's health, the desire for pain relief (headaches, pains, or flu), and the wish for more energy.
    2. Look or Smell Good: If the character aims for a more attractive appearance, often related to personal care, and includes the desire to reduce wrinkles and achieve a tan.
    3. Make a Home: If the character desires to create a warm living space, involving actions like serving food and expressing a wish to improve their home.

4. Cleaning or Hygiene: If the character desires cleanliness in surroundings or personal hygiene practices.
5. Protection or Safety: If the character emphasises an interest in protection or safety, including message related to staying safe during Covid and highlighting safety measures.
6. Relationships: If the character focuses on connections with others, emphasising personal connections, friendships, family ties, or romantic relationships.
7. Rest: If the character desires relaxation, taking a break, going on a holiday, or getting quality sleep.
8. Save Money: If the character expresses interest in cost-effectiveness, discounts, or getting good value for their money.
9. Other: If the character's interest does not match any of the specified categories.

13. **Company**: Indicate the character's social context. Only code when the character interacts with their company, except for the category "pets". This includes speaking to other people, physical touch, performing tasks, or having tasks done for them.
    1. One or several children: If the character interacts with any children, regardless of whether they are the character's children.
    2. Partner: If the character is portrayed with a romantic partner.
    3. Children and Partner or Family: If the character is portrayed with both children and a partner or family.
    4. Friends: If the character is depicted with friends or acquaintances.
    5. Pet: If the character is around a pet.
    6. Other: If the character is engaging in social interactions not covered by the specified categories.
    7. None: If the character is not engaging in any social interactions.

14. **Relationship Status**: Specify if the character is wearing a wedding band or not to indicate their marital status.
    1. No Ring
    2. Ring
    3. Unclear

15. Race: Enter the number corresponding with the apparent racial identification of the character.

1. Black
2. White
3. Asian
4. Other

E Coding Form

Gender Portrayals in Television Advertising

Coder ID _____ Filename _____ Channel _____

Date _____ Day Part _____ Week Part _____ Country _____

1. Character ID							
2. Brand							
3. Product Type							
4. Gender							
5. Role							
6. Occupation							
7. Activity							
8. Setting							
9. Age							
10. Body Type							
11. Attire							
12. Passive vs. Active Behaviour							
13. Symbolic Behaviours							
14. Interest							
15. Company							
16. Relationship Status							
17. Race							

F Quantitative Findings Overview

South African Advertisements

RQ0: Advertising Attributes

Gender: The overall chi-square for central characters was not significant, $\chi 2$ (1, n=247)=.04, ns, which indicates that male and female characters were equally likely to be central characters.

Product Type: The overall chi-square was significant, $\chi 2$ (5, n=247)=16.3, p<.01, indicating that female characters were more than 3 times more likely to be associated with beauty, personal care, and fashion products than male characters. Male characters, however, were more likely to advertise food and marginally more likely to be associated with insurance and tax products.

RQ1: Roles, Activities and Settings

Role: The overall chi-square for role was not significant, $\chi 2$ (5, n=247)=2.62, *ns*, which implies that male and female characters were not systematically depicted in certain roles.

Occupation: The overall chi-square was not significant, $\chi 2$ (2, n=247)=4.68, *ns,* indicating that male and female characters were just as likely to be presented in blue-collar, white-collar, or high-level occupations.

Activity: The overall chi-square was not significant, $\chi 2$ (5, n=247)=3.18, *ns*, that is the activity the central character is engaging in is not affected by gender.

Setting: The overall chi-square was not significant, $\chi 2$ (4, n=247)=6.39, *ns*, showing that gender does not affect the setting in which the central character is depicted.

RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes

Age: The overall chi-square was significant, $\chi 2$ (2, n=247)=6.97, p<.05, which indicates male and female characters were just as likely to be young or middle-aged. However, female characters were far more likely to be old, with only one male character who was thought to be over 60.

Body Type: The overall chi-square for body type was significant, $\chi 2$ (3, n=247)=22.23, p<.001, which implies that female characters were twice as likely to be underweight as male characters. Male characters were marginally more likely to be of average weight and more likely to be athletic.

Attire: Chi-square was not significant for attire, $\chi 2$ (1, n=247)=.98, *ns*, which suggests that gender did not affect whether the central character was shown in revealing or non-revealing clothing.

RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours

Passive Vs. Active Behaviour: There was no overall significance, $\chi 2$ (3, n=247)=3.03, *ns*, which means that gender did not affect whether the central character was shown not speaking or only smiling, or whether the character is shown engaging in conversation or both speaking and smiling.

Symbolic Behaviours: There was no significant difference found for symbolic behaviours, $\chi 2$ (1, n=247)=.73, *ns*, indicating that both genders were similarly likely to be shown either displaying or not displaying symbolic behaviours such as looking at themselves, or touching or smelling something.

RQ4: Interests

Interests: A non-significant chi-square was found for interest, $\chi 2$ (7, n=247)=9.8, *ns*, showing that gender did not make any difference in what the central character was assumed to be interested in.

RQ5: Social Relationships

Company: The overall chi-square was not significant, $\chi 2$ (5, n=247)=2.29, *ns*, showing that no specific type of company applied more to male than female characters.

Relationship Status: There was an overall significant chi-square for relationship status, $\chi 2$ (2, n=247)=8.93, p<.01, which implies that male characters were more likely than female characters to be unmarried.

RQ6: Mediating Identity Categories

Race: The chi-square was not significant, $\chi 2$ (2, n=247)=.92, *ns*, which indicates that there was no systematic difference between the genders when it comes to the central character's race.

German Advertisements

RQ0: Advertising Attributes

Gender: The overall chi-square for central characters was not significant, $\chi 2$ (1, n=399)=.04, ns, which shows that male and female characters were just as likely to be central characters.

Product Type: The overall chi-square was significant, $\chi 2$ (5, n=399)=27.45, p<.001, which means that female characters were more likely shown advertising beauty, personal care, and fashion products. Female central characters were also more likely to be associated with health products. Male characters were more likely to advertise home and household products, as well as insurance and tax products.

RQ1: Roles, Activities and Settings

Role: There was no significant chi-square for role, $\chi 2$ (5, n=399)=5.98, *ns*, meaning that there was no gender difference regarding the roles male or female characters were shown in.

Occupation: The overall chi-square was not significant, $\chi 2$ (2, n=399)=3.52, *ns,* showing that no particular occupation level was associated more with male than with female characters.

Activity: Chi-square was not significant, $\chi 2$ (6, n=399)=8.07, *ns*, that is the central character's activity is not associated with the character's gender.

Setting: There was a significant chi-square for setting, $\chi 2$ (4, n=399)=12.97, p<.01, which indicates that female characters were more likely to be depicted in the home or the kitchen. Male characters, however, were marginally more likely to be depicted in an occupational setting as well as outside.

RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes

Age: The chi-square for age was significant, $\chi 2$ (2, n=399)=14.92, p<.001, indicating that female central characters were more likely to be under 30, while male characters were more likely to be middle-aged.

Body Type: There was a significant chi-square for body type, $\chi 2$ (3, n=399)=133.34, p<.001, which suggests that female characters were more likely than their male counterparts to be underweight. Male central characters were more likely than female characters to be of average weight as well as athletic.

Attire: Chi-square was significant for attire, $\chi 2$ (1, n=399)=9.59, p<.01, which indicates that female characters were more likely to be shown in revealing attire.

RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours

Passive Vs. Active Behaviour: The overall chi-square was significant, $\chi 2$ (3, n=399)=11.80, p<.01, showing that female central characters were marginally more likely to be seen speaking and smiling as well as being only featured as smiling or laughing. Male characters on the other hand were more likely to be engaging in conversation or speaking.

Symbolic Behaviours: There was a significant difference found for symbolic behaviours, $\chi 2$ (1, n=399)=8.11, p<.01, which means that female central characters were more likely to be displaying symbolic behaviours such as touching or smelling something or looking at themselves.

RQ4: Interests

Interests: The overall chi-square was significant, $\chi 2$ (7, n=399)=19.03, p<.01, which implies that female characters were more likely to be interested in looking or smelling good as well as being healthy than their male counterparts. Male characters were marginally more interested in saving money, as well as cleaning or hygiene.

RQ5: Social Relationships

Company: There was an overall significant chi-square, $\chi 2$ (5, n=399)=18.83, p<.01, showing female characters were most commonly seen alone. Male central characters were more likely to be associated with “other”.

Relationship Status: The overall chi-square was not significant, $\chi 2$ (2, n=399)=5.53, *ns*, indicating that the central character’s gender was not associated with their marital status.

RQ6: Mediating Identity Categories

Race: There was a non-significant chi-square, $\chi 2$ (2, n=399)=.38, *ns*, that there is no association between gender and race of the central character.

G Quantitative Findings Chi-Square Tables

Table 30: Gender x Country

RQ0: Advertising Attributes	South Africa (n=247)		Germany (n=399)	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Male	112	45.3	184	46.1
Female	135	54.7	215	53.9
		n.s.		

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Table 31: Gender x Product Type

RQ:0 Advertising Attributes	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%		%
Product Type								
Beauty, Personal Care and Fashion	8	7.1	33	24.4	16	8.7	55	25.6
Food	45	40.2	41	30.4	45	24.5	46	21.4
Health	15	13.4	19	14.1	24	13.0	39	18.1
Home and Household	12	10.7	17	12.6	31	16.8	20	9.3
Insurance and Taxes	24	21.4	21	15.6	7	3.8	3	1.4
Other	8	7.1	4	3.0	61	33.2	52	24.2
		$\chi 2 = 16.3$**				$\chi 2 = 27.45$***		

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Table 32: Gender x Roles, Activities, Settings

RQ1: Roles, Activities and Settings	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Role								
Homemaker	7	6.3	12	8.9	21	11.4	22	10.2
Parent or Grandparent	24	21.4	38	28.1	18	9.8	27	12.6
Product Expert	20	17.9	21	15.6	29	15.8	26	12.1
Spouse or Partner	6	5.4	7	5.2	22	12.0	24	11.2
Worker	24	21.4	23	17.0	30	16.3	23	10.7
At Leisure	31	27.7	34	25.2	64	34.8	93	43.3
			n.s.				*n.s.*	
Occupation			**(n=67)**				**(n=79)**	
Professional or High-Level Business Executive	11	29.7	12	40.0	6	13.6	9	25.7
White-collar	18	48.6	7	23.3	25	56.8	21	60.0
Blue-collar	8	21.6	11	36.7	13	29.5	5	14.3
			n.s.				*n.s.*	
Activity								
Cleaning	9	8.0	9	6.7	13	7.1	13	6.0
Cooking or Preparing Food	8	7.1	12	8.9	5	2.7	7	3.3
Parenting	11	9.8	20	14.8	12	6.5	12	5.6
Self-Care	8	7.1	14	10.4	17	9.2	37	17.2
Other Leisure Activity	31	27.7	35	25.9	77	41.8	93	43.3
Other	45	40.2	45	33.3	60	32.6	53	24.7
			n.s.				*n.s.*	
Setting								
Kitchen	5	4.5	10	7.4	6	3.3	8	3.7
Somewhere Else in the Home	28	25.0	49	36.3	56	30.4	102	47.4
Occupational	20	17.9	17	12.6	19	10.3	17	7.9
Outside	49	43.8	45	33.3	91	49.5	80	37.2
Undefined or Other	10	8.9	14	10.4	12	6.5	8	3.7
			n.s.				$\chi 2 = 12.97^{**}$	

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Table 33: Gender x Physical and Material Attributes

RQ2: Physical and Material Attributes	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Age								
Young (<30)	37	33.0	41	30.4	61	33.2	109	50.7
Middle-Aged (31-60)	74	66.1	83	61.5	100	54.3	77	35.8
Old (>60)	1	0.9	11	8.1	23	12.5	29	13.5
	$\chi 2 = 6.97$*				$\chi 2 = 14.92$***			
Body Type								
Underweight	22	19.6	55	40.7	26	14.1	152	70.7
Average Weight	52	46.4	44	32.6	116	63.0	43	20.0
Overweight	27	24.1	35	25.9	21	11.4	16	7.4
Athletic	11	9.8	1	0.7	21	11.4	4	1.9
	$\chi 2 = 22.23$***				$\chi 2 = 133.34$***			
Attire								
Non-revealing	103	92.0	119	88.1	173	94.0	181	84.2
Revealing	9	8.0	16	11.9	11	6.0	34	15.8
	n.s.				$\chi 2 = 9.59$**			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Table 34: Gender x Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours

RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Passive Vs. Active								
Conversation or Speaking	43	38.4	40	29.6	49	26.6	29	13.5
No Speaking	15	13.4	16	11.9	15	8.2	16	7.4
Smiling or Laughing	24	21.4	39	28.9	79	42.9	106	49.3
Speaking and Smiling	30	26.8	40	29.6	41	22.3	64	29.8
	n.s.				$\chi 2 = 11.80$**			

RQ3: Symbolic and Stylistic Behaviours	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Symbolic Behaviours								
Symbolic Behaviour[44]	11	9.8	18	13.3	28	15.2	58	27.0
No Symbolic Behaviour	101	90.2	117	86.7	156	84.8	157	73.0
	n.s.				$\chi 2 = 8.11$**			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Table 35: Gender x Interests

RQ4: Interests	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Interest								
Be Healthy	11	9.8	17	12.6	23	12.5	37	17.2
Look or Smell Good	5	4.5	15	11.1	11	6.0	39	18.1
Make a Home	1	0.9	5	3.7	10	5.4	10	4.7
Cleaning or Hygiene	6	5.4	10	7.4	16	8.7	14	6.5
Protection or Safety	10	8.9	16	11.9	5	2.7	9	4.2
Relationships	9	8.0	9	6.7	21	11.4	22	10.2
Save Money	21	18.8	17	12.6	12	6.5	10	4.7
Other	49	43.8	46	34.1	86	46.7	74	34.4
	n.s.				$\chi 2 = 19.03$**			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

[44] Looking at Self in Mirror, Touching Something or Self, Touching while Looking at Self in Mirror, Smelling Something or Someone

Table 36: Gender x Social Relationships

RQ5: Social Relationships	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Company								
One or several children	12	10.7	19	14.1	6	3.3	13	6.0
Partner	6	5.4	5	3.7	35	19.0	43	20.0
Children and Partner or Family	19	17.0	29	21.5	21	11.4	23	10.7
Friends	12	10.7	14	10.4	31	16.8	34	15.8
Other	29	25.9	28	20.7	60	32.6	37	17.2
None	34	30.4	40	29.6	31	16.8	65	30.2
	n.s.				$\chi^2 = 18.83$**			
Relationship Status								
Not Married	61	54.5	49	36.3	81	44.0	100	46.5
Married	33	29.5	49	36.3	31	16.8	52	24.2
Unclear	18	16.1	37	27.4	72	39.1	63	29.3
	$\chi^2 = 8.93$**				*n.s.*			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001

Table 37: Gender x Race

RQ4: Mediating Identity Categories	South Africa (n=247)				Germany (n=399)			
	Male (n=112)		Female (n=135)		Male (n=184)		Female (n=215)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Race								
Black	99	88.4	121	89.6	12	6.5	11	5.1
White	13	11.6	14	10.4	169	91.8	200	93.0
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	1.6	4	1.9
	n.s.				*n.s.*			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001