



**Gillette's controversial toxic masculinity commercial**  
**A Critical Discourse Analysis of Gillette's 'We Believe: The Best a Man  
Can Be' commercial with the use of Legitimacy Theory**  
Master's Thesis

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## Abstract

As companies become increasingly involved with social issues, the need for a guide is becoming bigger. The discipline of cause-related marketing can be tricky and the outcome horrible, if not done carefully. This thesis aims at studying one of the horrible examples, namely Gillette's 2019 'We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be' commercial. This commercial was Gillette's attempt at cause-related marketing. Gillette's commercial revolves around the social issue 'toxic masculinity'. Toxic masculinity idealizes traits such as extreme competitiveness, domination and the idea that men should be in charge. Gillette released a commercial that addressed this issue and it was met with criticism from most. This thesis investigates how Gillette conveys this message through the use of Critical Discourse Analysis and Legitimacy Theory. The Critical Discourse Analysis studies the commercial from a textual level, including grammar vocabulary and forms of appeal. Additionally, the analysis has a picture analysis with analytical tools from a Multi-Modal Discourse Analysis to investigate the picture side. The second level is a discursive practice that will study the genre and discourses present in the commercial. Finally, the third level is the social practice which will look at the findings and consider the commercial and the social context of the time that the commercial was released. After each level of the analysis, the findings will be considered with Legitimacy Theory to identify the type of legitimacy that Gillette conveyed. This will contribute to a thorough look at how Gillette conveys their message, and based on those findings, the thesis will be able to pinpoint the mistakes made by Gillette. This allows for a discussion about what considerations a company should have before engaging in cause-related marketing. The analysis found that Gillette mainly uses mood and emotions to convey their message about toxic masculinity, along with their commitment to the cause. They do a good job of visually showing the impact of toxic masculinity to reach the audience and make them feel something. Furthermore, they also do a good job of showing how men can fight toxic masculinity, however, they do not show or speak of how they intend to join the fight. It could have helped Gillette to show their audience how they intend to make a difference. It could perhaps have diminished some of the criticism that Gillette received if they had shown more action on their part. Furthermore, Gillette released the commercial at a time with political tension and a lot of debate about men and women, as a result of the MeToo-movement from 2017. This could have contributed

to the strong reactions directed at Gillette and the commercial. Through the analysis, the findings show that Gillette used the commercial to challenge the existing power relations between men and women, while also challenging the hegemonic masculinity. However, Gillette's sister company, Venus Gillette, is making money off that same power dynamic by abusing the pink tax. This does not look good, as it appears hypocritical for the audience and the message loses credibility. Finally, through the use of Legitimacy Theory, the analysis found that Gillette takes for granted how much goodwill they have on the issue. Therefore, the audience was not willing to let anything pass, despite working hard towards presenting themselves as a good corporate citizen. Finally, based on the analysis the thesis found considerations that companies should consider before engaging in cause-related marketing.

Firstly, it is important to find a relevant social issue, something that relates to the company. Secondly, consider the best way to support the issue, either through collaborations with non-profits or by itself. Thirdly, to thoroughly look into the company to see if there are any potential policies, people or old stories that do not align with the social stance. If there is, they should address it immediately, as they otherwise will look either untrustworthy or ignorant about their own organization.

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## 1. Introduction

The evolution of the internet and online social media has opened the door for online protests that can kick start a worldwide movement. This is what happened in 2017, as the hashtag #MeToo took off and started an international movement to acknowledge the issue and scope of the problem that is sexual assault and harassment (Brünker et al. 2020, 2356). This movement put a new focus on an old phrase, 'toxic masculinity'. Toxic masculinity describes masculinity with behavioral traits, which are considered toxic and unhealthy (Harrington 2020, 348-349). As the MeToo-movement swept the world, companies were pushed to take a stand against sexual harassment, especially at the workplace. Companies having to take a stand on a political or social issue is not a new trend but has been around for decades. Companies will advocate for a charity, social issue, etc., and use it to gain recognition, also known as cause-related marketing (Brønn & Vrioni 2001, 214-215). We have seen a growing number of companies using cause-related marketing to position themselves as socially responsible companies to their consumers (Brønn & Vrioni 2001, 207-208). However, a company using a social issue, such as climate change or the MeToo-movement, is not an easy task, as consumers become more and more skeptical of what companies tell them, and, therefore, cause-related marketing must be done carefully (Brønn & Vrioni 2001, 207-208). Some companies have been successful in their cause-related marketing, while others have failed. But what separates the successful and unsuccessful marketing attempts? Why do some companies benefit greatly, while other companies pay a high price? This study will take a closer look at a company that did not benefit from their attempt at cause-related marketing, namely Gillette's 'We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be' commercial, which attempted to deal with the social issue of toxic masculinity. This commercial is especially interesting, as it was not obvious to some what the issue with the commercial was. What had sparked such anger from a commercial that encouraged men to step up and be good role models? The commercial received a lot of criticism on social media, with many people threatening to boycott the brand (Baggs 2019) (Taylor 2019) (Smith 2019). But what exactly went wrong with Gillette's commercial and its message, since it received such backlash?

As the idea of doing cause-related marketing becomes more popular, it becomes increasingly important for companies to understand how to approach the discipline without ending in a shit-storm with a big financial loss and/or loss of customers. To contribute to this, this thesis explores how Gillette communicates their message about toxic masculinity to their audience through the 2019 commercial. The purpose is to deconstruct the commercial and pinpoint some potential downfalls or elements that companies must pay extra attention to. To do this, Legitimacy Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis will be applied, which will give this thesis tools to deconstruct and isolate the mistakes in the commercial.

The problem statement that this thesis will attempt to answer is:

**The Gillette ‘We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be’ commercial is a recent example of cause-related marketing, however, it is considered a failure. With the use of Critical Discourse Analysis and Legitimacy Theory, how did Gillette convey their message about toxic masculinity and, based on these findings, why did it fail?**

This project includes nine chapters that are used to establish the theoretical and methodological choices and to conduct a thorough analysis of the commercial. Chapter 1 is the introduction to the thesis; Chapter 2 explains the philosophy of science perspective of this thesis, i.e. social constructivism; Chapter 3; provides background knowledge on the MeToo-movement and Gillette; Chapter 4; looks into the phrase ‘toxic masculinity’, cause-related marketing and past research of the Gillette 2019 commercial; Chapter 5 presents the theoretical perspective, namely Legitimacy Theory; Chapter 6 explains the methodological choices and considerations, including the research design, empirical considerations and the method of choice, i.e. Critical Discourse Analysis; Chapter 7 is the analysis of the commercial; Chapter 8 discusses the changes and considerations that a company must make before using cause-related marketing; And finally, Chapter 9 concludes the finds and suggestions for further research.

## 2.0 Scientific perspective

The following chapter will go into detail about the scientific perspective of this thesis and the implications that it has on the analysis. The scientific perspective influences how scholars view

good research and correct knowledge, as these can differ greatly (Kastberg 2017, 9). In this thesis, the scientific perspective is social constructivism. The core of social constructivism is the idea that reality is socially constructed through our use of language and relations. Therefore, to properly understand the meaning behind Gillette's commercial, this thesis must look into the language, relations, social context and power dynamics.

To further explain how social constructivism influences research, the ontological and epistemological perspectives must be explained. The ontological and epistemological perspectives revolve around how you justify knowledge, depending on how you, as a researcher, see the world through your scientific perspective of choice (Kastberg 2017, 10). The ontological perspective from social constructivism is relativistic, which means that reality and our objective are socially constructed and the epistemological perspective is subjective, as knowledge is socially constructed. Therefore, our knowledge about the world comes from subjective experiences, social relations, culture, language, etc. (Kastberg 2017, 12).

To further expand on this, this chapter will look at some of the theorists that have contributed to this particular view of the world and how we discover knowledge.

One of the main theoretical inspirations behind social constructivism was Thomas S. Kuhn (1922-1996). His famous work 'The Structure of Scientific Revolutions' is believed to be one of the most influential books of the 20th century. He was interested in discovering how science comes to be considered 'true'. He found that before the science comes to be considered true, it must be accepted by a scientific community. This scientific community is brought together by education, professional interactions, other forms of communication, and a common interest in certain problem areas. As science has to be accepted by a group of people, he believed that science was socially constructed. The social relations between scientists are a factor when determining what science is correct. If agreement between people is a key element in deciding what is correct or not, individual relations will be a player in this decision. Kuhn's ideas and research were limited to the scientific community, however, it was adopted by social constructivism and soon expanded. Kuhn's idea that all science is socially constructed was further expanded to reality being socially constructed (Holm 2018, 142). What is considered true, or what is considered reality, is based on agreement between people and this does not end with science. Today, we know that it is not okay for a man to touch a random woman, without her consent. However, this was not always the case. The idea of how men



should treat women has changed and is constantly changing, due to people, i.e. societies, agreeing on what behavior is acceptable and no longer acceptable. It is this acceptance between people that shapes our reality, where touching women on the butt is considered inappropriate, and, therefore, knowledge is subjective. This, of course, does not mean that nobody touches women inappropriately anymore, which became very evident as a result of the MeToo-movement. The same way that not everyone believes in the science that is considered correct, i.e. people that believe that God created the earth. The MeToo-movement did, however, put a lot of focus on bad behavior that many women experience, which started many debates about how men and women should interact in the future.

Furthermore, when researching a topic and writing a research paper, such as this, many choices are made by the researcher. What data to select, which theories to apply, and what methods to use when seeking answers to research questions. All these choices impact the paper, as different results could have been found using other theories or methods. It is, therefore, according to social constructivism, impossible to be objective. This does, however, not mean that there is no point in researching at all, but rather that more research using different angles should be done. In chapter 4.2., previous research on the 2019 Gillette commercial will be accounted for. However, this thesis is still relevant, as it uses different analytical tools. Therefore, the result might not be the same, and this analysis will be able to contribute even further to the research that has already been conducted.

Another big contributor to social constructivism is Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951). He started with a positivistic theoretical perspective, but, over the years, he changed his perspective to a social constructivist theoretical perspective. He believed that words and sentences receive their meaning depending on the context in which they are used. To explain this, he used the term 'language games', which refers to the different social and relational contexts that people are in when using words and sentences. It is important to consider the social relations between participants when they are communicating (Holm 2018, 142-143). In the commercial, Gillette is communicating to their audience. Therefore, the relationship between the company and the customer must be considered when conducting an analysis. This will contribute to how the message and the meaning are perceived. According to Wittgenstein, the key to revealing words meaning and how they are received by the audience is by considering context and relationship. This project seeks to

investigate the message that Gillette sent through the ‘We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be’ commercial and what went wrong, as the intended audience did not receive their message well. Therefore, the relationship between the sender and the audience must be included in the analysis. Additionally, considering that the commercial is using a social issue, toxic masculinity, as a big part of the commercial, it is highly relevant to connect the language that they use and the social context in which they are communicating. This will influence the way that the audience will interpret the commercial and Gillette’s message. For instance, if Gillette had made a commercial talking about how amazing men are before the MeToo-movement, it would most likely not come off as offensive. However, if it came out right after the MeToo-movement, the language that they used could be interpreted as offensive because of what was happening in society at the time.

Based on this, Kenneth J. Gergen proposed four main principles that according to him are the core of social constructivism (Gergen 199: Holm 2018, 143-144).

The first principle is the idea that there is no necessary link between the world and the words and phrases that we use to describe the world. According to social constructivism and Gergen, all language is metaphorical (Holm 2018, 144-148). We have clear metaphors that we all agree are metaphors, such as ‘toxic masculinity’. The phrase is not meant to be literal. If someone shows signs of toxic masculinity, they are not toxic in the literal sense. This is a metaphorical way to describe someone who is portraying personality traits that are considered bad. However, according to social constructivism, all language is metaphorical, and therefore saying that someone is behaving badly is also metaphorical. This is because words and feelings are two different things and, therefore, one description of feelings is not closer than another. The meaning does not come from the word’s reflection of reality but from our shared language games. Our understanding of words and phrases depends on our cultural background. People might interpret Gillette’s commercial differently depending on their language or ethnicity, as the phrase ‘toxic masculinity’ might not be equally known in all parts of the world. If someone watching the commercial does not know what toxic masculinity is, they might not understand the commercial, as it was intended.

The second principle is the idea that our descriptions of reality come from our social relations. This means that we do not describe or understand the world from an individual perspective. We learn about the world and our reality, as we grow up (Holm 2018, 146-148). An example of this is masculinity. How each of us interprets the word and meaning of masculinity can greatly differ

from one person to the next. It depends on how masculinity is portrayed in the society, community, or family that you grew up in. One person might understand masculinity as being a financial provider for a family, and another might think of someone competitive and dominating in his professional life. Some might associate masculinity with not showing emotions or the complete opposite. Each person's view on masculinity depends on their social relations and upbringing.

The third principle is the idea that it is through our understanding of the world that we shape our future. How we address things and people carry much power. According to social constructivism, the discourses that we use, especially about marginalized communities, are important when fighting social issues (Holm 2018, 148-149). The way that we speak of men and women is, therefore, crucial when wanting to fight for gender equality. If the dominating discourse surrounding men and masculinity continues to idolize toxic traits, then the behavior will remain the same. If the discourse surrounding women continues to point to women as weak and inferior to men, they will remain as such. Therefore, if we want to make changes, we must think critically about our use of language.

The fourth and final principle is the idea that reflecting on our understanding of the world is important for our future well-being. This means that by understanding how we use language games to understand and construct our reality, we can make the world a better place and address and influence change. We can look critically at our use of language and discourses, to bring about the change that we desire, by changing the way we address them (Holm 2018, 149-150). For instance, Gillette is addressing the issue of toxic masculinity in their commercial, in a post Me-Too world. This will influence how the message that they are conveying to their audience is received. Furthermore, the relationship between Gillette and their audience is also important to consider, when analyzing the commercial.

The scientific perspective of this thesis, social constructivism, has implications for the way that this thesis will be conducted. As reality is socially constructed, the relationship between sender and receiver and the context of a communicative event should all be considered when choosing a methodology, theory, and method. The connection and considerations between the social perspective and the methodology, theory, and method will be expanded in chapter 6.2.

### 3. Background chapter

In the following chapter, the MeToo-movement will be accounted for, the origin of the movement and escalation. Furthermore, the Gillette company and parent company, Proctor & Gamble, will be described, as it is necessary to understand the company's history.

#### 3.1 MeToo

The MeToo-movement revolves around the issue of sexual harassment and assault. In 2017, a New York Times article was published, revealing the sexual assaults and harassment from Hollywood movie producer Harvey Weinstein. After the article was published, it was quickly picked up by other news outlets and became a major story (Corbett 2022). However, the movement did not start until the American actress, Alyssa Milano, tweeted the following;

“If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet” (Milano 2017), along with a photo stating; “Me too. Suggested by a friend: “If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote ‘Me too.’ as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.” (Milano 2017).

The tweet got over 12 million responses within 24 hours and the hashtag very quickly became a social media phenomenon, similar to the black lives matter movement that would take place a couple of years later. Thousands of women and men shared their stories online and the movement soon spread beyond the American borders. The reality of the amount of sexual assaults and harassment, especially in the workplace, shook the world and, as a result, people began to campaign for cultural and workplace changes (Corbett 2022). The tweet from Alyssa Milano was, however, not the first time that the phrase ‘Me too’ had been used in relation to sexual harassment and assault. Tarana Burke coined the phrase more than 10 years prior in her work with young sexual assault victims, as it could help them feel less alone (Alexander 2020). Although the initial focus was on Hollywood and the entertainment industry, it quickly spread to other industries like the media, politics, and the culinary industry. In the beginning of the MeToo-movement, the focus was often on the individual, i.e. the man who had committed sexual harassment or assault. However, as time went on, the focus shifted to a broader societal perspective and the systems that

had enabled this type of behavior for so long (Corbett 2022). Nevertheless, not everyone supported the MeToo-movement. Some people claimed that the MeToo-movement was merely a witch hunt, fueled by misandrist feminists (Brown 2021).

### 3.2 Gillette

In this thesis, the main objective is to look into the use of cause-related marketing, specifically when it does not go well. To do so, the case of Gillette's 'We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be' commercial will be used. Gillette is a company that specializes in men's razor blades. According to their website, the founder is a man by the name of King Camp Gillette, who made a new and innovative type of razorblade for men with disposable blades and a better handle (Gillette nd. b). The company was founded in 1904 by King Camp Gillette and has since then grown into a big company supplying much of the world with razor blades. The company became part of American multinational consumer goods corporation Procter and Gamble in 2005 and is one of P&G's most profitable companies. P&G started as a soap and candle company in 1837 and today has some of the biggest brands in feminine hygiene, oral hygiene, and many other industries. They also own Gillette's sister company, Venus Gillette, which supplies razors for women (Forbes nd.). They have faced criticism concerning their sister company, Venus Gillette, in the past for charging the 'pink tax'. The pink tax is when products advertised to women are more expensive than similar products advertised to men. Gillette and Venus Gillette have been guilty of this, as they charge more for their razors for women. The hypocrisy was also quickly pointed out after Gillette's 2019 commercial urging men to stop toxic masculinity and treat women right (Ritshel 2019)

From 1989 until 2019 Gillette's slogan was 'We Believe: The Best a Man Can Get' referring to the quality of their razors. In 2019 they changed that slogan to 'We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be', which is still their current slogan. When introducing their new slogan, they made a commercial that also presented their new commitment to combat toxic masculinity and encourage men to be good role models. The commercial was released on January 14th, 2019. The commercial was met with great criticism from people all over social media (Taylor 2019). Many proclaimed that they would boycott Gillette and never lay a hand on one of their razors again. Despite this and the removal of the commercial on social media, Gillette stands by the slogan and their mission. They

have made several other commercials that they have uploaded on YouTube since then. However, they have removed the possibility for viewers to leave comments or view the number of dislikes (Guru 2022). Although Gillette is still doing well since the commercial in 2019, it is still relevant to study the commercial and identify the problem areas in the commercial. This can help Gillette and other companies when using cause-related marketing in the future.

## 4. Literature review

In the following chapter, the phrase ‘toxic masculinity’ will be investigated, by accounting where the terminology comes from and how it has evolved throughout the years. To properly analyze the message about toxic masculinity from Gillette’s commercial, it is important to understand what toxic masculinity is. Furthermore, the literature review will go over the existing research that has been done on the Gillette commercial and the discipline that is cause-related marketing.

### 4.1 Toxic masculinity

Toxic masculinity is a phrase that was first coined by Professor Shepherd Bliss in the 1980’ies. The expression ‘toxic masculinity’ was, according to Shepherd Bliss, used as a description of his own father’s masculinity, which was a very strong, militarized, authoritarian masculinity. He believed that there was a cure for toxic masculinity, stating; “I use a medical term because I believe that like every sickness, toxic masculinity has an antidote”. Therefore, toxic masculinity was treated more like a treatable disease, than anything else (Harrington 2020, 347).

Throughout the 1990ies and early 2000s, the phrase was more widely used to describe men with distant relationships with their sons. It was believed that without a strong male presence in a boy’s upbringing, boys would grow up with a twisted and toxic sense of masculinity. Therefore, a boy needed a strong bond with his father or a male mentor to show the ‘right’ type of masculinity. This term was also used by Frank Pittman, who argued that without a proper father figure and role model, men would grow up trying to reach unrealistic ideals, while also having a constant need to

prove their masculinity and manhood to others (Harrington 2020, 347). Furthermore, the phrase ‘toxic masculinity’ was now spreading to the political discourse at the turn of the century. Policymakers picked up on this phrase in reference to the increasing youth violence (Harrington 2020, 347-348). Don Eberly was the founder of the Fatherhood Initiative and claimed that present fathers would battle youth violence. Eberly stated; “Young men badly need to see mature masculinity modeled (sic) out. Well-seasoned masculinity fundamentally transforms the aggression of young males by capturing their masculine energy and directing it toward socially constructive pursuits” (Harrington 2020, 347-348). He believed that if a man had violent tendencies, he probably grew up with an emotionally distant father or with a single mother, as women could not teach boys how to be men (Harrington 2020, 348).

The idea that a present father would contribute to less violence was well suited for a time when the heteronormative family dynamic was highly pushed by politicians. The heteronormative family was the idea of the nuclear family, where the traditional roles of a wife, husband and kids were upheld. Furthermore, this was happening in the post-deindustrialized time. A time when many of the traditional ‘masculine’ jobs were disappearing and the more feminine job sector was expanding. This caused issues, and people started to call for fathers to take a bigger part in parenting (Harrington 2020, 348)

The phrase toxic masculinity became a framework, which framed men as aggressive and criminal. Yet it was still presented in a way, where it was expressed through concern for men and their mental health. This framework was used particularly by the conservative political ‘side’, as it aligned with their political values and agendas regarding social control over low-income families and under-employed men. While it was believed that the idea of toxic masculinity was pushed by feminists from a misandrist point of view, it was quite the opposite. Furthermore, at the time, the term ‘toxic masculinity’ tended to be used on men of minority, consequently African Americans and Hispanics (Harrington 2020, 348-349).

Terry A. Kupers (2005), a researcher and psychologist, did a research study named “Toxic Masculinity as a Barrier to Mental Health Treatment in Prison”. In his paper, he speaks of the phrase ‘toxic masculinity’ and defines it as follows:

“Toxic masculinity involves the need to aggressively compete and dominate others and encompasses the most problematic proclivities in men. ... Toxic masculinity also includes a strong measure of the male proclivities that lead to resistance in psychotherapy” (Kupers 2005, 713–714).

He draws on Raewyn Connell’s understanding of hegemonic masculinity. Connell theorized that the hegemonic masculinity or “ideal man”, in a given time, was based on the most dominating perception of masculinity. He stated that the ideal masculinity in contemporary America and Europe was based on two pillars. The first one is the domination of women and the second is a hierarchy dominated by men. In the mid-2000s, the traits that most dominated the idea of masculinity were a need and longing for competition and not showing emotions other than anger, while also being unwilling to admit to any faults or weaknesses. Furthermore, it was important to dissociate oneself from any traits that could be perceived as feminine. Even though other forms of masculinity coexist that would not be considered toxic, according to Connell, hegemonic masculinity is shaped by the less dominating types of masculinity and women (Kupers 2005, 716).

Kupers found the term ‘toxic masculinity’ useful in differentiating between the ‘toxic’ aspects and traits of hegemonic masculinity and the non-toxic traits. As he argues in his study, there is nothing inherently toxic about wanting to succeed at work or be competitive. However, the traits that come from a place of dominance are toxic, as they are socially destructive (Kupers 2005, 716-717).

Kupers further defines toxic traits as;

“Unfortunate male proclivities associated with toxic masculinity include extreme competition and greed, insensitivity to or lack of consideration of the experiences and feelings of others, a strong need to dominate and control others, an incapacity to nurture, a dread of dependency, a readiness to resort to violence, and the stigmatization and subjugation of women, gays, and men who exhibit feminine characteristics.” (Kupers 2005, 717)

In more recent years, the term ‘toxic masculinity’ has changed meaning, as a result of having been adopted by feminists and feminist movements. The term changed from being used to describe marginalized men, to characterize men with violent tendencies and misogynistic and homophobic speech. This new version of ‘toxic masculinity’ became especially popular during the Trump campaign and presidency, and the #MeToo-movement. Due to this development, the term ‘toxic



masculinity' went from being used to describe marginalized men to describing, especially, white men within right-wing politics (Harrington 2020, 349).

In 2016, Sarah Banet-Weiser and Kate M. Miltner wrote of 'networked misogyny' which they defined as follows; "an especially virulent strain of violence and hostility towards women in online environments" (Banet-Weiser and Miltner 2016, 171). This online discourse amongst men could be linked to real-life violence and hostility towards women. According to Carol Harrington, this type of behavior can be summed up by the phrase toxic masculinity (Harrington 2020, 349).

As the phrase became more popular, more feminist scholars started to use toxic masculinity in an academic setting. Harrington did, however, find that the majority of the research did not include a proper definition of toxic masculinity. The research that defined toxic masculinity often used words such as domination, misogyny, violence, and aggression. Harrington suggests further study on what happens when men condemn toxic masculinity, as there are indications that condemning toxic masculinity will benefit those individuals or companies, which is exactly what the Gillette commercial attempts to do (Harrington 2020, 349-350).

To summarize, the phrase 'toxic masculinity' has been around for about 40 years, but the meaning has drastically changed over the years. The term went from describing marginalized men, whose toxic behavior was attributed to a lack of father figures by right-winged politicians, to describing mainly white, rich men, whose toxic behavior stems from a patriarchal system that enables and encourages a hegemonic masculinity in which violence, domination and aggression are important.

## 4.2 Previous research on the Gillette commercial

In 2020, researchers Michael Nebeling Petersen and Karen Hvidtfeldt investigated the Gillette commercial from an academic perspective of masculine studies. They found that the commercial appeals to social responsibility, and that they encourage a new and better type of masculinity. However, through their analysis, they also found that Gillette continues to reproduce the current patriarchal system of masculinity. They argue that the commercial illustrates how power still runs from man to man and leaves women out of the picture.

“The Gillette ad still portrays a patriarchal organization of masculinity in which men have the final authority to protect women and children and in which masculine privileges are passed on from fathers to sons” (Petersen & Hvidtfeldt 2020, 16).

Furthermore, they discuss that the move from toxic masculinity to a more empathetic type of masculinity is portrayed as an individual choice, as opposed to a systemic problem.

Katherine W. Bogen, Samantha L. Williams, Dennis E. Reidy, and Lindsay M. Orchowski did a qualitative analysis of the Twitter reactions to the Gillette commercial. They sought to establish how a commercial discussing masculinity was discussed on social media, more specifically on Twitter. They gathered 538 tweets to investigate and the tweets were then divided into 5 themes as follows: Commentary About the Brand and Corporate Social Responsibility, Theme 2: Commentary on Masculine Norms Regarding Aggression, Theme 3: Calling Upon Men to Challenge Problematic Masculine Norms, Theme 4: Resistance to Advertisement—Deflection, Antifeminist Sentiment and Theme 5: Nationalism, Racial Animus, and Political Affiliation. They found that people tended to talk about: “... (a) comment on the Gillette brand and the corporation Proctor and Gamble, (b) describe masculine norms, (c) seek to engage men in challenging masculine norms associated with aggressive behavior, and (d) express resistance toward the advertisement through deflection and antifeminist sentiment. A fifth theme encompassed comments that reflected nationalism, racial animus, and political affiliation” (Bogen et al. 2020, 7).

Furthermore, they found that people had a variety of opinions on men and masculinity, and some users became defensive when faced with a commercial that challenged masculinity.

In 2021, researchers Muftihaturrahmah Burhamzah, Lely Novia and Alamsyah used Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis to investigate the commercial from Gillette. They conducted a textual analysis and looked into the discursive practice and the socio-cultural practice. It is worth noting that the researchers did not take the reaction from the public into account when conducting this analysis. Therefore, the analysis is focused on the commercial only. The results of the analysis are positive, thus different from the public's reaction to viewing the commercial. They found that Gillette portrays a healthy way to be a man, and they do not mention any negative aspects of the commercial (Burhamzah, Novia & Alamsyah 2021).

Verity Anne Trott did a social media analysis and thematic analysis of the comments posted on YouTube, to understand the reason behind the backlash. She found that the users reproduced the hegemonic masculinity online (Trott 2020).

The former research done on this topic points to a few issues, such as the lack of female presence in the commercial or dismissing that toxic masculinity is a systemic problem. Also, it was pointed out that people had reacted defensively when met with criticism of toxic masculinity and been challenged on their views. Several researchers have mentioned that users used antifeminist speech. The findings from the researchers do, however, not appear to match with the outpour of rage against Gillette. This thesis aims to take another look at the commercial using Legitimacy Theory and Critical Discourse Analysis, which includes a picture analysis, with the purpose of digging even deeper and uncovering why the public reaction was so strong.

#### 4.3. Cause-related marketing

Cause-related marketing (CRM) is a communication tool that more and more companies use to differentiate themselves from other companies. Companies will communicate how they support causes, work with non-profit organizations or show support for current social issues. Companies do this to attract customers who care about different issues, as it could persuade them to buy their products or services, instead of the company's rival (Brønn & Vrioni 2001, 207-208). This has become increasingly popular and has made consumers more critical of the information that companies communicate to them. Because so many companies use cause-related marketing, consumers have become more critical of what companies tell them (Brønn & Vrioni 2001, 208)

Due to the skepticism, it is very important that companies fully understand what they are doing, if they want to use cause-related marketing as a communication tool.

“Therefore not only is it important for companies pursuing CRM to be genuine in their behavior but they must also have a full understanding of consumers' knowledge of CRM and their level of scepticism before attempting this marketing technique.” (Brønn & Vrioni 2001, 208)

Corporate social responsibility is the company's responsibility towards social factors, such as the environment, local community, worker's environment or diversity within the company. These are

all things that consumers are expected to care about. To satisfy customers, companies must communicate how they are being a socially responsible company. This is the purpose of cause-related marketing, to communicate the CSR initiatives, progress, results, etc. to their consumers (Brønn & Vrioni 2001, 214). This is exactly what Gillette did, with their 2019 ‘We Believe: The Best a Man Can Get’ commercial. They made a commercial to announce their stance against toxic masculinity and their commitment to fight it. However, they did not succeed in cause-related marketing. Why this happened will be studied in this thesis by deconstructing the commercial with the use of Critical Discourse Analysis and Legitimacy Theory

In the following chapter, the phrase ‘toxic masculinity’ will be investigated, by accounting where the terminology comes from and how it has evolved throughout the years. In order to properly analyze the message about toxic masculinity from Gillette’s commercial, it is important to understand what toxic masculinity is. Furthermore, the literature review will go over the existing research that has been done on the Gillette commercial and the discipline that is cause-related marketing.

## 5. Theory

In the following chapter, this thesis's theoretical framework will be presented, i.e. Legitimacy Theory, along with the theoretical considerations and perspective that using Legitimacy Theory brings this analysis.

### 5.1 Legitimacy Theory

Gillette attempted to take a stand against toxic masculinity in their “We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be” commercial, but it was poorly received by their audience. This thesis aims at deconstructing the commercial to study how Gillette conveys this message, and where it went wrong. As the commercial is cause-related marketing and Gillette is encouraging people to stand up against toxic masculinity, it is important that Gillette conveys legitimacy. This is why legitimacy theory was selected, as it allows us to look into what kinds of legitimacy they portray through their commercial.

To investigate Gillette's use of legitimacy, this analysis will use Mark C. Suchman's (1995) work on organizational legitimacy and Rojo and van Dijk's (1997) work with legitimacy and discourse. These were selected as they both work from the perspective that legitimacy is socially constructed and therefore fits with the scientific perspective.

Suchman proposes the following definition of legitimacy:

"Legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions" (Suchman 1995, 574).

This definition claims that legitimacy is generated when companies act/perform in a way that is considered appropriate by observers. What is deemed appropriate is dependent on the norms, values, etc. that are set in society. Legitimacy is, therefore, subjective, as there are no objective perceptions or assumptions made by observers, and legitimacy is therefore socially constructive. This aligns with the scientific perspective of this commercial, as social constructivism asserts that reality is socially constructed (see Chapter 2).

"... legitimacy affects not only how people act toward organizations, but also how they understand them" (Suchman 1995, 575). When a company has legitimacy in the eyes of their audiences, the company is perceived as more worthy and meaningful. For instance, if Gillette has a lot of legitimacy when it comes to their social policies, i.e. anti-discrimination, female-hire, diversity, they are considered more valuable and meaningful to society and their audience (their customer). Legitimacy adds value to a company, while also giving the perception that the company is more predictable in their behavior. Their audience knows what to expect from them. For instance, how Gillette would react during social movements, such as the MeToo-movement or the Black Lives Matter-movement, as they have already worked up legitimacy on these issues. This makes a company more trustworthy in their behavior and actions.

A company can assess how much support they desire from their audience, and thereafter figure out the steps to get it. If a company only wants to be accepted and does not desire any particular active support, the level of legitimacy that they need is quite low. For instance, if Gillette merely wants to run their business, sell razors and not gain more market share, they do not need much legitimacy. As long as they run a legal, profitable business that follows the rules set by society, their audience

will not question them or their legitimacy. On the other hand, if they need more active support, it requires the company to have more worth and, therefore, a higher level of legitimacy. If Gillette urgently needed more employees, it would greatly benefit them to have legitimacy for the conditions of their workplace.

Suchman discusses three different types of organizational legitimacy, namely pragmatic legitimacy, moral legitimacy and cognitive legitimacy, with further subcategories.

Pragmatic legitimacy deals with a company's most immediate audiences and involves action and communication targeted directly at them. Suchman describes how pragmatic legitimacy at its most simple level is a form of exchange legitimacy.

"... pragmatic legitimacy boils down to a sort of exchange legitimacy-support for an organizational policy based on that policy's expected value to a particular set of constituents..." (Suchman 1995, 578).

It includes meeting expectations set by stakeholders, and following the norms and regulations, while demonstrating skills to achieve the company's goals. When dealing with pragmatic legitimacy, the company's actions often influence or affect the stakeholders directly. This could be customers, workers, shareholders, local community, etc. Therefore, they are much more likely to watch the company closely. For instance, if Gillette changes their safety policy for a better work environment because the workers asked for it. As the workers are directly affected by the company's decisions, they will evaluate the policies made and either give their support or not. The company and audience therefore exchange support, as both parties are gaining something.

Sub-types of pragmatic legitimacy are:

Influence legitimacy. This type of support from audiences does not rely on the outcome or exchanges that benefit the audience directly, but because it benefits the audiences' larger interests. This could be involving audiences in policy-making or giving them some sort of power or authority. This can make the audience feel seen and heard, especially important if the company requires strong and continuous support from them.

Dispositional legitimacy. "... the modern institutional order increasingly personifies organizations and treats them as autonomous, coherent, and morally responsible actors..." (Suchman 1995, 578).

Because companies are being personified, audiences are increasingly reacting, as if companies have personalities. They are therefore more likely to give support to those companies that they feel “have our best interests at heart,” that “share our values,” or that are “honest,” “trustworthy,” “decent,” and “wise.” (Suchman 1995, 578). To summarize, pragmatic legitimacy is support gained from a quid pro quo by the audience. The audience gets something in return for their support of the organization.

Moral legitimacy differs from pragmatic legitimacy in that it is not about evaluating what the organization can do for the audience, but more about whether the organization is acting in a manner that is deemed morally correct. This requires organizations to adhere to the audience's socially constructed value system and promote social welfare. This could be promoting issues such as racism or working towards making an organization's production more climate-friendly. It such be noted that organizations can put forth false claims regarding such issues, an example could be greenwashing, where companies lie or exaggerate their climate initiatives to their audience (Suchman 1995, 579). For instance, Gillette could begin a partnership with Venus Gillette, both owned by Procter and Gamble and vow to end the pink tax that makes razors for women more expensive than razors for men.

Cognitive legitimacy is based on taken-for-grantedness, as cognitive legitimacy deals with the societal acceptance of an organization's practices and policies, as the way things are done and therefore does not question them. A company's actions have been normalized in society to the point that people do not notice, for instance how Venus Gillette charges more for a razor than Gillette. The pink tax is accepted or goes unnoticed by many, as this is the way things are. Cognitive legitimacy typically gives companies a high and stable level of social acceptance, as people accept what they do without much scrutiny.

In the final section of this chapter, I will look into Legitimacy theory and discourse, as these two will be used in the analysis.

In Rojo and van Dijk's article “'There was a problem, and it was solved!': legitimating the expulsion of 'illegal' immigrants in Spanish parliamentary discourse' from 1997, they discuss the topic of legitimacy and discourse. They claim that legitimacy is discursive and, therefore, it is vital to look into linguistic and discursive characteristics, when discussing legitimacy. According to

Rojo and Dijk, when a company is seeking social legitimacy, legitimacy coming from supporting issues facing society, they are seeking normative approval for their actions.

The strategies that they use:

“aim to show that such actions are consistent with the moral order of society, that is, within the system of laws, norms, agreements or aims agreed upon by (the majority of) the citizens”(Rojo & van Dijk 1997, 528).

When a company seeks social legitimacy through discursive actions, they must adhere to the social norms set by the majority of society. Furthermore, they found that legitimacy has a top-down and bottom-up direction. When companies, the dominating group, want to legitimate themselves, they do so by getting approval or acceptance from the dominated group, who in turn legitimate the company by behaving in a way that portrays acceptance or approval. In this instance, it is Gillette, a powerful company, that wants to legitimate itself by getting approval and acceptance from their customers by getting involved in a social issue presented by a commercial. However, the customers did not legitimate Gillette by accepting and showing approval for their commercial but did quite the opposite.

The following chapter will go into more detail about the methodology, data collection and method that will be used when looking into the discursive aspect of the commercial

## 6. Methodology, Research Design, Empirical Data Collection and Method

The following chapter will describe the methodological considerations, including the research design, and empirical data collection, along with the method used in the analysis. When setting up a thesis, it is important to have a strong foundation. This is built by a coherent research design where the methodology, data and method are coherent and complement each other.



## 6.1. Empirical Data Collection

Gillette's 'We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be' commercial was aired on January 14th, 2019. The commercial was uploaded to YouTube but has since then been removed from Gillette's own YouTube channel. There are, however, still a couple of YouTube channels that have the video, one of them being The Guardian News. The Guardian is a news outlet founded in 1821 in the UK. It is considered one of the leading newspapers in the UK and has been praised for its investigative journalism (Britannica 2023). They have several YouTube channels including The Guardian News, The Guardian Football, The Guardian and others. The Gillette commercial was found on their YouTube channel named The Guardian News and was uploaded on January 15, 2019, the day after the commercial's official release (The Guardian News 2023). The video is 1:50 minutes long. The very first frame of the commercial (0:00) shows a red screen and the Guardian's name and this will not be included in any part of the analysis. The YouTube video showing Gillette's commercial from the Guardian News channel was selected to be used to make the transcript and the analysis of this thesis. The credibility of the Guardian and the date that it was uploaded ensures that the commercial is shown in its full length and has not been tampered with or edited. The video on the Guardian's YouTube channel has subtitles added by them, not auto-generated. These subtitles were used to help make the transcript of the commercial.

## 6.2. Methodology and Research Design

The following analysis is a case study using qualitative data, the 2019 "We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be" Gillette commercial, to study the message behind the commercial and why it went wrong.

A case study offers researchers the opportunity to use a variety of different methods, i.e. methods of data collection and analytical methods, to study the event, process, activity, etc. in detail. "... a case study is not a method of data collection, rather is a research strategy or design to study a social unit. " (Priya 2021, 95).

In this thesis, the aim is to investigate the Gillette commercial to uncover how they communicated their message and identify the flaws. The Gillette commercial is the data and the event that is being studied. The data is qualitative, as the commercial, transcript and video, are the data that will be studied. If this thesis was going to investigate the response to the Gillette commercial, i.e. comments from social media, the data would be quantitative. Although a thorough quantitative analysis of the response to the commercial could give a clear image of what people found offensive or troubling about the commercial, this is not the aim of this thesis. Rather, this thesis already accepts that the commercial got a lot of criticism and wants to study what and how Gillette sent their message.

“A case study involves a detailed study of the concerned unit of analysis within its natural setting. A de-contextualised study has no relevance in a case study research.” (Priya 2021, 95).

As mentioned in the quote above, when performing a case study, the data should be investigated within its context. For this case study that means that the commercial should not just be analyzed on its own, but the context, the socio-cultural situation at the time, should be considered in the analysis. Furthermore, when analyzing a text, the term ‘text’ includes documents, videos, etc., the researcher should attempt to deconstruct the text to discover the power relations between the sender and the audience (Priya 2021, 97). Therefore, this analysis will use a method of analysis that will attempt to uncover these power relations between the sender and audience, which, as established in Chapter 3, is embedded in language. The method of analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis. Unlike other forms of Discourse Analysis, Critical Discourse Analysis studies not only the text, but the relationship between the text and the social conditions, and power relations.

#### Research design:

The research design helps determine the efficiency and validity of one's case study outcome. As established in Chapter 2, the scientific perspective is social constructivism. This scientific perspective tells us that reality is socially constructed and that the meaning behind a message can be found, not only in the words but the social context and relationship between the sender and the audience (see Chapter 2). The theory chosen for this thesis, Legitimacy theory, will be used to uncover what kind of legitimacy Gillette is trying to portray in the commercial. Legitimacy is also socially constructed, as the norms that companies must follow are set by people in society (see Chapter 3). The methodology, case study, further compliments this as it points out the importance

of social context and the relationship between sender and audience. Finally, the method of analysis is Critical Discourse Analysis, which seeks to find the meaning behind communicative events, by uncovering the power relations between participants and the connection to the socio-cultural situation at the time. Every element complements each other, which makes it a strong foundation for an analysis.

### 6.3. Critical Discourse Analysis

As stated in the science perspective chapter (see Chapter 3), the scientific perspective of this thesis is social constructivism, which encourages us to be critical of how language is used to create or reproduce the socially constructed reality that we live in. Critical Discourse Analysis seeks to do just that.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a very popular method, as it is a way to perform a linguistic analysis of a social phenomenon. Norman Fairclough, the author behind CDA, believes that when analyzing discourses, it should be done on three levels, also referred to as dimensions, the textual, the discursive and the social level simultaneously (Horsbøl & Raudaskoski 2016, 71). As the name suggests, Critical Discourse Analysis takes a critical stance, as the main motivation behind the method is to uncover the underlying discourses in society that construct, maintain and legitimize social inequality (Horsbøl & Raudaskoski 2016, 61-63). Gillette is taking a stance against toxic masculinity, which includes dominating and being superior to women. Therefore, it is relevant to study whether they are challenging this social inequality or contributing to it. Fairclough believes that discourses not only reproduce but also change identities, knowledge and social relations, and that these are embedded within language ((Fairclough 1992, 64). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the way we speak and address things, people, etc. in the world influences our society and our future. This includes the way that we talk about masculinity. Therefore, the discourses that are either being constituted or reproduced in the commercial are important to study, as they can uncover power relations, ideologies and social structures. The main focus of CDA is therefore the relationship between language, power and society. Furthermore, CDA offers a broad framework with three levels of analysis and a broad collection of analysis tools. The analytical tools and the three layers

of analysis will be elaborated upon in the next section. However, not every single tool will be used in the analysis of Gillette's commercial, as they might not be relevant.

As this is a commercial, there is also a visual aspect of the commercial that must be investigated, which requires us to study not only language but also different semiotic modes. Modes can include images, graphs, sound, etc. In the textual analysis, the visual aspect can be analyzed in connection to the text analysis. However, the picture side must also be analyzed on its own. Analytical tools from the Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) (Machin & Mayr 2012) will be applied in the picture analysis. MCDA is a systematic analysis to study not only linguistic and textual aspects but also non-verbal elements (Machin & Mayr 2012, 6-9). However, the MCDA's primary aim is to study how different non-verbal modes contribute to meaning within a discourse. Whereas, the CDA's primary aim is to uncover the power dynamics and social structures that are at play, which is why part of the MCDA was added to the CDA in this analysis.

Additionally, the sound, sound effects and music, will be analyzed in connection with either the textual analysis or the picture analysis, and not on its own.

As mentioned earlier, CDA consists of three levels of analysis which will all be applied to the Gillette commercial. First is the textual level, which looks into the linguistic features of the commercial, which includes text and spoken word. Secondly, the picture analysis is specially added for this thesis, which looks at the visual features. Thirdly, the discursive practice, which looks at the production and consumption of the commercial. Finally, there is the social practice, which looks at the social and cultural context that influences the commercial and the power relations hidden in the commercial.

### 6.3.1. The textual analysis

The textual analysis will look into different textual and grammatical elements that can uncover what is truly being said by the sender. It is through a close analysis that the critical perspective can be achieved (Jørgensen & Philips 1999, 94-95). The textual analysis will look into the following elements: transitivity, pronouns, vocabulary and forms of appeal. Gillette is using a sensitive topic

in their commercial, therefore, it is important to look into how they conveyed this message to their audience. The elements chosen in this thesis will be able to tell us how they communicate to their audience in terms of making the commercial dynamic and personal through the use of different grammatical choices, such as verbs and pronouns. Furthermore, how they are conveying this sensitive topic and trying to reach their audience through their vocabulary and how they appeal to their audience.

In the rest of this section, each element will be explained. As mentioned earlier, not every analytical element will be used in this thesis, such as metaphors. There are no metaphors present in the commercial, therefore, it is not relevant to look into.

#### 6.3.1.1 Transitivity

When looking into transitivity, you are looking to investigate the events and processes connected to the subject and object of the commercial or the lack of. There are many different grammatical elements to investigate when looking at transitivity, but this analysis will focus mainly on the verbs, modal verbs and the presence of the agent. Whether or not the verbs are passive or active impacts the dynamic of the text. If verbs are active, the text will become more dynamic, as the focus is on the action (Fairclough 1992, 177-179). An example of this could be, 'Men make more money than women'. If the majority of verbs are passive, the text will become less dynamic, as the focus is not on the action itself, but the target of the action. An example of this could be, 'More money is made by men than women'.

Modal verbs also impact the dynamic of the text. The modal verbs are as follows, can, may, might, could, should, would, will and must. Modality verbs say something about the condition of the action. Whether the action is allowed, necessary, wanted or possible, this is what modal verbs can contribute. A sentence can dramatically change when modal verbs are added. An example of this is the sentence "men do better". In the previous sentence the verb 'do' is active and the focus is on the action. By adding modal verbs the condition of the action is the main focus and can dramatically change the meaning (Fairclough 1992, 158-161). 'Men will do better' and 'Men might do better' are two sentences that by the use of different modal verbs have very different meanings. The modal verb 'will' adds meaning to the sentence that the action will happen. But if

the modal verb is switched to 'might', the meaning changes to uncertain. These modal verbs make a text less dynamic than active verbs, as the focus on the action is moved to the condition of the action, but not as much as passive verbs.

#### 6.3.1.2. Pronouns

The use of pronouns in a text can tell us about the relationship between the sender and the audience. If a text uses many pronouns, such as I, you, he, she, we, and us, the text becomes more personal and informal. If the text, on the other hand, does not include many pronouns or uses the neutral it or one, the text becomes less personal and more formal. Thereby, we can learn about the relationship that the sender has with the audience. Furthermore, it can also speak to how inclusive the text is of the sender and audience. Whether or not the text includes the sender with pronouns, such as I, we, or us, can tell us about the sender's involvement in the message of the text. If pronouns directed towards the audience are included, such as you, the sender is involving the audience in the message of the text. Finally, the sender can include both the sender and the audience with the use of pronouns, such as we and us. Here the sender is putting the sender and audience together in their message (Fairclough 1992, 176).

#### 6.3.1.3. Vocabulary

The vocabulary used in a text does not only convey the message but can also set the tone or mood of a text. This influences the way that the audience interprets the text through the use of either positively or negatively charged words. Therefore, the analysis will look into Gillette's choice of words and potential changes from positive to negative or vice versa. Furthermore, the sender must choose the correct tone for the message that they are trying to send or it could be distorted. If a commercial is sending a message that is meant to be encouraging and hopeful, but the vocabulary is filled with negative words, these do not align and can distort the message. (Fairclough 1992, 190-191).

#### 6.3.1.4. Forms of appeal

When a sender tries to convince their audience to do something, perform an action or change behavior, it is key to convince the audience that it is relevant for them. To do so, the argumentation from the sender must reach and capture the audience. Forms of appeal come from Greek rhetoric and are about how a sender gets the audience convinced through the use of logos, ethos and pathos.

Logos:

Logos is often used when the sender wants to appeal to the audience's rational and logical side. When using the logos appeal, the vocabulary tends to be more neutral and the use of pronouns is often neutral or low. This keeps the text more formal and less personal. When a sender uses this appeal, they often use scientific facts or studies and argumentation that is rooted in logic. An example of this could be to refer to a survey that shows that people are more satisfied with Gillette's razors than other brands.

Ethos:

Ethos is used when the sender wants to appeal to the audience's trust in the sender. The more ethos that a sender has, the more credibility they have. Therefore, the ethos appeal is more sender-oriented. When using ethos, the sender will often use authority in their argumentation. This authority can come from the company's existing credibility, such as Gillette's long experience with making razors for men. It can also come from using experts or celebrities to vouch for the company, such as using Tiger Woods or David Beckham to promote Gillette's razors.

Pathos:

When using pathos, the sender is trying to connect to the audience's emotional side. They will often use words, images or sounds to try and make the audience feel moved. An example of this can be when companies use causes to tuck at our heartstrings by using words or images that will make us feel something, such as sadness, anger or happiness. This can be seen in commercials that promote non-profit causes such as hunger or diseases. By showing the audience the suffering of others, they might be persuaded to donate money or their time (Andersen 2014, 92-95).

Now the analysis will move on to the picture analysis.

### 6.3.2. Picture analysis

After looking at the textual elements of the commercial, the following analysis will focus on the visual aspects of the commercial. The picture analysis will focus on how Gillette visually tells a story through the settings, salience and iconography. As Gillette is using a social issue, they must convey the message visually as well as textually. There are many different analytical elements to investigate, but this analysis will, as with the textual analysis, not include every element. For instance, the element attributes will not be studied, as it does not reveal anything about the message, in the commercial.

#### 6.3.2.1. Setting

The setting in an image or video can be used to add meaning and help convey the message from the sender. "... settings are used to communicate general ideas, to connote discourses and their values, identities and actions" (Machin & Mayr 2012, 52). An example of this could be a video of a man standing behind a woman and putting his hands on her shoulders. If the setting is in a living room, the audience would most likely interpret it as a husband and wife. However, if the setting changes to a workplace, the meaning completely changes. Most of the audience would perceive them as colleagues and the interaction becomes inappropriate. Therefore, settings can add to the meaning and interpretation of the message.

#### 6.3.2.2. Salience

When looking into salience in an image or video, the main analytical focus is on the elements that purposely stand out to the viewer. "Salience is where certain features in compositions are made to stand out, to draw our attention to foreground certain meanings. Such features will have the central symbolic value in the composition." (Machin & Mayr 2012, 54). There are many different elements to look into, as with the textual analysis, and this thesis will only look into the relevant elements that are present and play a part in conveying the message that Gillette is trying to send to the audience.

##### 6.3.2.2.1. Color



The use of colors can give attention to different elements by using bright and/or vibrant colors. If the aim is to mute elements, less strong colors can be used. For instance, if a company wants to bring attention to their products, they can use strong and bright colors to make the products stand out (Machin & Mayr 2012, 55).

#### 6.3.2.2.2. Focus

In images or videos, focus can give salience to different elements. Focus can come from elements having more details than the rest of the image. This can also be a result of the lighting being directed towards specific elements. Elements can also have reduced focus to minimize their importance (Machin & Mayr 2012, 55). For instance, if a commercial focuses on their product and the rest of the image is less detailed.

#### 6.3.2.2.3. Overlapping

Overlapping places objects, people or other elements in front of other elements in the image. Overlapping makes the element appear to be in front of other objects and this brings the audience's focus on that element. An example of this could be if a person walks in front of other people. The focus will turn to that person and this signifies that this person is important. (Machin & Mayr 2012, 56).

#### 6.3.2.3. Iconography

Iconography is a semiotic theory of Roland Barthes (1973, 1977) that revolves around what images can denote and connote. Denotation is what the image is documenting or showing, e.g. people, events, places or things. The purpose of the image is to show specific people, events, etc. This could be photos or videos showing how Gillette produces their razors. Essentially, what the image is showing is what the sender wants you to see. Sometimes the point of an image is not what it denotes, the particular people, events or things. Rather the purpose of the image is what they

connote. They show particular people, events or things, to get an abstract message across to the viewer. Here, the focus is on the ideas and values that are shown (Machin & Mayr 2012, 49-50). This could be a commercial featuring an actor, who is freshly shaven, smiling to himself in a mirror, with a Gillette razor lying on the sink. This connotes the message that a Gillette razor will leave you with a happy and satisfied feeling about your shave. Here the focus is not on the specific actor or the fact that he is smiling, but the supposed result of using a Gillette razor.

#### 6.3.2.4 Anchorage and relay

Anchorage and relay, which were presented by Barthes (1997), are two different kinds of relationships between text and image.

Anchorage means that the text helps the audience interpret the image. This means that the text is used to guide the audience to understand the image, as the sender wishes. The text 'anchors' the audience's understanding, as it provides context, explains or gives information that is needed to interpret the image correctly (Barthes 1977, 156-157). For instance, a Gillette commercial that shows a man smiling and looking into the camera does not make a lot of sense unless the text or audio gives context that the man just shaved with a Gillette razor and, as a result, it feels nice and fresh. Whereas, relay is about a complimentary relationship between the text and image. This means that the audience does not need the text to interpret the image, rather it adds more meaning. This is often seen in cartoons, where the action is illustrated and speech is added to give more meaning to the cartoon (Barthes 1977, 156-157). For instance a commercial of a man shaving smoothly with a Gillette razor along with text that mentions how Gillette razors have become more innovative with a new kind of handle. Here, the text and image complement each other, but would also be understood separately.

#### 6.3.3. The discursive practice

After looking into the textual and visual aspects of the commercial, the analysis will move to the discursive practice.

“The 'discursive practice' dimension, like 'interaction' in the 'text-and-interaction' view of discourse, specifies the nature of the processes of text production and interpretation, for example, which types of discourse (including 'discourses' in the more social-theoretical sense) are drawn upon and how they are combined.” (Fairclough 1992, 4).

To bring our analysis from the textual and picture level to the discursive practice, we must take a step back and see the text as a whole. This means looking at how the commercial is produced, distributed and consumed (Fairclough 1992, 78). The discursive practice is the next dimension of a critical discourse analysis, and focuses on the communicative process that happens through the text, in this case, the Gillette commercial. To do so, this part of the analysis will look into the discourses and genres in the text.

The analysis will establish the different discourses that are present in the text. A discourse is according to Fairclough: “a particular way of representing some part of the (physical, social, psychological) world”(Fairclough 2003, 13). Discourses that are often found in external communication from companies to their customers are sales discourses, marketing discourses, etc. However, there is often more than just one discourse present in a piece of communication. Therefore, it is important to uncover the order of discourse. An order of discourse is the stability that exists within a field or organization (Fairclough 1992, 12). Furthermore, the different discourses in the order of discourse often have different power relations ((Horsbøl & Raudaskoski 2016, 81). This is relevant when determining whether the commercial reproduces or challenges the existing order of discourse. The order of discourse is determined by the genre conventions and discourses within a particular context. For instance, if the discourses present in a commercial follow the genre conventions, such as a sales discourse, they are constituted within the order of discourse. On the other hand, if a discourse present in a commercial is out of the ordinary, it originates from outside the order of discourse.

The genre of the text is also an important element to look into. It has been established that this is a commercial, and therefore, there are certain genre conventions and compositional structures that the audience expects from a commercial (Fairclough 1993, 138). Furthermore, Gillette is using cause-related marketing in their commercial. This will be interesting to study, as the mix between

the two can be tricky. On one hand, Gillette has made a commercial, which typically aims at selling, with cause-related marketing, which typically aims at promoting a good cause. It is especially the mix between the two that a company like Gillette must be aware of. If not used correctly, their message can seem disingenuous, because it can be perceived as if they are only trying to make themselves look better.

Finally, the discourses will be investigated in terms of intertextuality. The definition of the term is according to Norman Fairclough:

“...the concept of intertextuality in terms of a distinction between 'manifest' intertextuality (the explicit presence of other texts in a text)...” (Fairclough 1992, 10).

Intertextuality is text from a prior source that has been put into the text, or in this case commercial. This could be quotes, clips, links to other sources or references to other texts. This shows if the text is reproducing existing discourses by referring back to other texts.

The Critical Discourse Analysis aims at looking into how the commercial was produced in terms of the genre, the discourses and it will also look into the sender and audience, who the sender is and who the intended audience is. This will help establish the power relations in the commercial that will be studied in the social practice.

#### 6.3.4. The social practice

The final level of analysis is the social practice, which connects the analysis of the commercial to the social context at the time of its release.

“The 'social practice' dimension attends to issues of concern in social analysis such as the institutional and organizational circumstances of the discursive event and how that shapes the nature of the discursive practice, and the constitutive/ constructive effects of discourse referred to above” (Fairclough 1992, 4).

The social practice is the third and final dimension of analysis. Here, the text goes from being a product (textual analysis) or a process (discursive practice) to a text being a social act. It is in the final part of the analysis that all the previous analytical findings will be connected to the social norms and developments in society.

In the discursive practice, the discourses present in the commercial will have been established, and the different discourses that constitute the order of discourse. However, as mentioned earlier, the discourses often have different power relations and one discourse is the most dominant, this is also known as hegemony. In the social practice, the power relations will be studied by linking the three analytical dimensions together and the hegemonic discourse will be established. This chapter will seek to uncover power relations embedded in the commercial to fully understand the meaning behind the commercial. Additionally, the social situation at the time will be considered in relation to the previous findings.

#### 6.3.4. Legitimacy theory

By the end of each step of the analysis, legitimacy theory will be intertwined in the analysis. Essentially, the part of the analysis that has been done, i.e. the textual analysis, will then be connected to legitimacy theory. After every level of analysis, the findings will be summarized in a sub-conclusion. Thereafter, the findings will be considered with the different kinds of legitimacy in mind to determine if and how Gillette uses legitimacy in their commercial. For instance, if the analysis finds that Gillette encourages their audience to make suggestions or policies that will help Gillette live up to their new stand against toxic masculinity in the textual analysis, Gillette is using the influence legitimacy strategy. It is through a detailed analysis of the commercial and the message that their use of legitimacy can be found.

## 7. Analysis

In the following chapter, the Gillette ‘We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be’ commercial will be analyzed. First, the textual analysis will look into the written and spoken parts of the commercial. Secondly, the picture analysis will be conducted, to look into the visuals of the commercial and the relationship between the text and image. Thirdly, the discursive practice will be analyzed and finally the social practice. Legitimacy theory will be applied after every layer of the analysis in the sub-conclusions. When referencing the transcript (appendix 1), the text will quote the transcript and state which line it is referencing. For instance, “And there will be no going back” (l. 16),

references line 16 in the transcript. If the analysis will reference an image or part of the video, the timestamp will be shown. For instance, (0:30) means 30 seconds into the commercial.

## 7.1. Textual Analysis

The textual analysis will look into transitivity, pronouns, vocabulary and forms of appeal. Finally, legitimacy theory will be applied to the textual analysis in the sub-conclusion.

### 7.1.1. Transitivity

The majority of the verbs in the Gillette commercial are active, such as “We can’t hide from it” (l. 3) or “Join us” (l. 34). The use of active verbs makes the commercial more dynamic and more interesting for the audience. As mentioned earlier (see chapter 6.3.1.1), the use of active verbs puts the focus on the action in a sentence. The focus is the verb and what action Gillette wants the audience, themselves or both to take. Additionally, the verbs are all in the present tense, except for line 13, “But something finally changed”. The change that happened is a reference to the MeToo-movement, as the next lines are from news clips that show just how big and global this movement was.

In the Gillette commercial, several modal verbs are being used, mainly ‘can’, ‘can’t’ and ‘will’. In line 2 the modal verb ‘can’ is used: “Is this the best a man can get?” (l. 2). It is used again in lines 4 and 6, here the modal verbs are used to emphasize that the current situation no longer can be ignored. It is used again in the final part of the commercial, “That we can get closer to our best” (l. 32). The modal verb ‘can’ signifies that an action is possible or allowed. In this instance, it adds that the action is possible, and, when used in a question such as line 2, it can be used to ask challenging questions. The use of modal verbs shifts to ‘will’ about halfway into the commercial and is used to emphasize Gillette’s commitment to change, “And there will be no going back” (l. 16). ‘Will’ is in this sentence used as a statement to the audience that it is not possible for Gillette or the audience to go back to the way things used to be. The use of modal verbs can make a commercial less dynamic, as modal verbs remove the focus from the action to the condition surrounding the action. However, as the message of the commercial is to take a stand against toxic

masculinity, the use of modal verbs is appropriate. They are trying to convince their audience that Gillette and the audience have to take action. Especially, when Gillette uses 'will', they are not leaving them or the audience any choice on whether or not to take action. Gillette uses verbs and modal verbs to make the text more dynamic and make their commitment to fight toxic masculinity very clear to the audience

### 7.1.2. Pronouns

In the commercial, the use of pronouns also adds to the dynamic of the text and clarifies the relationship between the sender and the audience. In this commercial, Gillette uses several pronouns in their text, but only one pronoun is used by the moderator, the voice who reads the transcript during the commercial. The first use of pronouns happens in line four and is repeated four times, namely 'we'. The pronoun 'we' can be used as 'we Gillette' or 'we Gillette and audience'. In the first use of we the moderator says the following "We can't hide from it" (l. 4). The first 'we' refers to a combined we. The following 'we' in line six is also a combined 'we', "We can't laugh it off" (l.6). We know this, because they are referring back to the first line, which sets the context about the MeToo-movement. They mean that neither Gillette nor the audience can ignore the issues brought up during the MeToo-movement. By using a combined 'we', Gillette is holding not only themselves but also the audience responsible for taking action. The next two 'we', however, are only a Gillette 'we'. "Because we, we believe in the best in men" (l. 17), they emphasize the 'we' by saying it twice in a row. It is a statement that cannot be made on behalf of the audience, so, therefore it will be perceived as only referring to Gillette. By shifting the 'we' to mean only Gillette and not Gillette and the audience, it could be an attempt to try and emotionally move the audience. Not only does the double 'we' imply that it is coming from Gillette, they also want to emphasize that Gillette believes that men can be better. They have faith that men can be better than they are now, which could also imply that other people do not. Thereby, Gillette is not only portraying themselves as being in the fight, but also the ones that support and still believe in men after a MeToo-movement that created a lot of focus on poor behavior from men.

The following use of pronouns is from a video of a man with a little girl, perceived as a father and daughter, with the man saying "I am strong"(l. 24) and the little girl repeating it. Another 'we' is used in the commercial as a man is separating two little boys fighting with the words "That's not

how we treat each other, okay?” (l. 27). This is an inclusive ‘we’ that not only signals that they should not behave like that but neither should the adults. The only ‘you’ to be used in the commercial comes from a man helping a young boy after bullies tried to chase him. He asks: “Are you okay?”(l.28)

As the commercial is about to end, a written message appears to the audience, which includes more pronouns. “It’s only by challenging ourselves to do more”(l. 31) and “That we can get closer to our best”, here Gillette uses another ‘we’ and an ‘our’ that includes everyone. Finally, they use two pronouns that just include Gillette, “We are taking action...”(l.33) and “Join us”(l.34). The pronouns are used encouragingly to get other men to join them in taking action. However, it could also be perceived as being pushy, especially if parts of the audience do not have a shared belief or concern about toxic masculinity. Gillette is also encouraging people to go to their website and seek more information, as they do not speak of any actual changes that they have made to their company or cooperation with any relevant charities.

The most significant use of pronouns in this commercial is the use of ‘we’. They either include Gillette or Gillette and the audience. They are attempting to make it very clear to the audience that Gillette is taking action. What action Gillette is taking, they do not say. That information is only available on their website. Given the use of inclusive ‘we’ in the commercial, the relationship between the sender and the audience is informal. Gillette is putting them and the audience together and presenting them as one unit. This creates a sense of togetherness in the fight against toxic masculinity. However, the lack of actual action from their side in the commercial can make the inclusive ‘we are in this together’ seem hollow.

### 7.1.3. Vocabulary

The vocabulary used in this commercial is filled with both positively and negatively charged words and phrases, which is illustrated in the table below.

<b>Positively charged words</b>	<b>Negatively charged words</b>
Right thing (l. 21)	Bullying (l. 1)
Right way (l. 21)	Toxic masculinity (l. 1)



Strong (l. 24)	Sexual harassment (l. 1)
Best (l. 30)	Same old excuses (l. 9)
Finally changed (l. 13)	Boys will be boys (l. 10)

The commercial begins with many negatively charged words, the three used in the table above are from the first line. They are used to explain and set the scene for the audience. The negatively charged words and phrases continue in the text to further illustrate to the audience what the issue is about and how it has been handled so far.

However, from line 13 the commercial becomes more positive. The vocabulary starts to include words that are positive and attempt to inspire action, such as ‘changed’ and ‘right’. This is also reflected in the music. In the commercial, the music, along with the vocabulary, contributes to the tone in the commercial. From 0:48, the music starts to become more upbeat and louder. This is further reflected in the stories and video clips that Gillette has used in their commercial. From 0:54, the audience sees storylines of people taking action against toxic masculinity. This all contributes to the tone of the commercial and the shift from a darker and more negative mood to a lighter and more positive mood. This is appropriate for this commercial as the beginning asserts the seriousness of the issue and that Gillette does not take it lightly. It ends on a lighter and more hopeful note that helps send the message that change can happen.

The vocabulary in this commercial is used, not only to set the situation but also to set the overall mood and tone. The commercial starts negatively with talk of sexual harassment and toxic masculinity but changes tone about halfway in. The tone becomes lighter and more inspirational, so, by the end of the commercial, the audience can sit with a feeling of hope and a positive outlook on the future. This is also reflected in the music and images. Did Gillette not use negatively charged words in the beginning, it might not have the same effect on the audience. It is important, with a commercial using a social issue, to convey the proper sense of seriousness about it. Furthermore, it is also important to shift the tone towards the end, so the audience is left with a hopeless feeling. If this was the case, it would not encourage people to join in the fight against toxic masculinity.

#### 7.1.4. Forms of appeal

In the Gillette commercial, the most dominant form of appeal used is the pathos appeal. This is evident from the very first line, “Bullying, the MeToo-movement against sexual harassment, toxic masculinity...” (l. 1). Gillette is referring to topics that are supposed to make the audience think of the MeToo-movement that exposed many awful stories from women and men around the world. This could cause a feeling of rage, injustice or guilt over the way things have been in the past for women. However, it can also cause a different rage, if the person watching does not support the MeToo-movement, but rather finds it to be a witch-hunt.

In the following question: “Is this the best a man can get?” (l. 2) and statements: “We can’t hide from it” (l. 4) and “We can’t laugh it off” (l. 6), Gillette is attempting to provoke some feelings of responsibility from the audience. They are using an inclusive ‘we’ (see chapter 4.1.2), and, in lines 4 and 6, they are implying that the audience knew that something wrong was going on the entire time, but ignored it or laughed it off. This could further provoke feelings of guilt or responsibility in the audience.

From 0:20-0:39, the audience sees clips of men acting out some classic actions associated with toxic masculinity. This can cause rage in those who have experienced similar behavior, shame in those who have done it and further responsibility to stop this kind of behavior. This continues with lines 10, 11 and 12, “Boys will be boys”. This phrase became widely discussed in the US after a tape of Donald Trump and TV host Billy Bush was leaked in 2016, where Donald Trump had a lewd conversation about women. Trump supporters came out to defend Donald Trump by saying that the remarks were locker room talk and many used the phrase ‘Boys will be boys’ to excuse the behavior (Paquette 2016). Then, the commercial shifts tone and becomes more hopeful. The commercial again uses pathos at 1:14, as the audience sees a little girl repeat her father's words “I am strong” (l. 24-25). This is meant to pull at the audience’s heartstrings as a cute little girl is encouraged to tell herself that she is strong. Additionally, the audience is shown more people who stand up to toxic masculinity, which can make them feel inspired to do the same.

The commercial also uses some ethos in the commercial. They do this by showing celebrities talking about sexual harassment and news channels speaking about the MeToo-movement. However, these are clips from news outlets or other shows. Gillette is using these clips to show credibility for their cause, as this is a serious issue that exists in society. Furthermore, Gillette is

using their position as an old and well-established company as a form of ethos. Therefore, it can be perceived by the audience, that Gillette has credibility to speak on this issue.

### Sub-conclusion

In the textual analysis, transitivity, pronouns, vocabulary and forms of appeal were investigated. This analysis showed that Gillette attempted to make a dynamic text with a monologue that contained consistent active verbs and modal verbs to communicate the urgency of taking action. Furthermore, they included themselves and the audience in their message through the use of the pronoun 'we'. This made the text informal and personal, as they were speaking directly to the audience and telling them that they needed to take action. Through their choice of vocabulary, they started the commercial with negatively charged words and then changed to positively charged words, along with the music. This shift in tone can make the audience feel more hopeful, empowered and engaged in their message. This aligned with their use of pathos, which is the most used appeal in this commercial. Considering the issue that they are speaking of, drawing on people's emotions and sense of justice and responsibility was a good idea, as it might persuade people to join their cause. Gillette devoted much of the commercial to encouraging their audience to take action. However, it is not clear what kind of action that Gillette will take. They urge men to stand up against toxic masculinity, however, they do not say what they as a company are planning to do. This can make the audience feel like Gillette is merely telling them to take action, while not doing anything themselves. At the end of the commercial, they show a link where the audience can see what Gillette intends to do. However, showing what a company like Gillette would do would have been better and made the commercial more sincere.

Looking at this analysis through the perspective of legitimacy theory, Gillette is using a combination of dispositional legitimacy and moral legitimacy. Dispositional legitimacy is a sub-category of pragmatic legitimacy that is used to make the audience feel like the company is a good corporate friend that has their best interest at heart. Through the use of pronouns and modal verbs, Gillette is solidifying their commitment to the cause. Additionally, through the use of tone and music, they assure the audience that this is something that they take seriously. They are trying to present themselves as trustworthy. Moral legitimacy is evident through the use of vocabulary and use of pathos appeal. Gillette uses phrases such as "the right thing" and "the right way", which

refers to the right way to act as a man in today's society. This is exactly what they are supporting. They are trying to adhere to their audience and the socially constructed value system, where toxic masculinity is no longer accepted.

## 7.2. Picture Analysis

In the following chapter, the picture analysis will be conducted. The analysis will go over the setting, salience, iconography and the relationship between text and image through anchorage and relay.

### 7.2.1 Setting

The setting in an image or video can be used to add meaning and help convey the message from the sender. In the Gillette commercial, there are many different settings throughout the commercial and the following analysis will study the most significant ones.

#### 0:16 – online bullying (boys chasing another boy in his home)

The first significant setting is at 0:16, where the audience sees a young boy holding onto his mother. This is taking place in what appears to be their living room. While the boy is holding his mother, small text bobbles appear on the screen with messages that most people would consider bullying, such as “freak”. As these appear, a group of boys comes running through the living room, the same group that has been seen earlier in the commercial (0:10). The boy holds his mother even tighter while being visibly scared, while the boys knock over furniture. This group of boys, who appear throughout the commercial, are chasing one boy, in what does not appear to be a fun game but rather bullying. This could illustrate how online bullying can mean that there no longer is a safe space for kids. Social media allows us to connect and write to our friends and loved ones all the time. However, it also means that the bullies at school, no longer have to physically be there to bully someone. The setting, the boy's living room, and the group of bullies running through it illustrate how bullying can enter people's homes through social media. One of the traits that is associated with toxic masculinity is being overly competitive and dominating. This type of

behavior can lead to bullying others and putting other people down. This can also be the case with children, therefore, it is important to teach children not to behave like that.

#### 0:19 – sexism on television

At 0:19, the commercial shows a television that is playing small clips, where men or male characters are objectifying women. This cuts to a clip of three boys who are sitting on a couch, with one boy holding a TV remote, supposedly having just watched those clips. The setting is another living room, this time indicating that boys grow up watching this type of behavior on television and this is one of the reasons why they learn this behavior.

#### 0:28 – sexism at the workplace

At 0:28, the audience sees a long table with people surrounding it and a city view in the background. The long table, the way that people are dressed., and the notebooks on the table all point to this setting being a workplace. Then, the man standing at the end of the table puts his hand on the shoulder of the only woman present and says “What I actually think she’s trying to say” (l. 8). The line and the condescending way that it is delivered by the actor all point towards the woman’s opinion being ignored and that she is being belittled at her job. Furthermore, the phrase ‘mansplaining’ is also often used about situations like this, where a man will tell a woman what she thinks or what she means. This scene showcases another toxic masculinity trait, namely that some men do not take women seriously in the workplace due to their gender. The setting and the condescending line put together represent sexism and toxic masculinity in the workplace. This was also something that was brought up as a result of the MeToo-movement. How it can be harder for women to be heard, if she is employed in a male-dominated field or workplace.

#### 0:33 – bullying behavior at home

The fourth and final setting that will be analyzed is shown at 0:33. Here two young boys are fighting each other while two men, who appear to be their dads, are watching. Then they say “Boys will be boys” (l.). As established earlier, the phrase ‘boys will be boys’ means that the behavior is

just a boy thing and should not be taken seriously. It is essentially excusing bad behavior on gender. In this case, it is two small boys fighting, while the dads ignore it because that is just how boys behave. The setting is in a backyard, we know this as we see a yard and a tall fence. The previous setting suggests that toxic masculinity is learned at home through television, this setting further indicates that toxic masculinity is also accepted at home in families. Additionally, the scene also indicates that this is typical behavior, at 0:36, as they show a long line of men in front of grills repeating the line “Boys will be boys will be boys” (1.). This indicates that many men have and would react similarly and that this is a problem. This also tells us that toxic masculinity is learned through our social relations, in this case from father to son. This could, however, also be perceived as Gillette stating that the majority of men would tolerate this type of behavior, which could be offensive for some of the audience.

The settings in Gillette’s commercial show where some of the toxic masculinity is taught, on television, through social relations, and where it is experienced, at home, at the workplace, online. These all show little stories of people being the victim of toxic masculinity or how it is taught.

### 7.2.2 Salience

In the following chapter, the picture analysis will study color, focus and overlapping. These are all elements that seek to draw the audience’s attention to a certain thing.

#### 7.2.2.1 Color

In the Gillette commercial, the color blue is used from the very first frame (0:01), the bathroom wall is a shade of blue and a blue background appears several times (0:20, 0:24, 0:26, 0:30, 0:47, 0:50, 0:54, 1:37-1:48). Different elements in the commercial is also blue, such as the bag pack on the boy that is being chased throughout the commercial (0:12) and the speech bubbles showing rude messages (0:13, 0:17). Several of the actors in the commercial are wearing shirts in a shade of blue (0:20, 0:24, 0:27, 0:33-0:35, 1:03, 1:06, 1:10). The lighting also appears blue at the film studio shown in the commercial (0:12, 0:25, 0:28, 0:47). Gillette often uses blue in their logo and

commercials. This is presented when they show part of their old commercial (0:08). Blue is one of Gillette's signature colors and the use of blue throughout the commercial can be perceived as Gillette being present throughout the entire commercial. There is little to no mention of Gillette and their products, however, the blue colors can represent Gillette and promote them throughout the commercial.

#### 7.2.2.2. Focus

Gillette uses focus in this commercial when they show people's faces. Throughout the commercial, the audience sees men, women and children's faces up close. It is the very first scene of the commercial (0:01-0:06). The audience sees four different men, of different ages, looking at themselves in the mirror. In this scene, the background is not in focus and is slightly blurred. The audience's attention is drawn to the men's faces. The men all have facial expressions that could be interpreted as concerned, sad or negative. We see these faces as the first line of the commercial is spoken, "Bullying, the MeToo-movement against sexual harassment, toxic masculinity." (l. 1). This combination indicates that this is what the men, looking at themselves in the mirror, is thinking about. The issue of sexual harassment and toxic masculinity are making them concerned and sad.

At 0:13, we see the face of a crying mother who is holding her son. The focus is on her face as the background is faded and the lighting is on her face. The audience is meant to see the makeup that is smudged around her eyes and the sad, desperate look on her face, as she is holding her son who, as established earlier, is being bullied online. Here, the audience must see the pain that it brings her that her son is being bullied and how much pain it is causing them both. There is another close-up of a woman at 0:33, who is being ignored at her work. Here the focus is her face, so it is clear to the audience how that makes her feel. Her facial expression can be perceived as defeated, sad or embarrassed.

At 0:50, there is another close-up of three different men, which resembles the first scene. However, now the expressions have changed. As the moderator says: "Because we, we believe in the best in men" (l.17), the audience is shown three new men, who are looking at themselves in the mirror. Their facial expressions can be perceived as more happy, confident or determined, which,

combined with the text, could convey that their attitudes have changed and that they are more hopeful. It could also be perceived as if the men are ready to make changes. This fits with the following line, “Men need to hold other men accountable” (l. 18). The final close-up is at 1:27, where the audience sees the faces of four young kids. The first kid is looking at his father, as he just stopped a group of boys bullying another boy. His facial expression can be perceived to be admiration or curiosity at what his father just did. The final line from the moderator is playing at the same time, “Because the boys watching today, will be the men of tomorrow” (l. 29). This helps convey the message that young kids are watching how their parents or authority figures behave, and they will imitate this. Therefore, it is important to set a good example for the next generation of men, so they will not commit the same mistakes and grow up to do better.

### 7.2.2.3 Overlapping

At 0:10, the audience sees the iconic Gillette commercial from 1989, which kickstarted their previous slogan, ‘The Best a Man Can Get’. Then, a group of boys comes bursting through the canvas and runs towards the camera. The first boy that comes through the camera looks back at the others. It appears as if the group is chasing the first boy, based on the way that the first one looks back and yells from the group. The group is depicting a group of bullies that is chasing one of their victims. As they burst through the screen, the boys overlap the commercial in the background. Thereby, the audience’s attention goes from the commercial to the group of boys. This could be perceived, as Gillette criticizing their old commercial or implying that it is no longer relevant in these times. Before we see the old Gillette commercial, the moderator asks the audience “Is this the best a man can get?” (l. 2). This could be interpreted as them referring to the past, past commercial and past behavior, and question the audience as if this is the best that they deserve. The commercial then continues to show toxic masculinity and the hurt that it can bring.

### 7.2.3. Iconography

In the Gillette commercial, the images that they show their audience include many different stories that portray toxic masculinity. In the setting chapter, it was established that Gillette used settings to portray the different places where toxic masculinity happens and is learned. Here, the audience



needs to notice the different settings and therefore denote what the setting is. However, the main purpose behind showing these different settings is to connote that toxic masculinity can happen online, at home, at work, on television and the street. This also goes for the stories that take place in these settings.

The story about the boy that is being chased by a group of boys and the boy being online bullied (0:16) and the two little boys fighting (0:33) are not specifically about the boys that the audience sees in the commercial, but rather how the competitive, aggressive and dominating traits, which are part of toxic masculinity, can turn into bullying. In the story of the woman who is being talked down to (0:28), it is not about this specific woman, but what she represents and the image connotes. She represents the issue that many women face as a result of toxic masculinity, which is being mansplained her thoughts and feelings. Mansplaining is when men explain obvious things to women, condescendingly speak to them or tell them what they think or how they feel. Furthermore, there is a problem with women being taken seriously in the workplace.

The small stories created by Gillette all connote issues that real people are facing in society. They also show the actions that they want men to take, such as standing up to friends if they see them acting inappropriately, teaching boys that fighting is not okay and helping people that need it. They do, however, also use clips that they did not make themselves. They use several clips and audio from news channels (0:39-0:45). These clips are meant to be denoted, as they show real people discussing the MeToo-movement and a famous former football player, Terry Crews, talking about men's responsibility. They also use clips showing people ending bullying and a father encouraging a little girl (1:11-1:15). These clips are also meant to be denoted, as they show that people are already making a difference, not just in the stories that they created.

The clips from outside sources and their implications will be further discussed in the discursive practice.

#### 7.2.4 Anchorage and relay

As evident from the picture analysis, the text is vitally important to guide the images that the audience sees in the commercial. The very first line "Bullying, The MeToo-movement against sexual harassment, toxic masculinity..." explains the context for the audience. Without it, the

audience would see four men looking depressed at themselves and wondering why. The text anchors and directs the audience to better understand the message. It is through the text that they encourage people to take a stand. The images show how harmful toxic masculinity can be and how you can step up. However, without the textual side of the commercial, the commercial would not properly get the message across.

#### Sub-conclusion:

The picture analysis revealed the small stories that Gillette is using to convey how important it is to fight toxic masculinity. They use settings to portray how toxic masculinity happens everywhere, at home, online, on television, at the workplace, on the street and at different ages. They also show that toxic masculinity is learned through your surroundings as you grow up, television, and through social relations, father to son. Additionally, through the use of focus on the actor's faces, they convey the seriousness of the issue. The focus shows how hurtful the different toxic traits can be to other people. The overlapping in the commercial is used to shift focus from one element to another. Gillette shows part of their iconic 1989 commercial that started the slogan "The Best a Man Can Get". They used this technic to show that their commercial and slogan is outdated, as they introduce their new slogan, "We Believe: The Best a Man Can Get". The consistent use of the color blue represents Gillette and, despite only showing their name briefly, keeps them present in the commercial. The use of iconography shows how Gillette uses these small stories they filmed to connote toxic masculinity to their audience while using real clips from other sources to denote how people are already standing up to toxic masculinity in different ways. Finally, the relationship between the text mode and image mode is anchorage, as the text helps guide the audience to get the correct interpretation of the images

Considering legitimacy theory, Gillette conveys dispositional legitimacy. They show the consequences of toxic masculinity and how it can be solved. Thereby, giving good advice on what you can and should do in certain situations. They are acting as a good corporate citizen. However, they do not show what actions Gillette intends to take, thereby portraying cognitive legitimacy. They take for granted that they cannot simply tell other people what to do, while not doing anything themselves. Although Gillette says that they intend to take action and that the audience can go to a website to see more, they are taking for granted how much the audience cares and trusts Gillette.

It would have been better to show the audience how and what Gillette intends to do, to make the world a better place.

### 7.3. Discursive practice

In the following analysis section, the genre and the discourses present in the commercial will be established, along with the use of intertextuality and the order of discourse.

#### 7.3.1 Genre

The genre of the data is a TV commercial that uses cause-related marketing to take a stand against toxic masculinity. The commercial was not only intended to be seen as a TV commercial but was also uploaded to YouTube for an even broader audience. In a typical commercial, the main objective is to promote a company's (the sender) products or services to their customers (the audience). However, there is very little promotion of Gillette's products, as there is not a single razor shown in the entire commercial. Furthermore, the Gillette name only appears in the commercial twice. At 0:08, the Gillette name appears as they show a part of their iconic 1989 commercial and at the very end (1:47), in the final frame. Additionally, the commercial does not use any of the typical characteristics, such as showing products or pricing. It is not the product, Gillette's razors, that is the focus of this commercial. This is evident in the textual and picture analysis, as the focus is mostly on the stories that they are trying to tell about the effects of toxic masculinity and how it is time to stop it. However, as established in the picture analysis (see chapter 7.2.2.1), the use of blue colors in the commercial, Gillette's signature color, and the fact that they show part of their old commercial does keep Gillette present in the commercial. There is no doubt that this is a commercial coming from Gillette. The sender of this message is Gillette, or more specifically their marketing/advertisement team that represents the company.

The intended audience of the commercial is men between 20-50. From 0:00 to 0:07, the audience is shown four men of different ages, and again at 0:49-0:54, the audience is shown three different men of different ages. The background tells us that they are standing in a bathroom and looking at themselves in the mirror, as a man would do when shaving. As Gillette is a shaving company, the

men represent Gillette's customers, and it tells us that these are the men that Gillette is trying to reach. Furthermore, they show how men of different ages can make a difference in the fight against toxic masculinity, by stopping friends from harassing women (0:57-1:04) or ending bullying and being a role model to children (1:17-1:28). If the commercial had been a classic commercial, promoting a specific razor or skincare, the target group would be smaller, depending on men's different shaving routines and needs at different ages. However, as this commercial does not feature products, or any other indicators for a specific age group, the target audience is very broad. The broad target group does fit with the message that Gillette is trying to send to their audience. Thereby, the genre of the data is a commercial that uses cause-related marketing to spread awareness and support the fight against toxic masculinity.

### 7.3.2. Intertextuality

Gillette uses intertextuality throughout the commercial. The first time is in line 1, "Bullying, the MeToo-movement against sexual harassment, toxic masculinity" (l. 1). This is audio taken from news programs discussing the MeToo-movement. They use audio and video from different news channels (0:39-0:45), as they discuss the MeToo-movement and a clip of Terry Crews, a former American football player and actor, as he talks about the sexual assault survivors' rights act in front of the US senate (0:55). The use of clips and audio from news channels show the validity of the issue that Gillette is talking about. Gillette choosing a clip with Terry Crews could be an attempt to show that men like him are in on the fight against toxic masculinity. He is a physically big, former football player and has many young and older men looking up to him. He joined the MeToo-movement with his own story of experiencing sexual assault and came out to use his platform to support the movement and the sexual assault survivors' rights act. This act is different initiatives to protect survivors and ensure that they can seek justice (Karson & Shine 2018). Furthermore, Gillette uses a clip of one of their old commercials (0:07), which is the iconic Super Bowl 1989 commercial that started the slogan 'The best a man can get'. As discussed in the picture analysis (see chapter 7.2.2.3), this is portrayed as though the commercial and their famous slogan, "The best a man can get", is no longer relevant. Finally, they use clips that most likely come from YouTube or a social media source (1:11, 1:15). These are examples of ordinary people stopping a fight and a dad empowering his daughter. This is a good way of showing that the actions that

Gillette is encouraging others to do, other men are already doing. The consistent use of intertextuality shows that Gillette is reproducing already existing discourses started during the MeToo-movement. This also shows that Gillette is supporting already existing ideas and values, and it is not something new that they made up.

### 7.3.3 Discourses

In the commercial, Gillette presents different storylines, some with one scene and others with multiple scenes throughout the commercial. These storylines will help identify the discourses present in the commercial. The discourses present in the Gillette commercial are as follows:

#### Bullying discourse

One of the first storylines the audience is presented with is the group of bullies that are chasing a boy throughout the commercial. This storyline starts at 0:10, with the group bursting through a canvas showing the old Gillette commercial. They appear again at 0:17 when the group runs through a living room with a mother comforting her crying son. At 1:05, the group appear running down a street, which is noticed by a man walking with his son. A similar story starts at 0:33 when two little boys are fighting, and the dads are watching, while one dad excuses the behavior with “Boys will be boys” (l. 10). This discourse is established through the storylines shown about online and physical bullying. The people who are seen being bullied are children and teenagers, and bullying is one of the traits that are associated with toxic masculinity. Gillette devotes a lot of the commercial to bullying, which comes off as one of the most important traits of toxic masculinity that they want to fight.

#### Sexual harassment discourse

The sexual harassment discourse is also established through a couple of the storylines. The audience is shown a television with behavior that would be considered sexual harassment and assault, while an audience of men laugh and the moderator says: “We can’t laugh it off” (l. 6). Men treating women as objects that they can speak to or touch however they want is a common trait of toxic masculinity. They also show a clip of Terry Crews speaking in front of the US Senate in favor of the sexual assault survivor’s rights act (0:55), along with referencing the MeToo-movement.

### Toxic masculinity discourse

The next discourse found in the commercial is the toxic masculinity discourse. The phrase toxic masculinity is not explained in the commercial and is only mentioned once in line 1. Gillette does however portray toxic masculinity through a variety of storylines. Throughout the commercial, the audience is shown small storylines that each portray a toxic masculinity trait, such as bullying and sexual harassment. These are the two biggest topics that Gillette focuses on, hence the previous discourses. However, they also portray a woman being mansplained at her job (0:30). The toxic masculinity discourse is found primarily in the picture analysis, as the text does not specifically talk about what toxic masculinity is.

### Role model discourse

This discourse is found in both the text and the picture analysis and revolves around what Gillette wants their audience to do. They want them to stand up, say something or do something, when they see the type of behavior that they communicated through their toxic masculinity discourse, and be a role model for other men and young boys. Gillette shows the father with the small kid (1:20 -1:28), who approaches the group of bullies and ends it, while his son looks at him. Here, Gillette reiterates how important it is for adults to step in, when they see someone being bullied, as their children or other children are watching what they do. Similarly, we see the dad rushing to end the fight between the little boys and reprimand the boys (1.18). This storyline signals that adults need to step up, when it comes to their children's behavior and discipline them. They also show men stopping other men from harassing women (0:58, 1:03). This is further clarified in the text, as Gillette's vocabulary shows the seriousness of the situation, while also being hopeful that men can and should make a change. "To say the right thing, to act the right way" (l. 21), "Because the boys watching today, will be the men of tomorrow" (l. 29). It is important to act if the next generation of men shall be better, as toxic masculinity is learned through social relations and social environment, such as on television. "It's only by challenging ourselves to do more" (l. 31) and "That we can get closer to our best" (l. 32), here Gillette communicates that to be their best, men will be challenged. They are acknowledging that it is not always easy to stand up for what is right. For instance, telling your friend that he is being inappropriate can be difficult, as they may not react kindly to it. However, this could also be perceived as Gillette telling men that it will be challenging for them to behave like good people, which could be offensive.

### Promotion-discourse

The final discourse found in the commercial is the promotion discourse. The promotion discourse is found in the genre convention of commercials and cause-related marketing. Although Gillette does not show or speak about their products, they are promoting Gillette as a company. As established in Chapter 4.3, cause-related marketing is done when it is expected to benefit them in some way. Gillette is not promoting a cooperation with a non-profit in the commercial, rather they are promoting themselves as a socially responsible company. By showing the audience that Gillette is supporting the fight against toxic masculinity. Gillette is trying to differentiate itself from their competitors and appeal to their existing and past customers. For a long time, Gillette has dominated the razor market, but more and more brands have gained market share (Tiffany 2018). In an attempt to attract past and new customers, Gillette can take a stand on a social justice issue to attract a young and more liberal consumer group, who will support the same cause. Gillette does a good job of not promoting their products and only themselves as a good and socially responsible company.

The order of discourse is determined by the genre conventions and discourses within a certain social context. As Gillette's commercial is constituted within cause-related marketing, the discourses found are all within the order of discourse. The bullying discourse, sexual harassment discourse, toxic masculinity discourse, 'be a role model' discourse and promotion discourse all align with the message that Gillette wants to send and fit with the genre conventions of cause-related marketing, as it aims at promoting the company and a social issue. The discourses are therefore not created outside of their genre. This further proves that Gillette is not creating anything new with their commercial.

### Sub-conclusion:

In the discursive practice, the genre, intertextuality and discourses were studied. The genre was determined to be a commercial using cause-related marketing. Additionally, the intended audience for Gillette's commercial was established as men between the ages of 20 and 50. This was based on the men staring at their image in the mirror that represents Gillette's customers. The use of intertextuality showed that the issue of toxic masculinity is well known. Therefore, Gillette is not

inventing an issue or talking about a small, unimportant issue. Rather, they are bringing up a topic that affects many people. The different discourses present in the commercial were also identified as a bullying discourse, sexual harassment discourse, toxic masculinity discourse, role model discourse and a promotion discourse. These discourses are established mainly through the picture analysis, as Gillette uses the imagery side to portray toxic masculinity and how to be a role model. The role model discourse is also conveyed through the text that encourages men to step up. The presence of the promotion discourse is subtle and Gillette manages to not appear to promote themselves too much, rather toxic masculinity. In the intertextuality analysis, it was established that Gillette is reproducing already existing discourses, as they showed multiple clips expressing a similar message.

From the discursive practice, we can see that the use of legitimacy follows the text and picture analysis. They portray moral legitimacy, as they are positioning themselves as a morally correct company through their use of discourses, especially the role model discourse. The use of intertextuality is also a show of moral legitimacy, as they are showing that this idea is nothing new in society and that they are joining an existing fight. Simultaneously, they are portraying dispositional legitimacy. Through their discourses, they convey that their message is in the best interest of the audience.

#### 7.4. Social practice

In the following chapter, the findings from the textual analysis, picture analysis and discursive practice will be connected to the social situation at the time to assess the power relations in the commercial.

Based on the text- and picture analysis, I found that the message behind the commercial is to create awareness and promote action against toxic masculinity. Gillette is encouraging men to be good role models to young men and boys and join them in fighting toxic masculinity. Gender inequality has always been an issue, with men dominating politics and many other influential industries which makes it more challenging to change this. The commercial addresses this, as it shows a woman not being listened to or taken seriously (0:30). It is behavior like this that many people point to when



discussing why women do not have more leading positions, along with resistance to hiring women in the first place.

As the aim of the commercial is to encourage men to stand up and act, when they see bad behavior, it can very easily be perceived, as if they are targeting men. Through the stories, they portray men who do not behave like decent people. This could be interpreted as Gillette generalizing men and saying that all men are the same. However, they use the inclusive 'we' (7.1.2) and also show footage of people already making a difference (0:54, 1:11, 1:15). This might be an attempt to show that they are not generalizing.

In the commercial, Gillette does not mention any steps that they intend to take to help this issue themselves. The only indication that Gillette is taking action is in the final text, "We are taking action at THEBESTMENCANBE.org" (l. 33). However, this requires people to actively search on their website. This could come off as arrogant or presumptuous, as Gillette expects people to care enough to go to their website. It could also be perceived as Gillette trying to get people to their website, so they can advertise their razors, although people entered their website for a different reason. Although Gillette aims to bring attention to a social issue and get involved in the debate, it is important that it cannot be misinterpreted by the audience. This is why they must take a critical look at their company and address any potential issues first. Gillette did not address the issue with the pink tax first, and they got hit with criticism for it. This lack of self-awareness and arrogance can be a hindrance for the audience when they see this commercial. If Gillette showed what they intend to do, or are doing, people might be more open to their message. Whereas, some of the audience can perceive this as Gillette telling them what to do, without doing anything themselves, and wanting credit for it.

As established in Chapter 3, when companies engage in cause-related marketing, they often do it, because they will benefit from it. This can happen due to more products or services sold, by differentiating themselves from their rivals and keeping or attracting more customers. This means that their actions are not purely charitable or coming from a place of wanting to make the world a better place, but from wanting more money and recognition. Therefore, Gillette must come off as genuine as possible, so people cannot accuse them of using a social issue to make money. In the discursive practice, it was established that a promotion discourse is present in the commercial,

although the presence is very small. This is good, as Gillette should be perceived as getting as little out of it as possible.

Now that the message has been established, the analysis will take a look at the social context at the time.

At the beginning of 2019, when the commercial was released, it had been roughly 15 months since #MeToo went viral and created the MeToo-movement. Stories about sexual abuse and harassment were still going strong in the media, while the opposition to the MeToo-movement was also growing (Kottasová 2019). In the US, the current president was Donald Trump, a very controversial figure who was constantly being accused of being sexist and portraying toxic masculinity. As established in the textual analysis (see chapter 7.1.4), Gillette used one of the phrases that Trump supporters often use in defense of the president, “Boys will be boys” (l. 10). The 2020 election was fast approaching and the US was politically divided. Social issues, such as abortion rights, LGBTQ+ rights and other issues, that would be considered human rights issues in other countries, are often presented as political issues in the US. This included the MeToo-movement, where Republicans were statistically less likely to support the movement (Brown 2022). Turning social issues into political issues means that when a company like Gillette talks about a social issue, it can be interpreted by the audience, as if they are also taking a political stance, in this case with the Democrats.

This makes the message about toxic masculinity very relevant, as the issue is discussed in society. However, as the topic of sexism and toxic masculinity was at a high combined with the political climate, it made the debate more volatile. Therefore, the reactions can be stronger than at other times, both the positive and the negative reactions. This could explain some people calling for a boycott of Gillette, as they reacted very strongly to the commercial. It should also be noticed that the commercial also got positive reactions (McCluskey 2019). People also pointed out how ridiculous it is to feel threatened by a commercial. Gillette also continues to push for more role models in more recent commercials, on social media and on their website (Gillette nd. a).

In the discursive practice, the discourses present in the commercial were identified, namely bullying discourse, sexual harassment, toxic masculinity discourse, role model discourse and promotion discourse. The most dominating discourse in the commercial is the role model discourse. This is evident as the overall topic of the commercial from Gillette is about fighting

toxic masculinity, by being a good role model to other men. Therefore, the hegemonic discourse in the commercial is the role model discourse. As established in the discourse analysis, the sender is Gillette, a big international company, and the audience is ordinary Americans. The relationship and power dynamic between Gillette and their customers are not equal. Although Gillette is dependent on selling their products to their customers, Gillette is a well-established and successful company owned by a multinational organization that has a huge market share in the shaving industry and other hygienic industries. This also means that Gillette has a big platform to reach people, through TV commercials and social media. The power relationship between Gillette and the audience is therefore not equal. This also means that Gillette has a chance of changing the way that men see masculinity. The hegemonic discourse, in this case a healthy kind of masculinity, can, when promoted by people in power, become the dominant way of thinking in society.

Furthermore, as Gillette has an unequal power relationship with their audience, ordinary working Americans, it can impact their attempt to challenge existing power relations between men and women. As they have more power than their audience, it can be perceived as condescending, and as if they are telling people what to do because they have more power than the audience. This could have contributed to some of the backlash that Gillette faced. This makes it even more important that Gillette does not have any issues with toxic masculinity, such as the pink tax issue.

Gillette is challenging the existing social structures in society with their commercial. They are challenging the hegemonic masculinity (see chapter 4.1) and the power relations between men and women. This can be triggering for people who are against feminism, which can explain some of the criticism. Gillette will have anticipated some pushback for their commercial, as they will have known that it is a divisive issue. They have most likely also expected that they would lose some customers. However, the commercial did not get great reception from a lot of women either, as they pointed out the 'pink tax issue' (see chapter 3.3). The unequal status between men and women makes it possible for Venus Gillette to sell female hygienic products at a higher price. Although it is not the same company, both Gillette and Venus Gillette are part of Proctor & Gamble, and they share the same name. Gillette and Proctor & Gamble are challenging the existing power relations between men and women, while simultaneously making money off that same power relation. This makes the impact and sincerity of the commercial disappear for the audience that the commercial intended to reach.

### Sub-conclusion:

The social practice connected the social context to the commercial and uncovered the power dynamic in the commercial. At the time the MeToo-movement was still going strong and the reactions to the commercial could have been amplified by that. Additionally, it was found that Gillette is challenging the idea of what masculinity is and the power dynamic between men and women. However, the pick tax issue ruins this, as Proctor and Gamble are taking advantage of that same power dynamic. This presents Gillette as either unknowledgeable, which is highly unlikely, or hypocritical. This is most likely why the commercial did not receive as much backup, as they could have gotten from women. They did, however, not only receive criticism but they are sticking to the commitment that they made, despite all the criticism that they got.

In the social practice, the legitimacy that Gillette expresses is moral legitimacy. Gillette is challenging the power dynamic between men and women. Thereby, they are attempting to tackle the inequality between men and women. There has since the MeToo-movement been a lot of focus on fighting inequality in society. However, they are also portraying cognitive legitimacy, as they did not consider the pink tax issue. This shows that Gillette and, by extension, Proctor and Gamble did not consider this an issue, because this is what companies do. They took the power that the patriarchy gave them for granted.

## 8. Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to properly answer the research question that was defined in Chapter 1: Gillette's 'We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be' commercial is a recent example of cause-related marketing, however, it is considered a failure. With the use of Critical Discourse Analysis and Legitimacy Theory, how did Gillette convey their message about toxic masculinity and, based on these findings, why did it fail?

The Critical discourse analysis was divided into four parts, textual analysis, picture analysis, discursive practice and the social practice. Legitimacy theory was considered at the end of each

part, as the previous analysis sections were used to discover what kind of legitimacy Gillette expressed in the commercial.

In the textual analysis, I found that Gillette uses grammar, transitivity and pronouns, to communicate to their audience how dedicated they are in the fight against toxic masculinity and establish an informal relationship with their audience, so they can include them in the message as well. They use the vocabulary and the music to set the mood for the commercial. They start with a darker and more negative mood and then slowly build to a more positive and hopeful finish to the commercial. Finally, they reach their audience by appealing to their emotions and showing the consequences of toxic masculinity. I find this to be a smart tactic from Gillette. When speaking of such a serious issue that impacts many people, it is important to set the right tone. Additionally, it is a smart move to include both the audience and themselves in the message. They are pushing the audience as hard as they should to take action.

Similarly, in the picture analysis, I found that Gillette uses images to show what toxic masculinity looks like and how you as a man can take a stand against it. They show the different settings in which toxic masculinity occurs and how it is learned. As social constructivism tells us, reality is shaped through our social relations and the culture we grow up in and this includes behavior, such as toxic masculinity. Gillette shows how toxic masculinity and the opposite are learned through our social relations and culture. This is seen in the responsibility that Gillette attributes to men and fathers in particular and the culture that we consume through television. I find this to be an effective way to convey the importance of the issue. They do not merely frame it as a man vs. women issue, as it tends to be in the media. They also show the negative effects that it can have on other men and young boys. Showing men that they are essentially hurting themselves is a clever move, as it could convince more men. Other scholars critiqued Gillette for not showing more women, however, I do not believe that this is an issue. If Gillette had made the commercial too focused on the female experience, it would not have reached as broadly. This commercial was aimed at men, therefore, it was smart to keep the main focus on men.

In the discursive practice, I found that the discourses present in the commercial are a bullying discourse, sexual harassment discourse, toxic masculinity discourse, role model discourse and a promotion discourse. These discourses are all constituted within the order of discourse that is determined by the genre conventions of cause-related marketing. Additionally, the use of

intertextuality shows that Gillette is reproducing existing discourses in society. Thereby, they are supporting an ongoing cause that already has support. They also use intertextuality to show that men are already making changes and fighting toxic masculinity. Therefore, they are not encouraging men to do something that is not already being done by some. I find that the use of intertextuality is good, especially in the clip featuring Terry Crews. He looks big and strong and is a former American football player. These are traits that men often idealize as part of the ideal man, as American football is a rough sport, where you have to have a lot of the traits that are considered masculine. Therefore, he is a great role model for other men, as he encompasses some of the typical masculine features, while still being a good role model for others. Gillette is good at communicating what they want other people to do, but do not communicate what they intend to do. This is a mistake, as they should have mentioned at least one initiative on their part. Telling people to come to their website is a good idea, but only after having shown the audience some action that they plan to take. It comes off as arrogant that they can tell other people what to do in a very public commercial, without saying what they, as a big company, could do better.

In the social practice, I found that Gillette is challenging the existing power dynamic between men and women and the hegemonic masculinity. As Gillette has a lot of power as a big company and more power than the audience, they are in a position to change the way that men think about masculinity. However, their sister company, Venus Gillette, is guilty of using this power dynamic to make more money through the pink tax. This does not look good for Gillette, as their stance against toxic masculinity becomes less trustworthy. It ruins their message and the authenticity of it for the audience. Gillette should have been aware that this could be an issue and addressed it either before or in the commercial. It is also very important that the company does not come off, as if they do not understand the issue that they are talking about. With Gillette's pink tax issue, it can come off as if they do not fully understand the issue at hand, since they did not address the pink tax issue. In the literature review, another research paper criticized Gillette for not acknowledging that toxic masculinity is a systemic problem. However, this would make the message of the commercial much harder to convey. The commercial is a short commercial that is meant to reach a broad audience of ordinary Americans. Therefore, Gillette would have a hard time communicating this to the audience in a way that everyone would understand. Additionally, speaking on the systemic issue of gender inequality would also move the possibility of action from

the audience. To battle a systemic issue requires systemic change that includes more than the audience.

Finally, after every part of the analysis, legitimacy theory was considered. I found that Gillette tries very hard to portray moral and dispositional legitimacy. They are trying very hard to come off as a morally good company that is following the way that society deems correct. They show some influence legitimacy, as they are encouraging men to be better and in return, it will give their sons a better life. Finally, they also portray cognitive legitimacy through the lack of consideration for what the pink tax issue could give them. As established in Chapter 5, when a company seeks social legitimacy, they want normative approval from their audience and Gillette did not receive this for this commercial. Gillette made a mistake by thinking that they have cognitive legitimacy and that people would accept their company's practices. Gillette should have known that entering a very divisive debate about toxic masculinity would put other people put Gillette under the microscope. Thereby, discovering any mistakes and holding them accountable for them.

When a company wants to engage in cause-related marketing, they must consider a variety of factors first. Based on the findings of the analysis, the following section will list suggestions that companies should consider before engaging in cause-related marketing. This will be based on the findings in the analysis of the Gillette commercial.

Firstly, the company needs to decide what social issue to support. The more relevant it is for the company and their customers the better. Gillette chose an issue that involves men. As their customers are mainly men, due to Gillette being a shaving company that advertised towards men, this makes good sense. Furthermore, it makes sense for Gillette to pick toxic masculinity, as they have often portrayed father/son relationships in their past commercials. If Gillette had chosen an issue that did not relate to them, it would have seemed strange. As Gillette has a big platform for men specifically, they also have a real chance of reaching the intended audience.

After the company has selected the issue that they want to support, they have to decide how to support it. As mentioned in Chapter 4.3, the most common way for a company to perform cause-related marketing is by cooperating with a charity. This could be by donating the profits of a certain product, giving money to a charity or some other form of cooperation. A company can also choose, like Gillette, to advertise the issue to create awareness and enter the debate. By choosing to cooperate with a charity or non-profit organization, it comes across as very trustworthy. A non-

profit organization is involved, therefore, they cannot lie about what they intend to do. However, if a company, such as Gillette, chooses to create a commercial or another kind of communication about a social issue without the involvement of another company, they have to follow through and communicate carefully what they intend to do.

As established in the analysis, it is very important to come off as genuine when doing cause-related marketing. Customers are skeptical, as they are aware that companies sometimes will use a social issue to promote themselves without any real dedication to the cause. If they do not live up to the things that they say, or if they act in a contradictory way, they will get a lot of backlash from consumers. It is therefore important that companies live up to the expectations that they set. Additionally, as established in the social practice, Gillette is challenging the power dynamic between men and women in their commercial. However, their sister company Venus Gillette is making money off that exact power dynamic through the pink tax. Although it is not Gillette doing this themselves, it still looks hypocritical, as they are both part of Proctor and Gamble and share the same name. It can look bad in the eyes of the customers, as they can connect the two companies and hold both responsible. Therefore, companies must consider, if they have any policies, controversies, people or stories that will contradict the cause that they are showing support for. If they do have anything in their past or present, it is important to own up to it and address it first. A company cannot simply hope that people will not find that contradictory policy or past story. If someone finds out and connects the dots, it will look much worse because they tried to hide it.

## 9. Conclusion

The purpose of this thesis was to investigate how Gillette conveyed their message about toxic masculinity in their 2019 commercial, and, based on this analysis, identify what went wrong. This was done by using Critical Discourse Analysis, with an added picture analysis using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis tools. After each layer of CDA, the findings were connected to Legitimacy Theory to identify what kind of legitimacy Gillette expresses in the commercial.

The main findings made in the analysis were:



1. Gillette used a variety of elements to express their commitment to the cause while showing the audience just how harmful toxic masculinity can be
2. Gillette did not communicate properly what initiatives they intend to do.
3. Gillette challenges the existing power dynamic between men and women and the hegemonic masculinity.
4. Venus Gillette and Proctor and Gamble are taking advantage of the same power dynamic between men and women to make more money, which hurts Gillette's message.

The identified mistake from the commercial was the lack of action and initiatives that Gillette would commit themselves to. The rest of the identified mistakes did not come from the commercial. The commercial had a strong message about toxic masculinity that Gillette conveyed clearly. They should, however, have been more aware of what it means to engage in cause-related marketing. When a big company gets involved in a social issue, they must not have any prior mistakes related to that issue, and if they do, they should address it. Despite the negative backlash, Gillette continues their commitment to fighting toxic masculinity and creating more role models in boys' and young men's lives. As a company, you must expect some pushback when engaging in a social issue, as the reactions can be strong. In 2019, when Gillette released the commercial, the MeToo-movement was still going strong. However, that does not mean that a company should not get involved when the issue is relevant, as long as they make the right considerations.

#### Implications for further research:

This thesis looks at one example of cause-related marketing, namely Gillette's 2019 'We Believe: The Best a Man Can Be'. As the idea of cause-related marketing becomes more and more popular, the research must follow this trend. Especially in the US, social issues get attached to a political side, which makes engaging in cause-related marketing more and more of a political stance. Research on how companies should approach this would be helpful and was not addressed in this thesis, as it was too outside the scope of the research question.

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