

Master thesis

# MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL: WHO IS THE MANLIEST OF THEM ALL?

A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF  
MASCULINITY IN THAILAND AND THE U.S.

ANITA ATLADÓTTIR HELLISDAL  
ZACHARIASEN  
20211096

SUMITTRA SENACHOHO  
20194550

CHARACTERS:  
291.707

# Abstract

## **Purpose and relevance**

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the distinctions and similarities between the traditional and contemporary masculinity portrayed in Thai and American skincare companies. Although skincare has traditionally been associated with femininity (Bovet 2018), men are becoming aware of the necessity to keep their skin healthy, and washing their faces with soap and water is no longer sufficient. The growth of the male skincare sector serves as another example of this (GVR 2020; Chemla 2023). Given our cultural ties to Thailand and the understudied status of both countries in this field, we believe our research can contribute valuable knowledge to the topic.

## **Data**

Our data consists of four video advertisements from four different skincare companies: two from the United States and two from Thailand. For each country, the data has been divided into one 'traditional' and one 'contemporary' video reflecting the depiction of masculinity.

## **Method and theories**

In order to answer our problem statement a multimodal thematic analysis was conducted. A total of six main themes were identified; *appearance*, *emotional expression*, *space*, *social connection*, *product*, and *advocacy*, guiding our analysis to uncover the nuanced constructions/portrayals of traditional and contemporary masculinity in all four videos individually, intra-culturally, as well as cross-culturally. The theory of Hegemonic masculinity by Connell is applied to the traditional videos, while Inclusive masculinity theory by Eric Anderson is applied to the contemporary videos to capture the spectrum of masculinity. Additionally, the framework of Types of masculinities and their characteristics by Kreicberg, Ščeuļovs, and Bernovskis, is applied in intra-cultural comparisons.

## **Key findings**

### *US traditional*

It was revealed that the portrayal of masculinity is complex. Traditional ideas of success, strength, and power are still prevalent. However, the influence of race and subtly attention to self-care, suggest hierarchy among masculinity as well as a potential shift towards inclusivity.

### *US contemporary*

We found that contemporary masculinity in the U.S. is embracing diversity in appearance, emotional expression, and relationships. Key findings include that masculinity is expressed through personal style rather than physique; men are encouraged to show vulnerability; and physical affection is more accepted.

### *Thai traditional*

We discovered that Thai traditional videos embody a balance between traditional characteristics such as heterosexuality and attire that denote social status and contemporary traits such as positive and negative emotional expression and practicing self-care to achieve male attractiveness.

### *Thai contemporary*

It was found that contemporary masculinity in Thailand was also marked by diversity in appearance, emotional expression, and relationships. The key findings include that masculinity is expressed through personal style and physiognomy; emotions across the entire spectrum are accepted forms of masculinity expression; and homosexual relationships between men are accepted.

### **Takeaway-message**

In the U.S. context, gender is performative. The traditional video emphasizes masculinity as a reflection of your roles and achievements, while the contemporary video centers around the freedom of gender expression. On the other hand, the Thai context highlights the connection of sexuality to masculinity. The traditional video emphasizes heterosexuality, whereas the contemporary video exhibits the inclusivity of homosexual masculinity.

### **Further research**

Given that the thesis has addressed one aspect of masculinity in the skincare industry and cannot be generalized for all men, it is recommended to investigate other industries and draw from a larger sample size in order to obtain a more comprehensive perspective.

**Keywords:** *Traditional masculinity, contemporary masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, inclusive masculinity, advertisement, cross-cultural comparison.*

# Table of content

<b>Table of content</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 Background knowledge</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1 United States	5
2.2 Thailand	6
<b>3 Literature review</b>	<b>7</b>
3.1 Men in Advertising	8
3.2 United States	9
3.2.1 Masculinity	9
3.2.2 Masculinity in Advertising	11
3.3 Thailand	12
3.3.1 Masculinity	12
3.3.2 Masculinity in Advertising	14
3.4 Addressing the Gap in Literature	15
3.5 Theoretical Frameworks	16
<b>4 Theoretical frameworks</b>	<b>19</b>
4.1 Hegemonic Masculinity	19
4.2 Inclusive Masculinity Theory	24
4.3 Types of masculinities and their characteristics	29
4.4 Application of theories	31
<b>5 Methodology</b>	<b>32</b>
5.1 Philosophy of science	32
5.1.1 Social Constructivism	32
5.1.2 Ontological approach	33
5.1.3 Epistemological approach	34
5.1.4 Considerations and Limitations of Social Constructivism	34
5.2 Research design	35



5.3 Method of data collection	36
5.4 Method of data analysis	39
5.4.1 Multimodal thematic analysis	40
<b>6 Findings</b>	<b>42</b>
6.1 Appearance	45
6.1.1 Traditional U.S. video	45
6.1.2 Contemporary U.S. video	47
6.1.3 Traditional Thai video	51
6.1.4 Contemporary Thai video	54
6.1.5 Cross-cultural comparison	56
6.2 Emotional Expression	58
6.2.1 Traditional U.S. video	58
6.2.2 Contemporary U.S. video	61
6.2.3 Traditional Thai video	63
6.2.4 Contemporary Thai video	64
6.2.5 Cross-cultural comparison	65
6.3 Space	67
6.3.1 Traditional U.S. video	67
6.3.2 Contemporary U.S. video	69
6.3.3 Traditional Thai video	71
6.3.4 Contemporary Thai video	72
6.3.5 Cross-cultural comparison	74
6.4 Social connection	75
6.4.1 Traditional U.S. video	75
6.4.2 Contemporary U.S. video	78
6.4.3 Traditional Thai video	82
6.4.4 Contemporary Thai video	83
6.4.5 Cross-cultural comparison	86
6.5 Product	89

6.5.1 Traditional U.S. video	89
6.5.2 Contemporary U.S. video	93
6.5.3 Traditional Thai video	96
6.5.4 Contemporary Thai video	98
6.5.5 Cross-cultural comparison	100
6.6 Advocacy	103
6.6.1 Traditional U.S. video	103
6.6.2 Contemporary U.S. video	104
6.6.3 Traditional Thai video	106
6.6.4 Contemporary Thai video	107
6.6.5 Cross-cultural comparison	109
<b>7 Discussion and conclusion</b>	<b>112</b>

# 1 Introduction

The skincare industry currently occupies a prominent space in consumer culture and is a multi-billion-dollar industry (Joydeep 2023). Historically, the skincare industry has been highly intertwined with notions of beauty and femininity. This is, in part, a result of skincare being associated with female behavior, and being deeply rooted in the social construction of femininity (Bovet 2018). This association with femininity, in particular, raises an intriguing question regarding the intersection of skincare, self-care, and beauty and the gendered perceptions surrounding these concepts: why is skincare predominantly seen as a female behavior?

Throughout history, societal expectations have dictated women's roles as caretakers, meaning that they are nurturing both themselves and others (Eagly and Wood 2012). In relation to this nurturing behavior, skincare can be conceptualized as a manifestation of self-care being a ritualistic practice consisting of combinations of personal well-being and nourishment of the skin (Anusha 2023). Another aspect of skincare being seen as feminine is due to its maintenance through various cultural channels such as advertising, disproportionately placing an emphasis on women and their appearance (Bovet 2018), further reinforcing the notion that skincare inherently is a feminine activity. This gendered segmentation of the skincare market not only shapes product development but also has a significant influence on advertising strategies in general. Consequently, skincare ads predominantly feature female figures, since female beauty is considered an effective marketing tool (Tanyildizi and Yolcu 2020; Holt 2023), further solidifying the association of skincare with femininity.

However, the evolution of gender conventions is encouraging men to engage in activities once viewed as exclusively feminine, and this shift is evident in the booming market for male skincare products (Kestenbaum 2022; Byrne and Milestone 2023). According to a market report from Grand View Research, a market research and consulting company, the global market for men's skincare was estimated at USD 11.6 billion in 2019. Moreover, the market is anticipated to continuously grow at a yearly rate of 6.2% from 2020 to 2027, which reflects the rising awareness of self-care and skincare among men, thus increasing demand for men's skincare products (GVR 2020).

This growth is caused by several factors, one of which is the evolution of the concept of masculinity. Modern men recognize that skincare goes beyond adhering to gender norms but rather is about embracing self-care and self-expression. Men are becoming more conscious of the significance of maintaining healthy skin, and a face routine with soap and water simply is no longer enough (Chemla 2023). This change in perception is further influenced by social media. For instance, TikTok has experienced a growth in relation to ‘Get Ready With Me’ videos that feature male creators using skincare products which normalize the idea of skincare for men. Hashtags like #menskincare has 462 million views and #menskincareroutine has 28 million views (Allen 2023), indicating a growing interest in the area. Furthermore, skincare brands have begun to feature men in their advertising in an effort to normalize men using skincare products. One example of this is the use of celebrities to inspire men to embrace their masculinity by maintaining their physical attractiveness through skincare routines (Kenalemang-Palm 2023).

In contrast to the female skincare market, the male skincare market is relatively new, with limited research conducted on this growing industry (Byrne and Milestone 2023). This sparked a sense of curiosity among us, leading us to conduct a deeper study of how masculinity is constructed by skincare brands. Based on our knowledge and connection to Western and Asian cultures, we are motivated to investigate possible discrepancies in the depictions of masculinity in skincare advertisements, specifically by American and Thai companies. This leads to the following problem statement:

*In order to explore the construction of masculinity in advertisements, how do skincare companies in Thailand and the United States depict it in their online marketing communication and are there any differences and similarities of the portrayal in these two regions?*

The primary objective of this thesis is to comprehend and investigate how skincare companies, generally associated with femininity, portray masculinity in their advertising. In particular, by exploring skincare companies from Thailand and the United States, we can identify any potential similarities and disparities in their portrayal of ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ masculinity, both intra-culturally and cross-culturally. Moreover, the findings are intended to provide marketers, who seek entry into the Thai and/or American male skin-care market, with potentially valuable insights into how different visual portrayals of

masculinity can be utilized in their online marketing communications in order to best resonate with the target markets.

### *Disclaimer*

This thesis examines the concept of masculinity in Thailand and the U.S. by using ‘ideal types’. Traditional masculinity emphasizes physical strength and stoicism, whereas emotional expressiveness and shared domestic obligations define contemporary masculinity (Kreicberg, Ščeuļovs and Bernovskis 2024). However, we reject the notion of ‘one country, one culture’ and acknowledge cultural diversity within a country. By utilizing ideal types, this enables us to compare and analyze how masculinity is depicted in Thailand and the U.S. Although these depictions are not definitive and do not represent all men, they serve as a springboard for investigating the representation of masculinity in skincare advertising. Thus, we are able to comprehend the nuances of how traditional and contemporary masculinity are portrayed in each country by taking these cultural variations into account.

## 2 Background knowledge

This chapter of the thesis aims to provide the reader with the necessary background knowledge of the cultural and sociopolitical landscapes of both the United States and Thailand relating to the subject of gender politics and attitudes on sexual orientations.

### 2.1 United States

The United States, with its complex mixture of diverse cultures, presents a unique landscape for understanding the interplay of politics, culture, and gender. The country’s foundation in individualism, its legislative history surrounding gender and sexuality, and the societal attitudes towards gender identities and homosexuality all contribute to the country’s gender discourse.

The United States is characterized by an individualistic culture that prioritizes personal autonomy and self-expression (The Culture Factor Group 2023). These strong individualistic values influence how gender and sexuality are perceived and expressed, encouraging a diverse range of identities and lifestyles that may be less prevalent in more collectivistic cultures (Davis and Williamson 2019). One way in which the diverse range of gender

lifestyles in the U.S. has changed in recent years, stems from the legal landscape surrounding gender and sexuality. Notably, the legalization of same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015 through the Supreme Court's ruling in *Obergefell v. Hodges*, was a significant victory for LGBTQ+ rights (Justia 2015). However, the political arena remains deeply divided on several issues related to gender and sexuality, especially transgender rights and the protections against gender identity and sexual orientation-based discrimination (Parker, Horowitz, and Brown 2022; Brown 2022). Legislations vary by state, with some implementing laws that are seen as protective, while others pass laws that are considered restrictive for LGBTQ+ individuals (Thomas 2022).

Within the United States, the societal perception of gender is evolving. Historically, gender roles were rigid with any deviations from these roles often being met with resistance (Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004). Today, there is an increasing acceptance of diverse gender identities, particularly among younger generations (Thomas 2022). However, this acceptance is not universal. Transgender and non-binary individuals often must fight for recognition and equal rights, facing challenges such as discrimination, violence, and lack of access to proper healthcare (Brown et al. 2022). Furthermore, attitudes towards homosexuality in the United States have shifted over the past few decades. According to a survey by Pew Research Center, a majority (61%) of Americans support same-sex marriage and believe homosexuality should be accepted by society (Borelli 2022). This shift reflects broader changes in attitudes toward sexual orientation, which has been influenced by advocacy, visibility of LGBTQ+ individuals in media, and generational changes in perception.

The cultural and political environment in the United States surrounding gender and sexuality is therefore rather complex. While notable progress has been made in terms of legal rights and societal acceptance, challenges remain, highlighting the continuous fight for gender equity and the recognition of diverse gender identities.

## 2.2 Thailand

In Thailand, family is highly valued, and the extended family is given particular consideration. Moreover, younger family members have to help older ones, whether financially or by doing other types of work. This emphasizes the collectivistic aspect of Thai culture as opposed to the individualistic characteristics that are frequently observed in



Western cultures (Williams 2023). Nonetheless, despite this heavy focus on family, there is evidence of a divide between the acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals in society at large and within families.

The United Nations Development Programme Thailand conducted a national survey regarding the discrimination and societal perceptions of LGBTQ+ people in Thailand. The findings demonstrated that 69% of non-LGBTQ+ respondents generally hold a positive attitude towards LGBTQ+ people and 77% of them are in favor of LGBTQ+ individuals having equal rights and access to resources. However, the findings also revealed that the acceptance of LGBTQ+ people declined within families. For instance, 88% of the respondents stated they were accepting of LGBTQ+ individuals outside the family, but when asked about LGBTQ+ persons inside their own family, the acceptance decreased to 75%. Moreover, 63% stated that they would feel uncomfortable if a family member were to fall in love with an LGBTQ+ person (UNDP 2019). While the country has a long history of a relatively safe and open environment, and a welcoming attitude toward transgender and LGBTQ+ people, social acceptance on its own is insufficient and it is essential to establish legal protections (Human Rights Watch 2021). LGBTQ+ people are governed by a limited number of laws, some of which prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and others that recognize that LGBTQ+ people face difficulties and need assistance in order to access social services like healthcare and education (Suriyasarn 2014; Head and Ng 2024). However, a new chapter in Thai history is about to begin with 400 of the 415 legislators voting in favor of a new law, which will legalize same-sex marriage. Although still requiring royal assent and senate approval, it is anticipated to become enforced by the end of 2024, making Thailand the first nation in Southeast Asia to officially recognize same-sex marriage (Head and Ng 2024). This indicates that the nation and its politics are gradually catching up with the societal changes that have been taking place within the country, particularly considering Thailand's reputation as an open-minded society that welcomes all forms of sexual orientation and gender expression.

### 3 Literature review

This chapter has been divided into five parts. In order to establish a foundational comprehension of our thesis's topic, we will first explore the general depiction of men in advertising. Subsequently, we will dive into the notions of masculinity in the United States

and Thailand, along with its portrayal in advertisements. The purpose of these sub-chapters is to acquire a more in-depth understanding of the concept of traditional masculinity and contemporary trends regarding gender. Following that, we will address the research gap and how our thesis contributes to the field of masculinity in advertising. Finally, we will cover the theoretical frameworks that other researchers on the subject of masculinity have utilized alongside a justification of the theories we have chosen.

### 3.1 Men in Advertising

For over five decades, researchers' interest in studying advertising stereotypes has been prevalent, particularly focusing on how women are portrayed. However, given that the majority of studies revolve around the depiction of women in advertising, there is a noticeable gap in the research regarding how men are portrayed in the media (Grau and Zotos 2016, 761-767). Researchers have investigated various themes related to gender in advertising. For instance, trait and physical attributes, roles and occupational status, voiceover, and the product types they are associated with (Grau and Zotos 2016; Matthes et. al 2016). Historically, there has been a dominant concept of masculinity, particularly throughout the 20th century. This definition excluded anything considered feminine or homosexual and instead placed an emphasis on characteristics like independence, toughness, and heterosexuality. Advertising narratives typically portray men as independent roles like professionals, workers, and celebrities, whereas it is more common for women to be shown as a part of relational frameworks, including as partners, parents, or housewives (Gentry and Harrison 2010, 79-81). However, this conventional depiction has been changing.

Recently, the evolution of men in advertising has received a great deal of attention. (Grau and Zotos 2016, 767). Fowler and Thomas (2015) analyzed television advertising from 2003 to 2008, which revealed a shift in how men are portrayed. The findings suggested that fewer men occupied the lead roles in advertising, which they assumed might be a reflection of shifting views on gender roles with women receiving greater responsibility. Consequently, men assume fewer important roles. Moreover, there is a growing fatherhood role, which they argued reflects society's acceptance of men performing domestic and parental roles.

So, how are men represented in advertising? The most common response to the majority of questions in the marketing domain is: "It depends" (Gentry and Harrison 2010, 81). They

suggested that there is no one defined answer to how men are portrayed in advertising because various factors may come into play. As demonstrated above, the evolution of gender roles affects how men are portrayed in advertising, making it difficult to provide one, fixed answer. In addition, Eisend (2010, 436) suggested gender stereotypes in advertising are more likely to be influenced by the progress in gender equality in society, rather than advertising driving societal change. This indicates that notions of gender are influenced by cultural factors in each country and are subject to change throughout time. Thus, the portrayal of men in advertising may differ across cultures and over time.

## 3.2 United States

### 3.2.1 Masculinity

In order to comprehend the concept of masculinity in the United States, it is important to understand the cultural dynamics of the country. Research suggests that there is a coexistence of a *melting pot* (assimilation) and *mixed salad* (multiple cultures) in American culture. Considering the fact that the nation lacks a single ethnic group and is established through immigrants, the U.S. is equivalent to a huge bowl that contains diverse elements. This cultural diversity influences the way American men perceive and express masculinity, meaning that men of different ethnic groups preserve their distinctive cultural expressions of masculinity while conforming to general societal standards and expectations (Carroll 2003, 151). In other words, the concept of masculinity may vary in the United States depending on an individual's ethnic background which reflects the diversity within the country. It is particularly important to consider how race and masculinity intersect.

Whiteness and masculinity have consistently reinforced one another to maintain a system of power and exclusion. This happens when those in positions of authority, primarily white men, attempt to reject the notion that non-white men are 'real men' by preventing them from opportunities, rights, and benefits that come with being a man in American culture (Carroll 2003, 491).

So, what does it mean to be a 'real man' in American culture? A study conducted by Mahalik et. al. 2003 revealed 11 predominant traditional masculine norms in American society. These norms composed of *Winning* (the strive to be successful or powerful), *Emotional Control* (suppression of emotions), *Risk-Taking* (toughness and adventure), *Violence*, *Power over*

*women* (desire for control over women), *Dominance* (desire for admiration and respect), *Playboy* (seek adventures and casual relationships), *Self-reliance* (depend on oneself), *Primary of work* (breadwinner and endurance), *Disdain for Homosexuals* (anti-femininity and restricted display of affection towards other men), and *Pursuit of status* (excellence in every aspect of life). It is important to keep in mind that the majority of the participants in the study are caucasian, heterosexual, college students in the United States. For that reason, the authors also emphasized that the findings should not be interpreted as American culture being dominated by these exact 11 masculine norms. They argued that the possibility of the existence of other, as of yet unidentified, masculine norms from other ethnic groups in the United States as well as from American society as a whole cannot be ruled out. Hence, race emerges as a prevalent factor in the development of masculinity in the United States.

For instance, Kyler-Yano and Mankowski (2020) found that among Asian American men, the ideal masculine traits include “being responsible, being respectful, taking care of others, having a moral code, never harming women, and being cognitively disciplined”. Their findings suggest that Asian American men perceive characteristics, such as showing respect and nurturing, which are commonly associated with femininity, as traits of the ideal man rather than viewing them as qualities that are non-masculine. This suggests a possible reason why Asian American men are often perceived as less masculine than other ethnicities in the United States as well as being considered feminine (Carroll 2003, 40-41). Within the framework of Hegemonic masculinity, they are also considered the Subordinate and Marginalized masculinity type along with men of color, homosexual men, and bisexual men (Shek 2006, 383).

Although most people have a notion of what conventional masculinity is, this notion is constantly evolving as a result of the social environment in which it occurs (Cassino and Besen-Cassino 2022, 136). An alternative perspective on gender identity has emerged in recent years, especially among Gen Z in the United States, who believe that gender is fluid. It suggests that people can identify as transgender, which means they identify with a gender other than the one assigned at birth, or nonbinary, which means they identify as neither male nor female. In other words, gender is no longer just limited to being either male and female. Among the generations in the U.S., Gen Z distinguished itself as one where the majority believed in more than two genders. Moreover, this generation is also more likely to identify as transgender or non-binary (Twenge 2023).

Despite this progressive view, a survey from the Pew Research Center shows that the rapidly changing perspectives on gender identity are challenging for many Americans to adjust to. The survey reveals that almost half of Americans, 43%, believe views on transgender and non-binary issues are moving too quickly. There are a number of reasons for this discomfort with the pace of change. For some people, this information is completely new and requires time to get adjusted to, while for others, these gender identities go against their religious beliefs. On the other hand, 26% think it should progress even faster, which is likely a result of concerns about ongoing discrimination and the lack of acceptance of diverse gender identities. Furthermore, Americans are also concerned about legislation in certain states that limit the rights of these communities. Around 28% think that the current pace is appropriate, indicating that they are comfortable with the discussion and progress (Parker, Horowitz, and Brown 2022).

In conclusion, the notion of masculinity in the U.S. has become more dynamic and complex, with race, ethnicity, and the evolving perspectives on gender fluidity all influencing a more nuanced understanding of masculinity. Perception of masculinity in the United States will inevitably continue to change as society evolves.

### 3.2.2 Masculinity in Advertising

In the late 1800s, advertising emerged as a significant cultural influence. It plays an important social role by educating people about the product and generating desire for them. Advertising targeting men has historically promoted traditional notions of masculinity by associating the product with authoritative figures, success, and power. They frequently portrayed men in professional and public fields, whereas women were assigned to the home, family, and emotional domains. White professionals were the ideal representation of masculinity while promoting the idea that success for males involves material wealth and control over women (Carroll 2003, 10-11).

However, things are changing. A study by Branchik and Chowdhury (2012) demonstrates an increase in advertisements including minority models. This might be a reflection of the societal changes occurring in the male market segment on acceptance of ethnic diversity and how African-American celebrities are viewed by people of all races as idealized versions of themselves. In addition, there has been a rise in the number of advertisements of brands like Starbucks and Benefit Cosmetics that feature LGBTQIA+ individuals, including trans and

nonbinary people in recent years. In an effort to appeal to consumers, marketers are increasingly associating themselves with social concerns. This may not be the only factor driving the change. Given that LGBTQIA+ Americans are believed to have a \$1 trillion purchasing power, it is possible that corporations are beginning to recognize the significance of modifying their marketing in this manner (Dua 2021). Altogether, advertising could offer a wide range of masculine identities as a result of the evolving and more complex concept of masculinity.

### 3.3 Thailand

#### 3.3.1 Masculinity

Before diving into the notions of masculinity in Thailand, it is important to comprehend the social structure of the country, as it may impact ideas about what it means to be a man. Politically speaking, Thailand had been an absolute monarchy until 1932. Following that, it transitioned to a constitutional monarchy, in which the power of the king was limited by the constitution (Merriam-Webster Dictionary 2024). The Thai military has maintained political power, although, within the past two decades, parliamentary democracy has gained greater popularity (Keyes et. al. 2024). Beyond the political realm, Thailand's national identity is deeply rooted in Buddhism, especially Theravada Buddhism, which is perceived as “a culture one is part of” and “a family tradition one must follow” (Evans et. al. 2023; Keyes et. al. 2024).

In the context of ‘Thai masculinity’, there is no fixed definition that applies to all men. It varies depending on particular circumstances as well as historical and cultural contexts (Kitiarsa 2005, 59). Despite this fact, Kitiarsa (2012) suggests a compelling connection between Thai masculinity and Buddhism and boxing. He argued that boxing and Buddhism are interconnected and collectively constructing the Thai's understanding of what it means to be a man. This is because *muay thai* (Thai boxing) and Buddhism have historically served as the foundation for the national patriarchal ideals of *nak muay* (boxer) and *nak buat* (monk) in modern-day Thailand, making these the most dominant male cultural figures in Thailand. Using Sombat Banchamek, a boxing champion from Surin, Thailand as an example. His story follows the well-known scenario of an impoverished boy who uses boxing as a means of overcoming poverty and becoming the breadwinner of his family. After he won a lot of



fights, he started to fight internationally and the prize money grew. However, his aging body could no longer keep up and he decided to enter the Buddhist monkhood. This demonstrates that he is not an uneducated boxer but an intelligent person with spiritual understanding. He also presents himself as a mature boxer and a grown-up who is prepared to take control of his own path. Boxing and Buddhism play a role in shaping Thai masculinity on three levels: (1) *Individual*: aspiring males to work hard and be dedicated by using their physical body as a tool for discipline, (2) *Societal*: enabling the demonstration of masculinity while also providing opportunities for social mobility within society, and (3) *National*: the dream of becoming a hero is realized through boxers and monks which represents Thailand. Thus, men obtain respect through engaging in hierarchical and competitive activities.

Another way to understand Thai masculinity is through the lens of national identity. Thai masculinities are embedded in the concept of *khwampenthai* (Thai national identity) and Thai national identity is grounded on the 'Holy Trinity' which consists of Buddhism, Nation, and King. Collectively, these constitute *lak Thai* (love Thai) which is a set of principles that supports, protects, and validates the official Thai identity (Jorgensen 1995, 34). In Reynolds 2006; 2024 (cited in Siripai 2017), it was stated that these three social institutions have culturally integrated into one another, which has strengthened the notion of male dominance and promoted a patriarchal culture. As a result, established norms have an impact on how Thai men view and develop their masculinity. To be a good Thai man, one must adhere to Thai values. This entails being loyal, taking care of family, being respectful of elders, expressing appreciation for parents, honoring the King and Royal family, and demonstrating respect and gratitude for Buddhism by ordination: a practice that has historically excluded women. These principles support citizenship, cultural belonging, and national identity (Jorgensen 1995). Thai masculinity is a complex concept that is shaped by social, historical, and cultural aspects. It involves various responsibilities, characteristics, and behavioral demands that work together to create the idealized masculine identity that is formed in Thai society.

As we have explored the complexities of Thai masculinity, it is apparent that the perception of gender in society continues to evolve. In Thai, the term *phet* covers notions of sex, gender, and sexuality. It includes *phu chai* (cis man), *phu ying* (cis woman), *kathoe* (male-to-female transgender), *tom* (manly lesbian), *dee* (feminine lesbian), and more. The discourse about *phet* in Thailand reflects an increasing awareness of diversity. Informally or formally, when

Thai academics, journalists, or others address *phet*, they typically discuss multiple identities, not just two (Jackson 2011, 3; Baudinette 2019, 117). Over the course of the last fifty years, Thailand's contemporary homosexual, *kathoe*y, and *tom-dee* cultures have developed following the country's growing market economy and new media (Jackson 2011, 8).

Moving beyond Thailand, East Asia as a whole demonstrates a current shift characterized by the rise of soft masculinity. It indicates that masculinity moves away from the traditional notion of rough, strong masculinity and toward a more soft, romanticized perception of manhood. These new masculine styles have gained popularity in K-pop, K-dramas, and the fashion industry. As the major consumer, women play a role in shaping these new notions of masculinity. In response to women's preferences for gentle and loving men, soft masculine images have become more prevalent in the media. This in turn impacts how East Asian males view and portray themselves in order to attract women. In addition, the rise of fans of the boys love (BL) genre known as *sao wai* (properly translated as 'Y girl,' with 'y' standing for the Japanese word for *yaoi*, which refers to a genre feature a romantic relationship between two males) is evidence of the influence of soft masculinity in Thailand. This genre centers around the love and sexual relationships of young male couples, which was created predominantly by and for women. However, there are also men, whether it is heterosexual or homosexual, who aspire to be liked by *sao wai* by shaping themselves to fit the stereotypes of BL image (Kang-Nguyen, 26-28). This indicates an alternative notion of what masculinity looks like in contemporary Thailand.

### 3.3.2 Masculinity in Advertising

In continuation of this shift in society, the representation of masculinity in advertising has also been influenced. It appears that queer advertising is becoming progressively more popular in Thailand which is supported by the prevalence of *idol* celebrity couples, many of whom are stars from the BL series (Baudinette and Svetanant 2023, 418). These male couples are known as *khu jin* (imagined couples). Some of these BL couples, like OffGun, TayNew and KristSingto (each of which has a unique couple name that combines the names of both individuals) can be seen in numerous advertisements throughout Thailand promoting everything from cosmetics to wireless internet packages to bottled tea (Baudinette 2024, 44, 47).

Moreover, BL actors frequently portray men with a cute, youthful, and attractive appearance (LINE Insights 2020), which differs from the traditional concept of masculinity. When exploring the audience for the BL series, 78% consist of females, followed by 21% male, and 2% others. In terms of the age group, 21% fall within the 26-30 age range, 19% are between 36-40 years old, and 16% of people are between the ages of 21-25 and 31-35. Additionally, it is highlighted that 49% of the audience belongs to the highest-earning category in Thailand (LINE Insights 2020). Simultaneously, the growth of media platforms and the increasing number of BL fans have given fans greater power, enabling them to build stronger fandoms and communities than in the past. As a result, businesses have begun to take notice of the fans and implement elements of their subculture into mainstream advertising. It is argued that there is an interplay between fans and businesses (Kwon 2015, 104-105). If we apply this to the context of the portrayal of masculinity in Thai advertising, one could say that the organizations are acknowledging the influences and preferences of BL fans. As a response to the changing expectations and preferences of the audience, idol celebrity couples from the BL series have been incorporated into advertisements, which represents the contemporary representation of masculinity.

### 3.4 Addressing the Gap in Literature

As mentioned at the beginning of the literature review in 3.1, there is already a gap in research concerning the portrayal of men in media. Given that our research is concerned with the construction of masculinity in advertising within the industry of skincare, it further narrows the research area, and the gap in the literature increases (Byrne 2017). This is evident through two factors, one being that the male skincare industry is a more recent field than that of the female skincare industry which has existed for decades (Kenalemang-Palm 2023). Therefore, the research regarding the portrayal of men in advertisements from this particular industry is rather limited, although being increasingly studied as the industry is growing expeditiously, especially in the United States (Whorley and Addis 2006). Furthermore, when looking for studies and literature of masculinity in skincare advertising in databases such as EBSCOhost, we found significantly fewer studies when searching for: “masculinity OR men OR male AND skincare AND advertising OR advertisement OR ads OR commercial OR marketing” in comparison to when looking at searches for: “femininity OR women OR female AND skincare AND advertising OR advertisement OR ads OR commercial OR

marketing”. This further supports the argument that this field is under-researched and that this thesis therefore seeks to contribute to addressing the gap.

Furthermore, taking non-Western cultures into account highlights this study gap even more, which is one of the two motivating factors in our selection of Thailand. Firstly, in Milner and Higgs’ “Gender sex-role portrayals in international television advertising over time: The Australian experience” from 2004 (cited in Paek, Nelson, and Vilela 2010), Thailand appears to be one of the countries that are under-researched in cross-advertising studies. The gap in current research presents an opportunity to provide new insights into the field. Secondly, we believe our cultural connection, such as Thai fluency, enables us to have a more thorough comprehension of how masculinity is portrayed in Thai advertising. Given the under-researched nature of Thailand’s advertising and our cultural connection, we hope to offer a valuable contribution to the current research.

### 3.5 Theoretical Frameworks

The portrayal of masculinity in advertising is a rich field of study that intersects with cultural studies, sociology, and theories of gender. This section of the literature review looks at theories that could help explain how masculinity is constructed, represented, and perceived in an advertising context, as well as key theories of masculinity.

A theory of prominence is that of *Social Semiotic Theory* (Halliday and Matthiessen 2013). The theory is part of Halliday’s broader work on systemic functional linguistics, which views language as a social semiotic tool that people use to make meanings in contextually and culturally specific ways. This theory emphasizes that language function is intertwined with social practices, highlighting the role of language in the construction of social identities and power relations. It suggests that every use of language is shaped by and reflective of the social context in which it is used, enabling a deep analysis of how language contributes to the construction of social reality. Harrison (2008) examined the changing perceptions of masculinity through the lens of advertising, specifically focusing on male mascara ads. Using social semiotic theory and systemic functional linguistics, she analyzes how these advertisements navigate the fine balance of encouraging men to use traditionally feminine products while maintaining traditional masculine traits. The key finding reveals a contrast in advertising that promotes the acceptance of feminine-style products by men, without

compromising their masculine identity. This study highlights the interplay between traditional and metrosexual masculinities in the advertising discourse. Social semiotic theory can enrich our understanding of masculinity in advertising by stressing the sociocultural factors that influence meaning-making processes. However, its focus on discourse and social context may overlook the visual aspects of advertising, which can play a significant role in the construction of masculine identities. Given the nature of our data being videos, this theory is not comprehensive in exploring masculinity in a manner that would account for these visual portrayals of masculinity.

Alice Eagly's *Social Role Theory* (1987) posits that the behaviors typically associated with each gender are largely influenced by the historical division of labor between men and women in a society. According to Eagly, gender roles are socially constructed through the expectations and norms that arise from the roles that men and women predominantly occupy in society. The differentiation in roles often leads to the development of gender-specific skills, preferences, and behaviors, reinforcing societal norms and stereotypes about gender. Social role theory has been extensively applied in various areas of social science research, including leadership (Forsyth, Heiney and Wright 1997), and marketing (Baxter 2020). The theory could be relevant to this thesis in exploring how masculinity is portrayed by skincare brands in Thailand and the U.S., as it provides a framework for understanding how traditional gender roles might influence masculinity in these regions. However, while social role theory can explain variations based on traditional gender roles, it may be less useful in addressing the nuances of gender fluidity, as the theory primarily focuses on traditional views of gender roles. In terms of the aim of our thesis, this presents a significant issue if applied, as one half of our data is concerned with more fluid expressions of gender, including masculinity.

Connell's *Theory of Masculinity*, developed in 1985 (Connell 2005), is the most prominent theory in the field of masculinity, with its foundation in understanding the maintenance of societal gender hierarchies. It outlines a pattern of masculinity that legitimizes men's dominant position in society and justifies the Subordination of the common male population and women. This dominance is not only exerted through physical strength or aggression but is also institutionalized in societal structures and cultural practices, maintaining privilege, and power for certain groups of men over women and other men. This theory of masculinity has been extensively applied in fields of gender studies and sociology helping to promote discussions around gender inequalities, the complexities of male identities, and various

dynamics within social institutions like sports (Pringle 2005), the military (Hinojosa 2010) and workplaces (Acker 1990). This theory aligns directly with our thesis by providing a framework for analyzing how online marketing by skincare brands potentially reinforces or challenges dominant hegemonic masculinity norms. It enables an examination of whether these communications promote a singular, hegemonic ideal of masculinity or offer a broader, more inclusive representation, particularly in cross-cultural contexts like Thailand and the U.S., thus influencing traditional constructions of masculinity.

Moving on to another theory of prevalence, Eric Anderson's *Inclusive Masculinity Theory* (Anderson 2009), which proposes that contemporary societies, where homophobia has decreased, reveal a trend towards more inclusive notions of masculinity, where expressions of affection, emotion, and vulnerability among men have become more socially acceptable. This reflects a move away from the restrictions of traditional hegemonic masculinity towards a more pluralistic understanding of male identities, particularly among younger generations. Inclusive masculinity theory has been applied in the study of sports (Anderson 2015), education and youth cultures (Blanchard and McCormack 2015), highlighting changes in male behavior and attitudes towards gender and sexuality in less homophobic environments, demonstrating a shift toward more open and diverse representations of masculinity. This theory is particularly relevant to this thesis as it can assist in exploring the extent to which skincare marketing communications embrace a range of masculine identities, including those that deviate from traditional norms. It provides a lens through which to assess how contemporary masculinity is portrayed and whether there are notable differences in this representation between Thailand and the U.S., reflecting varying social attitudes towards masculinity.

The theoretical frameworks that have been explored offer an understanding and critical insights into the exploration of traditional and contemporary masculinity, as well as potential regional differences between Thailand and the United States. As we have explored the intricate interplay between cultural norms, media representations, and gender identities, in this section of the literature review, it has become evident that understanding masculinity in skincare advertising requires a nuanced analysis with a combination of theoretical frameworks to explore the construction of masculinity, both intra-culturally and cross-culturally. Based on this, we have chosen three theories in order to comprehensively



examine the problem statement of this thesis, with the following chapter elaborating on each of the theories.

## 4 Theoretical frameworks

This chapter consists of an elaboration of the theories chosen for this thesis. It is structured as follows: First, Hegemonic masculinity theory is explained by exploring its foundation and key concepts, including the four types of masculinity. Secondly, the theory of Inclusive masculinity is examined by detailing its creation, the key concept of *homohysteria*, and the three cultural stages the theory identifies in terms of Inclusive masculinity. Thirdly, the framework of types of masculinities is outlined, describing the three types of masculinities and their accompanying characteristics. Each sub-chapter concludes with a reflection and critique of the respective theory. Finally, the chapter ends with a sub-chapter on how these theories will be applied in the findings portion of this thesis.

### 4.1 Hegemonic Masculinity

*Hegemonic masculinity theory* (also called HMT) emerged from studies conducted in Australian high schools and debates about men's involvement in Australian politics. This early research demonstrated the existence of several hierarchies based on gender and class as well as how people actively construct their masculine identity. This concept was further refined through an influential article, "Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity" by Carrigan, Connell, and Lee (1985), which criticized the previous view on masculinity and proposed the notion of multiple masculinity and the power dynamics among them. As scholars and activists around the world addressed related concerns, the concept gained international recognition and was widely quoted (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 830-831).

This research produced an idea that is comparable to the power structures that political sociologists have researched but with an emphasis on gender. Beyond roles and identity, Hegemonic masculinity encompassed more than how men were expected to behave. It is to be understood as the pattern of behaviors that permitted men to maintain their control over women and other men. Though force may support it, Hegemony is not equivalent to violence. Rather, it gained dominance through institutional, and cultural structures and persuasive

strategies. These concepts were formulated within the framework of the patriarchal gender system, making them abstract as opposed to descriptive. They operated under the assumption that gender dynamics changed throughout time, enabling changes to the hierarchies of gender. Thus, Hegemonic masculinities arose in particular settings and were subject to historical change (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832).

Speaking of masculinity, there are numerous ways to define the term. An essentialist approach bases the concept of masculinity on one primary trait, such as assertiveness or risk-taking. The problem with this approach is that the attribute chosen is frequently arbitrary, and it does not consider cultural context (Connell 2005, 68-69). In contrast, a normative approach suggests that men should behave in a certain sort of 'man code'. It extends beyond the biological aspects of being a male and emphasizes the expected behaviors of men in society. However, this approach disregards personality and the range of ways that men can appear manly (Connell 2005, 70). In this thesis, we have taken the semiotic approach, which defines masculinity in contrast with femininity through a system of symbolic differences. It focuses on what defines these two sides in relation to one another. Masculinity is not a fixed concept or behavior, but rather an understanding of men's and women's roles in society and how they interact with each other (Connell 2005, 70-71). The semiotic approach proves particularly useful for our analysis. Its emphasis on the construction of meaning through symbols aligns well with our multimodal thematic analysis of masculinity in advertising videos. While the semiotic approach places a strong emphasis on symbolic meaning, we acknowledge that masculinity may also be influenced by the social structures and economic conditions of the respective countries in which our videos originate.

## Types of masculinities

The following section will introduce the four types of masculinity which are based on how Western society perceives and practices masculinity in general (Connell 2005, 77). It is emphasized that each type of masculinity does not refer to a 'fixed character type' that is unchangeable. Rather, it is the way men behave and are perceived in particular situations, which can evolve over time in parallel with changes in society and relationships (Connell 2005, 81).

## **Hegemony**

Connell borrowed the term *Hegemony* from Antonio Gramsci. It refers to the way in which a group preserves its dominance in the culture of a society. To put the term into context, Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as “the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the Subordination of women.” (Connell 2005, 77). In other words, Hegemonic masculinity is ‘a currently accepted’ behavior and mentality that the general public perceives as appropriate for males to exhibit, and it reinforces the notion that men have more power and control than women, making men the dominant and women the Subordinate. In addition, the establishment of hegemony is likely to happen if there is an alignment between situational power and the cultural ideal (Connell 2005, 77). It implies that a particular masculinity must be an ideal that the general public strives to attain while having authority in order for it to become hegemonic. However, it is important to recognize that hegemonic masculinity is not a fixed universal set of standards for men because the ‘manly’ ideal is a concept that varies with culture and time. Moreover, people can constantly fight for different definitions of masculinity, allowing new groups to challenge existing Hegemony and create a new Hegemony (Connell 2005, 76). Although only a small percentage of males conform to the Hegemonic patterns completely, few men truly meet the normative standards (Connell 2005, 79).

## **Subordination**

In the context of Hegemony, there are power dynamics between different groups of men with certain groups having more power and respect than others. Within contemporary Western society, heterosexual men occupy a dominant role, whilst homosexual men hold a Subordinate one. This is beyond prejudice in society towards homosexuality or the LGBTQ+ community but rather how homosexual men face disadvantages compared to straight men. For example, through specific legislative or political regulations that exclude them. Furthermore, homosexual masculinities are placed lower in the hierarchy by oppression because they tend to be associated with femininity (Connell 2005, 78). Hence, they are the most noticeable form of Subordinate masculinity because they deviate from the dominant image of masculinity. However, heterosexual males can also face subordination if they do not conform to traditional masculine norms. They may be called names such as ‘sissy’, ‘wimp’, ‘nerd’ etc. These names suggest that these men are not manly or tough enough and often

perceived as more feminine. It is an indication that men need to distance themselves from anything associated with 'womanly' or 'femininity' in order to be a manly man (Connell 2005, 79).

### **Complicity**

As previously stated, very few men truly embody the ideals of Hegemonic masculinity. However, most men benefit from its dominance through the patriarchal dividend, which refers to the advantages that males receive from the general Subordination of women. This leads to another type of masculinity, which is Complicit masculinity. It has been defined as "Masculinities constructed in ways that realize the patriarchal dividend without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy." (Connell 2005, 79). Essentially, these are men who benefited from patriarchy without strongly expressing masculine dominance (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 832). To provide an example, these men might respect their mothers and spouses, refrain from using violence against women, and help out around the house, yet they might also think feminists are extreme (Connell 2005, 79-80). This illustrates that they maintain their privilege through more subtle means.

### **Marginalization**

The concept of Marginalization refers to "the relations between the masculinities in the dominant and Subordinated classes and ethnic groups." (Connell 2005, 80). It highlights how certain groups of men are viewed as more influential and important in society, while others have less respect and power, especially based on their social class and ethnic groups. For instance, some African-American athletes represent Hegemonic masculinity, but their success does not improve the overall social status of black men (Connell 2005, 81). In contrast to white Americans, it suggests that African-American males receive no benefit from the hierarchical nature of Hegemonic masculinity theory despite the fact that they embody it. This demonstrates how an individual's social status or ethnicity can affect how society perceives them as a man, which in turn can impact their lives and opportunities. Groups such as 'working class' and 'black masculinity' are examples of those who are viewed as Marginalized (Demetriou 2001, 342).

## Criticism

We acknowledge the limitations of Connell's theory of Hegemonic masculinity, despite the fact that it provides an insightful framework on power dynamics and masculinity constructions. One of the critiques regarding Connell's theory of Hegemonic masculinity is its vagueness and ambiguity. This is evident in Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005, 823) acknowledgment that "these concepts were abstract rather than descriptive". Consequently, the usage becomes unclear due to this lack of clarity. This was highlighted by Martin (1998), who criticized that sometimes it refers to a certain kind of masculinity and at other times to the current types in a given situation or location. The question of who genuinely embodies Hegemonic masculinity is brought to light as it has been acknowledged that many powerful men in society do not represent the ideal of masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 838). This emphasizes the challenge of defining Hegemonic masculinity precisely and the complexity of the concept. This vagueness can present a challenge when employing Hegemonic masculinity in analyzing advertisements in the U.S. and Thailand. With the lack of clarity of defined characteristics and the susceptibility of subjective interpretations, it may be difficult to determine whether men meet the ideals of Hegemonic masculinity or not. To address this challenge, we have incorporated the framework of Types of masculinity and characteristics by Kreicberg, Ščeuļovs, and Bernovskis (2024), which covers the aspects of *traditional*, *hybrid*, and *modern* masculinity. The framework provides tangible attributes that facilitate the examination of the portrayal of masculinity in the videos. Although we acknowledge that there is not a fixed type of masculinity and we are not attempting to place the portrayals into specific categories, the framework enables us to determine whether the depictions of men in the advertisements subvert or support common perceptions of masculinity, even when those conceptions are more complex than a straightforward 'ideal'.

In addition, the Hegemonic masculinity theory has also been criticized for its concept of masculinity which is framed within a heteronormative conception of gender that emphasizes differences between men and women while neglecting identities outside these gender binaries, and people who do not simply fall into these categories are Marginalized (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005, 836). This critique is especially relevant to our thesis, which examines how traditional and contemporary masculinity is portrayed in advertisements. In

today's society, gender identities and expressions are acknowledged on a spectrum, rather than solely as the male and female binary. Therefore, Hegemonic masculinity may not fully capture the way that gender identities are evolving in each country.

Rather than a criticism of the theory, there is one potential limitation to consider when applied to Thailand, a non-Western country. The theory is based on the notion of masculinity from Western cultures, which might not accurately represent the complex nature of masculinity in Thai society. We acknowledge this as an opportunity to extend theory and incorporate intercultural aspects, which implies that we will be open to acknowledging aspects of Thai masculinity that the theory may not adequately account for.

## 4.2 Inclusive Masculinity Theory

Masculinity scholarship is currently in its third wave, where scholars have moved on from theoretical works such as Connell's theory of Hegemonic masculinity. Within this new wave of masculinity studies, the most prominent theory comes from Eric Anderson who is the creator of *Inclusive masculinity theory* (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 70). Anderson himself used the Hegemonic masculinity theory in his research, specifically in his studies of gay male athletes, but soon discovered that the theory was lacking and could not explain the findings of his studies (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 70). He then went on to investigate heterosexual athletes, and once again found that their behavior was not in correspondence with the theoretical assumptions proposed by Connell's Hegemonic masculinity theory, thus beginning to investigate the possible reasons for what the theory was missing since it could not account for the results (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 70-71). What he found was, what now is considered one of the main components of Inclusive masculinity theory. Namely the level of homophobia within a given culture being a core factor in the social constructs of masculinity, and as a result, how men behave and interact is determined by varying levels of homophobia (Robinson and Anderson 2022,71). Furthermore, Anderson wanted to understand exactly how the level of homophobia in a culture was impacting both gender and homosocial intimacy, which led him to the work of John Ibson's *Picturing Men* (2002). After gathering all the information, Anderson created Inclusive masculinity theory (also called IMT) with his book *Inclusive masculinity: The changing nature of masculinities* (2009). The theory is mainly based on research done in the United Kingdom and the United States, which finds that



an increasing number of young men reject homophobia, have gay friends, exhibit emotional intimacy with friends, are physically tactile with other males, are accepting of bisexuality, embrace activities that have traditionally been categorized as 'feminine' and distance themselves from engaging in bullying and violence (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 71). With Anderson's theory, he argues that the types of masculinity that stem from Connell's theory of Hegemonic masculinity can and do not exist in cultures where homosexuality is more accepted. Furthermore he argues that instead of the hierarchical structure of masculinity types proposed by Connell, there exists only groups of masculinity types on a horizontal field where no type is considered dominant or superior to another (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 71).

Before we dive into the key concepts theory and how to apply it, there are a few conditions of the theory which are important to note. Firstly, although Anderson rejects much of Connell's theoretical framework, he does note that in a culture where homophobia (this concept will be elaborated on later) exists, Connell's theory of Hegemonic masculinity is applicable. Moreover, IMT does not imply that all men in each culture must be gay-friendly for all men to benefit from an inclusive culture (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 72). A culture that has reduced its homophobia does not imply that heterosexism does not still exist in that culture and that certain men will have privilege and dominance over others, but this is not due to sexuality, rather it depends on the individual's popularity (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 72).

Now that we have explored the origins of the theory and some of the theoretical considerations made by Anderson, we will now delve into the key concepts of the theory. First and foremost, to understand Inclusive masculinity theory, one must be familiar with the concept of *Homophobia*, which lies at the core of the theory. According to Anderson, homophobia "describes a culture where homophobia policies gendered behavior: A culture in which boys and men fear being socially perceived as gay because of the stigma they will receive as a result, and so alter their behaviors to avoid it." (cited in Robinson and Anderson 2022, 73).

So, how do we determine whether a culture is homophobic? Anderson has created three fundamental social conditions that must be fulfilled for us to conclude whether a culture is homophobic or not. The three conditions are as follows: (1) There must be a widespread awareness that homosexuality exists and that it is an inherent sexual orientation of a

significant portion of the population; (2) there are high levels of homophobia in the culture; and lastly (3) homosexuality is associated with gender atypicality (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 73). However, these factors are not static, and the factors can and will change within all cultures, causing variations within cultures over time, variations across different cultures, and organizational variations within a given culture (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 74). These cultural conditions can also be seen as a three-stage model, as proposed by Anderson: (1) Homoerasure; (2) Homohysteria; and (3) Inclusivity. These stages will each be elaborated on in the following section.

### **Stage 1: Homoerasure**

Anderson argues that homohysteria is a product of modernity, thus it can only exist in modern cultures and cannot exist in cultures with no understanding of sexual identities (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 74). He further argues that the emergence of homohysteria stems from the industrial revolution in Western societies, where men with same-sex desires migrated to larger cities, and these men started to encounter others with the same sexual orientation (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 75). This came with legal and political consequences, as these types of ‘deviant’ behaviors were strongly stigmatized and looked down on, to the extent that they were criminalized and sought medicated. This meant that, although same-sex people existed within the cultures, they were almost invisible and hidden, causing the public to not recognize the existence of homosexuality as a sexual orientation (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 75). These are cultures of *erasure*, where homophobia is so high that the mere existence of it is concealed, which interestingly causes men to behave in a way that is almost opposite to what one would expect, namely, being physically tactile with other men, being emotionally open etc., as they are not regulated by homophobic attitudes (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 76).

### **Stage 2: Homohysteria**

The concept of homohysteria was developed to explain the power dynamics of the changing homophobia which impacts the masculinities of heterosexual males (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 76). While previous scholars had shown that cultures with high levels of homophobia caused men to refrain from behaviors gendered as ‘feminine’ to avoid being suspected of being gay, Anderson argues that this is only the case within specific social and historical conditions, namely in homohysterical cultures (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 76). The difference between a homophobic culture and a homohysterical one, lies in the first condition

of a homohysterical culture as mentioned earlier, the population must acknowledge homosexuality as a legitimate sexuality. If they do not then it is a culture of homoerasure, if they do, but their attitudes towards it are highly negative, it is a homohysterical culture (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 77). This happened in the Western world with the AIDS epidemic, which caused people to associate homosexuality with health risks, while the popularity of fundamentalist Christianity proposed homosexuality as a threat to the nuclear family (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 78). This meant that the majority of the population regarded homosexuality as wrong and distanced themselves from it, where men stopped engaging in homosocial intimacy and started demonstrating their masculinity through sports, anger, and violence while simultaneously denying their fears and weaknesses (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 78).

### **Stage 3: Inclusivity**

Throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> century and in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, homophobia has been decreasing at an accelerated rate, where now the majority of the population in cultures like the U.S. and Thailand have positive attitudes towards homosexuality and accept it as a fully valid sexual identity (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 79). A culture with these characteristics is a culture of *inclusivity*, but this does not entail that the culture is entirely inclusive on all matters, such as race, class, disability, etc. it just means that the attitudes towards gay people are positive (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 79). The main driver for the decrease in homophobia in these cultures is the emergence of metrosexuality in the late 1990s, where men began engaging in behavior that was previously considered ‘feminine’ and ‘gay’, such as self-grooming, attention to style, appearance, wearing makeup, while also sexualizing themselves (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 80). Although a culture is considered inclusive, it should be mentioned that the process of decreasing homophobia is dynamic and uneven throughout each culture, e.g., there might be less representation of homosexuality in certain areas of the culture like sports, politics, and religious organizations (Robinson and Anderson 2022, 81).

In conclusion, Inclusive masculinity theory challenges traditional masculinity theories by arguing for a range of masculinities that are shaped by varying degrees of homophobia within any culture. The theory explains the correlation between decreasing homophobia and the ability of men to engage in behaviors, including emotional and physical intimacy with other men, which is often suppressed under traditional gender norms. IMT allows for an understanding of the dynamics of gender expressions within and across different cultures. It

can be used in combination with more traditional theories like hegemonic masculinity, especially in environments where rigid gender norms are still in place. Thus, we as researchers can achieve a more nuanced understanding of contemporary, more fluid gender identities while reflecting on the complexities of changing societal attitudes toward gender.

### **Criticism**

As mentioned previously, Inclusive masculinity theory was created due to Hegemonic masculinity theory not being able to explain the more inclusive variations of masculinity expressions that were emerging on a seemingly nonhierarchical playing field. This is contrary to the theoretical notions made by Connell about the Hegemonic nature of masculinity. While this theory allows for a broader understanding of more fluid variations of masculinity and considers the societal, cultural, and historical contexts such as the level of homophobia, the theory might overlook other aspects within and across cultures that cause certain expressions of masculinity.

Further arguing for the limitations of the theories applicability across cultures, is the fact that the theory is rooted in research conducted in Western cultures. This means that the theoretical assumptions are based on masculinity, homophobia, and how it presents in the modern Western world and is not necessarily useful for studying the construction of masculinity in Asia, as this paper, in part, seeks to do. This is a factor that we as researchers are highly aware of in our analysis and wish to investigate whether the theory can be utilized in other cultural contexts than in which it was founded.

Another criticism of the theory comes from Sam de Boise (2015) who stated that the theory has vague definitions, which can be a problem for researchers wanting to apply the theory, in particular when assessing the level of homophobia in a society. This is due to Anderson using terms like ‘low’ and ‘high’ levels, which can be ambiguous and interpreted differently from person to person. Thus, it makes it hard to make clear distinctions between studies, as the conditions for homophobia is key to the theory and might be interpreted widely differently between scholars. In this paper, we do not seek to define the societal or cultural contexts in which the advertisements appear. Rather, we are using the knowledge we have accumulated in the background and literature review chapters of this thesis, to gain an understanding of whether masculinity is portrayed by the skincare companies, in alignment with the notions of Inclusive masculinity or not.

Lastly, the theory perhaps places an overemphasis on homophobia and the necessity for a culture to have certain attitudes towards homosexuality for men to behave in either homosocial ways or the complete opposite. Again, Sam de Boise (2015) mentions the vagueness of Anderson's definitions of sexuality and gender identity, where it is argued that even if there is an acceptance of men kissing or hugging each other, there can still be negative attitudes towards people who are homosexual. The theory does not account for this possibility, thus there could be instances of cultures that have high levels of homophobia and are not homohysterical culture, yet men still exhibit the behavior of inclusive masculinity.

### 4.3 Types of masculinities and their characteristics

The *Types of masculinities and their characteristics* as proposed by Kreicberg, Ščeulovs and Bernovskis (2024), was developed through thorough research regarding types of masculinities depicted in advertising. They created the archetypes to be utilized and showcased by marketers for the purpose of reaching the intended target audience and aligning with consumer preference (Kreicberg, Ščeulovs and Bernovskis 2024, 1). The authors' work is a combination and re-categorization of existing theoretical work on masculine personality types. This involves the archetype theory by Mark and Pearson (2001), which include an outline of 12 brand archetypes that are derived from Carl Jung's archetypal model and have been revised into a business context (Kreicberg, Ščeulovs and Bernovskis 2023, 1). Furthermore, More and Gillette (1990) also took Carl Jung's archetypes and created four masculinity archetypes: King, Magician, Lover and Warrior, which can be used in an advertising setting. These are the two theoretical frameworks that Kreicberg, Ščeulovs and Bernovskis have taken inspiration from to craft their own list of masculinity types and their characteristics (Kreicberg, Ščeulovs and Bernovskis 2024, 1). They categorized three main types of masculinities and their accompanying characteristics (the full list of characteristics can be seen in Kreicberg, Ščeulovs and Bernovskis 2024). The types will be elaborated on in the following section.

The first type is called *Traditional masculinity*. This type includes hegemonic masculinity, toxic masculinity and is characterized by a variety of traits such as: ambitious, entitled, emotionally stoic, physical strength, competitiveness, powerful, tough, etc. (Kreicberg, Ščeulovs and Bernovskis 2024, 4). Furthermore, the *Traditional masculinity* type

encompasses the brand archetype of the ‘Hero’, ‘Outlaw’, ‘Explorer’, and ‘Ruler’ and the masculinity archetype of the ‘King’ and ‘Warrior’ (Kreicberg, Ščeuľovs and Bernovskis 2024, 4). The characteristics of this type of masculinity does come with some overlap into the next type, *Hybrid masculinity*, specifically traits like: privilege, aggression, and maintaining male dominance are thus somewhere between the two types (Kreicberg, Ščeuľovs and Bernovskis 2024, 4).

The second type is called *Hybrid masculinity*. Flexible masculinity and Complicit masculinity are included in this type, and it is characterized by the following traits among others: empathic, adaptable, caring, less rigid about gender norms (Kreicberg, Ščeuľovs and Bernovskis 2024, 4). This type of masculinity is classified as being the brand archetype of the: ‘Jester’, ‘Magician’, ‘Everyman’ and ‘Sage’ and furthermore the masculinity archetype of the ‘Magician’ (Kreicberg, Ščeuľovs and Bernovskis 2024, 4). The *Hybrid masculinity* also has some overlapping characteristics of the last type, the *Modern masculinity* type, these include traits like being emotionally available and being sensitive (Kreicberg, Ščeuľovs and Bernovskis 2024, 4).

The third and last type is called *Modern masculinity*. This type includes Inclusive masculinity and new masculinity, with the characteristics being: interest in fashion, rejecting gender conformity, compassionate, progressive, sense of equality, emotionally expressive, having feminine characteristics (Kreicberg, Ščeuľovs and Bernovskis 2024, 4). The *modern masculinity* type is classified as being equivalent to the brand archetype of the: ‘Lover’, ‘Caregiver’, ‘Creator’ and ‘Innocent’ and the masculinity archetype of the ‘Lover’ (Kreicberg, Ščeuľovs and Bernovskis 2024, 4).

## **Criticism**

The theoretical framework by Kreicberg, Ščeuľovs, and Bernovskis (2024) can be critiqued for its over-reliance on generalized “ideal types”, often situated at the extremes, which can be problematic when applied to portrayals of masculinity, where the representation tends to be more nuanced. The rigid categorization into extreme types fails to capture the fluidity and diversity in expressions of masculinity. Additionally, like Hegemonic and Inclusive masculinity theory the foundation of the framework is heavily based on Western constructs of gender, which can lead to difficulties when trying to apply it to contexts, such as Thailand. In Thai culture, the meanings and characteristics associated with different types of masculinity

can differ significantly from those in Western cultures. These cultural differences need to be carefully and critically assessed in the theory's application to ensure that the analysis remains culturally accurate. Lastly, the specificity of the types and their characteristics suggests a static nature of gender, implying that these categories are fixed, which does not align with the understanding of gender constructs as a dynamic and evolving process. The framework thus overlooks the fluid nature of gender identities and the ongoing shifts in how masculinity is perceived and performed. This can cause challenges to its applicability in analyzing gender dynamics that do not conform to binary notions of masculinity. While the framework provides a structured understanding and categorizing masculinity types, its reliance on generalized and extreme ideal types, its Western cultural bias, and its static conception of gender present various limitations, which calls for a critical approach when applying the framework which we as researchers have taken into account.

## 4.4 Application of theories

This section will briefly describe each theory's application in this thesis, their interactions, and the rationale for our approach.

The Hegemonic masculinity theory will be applied to the videos categorized as traditional: Lab Series (U.S.) and Oriental Princess (Thailand). The theory suggests that there is a culturally dominant type of masculinity that is considered superior to other types of masculinity and women. By utilizing the theory, we aim to explore how the portrayal of traditional masculinity establishes and/or reinforces gender hierarchies as well as maintains a singular idealized version of masculinity in the videos. Conversely, the Inclusive masculinity theory will be applied to those categorized as contemporary: NOTO (U.S.) and Doctor Tony (Thailand). In contrast to Hegemonic masculinity theory, this theory challenges the notion of a singular dominant masculinity by acknowledging that multiple masculinities can coexist in societies without hierarchical structures of gender. The application of the theory allows us to examine how and if the portrayals of contemporary masculinity reflect societal and/or cultural notions of a more varied and inclusive understanding and acceptance of masculinity. In regards to the framework of Types of masculinity and their characteristics, it has been applied in the intra-cultural comparisons to identify masculinity characteristics from the findings. This helps determine whether it supports or deviates from the two theories related to traditional and contemporary masculinity.

## 5 Methodology

The methodological approach that forms the basis of this thesis will be presented in this chapter. The primary objective of this chapter is to provide an explanation of the reasoning behind our research strategy and go into specifics on how it was implemented. We will begin by defining our research standpoint, which is social constructivism, before proceeding to address the way it affects our understanding of reality, our ability to acquire new information and the limitations it places on us. Following that, we will present the research design, which aims to provide an overview of the thesis and demonstrate how each element of our thesis corresponds to the others. Following that, the details of the data-collecting method utilized for this thesis will be addressed, along with an explanation of the gathered data. Lastly, we will elaborate on our method of data analysis, which is multimodal thematic analysis, and how we utilized it for this thesis, specifically.

### 5.1 Philosophy of science

Within this sub-chapter, we will introduce our philosophy of science through the lens of social constructivism, examining its principles in understanding knowledge and reality. Moreover, we will explore how social constructivism shapes our thesis' analysis of the portrayal of masculinity in skincare advertising, focusing on how cultural and societal contexts influence perceptions of masculinity. The methodology discussed will highlight the strengths of this scientific approach in capturing the dynamic nature of gender constructs, while addressing potential limitations of the approach in terms of generalizability and interpretation.

#### 5.1.1 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism is a philosophical position that proposes that reality is not just an understanding of an objectively existent world but rather is constructed through human interactions and interpretations, which they assign to their experiences. Central to social constructivism is the idea that all knowledge, including our understanding of reality itself, is a product of social processes (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

Social constructivism views *reality* as a product of social construction rather than an objective entity. This scientific position argues that what we consider to be 'real' is shaped by



the social interactions and cultural contexts in which we are involved. Our understanding of the world is thus influenced by the collective interpretations and the shared meanings developed within our communities (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Social constructivism, according to Berger and Luckmann, involves the concept that society can be understood as both an objective and subjective reality. Objective reality refers to the world of organizations and structures that individuals are born into: these pre-exist and outlast individual human lives. Subjective reality, on the other hand, is the internalized perceptions and understandings that individuals form based on their interactions within the objective world (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

In social constructivism, the term *construction* refers to the process of how individuals and groups come together to form perceptions and conceptual frameworks that shape their reality (Berger and Luckmann 1967). This construction is continuous and dynamic, influenced by cultural norms, historical contexts, and social interactions. Thus, knowledge and societal structures, such as gender roles, are seen as constructed through these ongoing interactions.

*Language* plays a crucial role in social constructivism. It is through language that shared meanings are conveyed and maintained. Language serves both as a reflection and as a creation of our constructed reality. The way we discuss and categorize elements of our world produces certain perceptions and attitudes, which can reinforce specific social norms or challenge them (Berger and Luckmann 1967).

### 5.1.2 Ontological approach

Ontology, in the philosophical sense, concerns itself with the study of what exists. In methodology, the ontological position of a study refers to the researcher's assumptions and beliefs about the nature of reality. These assumptions have a significant influence on how a research question is approached and how the findings of the study are interpreted (Blackburn 2016; Presskorn-Thygesen 2012).

As social constructivists, our ontological approach is relativistic, meaning that we view reality as subjective and as something that individuals collectively construct through their interpretations and interactions (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012). In the field of gender studies, social constructivism suggests that gender roles and identities are not inherent or biologically

determined but are formed through cultural and social practices. This perspective challenges conventional views of gender as a fixed attribute, instead suggesting that gender is a dynamic construct shaped by societal norms and interactions.

### 5.1.3 Epistemological approach

Epistemology examines the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope, and general basis. It involves a discussion of how knowledge is generated and shared. It focuses on the relationship between the knower and what is to be known, exploring the process by which knowledge is acquired and the standards by which it is evaluated (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012, 27). In research, the epistemological stance is essential as it determines the methodologies used and the criteria for verifying the knowledge obtained.

The epistemological stance of social constructivism argues that knowledge is socially constructed and that truth and meaning emerge from interactions between individuals within a specific cultural and social context (Presskorn-Thygesen 2012, 29). This perspective emphasizes the subjective involvement of the researcher and acknowledges that knowledge is influenced by aspects such as social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender values. Therefore, social constructivism aligns with qualitative and interpretive research methods, which are important for delving into the complex meanings that individuals and groups assign to their experiences and interactions, allowing for a deeper understanding of the subjective elements that shape social reality.

### 5.1.4 Considerations and Limitations of Social Constructivism

The decision to utilize social constructivism to examine masculinity in skincare advertising across different cultural contexts, such as Thailand and the U.S., is based on the position's strong emphasis on how societal influences shape perceptions. Social constructivism is particularly useful for highlighting how masculinity is defined and portrayed differently in various cultural contexts. It has the ability to recognize that masculine identities are not fixed but are more fluid and can be shaped by media such as advertising.

For our thesis, social constructivism is preferred over cognitive and radical constructivism due to its focus on societal constructions of knowledge. It is more suitable for examining how masculinity is portrayed in advertising because it considers the broader cultural influences on

the construction of gender identities. In contrast, Cognitive Constructivism (Wadsworth 1996) focuses on the cognitive processes of individuals and tends to overlook the broader cultural influences that have a role in shaping perceptions, such as those of masculinity in advertising. Furthermore, Radical Constructivism (von Glasersfeld 1995) places emphasis on individual's constructions of reality, which is less effective for examining how broader collective cultural influences shape the portrayals of masculinity in advertising.

Social constructivism provides an extensive foundation that enables an examination of how societal norms and cultural values in different countries influence and are influenced by the portrayal of masculinity in marketing efforts like advertising. This approach is significant in exploring nuanced expressions and negotiations of masculinity across cultural borders, moving beyond traditional gender views. Although social constructivism provides valuable tools for understanding the diversity and dynamic nature of gender roles, it also has limitations that could affect our research. One limitation is its emphasis on the subjective and interpretative aspects (Berger and Luckmann 1967), which can lead to challenges in generalizing findings. This can be particularly problematic in cross-cultural research where different cultural contexts might require more generalized conclusions to guide broader marketing strategies. Furthermore, the emphasis of social constructivism on the social origins of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann 1967) might overlook the impact of biological, psychological, or economic factors on gender identities and behaviors.

Integrating social constructivism into the study of masculinity in skincare advertising offers a solid methodological foundation that can highlight the role of media in constructing and reflecting gender norms. However, acknowledging its limitations ensures that the research remains grounded and applicable across different cultural contexts, providing a comprehensive view of the dynamics at play in gender portrayal. This not only enhances our understanding of how gender is constructed in advertising but also prepares us to address the complexities involved in the examination of gender cross-culturally.

## 5.2 Research design

This sub-chapter provides an overview of the research design utilized to investigate and answer our problem statement. Our thesis aims to explore the constructions of traditional and contemporary masculinity in online marketing communications by four skincare brands in

Thailand and the United States and to identify potential similarities and differences in the portrayals between the two regions. Our research is grounded in a social constructivist philosophical position, allowing for an in-depth interpretation of socially constructed realities and nuanced representations of masculinity in marketing communications. Therefore, this thesis employs a qualitative research approach, analyzing four advertising videos from male skincare brands: two from Thailand and two from the United States. The approach is well-suited for examining complex, context-dependent portrayals of masculinity. Each video will be analyzed using the theories of Hegemonic masculinity and Inclusive masculinity to capture the spectrum from traditional to contemporary masculinities. Additionally, the framework of Types of masculinities and their characteristics, will be used in intra-cultural comparisons to ensure our interpretations align with HMT's and IMT's assumptions. Employing multiple frameworks enhances the reliability of our analysis. Furthermore, we will be conducting a four-field matrix comparative analysis consisting of intra-cultural comparisons of contemporary and traditional masculinity in the U.S and Thailand, and cross-cultural comparisons of traditional masculinity as well as contemporary masculinity between Thailand and the U.S. This comparative approach aims to highlight regional and cultural differences and similarities in the portrayals of masculinity, enabling a structured analysis across two cultural contexts. To investigate masculinity in the four videos, a multimodal thematic analysis is conducted, aiming to uncover nuanced portrayals of masculinity in marketing communications. Through the coding process, six main themes were identified across the entire dataset, guiding our analysis with each video being analyzed according to all six themes, to provide a comprehensive understanding of masculinity portrayals by male skincare brands in Thailand and the United States. This research design is structured to offer a comparative analysis of masculinity portrayals in skin care advertising, considering both methodological consequences and limitations.

### 5.3 Method of data collection

To investigate how companies in the United States and Thailand portray masculinity, we have collected four existing advertising videos from two companies' YouTube channels. We believe that advertising videos offer valuable insight into how companies in these countries construct and portray masculinity within the field of skincare. Although the data is secondary data, they serve as our primary data of analysis in this thesis. Our data comprises four advertising videos: two depict traditional masculinity and two contemporary masculinity. It is

important to note that the terms ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ are employed to simply categorize the videos. Those labeled as contemporary represent more modern depictions of masculinity, while those labeled as traditional display characteristics associated with traditional gender roles. This differentiation serves to demonstrate various representations of masculinity, not to suggest a judgment on any category as good or bad. Each country, the United States and Thailand has one video from each category. This selection enables us to conduct a two-level comparison: Firstly, comparing the representation of traditional and contemporary masculinity, and secondly, investigating these portrayals in Thailand and the United States. This two-level comparison method accomplishes two goals. First of all, it allows us to make a comparison between the ways in which masculinities are constructed in the videos. In addition, it enables us to explore these representations within two different cultural contexts. We will now present the data gathered for this analysis.

### **Lab Series** (*Traditional*)

Lab Series is an American based skincare brand for men created in 1987, aiming at accommodating the unique skin needs of men, to improve their skin so that they can feel free to be the man they want to be (Lab Series n.d.). In 2022 they created an advertisement with the title: LAB SERIES: Invent Yourself ([Click to watch](#)), which was posted on their official YouTube channel labseries. It is not certain if the video was posted on other media platforms other than YouTube. The video is 1:05 minutes long and follows five high achieving men who all are either athletes, models and/or designers. Each man has an approximate 10-second sequence where their individual craft or athletic abilities are showcased. The sequences in chronological order shows: an African-american shoe designer (0:09 - 0:17), an Asian athlete (0:18 - 0:28), a fencer (0:28 - 0:40), a ballet dancer (0:40 - 0:50) and a fashion designer (0:50 - 0:58). The video concludes with the message ‘invent yourself’ and is further elaborated in the description box of the video, where Lab Series states that “when your skin is at its best, it enables you to feel confident and express yourself” (Lab Series 2022).

### **NOTO Botanics** (*Contemporary*)

NOTO Botanics (also called NOTO) is a skincare brand created by Gloria Noto, a former fashion and celebrity make-up artist, with the mission of creating a clean beauty skincare line that is gender-inclusive and celebrates the spectrum of identities and importance of self-expression (NOTO Botanics n.d.). The video titled: NOTO IS : DEEP SERUM // FULL FILM ([Click to watch](#)), is an advertisement of the product the ‘deep serum’ which was

published in 2023 to the company's official YouTube channel NOTO BOTANICS. The video is 2:14 minutes long and is a full-length version with smaller sections of the video posted separately on their channel. The video shows three individuals: two seemingly biological females and one being seemingly biologically male, all with diverse gender expressions. Early on, the video explicitly states that the brand is gender fluid meaning that all expressions of gender are represented and embraced. Throughout, Gloria appears and is narrating the video, talking about the brand and its mission of creating a community as well as talking about the brand being made for all genders and ages. The middle section of the video is dedicated to Gloria giving a detailed description of the product ingredients (0:48 - 0:18), effects and guide on how to use the product (1:28 - 1:41). Due to the length and structure of the video, it is most likely an advertisement posted only on this platform and not shown on e.g. television.

#### *Disclaimer*

We do not intend to cause any offense to anyone by assuming the genders of the individuals or by stating the races of non-caucasian individuals in the videos. This is purely for the purpose of being able to analyze the construction of masculinity according to the theories, which include notions of race and gender.

#### **Oriental Princess** (*Traditional*)

Oriental Princess is a Thai beauty brand that prioritizes creating high-quality products using natural ingredients. The company launched its “for MEN” series of face and body care products intending to target the male market. This product line, according to Oriental Princess, is made with men's needs in mind. When men are well-groomed, they can win in any situation (Oriental Princess 2022). The company also demonstrates this point in its advertisement which is titled: ORIENTAL PRINCESS FOR MEN 2020 Be the right kind of man that women like ([Click to watch](#)). The advertisement is a compilation of short videos addressing six misconceptions that men have about self-care, for instance, the notion that applying a thick layer of sun cream will provide greater protection or that excessive face washing will make one's face clearer. The duration of the advertisement is 3:45 minutes, with each scenario lasting approximately 30-40 seconds. Every scene depicts a scenario in which a man ‘fails’ because he has neglected self-care but he overcomes it by using Oriental Princess' product. As a result, it gives men more confidence to look and feel their best, which makes them the kind of man women find appealing.

### **Doctor Tony Shop** (*Contemporary*)

Doctor Tony Shop is a Thai brand that was founded by Dr. Woraphon, also known as Dr. Tony. The company emphasizes that Dr. Tony is a dermatologist with over 15 years of experience and is therefore familiar with the common skin issues that many people encounter. Thus, in order to enable everyone to take care of themselves, the company's objective is to provide high-quality goods at affordable costs (DOCTOR TONY 2024). Regarding their advertisement, they have produced a 45-second miniseries ([Click to watch](#)). There are two possible translations and interpretations of the video's title. The first translation is 'the Special Edition series: The First Time We Were on the Same Page. This captures the essence of the phrase which implies that the two protagonists have come to an agreement for the first time. The second translation is 'the Special Edition series: Our Hearts Aligned for the First Time.', which takes more of a literal approach to the phrase. The phrase 'ใจตรงกัน' can be directly translated as 'our hearts aligned', however, it also conveys the idea of agreeing as mentioned previously. In order to account for diverse interpretations, we have offered two possible translations of the title. Returning to the advertisement, it includes two of their brand ambassadors, Gemini and Fourth, who are well-known for their roles in *My School President*, a BL series (MyDramaList n.d.). In the beginning stages of the advertisement, two characters, Gemini and Fourth, who appear to have different characteristics are introduced. These traits are demonstrated by their actions and surroundings, such as the styles and decorations of their bathrooms and bedrooms. Moreover, things escalate into a small fight between them regarding which serum they should use. Their argument, however, ends when they realize they have something in common, which is the fact that they are both using Dr. Tony's serum, merely in different bottles.

## 5.4 Method of data analysis

The multimodal thematic analysis, which is the data analysis method utilized in this thesis, will be presented in this section of the methodology chapter. It is intended to provide an understanding of how we particularly implemented the method and approached the data sets.

### 5.4.1 Multimodal thematic analysis

As mentioned earlier, our aim is to gain an understanding of how the United States and Thailand depict masculinity in their advertisements. In order to answer the research question, we have selected multimodal thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying patterns and meanings, also known as themes, in a dataset. It offers an in-depth and comprehensive explanation of the findings which goes beyond simply organizing the data. One of the advantages of thematic analysis is its flexibility. This method is not limited to any particular theoretical framework, hence it can be applied across a wide range of theoretical perspectives. For instance, it can be employed with a constructionist approach, which explores how various discourses present in societies have an impact on realities and meanings (Braun and Clarke 2006, 79-81). This approach is particularly suited for this research because it enables us to examine the construction of masculinity in advertising by identifying recurring patterns while simultaneously accounting for the influence of social and cultural norms within the United States and Thailand. In addition, the multimodal analysis is supported by modes and is automatically incorporated into our thematic analysis given the nature of the data being videos.

For our research, we have used a combination of a deductive and inductive approach, for our analysis. Firstly, we employed a deductive approach by drawing on our knowledge of masculinity from the theoretical frameworks to identify themes consistently appearing across all four videos. By doing this, we ensure that the main themes are relevant to the research question as well as establishing a common ground that enables us to compare the data sets. We did, however, keep our minds open to data-driven insights when exploring sub-themes within these larger categories, which indicates an inductive approach to the identification of sub-themes. With this approach to the sub-themes, we are able to account for similarities and differences that emerge from each video within the main themes. Secondly, the themes have been identified at both semantic and latent levels. Semantic themes are those that emerge explicitly in the videos, for instance, 'Appearance'. Latent themes, such as 'Advocacy' require an in-depth understanding of the underlying meaning of the content that is portrayed. Lastly, the six phases within thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006) will be presented as follows.



### **Phase 1: Familiarize Yourself With the Data**

To gain a comprehensive understanding of our data, we took steps to break down all four videos. Firstly, we separated each video into individual frames, marking any cuts or edits along with their timestamps. Next, we transcribed all spoken languages and any on-screen texts as well as any background music or sound effects for each video. This step is particularly critical on both Thai videos which ensures that both of the researchers have an understanding of the data due to the language barrier. The purpose of separating different elements of the video enables us to gain a deeper insight into the data and get into all the small details that may have gone unnoticed if only looking at the bigger picture. Moreover, this detailed transcript provides a comprehensive overview of each video.

### **Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes**

While this stage involves creating preliminary codes, we have chosen an alternative approach because of our steps from phase 1. After thoroughly dissecting the data, we had a solid understanding of the content. This understanding enables us to immediately search for main themes and sub-themes and disregard the process of creating codes.

### **Phase 3: Searching for Themes**

After establishing an understanding of the data, we attempted to identify potential themes that appear across all four videos which were based on our theoretical frameworks and the knowledge from the literature review about masculinity in each country. In this stage, we started the process by making preliminary notes about the data that might lead to potential main themes as well as sub-themes. At this stage, the themes are not yet finalized but serve as a starting point for the thematic analysis.

### **Phase 4: Reviewing Potential Themes**

Once we had identified a set of potential main themes and sub-themes, we created a new coding scheme. This new coding scheme consists of timestamps, descriptions of content, frame photos, and linguistics, if necessary. Our attention thus shifted to a bigger picture rather than on individual frames as a result of this new coding method. The scenes in the videos that accurately represent the main themes and sub-themes are now identified. It allows us to take a comprehensive view of the main themes and sub-themes that have been identified in each video without the need for repetitive coding of the same data points.

### **Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes**

We assessed the degree to which our initial main themes and sub-themes aligned with the data after implementing the new coding method to all four videos. In this phase, we were able to refine and polish the themes. We created accurate descriptions that captured their core, while ensuring there were clear distinctions between them. Certain broad sub-themes were divided into more specific sub-themes. Others, on the other hand, needed to be renamed. For instance, the theme ‘atmosphere’ was renamed ‘space’ to accurately reflect the data and the specific concept we were trying to identify.

### **Phase 6: Producing the Report**

The last phase of this process is to write a thematic analysis report that transcends mere data presentation. Our objective is to use the knowledge gained from the identified main themes and sub-themes to create a compelling argument that addresses the research question and the aim of this thesis: How is masculinity depicted in the advertising videos, and what are the differences and similarities between the portrayals in the United States and Thailand. We will present the write-up of the thematic analysis in the next chapter, our findings chapter.

## **6 Findings**

This chapter consists of the analysis of the four skincare advertising videos from the U.S. and Thailand. The chapter is divided into six sub-chapter, each one representing one theme. The findings chapter is structured as follows: firstly, the traditional and contemporary portrayals of masculinity in the U.S. videos are examined according to the main theme and its sub-themes. Secondly, a comparison of the representations of these masculinities within the country is conducted. Thirdly, this process is then repeated for the Thai videos. Lastly, each theme concludes with a cross-cultural comparison of traditional and contemporary masculinity as depicted by both countries.

Before diving into the analysis, we will present a conducted scheme, which details all identified main themes and sub-themes, along with the descriptions and examples. The thematic scheme is shown here:

Main themes	Sub-themes	Description	Examples
<b>Appearance</b>			
	<b>Personal Styles</b>	How they express themselves through aesthetic choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clothing styles</li> <li>• Hairstyles</li> <li>• Accessory</li> </ul>
	<b>Physique</b>	Focusing on the body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Body shape</li> <li>• Body size</li> </ul>
	<b>Physiognomy</b>	Focusing on the face	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make-up</li> <li>• Facial features</li> </ul>
<b>Emotional Expression</b>			
	<b>Positive</b>	When positive emotion is expressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Happiness/Joy</li> <li>• Playfulness</li> <li>• Excitement</li> </ul>
	<b>Neutral</b>	When no specific emotion is expressed	
	<b>Negative</b>	When negative emotion is expressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grumpiness</li> <li>• Arrogance</li> </ul>
<b>Space</b>			
	<b>Traditional feminine space</b>	How the environment uses elements associated with femininity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At home, kitchen, etc.</li> <li>• Light/bright colors</li> <li>• soft lighting, textures</li> </ul>
	<b>Traditional masculine space</b>	How the environment uses elements associated with masculinity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dark colors</li> <li>• Sharp lines</li> <li>• Industrial elements</li> <li>• High contrast</li> <li>• At work, at the gym etc.</li> </ul>
<b>Social connection</b>			
	<b>Interaction</b>	When two or more people are interacting (explicit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Between individuals</li> <li>• Non-verbal interaction (body</li> </ul>

			language) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verbal interaction</li> </ul>
	<b>Intimacy</b>	When physical touch is involved	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical touch</li> <li>• With oneself or others</li> </ul>
	<b>Power Dynamics</b>	How power is distributed between individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fighting for dominance</li> <li>• Equality</li> </ul>
	<b>Relations</b>	An indication of their relationship to each other (implicit)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendships</li> <li>• Romantic interest</li> <li>• Sexual interest</li> </ul>
<b>Product</b>			
	<b>Product packaging</b>	The appearance of the product(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colors</li> <li>• Styles</li> </ul>
	<b>Production information</b>	When there is information about the product - either written or spoken	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ingredients</li> <li>• Effect</li> <li>• How to use it</li> </ul>
	<b>Product Association</b>	What characteristics are associated with skincare products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brand association</li> <li>• Other brand association</li> </ul>
<b>Advocacy</b>			
	<b>Political expression</b>	How ideological view are expressed through the video – explicit or implicit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Views on gender (gender norms/inclusivity)</li> <li>• Status in society (occupational/performance)</li> </ul>
	<b>Intersectionality</b>	How a person's identity affect their portrayal in the context of the video and the culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Race</li> <li>• Sexuality</li> <li>• Gender identity (gender expression)</li> </ul>

## 6.1 Appearance

Our multimodal thematic analysis revealed that the theme of *Appearance* plays a significant role in the depiction of men in advertising in terms of their outward presentation to others. This theme consists of three sub-themes, which are *Physical styles*, *Physique*, and *Physiognomy*. The findings will be elaborated in the following section.

### 6.1.1 Traditional U.S. video

The first video we will explore the sub-theme of *personal style* is the traditional masculinity video by Lab Series. The theme is seen throughout the entirety of the video. Each man is dressed in a way that not only reflects his professional role but also his societal status and his personal achievements, through visual and linguistic modes. For example, in the first scenario, we see a man wearing a suit, which is a conventional symbol of authority, power, and status (Moss n.d.). This choice of attire aligns with roles typically associated with male dominance, such as CEOs or other leadership positions (Patrick&co n.d.). The color black, chosen for the suit, further emphasizes power and control, echoing the traditional attire of figures like judges and priests who are seen as ultimate authority figures (RMRS 2023). Furthermore, in the video, we see three main types of attire being worn by the men: business, sport, and casual attire, all reflecting different variations of masculinity roles. The colors of the outfits, primarily black, white, or a combination thereof, can be seen as significant. If we look specifically at the color white, we notice something interesting. For instance, both the Asian athlete and the fencer are dressed in white, a color with various symbolic meanings, one of which being purity and innocence (Cherry 2024). This color choice could suggest a softer aspect of their masculinity. However, this potential softness is counterbalanced by the display of their athletic physique, which presents a dual image of masculinity: soft and aggressive. This contrast of color vs. physical strength could be seen as an effort to highlight their masculinity, downplaying the softness of the color white with the hardness of their emotional and physical expressions. We will explore this in greater detail in those respective sub-themes: *negative emotion* and *physique*. On the other hand, it could be seen as a way to showcase the possibility of a softer side to masculinity that can coexist with a rougher side, challenging notions of Hegemonic masculinity theory, by presenting a more hybrid version of masculinity. The video's focus on the men's *personal style* conveys masculinity in terms of power, authority, and status. The men's clothing not only reflects their professional identities but also projects an image of the importance of performance, strength, success, and power,

which fits with the hierarchical structure of masculinity which is part of Hegemonic masculinity, where the best-performing men are more likely to be at the top.

Moving on to the next sub-theme, *physique*, we see it showcased in two different ways: visual display of bodily physique and display of physical ability. Firstly, we will explore the visual presentation of the men's physiques. Three of the men: the Asian athlete, the fencer, and the fashion entrepreneur, are all shown with their chests exposed. Each of the men has an athletic and muscular build which signals strength, power, and endurance, while also perceived as having an 'ideal' male physique in Western cultures including the U.S. (Lawrence 2016). This aligns with the HMT, where men in sports fields, who show immense physicality, are admired and celebrated as ideals of masculinity in terms of physique. Not only does the physique of the men highlight their physical power, which is idealized, but their dedication to achieving those bodies is emphasized through the linguistic modes of their professional titles being showcased on screen. This sets a standard that not only should men achieve a great physique but also strive to be the best of the best, to be admired and seen as 'man enough', which once more aligns with the unachievable conditions of Hegemonic masculinity. The second way in which the video showcases physique is through the men's physical abilities in sports, displayed by the Asian athlete, the fencer, and the ballet dancer. Their athleticism, whether fencing, ballet, or martial arts, highlights their skill, strength, and endurance. These performances are not just displays of physical ability but are reflections of higher status and power within a patriarchal and individualistic society that values peak performance as a symbol of ultimate achievement for an individual, specifically men (Cranswick et al. 2020). Overall, the portrayal of *physique* in the video emphasizes the value that Western cultures place on the male body, where strength and physical ability are significant factors of perceived masculinity (Lefkowich et al. 2017), especially seen through the lens of HMT where men who are less physically able (i.e. disabilities) are Marginalized. The video utilizes these visual and performance-oriented portrayals to reflect and reinforce the ideals of Hegemonic masculinity, presenting an ideal that, while motivational, could also create unrealistic standards for men.

Lastly, the sub-theme of *physiognomy*, which focuses on the face, is very limited in this video. There are only a few scenes throughout the video and at the very end that include close-ups of the men's faces. This is particularly interesting, as the product being advertised is skincare intended for the face, yet there is an overarching emphasis on the physique rather

than the faces of the men. This strategic choice of omitting attention to the face, might be explained by notions of HMT, as the use of close-ups is often a method of showcasing a subject's true self and emotions, which in turn creates a connection between the viewer and actor (MasterClass 2022). As we've mentioned earlier, Hegemonic masculinity is typically associated with power, control, and authority, and by limiting the number of close-ups, the men are depicted as emotionally stoic. Thus, they are portrayed as strong and powerful figures. Overall, the video's limited focus on the men's faces suggests a deliberate choice to avoid showcasing vulnerability, establishing a hierarchy of power where the men in the video are presented as superior and emotionally controlled.

From the analysis of the main theme of *appearance*, masculinity in the traditional U.S. video is mainly portrayed through the sub-themes of *personal style* and *physique*, with a notable lack of focus on *physiognomy*. The men in the video wear attire that reflect their accomplishments in terms of career and physical performance such as athleticism. This signifies that in terms of masculinity there is a greater emphasis on men presenting themselves through their achievements to display characteristics of power, dominance, and authority.

### 6.1.2 Contemporary U.S. video

Now we move on to the video depicting modern masculinity by NOTO Botanics. Here we see that the sub-theme *personal style* is apparent through the entire video with the use of light colored clothing of all individuals featured. The owner, Gloria Noto, wears neutral colors, white and beige, while the three protagonists are entirely dressed in white. The color choice of white in this case symbolizes equality, and neutrality (van Braam 2024), which aligns well with IMT's notions of there being no inherent hierarchies within the gender spectrum, everyone is seen as equal, and no form of gender expression is seen as superior or inferior. While all individuals are wearing the same color, suggesting equality, they all wear varied styles and accessories highlighting their individuality and personalities as a reflection of their gender expression.

For example, we see one individual with a feminine face, short hair, no make-up, tattoos and wearing clothes that are not fitted to the body, this indicates a rejection of a typical 'feminine' style to a more 'masculine' one. This differentiation in style, supports the IMT notion that

while individuals may share commonalities, like their biological sex, the individual gender expression remains distinct and is not dictated by societal gender norms. Further emphasizing (staged) authenticity, the individuals' stylistic choices of hair and accessories reflect their true selves. For instance, natural hairstyles and culturally specific hairstyles like braids/dreadlocks for individuals of darker complexion, celebrate personal and cultural identity, which in the U.S. has been a historical issue (Douglas-Gabriel 2015). These choices show a resistance to conforming to specific beauty standards often associated with gender and race, advocating instead for a freedom of expression. The video's portrayal of *personal style* thus resonates deeply with the principles of IMT. It embraces gender fluidity, and the neutrality of the color choice reinforces that gender should not restrict personal expression. Being true to oneself transcends traditional gender roles and stereotypes, suggesting that personal authenticity is more valuable than adhering to gender characteristics and behaviors. This highlights the video's alignment with IMT, advocating for a culture with no gender hierarchy, emphasizing the fluidity and individuality of gender expression.

The sub-theme of *physique* is very limited in this video, with only brief moments where the individuals' upper bodies and arms are visible. This lack of emphasis on the physique contrasts with the more pronounced focus on their faces, which will be discussed in the sub-theme *physiognomy*. One way of interpreting this limited focus on the body is by viewing it as a metaphor for the concept of an individual's biological sex being less significant than their gender identity and expression. This interpretation aligns with IMT, which suggests that biological gender, whether male or female, should not dictate behavior or expression. How physique is expressed in the video prompts viewers to challenge their preconceived notions of gender, as it is natural for people to attempt to categorize the gender of the individuals featured: is the person male? Female? (Lieberman, Woodward, and Kinzler 2017). This questioning is further highlighted by the video's linguistic modes, which emphasize that the brand advocates for a non-binary view of gender. This signals a spectrum of gender identities that are not confined to traditional definitions of 'masculine' or 'feminine', challenging the binary and embracing a multitude of expressions that are fluid rather than fixed. The video's subtle focus on physique, therefore, serves to expand the boundaries of what constitutes a 'masculine' body. It suggests that no specific body type or size should be considered more 'masculine' than another, encouraging viewers to ask "What is masculinity?". Is it determined by biological traits, or is it a broader spectrum of attributes and behaviors? By connecting these portrayals to IMT, the video highlights that masculinity is not a rigid



concept but one that can be inclusively interpreted. This perspective challenges Hegemonic masculinity, which often views ‘feminine’ behaviors and expressions in men as inferior or Subordinate. Instead, the video showcases that femininity and masculinity are not bound by conventional norms but are part of a broader inclusive spectrum of gender. This alignment with IMT celebrates diversity in gender expressions, emphasizing that being true to oneself transcends traditional gender roles.

Lastly, the sub-theme of *physiognomy* is prominently expressed in the video through close-ups of the individuals’ faces, highlighting this aspect of their appearance. These close-ups, featuring both direct eye contact and moments where the individuals close their eyes or focus inward, serve to convey authenticity and vulnerability (Seals n.d.). Being close to the subjects’ faces allows viewers to connect more deeply with the individuals, making it harder to conceal true emotions and identities, which emphasizes authentic self-presentation. Moreover, direct eye contact with the camera establishes a sense of connection and transparency (Seals n.d.), suggesting an honest portrayal of identity that goes beyond physical appearance, such as style and physique. This makes viewers consider the face, rather than the body, as the primary indicator of identity, aligning with IMT. Furthermore, moments of vulnerability, such as when the individuals close their eyes, are significant in terms of the construction of gender. These scenes offer the viewer a glimpse into the individuals’ most genuine selves and displaying such an amount of vulnerability challenges traditional notions of masculinity, which typically discourage open emotional expression in men as it is often labeled as a ‘feminine’ trait (Fleming 2023). This presentation of vulnerability aligns with IMT, which advocates for a broader, more inclusive understanding of masculinity that embraces emotional openness and authenticity. By showcasing men who are comfortable expressing vulnerability, the video challenges homophobic and homohysterical cultural norms that associate emotional expression with being less masculine. Overall, the focus on *physiognomy* in the video highlights the idea that true gender expression is deeply connected to how individuals present and perceive themselves. This portrayal not only aligns with IMT but also encourages the conversation about masculinity, to a more inclusive understanding of gender identity.

To summarize how masculinity is presented through appearance in NOTO’s video, we see it primarily expressed through the sub-themes of *personal style* and *physiognomy*, with minimal emphasis on *physique*. The attire of the individuals in the video signifies neutrality of the

outward appearance in terms of gender with individuality highlighted through styles. The video showcases the importance of the emotional side of individuals rather than their bodily appearance as factors of characteristics. Overall, the portrayal of masculinity through these themes promotes an inclusive understanding of gender identity, challenging traditional masculinity and encouraging authenticity over gender conformity.

## **Comparison**

In the Lab Series advertisement, clothing plays a critical role in symbolizing societal roles, power, and a hierarchy of masculinity. The attire is deliberately chosen to reflect a traditional, Hegemonic view of masculinity, where power and success are visually communicated through high-status professional clothing. This aligns with the characteristics of traditional masculinity, namely financial success, ambition and being powerful. In stark contrast, NOTO uses clothing to promote gender equality and neutrality. All individuals in the advertisement are dressed in white, which serves to neutralize the gendered aspects of their identities, emphasizes that no single form of gender expression is valued over another, promoting a sense of equality among all individuals. These findings fit with the characteristics of modern masculinity: rejecting gender conformity, having a sense of equality and being who you want to be.

The emphasis in the Lab Series ad lies on physique, highlighting strength, performance, and striving, which aligns with traditional views of masculinity. The portrayal of muscular, athletic bodies not only celebrates physical abilities but also signals that the body is an important aspect of being perceived as a powerful man in society. Once again, this fits with traditional masculinity characteristics of having physical strength and being competitive. Conversely, NOTO's advertisement downplays the significance of the bodily physique in defining masculinity. There is little emphasis on an idealized 'masculine' physique, suggesting that masculinity, and gender identity, should not be confined to physical attributes, which align with the characteristic of modern masculinity of not conforming to a specific gender.

The Lab Series advertisement features a limited focus on the face. This choice creates a power dynamic where lack of vulnerability maintains a distance between the viewer and the subject. Hence we see alignment with the characteristic of emotional stoicism which is

related to the traditional masculinity type. In contrast, NOTO places a significant emphasis on the face, promoting authenticity and vulnerability. The close-ups of faces and the direct eye contact fosters a sense of emotional openness. This portrayal challenges traditional norms by suggesting that masculinity (and gender) is about being authentic to who you are on the inside, rather than adhering to external expectations of looks or behavior dictated by society. This portrayal is in alignment with the modern masculinity type and the characteristics of emotional expressiveness.

### 6.1.3 Traditional Thai video

Let's move on to the Thai ad, starting with the traditional video from Oriental Princess. The findings demonstrate that all three sub-themes have been identified in this video. Beginning with *Physical Styles*, this sub-theme appears throughout the entire video ranging from workout, casual, and business casual attire which appears in different shades of dark blue or plain gray. According to the notion of Hegemonic masculinity, scenarios 2 and 3 are noteworthy because they depict the protagonist in opposition to other males. The main character and four additional soccer players, all of whom are dressed in dark blue uniforms, are present in scenario 2. The four soccer players' clothing did, however, temporarily change to what appeared to be traditional Chinese opera attire, which is known as cross-dressing and as a metaphor for losing one's identity (Tian 2018). Simultaneously, the voiceover addresses the misconception held by many men that applying a thick layer of sunscreen offers more protection. In this scenario, the change of attire can symbolize the loss of identity as a result of using sunscreen from another brand as well as a disruption of Hegemonic masculinity. This deviation from the traditional image of masculinity can be perceived as a decrease in masculinity or performing masculinity incorrectly. This is further supported by the change in camera angles from medium long to medium and close-up shots, which highlights the men's unawareness of how they could be perceived by others. Given that the main character's attire did not change, it could indicate that he is practicing masculinity correctly by adhering to societal norms, including using the correct brand of sunscreen. Therefore, he is positioned above the other males by conforming to gender notions, which further reinforces his position as the Hegemonic ideal.

In scenario 3, the main character is in a metro and is walking past different men and women in search of a place to stand. He is dressed in midnight blue trousers and a royal blue dress

shirt, while other men can be seen wearing light blue dress shirts. Based on his attire, he may be working a white-collar job, which is typically associated with higher incomes than perhaps blue-collar labor (Lester 2022). Consequently, this not only preserves his personal image and status but also reinforces his masculinity by ensuring financial stability and the well-being of the family (Samutachak, Darawuttimaprakron, and Manajit 2021, 72). In Thai culture, being the breadwinner is considered one of the key components of masculinity. Moreover, colors can also carry specific meanings in Thailand. For instance, the color blue represents the monarchy which is closely linked with the Thai King and the entire royal family (Hulme 2018). As mentioned in the literature review, Thai identity is closely linked with Thai nationalism, thus, blue may signify his loyalty to the monarch while reflecting a sense of authority and hierarchy within the context. Some of the characteristics related to traditional Thai masculinity are reflected in these traits. Light blue, on the other hand, is the color representing the Queen, therefore, it is frequently used during Thai Mother's Day (Hulme 2018). This association arises from the cultural understanding of the King as a father figure, and in turn, the Queen assumes the motherly figure (Bangkok Post n.d.). Commonly, a queen is often regarded as being less powerful than a king, this could be an indication that despite being on a similar level with other men in terms of occupations, the main character is positioned higher in the hierarchy because he embodies more traits associated with Thai masculinity. In Hegemonic masculinity, different forms of masculinity compete for power; yet, both scenarios suggest that the protagonist is the dominant male figure, while the others can be considered Complicit.

Another aspect of Appearance is *Physique* which was identified two times, both times highlighting the protagonist's body type. The first identification is during scenario 1, while he is running on a treadmill. The use of close-up shots to extreme close-up shots, highlights that he is wearing a cutoff shirt to showcase his muscular arms and his perspiration, which could be an indicator of endurance. The second identification occurs during scenario 6, when he is about to take a shower. It is a medium close-up shot that displays his upper torso, demonstrating that he has a toned, fit physique rather than one that is excessively muscular. Close-up shots are frequently employed to emphasize the importance of a subject (MasterClass 2022), and in this case, it is his physique. However, the advertisement does not appear to be focusing on physical attributes, with physique only being identified twice. Yet, it can still be interpreted as a subtle suggestion that being physically fit is desirable for the 'ideal man', referring to their title as well. On the other hand, the lack of emphasis could also

imply a broader point: a man's physique does not play a crucial role in the construction of masculinity in Thailand. It could be desirable for some, but not a crucial factor. In terms of Hegemonic masculinity, there are some alignments with the image of Thai traditional masculinity, such as working hard and endurance. Moreover, there is no specified ideal when it comes to body type, which aligns with the advertisement indicating that physique may not be important in Thailand.

*Physiognomy* is the last aspect of *appearance*. It occurs quite frequently throughout the video as many instances of close-ups reveal his face and a small portion of his shoulder. Every man in the video, including the main character, has a well-groomed look. Their eyebrows are neatly trimmed, but not overly shaped, hair is styled, and with no facial hair with the exception of one person. This could suggest that a man with no facial hair is the dominant image of masculinity. Moreover, the people generally exhibit soft features as opposed to well-defined cheekbones and jawlines. Overall, this highlights the overall appearance of cleanliness and being put-together. In addition to the emphasis on the face, close-up shots also express emotion through expressions and reactions (MasterClass 2022). Consequently, the prevalence of close-up shots suggests that men are not afraid to display vulnerability and express their feelings. This will be further elaborated in the next theme: *emotional expression*. Mefodeva et al. (2020) found that men who have facial hair are perceived as more aggressive, dominant, and masculine. Hence, the absence of facial hair among the males in the video could challenge the preconceived perceptions of traditional masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity expectations may be subverted by this shift from traditional gender norms, which are defined by the absence of facial hair, the presence of softer features, and the expression of emotions. On the other hand, an emphasis on cleanliness and a put-together look may still reinforce a certain standard of masculinity, merely a different version than known in the West.

What does the traditional video reveal about the physical characteristics of Thai masculinity? In summary, physiognomy and physical styles are of greater significance when defining masculinity than physique. This implies that, rather than body type or physique, masculinity in Thailand is more dependent on one's presentation to others and external appearance. It has been revealed that one's attire might convey one's social status, and that it is crucial to conform to accepted standards of facial appeal.

#### 6.1.4 Contemporary Thai video

And finally, the modern video from Thailand: Doctor Tony. The three sub-themes have also been identified in this video. In terms of *physical styles*, it is apparent throughout the entire video going from pajamas to casual and business attire. One prominent detail of their physical styles is the color scheme, which predominantly consists of pink and white. First, their sleeping attire: Fourth is dressed in a white and light pink square-patterned matching set of pajamas, while Gemini is dressed in a white t-shirt and dark rosy pants. Second, their casual attire: Fourth is dressed in a light pink jumpsuit with a white sweatshirt underneath while Gemini is dressed in a white sweatshirt, light pink shirt on top, and pants. Third, business attire: Doctor Tony, who makes an appearance towards the end of the video is wearing a pink polo shirt and a white blazer. The characters' attire preferences highlight the difference in sense of style and ways of gender expression: Fourth presents a polished, neat, and tidy appearance, Gemini chooses a more laid-back look, and Doctor Tony portrays a more mature image. In terms of colors, people in Thailand often wear pink clothes to keep off negative energies (Tan 2023) because it is believed to bring harmony and inner peace (Gampper 2023), while the color white represents purity and Buddhism (Hulme 2018). The prominent use of pink challenges traditional concepts of masculinity because it is often associated with femininity (Soho lighting company 2021). Furthermore, considering the cultural significance of the colors in Thailand, its use might indicate that Thai men have a sense of innocence and tranquility which gives them the courage to express themselves through a variety of looks and colors, regardless of the norms and opinions of others. The colors do not suggest hierarchical dominance among the characters, despite the fact that in Thai culture, elders are often placed higher in the hierarchy of society compared to younger ones (Sumalee 2016). Furthermore, it can be considered as an attempt to break free from gender norms. This challenges Hegemonic masculinity by advocating a more inclusive and diverse representation of masculinity while suggesting that masculinity manifests in different shapes and forms, with all forms being equal, which aligns with Inclusive masculinity theory. This is also illustrated in the following two sub-themes.

The next sub-theme, *physique* has also been identified briefly in this Thai video. It occurs at the beginning of the video, where it starts with a medium shot to introduce the characters. Their body shape and size are partially revealed through their clothing. We can observe, for instance, that their arms appear to be relatively small and slender. Moreover, through a

medium long shot, a significant portion of their bodies are shown as they stand. This illustrates a slender physique rather than a muscular one. This appears to be the case for Doctor Tony as well. However, it is important to keep in mind that because they are covered up, we are not able to determine their level of musculature. Despite the fact that their physique may not differ significantly from one another, this aspect of appearance still has the potential to undermine Hegemonic masculinity, which places a high value on physical strength and muscle, by demonstrating physique can also be diverse. However, the similarity in their physical traits may also be a subtle indication that this is the standard 'ideal' body type in Thailand.

Lastly, *physiognomy*. There are only two instances of this sub-theme throughout the video where the faces of the two characters are highlighted. From 0:17 to 0:19 shows a close-up of Gemini's face. His complexion is revealed in great detail. He has clear skin, his lips have a slight shine with a touch of pink color, his eyebrows are nearly groomed, and his hair is styled. Moreover, he has delicate features and a defined jawline. Similarly, from 0:20 to 0:021 Fourth's face is highlighted in a close-up shot, revealing a comparable presentation to Gemini, with the exception of a hint of pink blush on his cheeks. Their emotion, which will be further explored in the following theme, is underscored as well in both of the close-up shots. Overall, the characters have a clear complexion, well-trimmed brows, styled hair, and subtle makeup while showing emotions. This depiction of physiognomy in this video also challenges Hegemonic masculinity and corresponds with Inclusive masculinity theory.

In summary, this advertisement presents an inclusive image of masculinity in terms of appearance that manifests through body proportion, clothing styles, colors, and face features that include a touch of cosmetics. Although their physique is given the least attention, the overall image demonstrates that men may appear different from what is usually associated with traditional masculinity.

## **Comparison**

The appearance of men in the U.S. traditional video embodies traditional masculinity traits such as athleticism, physical strength, being the breadwinner, and dominance. Surprisingly, the video also contains traits belonging to modern masculinity such as having feminine characteristics and emotional expression. Generally, the personal styles in this video are used

to signify status, power and dominance. On the other hand, the Thai modern video depicts men's appearance with traits such as equality, rejecting gender conformity, having feminine characteristics, having an interest in fashion, and being brave enough to define their own identity. The personal styles are employed to indicate equality. These are all traits belonging to modern masculinity. When comparing the two Thai videos, it became apparent that the traditional video does not fully embrace the stereotypical Western view of Hegemonic masculinity in terms of appearance. However, it still embodies some aspects of traditional masculinity in Thailand, thus qualifying as Hegemonic masculinity. Conversely, the appearance of men in the modern video is consistent with the notion of Inclusive masculinity.

### 6.1.5 Cross-cultural comparison

#### **Traditional videos**

Let's start with the first sub-theme, which is *personal styles*. Men are portrayed throughout both videos wearing a mix of sport, casual, business casual, and business attire. One main difference is how each video employs personal styles to deliver a message. For instance, in the traditional U.S. video, there is a portrayal of a man in a black suit, signifying leadership position, authority, power, and status, alongside an athlete addressed in white, which represents innocence and purity. This shows how the video depicts both power hierarchies of gender, but also the coexistence of softer masculinity in American society by integrating parts of physical styles. In contrast, the traditional Thai video employs personal styles to depict the main character's status in relation to other men present. For example, he wears blue business casual attire, which denotes both a white-collar occupation and loyalty to the Thai monarchy. This signifies a sense of authority and hierarchy. While some males wear light blue, which is connected to the queen and denotes a Subordinate position. He may therefore occupy a higher place in the hierarchy of masculinity due to his conformity to white-collar roles, the monarchy, and social conventions.

In terms of *physique*, there is a noticeable difference between the two videos. The traditional U.S. video places a strong emphasis on physique, displaying muscular, athletic builds and exposed chests as symbols of endurance, strength, and power. Physical ability is exhibited predominantly through acts of strength, endurance, and skill, reflecting the Western concept of peak performance as the ultimate level of achievement. The video demonstrates an 'ideal' male physique in the U.S. The traditional Thai video, on the other hand, places limited



emphasis on physique. A brief glimpse of the main character's muscular arms and toned stomach suggest a lean, fit physique rather than a well-defined muscular one. While this may still be considered the ideal body type in Thailand, it portrays a different image compared to Western standards.

Lastly, *physiognomy*. In contrast to the previous sub-theme, the traditional U.S. video places little to no emphasis on the men's facial features. This disregard for facial features can be a sign that males are expected by society to maintain their strength and authority while suppressing their vulnerability and emotional expressiveness. As a result, facial close-ups, which are frequently used to disclose a subject's true self and emotions, receive less attention. This reveals a cultural focus in the United States where physique is more significant than physiognomy when defining masculinity. On the other hand, physiognomy is heavily highlighted in the traditional Thai video which showcases men with soft features, no facial hair, and well-groomed appearances. This not only promotes an idealized image but also upholds the Thai society standard for facial appearance in the construction of masculinity.

### **Contemporary videos**

Comparing the two cultures in terms of *personal styles* reveals a divergence in handling gender through attire which highlights broader cultural dialogues about gender identity and expression in each country. This is evident in how the American video emphasizes that gender is fluid and exists without boundaries, whereas the attire in the Thai video's challenges gender norms differently by having the men wear colors traditionally associated with femininity, while still upholding their masculine perception. This could be explained by the ongoing discussion and issues that are happening in the U.S. specifically regarding LGBTQ+ and non-binaries. This is contrary to Thai culture, which has had an acceptance of gender fluidity, as they are integrated into daily life and language, making such expressions seem natural. Both videos are similar in their message of fashion signifying personal expression over rigid gender norms.

The portrayal of *physique* in the U.S. and Thai ads reflects each country's cultural attitudes towards gender norms and masculinity, with both videos having minimal emphasis on muscular physique. For the U.S. video, this trend aligns with discussions on gender neutrality and non-binary identities, challenging the ideals of Hegemonic masculinity as part of a societal move towards inclusivity to promote a diverse representation of masculinity.

Conversely, in Thailand the depiction of slender physiques doesn't challenge traditional masculinity. Overall, while the U.S. seeks to reshape societal perceptions of gender, Thailand's video maintains its bodily ideals, while subtly supporting a spectrum of gender expressions.

The U.S. advertisement places a significant emphasis on *physiognomy* which differs from the Thai ad. The emphasis on the face in the U.S. video is to convey vulnerability and authenticity, highlighting the societal challenges faced by gender-fluid individuals in America. The vulnerability depicted aims to resonate with viewers who share these experiences, promoting inclusion and understanding. On the other hand, the Thai ad also focuses on facial features, such as smooth, soft skin and emotional expressions, but without the same depth of vulnerability seen in U.S. ad. Instead, they celebrate the freedom of men to express themselves fashionably without compromising their masculinity, reflecting a cultural acceptance of a variety of masculine expressions that do not confront societal norms as directly as in the U.S.

## 6.2 Emotional Expression

The second main theme that was identified in our multimodal thematic analysis is that of *Emotional Expression*, which is concerned with how the individuals in the two videos are expressing their emotions via their face and body. The distinctions of emotional expression were made by categorizing them into the three sub-themes: *Positive*, *Neutral* and *Negative* and analyzing them accordingly.

### 6.2.1 Traditional U.S. video

First, we will look into the sub-theme of *positive* emotional expression. In the video there is a notable scarcity of emotional expression of a positive nature, with only about seven seconds in total portraying such emotions, which is primarily at the end of the video. Interestingly, only three of the five men exhibit positive emotions: the shoe designer, the Asian athlete, and the ballet dancer. This is notable for a variety of reasons, particularly relating to Hegemonic masculinity and intersectionality (which will be explored in greater detail in that sub-theme). Starting off with the Asian athlete, who is seen wearing white, signaling purity and innocence, challenges traditional masculine norms. The portrayal of him, through appearance, can be seen as a stereotypical portrayal of Asian men being less masculine than men of

Western ethnicities (Lee 2016). His display of positive emotion in the video, thus, can be interpreted as aligning with softer, non-dominant characteristics of masculinity. This aligns with the notions of racial dynamics of Hegemonic masculinity, where men of other races than Caucasian are Marginalized and therefore less aligned with the Hegemonic ideal. Similarly, the ballet dancer also seems to be portrayed in a less-than masculine manner. Ballet is a sport that is associated with femininity (Nelson 2022), which places him in a contrasting position to traditional masculine activities. This could explain why he is ‘allowed’ to express emotions like happiness which are not seen in alignment with the more restrictive emotional stoicisms of Hegemonic masculinity. As with the Asian athlete, this can be seen through the lens of Hegemonic masculinity, where his portrayal subtly suggests that he is considered Subordinate within the hierarchy of masculinity due to his behavior of being considered a feminine. The last man portraying positive emotion is the shoe designer, who’s case can be viewed as a little more complex, leaning towards stereotyping and intersectionality. First, let us explore it from the view of HMT, where one could interpret his race, seemingly African, as being Marginalized from the Hegemonic ideal of masculinity, thus ‘allowing’ him to display emotions that can be regarded as feminine, in this case smiling showcasing happiness (Chaplin 2015). Alternatively, the portrayal of him displaying softer and more feminine emotional expression could be interpreted as an attempt to counteract existing stereotypes of African-American men as aggressive (Taylor et al. 2019). If interpreted this way, it aligns with notions of IMT where the racially Marginalized notions of HMT are challenged, albeit in a problematic way that reinforces negative stereotypes of people with darker skin complexions. Overall, the portrayal of these three men’s positive emotional expressions aligns with Hegemonic masculinity theory. It highlights how men who deviate from traditionally masculine behaviors and emotional expressions, due to race or engagement in feminine activities, are often positioned as less masculine, and thus, non-Hegemonic.

In the video the *negative* emotional expression is more prominent than any other emotion, being characterized mainly as aggression, seriousness, dominance, and arrogance (or confidence depending on the interpretation). The emotions are conveyed and displayed through both facial expressions and body language. They are furthermore emphasized through cinematographic techniques such as low-angle shots, which are often used to create a heightened sense of the subjects’ dominance and power (NFI n.d.). Notably, the Asian athlete and the ballet dancer are filmed at low-angles in certain scenes, possibly to counteract their otherwise less masculine portrayals, as mentioned earlier, which aligns with the HMT’s view

of them as Subordinate and Marginalized men. Throughout the video we notice a pattern of emotional development sequences, where each man goes from a *neutral* to a *negative* emotional expression of aggression and/or dominance. This emotional progression is shown in direct correlation to product use, suggesting that the product empowers and causes the men to display these emotions (this will be elaborated on in the main theme *product*). The negative emotional expressions shown in the video correlate to the notions of Hegemonic masculinity, as the theory suggests that although emotional stoicism is idealized, certain emotional expression such as anger and aggression are acknowledged and acceptable in competitive contexts like sports (Brown 2019), which is the case in this video. This is attributed to the notion that competitive sports are an arena for men to express dominance-oriented emotions (Smith 2010), reinforcing the ‘survival of the fittest’ mentality. Within this context, expressions of aggression and intensity are seen not only as natural but as essential traits of successful, dominant Hegemonic masculinity.



0:39 - 0:40

A great example of this type of emotional expression is displayed by the fencer. Here we see his body language and expressions, characterized by screaming and muscle tensing, signifying him celebrating a victory, but it also projecting an intimidating, dominant force, illustrating the idea that he is superior and ‘masculine’ according to Hegemonic masculinity ideals. This portrayal aligns with the theory’s emphasis on a hierarchy where certain masculinities are deemed superior to others. All in all, the negative emotional expressions displayed by the men in the video can be seen as a reinforcement of their superiority, while affirming their roles as powerful, dominant, and strong men is in alignment with the Hegemonic ideals of masculinity.

In summary, *emotional expression* in the Lab Series' video is utilized through a few instances of *positive* and a majority of *negative* emotional expressions, reflecting Hegemonic masculinity and intersectionality. Positive expressions are scarce, with only three men showing such emotions, challenging traditional masculine norms and positioning them as Subordinate and Marginalized. Negative emotions like aggression, dominance, and seriousness are more prominent, conveyed through facial expressions, body language, and low-angle shots, emphasizing dominance. This pattern aligns with Hegemonic masculinity, reinforcing the men's roles as powerful, dominant figures.

### 6.2.2 Contemporary U.S. video

Moving on to the next video, we notice an emphasis on the sub-theme *positive* emotions marked by playfulness, happiness, and confidence, which are all expressed by the videos' three protagonists. Furthermore, these expressions contrast with more *neutral* emotions displayed by founder Gloria Noto when talking about the product itself and its ingredients. The way she remains focused and neutral in her demeanor could be interpreted as a way to highlight the qualities of the product in a professional manner. The video combines emotional expression with the overall message of self-acceptance. Through linguistic modes of describing the product, and thus, the individuals as glowing and natural, indicates an emotional tone of celebrating the beauty of diverse gender expressions and identities. This celebration through positive emotions related to the fluidity of genders can be interpreted as a way of challenging traditional views of vulnerability being seen as weakness, proposing instead that being true to one's truest self is a courageous act. This portrayal aligns well with notions of IMT, which unlike Hegemonic masculinity, supports the expression of emotions traditionally viewed as feminine, such as joy and playfulness. IMT advocates for a broader, more accepting view of masculinity that includes diverse emotional expressions such as the ones we see in the video.



0:35 - 0:36

The acceptance of emotional expressions in a variety of forms, seen as natural and not to be hidden, are showcased in the scene from 0:35 - 0:36. In this example, we see an individual radiating happiness and joy while the linguistic message of ‘it’s all natural’ is visible on screen. This pairing of modes can be interpreted as challenging the notions that are prevalent in parts of American society that sees gender expressions beyond the traditional categorizations as ‘male’ and ‘female’ as unnatural or flawed by default (Parker, Horowitz, and Brown 2022). This example highlights the video’s message; that expressing one’s true self is inherently natural and should be accepted as that. Moreover, the video’s focus on positive emotions can be viewed as a response to the societal challenges faced by those with non-binary or non-conforming gender identities, who often encounter prejudice and are at increased risk of harm (Human Rights Foundation 2021). By emphasizing emotions of happiness and pride in terms of the individuals’ gender expressions, the video is advocating for a society where individuals feel safe and free to celebrate who they are across the entire gender spectrum. This aligns well with IMT where all gender expressions are seen as equal, discarding the hierarchical structure of traditional Hegemonic masculinity. It showcases how Inclusive masculinity embraces and celebrates the variety of gender identities as naturally occurring, which can be seen as crucial advocacy in cultural contexts where gender non-conformity is met with hostility and discrimination.

## Comparison

In the video by Lab Series, the three men who are either racially Marginalized or engaged in less traditionally masculine activities, exhibit *positive* emotions. This selective portrayal suggests an underlying Hegemonic masculinity structure of hierarchies. These emotional expressions align with characteristics of modern and hybrid masculinity types, as they are

portrayed as being emotionally expressive, but as we know the three men also exhibit negative emotions which fits with characteristics of traditional masculinity. These characteristics combined align mostly with the hybrid masculinity type. In contrast, the video by NOTO places strong emphasis on *positive* emotional expressions like happiness and joy, particularly in celebrating diverse gender expressions and the freedom associated with fluid gender identities. These expressions not only showcase a sense of pride but also align with IMT, which views all gendered expressions as equal, challenging the hierarchical norms of traditional hegemonic masculinity. In terms of types of masculinity, these align mainly with the modern masculinity type characteristics of being emotionally expressive, rejecting gender conformity, and having a sense of equality. Moreover, the men in the Lab Series video predominantly display *negative* emotions, such as aggression, dominance, and arrogance. These expressions are indicative of a 'survival of the fittest' mentality and strong competitiveness, aligning with traditional Hegemonic masculinity where such emotions reinforce a hierarchical superiority among men. Here there are clear signs of alignment with the traditional masculinity type characteristics of being aggressive, competitive, toughness and dominance. Completely contrary, is the video by NOTO, which notably lacks any display of *negative* emotions, underscoring a more inclusive and portrayal of modern masculinity that rejects hostile competitiveness, which aligns with IMT of equality between masculinities.

### 6.2.3 Traditional Thai video

Moving on to the Thai traditional advertisement. The findings revealed a progression from negative to positive emotions, which is how *emotional expression* is displayed throughout the entire video. Thus, in terms of the sub-themes, both *positive* and *negative* emotions have been identified. To demonstrate this, Scenario 4 which concerns the misconception about how using body lotion makes your body sticky will be examined. In terms of visual modes, composition plays a big role in conveying a specific emotion. There is frequent use of close-up and medium shots to emphasize the product, protagonist's facial expression, and body movement. In this scene, he is seen battling with the stickiness of the body lotion. He tries to separate his arms, but they seem to be practically glued together by the lotion. This portrayal is further supported by Dutch angle shots also called canted angles, which are used to signal that something is wrong or unsettling (Lannom 2020), as well as fast cutting, which gives a chaotic feeling. His disgust/dislike towards the product is demonstrated by his body language. This is evident in the way he slams it down, shrugging his shoulders and then

leaning slightly away while scrunching his nose. The scene is supported by aural modes. He screams in desperation, emphasizing his desperate attempts to break free from the sticky lotion while the dramatic background music intensifies signaling tension. After using Oriental Princess's product, he appears at ease and pleased that there is no sign of stickiness. Overall, the protagonist wears his emotions on his sleeve, openly expressing his emotions through facial expressions and body language, regardless of whether he is among people or in private. The depiction can be interpreted as a challenge to Hegemonic masculinity, which requires males to constantly be in control and conceal their vulnerability by suppressing their emotions. This depiction in particular goes against Thai culture as well. From an early age, Thais avoid expressing negative emotions in public and instead choose to remain calm in order to save face. Therefore, Thai people are often perceived as being relaxed partly because of this cultural norm (Williams 2023).

#### 6.2.4 Contemporary Thai video

The findings of the contemporary Thai video similarly demonstrated progression in the conveying of emotions, with both *positive* and *negative* feelings being identified. At the beginning of the video, a medium shot is used to accurately portray the body language, facial expressions, and surroundings of both characters in one frame. The voiceover emphasizes their lack of common ground, which is further highlighted by the visual composition that creates an immediate contrast between them. Starting with Gemini, the scene demonstrates his morning grumpiness. He is shown sitting up, still half sleepy, and tossing the eye mask aside with a displeased expression. His slumping shoulders and the way he roughly shoves his feet into the slippers, almost kicking them, also suggest that he is not eager to start the day. Fourth, on the other hand, appears to be the opposite. He carefully removes his eye mask and begins to stretch out. Moreover, he slides his feet into the slippers and starts walking without hesitation. This indicates a more positive attitude in the morning. However, whenever they interact with each other, it seems to trigger negative emotions, which appear from 0:05 to 0:08 when they argue over who should use the bathroom first, and from 0:21 to 0:25 when they argue about which of the two serums to use. When they discover they have the same product but different formulas, they are pleased and quit fighting with each other, as seen in the clips from 0:26 to 0:44. Near the end of the video, they are seen in the background carefully applying the serum to one another. The characters' frequent disagreements may appear to contradict Thai culture which emphasizes maintaining harmony and avoiding



conflict (Prince of Songkla University n.d.). However, their interaction can be interpreted as playful bickering rather than serious arguments, therefore, it may still align with the cultural norms. Moreover, their bickering about the serums highlights another aspect of Thai collectivist culture: a strong sense of community and shared well-being. The scene can also be interpreted as a sincere attempt to express their concern for one another which reveals emotional expressions such as caring and nurturing. This is an example of the broader Asian concept of sharing good things with people you love. In relation to IMT, the characters' emotional expressions correspond with the theory by demonstrating how they are free to express their emotions and behaviors as they wish. This displays an acceptance of a variety of emotional expressions rather than suggesting that one is superior to the other.

### **Comparison**

In terms of emotional expression, the two Thai videos depict a similar portrayal of masculinity which involves characteristics associated with hybrid and modern masculinity. The main difference is that the traditional video leans more toward hybrid masculinity by emphasizing traits, such as maintaining certain privileges and having a less rigid view of gender norms. This is evident in the protagonist's ability to express emotions without completely adopting or rejecting feminine traits. This illustrates how, despite maintaining aspects of traditional masculinity, the video progresses toward a depiction of hybrid masculinity in terms of emotional expression. Conversely, the contemporary video showcases modern masculinity because it embraces aspects of immaturity through playful bickering, incorporates feminine characteristics, and displays confidence in expressing one's gender identity. When we mention feminine characteristics, we refer to attributes that are frequently linked to femininity, including nurturing and caring. Overall, neither of the videos suggests that a particular gender identity or way of expressing emotions is better than another. Rather, they present different perspectives on masculinity.

#### **6.2.5 Cross-cultural comparison**

##### **Traditional videos**

It has been revealed that both videos depict a range of *positive* and *negative* emotions. However, in the U.S. video, there is a noticeable emphasis on negative emotions. Dominant feelings such as aggression and dominance, are frequently shown and are associated with the usage of the product, implying that the product empowers and enables men to express these

emotions, thus portraying them in a specific way. This upholds their dominance and reinforces their sense of superiority. Positive feelings are less prevalent and mostly expressed by the Asian athlete, the shoe designer and the ballet dancer, who may already be perceived as less masculine because of their race and chosen profession. Overall, this depiction is consistent with Hegemonic masculinity, which contends that males should suppress their emotions and prioritize dominance.

In comparison to the Thai video, there is a balance of positive and negative emotions. Throughout the video, there is a pattern of emotions that evolve from negative ones, such as frustration, to positive emotions, such as relief and satisfaction, after using the product. This progression could be interpreted as a challenge to Hegemonic masculinity, as the protagonist openly expresses a full range of emotions in both public and private settings. In addition, this can also be seen as a challenge to Thai cultural norms, which expect individuals to control their emotions in public, particularly negative ones.

### **Contemporary videos**

In the contemporary Thai video, *emotional expression* is portrayed through body language, facial expressions, and voiceover, showing a nuanced mix of *positive* and *negative* emotions. The characters Gemini and Fourth demonstrate contrasting morning routines: Gemini displays grumpiness, while Fourth shows a positive attitude. Their playful bickering over bathroom use and serum choices seem to contradict Thai cultural norms emphasizing harmony and conflict avoidance. However, this bickering aligns with the collectivistic nature of Thai culture's strong sense of community and caring about each other. The scene where they discover they have the same product only with different formulas, to then apply the serum to each other reflects caring and nurturing, which are valued emotional expressions in Thai culture. In contrast, the U.S. contemporary video emphasizes *positive emotional expressions* such as playfulness, happiness, and confidence. The three protagonists express these emotions, with linguistic modes describing the product and individuals as "glowing" and "natural," celebrating diverse gender expressions and identities. The video supports the expression of emotions traditionally viewed as feminine, advocating for a broader, more accepting view of masculinity. By focusing on positive emotions, the video responds to societal challenges faced by non-binary or non-conforming individuals, who often encounter prejudice. By emphasizing happiness and pride, the video advocates that individuals can

safely celebrate their gender identities, crucial in cultural contexts like the U.S., where gender non-conformity faces hostility.

The value placed on freedom of speech and expression in the U.S. culture, significantly influences the video's portrayal of emotional expression. American culture prides itself on the freedom to express one's identity and beliefs openly. This foundational value supports the video's celebration of diverse gender expressions and the encouragement of self-acceptance. The portrayal of positive emotions and open discussions about gender fluidity resonate with the American view that everyone has the right to express themselves freely.

## 6.3 Space

*Space* is the third theme that was identified in our multimodal thematic analysis. This theme refers to the settings across all four videos. Two recurrent sub-themes emerged from this theme, *Traditional feminine space* and *Traditional masculine space*. These concepts were determined based on common elements found in interior design that are employed to convey masculine or feminine atmospheres.

### 6.3.1 Traditional U.S. video

This video features settings that can be identified as *traditionally feminine spaces* through visual modes such as lighting and color. There are three scenarios in the video that can be interpreted as feminine: the scenes with the shoe designer, the ballet dancer, and to a lesser extent the Asian athlete, each demonstrating nuances of HMT. Starting off with the scene with the shoe designer, his environment can be described as a dimly-lit home office with warm tones, creating a cozy and safe ambiance. This space incorporates softer home-like elements, which traditionally can be viewed as more feminine (Decorilla 2013). This could potentially be to counteract aggressive and rougher stereotypes often associated with African-American men (Taylor et al. 2019). However, these feminine aspects contrast with the darker colors of the space and his slightly serious demeanor, showcases a complex interplay between race, space, and masculinity where he simultaneously resists and conforms to Hegemonic masculinity ideals. Moving on to the scene featuring the ballet dancer, the space is bright, white, and resembles a ballet studio, a setting deeply associated with femininity due to the delicate nature of ballet. Despite the feminine connotations of the space, elements such as his black attire and his athletic performance, portray Hegemonic traits like

strength and dominance, suggesting a contrast between the space's femininity and his masculine presentation. This scenario illustrates the concept of Complicit masculinity, where men may not fully embody Hegemonic ideals but still benefit from patriarchal structures or this could be an indication that, due to his feminine actions through his sport, he is Subordinate and hierarchically placed lower. Lastly, the Asian athlete's scene is bright and has soft lighting and utilizes these visual contrasts to soften the masculine urban environment (TGR 2019). This lighter ambiance supports the depiction of the athlete in a less masculine manner compared to two Caucasian characters in the video: the fencer and the fashion designer, reflecting a degree of intersectional influencing his portrayal of masculinity in the video. These three scenes with feminine spaces collectively highlight a nuanced hierarchy of masculinity influenced by race, activity, and societal stereotypes. Although there are elements suggesting a move towards Inclusive masculinity, the predominant indicators align more closely with Hegemonic masculinity, portraying these men as less aligned with Hegemonic masculine ideals compared to the two other men in the video.

In the video, *traditional masculine spaces* are depicted through elements like industrial materials and settings, reinforcing concepts tied to Hegemonic masculinity. These spaces are characterized by the use of concrete, metal, and leather, materials that all possess durability and strength (Build 2021), qualities that metaphorically can be linked to the men featured in the video. This association between the roughness of the materials and the strength of the men emphasizes their perceived roles as persistent achievers and fundamental components of society, reflecting patriarchal values where men are seen as primary contributors and builders of society (Acker 1989). Furthermore, the specific environments that the men are in directly corresponds to their careers or competitive activities, such as workplaces and sports arenas, traditionally considered masculine domains (Bryson 1987; Berdahl 2018). These settings not only underscore the strength and value of these men, but also suggest that their identities are closely tied to their achievements and roles rather than their broader personal attributes. This notion reinforces the idea that a man's worth is predominantly measured by his actions and success, which aligns with notions of HMT. Color as a mode plays a significant role in the visual narrative: black conveys control and power; white suggests purity and innocence; and blue, often linked with masculinity (Domicile et al. 2021), symbolizes confidence and stability (Bear 2019). Notably, navy blue is used in the scenes featuring the fencer, and can be interpreted to symbolize his confidence and steadiness, attributes that are essential for his success as an Olympian. This further underscores the importance of achievement in being

perceived as a Hegemonic ideal of masculinity. The findings of this sub-theme collectively support HMT, which posits that men are integral to the maintenance of a patriarchal society. Their depiction in the video as strong, confident, and successful, is created to affirm their status as ‘role models’ within the societal hierarchy, particularly admired by other men (Edwards 2024). This portrayal aligns with the broader themes of Hegemonic masculinity, where traditional male roles and traits are both celebrated and reinforced.

To summarize, Lab Series uses traditionally feminine spaces through lighting and color to challenge and reinforce Hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, the traditional masculine spaces in the video, characterized by industrial materials and settings, reinforce Hegemonic masculinity. These spaces emphasize strength, achievement, and societal contributions, underscoring the patriarchal notion that men’s worth is tied to their success and societal roles.

### 6.3.2 Contemporary U.S. video

In the NOTO video there are no uses of *traditional masculine space*. Rather the settings of the entire video can be interpreted as *traditional feminine space* due to the visual modes of color and lighting. Throughout the video, the setting is thought to be a studio with a white backdrop. The use of a white background can be interpreted as a deliberate choice to signify neutrality (van Braam 2024), removing the traditional gendered contrasts of ‘male’ versus ‘female’. This choice aligns with IMT, which advocates for a broader understanding of gender, suggesting that characteristics traditionally labeled as male or female are merely expressions of individual identity. The complete white setting could also be interpreted as a blank slate, symbolizing a reimagined society where rigid gender norms are removed, allowing individuals the freedom to express themselves without any constraints. This concept of a ‘blank slate’ reflects one of the core principles of IMT, emphasizing the elimination of prescribed gendered behavior and the embrace of a spectrum of gender expressions. However, while IMT promotes acceptance of diverse gender expressions, including homosexuality, it remains less explicit about its stance on gender fluidity. This ambiguity suggests that, although IMT advocates for greater freedom of gender expression, it might not fully encompass or support the entire spectrum of gender nonconformity in contexts like the U.S. where challenges still exist for non-binary individuals.

## Comparison

The analysis of Lab Series' and NOTO's use of *space* revealed contrasting portrayals of masculinity and gender expression, with the video by Lab Series featuring both *traditionally feminine spaces* and *traditionally masculine spaces*. The traditionally feminine spaces reflect nuanced masculinities influenced by race, activity, and societal stereotypes. Whereas, the traditionally masculine spaces reinforce patriarchal values, emphasizing the men's roles as persistent achievers and societal contributors. Contrary to this use of space, NOTO only utilizes traditionally feminine spaces, where the entire video is set against a white background, symbolizing neutrality and departing from traditional gendered spaces advocating for a rejection of rigid gender norms.

In the video by Lab Series, each man's portrayal aligns with Hegemonic masculinity. The shoe designer's cozy office contrasts with stereotypes of African-American men, the ballet dancer's bright studio juxtaposes his strength and dominance, and the Asian athlete's softly lit setting highlights intersectional influences. These portrayals suggest a hierarchy of masculinity, with men in feminine spaces perceived as less aligned with Hegemonic ideals. In terms of characteristics, the space aligns with the traditional masculinity types' traits of ambition, success, strength and the hybrid masculinity type with traits of having male privilege and less rigid gender norms. On the other hand, NOTO's video aligns with the principles of IMT, with the white background acting as a 'blank slate', promoting a reimagined society free from prescribed gendered behavior. The video embraces a spectrum of gender expressions, allowing for self-expression without constraints. The characteristics that align mostly with NOTO's use of space belong to the modern masculinity type, where traits of rejecting gender conformity, being progressive, valuing equality are prevalent.

In general, Lab Series focuses on traditional, Marginalized and Complicit masculinity within feminine spaces, reinforcing Hegemonic masculinity's hierarchical structures. NOTO, on the other hand, uses a neutral setting to challenge these norms, promoting a more inclusive understanding of gender. Moreover, Lab Series uses gendered environments to highlight masculinity's nuances, while NOTO's stark white background symbolizes neutrality and inclusivity.

### 6.3.3 Traditional Thai video

The traditional Thai video primarily utilizes *traditional masculinity space*. In particular, the video portrays two settings that are traditionally associated with masculinity, scenario 1, which is the gym, and scenario 2, which is the soccer field. These two spaces have a strong resonance with traditional notions of masculinity, which emphasize physical strength and athleticism. This is also consistent with characteristics associated with Thai masculinity, especially Muay Thai. This form of fighting uses the body as a powerful tool and stresses endurance and competition. In addition, these two spaces also correspond directly with HMT, which suggests that specific settings and activities reinforce Hegemonic masculinity within a society and associate the notion of being a man with physical strength and competitiveness.

While the remaining four settings in the video do not explicitly suggest masculine or feminine space as the two above, the construction of these spaces may nevertheless indicate a more masculine space rather than a feminine space. Using scenario 4 as an example. In the full shot of the scene, which is often employed to establish the settings and context (Deguzman 2023), the protagonist occupies what appears to be a bedroom. The room embodies a minimalist style which is evident by the minimal to no decorations and the selection of solely essential furniture such as a bed, a vanity table, a chair, and a sofa. This may imply that functionality is prioritized over the aesthetic of the room, which is a common trait associated with masculinity (Devon 2023). In addition, the color scheme of the scene primarily consists of cold, dull, and darker colors such as black, white, gray, blue, brown, and a hint of red. Instead of warmth and comfort, the colors convey a sense of distance and seriousness. Furthermore, there is a use of low-key lighting, which produces a dark, dramatic atmosphere with high contrast between shadow and light. Consequently, the atmosphere becomes dramatic and more intense, which leans more toward masculine rather than a cozier, feminine atmosphere.

Another noteworthy aspect is that the video utilizes a black backdrop, which can be interpreted as a minimalist approach to masculinity. This eliminates any unnecessary distractions. While spaces like the soccer field and gym provide clear references to traditional masculinity, the black background ensures that the protagonist's actions and behaviors and how he embodies masculinity stay in focus. This could indicate that rather than focusing

solely on stereotypically masculine space, attention should be given to how masculinity is constructed and performed.

#### 6.3.4 Contemporary Thai video

Given the nature of the video layout, the findings revealed a contrast between *Traditional feminine space* and *Traditional masculine space* in the video. Within the first 15 seconds, the video demonstrates a contrast between the two main characters, where Gemini, who is on the left side, is in a traditional masculine environment, while Fourth, who is on the right side, occupies a traditional feminine setting. This is manifested through different elements in their surrounding environments. Starting with their bedroom decor, Gemini's room features dark and cold color schemes such as gray, black, dark brown, and white, which are typically associated with masculine (Devon 2023). Through close-up shots, it is evident that his room is filled with a variety of music-related items including a white bass guitar, bass speaker, gaming controller, video games, music cassettes, and dinosaur toys, all of which are scattered across the floor rather than placed neatly on shelves. His room decor consists of items stereotypically associated with the male gender, therefore, the overall image of his bedroom corresponds with the stereotypical image of what a typical boy's room would look like. Fourth's room, on the contrary, consists of a light and warm color scheme including white, beige, light brown, light blue, and green, which are a mix of pastel and neutral tones often lean more toward femininity (Soho lighting company 2021). His room decor comprises a white and light brown rug, a plant in a blue plant vase, and a shelf with books. The space has a clean and organized appearance overall. Each character's contrasting personalities are further emphasized in the video, for instance through their bathrooms. On the left side, there is a black, square shower head and the wall has simple white tiles with dark colored lines behind it, which is an element in masculine design (Devon 2023). On the right side, there is a round, golden showerhead with white marble walls in the background. In terms of interior design, black symbolizes strength and power, and gold signifies wealth and luxury (The KAP Designs 2023), which further highlights their personalities. However, the majority of the time, both characters occupy the living room. This shared space features plenty of natural light, warm and vibrant colors with soft tones, and a lot of green, blue, and white elements in the form of plants, decorations, and furniture. Altogether, this space creates a sense of cozy, homey, and welcoming atmosphere with a gentle flow. When examining the space through the lens of IMT, the shared living room space can be considered a representation of the



theory's notions because it does not favor masculine or feminine traits but may present a gender-neutral space. While each character's initial spaces might suggest contrasting expressions of masculinity, with Gemini leaning towards traditional masculinity and Fourth embodying traditional feminine traits, their interaction in the shared living room space suggests a common ground for both expressions of masculinity. In addition, the shared space can also be interpreted as a reflection of a society where different types of masculinity can coexist on equal footing. This illustrates a shift towards inclusivity and diversity while promoting and embracing different expressions of masculinity, all of which can coexist harmoniously. This also aligns with Thai culture, which is known to be open and welcoming to all kinds of sexuality and gender expression. An alternative interpretation is that both characters are able to express themselves openly because they are inside a house, which is considered a private space. Their different and contrasting environments could represent their inner exploration of their gender identities, while the shared living room could reflect an open and safe space where they are allowed to express their own gender identity despite their differences. However, this does not necessarily indicate rejection by society. It might merely indicate that, while the house provides a safe environment for inclusion and exploration, expressing these identities in public may require more courage.

### **Comparison**

In terms of the *space* theme, there is a clear contrast between the traditional and contemporary videos in Thailand. Although the traditional Thai video merely uses two spaces that exhibit a clear reference to masculinity, such as the gym and the soccer field, the overall mood of all scenarios in the video embody traits associated with a more intense and dark interpretation of masculinity. There is a stress on attributes like physical strength, athleticism and competitiveness, functionality, and barely any indications of characters associated with femininity. These components stand in contrast to the contemporary video. The two main protagonists in the contemporary Thai video, with their distinct personalities, express elements of modern masculinity, such as feminine qualities and metrosexuality, and traditional masculinity, including the trait of toughness. However, it could be argued that the contemporary video predominantly depicts modern masculinity considering that both characters spend most of their time in the shared living room space, which is marked by characteristics of modern masculinity like equality and open-mindedness.

### 6.3.5 Cross-cultural comparison

#### **Traditional videos**

Given the identification of both *traditional feminine space* and *traditional masculine space*, the American video explores a more complex concept of masculinity in relation to *space*, where spaces are used to reflect each of the characters. In the video, three characters are associated with traditional feminine spaces, including a ballet studio and environments characterized by colors, brightness, and lighting. The portrayal presents these men as deviating from conventional norms for masculinity, which challenges HMT. Meanwhile, the two Caucasian characters are presented in a traditional masculine space. Their spaces combine specific environments, including workplace and sports arenas, with industrial materials such as concrete, metal, and leather. These settings promote Hegemonic masculinity by emphasizing strength, achievement, and societal contributions.

The Thai video, on the other hand, predominantly depicts the protagonist in relation to *traditional masculine space*. The gym and the soccer fields are the two spaces that, based on characteristics such as physical strength and athleticism, explicitly refer to traditional masculine space and are associated with Hegemonic masculinity. The remaining spaces in the video emphasize a minimalist design and functionality while utilizing dark and dull colors and low-key lighting to evoke a sense of masculine atmosphere. Additionally, the black background draws attention to the protagonist's actions and behaviors, stressing masculinity as a performance over the surrounding environment.

#### **Contemporary videos**

In the Thai video, the distinct *spaces* of the two main characters, Gemini and Fourth, illustrate traditional gender norms through interior design. Gemini's space, characterized by dark colors and items like gaming controllers and music equipment, aligns with traditional masculine aesthetics. In contrast, Fourth's area uses light, warm colors and neatly organized decor, reflecting feminine attributes. Despite these initial contrasts, both characters share a living room that blends these styles, suggesting a gender-neutral environment. This space, filled with natural light and vibrant colors, symbolizes a harmonious coexistence of different gender expressions, aligning with Thai culture of collectivism along with the openness towards diverse sexualities and gender identities.

Contrary to this, the U.S. video has a blank white background throughout, avoiding traditional gendered *space* representations. This deliberate neutrality points to a broader interpretation of gender, where the absence of explicit masculine or feminine cues aims to foster a society free from rigid gender norms. The white background acts as a blank slate, symbolizing the potential for individuals to express their identities without constraints. This highlights the ongoing challenges in the U.S. regarding the acceptance and understanding of non-binary and non-conforming gender identities, suggesting that while the intent is progressive, actual societal acceptance may still be evolving.

The Thai video demonstrates a balance between traditional gender expressions and a progressive, inclusive environment, mirroring a society with tolerance of diverse gender identities. Meanwhile, the U.S. video uses a neutral backdrop to challenge and redefine gender norms, advocating for a future where gender expression is unrestricted by societal expectations. Both videos, through their respective cultural lenses, promote a more inclusive view of masculinity, yet the U.S. context underscores the need for continued advocacy and societal change to fully embrace this inclusivity.

## 6.4 Social connection

The main theme of *Social connection*, as identified from the multimodal thematic analysis, was found across all four videos. The theme refers to how individuals of the videos are connecting to each other and themselves, which is being explored through the following four sub-themes: *Interaction*, *Intimacy*, *Power dynamics* and *Relations*.

### 6.4.1 Traditional U.S. video

In the video by Lab Series there is an absence of *interactions* between the individual men, which can be seen as a reflection of the individualistic culture of the U.S., where personal success is often viewed as a solitary pursuit (Miller 2020). This is further supported by the portrayal of each man by themselves showcasing a cultural narrative that values self-reliance for achieving success, which ties to HMT, which emphasizes a hierarchy of masculinity. Men are thus expected to climb the social and professional ladders independently, proving their worth and competence without external aid. This portrayal not only reinforces traditional patriarchal values but also upholds the Hegemonic masculine ideal that connects masculinity with achievements.

In the video, there are a few instances of the sub-theme *intimacy* involving three of the men: the shoe designer, the fencer, and the fashion designer. These intimate moments primarily occur when the men look at themselves in the mirror, either caressing their faces suggesting the need for skincare products or, in the case of the fashion designer, stretching with his chest exposed to highlight his physique. This can be seen as traits of vanity, focusing on appearance and aligning with elements of metrosexuality, where men pay high attention to their physical image (Mitchell and Lodhia 2017). Hegemonic masculinity traditionally emphasizes strength, power, and status, which can be reflected in the appearance of the body and clothing. However, these intimate self-reflective moments could suggest a slight departure from Hegemonic ideals, incorporating characteristics more associated with Inclusive masculinities. Interestingly, the exposure of the fencer's and fashion designer's upper bodies could be seen as a way to balance the perceived femininity of vanity and facial grooming by emphasizing physical strength and athleticism, thus aligning more closely with traditional Hegemonic masculinity. Alternatively, these scenes might align more with Inclusive masculinity theory. By showcasing metrosexual elements, such as grooming and self-care alongside the sexualization of the male body, the video portrays a more complex and inclusive view of masculinity. Depending on the interpretation, these portrayals suggest that men can express both strength and power, as well as self-care and appearance, without diminishing their masculinity. This nuanced depiction indicates a contrast between strictly adhering to Hegemonic masculinity and a more inclusive understanding, where behaviors viewed as feminine do not undermine a man's masculinity but instead enrich and diversify its expression.

The sub-theme of *power dynamics* is prevalent throughout the entire video, as all men represent the pinnacle of their respective fields. This portrayal aligns with HMT. The five men in the video are depicted as superior to others who lack their levels of status, skills, and physiques, reinforcing the notion that certain men are deemed more masculine based on their achievements and attributes. The video's portrayal of these men and their successes can be interpreted as an aim to motivate the audience to reach similar levels of success and masculinity. This aligns with Hegemonic masculinity, where the ideal is perceived as a natural aspiration for all men. However, this ideal is often unattainable, making the notion problematic. The aural mode of the repeated phrase "Invent yourself" throughout the video suggests that achieving this idealized masculinity is any man's goal, reflecting the theory's

emphasis on the pursuit of an unattainable Hegemonic ideal. Contrary to Inclusive masculinity, which values all forms of masculinity equally, the video implies a specific type of masculinity that men should strive for. In the beginning of the video the men are all placed horizontally to each other suggesting a level of equality (Guinness 2023), but this equality is based on their status, power, success, and achievements, not just their gender. This rather superficial illustration of equality at a first glance, masks deeper issues of intersectionality and Marginalization upon deeper analysis. There is also a certain level of competitiveness displayed in terms of relations, as the men are competing to be seen as the most masculine and closest to the Hegemonic masculinity ideal by showcasing all qualities that would ensure their place at the top. Even within this portrayal of Hegemonic masculinity, there are distinctions made of the men based on race and activity. The men of African and Asian descent, as well as the ballet dancer, are depicted differently, indicating that non-Caucasian men and those engaged in traditionally feminine activities are still perceived as less masculine. This reinforces the idea that, despite achieving the ideals of Hegemonic masculinity, racial and activity-based biases prevent these men from being seen as fully equal to their Caucasian counterparts. The power dynamics in the video suggest that hierarchies of masculinity exist and that achieving the highest level of masculinity is nearly impossible for most men. This can lead to feelings of inferiority and a constant, unachievable pursuit of the Hegemonic ideal, illustrating the problematic nature of such an idealized standard of masculinity.

In summary, the analysis of the theme of *social connection*, highlights the individualistic culture of the U.S. by showing men pursuing success alone, reinforcing Hegemonic masculinity, which values self-reliance, and achievement. Scenes of intimacy including the shoe designer, fencer, and fashion designer, suggest a mix of traditional and Inclusive masculinity, balancing vanity with physical strength. The portrayal of power dynamics, with men excelling in their fields, underscores Hegemonic masculinity's hierarchy. Despite some depictions of inclusivity, racial and activity-based biases reveal deeper issues of intersectionality and Marginalization, suggesting that achieving the ideal of Hegemonic masculinity is often unattainable.

#### 6.4.2 Contemporary U.S. video

When exploring the sub-theme of *interaction*, we see the video featuring three individuals engaging in playful and affectionate interaction further highlighting sub-themes of *intimacy* and *relations*. These interactions, characterized by physical touch such as hugs and hand-holding, convey a sense of friendliness and care among the individuals. The physical closeness and affectionate gestures depicted in the video could be seen as expressions typically accepted within female same-sex friend groups or inclusive male friend groups (Derlega, Catanzaro and Lewis 2001). This portrayal aligns closely with Inclusive masculinity theory, which argues that men can engage in physical tactility without compromising their masculinity. However, since the individuals in the video are gender fluid, it deviates slightly from IMT, which primarily discusses male-to-male tactile interactions.

The video presents instances of the sub-theme *intimacy* between the individuals and self-intimacy among the individuals. The former is depicted through physical touch such as hand holding and caressing, which appear friendly rather than romantic or sexual. This interpretation is supported by the overall playful and lighthearted energy of the video. The latter form of intimacy is seen in individual shots where the individuals are applying the products, guided by the linguistic and aural modes provided by Gloria Noto, the founder. For example, she says “it’s going to take you through a whole experience with yourself” (0:29 – 0:32) while we see an individual sensually caressing their skin with their closed eyes. This can be interpreted both as describing the sensory experience of using the product and as a metaphor for the personal journey of self-discovery, particularly relevant for non-binary individuals (Unicamillus 2024). This portrayal of self-intimacy creates a safe space for exploring and accepting one’s identity, aligning with IMT which validates all gender expressions. The video further emphasizes this message with the statement “It’s a time where you can connect with your body” (1:25 – 1:28), reflecting the non-binary experience of reconciling with one’s physical form, which can often feel alien and the act of becoming comfortable with oneself intimately is for many a struggle (Turban 2022). The depiction of intimacy as self-care in the video challenges traditional notions of Hegemonic masculinity, which typically dismisses such feminized behavior. By showing these intimate moments, the video suggests that all forms of self-expression and self-care are valid, regardless of gender. This aligns with Inclusive masculinity by highlighting the importance of personal comfort and acceptance, transcending the rigid boundaries of traditional gender norms.

Moving on to the sub-theme of *power dynamics*. Previous elements of the analysis have indicated that the individuals in the video are portrayed as equal. However, certain scenes introduce nuances that may slightly contradict this sense of equality, particularly regarding power dynamics. Throughout the majority of the video, the individuals are shown in solo shots or together in non-hierarchical arrangements, standing side by side. This visual equality suggests that, despite differences in biological sex, personality expression, and individual style, they share equal power. This portrayal aligns with IMT, rejecting hierarchy of masculinity and promoting equality. But interestingly, a scene from 1:18 to 1:22 challenges this visual equality.



1:18 - 1:19

In this scene, the individuals are arranged vertically: the seemingly biological male at the top, the seemingly biological female in the middle, and the non-conforming individual at the bottom. This arrangement could be interpreted as a reflection of societal gender hierarchies, where traditional male roles are perceived as more powerful, followed by female roles, with non-conforming genders viewed as least powerful and accepted. This illustrated ranking of power can be interpreted in two ways, with one suggesting that this arrangement unintentionally conforms to societal norms that place men above women and non-conforming individuals at the bottom. However, considering the video's strong advocacy for non-binary experiences, an alternative interpretation is perhaps more fitting.



1:19 - 1:20

The non-conforming individual at the bottom reaches toward the camera, making a twisting motion that the camera follows. This gesture can be seen as a metaphor for challenging and changing/switching the narrative of hierarchical gender power structures. It could symbolize a reclaiming of power and promoting a view of gender equality. The latter interpretation aligns with IMT. This scene, therefore, reinforces the video's overall message of advocating for gender equality and the acceptance of diverse gender identities, fitting seamlessly with the rest of the video's content and its themes aligning with Inclusive notions of masculinity.

Throughout the video, we observe the sub-theme of *relations* of a friendly nature characterized by playful interactions and physical touch, suggesting a sense of care among the individuals. This depiction aligns with IMT, which contrasts with hegemonic masculinity's rejection of physical tactility. Although one might argue that, if the seemingly biological male exhibits feminized behavior, he might be seen as Subordinate and thus still fit within the ideals set by Hegemonic masculinity's framework, but this interpretation does not hold up given the video's overall portrayal. The video consistently presents non-hierarchical notions of gender and relationships, with no evident strive for Hegemonic ideals. Instead, the interactions reflect a more inclusive view of gender, where physical affection and diverse friendships are normalized and valued. Therefore, the video promotes a progressive and inclusive understanding of masculinity and relationships.

To summarize the analysis of *social connection*, the video by NOTO showcases interactions highlighting intimacy and relations, with three individuals engaging in playful, affectionate physical touch, suggesting friendliness and care. Intimacy is shown through friendly touches and self-care moments, promoting self-discovery and acceptance, challenging traditional



masculinity. Power dynamics are portrayed as equal, but one scene subtly reflects societal gender hierarchies. Overall, the video supports gender equality and diverse gender expressions, aligning with IMT's inclusive views on masculinity.

## Comparison

The video by Lab Series lacks *interactions* between men, reflecting U.S. individualism where personal success is solitary. Each man is depicted alone, aligning with HMT that emphasizes independent achievement, reinforcing traditional patriarchal values that equate masculinity with dominance. The characteristics portrayed here are in alignment with the traditional masculinity type with traits of independence and ambition being significant. In contrast, the video by NOTO features three individuals in playful, affectionate interactions, highlighting intimacy and care through physical touch like hugs and hand-holding. This aligns with IMT, suggesting men can engage in physical tactility without compromising masculinity. Here we see the modern masculinity type being displayed through traits of femininity and rejecting gender conformity.

*Intimacy* occurs with three of the men in the Lab Series' video. These moments incorporate traits of Inclusive masculinity, balancing elements of metrosexuality in terms of vanity with physical strength, suggesting that traditionally feminine behaviors can enrich masculinity rather than undermine it. This portrayal shows a blend of the characteristics of the modern masculinity type's trait of metrosexuality and the traditional masculinity type's trait of strength. In contrast, NOTO depicts both interpersonal and self-intimacy, through friendly physical touches and a playful energy, while self-intimacy is shown through product application. This promotes self-discovery and acceptance, challenging traditional Hegemonic masculinity by validating all forms of self-expression and self-care. This aligns with IMT, emphasizing personal comfort and acceptance beyond traditional gender norms. The characteristics in support of this are of the modern masculinity type, with traits of being brave enough to be whoever one wants to be.

The Lab Series video emphasizes *power dynamics* through the depiction of men as the pinnacle of their fields, aligning with Hegemonic masculinity by highlighting superiority based on achievements. This depiction could motivate viewers to pursue similar success, reinforcing an unattainable ideal. However, deeper analysis revealed issues of

intersectionality and Marginalization, with non-Caucasian men and those in feminine activities, illustrating the problematic nature of Hegemonic masculinity. Contrary to this portrayal of power dynamics, the NOTO video portrays individuals as equals, supported by similar attire and emotional expression. One scene hinting at societal gender hierarchies is marked by a non-conforming individual's gesture, symbolizing a challenge to these structures, which aligns with IMT.

#### 6.4.3 Traditional Thai video

The advertising features the protagonist with other characters, but *interaction* only occurs in two out of six scenarios. It is noteworthy that both interactions include activities related to traditional masculinity. From 0:34 to 1:04, the protagonist is shown playing soccer with other men, suggesting a friendly relationship between them. Soccer is a physically demanding and competitive sport that demands strength, endurance, and athleticism. This representation reflects the idea that males need to be dominant and prove themselves which is consistent with the idea of Hegemonic masculinity that places an emphasis on physical strength and endurance. In the scenario on the metro from 1:05 to 1:47, the protagonist is seen interacting with other passengers, particularly the women. Gazes are exchanged during this interaction as he moves through the carriage, suggesting a romantic interest. After using the 'right product', the main character now gained the attention of other people. This may indicate that the specific product makes men appear more appealing, possibly implying that validation comes from external attention, especially from women. This advertising solely emphasizes heterosexual relationships. In the context of Hegemonic masculinity, this serves to further reinforce the idea that heterosexuality is the norm and expected way to define masculinity. Notably, Thai society places a strong emphasis on forming connections with other people and belonging to a part of the group (The Unusual Trip n.d.). However, the minimal interaction may conflict with this collectivistic ideal and more in line with an individualistic culture.

Physical contact with oneself is how *intimacy* manifests itself in the video. The advertising, in particular, draws a connection between the protagonist's attitude to self-care and his engagement with intimacy. At first, he seems contemptuous of self-care practices that require gentleness toward himself, such as applying motion or washing his face. These actions are conventionally connected to practices of beauty and skincare. However, his attitudes and actions change after using the 'right product'. From the lens of Hegemonic masculinity, the

protagonist is challenging traditional masculinity by engaging in behaviors that are traditionally associated with feminine activities. However, from another perspective, the video may imply that these actions are not gender and intimacy is not feminine by showcasing the protagonist becoming more comfortable with self-care practices.

In the aspect of *power dynamics*, the protagonist is battling an internal power struggle to maintain his masculinity while practicing self-care, which is a recurring conflict throughout the video. In the beginning, the protagonist portrays a sense of confidence and dominance which are traits of traditional masculinity. In this context, it is possible to interpret that his confidence stems from his lack of awareness, that neglecting proper self-care practices actually undermines his masculinity. The voiceover plays an important role in this context because he addresses the protagonist's misconceptions regarding self-care, implying that the potential consequences of utilizing the 'wrong' product or improper care is a loss of confidence and dominance. The advertising plays on the fear of 'losing face', a concern that is crucial in many Asian societies, including Thai culture. It highlights the importance of preserving one's social status and refraining from behavior that can humiliate or dishonor oneself (Williams 2023). This is evident during the scene on the metro. After using the advertised product, which is considered the 'right' product for men, the protagonist regains his confidence and a sense of power. This further supports the notion that specific products define masculinity, particularly drawing a distinction between feminine and masculine skin care products. Consequently, using the 'right' product becomes a means of resolving internal conflict and reclaiming a sense of power because self-care is not typically linked with masculinity. This also portrays him as the ideal man who adheres to Hegemonic masculinity.

#### 6.4.4 Contemporary Thai video

Considering the fact that particular scenes in the video embody elements of several sub-themes within the theme of *social connection*, the structure of the analysis of the video in this section will be slightly different than previous ones, as the scenes will be addressed alongside their respective sub-themes rather than going over each sub-theme individually. The sub-theme of *relations* will be used as a starting point and has been divided into four stages that represent the development of the characters' relationship.

The first stage is from 0:05 to 0:08. This is the first time both characters interact with one another, and they appear to be fighting over who gets to use the bathroom first. The voice-over supports the scene by highlighting that they have nothing in common. Furthermore, their playful fight is given an element of silliness by the sound effect, which is a sharp clang similar to clashing swords. This portrays a lighthearted relationship between them that could also be interpreted as a means for them to greet each other. In terms of intimacy, the characters find themselves in a tussle, playfully pushing each other. This fusion of physical intimacy and fun competition suggests a softer power dynamic instead of a dominant and aggressive one. Moving away from the traditional concept of masculinity, this aligns with IMT by presenting a more inclusive portrayal of masculinity where rivalry and intimacy coexist. Regarding their relationship, considering the nature of their interaction, this could be interpreted as a friendship.

The relationship between the two characters deepens during the second interaction from 0:15 to 0:21. In this scene, the two characters are sitting on the sofa in the shared living room, exchanging serum recommendations and directly applying them on each other's faces. The intimacy is particularly highlighted during this action. Gemini has his eyes closed, and a soft smile appears on his face as Fourth finishes applying the product. Fourth, in turn, looks at Gemini with a gentle smile. This moment is supported by a magical twinkle sound effect, which evokes a sense of there being "love in the air". This may be an indication of a potential spark between them, which raises a question: could there be more to their relationship? This scene may suggest that the relationship between the two protagonists could blossom into something deeper than friendship. Additionally, their willingness to exchange personal skincare products and engage in physical intimacy subverts traditional concepts of masculinity and resonates with IMT, which promotes emotional expression and participation in activities traditionally associated with femininity.

The third stage is from 0:22 to 0:24, which illustrates a further progression in their relationship. Their debate about serum escalates into a playful tussle with their arms wrapped around each other while pushing each other back and forth while still seated on the sofa. During this fight, there is a squeaky bed sound effect. This sound effect can be interpreted as a suggestion that the characters are becoming more intimate and possibly a hidden sign of sexual tension. Furthermore, this interpretation might be supported by the messy appearance of their attire, such as the jumpsuit strap falling off Fourth's shoulder. The way the

relationship between the characters is portrayed is consistent with IMT that, regardless of sexual orientation, masculinity can be defined as a spectrum that involves emotional intimacy and vulnerability.

Lastly, the fourth stage is from 0:26 to 0:29. In this stage, their playful tussle reaches a turning point when they discover that their serums are from the same brand. There is a bell sound effect as their eyes lock, which adds a touch of surprise to the moment of realization. It can be interpreted as an awakening of deeper feelings within them. There is a saying that eyes are the window to the soul, thus this may indicate the moment in which their hearts truly align, as suggested by the double meaning of the title of the video. The remainder of the scene showcases the characters playfully applying the serums on each other in the background which may indicate a deeper connection between them. In addition, their playful fight about the serums presents a new perspective on traditional power dynamics. Instead of being an attempt to dominate, it is a lighthearted rivalry that strengthens the relationship. It can be interpreted as a new way of expressing masculinity that values tenderness and a fair dose of competition.

## **Comparison**

The key difference between the videos lies in their focus. The traditional video focuses on the power struggle to maintain masculinity, while the contemporary video emphasizes the interaction and relationship between the characters. In the contemporary video, the interaction between characters is prioritized, focusing on how their friendship grows into a more intimate connection, which implies a possible romantic or homosexual relationship. This is expressed through physical intimacy and tenderness, which deepen their connection. The characters embrace modern masculinity by expressing their emotions and sexuality, which implies that they are comfortable with their identity. In contrast, the traditional video places an emphasis on masculinity as a performance rather than establishing a genuine interaction. The protagonist's interaction centers on maintaining his masculinity and male dominance which are traits that lie between traditional masculinity and hybrid masculinity.

For the traditional video, the power dynamic revolves around preserving traditional masculine traits and overcoming the internal struggle of practicing proper self-care. The protagonist's fear of 'losing face' is exploited as a drive to use the right product and uphold

his masculinity. Although it shows a shift in power dynamics, the video nonetheless emphasizes traits of traditional masculinity. This includes expressing dominance and minimizing femininity. Moreover, the video does include aspects of modern masculinity, such as metrosexuality, however, it is employed to reinforce the traditional form of masculinity. In contrast, the contemporary video displays power dynamics as a playful competition with mutual care between the characters, conveying a sense of equality, which resonates more with modern masculinity.

#### 6.4.5 Cross-cultural comparison

##### **Traditional videos**

Beginning with *interaction*, this sub-theme is absent in the U.S. video. This could be a reflection of the country's individualistic culture, which values independence and frequently views personal achievement as a solitary effort. In the Thai video, there is minimal interaction, which is depicted in two instances showing male friendship and female-male romantic relationship. The interactions occur in relation to preserving traditional masculinity, such as playing soccer and gaining attention from others, suggesting heterosexuality. The interactions reinforce the ideals of Hegemonic masculinity, while challenging Thai culture, which places a strong emphasis on forming connections with other people.

Moving on to *intimacy*, a few instances occur in the U.S. video where three of the characters look at themselves in the mirror and engage in self-intimacy, such as caressing the face or stretching with the chest exposed. These actions embody characteristics of metrosexuality that deviate from Hegemonic norms and resonate more with Inclusive masculinity, such as self-care and the sexualization of the male body. This indicates a masculine ideal where strength, power, and self-care can coexist. For the Thai video, intimacy takes form in terms of physical contact with oneself. Although the protagonist is initially apprehensive, intimacy manifests itself when he uses the 'right product' and engages in self-care. The protagonist challenges Hegemonic masculinity by engaging in behaviors that are traditionally associated with women, such as self-care.

On the subject of *power dynamics*, this is prevalent throughout the entire U.S. video. Each man is depicted as the absolute best in his field, surpassing others in terms of status, talent, and physical appearance. This is in accordance with the notions of Hegemonic masculinity,

which underlines a rigid hierarchy of masculinity. In terms of *relations*, there is a hint of competition among the men. It appears that they are competing to be deemed the ‘most masculine’ by exhibiting qualities that would guarantee their position at the top of the hierarchy. Nonetheless, it seems that non-Caucasian males and those who engage in conventional feminine activities are viewed as less manly, suggesting that certain attributes, such as race, provide a barrier. In the end, the video points out the variety of masculinity, with some men being positioned lower in the hierarchy perpetually, making the Hegemonic masculinity ideals seem unachievable for many men.

The Thai video takes a different approach to power dynamics, by focusing on the protagonist’s internal struggle between adhering to traditional masculinity and practicing self-care. Initially, the protagonist appears confident and dominant which are traits associated with Hegemonic masculinity. This confidence may stem from his lack of awareness about self-care practices, which are frequently viewed as feminine. He loses confidence and dominance when the voiceover challenges his misconceptions about self-care by pointing out that neglecting proper care or using the incorrect product could result in losing face, a significant concern in Thai culture. However, he regains his confidence and power by utilizing the advertised product, which is the ‘right’ product and designed especially for men. The right product thus serves as a means of resolving this internal conflict, regaining control, and presenting the protagonist as the example of Hegemonic masculinity.

### **Contemporary videos**

In the U.S. video the portrayal of *interaction* highlights playful and affectionate behaviors among three non-binary individuals, rejecting traditional gender norms and showcasing tenderness typically associated with femininity. Conversely, the Thai video humorously presents a playful conflict between two male characters over bathroom usage, moving away from aggressive masculinity to a more inclusive representation. These depictions illustrate cultural nuances in expressing masculinity and intimacy: the U.S. emphasizes gender fluidity and normalized affection among non-binary individuals, while Thailand showcases gentle masculinity and cultural acceptance of varied gender interactions. Both highlight a shift towards inclusivity and a departure from Hegemonic masculinity.

In terms of *intimacy*, The U.S. video explores it through friendly touch and self-intimacy, focusing on non-binary individuals’ personal journeys. Gestures like hand holding and

caressing in a supportive environment emphasize self-care and acceptance, underscoring intimacy as essential for personal growth. In contrast, the Thai video showcases growing intimacy between two male characters, blending traditional and modern views on masculinity. The scene where they apply serum to each other's faces symbolizes trust and caring, with a hint of romantic development. Both videos highlight cultural differences in handling intimacy: the U.S. emphasizes self-acceptance and gender fluidity, while Thailand respects traditional gender roles and evolving masculine norms such as homosexuality.

The U.S. video challenges traditional *power dynamics* by depicting individuals in equal, non-hierarchical arrangements that emphasize shared power regardless of gender. However, one scene subtly contradicts this by arranging individuals vertically, potentially reflecting ingrained societal gender hierarchies. This critique aims to challenge and change cultural hierarchical gender structures, advocating for inclusivity. Conversely, the Thai video explores power dynamics through playful interactions rather than competition or dominance. A key scene where characters discover and apply the same serum on each other symbolizes a shift towards connection and mutual respect, reflecting Thai cultural nuances that value relational over confrontational power dynamics. These contrasting approaches highlight how each culture addresses power dynamics and gender roles: the U.S. video directly challenges traditional gender roles to advocate for equality, while the Thai video emphasizes harmony and relational dynamics, suggesting a cultural preference for a 'softer' masculinity.

As for the sub-theme of *relations*, the U.S. video challenges traditional gender norms by showcasing playful physical contact between a male and his female companions. This opposes Hegemonic masculinity, which often limits male affection to maintain dominance, supporting the idea that masculinity is not compromised by one's companions or interactions. Conversely, the Thai video depicts a playful tussle between two male characters, hinting at a deeper relationship development with cues of intimacy and possible sexual tension. Both videos advocate for a more inclusive understanding of masculinity and relationships. The U.S. focuses on breaking down gender barriers, while Thailand suggests a shift towards inclusivity within its cultural context.



## 6.5 Product

For the fifth theme, *Product* has been identified. Given that we are examining skincare companies, the aspect of the product is expected to be apparent. Thus, to gain a deeper understanding of the product, three sub-themes are explored: *Product Packaging*, *Product Information*, and *Product Association*.

### 6.5.1 Traditional U.S. video

In the Lab Series' video we see the product a couple of times in each scenario. In terms of the sub-theme *product packaging*, we see each man briefly holding a product with packaging colors and styles varying among them. The primary colors used are black, blue, white, and light green for one single product. The choice of product colors for each man is intriguing and aligns with earlier discussions of intersectionality within the framework of HMT. The Asian athlete and the ballet dancer, who can be seen as Marginalized or Subordinate within Hegemonic masculinity, are given white and light-colored products. These softer colors may reflect their perceived masculinity as less than the other men in the video. On the other hand, the shoe designer and fashion designer are holding products that are black, suggesting dominance, power, and sophistication which are traits associated with traditional masculinity. Furthermore, the color black is typical for male-targeted products, as darker colors are often used to convey masculinity (Darstaru 2020). Lastly, the fencer holds a blue product, a color associated with confidence and stability, which aligns with his character traits as an Olympian fencer and further emphasizes his embodiment of Hegemonic masculinity. The product design is sleek and modern, with shapes like squares and cylinders that convey a sense of sophistication (Mmscene 2023). This discrete and understated design is typical for male-targeted products, intended to be less detectable in a bathroom cabinet (Byrne and Milestone 2023). This aligns with Hegemonic masculinity, where any association with femininity is often rejected, so by creating skin-care products that do not appear feminine, the fear of being seen engaging in perceived feminine behavior is minimized. The brand name on the packaging is prominently displayed in bold font, while the rest of the text is small and hard to read due to the rapid frame changes. The bold font conveys robustness and strength (Hummel n.d.), characteristics valued in Hegemonic masculinity. This design choice underscores the preference for traits like strength and dominance among men, reinforcing traditional masculine ideals. Overall, the product packaging in the video aligns with Hegemonic masculinity by using color, design, and typography to reflect and reinforce

traditional masculine traits and values. The subtle differences in packaging for each man also highlight intersectional aspects of masculinity, indicating varying levels of power and status within the hierarchy of masculinity.

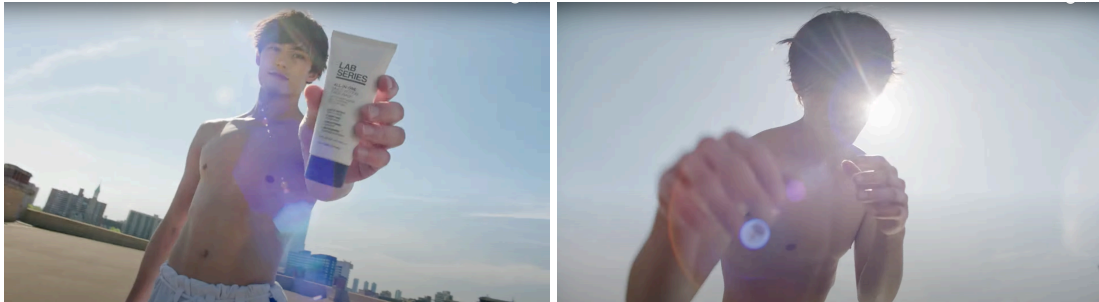
The video includes minimal display of the sub-theme *product information*, with only one scene showing the fencer briefly applying what appears to be lotion (0:31 - 0:31). This omission aligns with Hegemonic masculinity, where skin-care products are often viewed as feminine. Men who adhere to traditional masculine ideals might avoid such behaviors to prevent being perceived as less masculine. The video deliberately lacks explicit product details as viewers are neither informed about the products nor shown their specific uses. Instead, the emphasis is on product associations, with the men and their crafts symbolizing the aspirational qualities of a man who uses this brand. This approach personifies the brand through the achievements and characteristics of the men, rather than through the products themselves. This strategy reinforces Hegemonic masculinity by subtly avoiding any direct association with feminine behaviors like skincare. The focus remains on portraying a masculine ideal of being strong and successful. By showcasing the men's accomplishments and crafts, the video suggests that using these products contributes to achieving this Hegemonic ideal, which views masculinity as demonstrated through success and dominance. Thus, the video's emphasis on product association over direct product use reflects and supports Hegemonic masculinity, where the fear of appearing less masculine drives the omission of behaviors traditionally seen as feminine.

Throughout the video, each man personifies the brand's product, creating distinct displays of the sub-theme *product associations*. These associations are depicted through emotional or physical reactions prompted by the product and direct links between the product and the men's skills, which will be explored in the following.



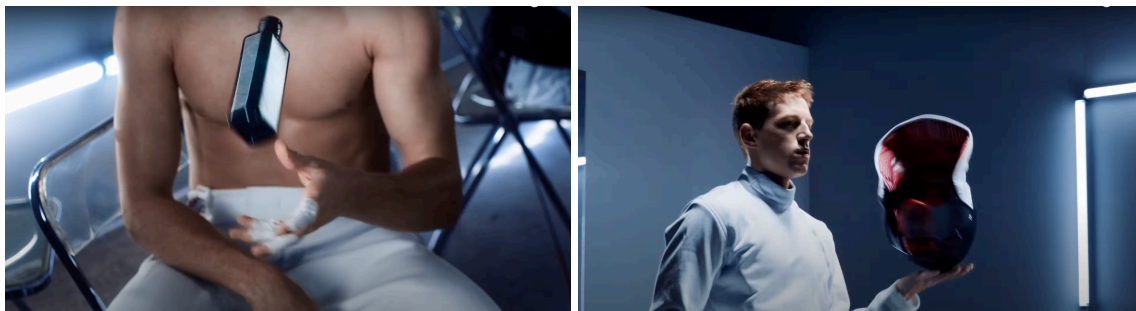
0:12 - 0:13

**The Shoe Designer:** In the scene he arrives at his office, applies the product, and is then seen working on his craft, while in one scene holding a shoe sole. The frame directly transitions to him holding the product in the same manner, equating the product with his craftsmanship. This association suggests that the product empowers him to excel in his high-quality craft.



0:23 - 0:24

**The Asian Athlete:** He is shown sitting by a container, holding the product about to apply it when the scene transitions to him doing pull-ups, linking the product use to his strength and endurance. Later in the scenario he is seen practicing martial arts, and we see a scene of him holding the product towards the screen, followed by transition to him making boxing motions. The product thus symbolizes his fighting skills and physical abilities.



0:32 - 0:34

**The Fencer:** Here we see him applying the product to his face while looking in the mirror, preparing for action. He throws the product in the air, which transitions to his fencing helmet which he catches, followed by a fencing practice scene. The product is thus directly associated with his helmet and his fencing skill, suggesting it enables his performance.



0:43 - 0:44

**The Ballet Dancer:** In this scene we see him picking up the product from the floor and then proceeding to display impressive gymnastics and ballet moves. The product once again becomes a symbol of the athletic skill that the man possesses.



0:53 - 0:54

**The Fashion Designer:** In the last scenario we see him holding the product while looking at the camera, then the scene transitions to him holding a pencil which is used for sketching designs. He then proceeds to touch materials, evaluating their quality and the frame switches back to him holding the product in the same evaluative manner, linking it to high quality and craftsmanship. Lastly, he is shown next to a clothing rack with black clothes, with the product range appearing in the front of the frame mimicking the clothes' visually, further associating the product with the quality of his work.

These associations emphasize the idea that the product helps each man become exceptional in their respective fields. The video does not focus on product details or ingredients but instead on the type of man who uses the product, a strong, ambitious, and successful man. This portrayal aligns with Hegemonic masculinity by emphasizing qualities such as skill, strength, and success, positioning the product as a tool for achieving these traditionally masculine ideals.

To summarize, the video by Lab Series uses product packaging to reflect and reinforce Hegemonic masculinity through color, design, and typography. Black, blue, white, and light green are used, with darker colors given to men embodying traditional masculine traits. The packaging is sleek and modern, discreetly designed to avoid feminine associations. The brand name is prominently displayed in bold font, emphasizing robustness and strength. The minimal display of product information and the emphasis on the men's achievements rather than the products themselves suggest that using these products contributes to achieving masculine ideals of success and dominance.

### 6.5.2 Contemporary U.S. video

Throughout the video, the product itself is frequently showcased, with a strong focus on its ingredients and effects. In terms of the sub-theme *product packaging*, it consists of a clear glass bottle containing yellow serum, a black pipette, and a white label with large text reading “NOTO” and smaller text saying “deep serum” and “face and neck serum”. The black and white colors of the label and pipette could signify inclusivity of all genders, with black representing masculinity and white symbolizing femininity. The transparent bottle represents visibility, suggesting that true value lies within, emphasizing gender identity and also the product itself. The color yellow of the serum inside can symbolize a variety of things like joy, happiness, hope, and optimism (McLean 2023), but yellow is significant in the LGBTQ+ community, representing the non-binary gender (UNCO n.d.). This color choice aligns with the video’s message that the product is for all genders: black for masculine, white for feminine, and yellow for those beyond traditional gender boundaries. The product itself becomes an abstract representation of gender fluid identities and the company’s advocacy for gender inclusivity. The visible fluidity of the serum inside could literally symbolize the fluid nature of non-binary genders, while the black and white elements on the outside signify the masculine and feminine nuances associated with expected societal and cultural behaviors and appearances. The packaging can be interpreted as a way to combat traditional gendered marketing by catering to a non-binary audience rather than adhering to typical male or female packaging conventions. This approach aligns with IMT, which rejects rigid gender binaries and embraces a spectrum of gender expressions. By presenting the product in a non-specific gendered manner, the packaging promotes the idea that self-care and personal grooming are for everyone, regardless of gender identity, reflecting a more inclusive and accepting view of masculinity and gender overall.

The video places significant emphasis on the sub-theme *product information* through aural, linguistic, and visual modes. Gloria Noto, the founder, provides a detailed step-by-step guide on how to use the product, while the visuals show the three individuals following this routine. This pragmatic, problem-solving approach to selling the product aligns with traditional stereotypical notions of masculinity, which value logic and functionality (Delaney et al. 2015). Gloria speaks about the product with confidence and joy, establishing her credibility by highlighting her experience and knowledge in cosmetics and this rhetorical tactic can be argued to enhance her credibility. From a patriarchal perspective, this might be seen as necessary because, as a woman, her scientific credibility might be unfairly questioned compared to a man's (Klass and Boukes 2019). Thus by explicitly stating her credentials could help ensure the audiences' trust in her. Moreover, the detailed descriptions of the product ingredients and instructions could be influenced by cultural factors. In the U.S., companies often need to provide thorough information to avoid potential lawsuits, ensuring that consumers use the products correctly and safely (Ross 2015). This detailed and inclusive approach to product information aligns with IMT, which embraces diverse expressions and rejects rigid gender binaries. By providing comprehensive product information, the video promotes an inclusive view of self-care, making it accessible and relevant to all genders.

In terms of the sub-theme *product association*, the three individuals personify the message and concept of gender fluidity and the freedom to express oneself authentically. This theme is conveyed through visual modes, textual and aural commentary by Gloria Noto, the founder. The individuals are shown with text highlighting characteristics that align with the product's intended effects. For instance, one scene (0:04) features the dark-skinned individual with the words "gender fluid" over it, while Gloria discusses the product's purpose. Another scene (0:43 - 0:44) shows the word "fresh" over it, describing the product's scent and being personified by the smiling dark-skinned individual. Similarly, a seemingly female individual with long hair is shown while Gloria says "natural" (0:35 - 0:36) referring both to the product's ingredients and the idea of being true to oneself. Finally, a scene (0:05 - 0:07) with all three individuals together accompanies Gloria's statement about wanting a product with "representation and community at its core" These associations are rather abstract, focusing on the broader message of the video. The individuals represent a gender-neutral product and a world that fully embraces diverse gender expressions. This aligns with IMT, which is supported by the fact that the seemingly male individual is not constrained by traditional

notions of masculinity or femininity, reflecting a more inclusive and accepting view of gender.

To summarize the findings of the sub-theme *product*, it was found that the video by NOTO frequently showcases the product, emphasizing its ingredients and effects, with packaging that symbolizes gender inclusivity. The product association with individuals conveys gender fluidity and authenticity supports a non-gendered approach, promoting self-care for all genders. This inclusive presentation challenges traditional gendered marketing and embraces a spectrum of gender expressions, reflecting a progressive view of masculinity and gender.

## **Comparison**

Firstly, in the Lab Series video, *product packaging* varies among the men, with primary colors being black, blue, white, and light green. These choices align with intersectionality within HMT, with the Asian athlete and ballet dancer being perceived as less masculine. The sleek, modern design and bold font of the packaging convey strength and sophistication, reinforcing traditional masculine ideals by avoiding feminine associations and underscoring the preference for traits like robustness and dominance. These traits are in alignment with the traditional type of masculinity, with traits like rejecting displays of femininity, dominance, and strength. Conversely, the NOTO video frequently showcases the product, emphasizing inclusivity through its clear glass bottle, yellow serum, black pipette. This inclusive packaging combats traditional gendered marketing by catering to a non-binary audience, reflecting IMT, which rejects rigid gender binaries. The characteristics of rejecting gender conformity and progressiveness from the modern masculinity type are in alignment with this portrayal.

Secondly, The Lab Series video provides minimal *product information*, only briefly showing the fencer applying lotion. Thus, subtly avoiding associating the product with behaviors traditionally seen as feminine, which once again aligns with the traditional masculinity type and the trait of rejecting femininity. In contrast, the NOTO video emphasizes detailed product information which aligns with traditional masculinity that values logic and functionality, while also promoting inclusivity. The detailed descriptions of ingredients and instructions reflect a broader understanding of masculinity that values knowledge and transparency,

making the product accessible to all genders. Interestingly these fit with both the hybrid masculinity type of being strategic but also the modern type with traits like equality.

Lastly, in terms of *product associations*, each man in the Lab Series video personifies the product, linking it to their skills and achievements. This portrayal suggests that using the product helps the men excel, emphasizing qualities like skill, strength, and success, which align with Hegemonic masculinity and the traditional masculinity type. Whereas the NOTO video associates the product with gender fluidity and self-expression, highlighting characteristics that align with the product's effects and abstractly supports a gender-neutral product aligning with IMT's notion of valuing equality, fitting the traits of the modern masculinity type.

### 6.5.3 Traditional Thai video

To explore the *product packaging* for the traditional Thai video, we will start by considering the use of color. For this product line, black is the predominant color, whereas the letters on the products are composed of white and gray. Black is frequently associated with power and elegance (The KAP Design 2023), therefore, this makes the products appear high-quality and mysterious. Moreover, black is also considered a masculine color. Thus, in terms of colors, the darker color scheme conveys a sense of power and intrigue, leaving the audience wondering about the products. Each product has a matte finish that amplifies the powerful black color. Given that matte finishes are frequently connected to sleekness, subtle elegance, and masculinity, this design choice strengthens the packaging's masculine appeal. There is not a noticeable feminine or masculine direction in the font selection. However, the packaging reinforced its masculine appeal with the phrase "for MEN", which is written in bold white letters on black product packaging. The design choice not only grabs the attention, but it also explicitly states that the product is specifically intended for men.

Throughout the video, *product information* consistently emerges, with each product appearing in relation to the corresponding misconception of that scene. The product is positioned in the video as a solution for common misconceptions males may have about skincare. Consider scene 2 as an example. It addresses a misconception that more protection comes from applying a larger coating of sunscreen. Following this, the brand presents its sunscreen, highlighting its specifications: "Light and comfortable on the skin and protects for



up to 8 hours” This problem-solving approach provides concise and simple information about the product while also immediately addressing a potential concern that males may have. In terms of the language, the word choice in the video contributes to a sense of authority and expertise. Thai expressions of politeness such as ครับ (krub) are notably absent, which is often employed after every sentence to show respect to the person you are speaking to. Rather than disrespecting the audience, this absence may suggest that the speaker views himself as the authority figure. This is further supported by the speaker’s deep tone and confident voice which reinforces this authority. This combination conveys a sense of authority and trustworthiness, suggesting that the product and the information provided are reliable and making the audience believe in the product. Additionally, the use of authority, which is a common element connected to dominance and power in traditional masculinity, could be interpreted as reinforcing Hegemonic masculinity.

It seems that the brand is establishing *product associations* to male attractiveness. While improved looks are one of the benefits of the products, the focus could be interpreted as suggesting that the products make men more attractive to women, thereby creating an externally validated definition of what makes a “better” man. This is evident through the use of visual and aural modes in the video to create this brand association. The underlying message that utilizing the brand’s product enhances a man’s attractiveness occurs throughout the scenes. This is further emphasized by the speaker’s statement “Oriental Princess wants you to look good and become the kind of man that women like” and the hashtag #เป็นผู้ชายที่ใช่แบบที่ผู้หญิงชอบ at the end of the video, which translates to “Be the right kind of man that women like”. The brand evidently wants men to associate their products with becoming attractive to women and that the products therefore are the right choice for men. This also indicates that the brand is aware of what women want and that the products meet these demands.

All in all, the brand’s approach to product corresponds with Hegemonic masculinity which emphasizes elements including power, authority, and heterosexuality. By utilizing authoritative language, connecting black and matte finishes with power and elegance, and portraying the product as a means for men to attract women, the product packaging, information, and association reinforce the traditional notion of masculinity. Through this approach, the company promotes a masculinity that conforms to societal norms and

expectations by presenting one particular image of masculinity which is a heterosexual, manly male whose objective is to be appealing to women.

#### 6.5.4 Contemporary Thai video

It is apparent that the *product packaging* for the contemporary Thai video is significantly different from that of the traditional Thai video. The color used is predominantly white and pink with a touch of black for the name of the brand. The color scheme of the packaging is bright and vibrant, which makes them quite eye-catching and prominent. As mentioned previously, pink is traditionally associated with femininity, while white is considered a neutral color. Thus, one may argue that this combination balances each other out which makes the overall impression less feminine and moves towards gender neutrality. The serum bottle is a transparent cylindrical glass with a matte finish, which allows you to see the liquid inside. The matte finish, in particular, adds a masculine touch to the appearance (Fontan 2021). The font used on the packaging provides a contrast between masculine and feminine. Rounded fonts that lean more towards feminine are contrasted with bold, straight lines frequently employed to construct a masculine style (Darstaru 2020). The product packaging may appear to be exclusively feminine at first glance. However, a closer examination reveals that it utilizes a combination of elements that are typically associated with both masculinity and femininity in design. Overall, the combination of these elements gives the impression of being more gender-neutral and balanced.

Moving on to *product information*, the video emphasizes providing details on the specifications and benefits of each serum. For instance, the white bottle is for sensitive skin, whereas the pink bottle is for brightening. Particularly, the information emphasizes that these serums are suitable for everyone. The product information in this video focuses on the benefits of the products and what consumers can gain from using them. While the product information does not delve into great details or ingredients, the message is simple and straightforward making it easy to understand. In terms of the language, there is a use of more formal language. The speaker avoids gendered pronouns and generally use คุณ (khun), which is a formal term that works for all genders. In addition, the speaker also employs Thai polite indicators such as ครับ (ka) and ครับ (krub). While they are gender specific and depend on the speaker, their primary purpose is to address the audience with respect. The speaker also uses a soft voice that creates an approachable and friendly atmosphere. By doing this, the gap between the speaker and the audience decreases, which encourages trust and openness. All

things considered, the language use contributes to an inclusive and positive experience. This approach feels gentler and more welcoming than the traditional Thai video, which uses a more authoritative communication style.

In relation to *product association*, the brand employs it to establish an emotional connection with customers through an association with two groups of people. The first association is achieved through their selection of a popular BL couple, also called GeminiFourth, as their brand ambassadors. By using these popular BL actors in their advertising, the brand creates a connection with the celebrities as well as associating the product with them by assigning each person to a specific bottle of serum. For instance, the brand positions the pink bottle with Fourth, while the white bottle is linked to Gemini. Furthermore, the aural mode is used to further reinforce this association. A scene from 0:17 to 0:19 illustrates how Fourth explicitly makes a connection between him and the product by saying “When you use it, your face will be bright and clear just like mine”.

The second association emerges at the end of the video by introducing Doctor Tony who is the founder of the brand. Putting the face of the company in the public eye gives it a more relatable touch. However, it goes beyond that. The medical professional background of Doctor Tony contributes to a level of authority and expertise. Thus, a doctor’s endorsement of a product evokes a subtle but powerful emotional response: if a doctor believes in the product, it must be good. Using Doctor Tony’s qualifications, this approach establishes the company as a trustworthy choice and promotes the credibility of the brand.

Overall, the brand’s approach to product association subtly promotes Inclusive masculinity. Firstly, using a BL couple as brand ambassadors challenges traditional gender roles by making male celebrities promote skincare products and undermining the common belief that self-care is just for women. Furthermore, they also reject the notion that men should stay away from “feminine” aesthetics by using products with pink and bright packaging. This aligns with IMT because the BL couple exemplifies that men can engage in activities traditionally associated with femininity without compromising their masculinity. Basically, showcasing another representation of masculinity that can emerge in different forms. Secondly, using Doctor Tony as a brand association also appeals to a broader audience than simply younger generations as compared to the BL couple. His presence implies that skincare is for all ages which reinforces the concept of IMT for a more open and inclusive masculinity.

## Comparison

Beginning with *product packaging*, there is a clear contrast between both brands. The packaging from the traditional video creates a sense of power, luxury, and mystery by using black, matte-finish packaging with white letters that enhance the phrase ‘for MEN’. In contrast, the packaging from the contemporary video uses a brighter and more vibrant color scheme, featuring white and pink. This offers a more modern and eye-detaching design.

Despite their contrasting aesthetics, *product information* is given priority in both videos. They present the benefits associated with the advertised products to highlight their usefulness. However, the delivery styles differ. The conventional video utilizes a problem-solving approach with an authoritative tone to establish trust, whereas the contemporary video employs a more formal approach by including Thai polite indicators and a respectful tone of voice.

When it comes to *product association*, the two brands have different approaches. The traditional video establishes a connection between the use of skincare and male attractiveness to women, highlighting heterosexuality. The contemporary video, on the other hand, establishes an association with BL actors and the founder of the brand, suggesting inclusivity for all genders and ages.

### 6.5.5 Cross-cultural comparison

#### Traditional videos

The traditional U.S. and Thai companies are similar in that they use Hegemonic masculinity traits in their *product packaging* to convey a masculine appearance. The product packaging in the U.S. video features a variety of colors such as black, blue, white, and light green, representing different degrees of masculinity associated with each person in the video. This can be interpreted as a reflection of the individualistic culture in the U.S. Furthermore, the packaging design contributes to a masculine image through the use of bold fonts that imply strength and durability, combined with a sleek and modern appearance. In comparison, the Thai brand’s product packaging is black with a matte finish and bold white letters, highlighting the phrase ‘for MEN’ on every product. This explicitly states the target audience while evoking a sense of power, and elegance, reflecting a collectivistic culture that values social status and hierarchy.

Concerning *product information*, the two videos are positioned at opposite ends of the spectrum. Explicit product details, such as the benefits or a demonstration of how to use the products, are absent from the traditional U.S. video. This could suggest an underlying message that reinforces Hegemonic masculinity by portraying men who uphold traditional masculinity ideals and avoid any direct association with feminine practices like skincare. In contrast, the Thai video provides detailed information about each product, emphasizing its benefits. This is accomplished by presenting skincare as a tool for men to improve their appearance while establishing trust through the use of an authoritative tone and problem-solving approach.

For *product association*, the U.S. brand connects the product with each character by creating the impression that the product empowers men to excel in their respective fields. There is also a focus on the type of man who uses the product: strong, ambitious, and successful. This indicates that the product is a tool for achieving traditional masculinity ideals. For instance, the fencer throws the product into the air, and in a transition, the scene changes to him spinning his fencing helmet. These moments are followed by scenes in which he practices, implying that the product enhances his performance. The portrayal of men with qualities including skill and strength aligns with the ideals of Hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, the men appear to excel in their respective fields, which reflects the American emphasis on individualism. On the other hand, the Thai video positions the product as a tool for men to enhance their appearance and increase their attractiveness to women. This is also emphasized explicitly through the statement “Oriental Princess wants you to look good and become the kind of man that women like”. With a focus on improved appearance as a benefit, the company aims to become the first choice for men seeking this kind of achievement. As opposed to emphasizing individual performance in the U.S. video, this association directly relates the product to the desired social objective, which is attractiveness to women.

### **Contemporary videos**

Comparing the analysis of *product packaging* in contemporary U.S. and Thai videos revealed how cultural influences shape marketing strategies regarding gender. In the U.S., the product packaging features a clear glass bottle with yellow serum, a black pipette, and a white label, using color symbolism to embrace inclusivity across all genders. The design emphasizes visibility and transparency promoting gender fluidity. This approach reflects a societal push

towards breaking traditional gender binaries and supporting the visibility of non-binary communities. In contrast, the Thai video employs a color scheme of white and pink, traditionally associated with femininity but balanced here to appear more gender-neutral. The packaging combines rounded fonts, typically feminine, with bold, straight lines, adding a masculine touch. This blend suggests a nuanced approach to gender that neither fully embraces nor rejects traditional norms, reflecting Thai culture's more integrated view of gender fluidity.

Moving on to *product information*, the U.S. video provides a detailed, step-by-step guide on product usage to reinforce the product's functionality and reliability. This method aligns with traditional notions of masculinity that prioritize logic and transparency. The detailed information serves to preempt legal issues and enhance consumer trust, reflecting a cultural emphasis on individual rights and protection. Conversely, the Thai video emphasizes product benefits with simplicity and broad applicability, using language that is neutral, inclusive and respectful, reflecting Thai cultural norms of politeness and harmony. Both approaches reflect their respective cultural contexts: the U.S. focus on detailed, transparent communication highlights a societal preference for informed consumerism and legal precaution, while Thailand's emphasis on respect and inclusivity in language showcases a communal approach aligning with broader social norms and values of gender fluidity and respect.

In the U.S., the *product association* is deeply intertwined with the concept of gender fluidity, emphasizing personal authenticity and diversity. Scenes highlight terms like “gender fluid” and “natural” paired with diverse individuals who embody these attributes, thereby promoting a gender-neutral product that embraces various gender expressions. This approach reflects the progressive American cultural push towards inclusivity and the rejection of traditional gender binaries. Conversely, the Thai video uses celebrity endorsement to create a connection with its audience. By featuring a well-known BL couple, Gemini and Fourth, each associated with specific serum types, the brand uses their popularity to foster a personal connection and attribute the celebrities' desirable traits to the products. Additionally, the inclusion of Doctor Tony, the brand's founder with a medical background, adds a layer of credibility and trust, suggesting that the endorsement by a medical professional ensures the product's effectiveness. This strategy reflects the Thai culture's respect for authority and celebrity influence, which is effectively used to enhance brand trustworthiness and appeal.

## 6.6 Advocacy

The last main theme that was identified through the multimodal thematic analysis is *Advocacy*. The analysis of this theme consists of an exploration of the findings from previous themes to examine how each of the four videos advocate for social and political issues through their advertising. The theme is divided into the two sub-themes: *Political expression* and *Intersectionality* to shed light on advocacy surrounding issues relating to gender, race, sexuality etc.

### 6.6.1 Traditional U.S. video

Through the analysis of the five previous main themes, we observed various indications of the theme of *advocacy* through *political expression*, particularly in how men are depicted as the leading forces of success and power in society. This reflects both patriarchal and capitalist values, where performance and financial success are highly valued. The themes which support these findings particularly are those of: *appearance*, *space*, *social connection*, and *emotional expression*.

The main theme of *appearance* highlighted the value of men through their titles and roles in society, and through the men's physiques, signaling their strength and persistence. This reflection showcased the individualistic nature of American culture, where competition and self-reliance are emphasized. The portrayal of high-status men further emphasizes patriarchal views, placing men at the top of society, which was especially reinforced in the theme of *space*, where the use of durable materials metaphorically was linked to the men's characteristics, symbolizing their foundational role in the construction of society.

In the themes of *social connection* and *emotional expression*, men were depicted as powerful and dominant, reinforcing patriarchal views that position men above other genders. The hierarchical view of gender was evident in the portrayal of the ballet dancer as less masculine compared to other men, supporting the notion that anything associated with femininity is considered inferior to the superiority of Hegemonic masculinity. One could view the portrayal of the "less" masculine men: the Asian athlete, the shoe designer, and the ballet dancer to be a way of suggesting a more inclusive view of gender, where traditional norms of masculinity do not solely dictate how it is perceived. These men display high levels of Hegemonic masculinity despite their portrayals being softer or different to the two Caucasian

men: the fencer and the fashion designer, which can be explained by intersectionality and HMT.

*Intersectionality* plays a significant role in the construction and portrayal of masculinity throughout the entire video. One of the most prevalent factors being race, with the Asian athlete and the African American shoe designer depicted differently from the Caucasian men presented in the video. Their emotional expressions are softer, counterbalanced by more traditionally masculine traits found in the theme of *appearance* and *emotional expression*. This highlights how intersectionality influences the construction of masculinity, with race determining the extent to which Hegemonic ideals can be achieved without Marginalization and being viewed as Subordinate. On the other hand, the inclusion of the two men from different races may also reflect the company's advocacy for diversity and inclusivity, as companies are often expected to represent racial diversity in their advertising (Mitchell 2022). However, the portrayal still aligns with stereotypes within U.S. culture, indicating that race remains a determining factor in achieving Hegemonic masculinity.

The video from Lab Series does not advocate for genders other than males or explicitly support specific sexualities. Instead, it advocates for the reinforcement of traditional gender norms, portraying men as leaders and foundations of society. The emphasis lies on individualism, capitalism, and the pursuit of financial success and status as ideals for men. Thus the company can be interpreted as being in supporting traditional gender roles, where men are seen as dominant and successful, maintaining patriarchal and capitalist values.

### 6.6.2 Contemporary U.S. video

Through the findings of the analysis so far, NOTO's *advocacy* and *political expressions* are explicit and seen throughout all five previous themes, but particularly through the founder Gloria's advocacy for gender inclusivity which we explored in the theme *product*. Besides talking about product associations, Gloria explicitly emphasizes the acceptance and embrace of non-binary and non-conforming gender identities, reflecting Inclusive masculinity theory. She talks about her aim to create a community and safe space for gender-fluid individuals, acknowledging the societal need for such spaces due to ongoing challenges in acceptance. While advocating for non-binary and fluid identities, Gloria also recognizes traditional gender categories, stating that the brand is for all genders and ages, highlighting the brand's inclusivity and commitment to diversity.



In terms of *intersectionality*, the video features an individual of African descent, demonstrating the company's commitment to racial inclusivity and intersectionality. This choice highlights the importance of representing diverse races and acknowledging the nuanced needs of different skin types. The linguistic and aural elements emphasize that the product suits all skin types, which can be seen as an effort to include and address the unique skincare needs of high-melanin skin (Georgievskaya 2023).

Furthermore, the findings of the themes of *appearance*, *emotional expression* and *space* showed how the video places significant emphasis on gender aspects, particularly the non-binary experience, which was particularly seen through the color choices which represents equality (white), the blend of masculinity (black) and femininity (white) and the non-binary gender (yellow). The video acknowledges the struggles of non-binary individuals, celebrating their bravery in self-expression, with staged authenticity to further emphasize the vulnerability and courage of non-binary people in expressing their true identities which we saw through the theme of *emotional expression*. This aligns with IMT, which promotes the acceptance of all gender expressions and sexualities, advocating for a society where individuals can freely express their identities without fear of prejudice.

Overall, the video's political and intersectional messages are clear: it advocates for the free expression of all gender identities and sexualities, promoting a more inclusive and accepting society. By emphasizing both traditional and non-traditional gender categories, the video underscores the brand's dedication to inclusivity and diversity, aligning with the principles of IMT.

## **Comparison**

The Lab Series video strongly showcases *political expressions* of patriarchal and capitalist values by depicting men as primary forces of success and power across various themes. The video celebrates men valued for their societal roles and physical strength, emphasizing an individualistic culture where self-reliance and competition are key. High-status men are portrayed as the pinnacle of societal hierarchy, reinforcing traditional masculinity, with durable materials metaphorically being linked to men's foundational roles in society, reflecting patriarchal views. Conversely, the NOTO video explicitly *advocates* for gender

inclusivity and diversity, aligning with Inclusive masculinity theory. It emphasizes acceptance of non-binary and non-conforming gender identities, aiming to create a community and safe space for gender-fluid individuals, which is reflected in the color choices symbolize equality (white), a blend of masculinity and femininity (black and white), and non-binary identity (yellow), highlighting the struggles and bravery of non-binary individuals and celebrating their self-expression and courage.

*Intersectionality* plays a significant role in the Lab Series video, where Asian and African American men are depicted with softer emotional expressions but traditional masculine traits, reflecting racial stereotypes. This portrayal suggests that achieving hegemonic masculinity is more challenging for non-Caucasian men due to racial stereotypes, emphasizing traditional gender norms, individualism, financial success, and maintaining patriarchal values. In contrast, NOTO's inclusion of an individual of African descent and emphasis on products for all skin types, including high-melanin skin, underscore the brand's dedication to racial inclusivity. The video advocates for the free expression of all gender identities and sexualities, promoting a more inclusive and accepting society. These differing approaches highlight a societal shift towards inclusive understandings of gender and sexuality, reflecting the evolving landscape of gender advocacy in media.

In conclusion, the Lab Series video advocates for and reinforces traditional patriarchal and capitalist values, emphasizing individualism and hierarchical masculinity. In contrast, the NOTO video advocates for gender inclusivity and diversity, promoting acceptance of non-binary identities.

### 6.6.3 Traditional Thai video

For this video, we primarily identified the *political expression* but found no indication of *intersectionality*. The traditional Thai video can be interpreted as conveying a political expression related to reinforcing hegemonic masculinity. Throughout the findings of each theme, the advertisement appears to promote the notion of a strong, heterosexual male who practices proper self-care to enhance his appearance and become attractive to women, which represents a specific portrayal of masculinity. This suggests a narrow definition of masculinity that implies self-care is simply a tool for men to enhance their appearance while adhering to conventional gender norms. This is expressed through various elements in the

video. For example, in the theme of *social connection*. There is an emphasis on power dynamics which revolves around preserving stereotypically masculinity and overcoming the internal struggle by practicing proper self-care. A cultural factor has been used to encourage males to utilize the product by exploiting their fear of losing face, which is a common concern in many Asian cultures including Thailand. Portraying the protagonist using the advertised and obtaining success, as defined by the video, implies a connection between particular products and specific masculinity which is one associated with power and achievement. Within the theme of *product*, the traditional video also suggests a target audience of heterosexual men. This is evident in the packaging design that uses black with a matte finish to illustrate a sense of luxury and masculinity, the use of an authoritative tone to convey product information, and the product association that relies on the notion that, when using their product, the users become ‘the right man that women want’.

However, it is also important to take into account the possibility that this specific portrayal of masculinity could be a marketing strategy that is in accordance with the brand image that this product line is attempting to establish. The emphasis on traditional masculinity may be an attempt to appeal to males who have more conventional perceptions of gender norms. These males may be wary of skincare because they believe that it is an indication of femininity. Consequently, the brand is offering a solution to that concern. The slogan, ‘Be the right man that women want’, emphasizes attractiveness as one of the benefits of using their products. This presents skincare as a tool for male affirmation and attracting women and can be perceived as an attempt to normalize skincare for men.

#### 6.6.4 Contemporary Thai video

Regarding the *political expression* of this video, there are different ways to view it. From one perspective, one could argue that their representation of men is a political expression of breaking gender norms. Traditionally, men do not engage in activities related to beauty or self-care because it is perceived as a feminine activity. By featuring male actors to promote skincare products, especially serums, the brand is challenging the traditional notion of masculinity. This suggests a political expression that men can also engage in self-care because it reflects a different gender expression, which is a break from traditional gender norms. Various elements in the video contribute to this political expression which goes beyond just using skincare products. For instance, the actors’ appearance themselves

challenges traditional gender norms. As revealed in the theme of *appearance*, the men are seen wearing vibrant colors such as white and pink, which are perceived as feminine colors. Beyond only promoting the serums, this decision may serve as a means of rejecting the notion that pink is exclusively associated with women. Similarly, the actors' soft facial features and a touch of makeup further challenged traditional gender norms. Another example emerges during the theme of *space*, which explores and reflects different gender expressions. On one hand, each character's personal space is a reflection of their individual personality, preferences, and gender identity. On the other hand, the shared living room space represents a common ground where various types of masculinity can coexist on equal footing. This emphasizes the notion that every type of gender identity can exist alongside one another. Through the advertising, the brand conveys a message: skincare is not gendered. This encourages men to take care of their skin and promotes an inclusive image of masculinity.

From another perspective, one could claim that the video does not convey a political expression. Considering that it is common for brands to utilize BL couples to promote their products in Thailand because their fanbase is loyal and is likely to purchase anything they endorse, one could argue that selecting a popular BL couple as brand ambassadors is a marketing strategy without any underlying message about masculinity or inclusivity. In other words, the selection of brand ambassadors may be based on business considerations. Moreover, the Asian male skincare market is rather large and is still growing (Hu 2024). Thus, men who engage in skincare and self-care are also more widespread in Thai society (Rittapirom 2021). It is not an uncommon sight for everyday men, not simply celebrities or influencers, to take care of their skin and overall appearance. This could be considered a reflection of an integrated aspect of Thai culture, which accepts a greater spectrum of gender expression. Consequently, it may also be argued that the company is not using this depiction of males as a means for promoting political expression, as it is already accepted and normalized in society.

Regarding this video's *intersectionality*, it can be interpreted as an attempt to represent the LGBTQ+ community in advertising. While historically Thailand has not been welcoming of the LGBTQ+ community, there has been a shift in attitudes. There is a parallel drawn between the change in public opinion on LGBTQ+ and the rapid rise in popularity of the Y series in Thailand. Some even perceive BL dramas as a soft power for the country (Shepherd 2023). Consequently, by featuring a BL couple, the brand can contribute to normalizing and

promoting a more positive portrayal of LGBTQ+ people in advertising. This positive depiction can challenge preconceived notions and provide a new perception for audiences unfamiliar with homosexuality. However, it is important to acknowledge the potential for queerbaiting. While showcasing a BL couple can be progressive, the objective of the brand is also essential. The romantic relationship between the characters in the video is implicitly conveyed and may rely on the audience's prior knowledge of the actors as a BL couple. This suggests the possibility that the brand is exploiting the BL fanbase and their purchasing power for commercial gain, rather than depicting a true representation of a romantic relationship between two men. Moreover, using a BL couple gives the argument another dimension. It can be considered a step toward inclusivity, however, it does not fully capture the broad spectrum of the community compared to featuring actual homosexual couples. This could point to a preference for using already-established popularity over accurate portrayal.

### **Comparison**

Regarding *political expression*, the conventional video promotes a specific portrayal of masculinity in order to reinforce Hegemonic masculinity. It shows a strong, heterosexual man who utilizes skincare products to attract women, implying that self-care can enhance their appearance while conforming to Hegemonic masculinity. However, this portrayal could also be perceived as a marketing strategy, rather than a political expression, with the aim of normalizing skincare for men who conform to traditional masculinity. One could argue that the marketing approach may incorporate subtle elements of metrosexuality, which aligns with modern masculinity. Conversely, the contemporary video promotes inclusivity and challenges traditional gender norms. It depicts self-care as an expression of gender identity rather than as a means of adhering to or maintaining traditional masculinity. Thus, there is an emphasis on the notion that skincare is not gendered, and everyone can practice self-care. However, it could also be interpreted as a marketing strategy rather than a political statement, given the use of a well-known BL couple with a large fanbase as brand ambassadors.

In terms of *intersectionality*, it has only been identified for contemporary video. Thus, we are unable to draw comparisons.

### **6.6.5 Cross-cultural comparison**

#### **Traditional videos**

Despite their differing approaches, both the U.S. and Thai videos appear to convey a political expression regarding the preservation of traditional masculinity. Beginning with the U.S. video, it reinforced traditional gender norms by depicting men as leaders and successful men in their respective fields, while connecting their status with physical strength. There is an emphasis on masculinity that is centered around traits including success, power, persistence and which resonates with Hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, this illustration reflects the individualistic and competitive American cultural ideals, which consider self-reliance and a drive for success as valuable characteristics in men. The U.S. video also includes the element of *intersectionality*, which was not identified in the Thai video. It recognizes the influence of race on how men embody Hegemonic masculinity and emphasizes how race can determine the degree to which Hegemonic ideals can be achieved.

Similar to the U.S. video, the Thai video also advocates for the reinforcement of traditional masculinity. The advertisement portrays the protagonist as a strong, heterosexual man who practices proper self-care to become attractive to women. He embodies characteristics of confidence and dominance which resonate with the notion of traditional masculinity. The video also positions skincare products as a tool for men to maintain and adhere to traditional masculinity. Although there is no explicit reference to Thai culture, it draws on it culturally by using the fear of losing face, a common concern shared by many Asian cultures, including Thailand, to persuade men to use skin care products and engage in self-care.

In summary, both videos promote traditional masculinity through different cultural lenses. The U.S. video links it to status and achievement, which is a core value in American culture. The Thai video emphasizes practicing self-care as a means to maintain a strong and appealing image to women, drawing on the concept of losing face which is important in many Asian cultures.

### **Contemporary videos**

Comparing the *advocacy* in the contemporary U.S. and Thai videos revealed how cultural influences shape marketing strategies regarding gender inclusivity and masculinity. In the U.S., NOTO's video explicitly advocates for gender inclusivity and diversity, aligning with Inclusive masculinity theory. Founder Gloria emphasizes acceptance of non-binary and non-conforming gender identities, creating a community and safe space for gender-fluid individuals. This approach reflects a societal push towards breaking traditional gender

binaries and supporting non-binary visibility, highlighting the importance of inclusive marketing. In contrast, the Thai video features male actors promoting skincare products, challenging traditional masculinity by normalizing self-care for men. The actors' use of vibrant, traditionally feminine colors and makeup subtly shifts gender norms. This nuanced approach reflects Thai culture's more integrated view of gender fluidity, balancing traditional norms with modern inclusivity without overtly challenging societal expectations.

Regarding *intersectionality*, the U.S. video includes an individual of African descent, demonstrating a commitment to racial inclusivity and addressing diverse skincare needs. This inclusion underscores the brand's dedication to diversity and aligns with broader American cultural values of individualism and equality. The detailed presentation of product benefits and transparent communication reflect a societal preference for informed consumerism and legal precaution. Conversely, the Thai video's use of a popular BL couple and a medical professional as endorsers leverages celebrity influence and societal respect for authority. This strategy aligns with Thai cultural norms of politeness and communal values, promoting an inclusive image of masculinity through respected public figures. The emphasis on mutual respect and connection in the product presentation showcases Thailand's cultural emphasis on harmony and relational dynamics.

In the U.S. the advocacy for gender fluidity is evident in the videos visual and verbal messaging, promoting both personal authenticity and diversity. This aligns with the progressive American cultural push towards inclusivity. The Thai video, while subtly promoting inclusivity, primarily capitalizes on the appeal and authority of well-known personalities to foster trust and connection with its audience. This reflects a cultural preference for gentle masculinity that respects traditional roles while evolving them. However, both videos demonstrate a shift towards more inclusive understandings of masculinity, with the U.S. video directly challenging traditional gender roles, emphasizing non-binary acceptance and individualism, while the Thai video navigates its cultural context with subtle shifts towards inclusivity and emotional openness. These contrasting approaches highlight how cultural contexts shape marketing strategies and consumer engagement, with the U.S. prioritizing gender inclusivity and Thailand leveraging respected public figures to subtly promote diverse gender expressions.

## 7 Discussion and conclusion

### Summary of our findings

#### *U.S. traditional masculinity*

The findings revealed that traditional norms of masculinity such as domination, physical strength, and success remain deeply embedded, despite indications of a more nuanced perspective. While attire plays a part because it reflects professional achievements and physical performance, physique is equally important because it expresses strength and peak performance, both of which are characteristics of traditional masculinity. This is further underlined by the prevalent negative emotions such as aggression and dominance. The absence of social interaction and spaces that are specifically associated with each man, highlights individualism which aligns with American culture. Certain men, especially those who are not Caucasian, are portrayed as ‘less masculine’ than the others, suggesting a power dynamic between them is cultivated by compositions to be the most masculine through the exhibition of different attributes. This shows the individuals’ hierarchical relationship. Furthermore, the results of the findings show a connection between using the product and enhanced performance. Since it enables individuals to excel in their fields of profession, there is an implication that the product is a tool for achieving traditional masculinity ideal types. However, an interesting finding is the lack of product information, which suggests that men should avoid any clear associations with feminine activities. It implies that practicing self-care should be discreet. Moreover, racial and ethnic background appear to have an influence in defining masculinity in the U.S. In conclusion, while the depiction of men predominantly reinforces traditional masculinity through performance, there is a hint of tension between the different types of masculinity.

#### *Thai traditional masculinity*

The findings revealed a complex picture of Thai traditional masculinity, characterized by an interplay between tradition and emerging tendencies. While slender physiques are considered more favorable than those that are muscular, social status and hierarchy are less associated with physical attributes. Instead, they are expressed through attire and the choice of color. In addition, there is attention to physiognomy, which may contradict conventional perception by showcasing softer features and a well-groomed appearance. Although appearance conveys



traits associated with traditional masculinity, the portrayal of these elements differs from conventional norms. An interesting finding is the openness to expressing both positive and negative emotions, presenting the possibility of challenging conventional stoicism and the Thai cultural norm of practicing emotional control. However, there are other ways that traditional masculinity manifests, especially when it involves an emphasis on appealing to women. This underlines heterosexuality and the internal power struggle men face in balancing traditional norms and contemporary trends. Products are positioned as a tool to navigate this conflict while regaining a sense of power and masculinity. Improved appearance and maintaining a strong image of attractiveness to women without compromising masculinity are associated with proper self-care practices utilizing products created exclusively for males. In conclusion, while traditional gender norms still exist, the incorporation of self-care practices, emotional expression, and an emphasis on outward appearance may indicate that the construction of masculinity in this video is both flexible and bound by societal conventions, indicating a more nuanced ideal type of masculinity.

#### *Differences and similarities*

It is evident from the findings that while the traditional masculinity videos from the U.S. and Thailand promote traditional gender roles, there is a subtle difference. The U.S. video defines masculinity through performance and contributions to society by emphasizing power, individual and professional achievement, and competitiveness. Overall, the U.S. approach places a greater importance on your actions than on who you are. Conversely, the Thai video places an emphasis on adhering to traditional gender norms, maintaining a masculine image, and practicing self-care to be viewed as attractive for the opposite gender, highlighting heterosexuality. This prioritizes social status and appearance above individual achievement. Notably, the Thai video hints more at Inclusive masculinity with metrosexual aspects which indicates a potential multifaceted masculinity in the future.

#### *U.S. contemporary masculinity*

Throughout the analysis it was found that the contemporary masculinity as portrayed in the video by NOTO Botanics was constructed through various themes, starting off with the theme of appearance, it was found that contemporary masculinity in the U.S. had the majority of its emphasis on personal style and physiognomy as opposed to physique. This proved that

a key element of contemporary masculinity is the acceptance of showcasing emotion and authenticity alongside expressing one's gender identity through style, regardless of gendered notions of appearance. This was further highlighted with the omission of physique, as the biological sex of the individuals was not considered an important factor of perceived masculinity, as an individual could express masculinity through other aspects than their body. The emotional expression as showcased in the video proved to be an important aspect of masculinity and gender non-conformity, as the positive emotional display by the individuals was expressive and leaned towards emotions of a vulnerable nature which showed that masculinity is one of emotional openness and being perceived as 'weak' does not stem from showcasing emotion, thus there is an embrace of diverse emotional expression and gender identities to being tied to certain emotions. The findings of the theme of space highlighted notions of freedom of gender expression, where the emphasis was on showcasing that all expression of gender, masculinity or femininity is equal and that society should not be dictating gendered behaviors. This analysis found a strong support for non-binary gender expressions and the freedom that any expressions of gendered behaviors, as according to society, should not be determined as 'less' masculinity if the individual identifies as such. The construction of contemporary masculinity as portrayed in the U.S. video, showed that interactions between individuals of physical tactility is acceptable and not a determining factor of 'less' or 'more' masculinity, highlighting that relations between people of different sexes can be of a friendly nature and does not have to entail intimacy of romantic or sexual character. Furthermore, the acceptance of exploring and being comfortable in one's own skin through self-intimacy was highlighted to show the importance of self-discovery in terms of gender identity and expression, noting that all gender expressions are valid. Through the theme of *product*, it became apparent that all gendered expressions were embraced in the video: masculinity, femininity, and non-binaries, this highlighted gender being performative rather than biologically determined. Moreover, the video advocates for gender fluidity, non-binary gender expressions, and identities alongside the gender spectrum, making the overall construction of masculinity a reflection of what behavior and appearance the eye of the beholder determines. Thus, it cannot be determined the exact construction of contemporary masculinity based on the video, as the video proposes a more abstract question of 'what is gender?' and 'is it possible to be both masculine and feminine or none of them?'. The video from the U.S. reflects a change in terms of ideas of masculinity and the concept of gender fluidity as being further studied in terms of masculinity studies.

### *Thai contemporary masculinity*

As for the construction of contemporary masculinity in Thailand, the analysis findings revealed that there lies less emphasis on having a muscular physique and more emphasis is placed on the individual personal style of the men, with the freedom to dress in colors and styles that might be perceived as feminine by some. This highlights that there is a cultural acceptance of dressing and expressing one's appearance through fashion without compromising perceived masculinity. When it comes to emotional expression and its portrayal in the Thai video, there were equal levels of negative and positive emotional displays indicating an acceptance for men to express the full spectrum of emotions and on the other hand, the emotional display being divided into one emotion for each indicates the embrace and acceptance of various expressions of masculinity with each being equally acceptable. Furthermore, the emphasis on maintaining harmony and balance reflects Thai culture and the fact that men can engage in, what some might argue to be feminized, behavior of caring, and nurturing behaviors without being perceived as 'less' masculine than others not engaged in this feminized behavior. The analysis of the theme of space revealed how the video views masculinity in the context of Thai society and culture, by utilizing both traditional feminine and masculine spaces to portray each of the men and then utilizing a neutral living space area that serves as a metaphor for society. This shows how the coexistence of various types and expressions of masculinity is accepted and embraced in the culture, or at least this is the message of the video of what it wants society to be. Thus, the Thai video has an inclusive portrayal of masculinity and the existence of masculinity expressions across the spectrum, not being judged as 'less' or 'more' masculine. When exploring the theme of social connection, product, and advocacy, one aspect became rather evident as there is a clear indication of an underlying insinuation of a sexual or romantic relationship between the two male characters. This showcases that the construction of masculinity as portrayed by the video, is accepting of homosexual relations between individuals, albeit with some elements of heteronormative views; there being a more feminine and a more masculine present male in the relation. This is further emphasized by the fact that this is a BL couple that is in fact two straight men, which could lead to some discussions of whether this portrayal of homosexuality is queer-bating and not truly reflect the gay experience of Thai men. However, the portrayal showcases an advocacy for the acceptance of masculinity in terms of sexual preference not determining the masculinity of either man. The video by Doctor Tony showcases contemporary masculinity where different

expressions of masculinity are accepted and can coexist as equal versions of masculinity, while simultaneously advocating for the acceptance of men as members of LGBTQ+. This highlights the way Thailand is viewing masculinity and its expressions as being more fluid in expressions, where ‘softer’ men are still perceived as masculine and men who fit more stereotypical notions of masculinity are not placed above the other males. This indicates an inclusive view of masculinity where gender expression and sexual orientation are not dictating factors in the construction of contemporary masculinity.

### *Differences and similarities*

Contemporary masculinity in both the U.S. and Thailand, as portrayed in the analyzed videos, reflects inclusivity and acceptance of diverse gender expressions. However, there are notable similarities and differences in how these cultural contexts portray and construct masculinity. In terms of similarities, both the U.S. and Thai videos highlight the importance of personal style and emotional expression in constructing contemporary masculinity. They reject traditional norms that equate masculinity with physical strength and emotional repression, instead advocating for a broader, more inclusive understanding. Both cultures portray masculinity as dynamic and multifaceted, embracing gender fluidity and diverse expressions. As for differences, the U.S. video places a significant emphasis on gender fluidity and non-binary identities, reflecting a progressive stance on gender inclusivity. In contrast, the Thai video incorporates cultural elements like harmony and balance and subtly addresses homosexual relationships while maintaining some heteronormative dynamics. The Thai approach leverages cultural respect for authority and public figures, using well-known personalities to promote its message, whereas the U.S. video focuses more on abstract notions of gender and personal authenticity. Both portrayals reflect an evolving understanding of masculinity that values inclusivity and emotional openness. While the U.S. video emphasizes breaking down traditional gender barriers and promoting non-binary identities, the Thai video integrates modern views with cultural values of harmony and communal well-being, showcasing a more fluid and inclusive approach to masculinity.

### *Traditional and contemporary comparison*

The findings illustrate the complex nature of masculinity in the U.S. and Thailand, revealing the coexistence of both traditional and contemporary types of masculinity which are based on

expected behavior and gender expressions related to traditional roles and sexual orientation. In the U.S. context, there is a general notion that gender is performative. The traditional video centers masculinity on one's roles, achievements, and contributions to society. Thus, masculinity can be seen as a reflection of what you do and how you fulfill societal expectations. Conversely, the contemporary video places emphasis on gender expression, noting that masculinity is about who you are, regardless of biological sex. This depiction highlights the freedom of gender identity and how each individual chooses to express their masculinity. In the Thai context, gender expectations surrounding sexuality are closely tied to masculinity. The traditional video's perspective of masculinity places heterosexuality at its core, with an emphasis on attracting the opposite sex. Masculinity is thus, in part, defined by heterosexual norms and behaviors. In stark contrast, the contemporary video shows an acceptance and inclusion of diverse expressions of masculinity among homosexual men. This point of view expands the definition of masculinity to include a range of sexual orientations.

## **Implications**

### *Academic implications*

Hegemonic masculinity theory, rooted in Western perspectives, can fall short in non-Western contexts like Thailand. It emphasizes traits such as dominance, emotional restraint, and physical strength, which may not align with Thai gender norms. In Thailand, masculinity often includes traits considered feminine in the West and this discrepancy highlights the risk of reinforcing stereotypes and misinterpreting Thai masculinities when applying the theory. Thus the implication is that researchers must avoid imposing Western norms onto a cultural context in which they may not fit. The theory of Inclusive masculinity also faces challenges, especially in the U.S. context, as the theory supports diverse gender expressions and rejects rigid binaries, aligning with contemporary gender inclusivity movements. However, it struggles to fully encompass the complexity of non-binary identities, which are prominent in U.S. gender discussions. The U.S. video emphasizes gender fluidity and non-binary identities, which the theory does not entirely capture. This means that even progressive theories like IMT need to evolve to include the full spectrum of gender identities. Therefore, the key academic implication is the need for theories that are adaptable and culturally sensitive. HMT risks misinterpretation in non-Western contexts, while IMT needs to better address non-binary identities. Scholars should consider these theoretical limitations and strive

to create or adapt frameworks that accurately reflect the diversity of masculinities globally and avoid cultural biases.

### *Practical implications - marketing strategies*

Our findings suggest that both cultures demonstrate a shift from stereotypes, with a more inclusive definition of masculinity that includes traditional characteristics as well as emotional expression, individuality, and practicing self-care. Marketers can use our results as a starting point on how to address this evolving concept of masculinity in both Thailand and the United States. For instance, in the U.S. there is an emphasis on who you are, and not what they do. This highlights the importance of individuality, freedom of diverse gender expression, and self-care in addition to traditional masculinity characteristics. In Thailand, there is a stress on the aspect of enhanced appearance for a more manly look to attract the opposite gender and the use of well-known figures to promote diverse expressions of masculinity. Overall, there may be a need to acknowledge the importance of diversity and challenge prejudices by crafting messages that focus on empowering men to be their best selves and showcasing a range of ethnicities, body types, and styles.

## **Limitations**

### *Limited scope*

The results of this thesis cannot be generalized to all men in Thailand or the United States because of the small sample size and the concentration on a niche industry, which is male skincare. However, this limited scope enables a more thorough examination of the representation of masculinity in this specific field and the possible cultural influences at play. This research provides a valuable starting point for investigating more comprehensive aspects of masculinity in these two countries.

### *Potential biases*

Our interpretations may be influenced by subjectivity, as our perspectives will be shaped by us being female and primarily raised in Western cultures. Despite efforts to maintain objectivity, these factors may unintentionally affect our findings. Additionally, our deductive approach, where we pre-established categories of ‘traditional’ and ‘contemporary’ masculinity based on the selected theories, might impact our analysis. This approach could

influence how we have interpreted and categorized the data from the videos, potentially leading to biases in our conclusions. While we have made efforts to minimize these biases and ensure our findings are as unbiased as possible, complete neutrality cannot be guaranteed. Recognizing these limitations is crucial for understanding the scope of the thesis.

## **Recommendations**

In our thesis we have solely highlighted one aspect of masculinity within the industry of skincare. In order to gain a broader picture of what is considered traditional and contemporary masculinity in the entirety of Thailand and the U.S., it is recommended to investigate other industries to gain a more comprehensive perspective on how masculinity manifests itself. Moreover, conducting studies of a bigger sample size is also recommended because it will provide a more nuanced understanding of what masculinity looks like in each of the countries. Lastly, our findings indicate that there is a need for further development of masculinity theories that are fully applicable in the contexts of non-western cultures and that can encompass more fluid expressions of masculinity including non-binary gender identities.

## 8 References

Acker, Joan. 1989. "the problem with patriarchy." *Sociology* 23, no. 2: 235–40.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/42853922>.

Acker, Joan. 1990. "HIERARCHIES, JOBS, BODIES: A Theory of Gendered Organizations." *Gender & Society* 4 (2): 139-158.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/089124390004002002>

Allen, Jo. 2023. "TikTok's #GRWM trend is encouraging men to try make-up and skin care." *Cosmetic business*. Accessed on February 16, 2024.

[https://www.cosmeticsbusiness.com/news/article\\_page/TikToks\\_GRMW\\_trend\\_is\\_encouraging\\_men\\_to\\_try\\_make-up\\_and\\_skin\\_care/208075](https://www.cosmeticsbusiness.com/news/article_page/TikToks_GRMW_trend_is_encouraging_men_to_try_make-up_and_skin_care/208075)

Anderson, Eric. 2009. *Inclusive Masculinity: The changing nature of masculinity*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Routledge.

Anderson, Eric. 2015. "Assessing the sociology of sport: On changing masculinities and homophobia." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 50 (4-5): 363-367.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690214538628>

Anusha, M. Gifty. 2023. "The Significance of Beauty Content and Self-Care: Unveiling the Power Within." *Linkedin*. Accessed on February 6, 2024.

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/significance-beauty-content-self-care-unveiling-power-anusha>

Baker, Paul and Erez Levon. 2016. "'That's what I call a man': representations of racialised and classed masculinities in the UK print media." *Gender and Language* 10 (1): 106-139.

<https://doi.org/10.1558/genl.v10i1.25401>



Bangkok Post. N.d. "Long live the Queen mother" Accessed April 27, 2024.

<https://www.bangkokpost.com/specials/queen-sirikit/2019/>

Baudinette, Thomas and Chavalin Svetanant. 2023. "Mobilizing idol celebrity in queer affective advertising: exploring the impacts of 'Boys Love' media and fandom in Thailand." *South East Asia Research* 31, no. 4: 417-434.

Baudinette, Thomas. 2019. "Lovesick, the Series: adapting Japanese 'Boys Love' to Thailand and the creation of a new genre of queer media." *South East Asia Research* 27, no. 2: 115-132.

Baudinette, Thomas. 2019. "Lovesick, the Series: adapting Japanese 'Boys Love' to Thailand and the creation of a new genre of queer media." *South East Asia Research* 27, no. 2: 115-132.

Baudinette, Thomas. 2024. *Boys love media in Thailand: Celebrity, fans, and transnational Asian queer popular culture*. Bloomsbury.

Baxter, Kathrine. 2020. "The impact of gendered content in printed health advertisements on attitudes and behavioural intentions: a mixed methods study in a social marketing campaign." Thesis, University of Bedfordshire.

Bear, Jacci Howard. 2019. "Dark Blue Colors." *Lifewire*. Accessed on May 15, 2024 from <https://www.lifewire.com/dark-blue-colors-in-design-1077454>

Berdahl, Jennifer L. 2018. "Work as a Masculinity Contest." *Journal of Social Issues* 74, No. 3: 422-448. DOI: 10.1111/josi.12289

Berger, Peter L., and Luckmann, Thomas. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality : A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York: Open Road Integrated Media.

Blackburn, Simon. 2016. "Ontology". *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Blanchard, Callum, Mark McCormack & Grant Peterson. (2015). "Inclusive Masculinities in a Working-Class Sixth Form in Northeast England." *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 46 (3): 310-333. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891241615610381>

Borelli, Gabriel. 2022. "About six-in-ten Americans say legalization of same-sex marriage is good for society." *Pew Research Center*. Accessed on April 18, 2024. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/11/15/about-six-in-ten-americans-say-legalization-of-same-sex-marriage-is-good-for-society/>

Bovet, Jeanne. 2018. "The Evolution of Feminine Beauty." *Exploring Transdisciplinarity in Art and Sciences*: 327-357. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76054-4\\_17](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76054-4_17)

Branchik, Blaine J. and Tilottama Ghosh Chowdhury. 2012. "Self-oriented Masculinity: Advertisements and the Changing Culture of the Male Market." *Journal of Macromarketing* 33, no. 2: 160-171.

Braun, Virginia and Victoria Clarke. 2006. "Using thematic analysis in psychology."

Broeke, Teo van den. 2023. "Male grooming is blooming. Here's why." *CNN Style*. Accessed on February 16, 2024. <https://edition.cnn.com/style/male-grooming-industry-booming/index.html>

Brooks, Clem and Catherine Bolzendahl. 2004. "The transformation of US gender role attitudes: cohort replacement, social-structural change, and ideological learning." *Social Science Research* 33 (1): 106-133. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0049-089X\(03\)00041-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0049-089X(03)00041-3)

Brown, Anna, Juliana Menasce Horowitz, Kim Parker and Rachel Minkin. 2022. "The Experiences, Challenges and Hopes of Transgender and Nonbinary U.S. Adults." *Pew*

Research Center. Accessed on April 17, 2024. <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/06/07/the-experiences-challenges-and-hopes-of-transgender-and-nonbinary-u-s-adults/>

Brown, Anna. 2022. “Deep partisan divide on whether greater acceptance of transgender people is good for society.” *Pew Research Center*. Accessed on April 18, 2024. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/02/11/deep-partisan-divide-on-whether-greater-acceptance-of-transgender-people-is-good-for-society/>

Brown, Leanna. 2019. “A Qualitative Study of the Possible Link Between Masculinity and Aggression Among College Football Players.” Thesis, Texas A&M University

Bryson, Lois. 1987. “Sport and the maintenance of masculine hegemony.” *Women’s Studies International forum* 10, no. 4: 349-360. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(87\)90052-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(87)90052-5)

Build. 2021. “The Most Durable Materials for Home Decoration That Will Ensure Your Home Decor is Eternal.” *Build Review*. Accessed on May 15, 2024 from: <https://www.build-review.com/the-most-durable-materials-for-home-decoration-that-will-ensure-your-home-decor-is-eternal/>

Byrne, Angela and Katie Milestone. 2023. ‘He wouldn’t be seen using it...’ Men’s use of male grooming products as a form of invisible consumption.” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 23, no. 1: 146-167. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1177/14695405211066314>

Byrne, Angela Dianne. 2017. “He wouldn’t be seen using it...” a critical examination of the influence of men’s facial skincare on male identity. Ph.d.: Manchester Metropolitan University.

Byrne, Angela, and Katie Milestone. 2023. “He wouldn’t be seen using it... Men’s use of male grooming products as a form of invisible consumption.” *Journal of Consumer Culture* 23, no. 1: 146-167.

Byrne, Angela, and Katie Milestone. 2023. "He wouldn't be seen using it... Men's use of male grooming products as a form of invisible consumption." *Journal of Consumer Culture* 23, no. 1: 146-167.

Carroll, Bret. 2003. "American Masculinities: a Historical Encyclopedia." Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, Incorporated.

Cassino, Dan, and Yasmin Besen-Cassino. 2022. "Gender Threat: American Masculinity in the Face of Change." California: Stanford University Press.

Chaplin, Tara M. 2015. "Gender and Emotion Expression: A Developmental Contextual Perspective." *Emotion review: journal of the International Society for Research on Emotion* 7 (1): 14–21. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073914544408>

Chemla, Salome. 2023. "The New Face of Masculinity: Men's Skincare Trends." Accessed on February 16, 2024. <https://www.gentlehomme.com/blogs/news/the-new-face-of-masculinity>

Cherry, Kendra. 2024. "The Meaning of the Color White." *Very Well Mind*. Accessed on April 29, 2024: <https://www.verywellmind.com/color-psychology-white-2795822>

Connell, R. W., and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the concept." *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6: 829-859.

Connell, Raewyn. 2005. *Masculinities*. 2nd Edition. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Connell's *Theory of Hegemonic Masculinity* (1995? 1987)

Cranswick, Ieuan, David Richardson, Martin Littlewood and David Tod. 2020. "'Oh take some man-up pills': A life-history study of muscles, masculinity, and the threat of injury."

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.peh.2020.100176>

Darstaru, Ana. 2020. "Design Stereotypes: What Defines Feminine Design or Masculine Design?". *Creatopy*. Accessed on May 16, 2024 from:

<https://www.creatopy.com/blog/masculine-design-feminine-design/>

Davis, Lewis S., and Claudia R. Williamson. 2019. "Does individualism promote gender equality?". *World Development* 123. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2019.104627>

Decorilla. 2013. "How to Balance Your Masculine and Feminine Décor." *Decorilla*.

Accessed on May 15, 2024 from:

<https://www.decorilla.com/online-decorating/how-to-balance-your-masculine-and-feminine-decor/>

Deguzman, Kyle. 2023. "What is Full Shot in Film? Types of Shots in Film Explained."

Accessed April 30, 2024

<https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/what-is-a-full-shot-in-film-definition/>

Delaney, Rebecca, JoNell Strough, Andrew M. Parker and Wandi Bruine de Bruin. 2015.

"Variations in Decision-Making Profiles by Age and Gender: A Cluster-Analytic Approach."

*Personality and individual differences* 85: 19–24. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2015.04.034>

Demetriou, Demetrakis Z. 2001. "Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity: A critique."

*Theory and Society* 30: 337-361.

Derlega, Valerian J., Diane Catanzaro and Robin J. Lewis. 2001. "Perceptions about tactile intimacy in same-sex and opposite-sex pairs based on research participants' sexual orientation." *Psychology of Men & Masculinity* 2 no. 2: 124–132.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/1524-9220.2.2.124>

Devon. 2023. “Incorporating Masculine styles into your interior design.” Accessed May 23, 2024. <https://lifestyleceramics.co.za/incorporating-masculine-styles-into-your-interior-design/>

Doctor Tony Shop. 2023. “ซีรีส์ลับพิเศษ คู่หัวใจตรงกันครั้งแรก!! เจมีไนท์-โพร์ท.” Uploaded on June 18, 2023. YouTube video, 0:45 min. <https://youtu.be/R465h5slGBI?si=I95YZNmSUjHkYUvm>

Doctor Tony. 2024. “Doctor Tony Shop.” Accessed April 3, 2024. <https://doctortonyshop.com/>

Douglas-Gabriel, Danielle. 2015. “The cultural ramifications of dreadlocks.” *The Washington Post*. Accessed on April 29, 2024: [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/twisted-locks-fraught-with-meaning/2015/06/10/72949b8c-f595-11e4-bcc4-e8141e5eb0c9\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/twisted-locks-fraught-with-meaning/2015/06/10/72949b8c-f595-11e4-bcc4-e8141e5eb0c9_story.html)

Dua, Tanya. 2021. “Trans and non-binary representation is going mainstream in advertising, with brands like e.l.f. Beauty, Mastercard, and Starbucks on board.” *Business Insider*, June 30, 2021. <https://www.businessinsider.com/trans-and-non-binary-representation-is-going-mainstream-in-advertising-2021-6>

Eagly and Wood 2012 (PDF) Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2012). Social role theory. In P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of theories of social psychology*: 458–476. Sage Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446249222.n49>

Eagly, Alice. H., and Wendy Wood. 2012. “Social role theory.” In *Handbook of theories of social psychology*, edited by P. A. M. Van Lange, A. W. Kruglanski, & E. T. Higgins, 458–476. Sage Publications Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446249222.n49>

Edwards, Mr. 2024. “Understanding Hegemonic Masculinity: Power, Control, and Dominance.” *Easy Sociology*. Accessed May 18, 2024 from:

<https://easysociology.com/sociology-of-gender/understanding-hegemonic-masculinity-power-control-and-dominance/>

Eisend, Martin. 2010. "A meta-analysis of gender roles in advertising." *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 38: 418-440.

Evans, Jonathan, Kelsey Jo Starr, Manolo Corichi, and William Miner. 2023. "Buddhism, Islam and Religious Pluralism in South and Southeast Asia." *Pew Research Center*. Accessed on February 22, 2024.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/09/12/buddhism-islam-and-religious-pluralism-in-south-and-southeast-asia/>

Evans, Jonathan, Kelsey Jo Starr, Manolo Corichi, and William Miner. 2023. "Buddhism, Islam and Religious Pluralism in South and Southeast Asia." *Pew Research Center*. Accessed on February 22, 2024.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2023/09/12/buddhism-islam-and-religious-pluralism-in-south-and-southeast-asia/>

Fleming, LaKeisha. 2023. "A Friendly Reminder: Showing Your Emotions Is Not a Sign of Weakness." *Very Well Mind*. Accessed on April 29, 2024:

<https://www.verywellmind.com/news-showing-emotions-benefits-mental-health-7368720>

Fontan, Jorge. 2021. "Masculine Interior Design ideas." Accessed May 23, 2024.

<https://fontanarchitecture.com/masculine-interior-design-ideas/>

Forsyth, Donelson R., Michele M. Heiney and Sandra S. Wright. 1997. "Biases in appraisals of women leaders." *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice* 1 no.1: 98-103.

DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2699.1.1.98>

Fowler, Kendra, and Veronica Thomas. 2015. "A content analysis of male roles in television advertising: Do traditional roles still hold." *Journal of Marketing Communications* 21, no. 5:356-371.

Frith, Katherine. 2014. *Globalizing Beauty: A Cultural History of the Beauty Industry*.

Gentry, James, and Robert Harrison. 2010. "Is advertising a barrier to male movement toward gender change?" *Marketing Theory* 10, no. 1: 74-96.

Georgievskaya, Anastasia. 2023. "Championing Diversity: Melanin-Rich Skin in the Beauty Industry." LinkedIn. Accessed on May 19, 2024 from:

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/championing-diversity-melanin-rich-skin-beauty-georgievskaya>

Gibbs, Evan and Rory Scothorne. 2020. "Accusers of capitalism: masculinity and populism on the Scottish radical left in the late twentieth century." *Social History* 45 (2): 218-245.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/03071022.2020.1732129>

Grampper, J.M. 2023. "Thailand's lucky color guide: Gifts for each day of the week." Accessed April 29, 2024.

<https://potico.co.th/blog/thailands-lucky-color-guide-how-to-choose-a-gift-for-a-thai/en>

Grau, Stacy Landreth, and Yorgos C. Zotos. 2016. "Gender stereotypes in advertising: a review of current research." *International Journal of Advertising* 35, no. 5: 761-770.

Guinness, Karen Mc. 2023. "The 16 Types of Camera Shots & Angles." Boords. Accessed on May 18, 2024 from: <https://boords.com/blog/16-types-of-camera-shots-and-angles-with-gifs>

GVR. 2020. "Men's Skincare Products Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Product(Shave Care, Creams & Moisturizers), By Distribution Channel, By Region, And Segment Forecasts, 2020-2027."

<https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/mens-skincare-products-market>



GVR. 2020. “Men's Skincare Products Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Product(Shave Care, Creams & Moisturizers), By Distribution Channel, By Region, And Segment Forecasts, 2020-2027.”

<https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/mens-skincare-products-market>

Hall, Stuart. 1997. *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*. Vol. 2. Sage

Halliday, Michael Alexander Kirkwood, and Christian MIM Matthiessen. 2013. *Halliday's introduction to functional grammar*. Routledge,

Harrison, Claire. 2008. “Real men do wear mascara: advertising discourse and masculine identity.” *Critical Discourse Studies* 5 (1): 55-74.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/17405900701768638>

Head, Jonathan, and Kelly No. 2024. “Thailand moves to legalise same-sex marriage” *BBC*, March 27, 2024. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-68672318>

Hinojosa, Ramon. 2010. “Doing Hegemony: Military, Men, and Constructing a Hegemonic Masculinity.” *The Journal of Men's Studies* 18 (2): 179-194.

<https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.1802.179>

Holt, Violet. 2023. “Female Beauty in Marketing – How Companies Appeal to both Men and Women.” *Arcadia*. Accessed on February 6, 2024.

<https://www.thearcadiaonline.com/female-beauty-in-marketing-how-companies-appeal-to-both-men-and-women/>

Hu, Yang. 2024. “Beyond Tradition: The blooming market of men's grooming in Asia.” *Euromonitor*, January 31, 2024. Accessed May 30, 2024.

<https://www.euromonitor.com/article/beyond-tradition-the-blooming-market-of-mens-grooming-in-asia2>

Hulme, Kyle. 2018. "Rainbow Nation: What 10 colors represent in Thai Culture." Accessed April 27, 2024.

<https://theculturetrip.com/asia/thailand/articles/rainbow-nation-what-10-colours-represent-in-thai-culture>

Human Rights Foundation. 2021. "Dismantling a Culture of Violence." *Human Rights Campaign Foundation*. Accessed May 16, 2024 from:

<https://reports.hrc.org/dismantling-a-culture-of-violence>

Human Rights Watch. 2021. "*People Can't Be Fit into Boxes*": *Thailand's Need for Legal Gender Recognition*. United States of America: Human Rights Watch.

Hummel, Kim Garmon. n.d. "Psychology of Logo Design: Font." *Sauce Agency*. Accessed on May 16, 2024 from: <https://blog.sauceagency.com/psychology-of-a-logo-font>

Jackson, Peter. 2011. "Queer Bangkok after the Millennium Beyond Twentieth-Century Paradigms." in *Queer Bangkok: 21st Century Markets, Media, and Rights* by Peter A. Jackson, 1-14. Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press.

Jackson, Peter. 2011. "Queer Bangkok after the Millennium Beyond Twentieth-Century Paradigms." in *Queer Bangkok: 21st Century Markets, Media, and Rights* by Peter A. Jackson, 1-14. Aberdeen: Hong Kong University Press.

Jonauskaite, Domicile, Adam Sutton, Nello Cristianini and Christine Mohr. 2021. "English colour terms carry gender and valence biases: A corpus study using word embeddings." *PloS one* 16, no 6. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0251559>

Jorgensen, Nickolas E. 1995. "Media and identity creation in contemporary Thailand." Master's Thesis, San Jose State University.

Joydeep. 2023. "Skin Care Market Size, Consumer Trends and Forecast: Top Stats [2030]." *Brentonway*. Accessed on February 6, 2024.  
<https://brentonway.com/skin-care-market-size-trends-forecast/>

Justia. 2015. "Obergefell v. Hodges, 576 U.S. 644 (2015)." Justia U.S. Supreme Court. Accessed on April 18, 2024. <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/576/644/>

Kang-Nguyen, Dredge Byung'chu. 2019. "The Softening of Butches: *The Adoption of Korean "Soft" Masculinity among Thai Toms*." in *Pop Empires: Transnational and Diasporic Flows of India and Korea*, edited by S. Heijin Lee, Monika Mehta, Robert Ji-Song Ku and Allison Alexy, 19-36. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Kenalemang-Palm, Lame Maatla. 2021. "Visual ageism and the subtle sexualisation of older celebrities in L'Oréal's advert campaigns: a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis" *Aging and society* 42 (9): 2122 – 2139. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X20002019>

Kenalemang-Palm, Lame Maatla. 2023. "The beautification of men within skincare advertisements: A multimodal critical discourse analysis." *Journal of Aging Studies* 66. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jaging.2023.101153>

Kestenbaum, Richard. 2022. "How Men's Attitude Toward Grooming And Cosmetics Is Changing." *Forbes*, March 24, 2022.  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/richardkestenbaum/2022/03/22/how-mens-attitude-towards-grooming-and-cosmetics-is-changing/?sh=375ad8d13b63>

Keyes, E. Jane, James A. Hafner, Charles F. Keyes. 2024. "Thailand." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, February 18, 2024. Accessed on February 21, 2024.  
<https://www.britannica.com/place/Thailand>

Kitiarsa, Pattana. 2012. "Of men and monks: The boxing-Buddhism nexus and the production of national manhood in contemporary Thailand."

Klaas, Elena, and Mark Boukes. 2020. "A Woman's Got to Write What a Woman's Got to Write: The Effect of Journalist's Gender on the Perceived Credibility of News Articles." *Feminist Media Studies* 22 no. 3: 571–87. doi:10.1080/14680777.2020.1838596

Kreicberg, Toms, Deniss Ščeulovs and Artūrs Bernovskis. 2024. "Brand and masculinity archetypes as an innovative research approach for analyzing consumer preferences on masculinity in advertising." *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market and Complexity* 10 (1).

Kwon, Jungmin. 2015. "Queering stars: Fan play and capital appropriation in the age of digital media." *Journal of Fandom Studies* 3, no. 1: 95-108.

Kyler-Yano, Jason Z., and Eric S. Mankowski. 2020. "What Does It Mean To Be a Real Man? Asian American College Men's Masculinity Ideology." *Psychology of Men and Masculinities* 21, no. 4: 643-654.

Lab Series. 2022. "LAB SERIES: Invent Yourself." *YouTube*. Accessed February 20, 2024. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bx4J0RXrOn0>

Lab Series. n.d. "About us." *Labseries*. Accessed February 20, 2024. <https://www.labseries.com/about-us>

Lannom, SC. 2020. "Dutch Angles: Creative Examples of camera movements & Angles." Accessed April 29, 2024. <https://www.studiobinder.com/blog/dutch-angle-shot-camera-movement/>

Lawrence, Stefan. 2016. "Racialising the "great man": A Critical Race study of idealised male athletic bodies in Men's Health magazine." *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 51 (7): 777-799. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690214555347>

Lee, Elisa J. 2016. "Masculine Identities Among Asian American Men: Negotiating Varying Masculine Ideals for the Self and Others." **Dissertation**, City University of New York.

Lefkowich, Maya, John L. Oliffe, Laura Hurd Clarke and Madeline Hannan-Leith. 2017. "Male Body Practices." *Am J Mens Health* 11 (2): 454-463. DOI:10.1177/1557988316669042.

Lester, Toby. 2022. "Finding Middle ground." Accessed May 30, 2023. <https://hbr.org/2022/03/finding-middle-ground>

Liberman Zoe, Amanda L. Woodward and Katherine D. Kinzler. 2017. "The Origins of Social Categorization." *Trends in Cognitive Science* 21 (7):556-568. DOI:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2017.04.004>

LINE Insights. 2020. "Y-Economy Study: A Major Opportunity to Reach Consumers' Minds and Hearts in 2020." Bangkok: LINE

Mahalik, James R., Benjamin D. Locke, Larry H. Ludlow, Matthew A. Diemer, Michael Gottfried, Ryan P. J. Scott, and Gary Freitas. 2003. "Development of the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory." *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*4, no. 1: 3-25.

Mark, Margaret and Carol S. Pearson. 2001. *Building Extraordinary Brands Through the Power of Archetypes*. New York: McGraw Hill Professional.

MasterClass. 2022. "Film 101: What Is a Close-Up Shot? How to Creatively Use a Close-Up Camera Angle to Convey Emotion." *MasterClass*. Accessed on April 29, 2024:

<https://www.masterclass.com/articles/film-101-what-is-a-close-up-shot-how-to-creatively-use-a-close-up-camera-angle-to-convey-emotion>

Matthes, Jörg, Micheal Prieler, and Karoline Adam. 2016. "Gender-Roles Portrayals in Television Advertising Across the Globe." *Sex Roles* 75: 314-327.

McLean, Sara. 2023. "The Color Yellow: Essential Color Theory, Symbolism and Design Application." *Dunn-Edwards paints*. on May 16, 2024 from:

<https://www.dunnedwards.com/pros/blog/the-color-yellow-essential-color-theory-symbolism-and-design-application/>

Mefodeva, Valeriya, Morgan J. Sidari, Holly Chau, Brett Fitzsimmons, Gabrielle Antoine, Tessa R. Clarkson, Samuel Pearson, Anthony J. Lee, Barnaby J. W. Dixson. 2020. "Multivariate Intra-Sexual Selection on Men's Perceptions of Male Facial Morphology." *Adaptive Human Behavior and Physiology* 6: 143-169.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary. 2024. "constitutional monarchy," Accessed on February 21, 2024. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/constitutional%20monarchy>.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary. 2024. "constitutional monarchy," Accessed February 21, 2024, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/constitutional%20monarchy>.

Miller, Matthew M. F. 2020. "The Radical Individualism Raging Throughout America."

Shondaland. on May 18, 2024 from:

<https://www.shondaland.com/act/news-politics/a34729330/the-radical-individualism-raging-throughout-america/>

Mitchell, Stuart. 2022. "65% of US consumers expect brands to promote diversity and inclusion in online advertising but 53% do not feel fully represented." *Ethical marketing news*. Accessed on May 19, 2024 from:

<https://ethicalmarketingnews.com/65-of-us-consumers-expect-brands-to-promote-diversity-and-inclusion-in-online-advertising-but-53-do-not-feel-fully-represented>

Mitchell, Vincent Wayne and Amar Lodhia. 2017. "Understanding the metrosexual and spornosexual as a segment for retailers." *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management* 45 no. 4.

Mmscene. 2023. "BEAUTY & GROOMING: Cosmetic Packaging designed with Men in Mind." Male Model Scene. Accessed on May 16, 2024 from:  
<https://www.malemodelsce.net/beauty-2/cosmetic-packaging-for-men/>

Moore, Robert. L. and Douglas Gillette. 1990. *King, warrior, magician, lover: rediscovering the archetypes of the mature masculine*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco.

Moore, Robert. L. and Douglas Gillette. 1990. *King, warrior, magician, lover: rediscovering the archetypes of the mature masculine*. San Francisco: Harper.

Moss. N.d. "How the suit got its power.". Moss. Accessed on April 29, 2024.  
<https://www.moss.co.uk/inside-pocket/post/how-the-suit-got-its-power>

Mulvihill, Geoff. 2023. "States add laws on pronouns, sports for transgender students." *AP news*. Accessed on April 17, 2024.  
<https://apnews.com/article/lgbtq-students-bathrooms-sports-pronouns-e53a0e7ca87001f1b97139098ee0906f>

MyDramaList. n.d. "My School President." Accessed April 3, 2024.  
<https://mydramalist.com/715931-my-school-president>

Nelson, Aubrey. 2022. "Behind the Gender Gap in Ballet." *Psychology Today*. Accessed on May 15, 2024 from:

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/he-speaks-she-speaks/202206/behind-the-gender-gap-in-ballet>

NFI. n.d. “Low Angle Shot: Everything You Need To Know.” Nashville Film Institute. Accessed May 15, 2024 from: <https://www.nfi.edu/low-angle-shot/>

NOTO Botanics. 2023. “NOTO IS : DEEP SERUM // FULL FILM.” *YouTube*. Accessed February 20, 2024 from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y2LnsitRB5Y>

NOTO Botanics. n.d. “The NOTO story.” *Notobotanics*. Accessed February 20, 2024. <https://notobotanics.com/pages/the-noto-story>

Nyhagen, Line. 2021. ““It’s Not Macho, Is It?”: Contemporary British Christian Men’s Constructions of Masculinity.” *The Journal of Men’s Studies* 29 (3): 259-277. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1060826520981719>

Oriental Princess. 2020. “ORIENTAL PRINCESS FOR MEN 2020 เป็นผู้ชายที่ใช่แบบที่ผู้หญิงชอบ.” Uploaded on January 16, 2020. YouTube video, 3:43 min. <https://youtu.be/hyy7w4QiKMk?si=U18uHeAlbr13yX9Z>

Oriental Princess. 2022. “For Men.” Accessed April 3, 2024. <https://www.orientalprincess.com/for-men.html>

Paek, Hye-Jin, Michelle R. Nelson, and Alexandra M. Vilela. 2010. “Examination of Gender-role Portrayals in Television Advertising across Seven Countries.” *Sex Roles* 64: 192-207.

Parker, Kim, Juliana Menasce Horowitz and Anna Brown. 2022. “Americans’ Complex Views on Gender Identity and Transgender Issues.” *Pew Research Center*. Accessed on April 18, 2024.



<https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2022/06/28/americans-complex-views-on-gender-identity-and-transgender-issues/>

Parker, Kim, Juliana Menasce Horowitz, and Anna Brown. 2022. "Americans' Complex Views on Gender Identity and Transgender Issues." *Pew Research Center*, June 28, 2022. <https://pewrsr.ch/3OQ7Zg6>

Patrick&co. n.d. "What your suit colour says about you." *Patrick & co*. Accessed on April 29, 2024. <https://www.patricknco.com/what-your-suit-colour-says-about-you/>

Phoenix, Ann and Stephen Frosh. 2001. "Positioned by "hegemonic" Masculinities: A study of london boys' narratives of identity." *Australian Psychologist* 36 (1): 27-35. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00050060108259628>

Presskorn-Thygesen, Thomas. 2012. "Samfundsvidenskabelige paradigmer - fire grundlæggende metodiske tendenser i moderne samfundsvidenskab". *Samfundsvidenskabelige analysemetoder*: 21-48. Frederiksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Prince of Songkla University. N.d. "Thai culture." Accessed May 30, 2023. <https://en.psu.ac.th/international/arts-and-culture/thai-culture>

Pringle, Richard. 2005. "Masculinities, Sport, and Power: A Critical Comparison of Gramscian and Foucauldian Inspired Theoretical Tools." *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 29 (3): 256-278. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0193723505276228>

Rittapirom, Thaweelap. 2021. "Men's cosmetics taking off in Asia." *Bangkok Post*, May 17, 2021. Accessed May 30, 2023. <https://www.bangkokpost.com/business/2116899/mens-cosmetics-taking-off-in-asia>

RMRS. 2023. "Color in Menswear : How To Wear A Black Suit." *Real men real style*. Accessed on April 29, 2024 <https://www.realmenrealstyle.com/color-in-menswear-black-suit/>

Rosalind, Gill. 2003. "Power and the Production of Subjects: A Genealogy of the New Man and the New Lad." *The Sociological Review* 51(1): 34-56.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2003.tb03602.x>

Ross, Kenneth. 2015. "The Role of Product Instructions in Product Liability Prevention." *In Compliance*. Accessed on May 20, 2024 from:

<https://incompliancemag.com/the-role-of-product-instructions-in-product-liability-prevention/>

Samutachak, Bhubate, Nippon Darawuttimaprakron, and Suchita Manajit. 2021. "Dream Life Dream job: Lifestyle that determine job search criteria of Generation Y college students in Thailand." *International Journal of Business* 26, no. 1: 61-83.

Sarwono, Billy K. and Alifia Oktrina Fayardi. 2018. "The construction of masculinity in male facial care product advertisement." *E3S Web Conf.* 74.

<https://doi.org/10.1051/e3sconf/20187410010>

Schroeder, Jonathan E. and Detlev Zwick. 2004. "Mirrors of Masculinity: Representation and Identity in Advertising Images." *Consumption Markets & Culture* 7 (1): 21-52.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1025386042000212383>

Seals, Aaron. N.d. "Mastering The Gaze: How Eye Contact Elevates Film Acting – Iconic Scenes Explored." *Direct Submit NY Casting*. Accessed on April 29, 2024:

<https://www.nycastings.com/mastering-the-gaze-how-eye-contact-elevates-film-acting-iconic-scenes-explored/>

Shek, Yen Ling. 2006. "Asian American Masculinity: A Review of the Literature." *The Journal of Men's Studies* 14, no. 3: 379-391.

Shepherd, Emma. 2023. "Thailand's Y series is capturing hearts and ad dollars in Asia."

Accessed May 22, 2024. <https://www.thecurrent.com/thailands-lgbtq-advertising-asia>

Siripai, Jhitsayarat. 2017. "Branding Men: Exploring how leading Thai alcohol companies use masculinity to increase consumer market share in Thailand." PhD thesis, Newcastle University.

Smith, Earl. 2010. *Sociology of Sport and Social Theory*. Human kinetics.

Soho lighting company. 2021. "Feminine interior design ideas." Accessed May 29, 2024.

<https://www.soholighting.com/blog/feminine-interior-design-ideas/>

Sumalee. 2016. "Age and respect in Thai." Accessed May 30, 2023.

<https://sumaleeboxinggym.com/age-respect-in-thai-culture/>

Suriyasarn, Busakorn. 2024. *Gender identity and sexual orientation in Thailand*. International Labour Organization.

Tan, Praew. 2023. "Thailand's colors of the day: A cultural Kaleidoscope" Accessed April 29,

2024. <https://www.cleverthai.com/color-of-the-day-in-thailand/>

Tanyildizi, Nural İmik, and Ayşe Sebnem Yolcu. 2020. "The Use of Women Beauty as Advertising Attraction: Semiological Analysis of Three Magazine Advertising." *International Journal of Humanities and Education (IJHE)* 6 (13): 49-67.

Taylor, Evi, Patricia Guy-Walls, Patricia Wilkerson and Rejoice Addae. 2019. "The Historical Perspectives of Stereotypes on African-American Males." *Journal of Human Rights and Social Work* 4: 213–225. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41134-019-00096-y>

TGR. 2019. "His & Hers: The Psychology Behind Masculine and Feminine Interior Design." *Tokyo Grand Rennovation Inc.* Accessed on May 15, 2024 from:

<https://tgr.com.ph/blogs/psychology-behind-masculine-and-feminine-interior-design>

The Culture Factor Group. 2023. "Country Comparison Tool." *Hofstede Insights*. Accessed on April 19, 2024.

<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool?countries=united+states>

The KAP Designs. 2023. "Exploring the color psychology of black in interior design: the allure of black with gold accents." *Medium*, May 30, 2023. Accessed May 4, 2024.

[https://medium.com/@the\\_kap\\_designs/exploring-the-color-psychology-of-black-in-interior-design-the-allure-of-black-with-gold-accents-e6ea0a461969](https://medium.com/@the_kap_designs/exploring-the-color-psychology-of-black-in-interior-design-the-allure-of-black-with-gold-accents-e6ea0a461969)

The Unusual Trip. N.d. "Characteristics of Thai culture." Accessed May 23, 2024.

<https://theunusualtrip.com/characteristics-of-thai-culture/>

Thomas, Erin. 2022. "Transphobia is a Powerful Force in American Politics, but Young Voters are Leading a Cultural Shift Towards Inclusion." *Data for progress*. Accessed on April 18, 2024.

<https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2022/2/23/transphobia-is-a-powerful-force-in-american-politics-but-young-voters-are-leading-a-cultural-shift-towards-inclusion>

Tian, Chen. 2018. "What Chinese Opera Can Teach Us About Gender." Accessed April 27, 2024 <https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1002838>

Turban, Jack. 2022. "What is gender dysphoria?" *American Psychiatric Association*.

Accessed on May 19, 2024 from:

<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/gender-dysphoria/what-is-gender-dysphoria>

Twenge, Jean M. 2023. "How Gen Z Changed Its Views On Gender." *Time*. May 1, 2023.

<https://time.com/6275663/generation-z-gender-identity/>

UNCO. n.d. "Pride Flags." *University of Northern Colorado*. Accessed on May 16, 2024

from: <https://www.unco.edu/gender-sexuality-resource-center/resources/pride-flags.aspx>

UNDP. 2019. *Tolerance But Not Inclusion: A national survey on experiences of discrimination and social attitudes towards LGBT people in Thailand*. Bangkok: United Nations Development Programme Thailand.

Unicamillus. 2024. "Gender dysphoria: the challenging journey of self-discovery."

Unicamillus. Accessed on May 19, 2024 from:

<https://www.unicamillus.org/gender-dysphoria-the-challenging-journey-of-self-discovery/>

Van Braam, Hailey. 2024. "White Color Psychology and Meaning." *Color Psychology*.

Accessed on April 29, 2024: <https://www.colorpsychology.org/white/>

Wadsworth, Barry J. 1996. *Piaget's Theory of Cognitive and Affective Development : Foundations of Constructivism*. White Plains, New York: Longman Publishers USA.

Williams, Sarah. 2023. "Things You Should Know About Thai Culture." Culture trip, December 27, 2023.

<https://theculturetrip.com/asia/thailand/articles/11-things-you-should-know-about-thai-culture>