



# Is gender-neutral marketing the future?

A survey of Swedish consumers

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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, SLU

Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Science/Department of Economics

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# Is gender-neutral marketing the future? A survey of Swedish consumers

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## Abstract

The marketing industry is undergoing significant transformation driven by technological advancements and shifting societal norms. This study investigates the impact of gender-neutral marketing on consumer behavior and perceptions of inclusivity. Utilizing a deductive quantitative approach, online surveys were distributed to gather data from diverse demographic groups. The study aims to determine whether there is a demand for gender-neutral marketing and if such marketing strategies are perceived as more inclusive. Additionally, it examines potential demographic differences in these perceptions, particularly focusing on age and gender.

Results indicate a notable preference for gender-neutral marketing among females and somewhat of a preference amongst males while age differences are less pronounced. The findings suggest that consumers of all ages are supportive of gender-neutral marketing, though the age effect is less significant than gender. This study underscores the importance of adapting marketing strategies to reflect evolving consumer expectations and promotes the adoption of more inclusive practices within the industry. The research contributes to the growing body of literature advocating for a reevaluation of traditional gender segmentation in marketing, offering insights into the benefits of embracing gender-neutral approaches.

*Keywords:* Genderneutral, Segmentation, Inclusivity, Marketing, Gendernorms

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

The marketing industry is an ever changing industry that has to follow the different trends and also the challenges that comes with these trends (Benady 2014). The world and society today changes at a very fast speed and it is not always easy to keep up, especially for large companies. Since trends come and go faster than ever, the demand of the consumers increase rather fast. Since the demand does increase the supply must follow. In todays day and age consumers have it easier to research and access information about products through the growth of social media and the internet (Deloitte 2014). It is easier and faster for consumers to compare prices and functions of different products. It is almost as the consumers has taken more power nto how the market works. As mentioned in a Deloitte (2014 p.8) consumer review:

The growing power of consumers is changing the way consumers interact with brands when deciding to purchase a product or service. Enabled by digital technology and extensive information source, consumers can choose how engaged they want to be across the different touch points of their path to purchase.

Even if this consumer review is from 2014 it was already clear then the impact of online consumerism and that the way consumers shop had changed and is still changing. Because demand and consumerism is changing the marketing has to follow.

In order to understand the reason for a change in marketing it is important to understand how marketing has worked and been used in the past. Gender as a form of segmentation within marketing strategy has been used for a long time and has been used due to extensive psychology research on the difference of genders (Meyers Levy & Loken 2015). Mayers Levy and Loken explains how marketing came to use gender as a part of segmentation in the past and gives three theories to explain the origin of gender differences. The theories are social-cultural theory, evolutionary and then hormone and brain science. They however explain that these theories are simple an addition and not the full reason as to how marketing through genders came to play such a large part of marketing and advertisement. They also

explain how these three theories are interrelated and explain the origin of gender differences.

Becoming a more gender equal society is something the world is aiming towards and that does not just include closing the gap between males and females but everyone, people who do not identify as a gender as well. Gender equality should include male, female, non-binary and people who can not identify as either. Equality is in fact a human rights issue (The global goals n.a) The global goal number five “Gender Equality” is about political, economic and social equality and the aim is to “eradict prejudice and work for equal rights and respect for all.” A way of ensuring gender equality is to make things such as advertisement and marketing more inclusive. Using gender-neutral marketing could be a way of expanding social inclusivity. The definition of gender-neutral in the Merriam-Webster (2024) dictionary is “not referring to either sex but only people in general”. As a society, especially Gen-Z (1995-2012), gender-neutral has become a part of being more inclusive and includes not just the traditional genders but transgender and non-binary are also included. Gender has become more fluid and a way to describe and identify oneself (Twenge 2023). So due to the younger generations interest and acceptance of more than two genders. It is interesting to look at how the rest of society is being affected and might need to change to follow the trends that the younger generations are following.

## 1.2 Problem Formulation

### 1.2.1 Empirical Problem

An empirical problem within gender-neutral marketing and advertisement is to study and research how gender-neutral marketing effects consumer behaviour and attitude towards the products and the company. To study this there needs to be studies on real data and observations in order to understand the effects of gender-neutral on consumers. How does gender-neutral marketing effect consumers in comparission to gender-specific marketing that has been a norm in the past (Abbasi 2022). When looking at consumers is also needs to be taken in consideration how gender-neutral marketing effects different demographic groups and which group is more susceptible to gender-neutrality.

Another area of interest could be the engagement and loyalty towards brands from consumers. Whether gender-neutral advertisement effect consumers loyalty towards a brand. How does loyalty differ between ages and genders when different brands adapt to more gender-neutral marketing and advertisement. Analyzing the

effectiveness of advertising campaigns is also important (Azar 2018). Questions such as whether gender-neutral advertising is more or less effective in driving sales and brand awareness compared to gender-specific advertising, and identifying which types of products or services work best with gender-neutral marketing, are key empirical problems (Liljedal et al. 2021). Furthermore, examining customer satisfaction and feedback is essential. Researchers might investigate how customers perceive gender-neutral marketing in terms of relevance and personalization and what kind of feedback customers provide about gender-neutral advertising.

To investigate these problems, researchers can employ various empirical methods, such as surveys and interviews to gather data on consumer attitudes and preferences, experiments to test how different types of marketing affect consumer behavior in controlled environments, and data analysis to examine sales data, website visits, social media engagement, and other quantitative measures before and after the implementation of gender-neutral marketing. By analyzing these data, researchers and marketers can gain insights into the effectiveness of gender-neutral marketing and how it can be optimized to better reach and influence different consumer groups.

### 1.2.2 Theoretical Problem

Marketing and advertisement is and will always be a large part of the large consumption of productions and that includes influence consumers on what to buy or how much (Soti 2022). Consumers see ads and different forms of marketing wherever they go and therefore marketing might have a larger impact than one might realize. Advertisement are made to influence the consumers what to buy or to buy more (Soti 2022). Research on advertisement has in the past mostly been about how consumers perceive it but not specifically on how different genders perceive gender-specific marketing. Using gender as segmentation is not something new in theory nor new in society but gender-neutral being a fairly new subjects causes research and theories within the subject to be fairly few.

Liljedal et al. (2021) suggest based of their findings, that the negative effects of gender stereotypes are far greater than they have been shown in earlier research. Consumers of other genders, apart of male and female, play a large part of purchasing these gendered products. The authors explain how literature on gender stereotypes have previously not taken in consideration the social, cultural and societal context of the effects of gender stereotyping (ibid).

## 1.3 Aim & purpose

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the use of gender and gender-neutral marketing today and how it affects the consumers in their purchasing choices and how they perceive different advertisement. Wanted to see whether the use of gender in marketing affects the perception of a company and what in today's society would produce a larger consumer base and what would get a consumer to actually invest and support a company. Through the aim two research questions transpired:

Is there a need and a want for more gender-neutral marketing? And if yes, are there sub-groups that are more likely to support it?

Would consumers believe that gender-neutral is more inclusive? And are there gender differences?

The reason for choosing the subject of gender-neutral marketing stems from a long term interest in gender equality and the fight for gender equality in every part of our society. Beginning the process of researching what specific subject of gender equality within marketing came across another student at JAMK University in Finland who had written a thesis on gender-neutral marketing within Generation-Z (Nykänen 2019) and it was the first time coming across the term "gender-neutral marketing" and it caught my interest immediately. A fairly new concept and something which felt not spoken about enough given the shift in views on gender. From this past research my hypotheses came forward which will be tested to see whether they are supported or not.

## 1.4 Delimitation

The focus of this essay is on the public and private consumers. There is no specific delimitation of gender nor age due to this essay wanting a broad spectrum of data. The reason for this is to be able to firstly see if there are any differences between age groups or gender groups in order to later on in further research see why they might think or look at gender-neutral marketing differently. All answers and data will stay anonymous in order to give the participants a chance to answer however they wish without being revealed for their thoughts and ideas. There is no segmentation delimitation done due to a few reasons, firstly the homogeneous population in the study, there is large similarity in the participants due to how the survey was shared through the author's social media. It is also a consequence of a rather small sample

size and possible implementation errors when executing a large amount of statistical tests.

## 2. Theories & previous research

Susan Dobsch (2019) discusses in her study the common use of STG strategy (Segmentation, Targeting, Positioning) within marketing. Which is used to gather information and demographic variables to aim for different parts of a market. Within STG there are different variables such as gender, ethnicity, age and occupation which are commonly used. Dobsch does however call this homogenic way of using STG as “lazy marketing” (ibid). She further explains how lazy marketing is when companies use demographics such as gender in order to create false differences in order to sell more and earn larger parts of the market. This becomes clear when companies play on gender roles and colours such as pink and blue, for example Bic launching their “pen for her” which had pastel colored pencils with a higher price. Another example is razors and the difference on mens and womens razors, where the womens razors are usually in bright colors such as pastel and packaging with flowers meanwhile mens razors are black, blue or grey with a more industrial look. Yet the products work in the same manner. A lot of the products you find in a typical drugstore differ in looks and price depending on wheter they are marketed for females or males (ibid, 3). She further explain that this way of marketing products continue and have existed during such a long time because it has given positive results. However due to a change in the culture and change in views on gender as a social construct consumers are beginning to question this way of marketing (ibid).

In Liljedal et al. (2021) paper they have researched how consumers react to gender-stereotyped advertising, with a focus on how consumers of a different gender than that of the models stereotyped in the ads. They studied cross-gender effects of gender sterotyped portrayals in advertisement. In the past years we have seen changes in advertisement when it comes to women and how they are portrayed. Instead of the use of women that just follow the beauty standards of being thin, an example is Dove in 2004 who created a campaign “for real beauty” where they included women of different shapes and body types (Pounders 2018, p. 133) yet there is still a topic well spoken about and discussed. However, the female beauty standard is not the only topic being discussed within advertisement but additionally the use of gender as a segmentation tactic. The use of female and male sterotypes within marketing has been a common factor for as long as there has been

advertisement. Nonetheless there has been findings that indicate that this has a negative effect on consumers (Liljedal et al. 2021).

Liljedal et al (2021) argue that there needs to be a change in how we use gender in today's advertising and marketing. The findings of their research show that the use of non-stereotypical female and male advertisement can lead to positive ad and brand attitudes from exposure audiences. Today's market should take into consideration the use of gender-neutral marketing and portrayals in advertisement in order to gain a larger consumer base and also larger sales. The importance of not just targeted but exposure audience plays a large role in the use of non-stereotypical gender roles when designing advertisements because consumers of all genders may play a large role in purchasing a product (ibid).

In order to understand and compare whether or not gender should or could be used as a form of marketing strategy Meyers Levy and Loken (2015) looked at something called consumer psychology and three different theories about gender differences; socio-cultural, evolutionary and hormone and brain science approaches.

The first theory of socio-cultural includes the differences of physical capacities and how that prompted males and females to take on different roles that has perpetuated over time Meyers Levy and Loken (2015). Socio-cultural theories acknowledge how behaviours are both biological but also learnt behaviours. This theory is based on physical differences and socio-cultural influences. Physical difference stems from women bearing and caring for children and men's often greater size, speed and strength leading to a division of labor (ibid). It caused women to stay home and nurse and take care of children and the house meanwhile men were out obtaining resources, farming, hunting and fight in wars. It later on came a power difference between the sexes as a new economically productive roles to accumulate resources. Today it is possible to witness a large difference in gender roles, where it has become more of an equal sharing of collecting resources and caring for children. However, the division of labour between the genders contributed to a formation of cultural beliefs. It is through these roles gender stereotypes grew such as boys being weak when showing emotions, they should be dominant meanwhile women are seen as nurturing, kind and possess emotional intelligence. These gender roles may put pressure to conform and become internalized gender identities. Throughout time gender roles and behaviour has changed. Today we see more women moving into male-dominated occupations and taking on leader roles however there is a lower increase in men moving towards female-dominated occupations (ibid).

Evolutionary theory builds on the former theory and developed in response to the environmental challenges and later on manifested into today's behaviours (Meyers Levy & Loken 2015). The evolutionary theory is based off of natural selection and

designed by our hunter-gather ancestors. Which includes finding a suitable partner and producing offspring. Due to males and females early on had different concerns these problems arose the evolution differed by gender. This is explained through history on how and why males and females today possess particular behaviours. Evolutionary theory goes beyond the biological factors and how they affect the two genders differently. Meanwhile most research in the past have focused on mating-related problems and how the genders can increasingly seem more attractive to the other and has in later years led to consumer relevant issues. For example females efforts at boosting their looks through cosmetics. So throughout time females and males have used different ways of promoting themselves in order to find their so called “mate” which stems from the history of gender evolution.

The third theory of gender differences adds on to both of these by shedding light on the differences in hormonal and brain processes of genders and by that adds to the two prior theories (Meyers Levy & Loken 2015). It is indicated that pre-neo and post-natal exposure to gonadal hormones influence brain development. Androgen and estrogen are male and female gonadal hormones respectively but it is shown that both genders are exposed to both. It is shown that testosterone and androgen typically are much higher in males and plays a role in producing a difference between the two genders meanwhile estrogen is typically higher within females and present a more feminize development by default (ibid). Research has shown that female kids with higher androgen levels have been prone displayed more “boy” typical toy choices but boys did not differ depending on hormone levels. However, Meyers Levy and Loken (2015) further explain that a lot of research which have been done looking at different hormonal levels within children differ and might not always be consistent. There are studies shown that difference between genders exist in the connectivity between brain areas and males and females brains different patterns when it comes to performance in different tasks such as perception and coordinatinated actions (ibid).

These three theories show how gender has come to be separated throughout history and therefore come to be viewed differently even in todays society and different cultures which is important in order to understand why advertisement has come to use gender as a segmentation strategy. Meyers Levy & Loken (2015) continues to explain differences between males and females throughout the article with the help of the theories and then they proceed to “Responses to promotional activity”. Furthermore there has been research on how differently females and males view advertisement and like Robert J. Fisher (2005) explains in his article that males and females differ systematically in the way that they show emotional expression it is not clear that the emotions they feel may differ. Hence men are taught to not show or express emotions in the same way women has been and therefore may feel the



same as females but will not show those emotions in the same way. This is a learnt behaviour and comes from the socio-cultural upbringing of males as said by Meyers Levy & Loken (2015) and their three different theories of why gender exists in the way it does today.

When reading different research there were not much found on age and what different generations believed to be good or bad when researching gendered marketing thus came the first hypothesis which developed through the different tests done further on in this essay.

Hypothesis 1: People under the age of 35 are more likely to want more gender-neutrality within marketing.

As a result of reading these previous theories there were a lot of them which were solely based on gender and how through time the two genders have been seen very different and continuously so, therefore the question grew if genders today still want gender specific marketing? Because it has mostly been done so in the past or if gender-neutral could be an option for the future. This then became the second hypothesis. The reason for choosing women as a higher preference for gender-neutral marketing because as stated by Pounders (2018) women are more often portrayed in a sexual thus more exposed way than men and has been in demand for a change in marketing in the past.

Hypothesis 2: Females have a higher preference for gender-neutral marketing than males.

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research method

This paper is a deductive quantitative research as the findings and the build-up of the research started from theories of that gender-neutral marketing and the questioning of use of gender has increased and from there the hypotheses were created and then compared to the findings and observations from the statistical testing (Bryman & Bell 2015). By looking at how the different answers from the survey and using peoples thoughts and perception on gender-neutral marketing, the use of social construction and how people are affected by the external societal build up. By reading past research and seeing a change in society the hypotheses were built before the study was started and the use of the hypotheses then developed into the actual study.

The ontological position is constructionism which according to Bryman and Bell is considering how the society affects the norms and standards and how they are in a constant revision. This means that changes within the society are caused by social actors (ibid).

By writing a quantitative essay and executing a quantitative research based on statistics from questionnaires there are problems including difficulties in obtaining the accurate data as well as gaining enough data for statistical testing. This due to the difficulties by recruiting participants and receiving enough fully filled questionnaires. Another problem that can occur is non-finished questionnaires and in that way not receiving all the data necessary to condone the statistical test and therefore lead to not being able to confirm my hypotheses. Furthermore a lack of answers and or submissions could lead to data analysis challenges. Difficulties analyzing and interpreting data, issues with statistical assumptions or appropriate analytical techniques.

## 3.2 Selection

The selection of this study is circumstantial and only based on that they have taken the survey. The selection could be seen as biased due to the survey being shared through the author's personal social media and further shared through peers and acquaintances. Hence sharing the survey through the platforms easiest based of the author majority of the people who has participated are acquaintances of the author. The reason for choosing this is due to it being easy to access participants through social media and even though it might be seen as bias in this case it was done due to enable as many recorded answers as possible in a short period of time.

## 3.3 Collection of Data

In order to find out if there was a difference in how consumers view marketing based on gender and age and in order to answer those questions the best way to conduct this research was through self-administered questionnaire (Bryman & Bell 2015). Respondents answers questions by completing the questionnaire (appendix 1) by themselves online. The questions within the questionnaire were created with the help of AI and supervisor of this essay. AI was used to help create the questions based of the ideas and subject of gender-neutral marketing and also a time effective way of doing so. The questionnaire was then shared through social media and word of mouth. The reason for choosing a quantitative method was to help provide more objective data as it rely on numerical measurements and statistical analysis (Bryman & Bell 2015). Though sharing the questionnaire through social media such as Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook it could still be seen as a sampling bias since there are large groups of people who are not apart of any social media platform and therefore miss out of taking the questionnaire. Therefore, by sharing it through my personal social media platforms it is somewhat sampling bias due to the company one might keep.

The use of quantitative method allowed generalization of findings to a larger population and enabled to collect data from a representative sample. Furthermore by using statistical techniques, it allowed to make inferences about the broader population. It was also better suited since it was more efficient in terms of collecting data. By using a survey it managed to gather larger amounts of data in a relatively short period of time and by using statistical software to analyse the data. This method made it possible for me to test different hypotheses and identify patterns within different age and gender groups in order to make larger predictions (Bryman & Bell 2015). Thus by choosing a quantitative research method it helped to be able to see how multiple consumers of different ages as well as gender perceive marketing of products today.

### 3.4 Data analysis

In order to analyse data collected through surveys there are multiple statistical tests that can be used based on what type of hypotheses used, what research is being executed and what type of data has been collected (Bryman & Bell 2015). For this study the application of Minitab will be used in order to recode the collected data to then further execute the statistical tests. The statistical test that will be used is the one-way ANOVA-test (Analysis of Variance), to analyse the difference between genders and their responses as well as different age groups and their responses to the survey.

The choice to use an ANOVA-test is because each number and result is a specific calculation used to analyze the variation between groups of data and within groups of data to determine if there are significant differences between the groups. For example the differences between genders and age groups. In a one-way ANOVA, Analysis of Variance, test, the assumption of normality typically applies to the residuals, not necessarily to the variables themselves. The residuals are the differences between the observed values and the predicted values from the ANOVA model. However, the normality assumption of residuals is important because ANOVA is a parametric test, meaning it assumes that the data follow a specific probability distribution—in this case, a normal distribution. Violation of this assumption can affect the validity of the results. Therefore, while normality of the variables themselves is not strictly required for ANOVA, normality of residuals is an important assumption to consider for the validity of the test results.

### 3.5 Literary Review

The literature review is a pivotal part of the research process. It enhances the relevance of research questions and the selected research method, choice of data collection and analysis strategies (Bryman & Bell 2015). For this study literature and previous research has been collected through Google scholar, Jstor.org, SLU library and research gate. Using the different keywords “Gender-neutrality, Inclusivity, Marketing, Gendernorms” when accessing the different platforms helped to find the information needed for the study. In addition when relevant research had been found, there was a follow up on previous research referenced in that paper. Furthermore looking at where they had retrieved their sources and past research in search of relevant information and studies. This is a method called snowballing effect (ibid) used to find relevant sources.

## 3.6 Quality

Validity, reliability, and objectivity are fundamental concepts in quantitative research, especially when studying topics like gender-neutral marketing. These concepts ensure the credibility, accuracy, and neutrality of the research findings, which is crucial for studies that use questionnaires distributed via social media.

### **Validity**

Validity refers to the extent to which a research study accurately measures what it intends to measure (Bryman & Bell 2015). In the context of a quantitative study on gender-neutral marketing, validity ensures that the questionnaire accurately captures participants' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors regarding gender-neutral marketing strategies. If the questions are not well-designed or if they do not adequately represent the construct being measured (in this case, attitudes towards gender-neutral marketing), the results may be misleading or not truly reflective of the participants' views. Ensuring high validity is essential for drawing meaningful and accurate conclusions from the data.

### **Reliability**

Reliability pertains to the consistency and stability of the measurement (Bryman & Bell 2015). A reliable questionnaire yields similar results under consistent conditions over time. For a study on gender-neutral marketing, reliability is important to ensure that the responses are not significantly influenced by external factors or random errors, such as ambiguous questions or inconsistent interpretations among participants. High reliability is crucial for the study's credibility because it means that the findings are repeatable and not just due to chance or temporary conditions.

### **Objectivity**

Objectivity in research refers to the neutrality and impartiality of the study's design, implementation, and analysis (Bryman & Bell 2015). In the context of a quantitative study using a questionnaire distributed via social media, objectivity is essential to avoid bias in how questions are framed, how data is collected, and how results are interpreted. For instance, ensuring that questions are not leading or suggestive helps maintain objectivity, as does employing standardized procedures for data collection and analysis. Objectivity ensures that the findings are a true reflection of the participants' responses, free from researcher bias or manipulation.

### **Importance for a Quantitative Thesis on Gender-Neutral Marketing**

When conducting a quantitative study on gender-neutral marketing, particularly one that uses questionnaires distributed through social media, ensuring high validity, reliability, and objectivity is vital for several reasons.

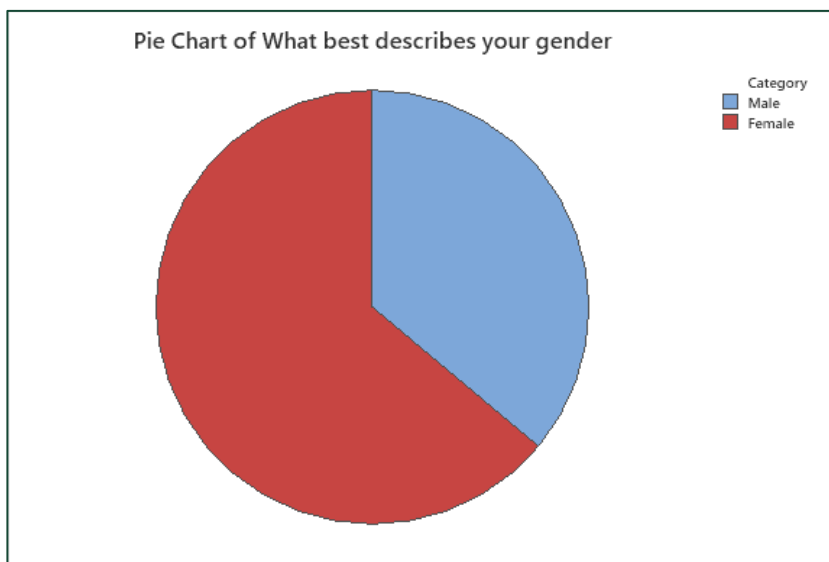
Accurate representation of views: ensuring validity means that the study accurately captures participants' true opinions (Bryman & Bell 2015) and attitudes towards gender-neutral marketing. This is particularly important when dealing with complex and potentially sensitive topics like gender and marketing. Credibility and Trustworthiness: High reliability ensures that the findings are consistent and can be trusted (ibid). If the same questionnaire were administered again under similar conditions, it would produce similar results. This consistency is key to establishing the credibility of the research. Neutral and Unbiased Results: Objectivity guarantees that the study's findings are free from personal or societal biases, making the results more generalizable and applicable across different contexts. This is particularly important when using social media, where the sample might be diverse and varied.

By carefully considering and applying these principles, the study can provide a robust, trustworthy, and unbiased understanding of how gender-neutral marketing is perceived by different audiences.

## 4. Empirical data

### 4.1 General Data

From the data collected we can see that the majority of people taking the survey were female with a percentage of 63.9% and remaining 36.1% were male shown in a pie chart below (Figure 1) which calculates to 57 females and 25 males. Further on in the data as for example Table 3 it will show that the females are a total of 70% and males 30%. The difference in percentages in Figure 1 compared to the rest of the Figures are that due to this being one of the first questions asked and therefore has a larger amount of answers because not everyone finished the survey. When analysing the data every non finishing participant was then excluded so the number of males and females actually participated in the full study are 16 and 32 in that order.



*Figure 1. Pie chart of Gender Distribution*

We can also see that the majority of people answering the survey were between the ages 25-34 with a percentage of 55.7% meanwhile the other age groups were divided on remaining 44.3% which is also shown below in a pie chart (Figure 2). Looking

at Figure 4 and comparing it to Figure 2, it is shown that the slot of “65-74 years old”, and “75 years or older”, only have one respondent per group. By only having one respondent it decreases the chances of getting any valid answers from the ANOVA-tests. It results in a difficulty to generalize the response to these age groups.

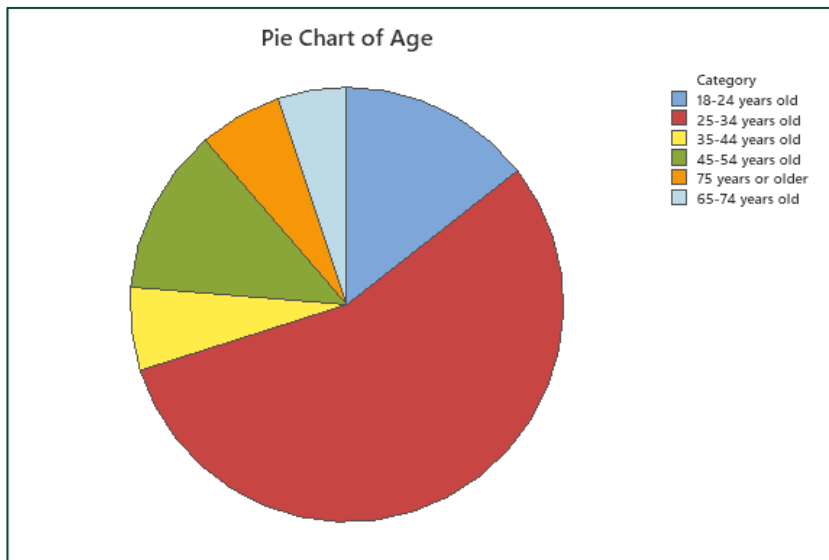


Figure 2. Pie chart of Age

By using either gender or age as a factor in the different statistical tests in order to compare results of the the different groups I wanted to see whether there were significant differences in how they perceive gender-neutral marketing and advertisement.

## 4.2 All Collected Data

The following data that will be shown below is collected on the website Qualtrics where the survey was created and all the figures shown were created directly by the website of the results from the surveys. However take in consideration that these are the raw data collected and therefore the first few questions of the survey contain a higher response than later on as 85 participated meanwhile 48 finished they survey and it is 48 responses which will be analysed and statistically tested.



Table 1. Consent

By proceeding with this survey, you indicate your voluntary consent to participate in this r... 85 ⓘ

Q1 - By proceeding with this survey, you indicate your voluntary consent to participate in this research study. You understand that your participation is entirely voluntary, and you have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Your responses will remain confidential and anonymous, and will only be used for research purposes. If you have any questions or concerns about the survey or your participation, please contact alicelinneaberg@gmail.com. Do you consent to participate in this survey?

	Percentage	Count
I consent	98%	83
I do not consent	2%	2

Table 1 displays the first question which was a formality in order to receive consent to use the answers from the participants. If the participants answered no it took them directly to the end of the survey. Following are Table 2 and 3 which show the answers to questions about age and gender.

Table 2. Data of the age groups

How old are you? 82 ⓘ

Q2 - How old are you?

	Percentage	Count
18-24 years old	33%	27
25-34 years old	56%	46
35-44 years old	4%	3
45-54 years old	5%	4
55-64 years old	0%	0
65-74 years old	1%	1
75 years or older	1%	1

Table 2 shows the age distributions of all of the participants in the questionnaire in order to get perspective of how many people in the different groups and how that can affect the outcome of the ANOVA-tests. Table 3 also show gender distribution for the same cause.

Table 3. Distribution of answers to what best describes your gender

What best describes your gender? 82 ⓘ		
Q3 - What best describes your gender?	Percentage	Count
Female	70%	57
Male	30%	25
Non-binary	0%	0
None of the above	0%	0
Prefer not to say	0%	0

The following figures show the distribution of answers on all of the questions, not based on gender nor age but only based on the amount of people who chose the specific answer (Figure 3-8 & Table 4). These figures are included in order to show the range of answers on all of the questions, and in order to get an overall view of the answers on the survey.

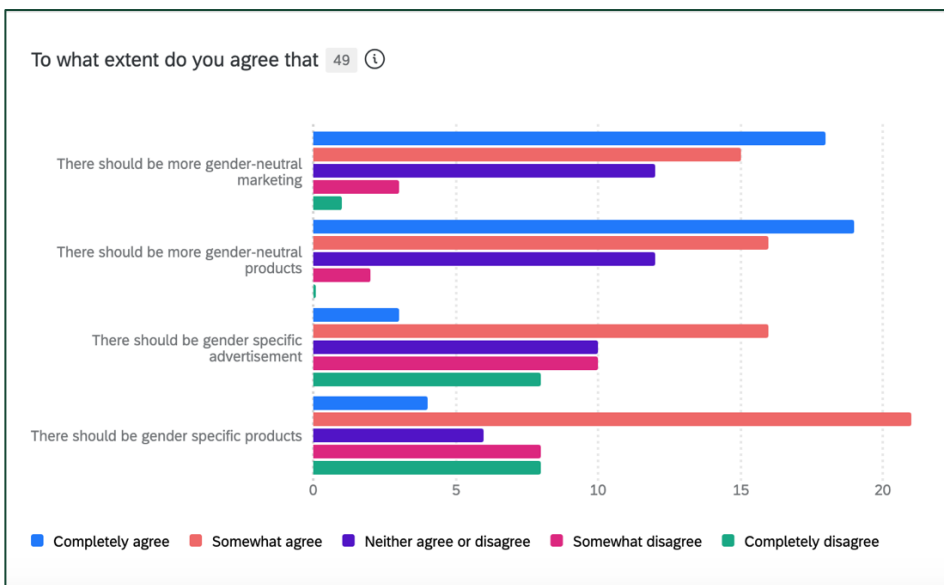


Figure 3. Answer distribution of Q1 to Q4

Figure 3 shows graphs of the first four “to what extent do you agree that” questions of the questionnaire which show which response have received the most answers by respondents.

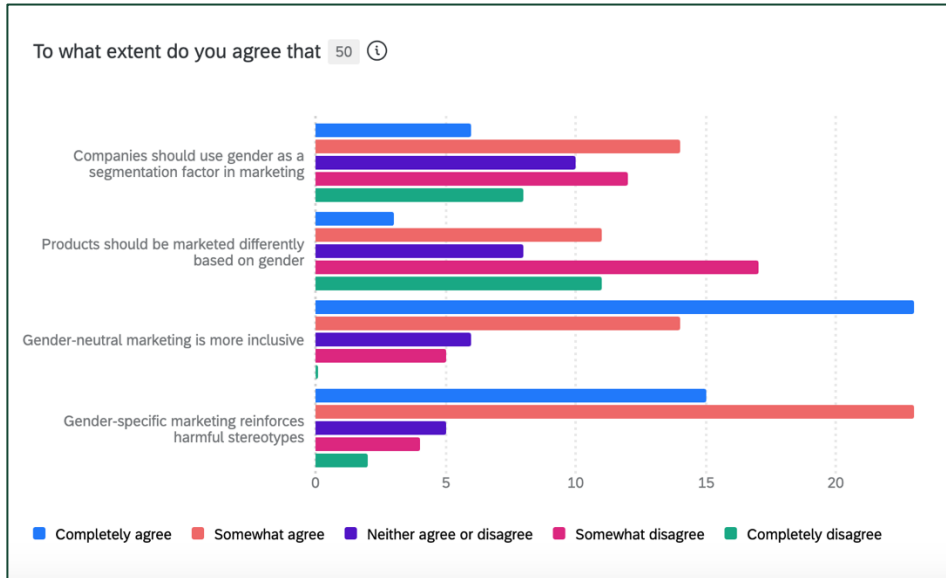


Figure 4. Answer distribution of Q5 to Q8

Figure 4 shows the distribution of the answers to questions five to eight, and the distribution of the answers.

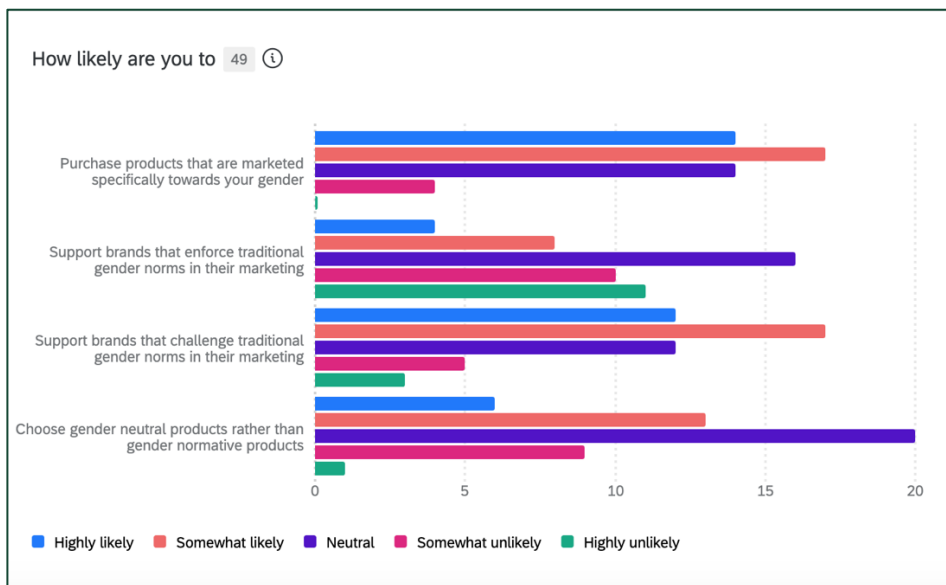


Figure 5. Answer distribution of Q9 to Q12

Figure 5 shows the first four questions that start with “how likely are you to” in order to see how likely the participants are to purchase and support brands depending on their stand on gender-neutral marketing and products.

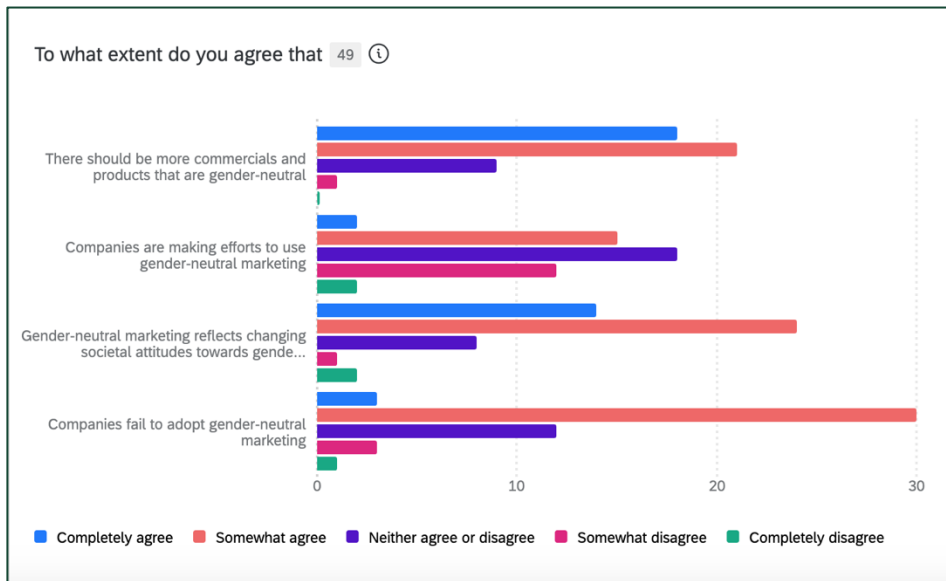


Figure 6. Answer distribution of Q13 to Q16

Figure 6 is another graph which ask more straight forward questions to the participants about their opinion on gender-neutral marketing.



Figure 7. Answer distribution of Q17

Figure 7 display the single question on the questionnaire of “How influential do you find gender-specific marketing in your purchasing decisions?” It is not shown gender specified nor age specified just see the overall response and what participants as a group believe.

Table 4. Answer distribution of Q18

Have you ever felt excluded or offended by gender-specific marketing campaigns? 48 ⓘ		
Q8 - Have you ever felt excluded or offended by gender-specific marketing campaigns? - Selected Choice	Percentage	Count
Yes (If so, please explain how or why)	17%	8
No	83%	40

Table 4 shows the percentage of how many of the participants have ever felt excluded by gender-specific marketing. As shown it was a total of eight people who answered yes and all eight were women. Eight might not seem a lot but it is almost at 20% of the participants which is higher than expected.

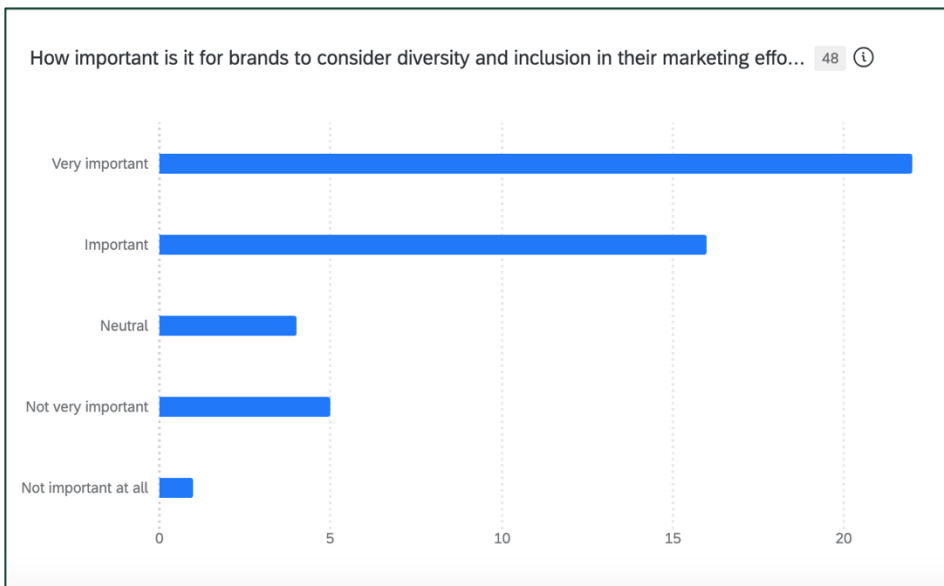


Figure 8. Answer distribution of Q19

Figure 8 is a graph showing the distribution of how important it is for the participants that brands consider diversity and inclusion in their marketing.

## 5. Analysis, result & discussion

### 5.1 Analysis

After downloading the data and converting it to Minitab, all the data was recoded into numbers in order to compel the ANOVA-test. The testing was then proceeded and tested the different questions in a one-way ANOVA-test with gender vs question 1-19 which is shown above and also in Appendix 1. The tests shown below are some handpicked ones, but all the tests are shown in Appendices 2 and 3.

When doing the ANOVA-tests I took to test gender in comparison to the different responses but also ages in comparison to the responses in order to see what the younger generation believe compared to the older generation. On all following graphs the constant of gender or age will be shown on the x-axis and the mean of the different groups on the y-axis.

#### 5.1.1 One-way ANOVA-test survey questions vs gender

Below shows the Figures of the graphs created when performing the ANOVA-tests using the different answers by participants and their gender.

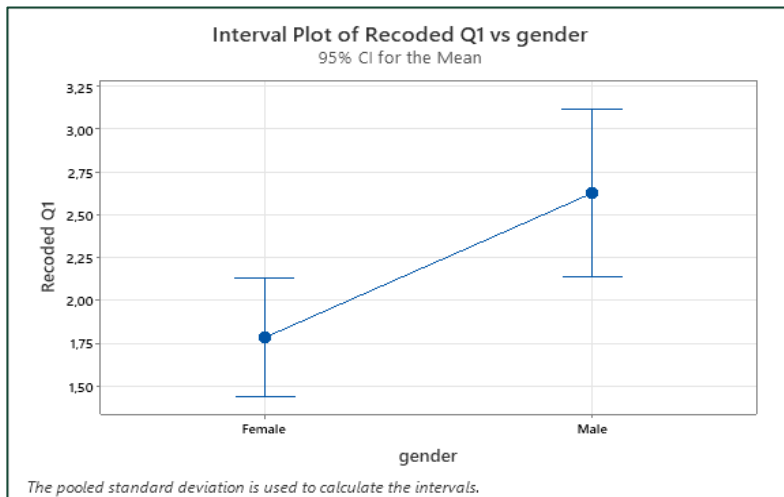


Figure 9. Q1, There should be more gender-neutral marketing vs gender

Figure 9, show females answers in comparison to males on the question “To what extent do you agree that there should be more gender-neutral marketing?”. The figure show that females have a lower mean at around 1,75 meanwhile males have a mean of around 2,6 which means that females agree more than males that there should be more gender-neutral marketing. However, since both means are below three which is equivalent to neutral on the subject it does show that both males and females agree that there should be more gender-neutral marketing. Figure 10 which is the ANOVA-test question three “To what extent do you agree that there should be gender specific advertisement?”. Which is the opposite question to Figure 9 it is shown the same result, as the previous Figure. Males on average agree more than females that there should be gender specific advertisement.

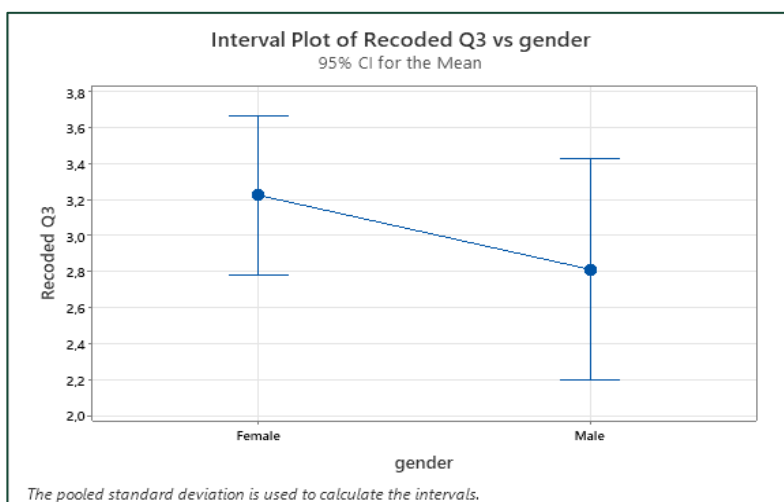


Figure 10. Q3, There should be gender specific advertisement vs gender

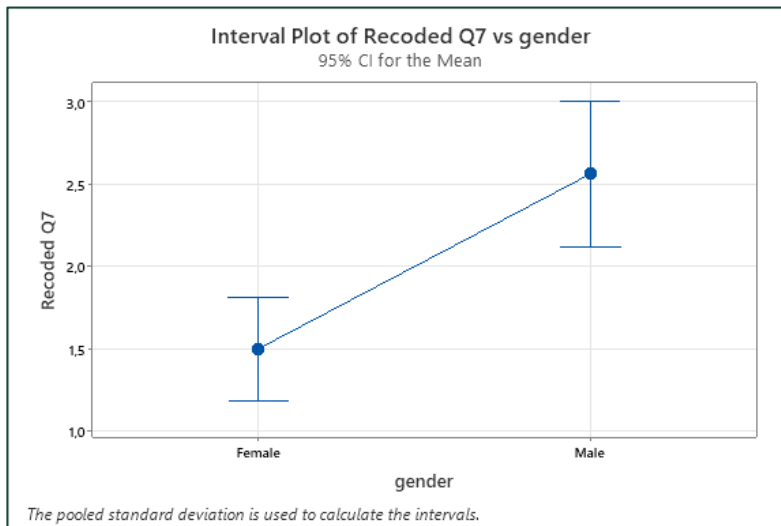


Figure 11. Q7, Gender-neutral marketing is more inclusive vs gender

Further looking at Figure 11 on the test of question seven “To what extent do you agree that gender-neutral marketing is more inclusive?”. Females agree according to the mean in the test are on 1,5 which means they are in between completely agree and somewhat agree. Meanwhile males have a mean of 2,5 which means they are in between somewhat agree and neither agree nor disagree. However, regarding question one and three both males and females do somewhat agree that gender-neutral is inclusive.

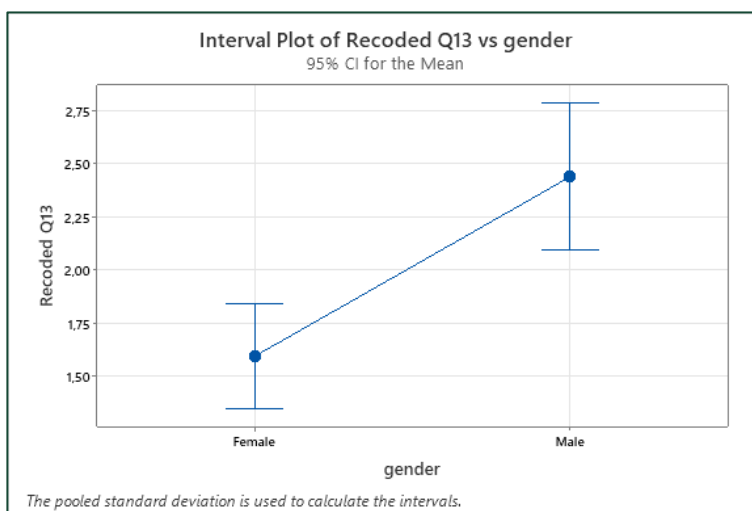


Figure 12. Q13, There should be more commercials and products that are gender-neutral vs gender



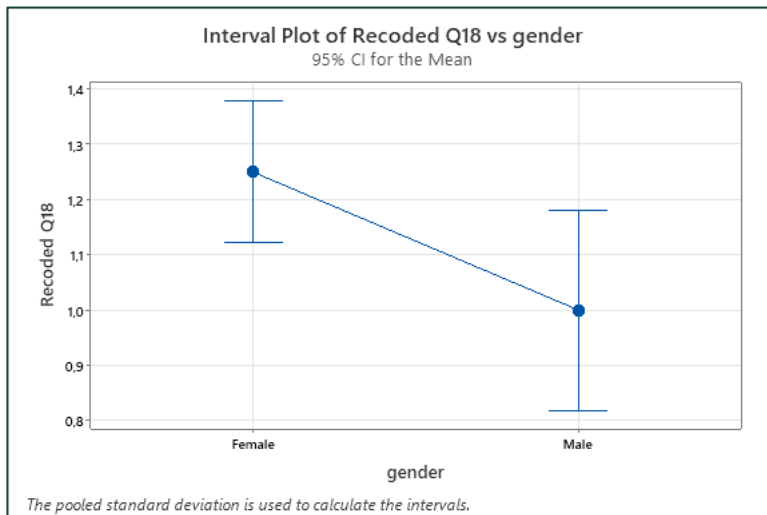


Figure 13. Q18, Have you ever felt excluded or offended vs gender

The question of “Have you ever felt excluded or offended by gender-specific marketing campaigns?” (Figure 13) there was not a single male who felt that they had ever been excluded but females had. The graph shows males and females on the x-axis and on the y-axis we have yes and no but recoded into no – 1 and yes – 2. Based here on the mean of the answers from the two we see that males only ever answered no while a few females answered yes, 1,25 which means 1 in 4 women answered yes. By adding a chance for people to express why there were a few responses from the females respondents shown down below

Table 5. Individual Responses Recorded via Qualtrics

Have you ever felt excluded or offended by gender-specific marketing campaigns?: Yes (If so, please explain h... ⓘ

Mostly offended that the extend of marketing there is for younger girls in terms of skincare or clothes that are more for adults ...

Verktyg/arbetskläder till kvinnor är blommiga / lila. Och barnkläder är oftast väldigt könade ...

When there is something I like and want, but feel like it's nit suitable because it's for men. ...

When women are shown as stupid and caring only for their appearance. ...

Cleaning products are usually targeted towards women which is enforcing ancient stereotypes. Period products are marketed in a juvenile way - it's the most natural thing in the world, and e don't need any frills just need to know if the product works or not. ...

In Table 5 there are the individual responses to the question “have you ever felt excluded or offended by gender-specific marketing campaigns?”. The reason for using a question where the respondants got the write their answers in more detail helped see why they felt excluded. The second response is in Swedish and translates

to “Tools/workwear for women are floral/purple. And children clothes are often very gendered.” As mentioned all of the respondents who had felt excluded were women. This helped to see why the women had felt excluded and could be connected and compared to previous research.

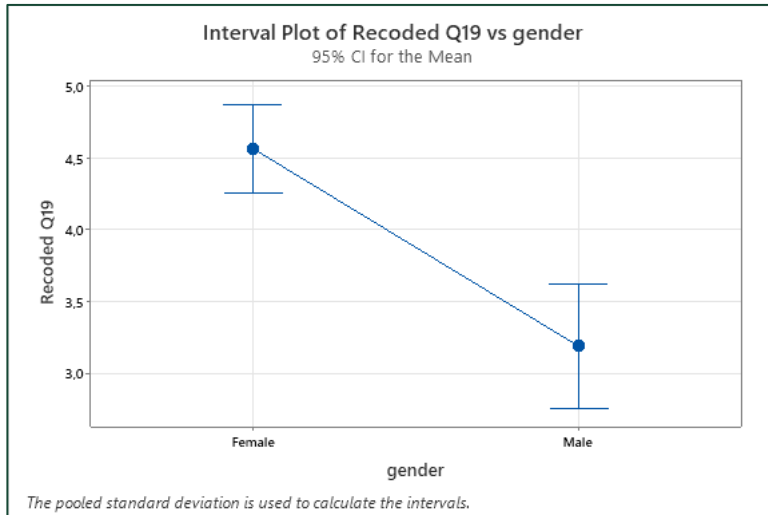


Figure 14. Q19, How important is it for brands to consider diversity and inclusion vs gender

The last question on the survey (Figure 14) was “How important is it for brands to consider diversity and inclusion in their marketing efforts?” Where 5 was very important meanwhile 1 was not important at all and as well as at the previous tests show females agree more strongly than the males. Both genders, based on the mean, believe that it is important but females more strongly so.

### 5.1.2 One-way ANOVA-test survey questions vs age

As mentioned previously in this chapter when it comes to the range of age groups it needs to be kept in mind that a vast majority of participants who took the survey are in the age group 25-34 years, 55.7% are in that age group (Table 2) .

Looking at Figure 15, the test of question one from the survey, compared to the age groups. The test shows that the two oldest age groups completely agree that there should be more gender-neutral marketing meanwhile the younger age groups vary inbetween somewhat agree and neither agree or disagree.

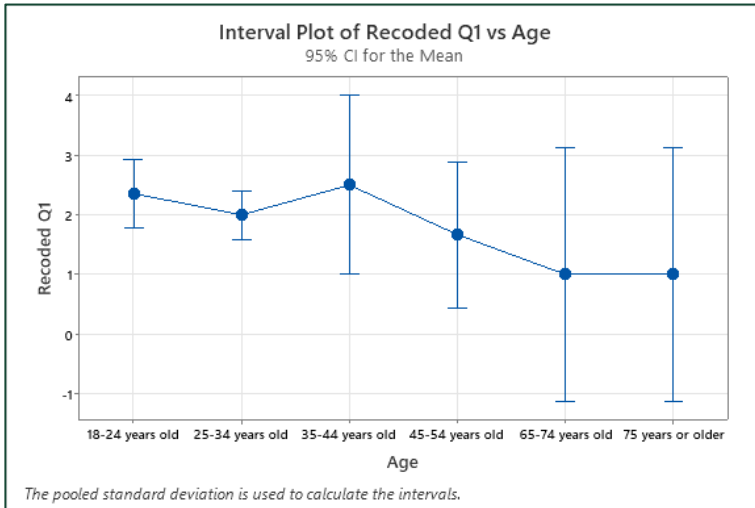


Figure 15. Q1, There should be more gender-neutral marketing vs age

Continuing by comparing Figure 15 to Figure 16, the test show that the two oldest age groups also believe that there should be gender specific advertisement. The overall mean is higher when comparing all of the age groups when it comes to the third survey question. The line on the graph is around neither agree nor disagree for all agegroups.

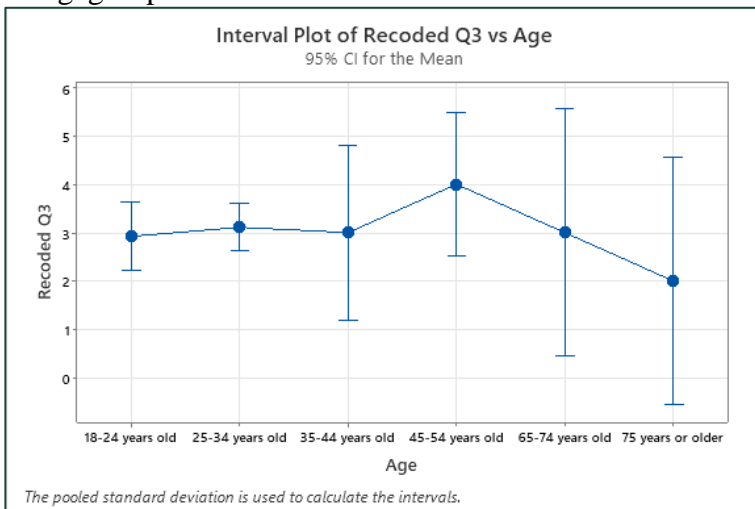


Figure 16. Q3, There should be gender specific advertisement vs age

When comparing the data from Figure 17 and 18, there is a distinct difference in the responses between the younger age groups compared to the age group 65-74 and 75 years or older. However, as mentioned previously there has only been one respondent in each of these age groups making this test validity questionable. In both figures the older age groups have responded with that they completely agree on both questions that gender-neutral marketing is more inclusive and that there should be more gender-neutral commercials and products. Nevertheless all age groups

agree to the statements and not a single respondent answered that they disagree completely. Which can also be seen in Figure 17.



Figure 17. Q7, Gender-neutral marketing is more inclusive vs age

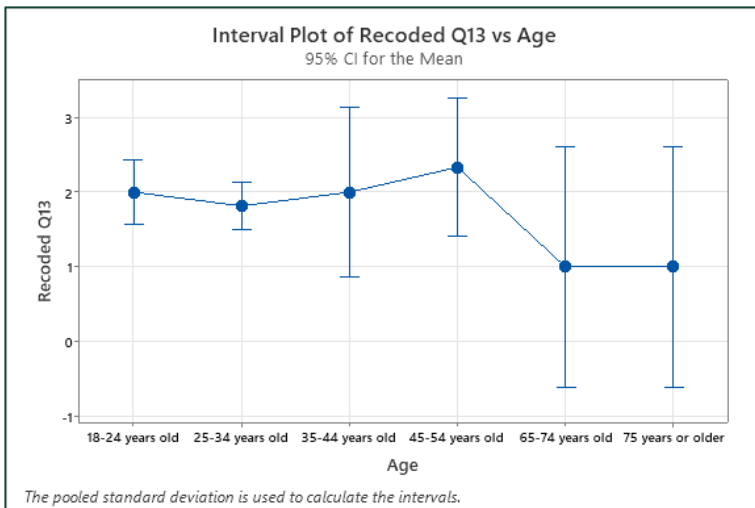


Figure 18. Q13, There should be more commercials and products that are gender-neutral vs age

Figure 19 below shows the ANOVA-test of question 19 in the survey in comparison to age and it shows that the mean between the age groups do not differ much they all end inbetween 3,5-5 which is neutral to very important.

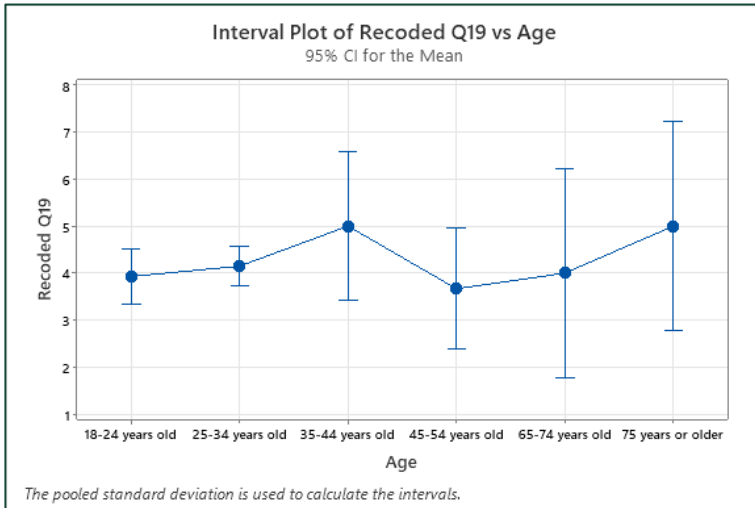


Figure 19. Q19, How important is it for brands to consider diversity and inclusion vs age

## 5.2 Limitations

By using statistical testing there were limitations on how many people would take the survey and there are also limitations on how many people actually finish the survey. With this project, there were 85 responses to the survey but once all the unfinished and non consenting participants were sorted out, the survey was left with in total 48 responses with a 100% answers, where 32 were female and 16 male. By choosing to sort out all of the unfinished surveys in order to only get responses that I can use in the statistical tests and therefore not receiving partial answers or the wrong outcomes due to some questions having more responders.

Since there was a majority females in the survey using the mean of the answers will give a more accurate and legitimate answer and helps the test to become more reliable. But due to lack of people who identify outside of the normative genders, within this survey the answers in the survey it cannot be completely un-biased. Henceforth this testing can only apply to people who identify as either female or male.

When analyzing the different age groups there is also limitations to what the results can show because there only was one person in each age group of “65-74” and “75 years or older”. Furthermore a generalized conclusion can not be drawn based solely off of these results provided in this study.

Due to the choice of having the survey with scale answers such as “To what extent do you agree that...” the statistical testing was limited to what tests were possible to complete without error. Nevertheless, it can also be seen as something positive as it simplified the analysis but being able to see on a scale instead of yes or no answers, or long worded answers. It also made it possible for the entries to answer on a scale since it rarely is a simple agree or disagree. It showed on a bigger scale rather than black and white and increase the possibility to analyse how present or popular gender-neutral is to the participants.

## 5.3 Discussion

When looking at previous research the focus has been on how has marketing worked in the past which has in most cases been very gender-conforming. The findings of the statistical testing shows that females and males do in general perceive marketing based on gender differently which furthermore could be a result of Meyers Levy & Lokens (2015) three theories; social-cultural theory, evolutionary and hormone and brain science. The reason for females and males

responding differently to the survey could be the result of years and years of separating genders when it comes to how they are expected to act, show emotions, what roles they have in the household, who brings home the money and who stays at home with the children. Like Fisher and Dubé (2005) write in their research on what emotions females and males feel when looking at different advertisements, they often feel the same but the way of expressing those emotions are very differently because that is how they were taught. This gender gap is something that the UN with the fifth global goal want to change, they want to close the gap and increase the equality of males and females being raised and treated equally (United nations u.a.). However this also reflects how genders view advertisements differently and therefore might experience different feelings as a result.

As one of the respondents answered on the “Have you ever felt excluded or offended by gender-specific marketing campaigns?” (Table 5) and she responded with that the clothing in her line of work which used to be a male dominated are now oftenly marketed and produced in so called girly colors and flowers. And as mentioned by Meyers Levy and Loken (2015) females have in the past years taken large part of the male dominated industries, more so than males in female dominated industries yet they still feel more excluded in a question such as this than males. Furthermore, it can also be seen that what Dobsch (2019) called “lazy marketing”. Where the companies designing these products want a simple way of showing they have products for both genders and does so in a very obvious and gender normative way. Whereas, the clothing for males are dark colors as black or blue meanwhile for females they show make them pink or floral while it could somewhat be assumed from the answers that females have a larger want for gender-neutral products.

Another female respondent wrote how she felt that cleaning products “are usually targeted towards women which is enforcing ancient stereotypes” (Figure 25). This answer once again connects to Meyers Levy and Loken (2015) and how marketing today can refer back to old fashioned ways of viewing gender and that there is a very clear difference between the genders and their roles in the household and all the way back to the hunters and gatherers time of their evolutionary theory (ibid). However the last and third theory which connects to male and female hormones and how it affects our way of feeling will be hard to discuss and analyse just depending on these few statistical tests from this survey.

By making a survey based on gender as segmentation in marketing it is also possible to attract a certain type of people. It could attract females who are more interested and invested in the subject and the same goes for males and this needs to be taken in consideration when analysing the results and the data provided. It also needs to

be taken into consideration when comparing the results from the statistical tests because it can be seen as somewhat fabricated due to the fact that the people who has taken the survey is making an active choice to participate. Therefore, given that they are interested in the subject which in comparison to someone who is forced to take the survey who might not at all be interested in either marketing nor gender-neutrality. Hence the choice to participate has to be taken in as a factor for the results. Nevertheless Liljedal et al. (2021) argues that there are advocates for change in the use of gender in today's advertising and marketing. As their research indicates that employing non-stereotypical representations of women and men in advertisements can result in positive attitudes towards the ads and the brand among the audience. So whether the participants and non-participants in the survey are interested or not in the subject it can be argued that the use of gender-neutral would benefit companies in the long-run.

However, when analysing the multiple different ANOVA-tests, there is not as large of a difference in their answers between ages as it is when it comes to gender. It was easier to analyze and compare what males and females answered which could lead back to Meyers Levy & Loken (2015) and their three theories of why genders are separated in the past and seen as so different. By using ANOVA-test, Hypothesis 1 can not be confirmed due to the lack of data from different age groups. However what could be seen was that the older generation did in fact agree there should be more gender-neutrality as well as there should still be gender-specific marketing. Meanwhile, Hypothesis 2 can be somewhat confirmed where females have a higher demand for gender-neutral marketing than males.



## 6. Conclusions

### 6.1 Conclusions

When looking at the ANOVA tests, the majority of them show that females are in general more conscious of the inclusivity and gender-neutral products and advertisements due to themselves have felt excluded in the past. Moreover by analysing the tests, the personal entries on the survey and looking at past research there has been a lot of marketing and advertisements in favour of males.

So to answer the question of “Is there a need and a want for more gender-neutral marketing? And if yes, are there sub-groups that are more likely to support it?” In short the answer is yes, based on the answers from the survey where a majority of the participants answered that there should be more gender-neutral products. Meanwhile females agreed to larger extent than males. I believe that the fact that females and women being the ones expressing a larger want for more gender-neutral and less gentrified products are because females feel excluded more often than males which was shown in Figure 18 by their own answers. Moreover, because women in the past did not received the same rights as men, products, advertisement and society has been a reflection of that. Producing goods and advertisements in favour of women has been done in the past by men and therefore women has felt a sort of exclusion. However looking at the different age groups as sub-groups it is harder to draw conclusions due to the number of participants in the different age groups, which goes for both research questions.

To answer “Would consumers believe that gender-neutral is more inclusive? And are there gender differences?” based on the answers from the survey and past research the answer here is also yes. The participants believe that it is more inclusive and both males and females mostly agree but it can be seen that females does agree to a higher extent than males. Therefore, a conclusion that can be somewhat of a stretch and would need further research to be confirmed, is that females has in the past as well as today been thought to be nurturers and caretakers of people in our surroundings. Hence, women take in consideration not just the women in their

surroundings perceive and feel about gendered advertisements and products but also non-binary and males.

## 6.2 Future Research

In order to continue this research in the future there would need to be larger surveys with more data recorded and also qualitative research with interviews on how generations today perceive gender-neutral marketing and what they want to see in the future. Moreover, there needs to be research on personal experiences, preferences and demographics which all have an impact on how advertisement and marketing is perceived. Because in order to become more inclusive and more accepting of all different genders there needs to be an active communication with the consumers. Not just the consumers existing but the upcoming ones. Although I believe and have come to the conclusion that gender normative products and advertisement always will be a part of consumerism, there is a change in the younger generations way of perceiving these products. So although there is a market for gender normative advertising there is also a market for gender-neutral advertising which I strongly believe is expanding looking at the different responses from the survey.

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## Popular science summary

Ever noticed how ads are changing? Well, it turns out, there's a whole science behind it. With technology booming and society evolving, marketing is going through some big shifts. One major change is on the rise of gender-neutral marketing – that's ads and products that aren't just for one gender.

Researcher wanted to know how this new type of marketing affects what people buy and how they feel about inclusivity. So, a study was done. The researcher asked people from all walks of life to fill out online surveys.

What they found was pretty interesting. It turns out, lots of folks – especially women – like the idea of gender-neutral marketing. Even some men are into it, though not to the same extent. And get this: age does not seem to matter as much as gender does when it comes to liking gender-neutral ads.

So, what is the big takeaway? Well, it seems like a majority, regardless of age, is on board with ads that don't stick to old-fashioned gender roles. This study suggests that companies should start paying attention and adapting their ads to reflect this change. By being more inclusive in their marketing, they can better connect with a diverse range of customers. And hey, that's good for business!

## Acknowledgements

I want to start by saying thank you to all of the women in my life for always being brave, loud, strong and taking up the space you all deserve. You inspire me every day.

And of course, thank you to all of my friends and family who I have spoken to for many hours about my essay, my interest in the future of marketing and my immense interest and desire for gender equality.

# Appendix 1

## Questions asked on the survey:

<b>How old are you?</b>	18-24 years old	25-34 years old	35-44 years old	45-54 years old	55-64 years old	65-74 years old	75 years or older
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<b>What best describes your gender?</b>	Female	Male	Non-binary	None of the above	Prefer not to say
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To what extent do you agree that	Completely agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Completely disagree (5)
<b>Q1</b> There should be more gender-neutral marketing?					
<b>Q2</b> There should be more gender-neutral products					
<b>Q3</b> There should be gender specific advertisement					
<b>Q4</b> There should be gender specific products					

To what extent do you agree that	Completely agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Completely disagree (5)
<b>Q5</b> Companies should use gender as a segmentation factor in marketing?					
<b>Q6</b> Products should be marketed differently based on gender?					
<b>Q7</b> Gender-neutral marketing is more inclusive?					
<b>Q8</b> Gender-specific marketing reinforces harmful stereotypes?					

How likely are you to	Highly likely (1)	Somewhat likely (2)	Neutral(3)	Somewhat unlikely (4)	Highly unlikely (5)
<b>Q9</b> Purchase products that are marketed specifically towards your gender?					
<b>Q10</b> Support brands that enforce traditional gender norms in their marketing?					
<b>Q11</b> Support brands that challenge traditional gender norms in their marketing?					
<b>Q12</b> Choose gender-neutral products rather than gender normative products?					



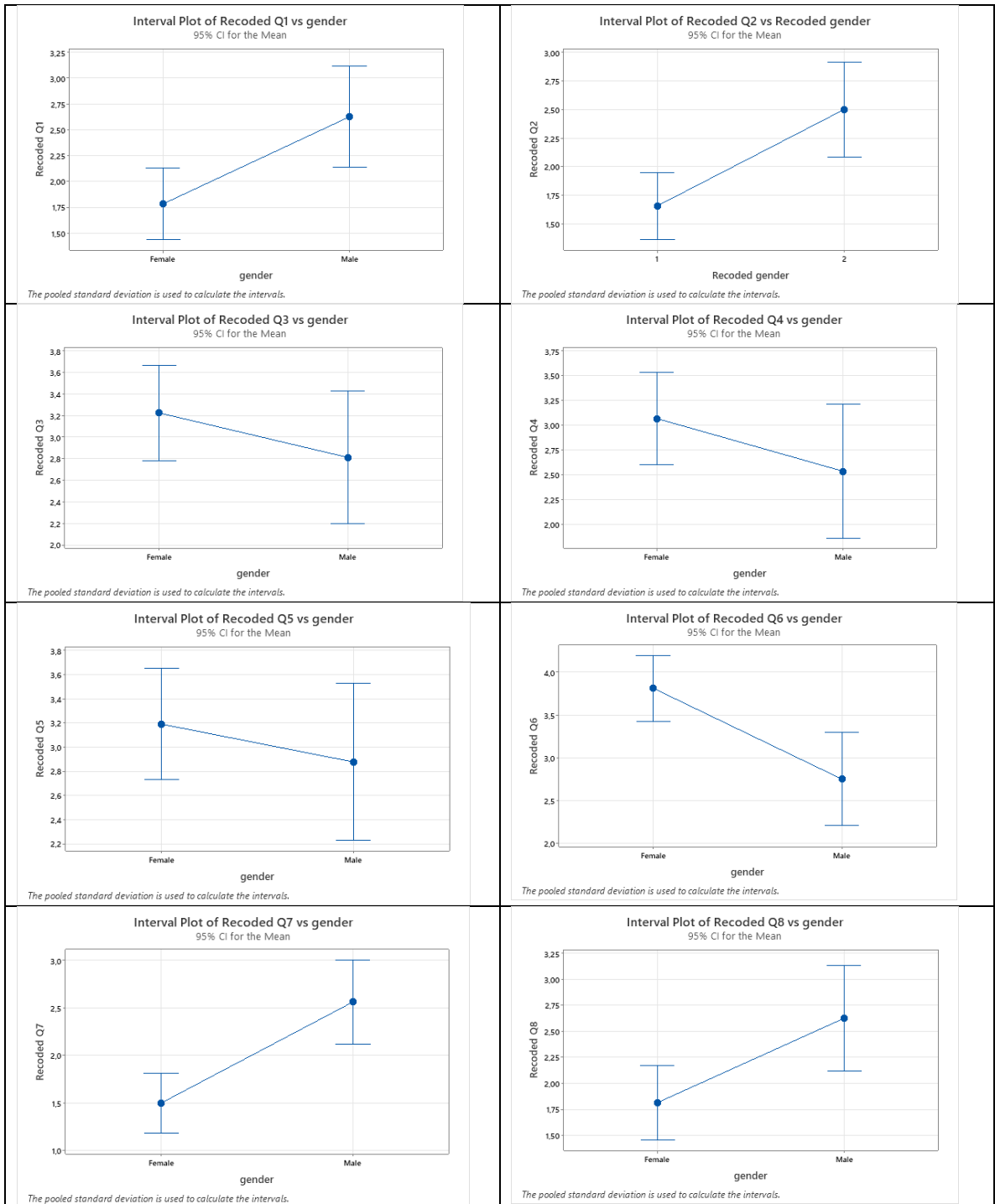
To what extent do you agree that	Completely agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Completely disagree (5)
<b>Q13</b> There should be more commercials and products that are gender-neutral?					
<b>Q14</b> Companies are making efforts to use gender-neutral marketing?					
<b>Q15</b> Companies fail to adopt gender-neutral marketing?					
<b>Q16</b> Gender-neutral marketing reflects changing societal attitudes towards gender and identity?					

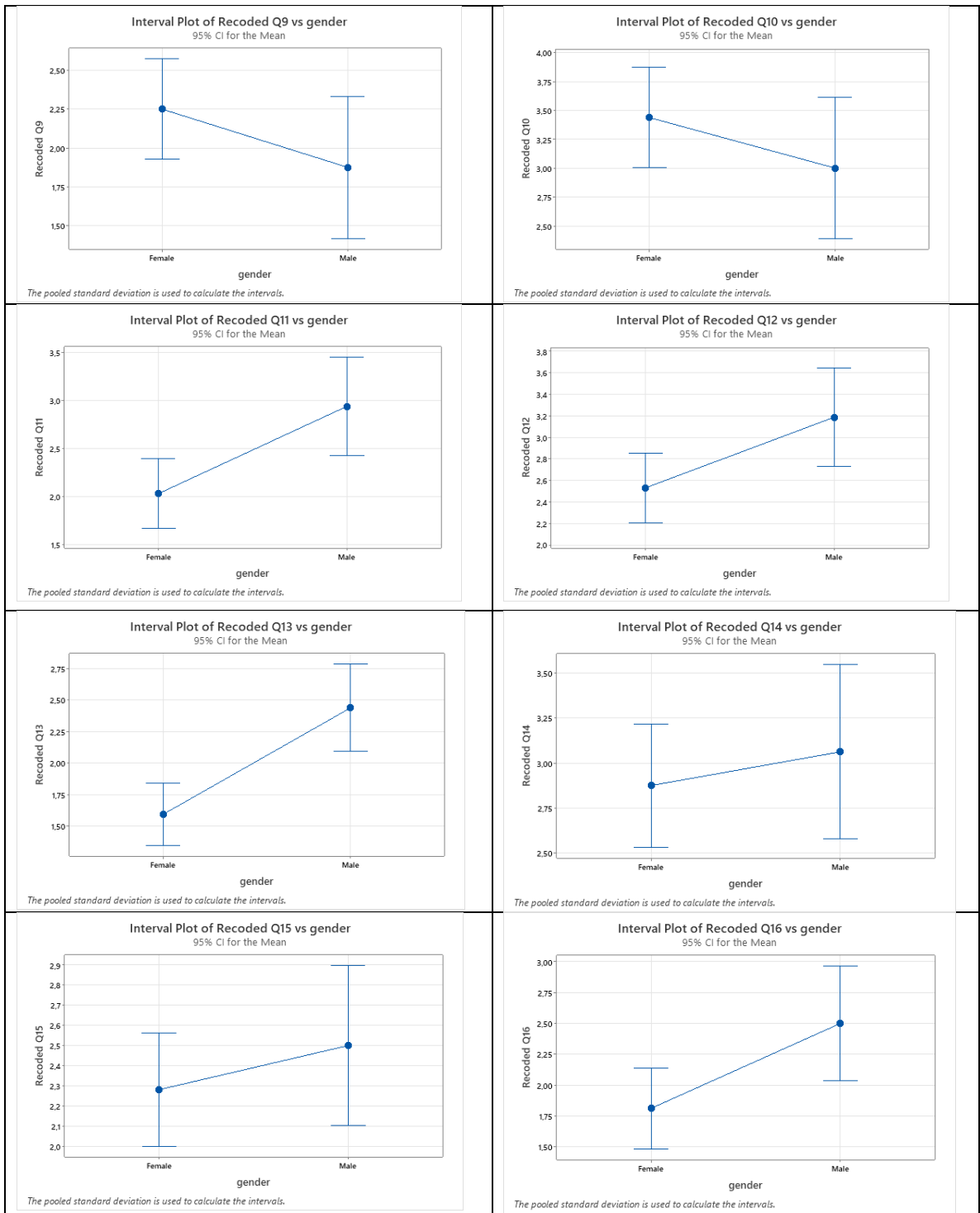
<b>Q17</b> How influential do you find gender-specific marketing in your purchasing decisions?	Very influential (1)	Somewhat influential (2)	Neutral (3)	Not very influential (4)	Not at all influential (5)

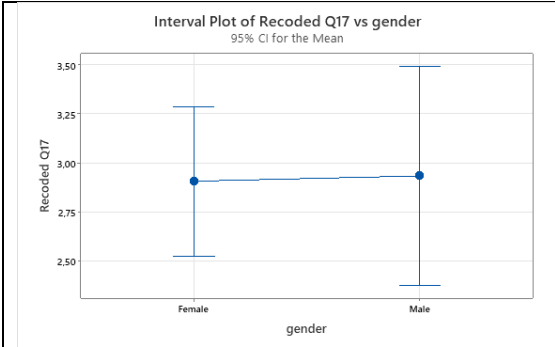
<b>Q18</b> Have you ever felt excluded or offended by gender-specific marketing campaigns?	No (1)	Yes (if so please explain how or why?) (2)

<b>Q19.</b> How important is it for brands to consider diversity and inclusion in their marketing efforts	Not important at all (1)	Not very important (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat important (4)	Very Important (5)

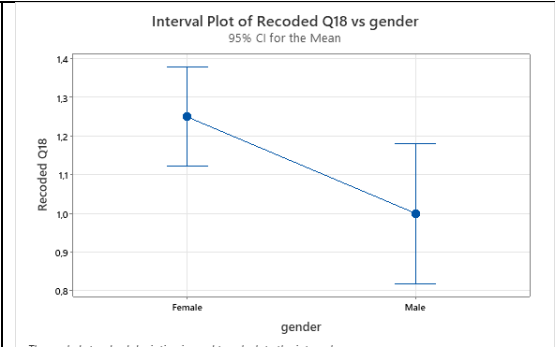
# Appendix 2



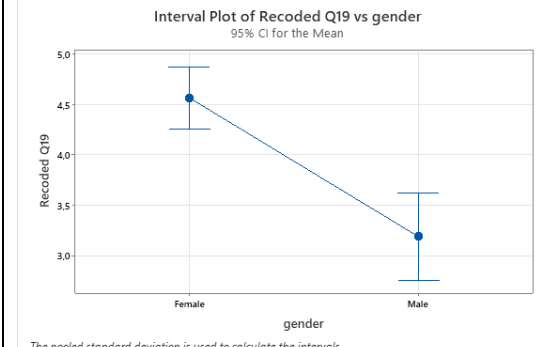




The pooled standard deviation is used to calculate the intervals.

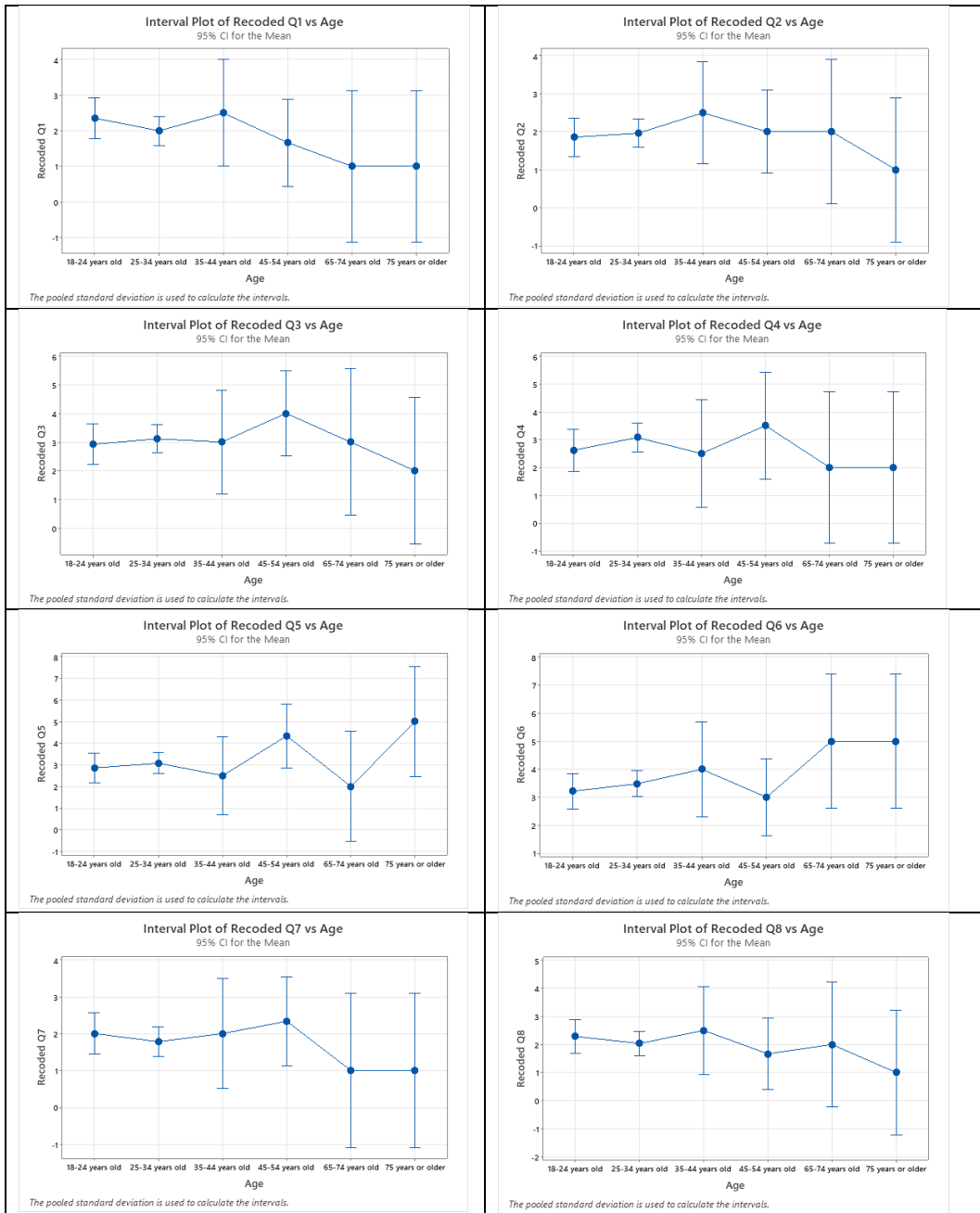


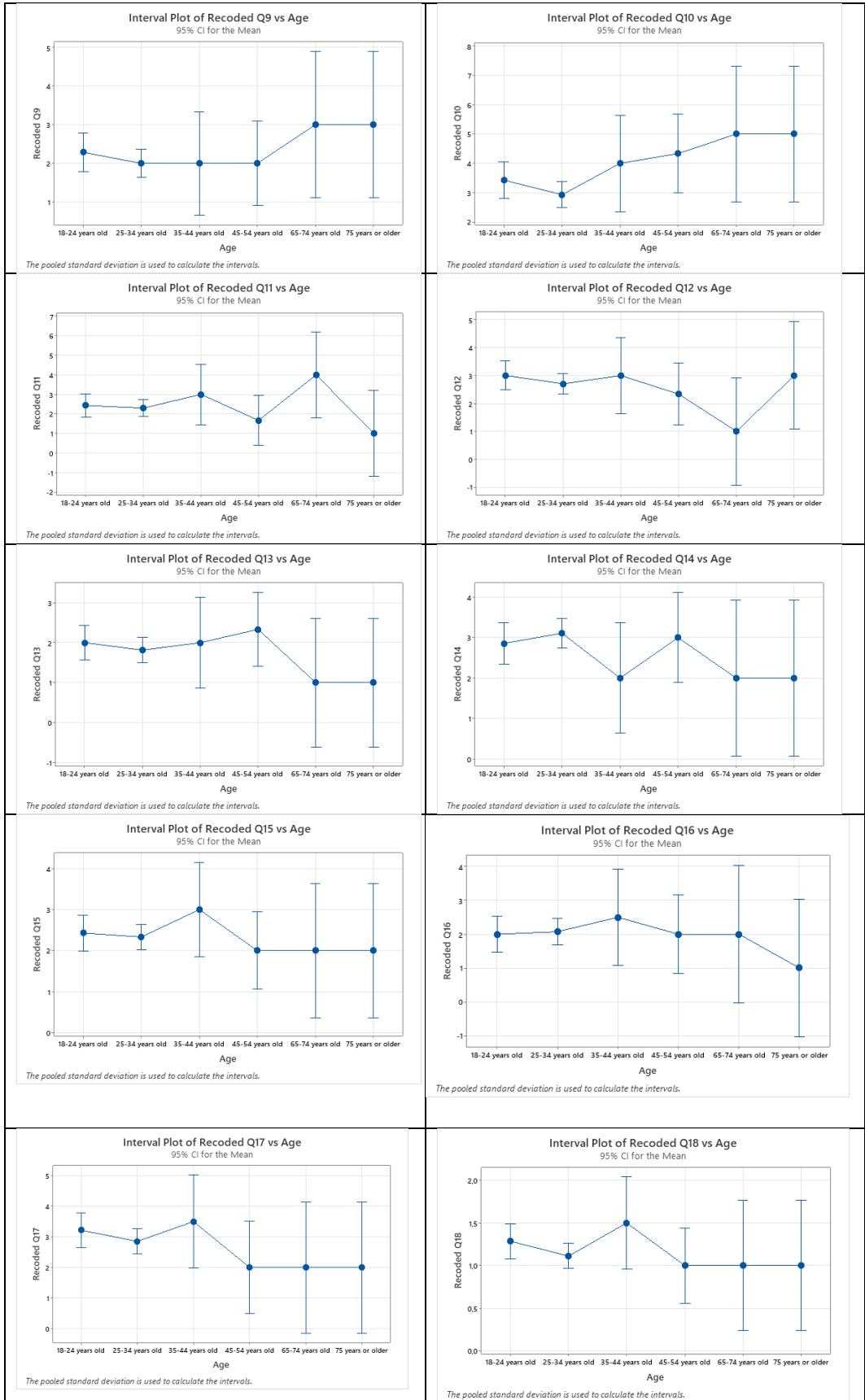
The pooled standard deviation is used to calculate the intervals.

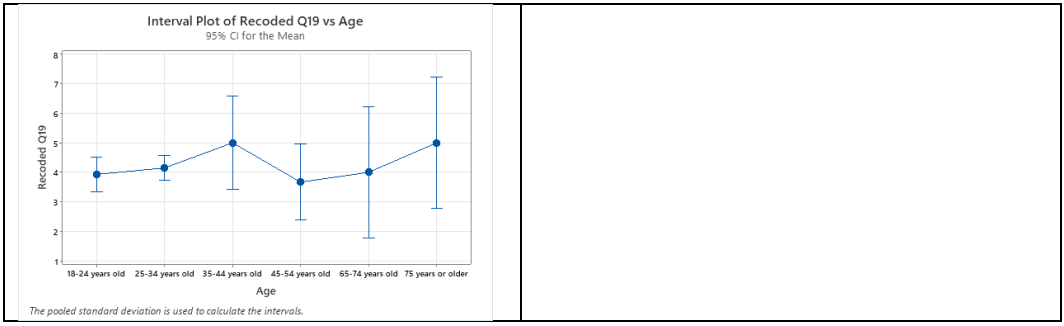


The pooled standard deviation is used to calculate the intervals.

# Appendix 3







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