

“Be a man – grow a beard”: Investigation into public responses to the Gillette advert on YouTube and Reddit

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Overview

- Project
- (Hegemonic) masculinity
- Digital spaces
- Aims & research question
- Methods & data
- Results & conclusion

Overall Project



- Gender empowerment adverts: Gillette and Nike
- YouTube & Reddit (quantitative & qualitative analysis)
- Focus groups (qualitative analysis)



Masculinity

*Masculinity is almost invariably invisible in shaping social relations, its ever-present specificity and significance shrouded in its constitution as the **universal, the axiomatic, the neutral**. Masculinity [...] assumes the banality of the **unstated norm** (Beasley, 2008:86, our emphasis)*

Hegemonic masculinity

- All participants are *orchestrators* of hegemonic masculinity (Messerschmidt, 2019)
- Repetition/synchronisation of *gendered* action (Coles, 2009)
- Individual and structural level (Coles, 2009)
- Non-hegemonic masculinities (Connell, 1987)
 - Complicit
 - **Subordinate**
 - Marginalised
 - Protest

Digital Spaces

- Renegotiation of masculinity (Hardaker & McGlashan, 2016)
- Subtle refashioning of hegemonic masculinity and occupation of centre stage (Lazar, 2015)
- Traditional /normative identities and ideologies are perpetuated, and alternative masculinities are targeted (White, 2019)
- MRAs and its subcultures: “traditional masculinity” that prides men on sexual prowess, physical aggression, and economic success (Ging, 2017; Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019)
- The manosphere
- Digital hegemony?

Aims & Research Question

- A focus on masculinities
- Investigate marked and unmarked masculinities
- Operationalise research in masculinities
- Research question:
 - How are masculinities constructed in a corpus of YouTube comments on the 2019 Gillette advert?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=koPmuEyP3a0>

Methods & Data

- The Youtube corpus
 - 195,671 YouTube comments (total comments with replies 416,136), retrieved through a comment scraper
 - Data cleaning: **195,644 comments (4,051,967 words, original comments unchanged)**
- SketchEngine
 - corpus-driven (keyword analysis vs EnTenTen15)
 - corpus-based (concordance & collocation analysis, 30 collocates -2+2, MI <8)
- Ethical considerations



Results - Keywords

| Category | Number | Keyword |
|---|--------|--|
| Against western stereotypical masculinity | 23 | feminize, moralize, emasculate, condescend, demonise, collectivize, whitey, womanize, castrate, objectify, patronise, prejudice, goy, cower, misbehave, berate, whiny, harangue, cuckold, insinuate, defame, procreate, douche, normalise, sicken, demoralize, patronize |
| Constructing alternative masculinities | 5 | cower, misbehave, grovel, victimise, caveman |
| For/against women | 4 | catcall, insinuate, procreate, victimise |
| Reaction to advert | 9 | scummy, strop, puke, nosedive, propagandize, overcharge, grovel, destruct, cheapen, indoctrinate |
| Other | 4 | overreact, ostracize, victimise, nag |

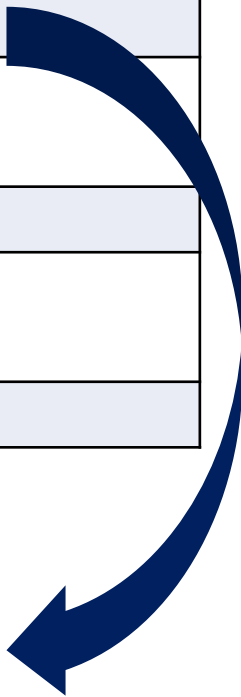
Discourses:

Fear of becoming subordinate masculinities

Resistance to being told what to do

Intersectionality

Not all men



Fear of becoming subordinate masculinities discourse

- They trying to **feminize** men because they won't vote for a woman President.
- **Feminize** men so that you will sell more razors because a hairy man is too masculine?
- Socialism is all fun and games until their strategy highjacks media in a thinly veiled attempt to **emasculate** your population so when they come in with guns...its not actually a challenge or a dangerous proposition.
- GILLEEEEEETTTTEEEEE, THE BEST A MAN CAN **EMASCULATE** HIMSELF WITH!
- Gillette, way to **womanize** masculinity.
- There's a *** abyss between being a real man, and a **douche**



Resistance to being told what to do discourse

- How dare you **moralize** your customer base... release an apology..
- I'll never buy this product again I will NEVER EVER buy Gillette again, how dare a razor company **patronise** me like this
- Real men don't belittle, **patronize**, mansplain, harass, abuse, or rape women
- Hey why not **berate**, belittle and **patronise** men a bit more..
- You do not get to **condescend** your main demographic and expect to keep their patronage.

Not all men discourse

- So because a few men, or even a few humans **misbehave** , we're going to shame all of them?
- "Becuse the boys watching today will be the girls of tommorow" - Gillette "I love how they **collectivize** all men like this.
- Was this an ad for women's razors ? It is insulting to **insinuate** that men depicted in this ad reflect real life.

Corpus-based Results – A Gendered Umbrella

- Boy*
- Alpha*
- **Man/men**
- **Soy***
- **Beta***
- **Cuck/cucks**
- Women/woman
- Girl*



Collocations – Men (38,974 occurrences)

Hegemonic traits: real, straight, patronizes, punishes, bashing, blame, hatred, portraying

Non-hegemonic traits: spineless, emasculated, demasculize, emasculates, feminise, girly, girlie

- **Portraying men** in the worst possible way, Gillett hold your head in shame as that's disgusting.
- Majority of your (now ex) customers are **men Bashing men** probably isn't your best choice.
- **Girly men** should henceforth be called 'Gillette Boys'!
- There's an agenda to **feminise** western **men**, so we sit limp and docile as they import millions of Non-Whites into our countries.

Collocations – Soy (4,323 occurrences)



Slang used to describe males who completely and utterly lack all necessary masculine qualities. This pathetic state is usually achieved by an over-indulgence of emasculating products and/or ideologies (Urban Dictionary, 2019).

- **Metaphor**
 - *Latte, milk, lattes, intake, gallon, soaked, beverage, foamy, infused, consuming, diet, drink, drinking, consumed, sauce, drank, consume, hold*
- **Gender**
 - *Cisgender, boy, boys, boyz, cisgendered, strips, life*
- Gillette razors can only shave wispy low-test pubic beards that have been **soaked** in soy for 5 hours
Yeah I'm an evil man, guess what?
- The audience this ad attracts either don't even shave because they dye their armpit hair or just need one razor for their soy **infused** life.

Collocations – Beta (648 occurrences) Cuck/s (541 occurrences)

Beta: *used to describe someone who prefers other people in charge and may be shy, lack confidence*

Cuck/s: *an insulting word for a man, used especially by the extreme right of politics to men with politically liberal views*
(Cambridge Dictionary)

Beta

▪ **Gender/group:** *male, males, soyboy, testosterone, boy, gay, boys, some, cucks, either, leftist, feminists, SJW, weak, low, best,*

You just admitted to everyone that you're all a bunch of low testosterone **beta** cucks!!!

You might as well feed them with so much soy to muster up white-knighting and be **pathetic** cucks!

Groups: *beta, soyboy, soyboys, boy, into, male, snowflake, leftist, liberal, gay, watched, become, feminists*

▪ **Traits:** *simps, pathetic, virtue, liked, little*

Conclusions

- Extremely hostile views (of some digital spaces) permeate other digital spaces (Ging, 2017) such as for instance the one investigated here.
- This creates a digital hegemony (on masculinity).
- The comments in our corpus seem to construct a sort of *softer manosphere* (where anti-feminist sentiments are implicit in the discourse). This is linked to discourses of aggrieved entitlement and victimhood in the manosphere (Kimmel, 2017).
- The results seem to corroborate a re-affirmation of hegemonic (western traditional) masculinity and evidence deviation from the 'norm', e.g. subordinate masculinities (on their own, e.g. soy or combinations e.g. beta cucks).
- The methodology proposed aims to fill the gap in operationalising research on the topic of masculinity.

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